

Star of the West extracts

comp. Mike Thomas

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This document is a selection¹ of the text covering the talks and writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which are not readily available elsewhere, from the George Ronald 10 volume reprint of the *Star of the West*.² Some pilgrim’s notes, historical records and reports relating mainly to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have been included. Material known to be available as newer translations or published elsewhere in readily available publications, e.g. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, have not been included. There are some repeated quotes and articles.

Idiosyncratic spelling or misuses of particular words in the original have been corrected where possible. Obvious typesetting errors have been corrected, international spelling used, accented letters added where known, and many additional Footnotes have been added.

Star of the West page numbers, formatted as “[vol:issue:page]”, have (2021) been inserted in the text to indicate the *Star of the West* volume, issue and page number at the **start** of each new page. Each item is preceded by the *Star of the West* volume, issue and publication date.

¹ The document, originally prepared by Sen McGlinn, has been extended to include all 10 reprint volumes. Correct transcriptions of “hybrid” words with an added English “s” are given in Footnotes when the hybrid “word” is first used. The same applies to corrections to names of people and place names. First version completed January 2001. A major revision completed in September 2021, and updated again May 2023. —M. W. Thomas

² The first volume was titled *Bahai News*.

Reprint book 1

Vol. I, Nos 1–19 (21 March 1910—2 March 1911)
and

Vol. II, Nos 1–11 (21 March 1911—27 September 1911)

I:1, 21 March 1910 [I:1:1]

The “Purest Branch”

In reproducing the photograph of the “Purest Branch” so lovingly sent by the maid-servant of God, Fareeza¹ *Khánum*, to the friends in the Occident, the following extracts from the “Life and Teachings [I:1:2] of Abbas Effendi”² (‘Abdu’l-Bahá), by Myron H. Phelps, relating how the “Purest Branch” came to his death, will be of interest:

“We were imprisoned in the barracks, without any substantial change in our manner of life, for two years. During this time none of us left the prison. One evening towards the end of the second year, my younger brother came, as was his habit, to write for his Father. But as he was not very well, and as others of the family were also ill, the Blessed Perfection (Bahá’u’lláh) told him to go and come later. So he went up to the flat roof of the barracks, where we were accustomed to walk, and which was our only recourse for fresh air and exercise. He was walking up and down repeating Tablets and gazing at the sky, when he stumbled, lost his balance, and fell through the opening to which the ladder from below led up. The room into which he fell had a lofty ceiling; it was the living-room of the family. No one was in the room at the time, but hearing his cries, some of the family rushed in and found him in a heap on the floor with the blood pouring from his mouth.

“We took him up and laid him on his mat. He was perfectly conscious. Later the Blessed Perfection came and remained with him. The physician was sent for; he said that there was no hope.

“My brother lived for thirty hours. When he was about to pass away the Blessed Perfection said to him: ‘What do you desire? Do you wish to live, or do you prefer to die? Tell me what you most wish for.’ My brother replied: ‘I don’t care to live. I have but one wish. I want the believers to be admitted to see their Lord. If you will promise me this, it is all I ask.’ The Blessed Perfection told him that it would be as he desired.

“The death of this youngest and favourite child of a very gentle and sweet disposition—nearly broke his mother’s heart. We feared for her reason. When the Blessed Perfection was told of the condition of his wife, he went to her and said: ‘Your son has been taken by God that His people might be free His life was the ransom, and you should rejoice that you had a son so dear to give to the Cause of God.’ When our mother heard these words she seemed to rally, and after that she did not shed tear.”

I:1, 21 March 1910 [I:1:5]

Tablet by Bahá’u’lláh³

A tablet by Bahá’u’lláh to the Persian Zoroastrian Bahá’ís. Revealed in the purest old Persian language, without an Arabic word in it.

In the name of God the peerless!

Glory is due unto God, the Discoverer, who, through one shower of the ocean of His Generosity, expanded the firmament of existence, begemmed it with the stars of knowledge

¹ Most likely Farída.

² ‘Abbás Afandí.

³ Lawḥ-i-Mánikjí Sáhib.

and summoned the people to the most high court of perception and understanding!

This shower, which is the Primal Word of the Almighty, is sometimes called the Water of Life, for it quickens the dead souls in the desert of ignorance with the spring of intelligence. Sometimes it is called the First Emanation which appears from the Sun of Wisdom, and when it began to shine the first movement became manifest and known; then phenomena stepped into the arena of existence and these appearances were through the generosity of the incomparable, the Wise One. He is the Knower, the Giver! He is sanctified and holy above every statement and attribute! The seen and the unseen fail to attain the measure of His understanding. The world of being and whatever has issued from it bears witness to this utterance.

Therefore, it has become known that the First Bestowal of the Almighty is the Word. The receiver and acceptor of it is the understanding. It is the First Instructor in the University of Existence and it is the Primal Emanation of God. Whatever has appeared is through the reflection of its Light and whatever is manifested is the appearance of its Wisdom. All the names originate in His Name and the beginnings and endings of all affairs are in His Hand.

Your letter came to this Captive of the world in this prison. It brought happiness and increased friendship; it renewed the remembrance of the former times. Thanks belong to the Possessor of the Universe, who permitted us to meet in the land of Persia. We met, we conversed and we listened. It [I:1:6] is hoped that no forgetfulness shall follow that meeting, that the revolving of the wheel of time shall not take away its remembrance from the heart and that the plants of love shall grow out of that which is sown and become green, verdant and imperishable.

You have asked regarding the heavenly Books: the pulse of the universe is in the hand of the skilful Physician. He diagnoses the illness and wisely prescribes the remedy. Every day has its own secret and every tongue a melody. The illness of today has one cure and that of tomorrow another. Look ye upon this day; consider and discuss its needs. One sees that existence is afflicted with innumerable diseases compelling it to lie upon the bed of suffering. Men who are intoxicated with the wine of self-contemplation prevent the wise Physician from reaching it. Thus have they made themselves and the world to suffer. They know not the ailment nor recognize the cure. They take the wrong for the right, the crooked for the straight, the enemy for the friend.

Hearken ye to the melody of this Prisoner! Stand up and proclaim! Perchance those who are asleep may awaken! Say, O ye dead ones! The generous Hand of the Almighty is passing around the Water of Eternal Life. Hasten ye and drink! Whosoever becomes alive in this day shall never die, and whosoever dies in this day can never find Life.¹

Ye have written regarding the language: Both Persian and Arabic are good, for that which one desires to gain from language is to attain to the meanings of the speaker and this can be accomplished in both. As in this day the Sun of Wisdom has appeared and shone forth from the horizon of Persia, the more you respect this language the better it is.

O Friend! When the Primal Word appeared in these latter days, a number of the heavenly souls heard the Melody of the Beloved and hastened toward it, while others finding that the deeds of some did not correspond with their words, were prevented from the splendours of the Sun of Knowledge.

Say, O ye sons of earth! The Pure God proclaims that which in this glorious day shall purify you [I:1:7] from the stains of desire and enable you to attain to tranquillity in My straight path

¹ A newer translation of this and the previous paragraph is to be found in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Section CVI.

and My manifest road. To be severed from attachment means to be separated from those things which occasion loss and lessen the grandeur of man. If the people of the world should attain to the Heavenly Utterances they would never be prevented from the Ocean of Divine Generosity.

The heaven of righteousness has no Star, and never shall have one, brighter than this. The first Utterance of the Wise One is this: O ye Sons of Earth! Turn from the night of foreignness to the shining of the Sun of Unity. This is that which shall benefit the people of the world more than aught else.

O Friend! The Tree of the Word has no better Blossom and the Ocean of Wisdom shall never have a brighter Pearl than this: O ye Sons of Intelligence! The thin eyelid prevents the eye from seeing the world and what is contained therein. Then think of the result when the curtain of greed covers the sight of the heart.

Say, O People! The darkness of greed and envy obscures the light of the soul as the cloud prevents the penetration of the sun's rays. Should one listen with the ear of intelligence to this Utterance, he shall spread the wings of freedom and soar with great joy toward the heaven of understanding.

When the world was environed with darkness, the Sea of Generosity was set in motion and Divine Illumination appeared so that the deeds were disclosed. This is the same illumination which is promised in the heavenly books. Should the Almighty desire the hearts of the people of the world, He will purify and sanctify them with the power of the Word, and will pour forth the Light of the Sun of Unity upon the souls to regenerate the world.

O People! The word must be demonstrated by the deed, for the righteous witness of the Word is action. The former without the latter shall not allay the thirst of the needy nor open the door of sight to the blind.

The Heavenly Wise One proclaimeth: A harsh word is like a sword, but gentle speech is like unto milk. The children of the world attain to knowledge and better themselves through this. The tongue of Wisdom says: Whosoever possesses Me [I:1:8] not, has nothing. Pass by whatever exists in this world and find Me. I am the Sun of Perception and the Ocean of Science. I revive the withered ones and quicken the dead. I am that Light which illumines the path of Insight. I am the Falcon of the Hand of the Almighty; I bear healing in My wings and teach the knowledge of soaring to the Heaven of Truth.

The Peerless Beloved says: The way of freedom is opened! Hasten ye! The Fountain of Knowledge is gushing! Drink ye! Say O friends! The Tabernacle of Oneness is raised; look not upon each other with the eye of strangeness. Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch.¹ Truly, I say, whatever lessens ignorance and increases knowledge, that has been, is and shall be accepted by the Creator.

Say, O People! Walk ye under the shade of the Tree of Righteousness; enter ye under the protection of the Tent of Unity. Say, O thou Possessor of Sight! The past is the mirror of the future; look and perceive. Perchance, after the acquirement of knowledge ye may know the Friend and attain to his good pleasure. Today the best fruit of Tree of Science and Knowledge is that which benefits mankind and improves his condition.

Say! the tongue is the witness of My Truth; do not pollute it with untruthfulness. The spirit is the treasury of My Mystery; do not deliver it into the hand of greed. It is hoped that in this Dawn the universe shall become illumined with the rays of the sun of understanding and knowledge, so that we may attain to the good pleasure of the Beloved and drink from the Ocean of Divine Recognition.

¹ According to Adib Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. 3, p. 270, this is the source of the *Ishráqát* passage.

O Friend! As there were few ears to hear, so for some time the Pen has been silent in its own chamber and to such a degree that silence has preceded utterance. Say, O People! Words are revealed according to capacity, so that the beginners may make progress. The milk must be given according to the measure, so that the babe of the world may enter into the realm of grandeur and be established in the Court of Unity.

O Friend! We have seen the pure ground and cast the seed of knowledge. Now it depends upon the rays of the sun whether it burns up or is caused to grow. Say, today, through the greatness [I:1:9] of the Peerless, Wise One, the Sun of Knowledge has appeared from behind the covering of the Spirit and all the birds of the meadow of oneness are intoxicated with the wine of Understanding and are commemorating the Name of the Beloved. Happy is the one who finds this and becomes immortal.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Chicago, Illinois, 8 September 1909.

I:1, 21 March 1910 [I:1:11]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

O ye friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful!

If it is your intention to have the general Convention in Chicago on the day of Naw-Rúz, so that delegates might be sent there from everywhere to deliberate and discuss matters pertaining to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, to proclaim the oneness of the kingdom of humanity, to explain the Divine Teachings and to elucidate and expound the Exhortations of the Blessed Perfection,—it is better to open this Convention during the Feast of Ridván; for the Feast of Ridván is greater and more important and the temperature at that time mild and balmy. Therefore, proclaim ye to all parts that all the delegates and friends gather in Chicago during that blessed day.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 24 February 1910, Washington, D.C.

I:3, 28 April 1910 [I:3:1]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Revealed and sent to all parts of the world.

HE IS GOD!¹

Praise be unto Thee, O my God! Thanks be unto Thee O my Beloved! Glory be unto Thee, O my Lord! for that which Thou hast bestowed, favoured, conferred and granted. For Thou hast chosen sincere servants from among Thy people to serve Thy Religion. Thou hast elected them to draw inspiration from Thy Manifest Light, attraction from Thy Luminous Beauty and to walk in Thy straight path. O my Lord! Verily the souls are heedless of Thy mentioning and hearts deprived of Thy love, the eyes veiled from beholding the Kingdom of Thy Beauty and the intellects wandering away from the Centre of Thy Glory, except those who are firm in Thy Covenant, free from dissension, attracting the rays of the Sun of Truth, detaching themselves from disharmony, arising in the service of Thy Cause amongst Thy people and exhilarated from the pure wine of Thy Kingdom. Bestow upon them unlimited blessing and creative good from the never-ending Bounty, and pour upon them with great abundance, from the Cloud of Thy Majesty, the rain of Thy Grace, the water of Thy Generosity and the Universal Favour.

¹ Huwa'lláh: "He is God" (Huwa + Alláh). Replacement phrase for the Islamic "There is none other God but God" (Lá iláha illá'lláh) in this dispensation (removal of the negation) (see Lawḥ-i-Salmán I). The command confirming the removal of the letter of negation, as described in the Tablet of Salmán I, is believed to be in the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, the Will and Testament of Bahá'u'lláh, that established the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and appointed its Centre, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

O Lord, suffer them to become the signs of Thy Guidance, the standards of the Realm of Might, the words of virtue, the army of the Supreme Concourse and the angels of heaven, so that through them the East and the West of the earth may become Illumined, Thy Name be mentioned in the North and South, that they may educate all races and communities and clothe them with the garment of the comely names and the perfect example in this realm of existence. [I:3:2]

O my Lord, reveal through them the ensign of Unity among mankind and the flag of Love between nations, so that multiplicities may converge into the centre of oneness and harmony, the veils of hatred be rent asunder, the conditions of discord pass away and enmity and rancour vanish from the world of man, So that after disunion the Beloved of Union shall unveil her countenance, animosity be changed into affection, the reign of faction and feud come to an end, and success and prosperity be attained.

O my Lord, strengthen their backs in their service, gird up their loins in their adoration, dilate their breasts with the light of Thy Knowledge, illumine the eyes by beholding Thy Face, gladden their spirits by the significances of thy Providence and purify their souls by the appearance of Thy Compassion. Verily Thou art the Merciful, the Clement, the Almighty, the Bestower, the Unconstrained! There is no God but Thee, the Giver, the Pardoner, the Hidden, the Manifest and the Source of Bounties!

O ye friends of God! Joy and happiness of the people of faithfulness consists in serving the Threshold of the Most High and turning their faces to the Kingdom of Abhá. The hope of the lovers is self-sacrifice, and the yearning of the longing ones is self-effacement and evanescence. For love is an irresistible power and an inextinguishable conflagration and the mirror of the love of God is the great martyrdom. Therefore, the sanctified souls and the Manifestations of God yearned for self-abnegation and attainment to the city of martyrdom. They gave up their lives, experienced exile and banishment, endured persecution and dire calamities, became subject to imprisonment and bondage and the targets of the arrows of oppression, and objects of the sword of malice. They did not complain, neither did they become disheartened. They drank the cup of martyrdom from the Hand of the Cup-Bearer of Providence, and tasted with the greatest joy the sweetness of annihilation. They found not a moment of rest. They sought not an instant of tranquillity. They withstood the persecution of [I:3:3] the enemies and became the centres of derision and scoffing of the people of envy. They sacrificed their homes and property and became homeless and wanderers. They experienced not one hour of safety, nor a day of repose of mind or body. This is the proof of the sincere lover and this is the evidence of the faithful friend. If it were not so every stranger would become a friend and the deprived one would become the confidant of the mysteries, the remote one would become the near one and the outcast would become the beloved. Consequently the Most Great Wisdom has ordained that the fire of tests shall rage and the rushing torrent of ordeals sweep tumultuously from the Mountain of Revelation, so that the untruthful may become distinguished from the truthful, the unrighteous be known from the righteous, the worshipper of self become separated from the worshipper of God, the good fruit be set apart from the evil fruit, the signs of light become manifest and the gloom of darkness be dispelled, the nightingale of trustworthiness sing the melody of love and the raven of oppression croak the discordant notes of error; the fertile soil become green and verdant and the barren ground produce its thorns and thistles; the attracted ones to the Breath of Abhá become firm and the follower of passion and desire turn away. This is the wisdom of trials and this is the cause of ordeals.

O ye friends of God! In these days the city of Tabríz has become red with the blood of mankind. Holy souls from among the believers of God sacrificed their lives in the path of Manifest Light. They hastened to the altar of love. Eyes are weeping on this account, hearts are burning for these events, lamentation and moaning is ascending to the apex of the

Supreme Concourse and great grief and intense mourning is experienced. It is the utmost yearning of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to drink from this cup of martyrdom and become exhilarated with the wine of sacrifice, so that the end of his life shall become the opening chapter of Divine Bounty. O my Lord, confer upon me that overflowing cup with the most great gift! Intoxicate me with that wine of the glorious favour and suffer me to partake of that food which cannot be tasted except by Thy [I:3:4] faithful servant. Crown my head with this refulgent diadem, cause my blood to be shed in Thy Cause, my body to be suspended between heaven and earth, this temple to be dismembered and its bones be disjoined by the arrows of the enemies.

O ye friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! In these days, through the happy circumstances and the confirmation of the Lord of the Supreme Heavens and the assistance of the Unseen Kingdom, the holy remains of His highness the Supreme (Báb) were transferred to the Mount of Carmel in Haifa in the present Tomb. Therefore, it is necessary for the believers to celebrate the occasion with joy and happiness. The believers in Tabríz became exhilarated with this cup and with the polo of magnanimity carried away the ball of service from the arena of the Cause. Perhaps later on the people of hatred and enmity, may calumniate and misrepresent the facts, stating that the blessed remains of the Báb are in some other place, or that a part of it is elsewhere. The friends of God must know that this is a pure falsehood, calumny and malicious slander. That blessed, crucified body is interred in its entirety on Mount Carmel, but the enemies will not rest quiet. It is certain that they will raise a clamour and claim that we stole that blessed body, or fraudulently transferred it or got hold of a part of it, or that the genii took it away from the firm ones. All these statements are fabrications and slanders. The whole truth is explained here. Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 3 March 1910.

I:3, 28 April 1910 [I:3:4]

Tablet extract

Extract from a recent Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

“The time has not yet arrived, even in those countries (America), to spread Tablets and Epistles with the utmost freedom, but it will soon come.”

I:3, 28 April 1910 [I:3:15]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, to the maid-servant of God who is firm in the Covenant, Mrs Corinne True (Upon her be Bahá'u'lláh!), Chicago, Illinois:

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter, dated 6 January 1910, was received with the enclosed papers.

Regarding the appointment of the time for the opening of the general convention in Chicago, this matter is already written about. Undoubtedly you have received it by this time. It was suggested to postpone the 20 March to the days of Ridván, in which the climate is temperate.

You have written regarding the election of delegates from among the Oriental Bahá'ís. The season for this work has not yet come. God willing, in its opportune time they will be sent.

Several plans and designs of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár have been received from America. Now the believers must display an endeavour so that the land may be bought in its entirety; then collect contributions for the building, and then they may think about the plans. So far the

means are lacking. I hope from the favour of the True One that sufficient and ample contribution may be gathered and afterward the best and most acceptable plans be decided upon.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá,

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 12 April 1910, Washington, D.C.

I:4, 17 May 1910 [I:4:7]

Second annual convention of Bahá'í Temple Unity¹

Prayer

A prayer read by Mr Mountfort Mills, 25 April 1910—it is identical except for capitalization to *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, pp. 2–3.

O my God! O my God! We are servants who have sincerely turned our faces unto Thy grand face, severed ourselves from all else save Thee in this great day and are assembled together in this glorious meeting, of one accord and desire, and unanimous in thought to promulgate Thy Word amid Thy creatures.

O my Lord! O my Lord! Suffer us to be signs of guidance, standards of Thy manifest Religion throughout the world, servants of Thy Great Covenant—O our exalted Lord!—appearances of Thy oneness in Thy Kingdom, the Abhá, and stars which dawn forth unto all regions.

O Lord! Make us as seas rolling with the waves of Thy great abundance, rivers flowing from the mountains of Thy glorious Kingdom, pure fruits on the tree of Thy illustrious Cause, plants refreshed and moved by the breeze of Thy gift in Thy wonderful vineyard.

O Lord! Cause our souls to depend upon the signs of Thy Oneness, our hearts to be dilated with the boun- [I:4:8] ties of Thy Singleness, so that we may become united as are ripples on a waving sea; become harmonized as are the rays which shine forth from a brilliant light; so that our thoughts, opinions and feelings become as one reality from which the spirit of accord may be diffused throughout all regions.

Verily Thou art the Beneficent, the Bestower! Verily Thou art the Giver, the Mighty, the Loving, the Merciful! [I:4:8]

Tablet

The following Tablet, sent by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for this Convention, was then read by Mrs Eva Webster Russell:

HE IS GOD!

Through his honour Dr Faríd,

To the beloved of God in America.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Praise be to God! The infinite bounty of God hath resuscitated the whole world, and the East and the West have come united with the bond of the summons of God.

Today the call of the Kingdom of God hath reached the hearing of the far and near of all the continents of the world and the standard of the solidarity of Mankind is held aloft by the grasp

¹ Extracts

of Divine Power.

The melody of the East has made joyous and happy the Western world, and the song of the West has penetrated the ears of the Eastern people.

From inception of the world until now there has been no uniting bond between Persia and America, and communication and correspondence never transpired between these two countries. Now consider what a joy and bliss have united these two regions in the shortest space of time! What a real and ideal tie hath bound these together! What spiritual communications have been revealed! And now is only the beginning of this early morn and this is only the result of the twilight preceding the dawn. Soon will the star of this unity shine forth and flood all the horizons with its light and perfect connection and real oneness be obtained in all the regions of the earth. But the speedy realization of these hopes is dependent upon this: That the beloved of God in the West shall arise in unison with perfect strength, girding the loins of endeavour in service and putting forth their greatest effort in the way of unity and love. They must not rest a moment nor take a breath of ease. Nay, rather, night and day must they be striving, working and serving! And with perfect severance, spirituality and the best intent and effort must they hasten to promulgate the Divine Teaching, and above all they must act according to the precepts and exhortations of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, for in this cycle of Bahá'u'lláh verbal confessions and acknowledgements, literal faith and certainty and external relations are of no avail. Nay, rather, the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful must manifest such attributes and ethical conduct as to embody and personify the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They must promulgate the law [I:4:9] of the Kingdom with deeds and not words. Thus may they become the quintessence of being, the signs of the Kingdom of God, standards of the Supreme Concourse. May ye be salutary water for the thirsty, an evidence of guidance for the seeker, protection and support for the helpless, a shelter and home for the wanderers, the treasury of the Kingdom for the poor; the source of hope and happiness for the disappointed; the remedy of the heart and soul for the ailing. May you manifest the utmost of kindness to the human race; to weep with him who mourneth and to laugh with him who rejoiceth; sympathizing with the helpless; in communion with the wanderer; a friend to the friend and foe.

O ye beloved of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! The beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful intend to found a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chicago. They have sent to us numerous plans, that one may be accepted and the edifice be built accordingly. Now the funds must be accumulated, the land entirely paid for and the necessary preparations for building made and then the accessory matters considered. Therefore, make ye an effort and show ye zeal that the price of the land be fully discharged and the means for the edifice procured.

The beloved in the East are striving with heart and soul to contribute to the best of their ability, although the internal conditions of Persia have, during the last few years, been exceedingly disturbed. This revolution affected all conditions and walks of life. There has been no agriculture, no trade and no commerce; nay, rather, in all the provinces there have been political disputes and quarrels between the two parties, namely, the nationalists and the constitutionalists. Thus, they have been wholly occupied with their own affairs. Notwithstanding this, they have striven to contribute to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chicago according to their best ability, and they will never be found wanting! If Persia should obtain order, the beloved there will make a worthy contribution.

And I supplicate the Kingdom of God to aid and confirm you.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Amín U. Faríd,¹ 18 March 1910.

I:4, 17 May 1910 [I:4:13]

“Mutual helpfulness—co-operation—confirmation”²

“Without the complete establishment of this divine principle in the hearts of the friends of God, nothing can be accomplished”

To his honour Amín,³ Tìhrán, Persia:

Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou spiritual Amín!

In all the world of creation all the existent beings are in the utmost connection. Through this connection, mutual helpfulness and co-operation is realized. This mutual helpfulness and co-operation is the origin of the conservation of the forces of life. If for one instant this mutual helpfulness and co-operation were cut off from the sources and realities of things, all the existent beings and things would be thrown into confusion and chaos, and be reduced to nothingness and annihilation.

For instance: From the breath of the animals a watery element, called hydrogen and carbon is exhaled, and this is the life principle of the vegetable kingdom. From the vegetable kingdom and the trees, a fiery element, called oxygen, is emitted and this becomes the cause of the maintenance of the life of the animal kingdom. In such a manner, mutual helpfulness and co-operation is realized continually between all the existent beings.

Likewise, the greatest inter-relation [I:4:14] and communication exists between the sons of men, without which peace, life and existence is entirely impossible. For a soul independent of all the other souls and without receiving assistance from other sources cannot live for the twinkling of an eye; nay, rather, he will become non-existent and reduced to nothingness; especially among the believers of God between whom material and spiritual communication is developed up to the highest point of perfection.

It is this real communication, the essential necessity and requirement of which is mutual helpfulness, co-operation and confirmation. Without the complete establishment of this divine principle in the hearts of the friends of God, nothing can be accomplished, for they are the hyacinths of one garden; the waves of one sea, the stars of one heaven and the rays of one sun. From every standpoint, the essential unity, the luminous unity, the religious unity and the material unity are founded and organized between them.

In these times the utmost hope and wish of the friends of the West is the erection of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, and in those regions the materials for construction and building are expensive and costly. A large sum of money is needed for the building of a residence; then how much more is needed for the foundation of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár which must be erected with the utmost splendour, beauty and magnificence!

Therefore, the friends of God must arise in every part of the world to raise contributions, and with their hearts and souls strive to gather these funds to be sent to the Occident that it may become known and evident throughout the universe that the Bahá’ís of the East and West are as members of one household and the children of the one Lord! The Turks and the Persian, the Pársí and the American, the Hindu and the African—all of them are one army and one cohort—and without any distinction they arise for the assistance and aid of each other.

¹ Dr Amínú’lláh Faríd.

² Version as per *Star of the West*, V:10, pp. 145–146.

³ One of the venerable teachers of the East.

This praiseworthy movement is beloved and accepted at the Threshold of the Forgiving Lord. Truly, I say, in the erection of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Ishqábád,¹ the friends of God have laid the foundation of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity and they worked nobly together until now, and it is nearly completed. Praise be to God, that at this moment from every country in the world, according to their various means, contributions are continually being sent toward the fund of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America.

Convey the gratitude of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to all the friends of God in this service.

In reality this magnanimity of the believers is worthy of great praise and thankfulness, for from Tíhrán, Khurásán, Shíráz, Jahrum, Işfahán, even from the towns and villages of Khurásán, Shíráz, and Yazd, contributions were sent. This donation in the path of the Orb of Regions is conducive of the happiness of the souls of the spiritual ones.

From the day of Adam until now such an event has never even been witnessed by man, that from the farthest country of Asia contributions were forwarded to the farthest country of America. From Rangoon, India, donations are sent to Chicago, and from Jahrum, a little village of Shíráz and Kheiról-Gora² of Tarshiz,³ [I:4:15] money is transmitted for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America. This is through the bounty and providence of the Blessed Perfection,⁴ the assistance and confirmation of the Sun of Truth, and the victory and triumph of the Luminary of Effulgence, who has united so marvellously the regions of the world together. Glory belongs to the Lord of Hosts! Sovereignty belongs to the Compassionate God! Power and Might belongs to the Living, Self-subsistent One who has united the people of the world and assembled them together like unto the brilliant stars of the horizon of adoration.

O my God! O my God! Favour belongs to Thee, Generosity belongs to Thee! Praise belongs to Thee and Glorification is Thine, for that which Thou hast bestowed upon these indigent ones, granted a refuge and asylum to these weak ones in the cave of Thy protection and preservation, assisted them in the service of Thy Cause and confirm them in the worship of Thy Exalted Threshold. O Lord! They have sacrificed their belongings and souls in Thy path, contributed for love of Thee and missed no chance or opportunity in spreading Thy Signs, diffusing Thy Word, promulgating Thy Name among Thy servants and proclaiming Thy wonders among Thy creatures!

Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty, the Most High, the Omnipresent; and verily Thou art the Clement and the Most Merciful!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 19 April 1910, Washington, D.C.

I:4, 17 May 1910 [I:4:15]

Extract from a tablet to his honour Ibn-i-Abhar⁵

Explain to the people the details of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chicago and tell them how contributions are received from the East and the West. For example, at this moment four contributions were received in one day from Rangoon, Bombay (India), Jahrum of Shíráz and Kheiról-Gora of Khurásán for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of America and were forwarded to their destination.

¹ In Russia.

² Khayru'l-Qurá ("best of villages"), a name given by Bahá'u'lláh to Zírak, a small village 13 km WSW Buşhrúyih.

³ Káshmar; formerly Turshíz (Torshiz), Turaythíth (Turaythith) or Sultánabád (Soltanabad); is a city (35.243022, 58.468591; 155 km SW Mashhad). See reference to Khayru'l-Qurá a few paragraphs below, I:4, p. 15.

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh.

⁵ Another of the venerable teachers of the East.

Truly, I say, the friends of God displayed wonderful generosity in regard to the contributions for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. They displayed magnanimity at any cost to such an extent that some of them sold portions of their clothing on the streets. This is through the Power of the Covenant of God, for until this day an event of this character has never transpired that from the East and Asia contributions were forwarded to the West for the building of a Temple. Verily this is a cause of astonishment for the people of perception.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 19 April 1910.

I:4, 17 May 1910 [I:4:20]

Prayer¹

Glory be to Thee, my God and my Beloved! Thy Fire is burning in me, O my Lord, and I feel its glowing in every member of my weak body. Every organ of my temple declares Thy Power and Thy Might, and every member testifies that Thou are powerful over all things. By Thy Strength I feel strong to withstand all trials and all temptations. Make firm Thy love in my heart and then I can bear all the swords of the earth. Verily every hair of my head says, "were it not for trials in Thy Path, I should not have appreciated Thy Love." O my Lord, strengthen me to remain firm and to uphold they hands of Thy Cause, to serve Thee among Thy people. Thou art loving! Thou art Bountiful!²

I:4, 17 May 1910 [I:4:21]

"Words" of Bahá'u'lláh³

O ye discerning ones of the people! Verily the Words which have descended from the Heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences and welcome all the with the light of Oneness. Be the cause of comfort and promotion of humanity. This handful of dust, the world, is one home; let it be in unity. forsake pride, it is the cause of discord. Follow that which tends to harmony.

I:4, 17 May 1910 [I:4:24]

Prayer⁴

The convention closed by all of the delegates and friends joining hands and facing the East, while Mr Hall read the following, which was revealed as a closing prayer for the House of Spirituality:

HE IS GOD!

O God O God! Thou dost look upon us from Thine unseen Kingdom of Oneness, [beholding] that we have assembled in this Spiritual Meeting, believing in Thee, confident in Thy signs, firm in Thy Covenant and Testament, attracted unto Thee, set aglow with the fire of Thy love, sincere in Thy Cause, servants in Thy vineyard, spreaders of Thy Religion, worshippers of Thy Countenance, humble to Thy beloved, submissive at Thy door and imploring Thee to confirm us in the service of Thy chosen ones. Support us with Thine unseen hosts, strengthen our loins in Thy servitude and make us submissive and worshipping servants, communing with Thee.

O our Lord! We are weak and Thou are the Mighty, the Powerful! We are mortals and

¹ Prayer read at the opening of the convention session on Tuesday 26 April 1910.

² Author unknown.

³ The passage is said to be an extract from Bahá'u'lláh's *Words of Wisdom*, but it does not correspond to the text as printed in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Aqdas*. Similar words are to be found in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 37.

⁴ A different translation is in *Bahá'í Prayers*, US edition, pp. 139–40.

Thou art the great life-giving Spirit! We are needy and Thou art the Powerful and Sustainer!

O our Lord! Turn our faces unto Thy divine face; feed us from Thy heavenly table by Thy godly grace; help us through the hosts of Thy supreme angels and confirm us by the holy ones of the Kingdom of Abhá.

Verily Thou art the Generous, the Merciful! Thou art possessor of great bounty and verily Thou art the Clement and Gracious!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:5, 5 June 1910 [I:5:1]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

HE IS GOD!

O ye Spiritual Friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

How long are ye silent and speechless! Although ye are speaking, yet in this age the speech of the believers of God must be the soul entrancing melody of the Kingdom of 'Abhá and the harmony of the Supreme Concourse! Therefore 'Abdu'l-Bahá is not satisfied with a meek voice and depressing lamentation! He seeks the passionate tumult and joyous clamour and he roars and cries at the top of his voice so that the realities of things may stir into movement and action and the Beloved of Bounty unveil her Countenance in the world of creation! Those friends must, like unto the stars in heaven, shine and gleam in the horizon of Truth with the Light of Guidance so that the realities of the existent beings and the spirit of humankind may find joy and happiness!

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 27 May 1910.

I:5, 5 June 1910 [I:5:3]

School of Tarbíyat

As to the School of Tarbíyat, the following Tablets have been revealed:

There exists a great Confirmation in the School of Tarbíyat which is founded by the friends. Although at this moment it is observed but by a few, yet it is assisted by the Almighty. If the believers of God display generosity, that school will progress day by day in all its grades. Encouragement and stimulus is necessary.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The problem of the School of Tarbíyat is of the utmost importance. It is an essential obligation and duty incumbent upon all the friends to serve that school. This is, the first school that the friends have founded in Persia, and all the people know that it belongs to them. Neglect and carelessness in the management of its progressive affairs is a blow to the Cause of God. Therefore everyone must give extraordinary importance to the school of Tarbíyat and assist it from some standpoint either through enlightened ideals or the introduction of modern system of education, either by liberal contributions or continual encouragement and assistance. To be brief: It is the hope of this Servant that in the course of time this school become distinguished from among all the schools of the world. Now consider how important is this matter.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The question of the School of Tarbíyat is very important. Through the Bounty and Providence of the True One it must become evident to all that it is the first school of Persia and its graduates are the most successful. Otherwise its non-being is better than its being. Therefore display the utmost zeal in matters pertaining to the progress of this school.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Society has received the approval of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the following Tablets having been revealed recently, addressed to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and to the officers of the Society respectively:

To his honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

In the last two mails detailed answers have been written to thee. Now the papers that you have forwarded pertaining to the Persian-American Educational Society have been received. Truly I say, although the importance of this Society at present, is apparently unknown, but if it remain firm and steadfast in the future it will become the Association of the union of the realm of man, it will thoroughly combine and harmonize the East and the West and accomplish a great service to humanity. ... [1:5:4]

The believers of God must give great importance to this Society and arise to perform its fundamental principles and essential duties with heart and soul. I send my congratulation and felicitation to this blessed Society and ask from the bounty of His Highness the Incomparable confirmation and assistance, supplicate and entreat at the Threshold of Oneness and beg from the Kingdom of Abhá preservation and protection, providence and safety. If this Society acts with independence and exerts itself in bringing about relations between the East and the West, it will become the foundation of the oneness of the world of humanity. Firmness is essential, for if small affairs can not be accomplished without firmness and steadfastness, how much more are these qualities needed for the undertaking of great matters! The friends of God must encourage each other to be firm and steadfast, to reason and consult with each other so that day by day this Society will progress.

Persia and America are in great need of such a Society, even to matters pertaining to material relations between these two Countries, especially America. This Society will become the cause of spreading the American industries in Persia and the great profits, which in the past other nations have collected through the introduction of their goods and implements in Persia, will then go to America. Now consider thou, what great profits will be the result! Moreover the spiritual powers will assist and help, the Breaths of the Holy Spirit will be spread, the Breezes of the Paradise of Abhá diffused and the rays of the Sun of Truth will display wonderful influence.

Convey, on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to all the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful in America the wonderful greeting of Abhá and congratulate and felicitate them for the organization of this Society.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Revealed in Haifa, Syria, 1 April 1910. Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 15 May 1910.

I:5, 5 June 1910 [I:5:4]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To the Officers of the Persian-American Educational Society, through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.
Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye who are favoured in the Threshold of the Almighty and the lovers of His Holiness,
Bahá’u’lláh!

According to the reports of his honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, in these days the Persian-American Educational Society is organized in America and the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful with the utmost zeal and enthusiasm are engaged in the solidarity of this Society. If possible, change the name of this Society to Persian-American Interdependence Society so that in the future it may include all points, such as commerce, industry and education so that spiritual and material results and benefits might be produced. Now in the beginning it may find no im- [I:5:5] portance in the eyes of some of the people but in the future it will attain to world-wide celebrity and it will indicate that—Praise be to God—at this early period the friends have directed their thoughts to this most important subject. Should the circle of this Society be widely extended and its various branches well organized and systematized it will remain firm and become established and if its members arise with perfect unity and agreement, know ye of a certainty that at the end it will become the greatest Society of the world, produce inexhaustible results and benefits, become the tree of the oneness of the realm of humanity and cast its all-encircling shade over the people of the East and the West. But firmness and firmness, steadfastness and steadfastness is necessary. This Society must be so organized and in the course of time its various policies so well defined, that since the beginning of the world until now no such association has ever been founded. This must become the first society embracing such universal aims and objects. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with the utmost supplication and contemplation towards the Kingdom of Abhá, prays in your behalf and begs confirmation and assistance.

Blessed is the Oriental-Occidental Interdependence Society! If it is organized in a befitting manner it will be productive of great results; otherwise it will be fruitless and profitless.

Long live this Society! Long live this Society! Undoubtedly at the beginning of every month a report of this Society should be sent to this Holy Land.

O Thou Almighty! Illumine Thou this Association and make Thou this gathering the bright candle of the world! For their intention is for the public good and their aim is Service to humankind.

O kind and compassionate God! Such a Society merits Thy Favours and such a Body deserves inexhaustible Bounty and Providence.

Verily, Thou art Powerful, Mighty and Omnipotent and, verily, Thou art the Peerless and Incomparable God!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Revealed in Haifa, Syria, 1 April 1910. Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 15 May 1910.

I:5, 5 June 1910 [I:5:9]

“I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to

His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate.”¹

[In relation to the death of one of the friends, the following words from Bahá'u'lláh's *Lawḥ-i-'Abdu'l-Vahháb* are cited. This corresponds to *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Section LXXXI, although this is an earlier translation.]

But concerning that which you asked about the spirit and its everlastingness after its ascension, know that it will ascend at the time of its departure until [I:5:10] it enters the Presence of God in a form which, throughout all centuries, times and throughout all circumstances and events of the world, will remain unchanged, but will be everlasting as the perpetuity of the Kingdom of God, His Sovereignty, His Power and His Might, and from it will appear the traces of God, His Qualities, Providences and Favours. The Pen cannot move at the mentioning of this Station as it is in its Supremeness and Exaltation!

The hand of the Divine Bounty will cause it to enter into a Station that cannot be comprehended by expression, nor be explained by all the creatures of the existence. Blessing be upon the spirit who departed from the body purified from the doubts and superstitions of the nations! Verily, it moves in the atmosphere of God's desire and enters into the Supreme Paradise! All the angels of the Supreme Paradise attend and surround it, and it will have fellowship with all the Prophets of God and His saints and speak with them and tell them what happened to it in the Cause of God, the Lord of the Universe!

If anyone could realize what hath been assigned for it in the Kingdom of God, the Lord of the Throne and the dust, he would immediately yearn with a great longing for that Unmovable, Exalted, Holy and Abhá Station!

I:5, 5 June 1910 [I:5:10]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá²

Through his honour Mirza Ahmad, to Mrs Louise R. Waite,³ Chicago, Illinois.

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was considered. On account of the lack of time, a brief answer is given.

The Spiritual Assemblies which are organized for the sake of teaching the Truth, whether assemblies for men, assemblies for women or mixed assemblies, are all accepted and are conducive to the spreading of the Fragrances of God. This is essential. Likewise the public meeting in which, one day during the week, the believers gather, to [I:5:11] be engaged in the commemoration of God, to read communions and deliver effective speeches, is acceptable and beloved. But now it is utterly impossible to establish the House of Justice, which is mentioned in the Book of Aqdas; nay, rather, it is impracticable and not to be thought of. That is for the time when the Cause is proclaimed and the Commands of God have become effective. Therefore, now is not the time for the House of Justice, which must be established by general election. Its mention is not permissible and its realization impossible.

Endeavour ye as much as possible that differences may not arise in the affairs; let not every insignificant matter become the cause of disagreement. If such a condition exists, the end will be complete dispersion.

The believers and the maid-servants of the Merciful must all consider how to produce

¹ Replaced with text from Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 65.

² The tablet below is also found in *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 411, but the latter has had considerable stylistic revisions.

³ Louise Dunn (1866–1939); used the name Louise Robinson Spencer from the 1890s; was a poet, composer of music and songs, and writer; who received 41 Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She married Edger F. Waite (d. 1931) in 1902. Named *Shahnáz* ("sweet music") *Khánum* by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and called a "sweet singing bird" and a "nightingale".

harmony, so that the unity of the human world may be realized; not that every wholly unimportant subject become conducive to differences of opinion. It is my hope that the friends and maid-servants of America become united on all subjects and not disagree at all, for disagreement destroys the foundation of the Cause of God. If they agree upon a subject, even though it be wrong, it is better than to disagree and be in the right. For this difference will produce demolition of the Divine foundation. Though one of the parties may be in the right and they disagree, that will be the cause of a thousand wrongs; but if they agree and both parties are in the wrong, as it is unity, the truth will be revealed and the wrong made right.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 20 April 1910.

I:6, 24 June 1910 [I:6:1]

HE IS GOD!

O ye merciful friends and the respected spiritual maid-servants!

Your blessed photograph¹ was received and studied. It imparted unmeasurable happiness. Praise be to God! that the faces are illumined, the hearts [I:6:2] are the rose-gardens of the love of God and the spirits are rejoiced through the divine Glad-tidings. Thank ye God that ye have assembled your likenesses upon one page. All of you are the sons and daughters of the Kingdom, are in perfect harmony and united, attracted and enkindled.

Just as these bodies are assembled together, so the hearts are attuned with the music of heaven and the souls enraptured with the melody of Truth. Ye are all waves of one sea, rays of one sun, trees of one orchard and flowers of one garden. The power of the Kingdom hath assembled you together, and I hope that you may become assisted in such wise as to raise the canopy of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity, to unfurl the banner of love and kindness among the sons of men, to perfume the nostrils with the Fragrances of the Paradise of Abhá and to illumine the hearts of the people of the world with the splendours of the Sun of Truth. Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 28 February 1910, Washington, D.C.

I:6, 24 June 1910 [I:6:2]

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab to the friends of Buffalo, N.Y.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Your brief and interesting letter was perused. Although it was brief, yet in reality it was a detailed book. Every word was a letter, for it contained the oneness of the realm of humanity, and it was a proof of the oneness and concord among the friends and maid-servants of God. Today all the communities of the world are engaged in fighting and quarrelling with each other. There is a religious strife, a sectarian strife, racial bias, patriotism, political contentions, commercial competition, industrial rivalry and a battle to defend their honour.

In reality these strifes are continual, and there is no cessation or interruption thereto. Now consider ye with what power and strength, love and devotion, union and harmony, happiness

¹ Refers to photograph placed above the passage taken of the committee gathered to examine the plans submitted by architects for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, at the residence of Mrs Corinne True, Chicago, 1 August 1909.

and joy [I:6:3] the friends of God must arise, so that they may reconcile and crystallize together these different fighting and quarrelling communities. Were it not for the confirmations of the Word of God the realization of these facts would have been impossible and improbable. But the confirmation of the Kingdom of God, the penetration of the Word of God, the illumination of the Divine Teachings, the instructions and advices of Bahá'u'lláh will solve these problems and ere long the Tabernacle of the Oneness of humanity will be raised in all regions, the beloved will find great rejoicing and beatitude and like unto the luminous stars they will shine from the horizon of sanctity.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 4 May 1910.

I:6, 24 June 1910 [I:6:3]

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, to the Bahá'í Assembly of Cleveland, Ohio.

HE IS GOD.

O ye brothers and sisters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

Your letter was received. The meeting which was established in the home of Dr Pauline was an illumined gathering and merciful assembly. Should ye remain firm and steadfast, know ye of a certainty that ye will be assisted by the help of the Kingdom of Abhá and confirmed in the service in the Realm of Truth, for through the power of the Word of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit the universal forces of the angels of heaven are drawn in battle array on the plain of the Supreme Apex and are expecting to assist and make victorious that soul who is hastening toward the field of the Kingdom.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 4 May 1910.

I:6, 24 June 1910 [I:6:4]

Through Mirza Ahmad, to the friends and maidservants of God, Sandusky, Ohio.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye who are favoured in the Threshold of the Almighty!

Your letter was a rose-garden of significances and from it the fragrance of the Love of God was exhaled. The friends can talk with each other without the lips or tongue, and without the assistance of pen, ink and paper they correspond with each other In the world of heart and spirit. Your brief letter was an indication of those detailed letters. It was the essence of truths and contained innumerable meanings. Therefore, in reality I read in your letter a book, and I felt that all of you are illumined by the light of guidance, are soaring in the infinite sphere of the love of God, like unto the birds singing wonderful melodies in this rose-garden and like unto the nightingale chanting harmonious songs and music. We expect that day after day this melody will become sweeter, this symphony more wonderful and this song more exquisite. It is assured that the confirmations of God will assist that gathering to progress; the boundless gifts will increase and illumine all with the light of guidance.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 4 May 1910.

I:6, 24 June 1910 [I:6:4]

Extracts from a Tablet to a Californian believer¹

HE IS GOD!

I beg of God that the means of thy composure may be brought about, that thou mayest be released from the fetters of this world, become a nightingale, be freed from the cage of the attachment of this earth and soar heavenward in the atmosphere of joy.

Regarding the use of liquors: According to the texts of the *Book of Aqdas*, both light and strong drinks are prohibited. The reason for this prohibition is that it leads the mind astray and is the cause of weakening the body. If alcohol were [I:6:5] beneficial, it would have been brought into the world by the divine creation and not by the effort of man. Whatever is beneficial for man exists in creation. Now, it has been proved and is established medically and scientifically that liquors are harmful.

Therefore the meaning of that which is written in the Tablets: “I have chosen for thee whatsoever is in the heaven and earth”, signifies those things which are according to the divine creation and not the things which are harmful. For instance, poison is one of the things: now, can we say that poisons are to be used habitually because God has created them for man? However, spirituous liquors, if prescribed by a physician for the patient and their use is necessary, then they may be used as directed.

In brief, I hope that thou mayest find eternal bliss and receive inexhaustible joy and happiness. The after effect of drinking is depression, but the wine of the Love of God bestows exaltation of the spirit.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:6, 24 June 1910 [I:6:5]

HE IS GOD!

O thou seeker after the knowledge of numbers!

Thy letter was received. The science of numbers is one of the common sciences, but the aim of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is, that the Heavenly Knowledge and Divine Wisdom encircle the world of existence.

Shouldst thou desire to become my pupil thou must acquire the Mysteries of God and attain to the Knowledges and Sciences of the Kingdom—for they are the cause of the life of the world and the salvation of humanity.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 27 May 1910.

I:7, 13 July 1910 [I:7:1]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the believers of God in Persia

Upon them be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

¹ This tablet is printed in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II (The Prohibition of Intoxication), pp. 246–7, but in a different translation

O God! O God! Verily, verily the reality of Thy Oneness is sanctified above ascent or descent, and the Sun of Thy Singleness is holy above appearance or disappearance. Thou hast been in the mystery of Thine Identity and the eternity of Thine Existence; moving in the exaltation of Thy Sanctity and the loftiness of Thy Purity. The souls who penetrate through the facts of life cannot know Thee, and the minds which are imbued with the subtleties of the universe do not apprehend Thee. Far from the spiders of imagination to weave the web of their weak thoughts in the imperial palaces of Thy Knowledge, and far from the birds of understanding to attempt soaring with their broken wings toward the golden apex of Thine Explanation! Verily, all the wings of effort are broken and will not reach the glorious heaven of Thy Singleness. The intellects are bewildered and if they cannot comprehend one verse of the verses of Thine Omnipotence, how then can they perceive Thy Reality which surrounds all things and is not surrounded! Thy Holy and Sanctified Identity is beyond the knowledge of the wisest and mightiest in the world of emanation!

O Lord! O Lord! Deliver the souls from the superstitions, that they may not imagine any disappearance for Thy Lights, any setting for Thy Luminary, any descent for Thy Reality, and any ascent for Thy Identity. For verily Thou art above all these qualifications and beyond all these attributes. Thou hast been and forever shalt be in Thine Inaccessible Station and Thine Unattainable Position. The road is barred and the path is closed. Thy Proof is Thy Verses and Thy Path is Thy Dominion. [I:7:2]

O Lord! O Lord! These souls are righteous, their hearts attracted, their minds enkindled their ears opened, their eyes seeing, their spirits rejoiced, their breasts dilated, their realities contented, their identities, satisfied and their hearts attentive. They are supplicating toward Thee, turning their faces to Thee, and begging for Thy Mercy.

O Lord! O Lord! Enkindle their lamps, ignite their torches, uplift their waves and open to them the Door of Bounty.

O Lord! Adorn their gardens, beautify their orchards, illumine their faces, confirm their words, hoist their ensigns, commemorate their names, perfect their morals, cleanse their hearts, purify their breasts and glorify their countenances; so that the manifest light may be seen upon their brow, and the Bloom of Paradise in their faces. Verily, Thou art the Merciful, Thou art the Clement, the Compassionate and the Ancient!

O ye friends of God! The waves of confirmations are successive and the hosts of assistance are drawn in battle array. The armies of the Kingdom of Abhá, like unto the waves of the Supreme Concourse, are tumultuous, and the Breezes of Providence wafting from the direction of Grace, rejuvenate with new life every faded and withered soul. The trees of the Garden of the Covenant are stirred into the utmost cheerfulness and the fruits of the Orchard of the Testament have reached the stage of perfection, sweetness and delicacy. The Majestic Palm produces luscious dates, and the Luminous Star shines with infinite brightness. The Zephyrs of the City of God bestow eternal life, and the Divine Wisdom grants spiritual insight. The Bounties of God are perfected on every side, and the Favours of the Most High have encircled all. Blessed are you!—and again, blessed are you!—for you have become the object of the Bestowals of the Beauty of Abhá and the Centre of the Revelations of the Mysteries of the Supreme Concourse.

His honour Amín¹ has given the utmost praise [I:7:3] and commendation on behalf of all, saying that—Praise be to God!—all the friends in all parts of Persia are firm in the Covenant, have taken hold of the Testament of His Highness the Merciful; their minds are full of acclamations, their faces illumined, their hearts aspiring and their spirits soaring toward the Realm of Truth, their souls full of glad-tidings and their consciences in infinite happiness. Day

¹ Amín is one of the old, venerable, sanctified teachers of Persia.—Translator.

and night they are engaged in spreading the fragrances, and morning and evening they deliver the Word of God. They are the Signs of Oneness and the Tokens of the Bounties of the Glorious Lord. They are the bright lamps and incontrovertible proofs. They are the horizons of knowledge and the hosts of the Supreme Concourse. In reality he has given the greatest praise and glorification. On account of this news great happiness was produced in the hearts of the believers, and all are expressing their most wonderful glad-tidings.

I beg of God, that day by day this Fire may consume the world, and this Flame enkindle the earth; this Favour become all-surrounding and this Path straight. Cast ye into oblivion all signs of attachment and impurity so that all the regions may become sanctified and purified and all the dawning-places shining and illumined. Then the Paradise of Abhá will be established in the East and in the West, the glorious outpouring of the Majestic Lord, become universal, the principles of the Cause produce results and the structure of the Revelation of Truth reach to the Mansions of the Supreme Heights.

Upon ye be Glory!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, especially for the *Bahai News*, Washington, D.C., 17 June 1910.

I:7, 13 July 1910 [I:7:9]

That all may be informed as to what is intended for this institution,¹ we quote the following from a Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

I am hopeful by divine bounty and grace that the beloved ones of God may be confirmed in the building of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* and all its accessories, for the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* has important accessories which are accounted of the basic foundations. These are: School for orphan children Hospital and Dispensary for the poor: Place for the incapable: i.e., (Home for the cripple); College for the Higher Scientific Education.

The meaning is this, that in every place:

First a *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* must be founded.

Then a School for the Education of orphan children and the poor.

Then the Hospital and Medical Dispensary must be founded.

Then the home of the Cripple.

Then the College of Higher Scientific Education. [I:7:10]

In every city a great *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* must be founded after this order.

Now we hope the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* may be founded in Chicago. After its foundation the important accessories may gradually be founded.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:8, 1 August 1910 [I:8:1]

Four talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the Editors of the *Bahai News*:

Mírzá Munírih Zayn has sent me notes taken in Persian and then translated, from four of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks given while Mr Struven and I were in Haifa. [I:8:2] I am enclosing them to you, knowing they will be of value to you in your work.

¹ The *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*.

Talk No. 1 was given shortly after our arrival in Haifa.

Talk No. 2 was given at a feast which 'Abdu'l-Bahá spread in his home, at which there was gathered a throng of believers from many countries and of various religious faiths.

Talk No. 3 was given upon a most memorable occasion, the 68th anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb. (According to solar reckoning 23 May of the present year was the 66th anniversary of this event, but according to lunar reckoning—still used in some of the Oriental countries—15 May of this present year was the 68th anniversary.)

At an early hour of the day the believers from Haifa and the visiting pilgrims went up to the hospice, situated near the Tomb of the Báb, upon the Mount of Carmel. When the feast was prepared 'Abdu'l-Bahá served us as we were seated about the table which had twenty-four places. There was a second service and also a third, there being between sixty and seventy present. After all had been served then he, himself, partook of food. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the material food he made the enclosed brief but soul sustaining address. It was the most impressive meal that one could possibly imagine. Any description of mine would not give any idea of the spirit manifested. Not only were there the many mentioned pilgrims present, but also a number of those old and faithful servants of the Cause—men who have done pioneer work in Persia and in neighbouring lands—men who have suffered for the faith in prisons and in exile, and who now are spending the evening of life serving in the shadow of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In the late afternoon the friends assembled before the door of the Tomb. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was there. All entered the outer chamber and stood facing the door of the inner chamber while he chanted two tablets. All stood save one, for whom a chair had been placed, Áqá Siyyid Taqí, the aged Afnán who was assisted into the building, tenderly supported upon one side by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and upon the other by our good brother, Howard Struven.

Directly over the Tomb hangs a nine-branch candelabra and in this we were permitted to place lighted candles. In the night Howard and I again climbed the mountain a second time. The candles were still burning, and we had a quiet hour of prayer there together, remembering in our supplications the friends in the many assemblies and lands visited on our long journey, and thanking God for His wonderful bounties and blessings.

Talk No. 4 was given as 'Abdu'l-Bahá was giving us his parting blessing. I assure you it was with joyful yet serious hearts that we left him to return to America. He had filled our souls with his wonderful spirit of love and we were anxious to be away and serving as he directed.

Yours In His service,
Charles Mason Remey. [I:8:3]

Talk No. 1—Haifa, 10 May 1910

Concerning the death of King Edward of England, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "The English king, with his pomp and grandeur, used to address the sun and say: 'Thou dost never disappear from my lands' ...; but now he is buried under the earth. Some time ago the flags at the top of the masts proclaimed the day of his ascension to the throne; but today the flags are at half-mast, for he is dead. The flags and banners of the Beloved are ever waving at the top of the masts; they are never inverted; nay, rather, they go on higher day by day; in fact, theirs is the sovereignty. Without fighting forces they conquer the cities; and without and without taking any tribute they bestow and give freely. The kings gain their victory through bloodshed and the taking of life; whereas the Beloved of God confer life and are victorious. The sovereignty of the friends is an eternal one."

Concerning the trials and hardships, ordeals and oppressions which befell the beloved of God in Persia, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: 'In America the people shall also thus serve you a little; they shall not permit you to escape and you cannot get rid of them.'

We spoke about the inhabitants of Honolulu; that many nationalities are there represented and yet all are in great harmony. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Time and place play a great influence over the conditions; when in a certain place some strangers meet, necessity requires that they should be in harmony; but our purpose is this, that the divine unity and concord may become well established among all the nations, so that they may become as one spirit in different bodies; the drops of one ocean; the fruits of one tree and the rays of the same sun. In America, when the different people united together they were enabled to drive away the English government and establish a new government for themselves. Consider how great is the result of unity and harmony! There has never been any action performed nor any philanthropic deed achieved except through unity and concord; disagreement and dissension have always been the means of evil and corruption.” [I:8:4]

“Animals are of two kinds, one the grazing and domestic; the other the wild and ferocious. If the wild beasts are near each other for ten years, still, as soon as they find an opportunity they attack and tear one another to pieces; whereas the tame creatures show their kind feelings toward each other. ... The beloved of God are like the blessed birds; they are kind and merciful.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said a contribution had been sent from Persia for the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in Chicago and we should take the sum with us to the United States. Mr Struven said that since contributions had come from the East to the West, we had felt ashamed of ourselves. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “You should never be ashamed; nay, rather, you must be very happy in realizing the power of the Word of God, which has enabled the beloved to send contributions from small villages of Persia.”

“Some time ago, a few souls in America expressed their wish for a journey to Persia, but I told them to defer this undertaking for a while. Now the time has come; they can go in these days, as there is no danger now.”

“As you both have been together during this long tour, I hope that you shall be together also on your journey to Persia in the future.”

Concerning the many Assemblies in America, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “These centres must have a complete connection and a firm union with each other, just as all the various Assemblies in Persia. Rest assured, all this shall come to pass.”

“Now is the commencement of the daybreak and the radiant morn is approaching. Consider the trees yonder; as soon as they peep out of the earth they receive the bounty of the sun, the shower of mercy and the gift of breeze. Although the same bounties are being bestowed upon them when they bring forth leaves, blossoms and fruit, still, there is a great difference between this state and that of the former one.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked Mr Remey if he remembered the few Persian words he had learned, and then he said: “The beloved of God are endowed with a particular language through which they express [I:8:5] their feelings and converse with one another. The sun speaks to the existing beings, the cloud communicates with the earth and the gentle breeze whispers to the trees.”

“The assistance and confirmations of God which shall attend you in the future will be so great and magnificent that when compared with those already experienced will make them seem very little.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “The two words, East and West, are imaginary words; there is no East and there is no West.”

Talk No. 2—Haifa, 13 May 1910

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke these words to a number of Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian and Muslim

Bahá'ís seated around his table and while serving them all.

“Among the human race, the bonds of and means for love are numerous, for man cannot live without it; nay, rather, human life is dependent upon friendship and affection. Both the material and intrinsic development of man are conditional upon amity and love and the greatest honour and pleasure in the human world is love; but the ways and means are different. Sometimes the cause of love is simply relationship and kinship; and sometimes it is a racial bond, patriotism, political affairs, etc. But, through all these various bonds and means it is impossible to obtain a real and pure love; it is rather superficial and temporary. Such love may easily be changed into enmity and rancour, for it is affected by the slightest manifestation of hostility; whereas a true and ideal love is faith and assurance. Those who believe in God and are confident in His Word shall enter the Kingdom, and the essential oneness appears among them to such an extent that all become the drops of one ocean, the rays of one sun, the fishes of one sea, the trees of one garden, the birds of one orchard, the candles of one assembly and the stars of the same heaven. Such love is real; there is no interruption for this connection, nor any separation for this union: this foundation shall never [I:8:6] be destroyed, for it is eternal: hence it is established that the love which exists among the beloved of God is everlasting, for it is a Divine bounty, a Godly appearance, a melody of the Kingdom and a heavenly cohesion.

“In the Qur’án it is said: ‘They love Him and He loves them’—i.e., the bounty of love is one of the Divine bounties which comes to man from God; just as the sun when it sends its rays to the mirrors and thereby the mirrors are illumined; this effulgence and splendour are from the bounty of the sun. Therefore, this love which is among the beloved is a Divine bounty, a Godly splendour, an eternal manifestation and the power of Divinity; it is perpetual.

“Praise be to God! Ye are gathered here under the shadow of the Blessed Beauty and your hearts are overflowing with His love, your souls are rejoicing in His favours and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is serving you. What more do you need?”

Talk No. 3—Haifa, 15 May 1910

Uttered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the day of the annual celebration of the Báb’s Declaration, held on Mount Carmel, when representatives of all different religions, such as Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian and Muslim Bahá’ís were seated around the table and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was serving them all personally:

“There are different gatherings and various meetings held in the world which apparently are in the utmost degree of arrangement and order; in the palaces of the kings many feasts and banquets are held which are incomparable and peerless; also, in the castles of the opulent ones great entertainments are presented and various kinds of foods and victuals are served; the singing of melodious tunes and playing of musical instruments exhilarate and deeply affect the concourse. Associations for political affairs are formed and convivial banquets for pleasure and gratification are offered: assemblages for exhibition of arts and sciences, literature and acquirements are established: meetings for the promotion of industry and commercial matters are being [I:8:7] held; extraordinary conventions and religious congresses are arranged. But all these assemblages and different gatherings are not to be compared with and equal to this, our meeting. Although from those gatherings and conferences certain results and effects are produced which render great service to the human world and make mankind progress and develop on the plane of civilization, promulgate the attributes and virtues of the world of humanity; yet the results are limited, the fruits thereof are finite and the signs are bounded; whereas the traces, the lights and the results of this gathering are unlimited, boundless and infinite, for it is held on the Supreme Spot (the Tomb of the Báb) and under the shadow of the Blessed Beauty.

“This feast is one eternal! It has connection with and relation to the soul and body; it shall be continued everlastingly. At least an hundred thousand feasts shall follow this one. All the other gatherings shall be forgotten, whereas the commemoration and celebration of this meeting shall remain and be duly observed forever throughout endless ages; it is under the merciful glances of the Blessed Beauty.

“Once His Holiness Christ gathered the disciples together, and having offered to them the Lord’s Supper, He advised them, admonished them and uttered certain teachings to them, and then He said this was ‘The Lord’s Supper.’ Now, as this meeting is held under the shadow of the Blessed Beauty, it should be called ‘The Lord’s Sustenance,’ and as the consequences of ‘The Lord’s Supper’ continued until the present time, so we hope that the results and effects of this ‘Lord’s Sustenance’ may also become permanent and perpetual. In fact, there is no meeting better than this, for it is held in the vicinity of the Supreme Spot and the faces are so brilliant and radiant! What is there superior to this?”

Talk No. 4—Haifa, 18 May 1910

These words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were addressed to Mr Charles Mason Remey and Mr Howard C. Struven on the day of their departure from his presence: [I:8:8]

“In fact, you have shown forth a wonderful devotion; you left the West and came to the furthest part of Asia. On your journey you had to pass through hard experiences and difficulties; yet the confirmations of God enabled you to spread the Cause and to raise the summons of the Kingdom in all regions. The Sun of Truth shall send forth its rays, the breeze of favour shall pass over and the rain of mercy shall be sent down upon the seeds which you have scattered and there shall be gathered and collected many harvests. The results shall indeed be magnificent and glorious; some of them you shall soon witness with your own eyes.

“Now, when you go back to America you must circulate in detail all the incidents and news about your vast trip and inform them fully of the works achieved successfully throughout the different countries.

“Now you have to rest and repose for some time and let your strength and breath be renewed. When a bird has been soaring in the air for a long time, it has to come down and rest for a while; after a long walk one must be seated and take some rest.

“I pray and supplicate at the Divine Threshold to confirm and aid you in all conditions, and that the seeds scattered may grow rapidly and form a charming plantation.”

After giving instructions to some Persian pilgrims who were leaving on the same day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arose and embraced them all one by one. Some were crying, the tears rolling down their cheeks.

“Good-by!” he said to all.

I:8, 1 August 1910 [I:8:12]

Around the world with Messrs Remey and Struven

The *Bahai News* devotes this issue to notes taken and letters¹ written by Mr Charles Mason Remey and Mr Howard C. Struven during their recent journey around the world in the interests of the Cause. The following extracts from tablets [I:8:13] revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá show the importance and world-wide effect of this tour:

Truly, I say, this beloved of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá left his native land, turned his back upon the comforts and pleasures of home, accepted the difficulties of travels, and crossed the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans. In the Hawaiian Islands he gave the Glad-tidings of the Kingdom;

¹ Only the tablet extracts have been included here.

in Japan he delivered the Teachings of His Highness the Incomparable. He summoned the souls to the Most Great Guidance, and suffered the thirsty ones to drink from the Fountain of Job. He proclaimed the Dawn of the Manifest Light in China, and he perfumed India with the Fragrance of the Rose-garden of the Merciful. Praise be to God, he became assisted, confirmed, and raised the Summons of the Kingdom in those countries, suffered the Mysteries of the Realm of Might to become manifest, built a structure which will remain firm and established forever and ever, enkindled a lamp whose illumination will be perpetual, and planted a tree whose fruits will be limitless.

Consider thou how the power of the Word of God has united the East and the West and bestowed spiritual communication, that a blessed soul from the inhabitants of America, while in the Holy Land, mentioned to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the name of a man living in Asia, and with the utmost devotion requests the writing of a Tablet. Praise be to God! What a communication! What a unity and concord! Today the inhabitants of the world must be engaged generally in praising the Word of God, which has bestowed such a bounty and has established such a harmony and affiliation that the Beloved of the union of the race of man has uncovered the face, displaying the utmost beauty and perfection in the assemblages of the world, and is captivating the hearts of everyone in all the regions.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:8, 1 August 1910 [I:8:13]

Letter from Mr Remey¹

Dear Friends in Abhá,

Since my arrival in this country, from the Holy Land, on 3 June, I have received many inquiries from the friends regarding any possible instructions which 'Abdu'l-Bahá might have sent through Mr Struven and me to the friends in America to be followed in the Bahá'í work. We are the bearers of no instructions whatever; nevertheless, we, as all who come from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have a message or a lesson to share with all.

The one great lesson which we learned while with 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the lesson of the Unity of the believers—the interdependence of the believers in each of the assemblies, and the interdependence of these assemblies between one another, both East and West.

On our long journey to 'Akká many of the friends asked us to place before 'Abdu'l-Bahá certain ques- [I:8:14] tions pertaining to the work of the Holy Cause. In practically every case his reply was that the friends should consult together and that that which they agreed upon in all joy and fragrance would be pleasing and acceptable to him, and that whatever should be thus decided after consultation and deliberation is the course to be pursued in carrying on the work of the Holy Cause.

In telling 'Abdu'l-Bahá of the work in the various cities in which the friends were united in consultation and works, he was greatly pleased and showed evident satisfaction. In practically every conversation which we had with 'Abdu'l-Bahá he gave us a lesson upon consultation and working together—sometimes told in one way and sometimes told in another.

During our travels of last summer Mr Struven and I found that some of the friends interpreted the instructions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to mean that the time has not yet arrived for meetings of consultation in the various assemblies, nor for system in carrying on the work (that is to say, organization).

While with 'Abdu'l-Bahá we learned that he had told others (as well as ourselves) that now

¹ Part of the letter from Mr Remey.

is not the time for establishing The House of Justice according to *The Book of Aqdas*. However, from his many talks he left no doubt in our minds that he wished the believers to unite, consult, organize and work together.

Personally I can see that united effort in the Bahá'í work is the crying need of this day. The real work is now not being carried on by separate individuals but by those who are casting aside individualism and are adhering to the principles of Unity in thought, spirit and action. This is the principle of the spiritual growth and strength of the Holy Cause which 'Abdu'l-Bahá made so very clear to us.

It is almost needless to mention that Mr Struven and I, in our round of visits, noticed that in those centres where the friends were united in consultation and in harmonious work and service, that there the Cause was manifestly strong and vigorous, while in those centres where the friends were not working along systematic lines the fruits of the work were not so evident.

Some copies of the *Bahai News* were reaching the Orient while we were there. Everywhere the friends were pleased with this effort. During our travels Mr Struven and I felt much the need of such an organ which would strengthen the ties of Unity between the East and the West.

About three years ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá told me to publish, semi-annually, a bulletin in both Persian and English, at the same time instructing that the matter to be published should first be sent to him to be approved. Accordingly, the manuscript for the first issue was sent to him, and after an interval of three or four months the matter for the second issue was also forwarded. Nothing was ever heard from either package. There was much correspondence from my end of the line, but all to no avail for there were no traces to follow up. [I:8:15]

I know that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is still anxious to have an Occidental-Oriental publication to further the holy work. I feel that the *Bahai News* is a most important step toward this other work, and at the same time is accomplishing a long needed work among the English speaking assemblies. ...

Faithfully yours in His Cause,
Charles Mason Remey.

I:8, 1 August 1910 [I:8:16]

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Fourteen years ago the following words were revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a Tablet to the Persian believers:

The Divine confirmations have in every way prepared for you the means of development. Before long your brethren will come to Persia from Europe and America. They will organize new industries; found the traces of civilization, various factories, the spread of commerce, increase of agriculture, and the universalization of learning. As soon as security and tranquillity are reached to the limit of perfection by the endeavours of the government, they will come, and will make the territory of Persia the envy of the world and of the other provinces. At that time the government will become exceedingly pleased, and the wishes of this Servant in wishing good for the Empire and my sincerity to the Imperial Throne, will become manifest.

I:9, 20 August 1910 [I:9:1]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Through Mr Howard Struven, to the Spiritual Assembly of Baltimore, Maryland:

HE IS GOD!

O ye Merciful Assembly!

Mr Struven became the herald of the Kingdom and travelled through the countries of China, India and Japan. The Supreme Confirmations bestowed assistance, so that he attained to this heavenly Bounty. He became the cause of the glory of the believers of Baltimore and imparted happiness and joy to the friends and maid-servants of the Merciful. He sacrificed everything in the Path of the Kingdom and imparted life to many souls. The results of this trip, ere long, will become apparent and manifest like unto the sun and moon, and the Most Great Confirmation be unveiled.

O ye friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful, hearken to the counsels of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The world of matter is not worthy of consideration or indulgence therein. Soon the life of everything will come to an end, therefore you must endeavour to raise the banner of greatness in the uni-coloured universe of God, attract the splendours of the Sun of Truth, become the cause of the illumination of the realm of man, serve all humanity, spread the essential oneness, become the embodiment of Divine Mercy, the impersonation of the Gift of His Highness the Almighty, seek eternal life, and discover the majesty of the age-abiding sovereignty.

Ponder and reflect a moment, millions of kings have stepped forth from the invisible world into [I:9:2] the arena of appearance, and all of them have vanished and disappeared. But a servant of the servants of the True One, who finds eternal life through the Breaths of the Holy Spirit, establishes everlasting dominion in the Kingdom of God; even in this temporal world his signs are spread and are known, his name becomes famous and his light diffused in every region.

Upon ye be the Glory of God!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá
Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, 17 June 1910.

I:9, 20 August 1910 [I:9:5]

Interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Extract from a letter written by a Mrs Crockett, May 1910, to Miss Frances Johnson, Pearl City, Hawaii:

I must tell you a little about Palestine and about one experience in particular. A visit to Palestine does certainly make the Bible seem like a new book and brings home to one's heart the reality of Christ's life and teachings.

I felt this particularly at Nazareth, the home of His boyhood, and at the Sea of Galilee, which is so associated with His ministry. We had a lovely early morning row on the peaceful lake, and the memories of Christ that came to us seemed to make His presence very real.

Now, I know you will be eager to hear of my interview with the one in Palestine whose teachings mean so much to you, the Prophet, or 'Abbás Afandí,¹ as he is generally called.

I found that he is not now kept a prisoner at 'Akká, but since the order of constitutional government in Turkey he is free to live in his home at Haifa (near by) and go and come as he will.

I planned my trip so that I could stop and see him, for I remember when you gave me some of the literature to read you said: "If you go to Egypt, Palestine is not far away and you will surely want to see him." So I planned for the interview with him when the others of the party went to 'Akká for a drive. (Perhaps you know that Haifa is a pretty little town right at the foot

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

of Mt Carmel.)

Well, I sent word to him of my wish to see him and he replied that he would see me in the afternoon, as his time was taken up that morning in seeing some people from India. So I went to his house at the time appointed and was shown into the presence of an old man, clothed in the flowing robe of a Persian, with white hair and a long white beard, with eyes that seemed to look me through and yet were most friendly, too. It was the Prophet! He received me most graciously, and his interpreter, a young Syrian, a student at the American Missionary College at Beirut. [I:9:6]

I told him first about the little circle of his friends in far off Honolulu—you who meet together to discuss his teachings—and I told him of your love and loyalty. He seemed very happy at this and his face lighted up as he asked for the names of those who knew and loved him. ... He sent you all his love and blessing and said he would pray for each one of you, and he added: “Tell them that they have a great mission—to make the blind eyes see, to make the deaf ears hear and to shed the light of knowledge where the darkness of ignorance prevails.” That was his message to you. He talked with me for some time, first telling me of his country, Persia, of his life and then of his teachings.

As he talked with me I felt my heart soften under the influence of his goodness and kindness, and the tears came to my eyes. He asked me about myself, if I were well and if I were happy. I replied to the latter question: “I have had many sorrows.” “Forget them!” he answered. “When your heart is filled with the love of God there will be no room for sorrow. There will only be love and happiness.” I cannot tell you the sweet sympathy of his voice as he said these beautiful and comforting words.

Then he had the attendant bring in tea, a cup for him and a cup for me. We drank together, wishing each other health and happiness, and then he told me that he hoped he should take tea with me in the Kingdom of Heaven!

When I praised the tea he said it was real Persian tea and presented me with a package to take away with me. (I wish I could send you some of it. I am afraid it would lose its strength though before it reached you.)

When I finally said good-by he put his hand on my head and blessed me and wished that I might be a blessing. ... I went away feeling softened, uplifted and blessed. I am so glad you told me of him and urged me to see him. He wrote his name in my book for me and told me always to remember it.

I tell you all these little incidents as I know they will interest you.

I:9, 20 August 1910 [I:9:8]

The Mashriqu’l-Adhkár

A recent pilgrim to ‘Akká wrote to the Financial Secretary that when she was in Haifa last winter she asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá if it was not of great importance to help in the sending of spiritual people to Syria to be taught by him, and he replied: “It is now of utmost importance for the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár to be built.” Corinne True.

I:9, 20 August 1910 [I:9:10]

... the following extract from a Tablet to a believer in Persia, should receive the careful perusal of the men who are interested in the progress of the Cause in the Occident:

You have written regarding the Assembly of Women. Undoubtedly, show ye great effort in this matter, and [I:9:11] make constant endeavour in the expansion of its spheres, and know ye of a certainty that it will be crowned with great success. This subject is pregnant with far-reaching results and when it is directed in a benefiting manner, such women will be trained In

that Assembly that the whole world will be astonished by their eloquent speeches and fluent utterances, and they will silence and discomfort the orators of the East and the West. Today the women in the West lead the men in the service of the Cause, summon the people under the shade of the Blessed Perfection, and loosen their tongues in eloquent lectures, delivery of wonderful proofs and the elucidation of new arguments.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:9, 20 August 1910 [I:9:12]

Funeral readings and prayer¹

To consider that after the death of the body the spirit perishes, is like imagining that a bird in a cage will be destroyed if the cage is broken—though the bird has nothing to fear from the destruction of the cage. Our body is like the cage, and the spirit is like the bird. We see that without the cage this bird flies in the world of sleep: therefore, if the cage becomes broken, the bird will continue to exist: its feelings will be even more powerful, its perceptions greater and its happiness increased. In truth, from hell it reaches a paradise of delights, because for the thankful bird there is no paradise greater than freedom from the cage.

Infants are under the shadow of the favour of God, and as they have not committed any sin and are not soiled with the impurities of the world of nature, they [I:9:13] are centres of the manifestation of bounty, and the Eye of Compassion will be turned upon them.

In the Name of God, the Supreme, the High! I ask Thee, by the sorrow of the hearts of the beloved and by the tears of the eyes of the lovers, to deprive me not from the fragrances of Thy Godliness in Thy Days, and from the melodies of the Dove of Thy Oneness at the appearance of the Lights of Thy Face!

Hold Thou my right arm, O God! and dwell continually with me! Guide me to the fountain of Thy Knowledge and encircle me with Thy Glory. Let mine ears hearken unto Thy melodious tone and comfort me with Thy Presence. For Thou art the strength of my heart, and the trust of my soul, and I desire no one beside Thee!

I:10, 8 September 1910 [I:9:1]

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to friends in America

Extracts from Tablets recently received by the Librarian of the Spiritual Assembly (H. of S.) of Chicago, for preservation in archives, and sent to the *Bahai News* for publication.

HE IS GOD!

O thou son of the Kingdom!

... Today, the most important affair and greatest hope is the unity and concord of the Friends. In every city where the Friends are united, spirituality and illumination is manifest and apparent with infinite power and strength; but where there is a lack of the warmth of love, every one becomes withered, cold, unhappy and deprived. Therefore, endeavour ye with all your heart and soul so that union and concord may be increased, the Word of God promoted and the lights of unity be spread. Convey on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the wonderful Abhá Greeting to all the Friends of that Spiritual Assembly.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 16 August 1910.

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

... Ere long the regions of the West will become the dawning-places of the East, and the Sun of Truth will shine in such wise that the darkness of ignorance will be dispelled. But a large

¹ A letter reported the death of an infant child and the burial service. Included were the following unsourced readings.

multitude of people will arise against you, showing oppression, expressing contumely and derision, shunning your society, and heaping upon you ridicule. However, the Heavenly Father will illumine you to such an extent that, like unto the rays of the sun, you shall scatter the dark clouds of superstition, shine gloriously in the midst of Heaven and illumine the face of the earth. You must make firm the feet at the time when these trials transpire, and demonstrate forbearance and patience. You [I:9:2] must withstand them with the utmost love and kindness; consider their oppression and persecution as the caprice of children, and do not give any importance to whatever they do. For at the end the illumination of the Kingdom will overwhelm the darkness of the world and the exaltation and grandeur of your station will become apparent and manifest; nothing will remain hidden. If the light remain in the depth of the well, ere long its shining will appear on the summit of the hill. The small ones will become great, the powerless powerful, the babes will become the children of the Kingdom, and the wanderers reach the Divine native land of the Father. Rest ye assured.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 14 November 1909.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:10, 8 September 1910 [I:9:6]

Around the world with Messrs Remey and Struven¹

We take the liberty of prefacing the letters selected for this issue with the following Tablet to one of the friends at Cincinnati, Ohio, believing it not only confirms the correctness of the observations of our brothers that organization and systematic work is needed in many centres, but that it will assist such centres in their endeavour to comply with the wish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed therein:

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

HE IS GOD!

O thou seeker of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. It is impossible to organize the House of Justice in these days; it will be formed after the establishment of the Cause of God. Now, the Spiritual Assemblies are organized in most of the cities, you must also organize a Spiritual Assembly in Cincinnati. It is permissible to elect the members of the Spiritual Assembly from among the men and women; nay, rather, it is better, so that perfect union may result. According to the Texts of the Aqdas the dues are to be collected in the Treasury in order to meet the necessary demands, but do not make the dues obligatory to anyone. Everyone can pay according to the dictates of their hearts and let it be a voluntary contribution.

O thou seeker of the Kingdom! Now is the time that you may become engaged in that country in the promotion of the Word of God, the diffusion of the sweet fragrances of the Paradise of Abhá and the spreading of the Divine Teachings.

Upon thee be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 18 May 1910.

I:10, 8 September 1910 [I:10:9]

Prayer from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Excerpt from a long prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the marriage feast of Mírzá

¹ The third letter.

Iskandar Khán (Mr Sydney Sprague) and Farhangise¹ Khánum, daughter of the well-known Bahá'í teacher, Mírzá Asadu'lláh, who were recently married by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, himself, in the presence of representatives of all nations and religions at Haifa, Syria:

Lord! Verily, Thy servant, Iskandar Sprague, journeyed to the most remote countries while aglow with Thy Love; he was attracted by Thy Call while in those far-away regions, hastened to the Radiant Spot (the Holy Land) and willed to unite with Thy pure maidservant who believeth In Thy Verses, who is aflame with the Fire of Thy Love and who is related² to The Branch of the Tree of Thy Grace. Lord! Make this marriage blessed by Thy Favour; happy by the benediction of Thy Generosity; an indissoluble tie; a partnership holy unto Sprague; a blending fellowship, a rejoicing, a unity and an affinity lasting throughout the Eternity of Eternities, in every world of Thy Holy Worlds—upon the plane of the Spirits and the Lights. Verily, Thou art the Helper! Verily, Thou are the Generous! Verily, Thou art the Merciful, the Clement!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Amín U. Faríd, 19 August 1910.

I:11, 27 September 1910 [I:10:1]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the Beloved of God in Tìhrán, Persia.

HE IS GOD!

O ye Beloved Friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

Today the most important affair is delivering the Cause of God and spreading the fragrances of God. The duty of every soul among the believers of God is that he must rest neither day nor night, and with every breath think of the diffusion of the fragrances of Truth. That is, he must endeavour as far as lies in his power to quicken and guide a soul to the Path of Immortality, for this service of his will be perpetuated throughout centuries and cycles.

The power of the faith of the first guide will be transmitted, find continuation and become manifest in the lives of other believers, until one sanctified soul will become the cause of quickening a hundred thousand souls. Consider how important this is, for the guidance of one soul is greater than the sovereignty of a kingdom. The temporal dominion is ended in a few days and no effect or result, no rejoicing or happiness, no beatitude or praise and no name or fame is produced thereby. But this sovereignty which consists in the guidance of the souls is eternal and everlasting. It embraces the Divine Beloved and it establishes man upon the throne of grandeur. Therefore, Spiritual Assemblies must be established in all the cities and their aims must be the guidance of the souls.

Likewise some teachers must be sent to various parts and in every direction, for the sake of diffusing the fragrances of God, so that they may direct the seekers to the Divine Path; even the coming and going of the friends is beneficial. For instance, the friends who live in the smaller cities often do not receive any news, and then only at random. Now if certain souls arise to travel through these places, give the Glad-tidings of God, stay in every [I:10:2] place a night or two, deliver the news of the Holy Land and other countries and cities of the East and West, and associate with them with the utmost love, enthusiasm and happiness, this will be conducive to attraction and enkindlement, the people will be trained in spiritual matters and obtain exhilaration and life. This will become the cause of diffusing the fragrances and the motive-power of the promulgation of the Word of God.

¹ Farahángíz.

² Farahángíz Khánum is a niece of Fátimah Nahrí (Munírih Khánum), the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

His Honour, Mírzá Áqá Ṭaráz, and ‘Alí Akbar are two blessed souls, and they are the cause of happiness to the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It is assured that they will become assisted in the universal services, and in the Kingdom of Abhá they will shine and gleam like unto the morning star.

Upon ye be the Glory of God!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, especially for the *Bahai News*, Washington, D.C., 14 July 1910.

I:11, 27 September 1910 [I:10:5]

Around the world with Messrs Remey and Struven¹

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Some of the words uttered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Messrs Howard C. Struven and Charles Mason Remey while in his presence at Haifa, Syria, May 1910.

“Welcome! You are blessed in making such a world pilgrimage and by being allowed to serve in so many countries. Many Tourists travel around the globe visiting places and cities, but their tours have no lasting effect and are soon forgotten. The effect of your tour will be eternal. Its effect will be seen during the ensuing centuries.” [I:10:6]

...

In speaking of spreading the fragrances of the Kingdom, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “In movement there is life; in immobility there is death. The travelling of the teachers from place to place, country to country, and from the Occident to the Orient, is one of the greatest means for sowing spiritual seeds in the souls of the people.”

In speaking again of Japan, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Blessed results will appear from the Holy Cause established in that land. I have sent your letter regarding the work in Japan to Mr MacNutt² in [I:10:7] New York, that he may spread the word for some of the American believers to go to Japan, and there serve and teach in the Cause. It is very good for teachers to travel, and, through the love of God, give life to the people. American Bahá’ís should go to the Oriental countries as teachers.”

At another time ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Encourage the Bahá’ís to hasten to India, both men and women teachers. In India, in particular, women teachers are needed. Delay not! Now is the time to travel there, and in Persia, too.”

“Later on, the results of your journey will be clearly seen. Praise be to God!—now our meeting here in the Land of Desire (the Holy Land) i.e. open and easy, while in the past it would have been most difficult. Some of the friends came long distances and could only see me from a distance. Now you must go out and serve—you must no longer stay here.”

I:11, 27 September 1910 [I:11:9]

Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To his honour, Mr MacNutt—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá.

HE IS GOD!

O thou herald of the True One!

His honour, Mr Remey, is travelling in India and has created wonderful interest among the

¹ Extracts from the fourth letter.

² See Tablet from page 9 of this issue.

people. Truly I say, in these days, India is awakened to a greater receptive capacity. The letter of Mr Remey is enclosed. Consider how India has attained to receptivity. If several teachers from America travel to those parts it is certain that the Lights of the Kingdom shall illumine that region and many souls will be raised from among the Hindus and become the Army of Light through the power of the Word of God and the outpouring of the cloud of the Love of God, they will make India a rose garden. Encourage and urge a few souls to take a trip to India so that they may fully realize that the doors of the Kingdom are opened, behold the uninterrupted confirmations of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, and unfurl a banner waving forever and ever with the breezes of Divine Confirmation and Assistance. Give this matter your most earnest consideration, for it is the most important problem of all problems concerning the Cause. We have also written to Persia to send a teacher to that country, but if several souls go from America it will have greater influence and weight and far-reaching results will become apparent and manifest.

Upon thee be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 17 May 1910.

I:11, 27 September 1910 [I:11:10]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

“The greatest affair and the most important matter today is to establish a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and to found a Temple from which the voices of praise may rise to the Kingdom of the Majestic God.”—'Abdu'l-Bahá.

I:12, 16 October 1910 [I:12:1]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt

First of a series of special news items pertaining to the tour of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Portion of a letter from Mr Sydney Sprague to Mrs Isabella D. Brittingham.

Mount Carmel, 29 August 1910.

Dear Sister in the Holy Cause: I have a very big piece of news to tell you. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has left this Holy Spot for the first time in forty-two years, and has gone to Egypt. Think of the vast significance and importance of this step! By it many prophecies of the sacred Scriptures are fulfilled. The Light and Life of 'Akká has departed and we feel as though we were now left in obscurity while Egypt is illumined, and that ancient country which has seen the prophets Joseph and Moses and even the infant Christ is now to see the Consummation of all the prophets. Will it appreciate and realize this Bounty? Everyone was astounded to hear of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's departure, for no one knew until the very last minute that he had any idea of leaving. The afternoon of the day he left, he came to Mírzá Asadu'lláh's home to see us and sat with us awhile beside a new well that has just been finished and said that he had come to taste the water. We did not realize that it was a good-bye visit. Then he took a carriage and went up the hill to the Holy Tomb (of the Báb). That night, as usual, the believers gathered before the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to receive that blessing, which every day is ours, of being in his presence, but we waited in vain, for one of the sons in law came and told us that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had taken the Khedivial steamer for Port Said. We could hardly believe it was true, so great was this news. Think how happy we must be that after forty-two years in this cage, the Divine Bird has spread His wings and in perfect freedom flown away.

SPECIAL: Word has been received from Port Said that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has sailed from that port on a steamer for an unknown destination.

Around the world with Messrs Remey and Struven¹

Written shortly after the interviews with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, from notes taken at the time, by Charles Mason Remey, while in Haifa, Syria, May 1910.

Question—Many of the American believers desire to worship daily in accordance with the Teachings. What prayers should they use daily? No instruction has yet been revealed for them regarding daily worship.

Answer—Later on I will give instructions.

Question—Was Bahá'u'lláh of the seed of Jesse?

Answer—Yes. He was the ninth generation in succession from Jesse, but this was not the Jesse of the Bible.

Question—What is the Command regarding the giving of tithes: Is it 19% of the increase of one's capital, or is it the one-nineteenth part of one's income?

Answer—It should be the one-nineteenth part of one's income. This tithe giving is a blessed privilege. Among mankind money is the greatest thing. This giving will confirm the people. With this money many great works will be done. In Hamadan in Persia, the Jewish believers raised much money in this way. At first I did not accept this money, but later on I directed that it should be used in their own town for the Bahá'í school. This giving was a great spiritual blessing to those believers. Everyone knows how the Jews love money.

Question—Is the calendar as revealed by the Báb to be used in this Dispensation?

Answer—Yes; but later on modifications will be made.

Question—From what year does the era of the New Dispensation date—from the Declaration of the Báb or from that of Bahá'u'lláh?

Answer—From the Declaration of the Báb, AH 1260 or CE 1844.

Question—Which day of the week will the Bahá'ís eventually observe as a day of rest?

Answer—Friday.

Question—We have been taught that Bahá'u'lláh was the Seventh of a series of great World (Universal) Manifestations of this present cycle, Christ being the sixth, Melchisedec² the fifth, while the first four [I:12:3] were before the compilation of our present world history, and of them we have no records; that their teachings were applicable to all mankind under all conditions; while upon the other hand the Manifestations, such as Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, Muḥammad and the Báb were sent each to a certain, people, bringing teachings which were applicable to those certain conditions and people only, while the teachings of the World Manifestations were not limited in their application to peoples. Is this teaching correct?

Answer—Yes, it is correct.

In a subsequent conversation, during which questions were being asked and answered, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

That Bahá'u'lláh was not a descendant from the Prophet Zoroaster.

That the Anniversary of the martyrdom of the Báb should be observed with solemnity by the friends.

¹ Extracts from the fifth letter.

² Melchizedek ("king of righteousness"), king of Salem.

That the Anniversary of the Departure of Bahá'u'lláh should be observed in like manner, and that in the night time a meeting of prayer should be held.

That it would be well for the Western friends to interest themselves in commercial and industrial matters with the people of Persia, for Persia and the West both need connection one with the other.

That in serving together the believers should always avoid those matters upon which they cannot agree. The believers should *serve together*, the men and women working together in harmony. In meetings of consultation the majority should rule, but it is far preferable that there should be such unity that there be no minority—that all should be of one mind.

I:12, 16 October 1910 [I:12:5]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

“Today all the beloved of God In those parts must endeavour that the Chicago Mashriqu'l-Adhkár be founded end be built In the utmost solidity and exquisiteness.”—‘Abdu'l-Bahá. Translated by Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán, 17 December 1908.

I:13, 4 November 1910 [I:13:1]

Tablet from ‘Abdu'l-Bahá

To the Believers in Sístán, Persia.

Upon them be the Glory of God the Most Glorious.

HE IS GOD!

O ye believers of God and friends of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá!

If ye knew how the heart of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá is soaring at this moment at your mentioning and the spirit is rejoicing at your name, undoubtedly you would not contain yourselves in this physical temple, neither would you have heeded any persecution or suffering.

Today the world of existence is moved through the Call of the Covenant, and the disjoined members of this earth have found mutual communication. Consider ye that the confusion produced thereby cannot be cleared and the forces cannot be brought together save through the Power of the Testament, and the darkness of the East and the West can only be dispelled through the Sun of the Covenant. The Divine Covenant is like unto the spiritual Springtime, which encircles all creation.

Now the greatest test for a tree is to have the latent possibility of fruition, and with the appearance of the spring they put forth leaves, branches and blossoms, but if a tree is barren at this season it will remain deprived and fruitless. Likewise, those souls who have been firm in the Covenant of God, are detached from all else save God, and are attracted to the fragrances of God, their faces will shine like unto the luminous moon, with the Light of Assurance. But the jealous bats, the people of injustice and pride, flew away from the Light of the Covenant and shrank out of sight into the dark dungeon of hesitation and fear. They have left the lamp of the Testament and are running in the Sahara of discord and are seeking the gloom of worldliness. They turned away from the Pure Spring of Life and attached themselves to the stagnant pools of superstition. They left behind the Paradise of Abhá and were contented with this nether world. [I:13:2]

They do not search after the Garden of Holiness but they wish for the sterile desert of passions and selfishness. They passed by the Blessed Tree and gathered around the stunted bitter plant. They did not yearn for the Star of Guidance, but they desired the will-o'-the-wisp of allurements. This is the result of their exertion in this life. Leave them to themselves, pay no heed to their faults, for verily they have left the Path of Guidance and forgotten the Road to

Righteousness. Verily, they are afflicted with disharmony and discord and their loss will be very great.

Therefore, O ye friends of God! enter ye in the Rose-garden of Oneness, take ye a share from the essence of singleness and spread the Breaths of the Morn of Holiness. The Glad-tidings of the Bounty of the Blessed Perfection is descending from the Invisible Kingdom, the Sea of Providence is moving and the waves of the Mercy of the Almighty are unlimited. Endeavour ye as far as ye can, so that ye may immerse yourselves in this vast Ocean and soar heavenward towards this Exalted Apex.

The greatest of all affairs is unity and harmony, the love and affection of heart and soul. The believers of God are the waves of one Sea, the drops of one River, the signs of one Kingdom, the standards of one Regiment the lights of one Orb, the Armies of one General, the stars of one Heaven and are addressed by one Covenant. Consequently they must associate with each other like the brilliant Stars of Pleiades in one firmament and become the letters and words of one Book.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab especially for *Bahai News*, Washington, D.C., 21 July 1910

I:13, 4 November 1910 [I:13:13]

Letter from Yazd¹

“O God, my aim, my hope! With hearts full of longing and breasts full of yearning, we beg of Thee and we supplicate at the threshold of Thy Might to raise the foundation of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* in Chicago in the most speedy manner. Make its basis firm and its structure enduring, suffer its pillars to remain unshakeable and make its columns of the steel and iron of firmness. Glorify its servants, beautify the characters and make the worshipers beloved. Suffer its nightingales to sing, 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!' and its parrots to warble the praises of our Lord, the Most Supreme. Make its men the standards unfolded on the mountains of the world, and its women the sanctified angels of the tabernacle of the world!”

I:13, 4 November 1910 [I:13:14]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Through Monsieur Dreyfus, to the friends and maid-servants of God, Stuttgart, Germany:

Upon them be the glory of Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Your letter which was written on the Day of Naw-Rúz in the assembly of the friends, has arrived. Its contents told of spiritual happenings and feelings of attraction. Its reading brought me the utmost happiness, for—Praise be to God!—in Germany, the servants and the maid-servants of the Rahman have adorned a gathering of friendship and love in the Day of Naw-Rúz, have perfumed their nostrils with the vivifying breezes of the divine garden, and have been mentioning the King of the Kingdom and the Lord of Hosts.

Therefore, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has been praying and supplicating to the Word of God that these servants and maid-servants of the Raḥmán may day by day become more brilliant and make greater progress, penetrate the mysteries of the Kingdom, become the cause of the diffusing of the principles of human unity, call every one to the Shade of the Tent of harmony and

¹ A letter from the Bahá'í maid-servants of Yazd, Persia, to their sisters in America, contains the following 'supplication' which is said to have been 'received' in the month of 'Alá' (Fasting month), and thus is likely to be from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

instruction of mankind, become the cause of enlightenment of these regions, make the hearts filled with the love of the bountiful Beloved, and attract the people to the divine Kingdom, so that during the coming year they may make still greater progress.

The flowers which were inside of your letter were exceedingly sweet, delicate and perfumed; it told of the sweetness of your countenances and characters.

Upon you all be the glory of God.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:14, 23 November 1910 [I:14:1]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the Members of the Spiritual Assembly of Işfahán, Persia.

Upon them be the Glory of God the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O ye illumined Friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

Praise be to God, that you have organized and established a new assembly in the land of Işfahán and with the utmost devotion its members are arising to serve the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh). I was pleased to know, also, that you have organized a committee for correspondence with all parts of the world, and another committee to teach the Truth to the youths. Wonderful confirmation and complete assistance is destined for all the members of these various committees. This move is identical with blessing and this glorious intention is accepted in the Threshold of Oneness. It is my hope that you may perform these services in a befitting manner; that you may become the dawning-places of the Bounties of the Infinite; centres of merciful feelings and the manifestors of the rays of the Everlasting Glory.

I trust that you may make the land of Işfahán a salubrious fountain, so that the cool water of knowledge and the flowing river of assurance may make that region the envy of the green garden of Paradise. That city was illumined with the presence of His Highness, the Báb, after he left Shíráz; the Word of God was promulgated; many blessed souls became believers; a number of them hastened toward the arena of martyrdom; his highness, the leader of the righteous ones, the "King of the Martyrs," and the master of the friends, the "Beloved of Martyrs," gave up their lives at the altar of love. His Highness, Ashraf, and many other martyrs drank the cup of trials and sacrificed their lives with the utmost severance. Therefore, it is the hope of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that that region may become the Green Garden and that city the delectable Paradise.

Upon ye be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 11 November 1910, especially for the *Bahai News*.

I:14, 23 November 1910 [I:14:2]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt¹

"OUT OF EGYPT HAVE I CALLED MY SON."

To those who are familiar with the sacred prophecies and the history of the Bahá'í (Glorious) Revelation, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "going down into Egypt", after forty years' confinement in the Holy Land—in the prison town of 'Akká, near the foot of Mt. Carmel—is an event fraught with wonderful and tremendous significance; for it is, undoubtedly, that event whereby the Word of God, as uttered by the Prophet Hosea (11:1) finds its complete

¹ Second of a series of special news items pertaining to the sojourn of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt.

fulfilment—although foreshadowed in the sojourn of the infant Jesus in that land nearly two thousand years ago (St. Matthew 2:25).

It is an event that has stirred the Bahá'ís everywhere, for when it became known that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had departed for that ancient country of Joseph, there swept over the Bahá'í world a mighty spirit of activity. It is an event that will, doubtless, soon command the serious attention of the Jewish and Christian worlds (especially those who await the coming of the Son "in the glory of his Father" as it has already commanded the attention of the Muslim world; for, at present, the Egyptian newspapers the most influential in the Muslim world today—are divided into two camps: some praising 'Abdu'l-Bahá's work; others trying to stop the floodgate of his irresistible influence.

Moamid,¹ a paper respected by all the Islamic world, says: "Although he ('Abdu'l-Bahá) has lived the greater part of his life in 'Akká, Syria, yet there are millions of people—in Persia, India, Europe and America—who follow him and respect him to the point of worship and adoration. Whosoever associates with him, finds him a man who has information upon all subjects of human interest; his words are eloquent and attract the hearts, and enkindle the souls. His teachings and conversation revolve around the centre of the greatest of the world's problems: To remove entirely, religious, racial and patriotic prejudices, and lay the foundation of a brotherhood and unity that will last throughout the ages and eternity."

Such is the statement of the leading newspaper printed in Arabic, while the editor of an influential [I:14:3] Persian newspaper printed in Cairo writes in a personal letter that he was summoned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to his presence, and although a few weeks before, he wrote and published an article against the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, he accepted the invitation and left Cairo for Alexandria. He met 'Abdu'l-Bahá and became a changed man. He went a stranger and an avowed antagonist; he returned a friend, and will write an article in favour of the Cause. He writes: "Indeed, I was very much benefited in meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Arabic newspapers are now anxiously waiting to read my comment upon the matter. You shall read my paper No. 20 and believe you will prize it very highly. There is no doubt that some people will slander and accuse me of being bought, but I do not care. I have seen the Truth, and I will write the truth, no matter what may happen."

Many others, who have been the enemies of the Cause, have gone, either through curiosity or honest investigation, to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá—the Servant of God and man—and have returned with the Glory of Truth in their faces.

What is the key to this irresistible spiritual power that thus opens the locked doors of the hearts of men? Those who are familiar with his Teachings, answer that it is his practice of them. He says: "*Be ye kind to the human world and be ye compassionate to the race of man. Deal with the stranger as you deal with the friends. Be ye gentle toward the outsiders as you are toward the beloved ones. Know ye the enemy are the friend. Look upon the satan as upon the angel and receive the unjust with the utmost love like unto a faithful one.*"

Truly, as of old, great miracles are transpiring on the banks of the river Nile, in the ancient land of the Pharaohs!

I:14, 23 November 1910 [I:14:7]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America

"When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was erected in 'Ishqábád, its influence was felt in all the Oriental countries. Whosoever heard of it, commenced an investigation of the Cause. Now, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of 'Ishqábád, like an evident banner, waves in the world. And if in Chicago the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is established, even as in 'Ishqábád, then you will see what the

¹ *al-Mu'ayyad* ("The Strengthened") newspaper (1889–1915).

recognition of the Cause will do; particularly the arrangement of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is such that it will exert the greatest effect upon the civilized world, for it has many accessories. Among them are the following: A school for orphans; a college for higher scientific education (or higher knowledge); a hospital; a home for cripples; a hospice. When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, with its accessories, be established in the world, aside from its religious or spiritual influence, it will have a tremendous effect upon civilization. Aside from the religionists who will feel its influence, materialists will not be exempt therefrom. Moreover, it contains Divine wisdoms, spiritual effects upon the intellects and thoughts. Subsequent to its erection these will become evident."

'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:15, 12 December 1910 [I:15:1]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the Believers of God in Ghalé Darré,¹ Persia.

Upon them be the Glory of God the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O ye servants of the Blessed Perfection!

In the Day of the Manifestation, you have caught the lights from the Manifestor on the Mount of Sinai and beheld the splendour of the Ray of Truth. Ye are the children of the Period of Bahá'u'lláh and have become the appearance of the Effulgence of Mercifulness in the Day wherein the rays of the Divine Sun radiate upon all things. Tear down the old garment and clad your sanctified temples with the new robe! Ye have passed from the salty water of ignorance and have drunk the salubrious salsabíl of knowledge. Ye have closed your eyes to the wine of heedlessness and became intoxicated with the choice sealed wine of intelligence! Ye have taken the cup of prosperity from the cup bearer of the Covenant and with infinite rejoicing, happiness and beatitude celebrated the Feast of beholding the rays of the Orb of regions!

Now is the time that we may sacrifice for the sake of the love of that Beloved, our spirit, our soul, our heart our mind, our property, our life and our all; and to wish for nothing but His good-pleasure, search for nothing but His Path, and desire nothing but His Service!

Upon ye be Glory!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. 30 November 1910, especially for the *Bahai News*.

I:15, 12 December 1910 [I:15:2]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt²

... You have asked for an account of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's departure to the land of Egypt. 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not inform anyone that he was going to leave Haifa. The day he left he visited the Holy Tomb of the Báb on Mt Carmel, and when he came down from the mountain of the Lord, he went direct to the steamer. This was the first anyone knew about the matter. Within two days he summoned to his presence, Mírzá Núri'd-Dín-i-Zayn, Shoghi Effendi, Khusraw, and this servant. The only persons who accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Egypt were Mírzá Munír Zayn and 'Abdu'l-Husayn, one of the pilgrims who was leaving at that time. When Mírzá Núri'd-Dín-i-Zayn arrived in Port Said, his brother Mírzá Munír returned to Haifa.

¹ Qarah Darrah, a village in Khuristan, Zanjan or Fars Provinces.

² Third of a series pertaining to the stay of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt. Previous items are in *Star of the West*, I:12, p. 1; and I:14, pp. 1-3.

For nearly one month ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remained in Port Said and the friends of God came from Cairo, in turn, to visit him. One day he called me to accompany him when taking a walk in the streets of the city. He said: *“Do you realize now the meaning of my statement when I was telling the friends that there was a wisdom in my indisposition?”* I answered, “Yes, I do remember very well.” He continued, *“Well, the wisdom was that I must always move according to the requirements of the Cause. Whatever the Cause requires for its promulgation, I will not delay in its accomplishment for one moment! Now, the Cause did require that I travel to these parts, and had I divulged my intention at that time, many difficulties would have arisen.”*

The day that he left for Alexandria he did not mention the matter to anyone; nor did this servant know the time of his departure. However, when I heard that he had left, I hurried to the steamer and there met him with two pilgrims from Ishqábád. He said: *“Tell the friends, how, under severe circumstances of bodily weakness, I have accepted the hardships of travelling to promote the Word of God, to spread the Cause of God and to diffuse the Fragrances of God! I have left behind friends, relatives and home for the sake of the Cause!”* By this he meant that the believers of [1:15:3] God must follow in his footsteps and illumine the East and the West with the lights of knowledge, peace and brotherhood.

While in Alexandria many noted persons, formerly enemies of the Cause for years, have met him and after being in his presence are changed entirely. Also, distinguished editors of Arabic and Persian newspapers, such as *Moaid*¹ and *Chehre Nema*,² have talked with him and afterward wrote and published columns of praise and commendation on his Teachings and greatness. Thus the newspapers have given great publicity to the Faith. In regard to the *Moaid* article, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says: “A clipping from the newspaper of *Moaid*, which is the first newspaper of Egypt and its editor well known throughout the world for his learning, is enclosed. Formerly, this person, through the instigation of some influential resident Persians, wrote many articles against this Cause and called the Bahá’ís infidels. But when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in this country, with one interview he was completely changed and contradicted all his former articles with this one. This is the type of the just man!”

There is no doubt that this trip is fraught with wonderful results for the Cause and many people will become awakened. In one of these interviews ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated he may go to Cairo and pass the remainder of the winter in that city. The Egyptian winter weather is ideal, temperate and agrees with him. Since he has arrived in Egypt his health is much improved, and should he decide to go to America it will not be before the springtime.

With great love and greeting to all the friends in the West, I am always
Your co-worker in the Cause,
Assadollah Gomi³

1:15, 12 December 1910 [1:15:5]

Siyid Asadu’lláh Qumí

Siyid Asadu’lláh Qumí, who has sent the special news item pertaining to the journey of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Egypt, published in this issue, is one of the oldest and most patriarchal Bahá’ís of the early days of Bahá’u’lláh. He has served the Cause in many ways and is now living in Port Said as the channel of communication between the friends all over the world and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá having been sent there from ‘Akká to continue the work of the late Siyyid Taqí Manshádi.

While a young man he was eager to learn the truth from every source. Later, he heard of the Bahá’í Revelation and, after a thorough investigation, accepted it. He then began to teach

¹ *al-Mu’ayyad* (“The Strengthened”) newspaper (1889–1915).

² Pers. *Chihra-Namá* (“Face view” or “Portrait painter”). Iranian newspaper first published in Alexandria and then Cairo. It acted as a conduit of ideas between Egypt and Iran in the campaigns of political, social, and cultural reform.

³ Siyyid Asadu’lláh Qumí.

and lead [I:15:6] others. On account of his open teaching, he was taken by the authorities of Ṭīhrán and thrown into prison with the renowned Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and eleven other prominent Bahá'ís. After a year and a half in prison, suffering untold hardships—the recital of which is pathetic and soul stirring—he and others were set free. About this time, Mírzá Asadu'lláh—who has been in America—and his family were preparing to leave Ṭīhrán for 'Akká, and Siyyid Asadu'lláh Qumí volunteered to go with them. Arriving at their destination, Siyyid Asadu'lláh begged Bahá'u'lláh to remain in His service, and for many years he was in turn a gardener in the Riḍván and a teacher to the Bahá'í children in the Holy Land.

When Bahá'u'lláh departed from this life, for nine months Siyyid Asadu'lláh was instructed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the art of teaching the Truth; after which he sent him to Persia to spread the Cause. Again he was apprehended in one of the remote cities of Persia, and with chains on his neck, hands and feet, was brought to Ṭīhrán to be judged. The Prime Minister, after investigation and finding him innocent, liberated him. At this time 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed to him some very glorious Tablets.

It was about the year 1900 that our editor, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, had the privilege of travelling with him through southern Persia, India and finally to 'Akká, and who testifies of Siyyid Asadu'lláh's gentleness, firmness, nobility of spirit and loftiness of mind.

I:15, 12 December 1910 [I:15:7]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

“The beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful intend to found a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chicago. They have sent to us numerous plans that one may be accepted and the edifice be built accordingly. Now the funds must be accumulated, the land entirely paid for and the necessary preparations for building made and then the accessory matters considered. Therefore, make ye an effort and show ye zeal that the price of the land be fully discharged and the means for the edifice produced.”—'Abdu'l-Bahá

I:16, 31 December 1910 [I:16:1]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Stating the conditions requisite for His coming to America

To the members of the Assemblies of Bahá'ís in America.¹

To the beloved ones and the maid-servants of the Merciful!

HE IS GOD!

O ye dear friends and maid-servants of God!

Your epistle was received.² You have expressed joy and happiness because of the trip of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the centre of prison ('Akká) to the land of the divine Joseph (Egypt). There are divine wisdoms in this journey! I am hopeful that it will be productive of results.

Now—praise be to God—some time is passed with the utmost of spirit and fragrance in this country, and we are occupied with the service of the Cause of God and servitude to the Holy Threshold.

When the service which is our (present) purpose is realized for the Kingdom of God, perhaps we shall journey to other parts.

If the beloved of God in all America strive for unity and harmony, attain perfect love and

¹ Through Lua M. Getsinger.

² A letter sent by the Washington (D.C.) Assembly on behalf of the Assemblies of America, supplicating 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit this country.

accord, and act according to the divine teachings and the precepts of the Blessed Perfection, this will prove a magnet attracting 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so that, perchance, he may journey to America.

But, until the light of oneness, unity and love shine forth from the lamp of America, and the beloved act in accordance with the divine teachings and precepts of the Blessed Perfection, and all the believers in America become united and harmonious, my coming to America will be hindered—nay, impossible.

Therefore, strive ye that ye may become the embodied teachings of the Blessed Perfection, confirmed in the divine precepts, resurrected in holiness and purity, severance, humility and meekness, set aglow with the fire of divine love; and loosen your tongues with the praises and commendations of the Heavenly Kingdom.

Thus may the great attainment be realized. Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Amín U. Faríd, 5 December 1910. Note: It is the wish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that this Tablet be read in all Assemblies.

Lua M. Getsinger

To the attracted maid-servant of God, Lua M. Getsinger.

Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

Your epistle was received and the desire and request of the beloved ones and the maid-servants of the Merciful became known.

The conditions requisite for the coming of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to those regions have just been written for the friends and the maid-servants of the Lord—through you. I am hopeful that these conditions will be carried out, perchance at some time a trip to those regions may be taken; but if these conditions be not realized, this will hinder a trip to those parts.

Convey most reverend Abhá greetings with the utmost longing to his honour, the dear friend, the Doctor (Getsinger).

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Faríd, 6 December 1910.

Wellesca Pollock Allen

To the attracted maid-servant of God, Ásíyih Khánum (Wellesca Pollock Allen).¹

Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

I hope, through the Lord, that thy request and desire may be granted. Thou hast written of the [1:16:3] joy and happiness of the beloved, together with a request for my presence in America.

'Abdu'l-Bahá is like the nightingale. The nightingale soars to the rose-garden. Should you desire my presence there, you must make America a rose-garden. That is to say, you must

¹ Wellesca Pollock Allen Dyar (1871–1940). Through Dr Amín Asadu'lláh Faríd.

make that country well adorned with every rose of spiritual qualities and human attributes. Then certainly, God, the Generous, will reward you greatly, and, perchance, this Nightingale will then fly to that rose-garden.

Thou hast written of thy new house wherein thou hast prepared a place for the travellers of the East and West. This is very acceptable.

Now the beloved must strive to make America a rose-garden. Then your desire will be realized.

O thou dear maid-servant of God! Thou art ever in mind and present before me. I hope, through the bounty and bestowal of God, that thy dear son may be blessed and become dear in both worlds.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Faríd, 5 December 1910.

I:17, 19 January 1911 [I:17:1]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

New York City

To the friends of God and the maid-servants of the merciful in New York City.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye real friends and beloved maid-servants of God!

Your letter, through the maid-servant of God, Dr Clock, was received and perused. Its contents imparted the utmost joy and happiness, for it indicated your advancement to the Kingdom of God, attraction with the love of God and supplication and prayer in the Threshold of God.

The friends and maid-servants of the Merciful must render service to the oneness of the human world and show love and affinity to all the children of men. They must deal with the utmost devotion, good-will, love and kindness with all the communities, religions and sects. Their aim and their work must be that the tree of their existence produce good fruits—and no fruit is greater than love and kindness toward all humanity. His Highness Bahá'u'lláh addressing the world, says: "Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of One branch." Therefore, the law of relationship, brotherhood, kinship, fatherhood and motherhood is established and proven among all the families of the human race. Endeavour ye with all your hearts and souls so that ye may live and act in accord with these teachings of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh; to become an asylum to every oppressed one; to assist and uplift every vanquished one; to be a skilled physician to every sick one; to bestow a swift healing antidote to every wounded one; to inspire with confidence every fearful one; to grant tranquillity and composure to every agitated one; to gladden the heart of every depressed one; to become a salubrious water to every thirsty one; heavenly food to every hungry one; to become the [I:17:2] cause of glory to every fallen one and be charitable to all the poor ones.

Beware! Beware! lest ye offend any heart!

Beware! Beware! lest ye hurt any soul!

Beware! Beware! lest ye deal unkindly toward any person!

Beware! Beware! lest ye be the cause of hopelessness to any creature!

Should any soul become the cause of grief to any heart or despondency to any soul, it is

better for him to hide himself in the lowest strata of the earth than to walk upon the earth. Should any soul desire the abasement of his kind, undoubtedly his non-entity is better for him, for his non-existence is better than his existence and his death better than his life.

Therefore, my advice to you is, endeavour as much as ye can to show kindness toward all men, deal with perfect love, affection and devotion with all the individuals of humanity. Remove from amongst yourselves racial, patriotic, religious, sectional, political, commercial, industrial and agricultural prejudices, so that you may become freed from all human restrictions and become the founders of the structures of the oneness of the world of humanity. All the countries are one country; all the nations are the children of one Father. The struggle for existence among the ferocious wolves has become the cause of all these differences and strifes; otherwise the expanse of the world is spacious and the table of the Bounties of the Almighty is spread in all the regions.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá
Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 11 November 1910.

Dr Faríd

To Dr Faríd.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of the Blessed Perfection!

Your epistle dated 30 October reached me at Ramleh.¹ ... Regarding my coming to America and the assignment and preparation of homes or of places for me, I wrote a letter not long since through you to the maid-servant of God Lua (Getsinger) wherein I mentioned that abiding places in the hearts are needed; that is, the beloved in America must become united and assembled in love so that it [I:17:3] may prove a magnet to attract 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Thus will I journey to America with perfect love and zeal. When a fragrant breeze reaches my nostrils I will certainly come.

Convey my longing greetings to Mr Kinney. Convey the utmost love to Mr Lennon.

I am hopeful through the bounty of God that the assemblies which were visited by you in the company of Lua will flourish and grow in the spread of the glad-tidings.

Regarding the beloved and the maid-servants of the Merciful in New York, and their securing a home in My Name wherein they gather together—in reality I am present among them in life and heart though absent in body.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

To his Honour, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou real beloved!

The letter which thou best written in regard to the happiness and joy, beatitude and rejoicing of the American believers concerning the trip of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the country of

¹ ar-Ramlah, a city in central Israel.

Joseph of Canaan, and likewise their expectation of my going to America was perused. However, the latter event is depended upon several conditions which are already explained in a former Tablet. The attractive power is necessary.

We must all with the utmost joy and cheerfulness sacrifice our lives for the Truth! Consider how I have left aside a thousand works and with the greatest attraction am writing to thee with my own hand; so that in every moment thou mayst raise a wave and in devotion in the Love of God and the spending of thy life in the Cause, thou mayst make every possible effort.

I have written a Tablet with my own hand for the *Star of the West*. Print it in its pages.¹

Upon thee be Bahá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 24 December 1910.

I:17, 19 January 1911 [I:17:4]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt²

A call to the American Bahá’ís
From Muḥammad Yazdí.

Praise be to God! that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has left the gloomy city of imprisonment for the freedom of the world. His only aim is to teach and raise the Standard of the Cause. When he was under the surveillance of the authorities in ‘Akká and confined to a limited prison life, he created the spirit of happiness and joy in every heart, and never complained, neither did he show distress or sadness on account of that imprisonment. When freedom was proclaimed in Turkey, a constitution declared, the prisoners set free, and a new era of brotherhood and good fellowship ushered in among the various sects, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, while happy for the freedom of the people, longed for his own imprisonment. His opinion was that under all circumstances he ought to serve the world of humanity, and while living in ‘Akká he served it effectively, even though a prisoner; but being freed, nothing was left for him to do in ‘Akká, and, like a bird released from its cage, he soared to other climes and countries.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in all his divine characteristics, is intensely human and keenly alive to the joys and sorrows of existence. There is no one who feels more acutely the sufferings of humanity than he and no one loves his fellow-men more than he. Here, in Alexandria, he lives exactly like other men; he goes into the stores, into the mosques, into the churches, into the schools and into the prisons. He converses just as kindly and amiably with the humblest man in the street as with the highest in the land. His matchless and magnetic kindness attracts all, whether ignorant or wise, rich or poor; he is no respecter of persons and in some instances, after a half-hour’s conversation, his bitterest enemy has become his staunchest friend.

His coming into Egypt has added great enthusiasm and zeal to the hearts of the friends. He has uplifted them from a state of comparative oblivion to a world-wide celebrity. He is no more a possible myth or a fable; he is there, standing “powerful, mighty and supreme!” The sun of his presence radiates the light of love and compassion; people [I:17:5] see him feel the wonderful influence of his presence, talk with him, walk with him as did the men of old walking with Jesus of Nazareth along the shores of Galilee. They can no longer doubt him and his Teachings.

When he first arrived in Egypt, a great cry and clamour was raised by the representatives of the people (the newspapers). All were expressing opinions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. No one could

¹ See Tablet on editorial page.

² Fourth of a series pertaining to the stay of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt. Previous items are in *Star of the West*, I:12, p. 1; I:14, pp. 1-3; and I:15, pp. 2-3.

form a just and impartial view of him. Facts were exaggerated and misrepresentations abounded in every paper. One writer expressed the opinion that 'Abdu'l-Bahá hates all religions, that his followers throughout the world are very few, and that his Teachings are destructive to the well-being and prosperity of human society.

Such were the conditions when 'Abdu'l-Bahá with his might and his glory, his meekness and humility, entered the land of Pharaoh. But lo? after a short time the clouds of misrepresentation were dispelled and the light of reality shone forth with great splendour. So much so, that at present there is not one dissenting voice in the land of Egypt about the greatness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Moggatam*,¹ one of the most influential Arabic newspapers, in a long article of 28 November 1910, comes out valiantly and defends in most eloquent terms the Teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Not being satisfied with this, the editor quotes from the Book of Aqdas wherein Bahá'u'lláh commands all despotic rulers to lay aside their absolutism and accept the constitution and establish in their kingdoms the Houses of Justice. He even upbraids in the strongest terms the other newspaper writers, calling attention to the responsibilities and duties of their positions—that is, to mirror forth facts and realities and not falsehoods and accusations. He says that every writer has been revelling in a riotous feast of exaggeration and derision; that they have gone beyond the limit of politeness and courtesy, which attributes differentiate man from beast. Now, if we compare such articles with what first appeared concerning 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we will find them as different as day from night.

Some people have expressed anxieties and fears because of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's possible visit to America; they think that the newspapers will write sensational articles and ridicule the Cause. Such people are very short-sighted. They have not realized deep- [I:17:6] ly, nor superficially, the force of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence. Neither have they dreamed of the magnetic influence of his Highness (rather his Kindness, ah, me!). He is a man whose very appearance will solve all the perplexed anxieties of the visionaries of disaster. We as Bahá'ís have nothing to be afraid of. We are the spiritual physicians of the world; we are the torch-bearers of the ideal civilization; we are the teachers of the Kingdom of Abhá. Should we be afraid to receive the One who is the source of all our inspiration and all our light? America must raise a gladsome voice of spiritual beatitude, spread a heavenly banquet and be prepared, for "lie shall come as a thief in the night." Future historians will record the coming of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to America as a great and momentous event. Broaden your vision and look into the future, when the nations of America shall celebrate, from one end of the continent to the other, the anniversary of the day when 'Abdu'l-Bahá set foot upon "the land of the brave and the free!" Future generations will sing in anthems and songs the resplendent glory of such a day. Children will be taught to respect and love that day. America is on the threshold of a great spiritual awakening, and it must arise to fulfil the responsibilities of such a wonderful and glowing promise. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written to you in several Tablets that he will come as soon as the friends in that country are united as bands of steel or a golden chain of life. Now it depends upon you. You must show to the world that you are united, that you are worthy to receive him in your midst. Let not this opportunity slip from your grasp. Arise, work, band together, remove the difficulties from his path. This day is not for fretting and discontentment, nor imagining the possibility of ridicule by the masses. Have you not faith in him? Has he not grappled with and solved the greatest problems for the past sixty years? Has he not conversed with the wisest men of the age? Again we say, prepare the way for his coming! Let not your minds be troubled with outside questions. He is able to change the ridicule into praise, the enmity into friendship and the derision into exaltation. When he arrived in Alexandria we were not prepared to receive him. There is no need of preparing houses and establishments for his reception; the probability is that he will take a place for him- [I:17:7] self when he arrives. The first thing that he did when he arrived in Alexandria was to take a house, and all the friends from far and near

¹ *al-Muqattam*, published in Cairo (1889–1952).

flocked around him. He does not want your houses and palaces, but your hearts. Prepare your hearts, purify your hearts, cleanse your hearts, that he may find a place therein!

The life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is simple; his attitude is humble: his needs are very few. You think that if he should come to America you must have a house prepared and surround him with luxuries of modern civilization. Far from it! With love, unity and harmony, shining like stars of heaven in your midst, a little cottage is greater than the imperial palace of the kings. All through his life his sole purpose and aim has been to spread the fragrances of God, to serve the Kingdom of Abhá, and to sacrifice himself for the good of the world. He has done all these; nay, rather, his services to man cannot be measured by any criterion. His life, like unto a tempestuous sea, is ever in motion, casting pearls of significance and truth upon its shore. Humanity owes to him a debt that can never be paid with money or gratitude. Notwithstanding all he has done for the world, hearken to what he says in a recent Tablet:

“The invisible hand has opened the doors, and wisdom requires that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá hasten to the country of Egypt; for he is infinitely ashamed and chagrined that he has not yet been assisted in servitude. Perchance, through travelling in this land, he may be assisted in the future to some small service. Now we are living in the country of Canaan and are supplicating day and night at the Threshold of Mercifulness and beg confirmation and assistance for the friends of God, so that all of us may participate and become partners in the servitude of the Holy Threshold and be aided in accomplishing one service.”

(Signed) Muḥammad Yazdí

I:17, 19 January 1911 [I:17:8]

Report from Sydney Sprague¹

... If we are asked the number of Bahá’ís in the world, is it not better to reply that it is impossible to know, and that we care much more about the quality of the believers than the quantity? This is the policy of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the following incident will show:

Two nights ago, an American journalist, Mr William Ellis, representing The Continent, came especially to Alexandria to interview ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It was my privilege to be the translator on this occasion. One of the first questions Mr Ellis asked was: “How many followers have you?” The answer was: “We have no statistics and we do not consider these things important. It is the quality of the believers we care for. If a few are characterized with the attributes of God and live according to the divine Teachings, it is praiseworthy. Five diamonds are worth more than five million stones.” Again the journalist asked: “Have you not many followers in America?” “I have a *few* friends in different cities who love me,” was the reply. “Is it not true that half of Persia is Bahá’í?” persisted the journalist. “No; it is not,” replied ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “but many there who are not Bahá’ís, are influenced by our Teachings.” “Are there not many followers in the Turkish Empire?” “No,” and again ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reiterated the non-importance of numbers. The journalist seemed very much taken aback. He evidently expected ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to boast of a large following. What an example ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has set us!

Then Mr Ellis asked briefly: “What are the Teachings of the Bahá’í Revelation and in what does it differ from other religions?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “While all the other religions are hating and denouncing each other, the Bahá’ís are the friends of all religions and the lovers of all peoples, and their aim is to unite and harmonize all.” There were many other questions which drew forth wonderful, illuminating explanations from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. I have not the time to write them now, but he on the lookout for an account of this interview in *The Continent*. Mr Ellis is on his way to Persia to write articles about that country, so he may write of the Cause there. [I:17:9]

¹ Extracts

... When Mr Ellis asked him if he was benefited by the change of air, he replied: "Certainly, one who has been a prisoner for forty years must he benefited to breathe another air."

I:17, 19 January 1911 [I:17:12]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the *Star of the West*. The original, which is reproduced herewith, is in his own handwriting:

HE IS GOD!

O thou *Star of the West*!

Be thou happy! Be thou happy! Shouldst thou continue to remain firm and eternal, ere long thou shalt become the Star of the East and shalt spread in every country and clime. Thou art the first paper of the Bahá'ís which is organized in the country of America. Although for the present thy subscribers are limited, thy form is small and thy voice weak, yet shouldst thou stand unshakeable, become the object of the attention of the friends and the centre of the generosity of the leaders of the faith who are firm in the Covenant, in the future thy subscribers will become hosts after hosts like unto the waves of the sea; thy volume will increase, thy arena will [I:17:13] become vast and spacious and thy voice and fame will be raised and become world-wide—and at last thou shalt become the first paper of the world of humanity. Yet all these depend upon firmness, firmness, firmness!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 24 December 1910.

I:18, 7 February 1911 [I:18:4]

Message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to *The Christian Commonwealth*

30 November 1910.

To the Editor of *The Christian Commonwealth*.

My Dear Friend: I have received your letter, for the contents of which I am extremely grateful to you. I understand the aims of your movement, and hope that with the greatest spirituality and by the pursuit of truth, it will succeed in bringing about the unification of mankind.

Enclosed you will find some of the sayings of Bahá'u'lláh: insert them in *The Christian Commonwealth*.

Be so kind as to accept for yourself and your honourable society my kindest regards.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The extracts enclosed from the sayings of Bahá'u'lláh illustrate the universality of the Bahá'í outlook. We quote the following:

"Today the universal religion of God, the great Church of God, is divided into diverse faiths which are at enmity one with the other. All the powerful [I:18:5] religions have appeared in the East; their differences arise only from the necessities of epoch, time, or century. O people of Bahá, therefore fasten securely the girdle of endeavour so that the discussions and strifes between the various sects of the world may be destroyed. For the love of God, I call upon you, His servants, to bestir yourselves, in this momentous matter!"

"Associate with all religions in reverence and with tolerance."

"O peoples of the world! Ye are all leaves of the same branch and plants in the same garden; live in love, concord, friendship and union. I declare by the Sun of Truth that it is the

light of fellowship which makes the heavens full of brightness.”

“If you possess a saying, a treasure, of which other peoples are deprived, tell it to them with affection The message of the prophets, the revelations of the sacred scriptures have no other aim but the knowledge of God, and the unity of mankind.”

“O peoples, do not spill blood and do not seize the goods of others. By my life, the sword of good character and kindness is sharper than a sword of iron. Those men are truly wise who are decorated with the ornaments of science and character; these are the head of the body of mankind. The ruling of man has always been in their hands. I ask God to assist them to do what He wishes, what pleases Him. Truly He is the Master of creation, the Lord of the beginning and of the end!”

I:18, 7 February 1911 [I:18:7]

The Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in America

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Through Zia Effendi,¹ the son of Muṣṭafá Afandí Baghdádí, to the maid-servant of God, Mrs Corinne True, Chicago, Illinois.

Upon her be Bahá’u’lláh!

HE IS GOD!

O thou attracted maid-servant of God!

Verily I read thy letter which indicated thy steadfastness in the Covenant of God and evinced thy walking in the Straight Path toward the Kingdom of God.

Verily I entered in the country of Egypt, trusting in God, attracted to His Kingdom and enkindled with the Fire of His Love, hoping to arise in the Servitude of the Threshold of Bahá, and I am always, day and night, serving. There is no rest, tranquillity or composure.

I beg of God to encircle ye with the Most Great Bounty and confirm ye with the Most Eminent Grace which consists of building the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár of America in Chicago! This foundation will have the greatest effect in the hearts of the people of faithfulness. Therefore, endeavour ye with all your power and generosity so that ye may raise this first foundation in the Name of Bahá on the continent of America.

I supplicate God to pour upon thee heavenly blessings and that thy family be protected from every sadness and sorrow in this world.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 11 January 1911.

I:18, 7 February 1911 [I:18:8]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To the Editors of the *Star of the West*:

Upon them be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye firm ones! O ye steadfast ones!

The publication of the *Star of the West*² is conducive to the happiness and beatitude of the

¹ Ḍiyá’ Afandí.

² Continuing the *Bahai News*, after 21 March 1911.

friends; for it is a clear mirror in which the pictures of the events and happenings in the Cause and the news [I:18:9] of the progress of the Kingdom throughout the world are reflected and can be observed. Praise flows from the tongue of every growing and firm believer after reading it, for he becomes informed of the events and thoughts. Unquestionably, this publication shall serve the world of humanity. If it is continued, its arena shall become broadened and it shall attain to such a station as to bring about the unity of the East and of the West.

Do not become discouraged, nor yet dispirited! Show ye firmness and steadfastness, and, if possible, publish it in a larger size and more legible characters.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 26 January 1911.

I:19, 2 March 1911 [I:19:1]

Recent Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Madame Aurelia Bethlen

Through Mr MacNutt and Mirza Ahmad to Madame Aurelia Bethlen.

HE IS GOD!

O thou seeker of Truth!

The letter which thou hast written through Mr MacNutt was received. As he is a beloved channel, I will immediately answer your letter, although I have little time.

You have expressed your longing for my presence in that country. Although I, too, have infinite longing to meet the believers on that continent, yet that region must attain to the capacity of attracting the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. A harmonious and wonderful banquet must be prepared, at which every kind of heavenly food may be served: after which you may send me an invitation.

That heavenly food consists of deeds which are in accord with the Divine Teachings. The first food is the Love of God. The second food is the attraction to the breaths of the Holy Spirit. The third food is union and harmony among all the believers. The fourth food is sincerity, trustworthiness, kindness, purity of intention and service to all humankind.

Should ye prepare and serve such a delicious, sweet and tempting banquet unquestionably 'Abdu'l-Bahá will hasten to America to partake of that food. Therefore endeavour ye with all your might that this Food be prepared.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 10 February 1911. [I:19:2]

Marie Watson

Through Dr Faríd to the near maid-servant of God, the daughter of the Kingdom, Marie Watson.

Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou candle of the Love of God!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written that the daughter of the Kingdom, Ásíyih, is

studying Persian, and that thou art teaching Mírzá Faragollah Khán,¹ English.

Turn to the Kingdom of Abhá, seek assistance and put forth effort so that all may soon learn Persian, and his honour, Mírzá Faragollah Khán may also acquire the mastery of the English tongue.

Thou hast learned of the conditions of my coming to America. I beg of God that the beloved in America may become so enlightened that the lights of their love may flood the “Turk and the Tajik,” and that an attractive magnet may be brought forth in that country, capable of attracting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with all power to those regions, and this is not far from His Mercy.

Regarding the meeting you have established in New York: I hope that through the Divine Confirmation it may prove to be a gathering of the Love of God.

Convey the utmost kindness from me to the daughter of Mr and Mrs Sheber, Marguerite, the daughter of the Kingdom, and say that the olive tree is an emblem of peace and concord, and the olive is the fruit and result thereof.

God willing thou shalt attain the delicious fruit of peace and concord and thou shalt place a bouquet of roses from the Garden of the Paradise of Abhá at the Heavenly Feast spread before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, i.e., God willing thou shalt attain such perfections as resemble a bouquet of flowers and thou shalt offer it to the heavenly table.

Thou hast written that in a house of a Theosophist thou prepared a feast of joy and a fête of gladness. This Society is ready for hearing the Word of God. Treat them with the utmost love, kindness, unity and oneness, so that the attractive power of the Word of God may draw them to the Sun of Reality.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(signed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Amín U. Faríd, 20 February 1911. [1:19:3]

Dr Amín U. Faríd

To Dr Amín U. Faríd.

Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art unique!

Thy letter dated 19 January 1911, was received. You have written of the good news from California and from Chicago. I hope that the news from these places may become better and that the glad-tidings may come of the Word of God becoming effective in all parts of the American continent; nay, rather, that it may move the whole of the western hemisphere.

If the beloved of God should unite and should agree as it is requisite, thou canst rest assured that in the shortest space of time the Sun of the Heavens (spiritual heavens) will so shine from the Kingdom of Abhá as to rend asunder all the veils of superstitions.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Amín U. Faríd, 23 February 1911. [1:19:3]

Children’s commune

Through Shahnáz Khánum.

¹ Mírzá Farajulláh Khán.

Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O my God! O my God! Thou seest these children, branches of the Tree of Life, birds of the Garden of Safety, pearls of the shells of the ocean of Thy Mercy and roses of the rose-garden of Thy Guidance.

O Lord! Verily we glorify in Thy praise, sanctify Thee and supplicate to the Kingdom of Thy Mercifulness to make us candles of guidance, stars of the horizon of the Eternal Majesty among the creatures; and teach us from Thy Knowledge, O Glory of the Most Glorious!

(signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Translated by Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, 23 February 1911.

Fragment of a Tablet to Dr Faríd

In a recent Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Dr Faríd, the following appears: "God willing, through the endeavour of the friends in America, may the Bird of Paradise be revealed in all its beauty in the Philippine Islands." This refers to a command received some time ago that the Cause would be served exceedingly if one or two of the friends would journey to the Philippines and convey the Message there.

I:19, 2 March 1911 [I:19:4]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt¹

The following article concerning 'Abdu'l-Bahá ('Abbás Afandí) appeared in the 19 January issue of "El Ahram" (The Pyramids),² an Arabic newspaper printed in Cairo:

Abbas Effendi the Leader of the Bahais
Statements regarding his morals and religion

Continually, the greatness of the Leader of the Bahais, Abbas Effendi, is the topic of conversation, among the men of affairs and statesmen. The wise men of Alexandria, and the nobility of that city are paying him great respect and homage. Latterly he has received many letters from his numerous followers in the United States, requesting him to travel to those parts so that they may meet him. They have prepared a great house in New York in accord with his station and position amongst them. However, it is probable that he will not respond to their invitation, on account of the remoteness of the country and the length of the trip.

We have received a letter from the celebrated scholar, Schokry Effendi,³ who has just arrived from Syria, in which he praises Abbas Effendi, explains his religion and produces certain arguments in his favour.

He says: "The wisdom of Abbas Effendi, our respected guest, descends from a family which was noble in lineage and descent in the Kingdom of Persia. He is the son of the 'Dweller of Paradise', Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, and he is the successor of his Father. In regard to his morality and character, he is the pattern of dignity and perfection. He is gracious, generous, noble-minded, philanthropic, charitable and full of benevolence. He is very kind to the poor and patient to the indigent. He does not make any difference between the followers of any religion, whether they be Christians, Jews, Muslims or Brahmans. To him all are the same, he looks upon them as part of the same family of humanity and not their particular religion. The aim of his Faith is the unity of religions in the world and their equality among the children of men. He thinks that the differences of religions are impeding the

¹ Fifth of a series of special news items pertaining to the sojourn of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt.

² *al-Ahrám* ("The Pyramids") (5 August 1875-) is the most widely circulating Egyptian daily newspaper, and the second oldest after *al-Waqá'i' al-Masriyyah*. It is majority owned by the Egyptian government.

³ Shoghi Effendi (Shawqí Afandí).

progress of the world' and he believes that the removal of these differences will benefit mankind.

"This religion has spread greatly and is carried to Europe and America so much so that today the number of Bahá'ís has reached the number of fifteen million, men, women and children included. Many of these Bahá'ís are in New York, Chicago and India, Persia, Egypt and Syria, and it is continually growing and spreading.

"The Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh is in 'Akká, called Bahjí and every year the Bahá'ís come from all parts of the world to visit it.

"Twice I have called upon Abbas Effendi while in Ramleh and have seen the poor and indigent gathered around his house waiting for him to come out and when he appears, they beg alms and he gives to them. This is just a short sketch of his generous qualities and I confess my inability to do it justice. His physical appearance is medium size, white hair, penetrating eyes, smiling face and wonderful countenance, courteous, and his manner, simplicity itself, disliking any ostentation and [I:19:5] show. He is a wise man a philosopher and his knowledge of the Turkish, Persian and Arabic is unsurpassed.

"He knows the history of nations and understands the causes of their rise and fall.

"He is sixty years old and on account of certain nervous ailments he has come to Egypt for change of air. He personally reads all the articles and letters sent him from all parts of the world, and answers the most important of them in his Persian hand writing which is famous for its beauty. Many of the great men of this country and delegates from other nations have met him and he gives a personal interview to each one of them. No one has visited him without leaving him impressed by his presence and praising his qualities and wondering at his magnanimity and his astonishing mind.

"Concerning the reports of his leaving 'Akká and the statement that he is against the Constitution, this was without foundation and the proof of this is his endeavour to unite the religions in the world and establish equality among nations. If such were his qualities, working against religions and constitution, and on the other hand trying to bring union and harmony amongst them, how can we reconcile the two? This is indeed far from him, for he is a man who advocated the Constitution from the very beginning and before the Turkish people received their Constitution. But the real object of his coming to Egypt is for the change of air and his physical condition. This is the real truth we are proclaiming at the top of our voice and if there is any virtue in it, it requires no praise or blame."

II:1, 21 March 1911 [II:1:6]

Tablet concerning the School of Tarbíyat

The following Tablet has been received from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in regard to the important matter of sending two teachers to the School of Tarbíyat:

HE IS GOD.

O Thou Servant of the Blessed Perfection!

They have written from Ṭíhrán that there is need of a scientific teacher for the School of Tarbíyat. He must be efficient in science as well as the English language; for at present there is no man in the School of Tarbíyat who is a scientist or linguist. They are in need of both, science and the English language.

Therefore, consult with the believers of God and select one soon, from among the American Bahá'ís, who is efficient in science and arts, and send him to Ṭíhrán. He will receive a salary sufficient to sustain him with the utmost ease while there.

Likewise select a woman teacher who may fill the position of principal as well as teacher, and send her without delay. The woman must have a share of the knowledge of sciences and be proficient in woman's work, such as sewing, housekeeping, hygiene and household economics, etc.

This matter is very necessary, and you must give to it the utmost importance and exert yourselves to bring this about; so that the association of the Interdependence of the West may render assistance to the East.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 23 February 1911

II:1, 21 March 1911 [II:1:8]

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The following tablet to the Board of Officers,¹ in answer to a supplication written to 'Abdu'l-Bahá by the Corresponding Secretary was received:

Through Áqá Dīyá' Afandí, son of M. Muşţafá, to the maid-servants of God; Mrs Ida Brush, Mrs Mary B. Grayson, Mrs Fannie G. Lesch, Mrs Elizabeth Greenleaf, Mrs Grace Foster, Mrs Christine Loeding, Miss Laura E. Jones, Miss Mary Lesch, Shahnáz Khánum (Mrs Louise R. Waite).

HE IS GOD!

O ye believers who are attracted to the Centre of Lights!

Verily there have been various assemblies in America which were organized many times and out of these but few remained firm.

I supplicate to the Divine Majesty for the establishment of every assembly which hath turned its face towards God, left the scattered desires, abandoned the self and passion and become firm in the Cause of God as solid mountains, which are not agitated by the winds and violent storms.

Then, O ye maid-servants of the Merciful, it is incumbent upon ye to be firm, sincere and highly energetic and in great unity; severed from all save God; effaced and annihilated in the love of God; sacrificing yourselves under all conditions and circumstances; and glorious, so that ye may be filled with the love of Bahá and that in ye nothing remains except the abundance of Bahá. Should ye arise for these great gifts, ye may rest assured that the confirmations of the Holy Spirit will follow ye in every time and instant.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, 9 February 1911

II:1, 21 March 1911 [II:1:10]

New Year's greeting from 'Abdu'l-Bahá²

HE IS GOD!

O ye children of the Kingdom!

It is New Year; that is to say, the rounding of the cycle of the year. A year is the expression of a cycle (of the sun); but now is the beginning of a cycle of Reality, a New Cycle, a New Age, a

¹ Chicago, Illinois.

² Revealed for the American friends in 1906, who had sent 'Abdu'l-Bahá a New Year greeting. (21 March)

New Century, a New Time and a New Year. Therefore, it is very blessed.

I wish this blessing to appear and become manifest in the faces and characteristics of the believers, so that they, too, may become a new people, and having found new life and been baptized with fire and spirit, may make the world a new world, to the end that the old earth may disappear and the new earth appear; old ideas depart and new thoughts come; old garments be cast aside and new garments put on; ancient politics whose foundation is war be discarded and modern politics founded on peace raise the standard of victory; the new star shine and gleam and the new sun illumine and radiate; new flowers bloom; the new spring become known; the new breeze blow; the new [II:1:11] bounty descend; the new tree give forth new fruit; the new voice become raised and this new sound reach the ears, that the new will follow the new, and all the old furnishings and adornments be cast aside and new decorations put in their places.

I desire for you all that you will have this great assistance and partake of this great bounty, and that in spirit and heart you will strive and endeavour until the world of war become the world of peace; the world of darkness the world of light; satanic conduct be turned into heavenly behaviour; the ruined places become built up; the sword be turned into the olive branch; the flash of hatred become the flame of the Love of God and the noise of the gun the voice of the Kingdom; the soldiers of death the soldiers of life; all the nations of the world one nation; all races as one race; and all national anthems harmonized into one melody. Then this material realm will be Paradise, the earth Heaven and the world of Satan become the world of Angels.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:1, 21 March 1911 [II:1:11]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, to the attracted maid-servant of God, Mrs Corinne True, Chicago, Illinois.

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved maid-servant of God!

Your detailed letter was perused and from its contents it became evident that the debt on the land of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is clear. This news made the hearts happy and caused infinite rejoicing.

Now it is hoped that the believers of God may show magnanimity and raise a great sum for the building, so that the foundation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár may be laid, and, perchance, God willing, the cornerstone of the foundation may be laid by the hands of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. [II:1:12]

This confirmation will descend upon the people of America if they will all arise and endeavour with great courage to establish union and harmony, so that every trace of difference may be uprooted and they may all become as one heart and one soul.

Convey the wonderful Abhá greeting to all the friends and the maid servants of the Merciful.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 4 March 1911.

Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh

To the Sulţán of Turkey.¹

Describing the sufferings of himself and his followers, after his arrival in 'Akká.

HE IS THE POSSESSOR IN HIS MIGHT AND POWER!

The Supreme Pen proclaims:

O, thou personage, who considerest thyself the greatest of all men, while looking upon the Divine Youth, thinking him to be the lowest of men, yet through him the Eye of the Supreme Concourse is brightened and illumined. This Youth has never made nor will he ever make a request of thee: For from the beginning every one of the Manifestations of Mercifulness and the dawning-Places of the Glory of the Almighty, who have stepped forth from the Realm of Immortality upon the arena of existence and shone forth with great splendour for the quickening of the dead, men like thee have considered those Sanctified Souls and Temples of Oneness upon whom the reformation of the world depends, as the people of strife, and wrongdoers. Verily, their names (the deniers) are forgotten and ere long thy name will also be forgotten and thou shalt find thyself in great loss. According to thy opinion this quickener of the World and its Peace-Maker is culpable and seditious. What crime have the women, children and suffering babes committed, to merit thy wrath, oppression and hate? In every religion and community the children are considered innocent, nor does the Pen of Divine Command hold them responsible, yet the reign of thy tyranny and despotism has surrounded them. If thou art the follower of any religion or sect, read thou the Heavenly Books, the Inspired Epistles and the Divine Writings, so that thou mayest realize the irresponsibility of children. On the other hand, even those people who do believe in God, have never committed such crimes. In everything an effect is hidden, and no one has denied the effects of things except an ignorant one who is completely denied and deprived of intelligence. Therefore, undoubtedly the lamentation of these children and the cries of these wronged ones will produce a great effect.

You have persecuted a number of souls who have shown no opposition your country and who have instigated no revolution against the government; nay, rather, days and nights they have been peacefully engaged in the mentioning of God. You have pillaged their properties and through your tyrannical acts, all they had was taken from them. When the order was issued for the banishment of this Youth, these souls began to lament, but the officers who constituted my guard mentioned that these souls had committed no wrong, nor has the government banished them, but if they desire they may follow you for no one will oppose them. Consequently, they paid all their own [II:2:4] expenses and leaving their property behind, they were contented with the Countenance of this Youth and trusting upon God they departed again with the True One, until the fortress of 'Akká became the place of the incarceration of Bahá'. The day after the arrival, the officials of the army surrounded the men, women and children and carried them to the gloomy dungeon of the barrack. The first night they were given neither bread nor water, for the sentinels were guarding the door of the prison and permitted no one to leave the place. They did not consider the plight of these wronged ones. Water was asked for, but it was refused. It is now some time since we are all imprisoned in this dungeon; although we were living for five years in Adrianople and all the people, whether ignorant or wise, rich or poor, testified to the sanctity and holiness of these servants.

When departing from Adrianople one of the believers of God sacrificed himself with his own hand, for he could not see this Wronged One in the hands of the tyrants. On our way we

¹ *Lawḥ-i Ra'ís* III (Tablet to 'Alí Páshá III). See Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. III, p. 33.

were transferred three times, from one ship to another, and it is evident that a number of the children suffered under these severe circumstances. When we left the steamer, they separated four of the friends from us, and prevented them from following, and upon the departure of this Youth, one of the four, named 'Abdu'l-Gaffar,¹ threw himself into the sea and no one has ever found any trace of him. This is a drop of the ocean of persecution which surrounded and encircled us. Notwithstanding these things, they are not yet satisfied, and every day the officers of the government are increasing their hard-heartedness, nor is it ended; day and night they are forming new intrigues and adding to our sufferings. From the government supplies, these prisoners receive three loaves of bread to last for twenty-four hours, and no one is able to eat it.

From the beginning of the world, no such persecutions have been seen or heard of! I declare by the One who has commanded Bahá to speak, between the heavens and the earth, there is no name or mention for you equal to those who sacrificed their spirits, bodies and property for the love of God, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Omnipotent! Before God, a handful of dust is greater than your kingdom, sovereignty, glory and dominion, and should He desire, He would scatter you as the sand of the desert, and ere long His wrath shall overtake thee, revolutions shall appear in your midst and your countries will be divided! Then you will weep and lament and nowhere will you find help and protection. The mentioning of these facts is not for the sake of your becoming mindful, for already the wrath of God has surrounded you, but you have not nor will you become mindful; neither is it for the sake of reciting the persecutions which have descended upon these holy souls, for they are intoxicated with the Wine of the Merciful and they are so exhilarated with the clear Salsabíl of Divine Providence, that should the persecutions of all the world descend upon them in the Path of God, they are satisfied, nay, rather, grateful; they never had nor will they ever have any complaints to offer. At every moment the blood in their bodies begs and supplicates from the Lord of both worlds, that it be shed upon the ground in His Path; likewise their heads yearn to be raised upon a spear for the sake of the Beloved of the heart and soul. For several times the tests of God have descended upon you, and you were not mindful; one was a conflagration which burned the city with the Fire of Justice, so much so that poets have composed poems about it, declaring that such a conflagration has never appeared before; notwithstanding this your negligence increased. Then the cholera came, and still you remained heedless. Be ye watchful, for the wrath of God is prepared, and ere long ye shall behold that which is descended from the Pen of Command. Have ye [II:2:5] thought that your glory is everlasting, or did ye dream that your kingdom would remain forever? No, by the life of God! Your glory is not eternal, and our humiliation will not last. This humiliation is the diadem of all the glories, and only man in his perfection can comprehend it.

When this Youth was a child and had not yet reached the age of maturity, one of my brothers intended to marry in Tíhrán and according to the custom of that country, for seven days and nights they were engaged in feasting and banqueting. The programme for the last day of the entertainments for the guests was the play of Sulṭán Salím. The ministers, the grandees and officials of the city were there in a great throng, and this Youth was sitting in one of the galleries of the building and was observing the scenes. Then they raised a great tent in the middle of the court; representations of human forms only a few inches in height would come out of the tent and cry: "The king is coming, arrange the seats in order." Then the other figures came out, sweeping the round while a number were sprinkling the streets with water; then another picture was presented, who was supposed to be the herald, acquainting the people to be ready for review before His Majesty, the Sulṭán.

Then the ministers came, with hat and shawl, according to the Persian custom; others were

¹ 'Abdu'l-Ghaffár.

present with clubs, while a number of others were garbed chamberlains, aides-de-camp, farráshes¹ and executioners with instruments of punishment. All these men were lined according to their station and class. At last the king appeared, with sovereign power and shining diadem upon his head, and with splendour and glory walked slowly and majestically, and with perfect calmness, tranquillity and composure, seated himself upon the throne. At that moment the noise of the guns and the music of the national anthem was raised, and the smoke surrounded the tent and the king. When the air was cleared, it was seen that the king was on his throne, and the ministers, the magistrates and secretaries had taken their places according to their rank. Immediately, a thief, captured by the police, was brought before the king, and royal order was issued to behead him. Then the chief of the executioners took the captive and decapitated him, and a red fluid, which was like blood, was seen by all the spectators. While the Sulţán was consulting with some of his ministers, the news was brought in that a certain person had become a rebel. The Sulţán issued orders that several regiments of soldiers and artillery men be sent to the scene and quell the disturbance. After a few minutes the thunderous noise of guns and artillery was heard behind the tent, and we were told they were engaged in battle. This Youth became astonished and bewildered at these affairs. Then the review ended and the curtain descended.

After twenty minutes a man came out from behind the tent with a box under his arm. I asked him, "What is this box? Where is the king and all the men?" He answered that all these great things and manifest objects, such kings, princes and ministers, glory, majesty, power and sovereignty that we beheld were enclosed in this box.

I declare by the Lord who has created all things through His Word, that from that day all the conditions of this world and its greatness are like that play before the eyes of this Youth. It has not nor will ever have the weight of a mustard seed. I was wondering greatly that the people glorify themselves in these affairs, notwithstanding this, the people of insight will discern with the eye of certainty the end of the glory of every great one before beholding it. I have seen nothing except I have discerned its transiency, and God testifies to this. It is incumbent upon every soul in these few days of life to spend them in truthfulness and justice and if he be not confirmed with the knowledge of the True One, he can at least walk in the path of equity and intelligence. [II:2:6]

Ere long all these apparent things, manifest treasuries, worldly wealth, valiant soldiers, beautiful dresses and haughty souls, will be enclosed in the box-like tomb, similar to the box which contained all the players, and all this quarrel, strife and so-called honours are like the play of the children before the people of insight. Be ye admonished, and be not of those who see the Truth and yet deny. These things will not affect this Youth and the friends of the True One, for they are all prisoners and enchained, and will not nor will ever make any request of people like thee.

The point is this, that thou mayest raise thy head from the bed of negligence and become mindful and not oppose the servants of God without reason. Bear in mind that so far as power and strength remain in the body, thou shouldst remove persecutions from the oppressed ones. Shouldst thou have a little justice and behold with the eye of certainty in the affairs and differences of the ephemeral world, thou shalt acknowledge that all of them are like unto the above-mentioned play. Hearken unto the word of Truth! Be thou not proud on account of the world. Where are those people who were like unto thee, who claimed divinity in this earth without the permission of God, and desired to extinguish the Light of God and to demolish the foundation of Truth? Dost thou see any one of them? Be just! Then turn to God, perchance He may forgive the sins thou hast committed in this ephemeral life. Yet we know that thou shalt not become assisted in this, for through thy tyranny the Fire of Sinai flamed forth, the Spirit

¹ Farrásh, pl. farráshún.

wept, and the hearts of the angels bled.

O, ye people of the earth! Harken to the voice of this Oppressed One with the ear of the soul, and ponder ye deeply over the above-mentioned story. Perchance ye may not be burned with the fire of passion and desire, and be not prevented from the meeting of the True One, through the worthless things of the faithless world. Glory and abasement, poverty and wealth, trouble and tranquillity, all shall pass away, and ere long all the inhabitants of the earth shall return to the tomb. Therefore every possessor of insight must behold the immortal outlook, that peradventure, through the Bounties of the Eternal Sovereign, he may enter into the everlasting Kingdom and rest under the shade of the Tree of Command. Although the world is the place of treachery and duplicity, yet under all circumstances it reminds all the people with the idea of change. The passing of the father is an admonition for the son, and it reminds him that he, too, must pass away. It would have been well if the people of the world who are amassing great fortunes and are deprived of the True One, knew what would become of their great wealth. By the Life of Bahá, no one is cognizant of this fact except God, Glorified is His Station!

The philosopher, Avicenna—peace be upon him—says: “Be admonished, O ye whose hearts are darkened, be ye admonished O ye, whose faces are covered with the lines of age!” However, the majority of the people are asleep. The example of those souls is like unto a person who was so intoxicated with wine that he was showing the signs of affection to a dog, and showering upon him tender words of love and affection. When the morning of intelligence dawned, and the horizons of the heaven were illumined with the brilliant orb, he beheld that his beloved was only a dog; when ashamed regretful and remorseful on account of his act, he returned to his home.

Do thou not think that thou hast made this Youth powerless, or that thou hast conquered him. Thou art defeated by one of the servants, but knowest it not. The worst and lowest of creatures ruled over thee, and that is thy passion and desire, which has been condemned forever. If it were not on account of the consummate Wisdom of God thou wouldst have seen thy [II:2:7] weakness and the weakness of the people of the earth. This humility is the glory of My Cause, wert thou to know! This Youth has never loved nor will ever love to utter any word which is against courtesy. Verily, courtesy is My Garment with which we have adorned the temples of our favourite servants. Otherwise some of thy actions that thou thinkest are unknown, would be mentioned in this Tablet. O, thou possessor of might! These little children and these friends of God did not need the officers and soldiers as guards. After our arrival, one of the officers presented himself and after much conversation expressed his own innocence and thy crime. This Youth mentioned to him that: “Primarily, it was necessary to bring about a meeting of the Ulama¹ of the time and Himself so that the crimes of which these servants are accused might become evident. However, time has passed and according to thy statement thou art commanded to imprison us in the ‘most desolate city.’ But I have one wish to make of thee, and that is to request of His Majesty, the Sultán, to grant Me an audience of ten minutes in order that he may ask proofs and arguments which he thinks would establish the validity of the Word of God. If the proofs which he desires are made manifest on the part of God, he should then liberate these wronged ones and leave them to their own condition.”

He promised to take this message and send an answer, but we heard nothing more from him; although it is not the Station of this True One to present Himself before any person, for all the people are created for His worship: Yet for the sake of these little children and the number of women who are away from their country and people, we volunteered this act, but notwithstanding this, no result was produced. Omar is living and ready, ask of him so that the Truth may become manifest to thee. Now all these exiled ones are sick and lying in prison. No

¹ ‘Alím, pl. ‘ulamá’ (Pers. ‘ulamá’).

one but God the Mighty, the Glorious, knows what will happen to us.

During the first days two of these servants passed into the Supreme Concourse. One day one of the officers commanded that they could not remove those blessed bodies unless they were paid for the shroud and casket, although no one ever asked anything of them. At that time we possessed no means, and when we insisted that they leave the work to us and allow the friends to prepare the dead for burial, they refused. Finally they took a rug to the bazaar and sold it at auction, and delivered the money to the officers. Later on it became evident that they only dug the ground and laid the two blessed bodies in the one grave, although they had been doubly paid for shrouds and caskets. The pen is unable and the tongue is powerless to describe that which has descended upon us; however, all these poisons of tests are sweeter to this Youth than honey. I pray that under all circumstances the trials of the world in the Path of God and the Love of the Merciful may descend upon this Ocean of Significances. We beg of Him patience and endurance.

Thou art weak, and knowest it not. Couldst thou realize and be perfumed with the fragrance wafted from the direction of the Ancient Beauty, thou wouldst leave everything that thou hast in hand and hasten to come and live in one of the ruined rooms of this Most Great Prison. Ask thou of God that thou mayest attain to the age of maturity so that thou mayest recognize the beauty and ugliness of deeds and actions. Peace be upon those who follow guidance!

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, especially for the *Star of the West*.

II:2, 9 April 1911 [II:2:8]

Tablet to the editors of the *Star of the West*

O ye Editors of the *Star of the West*!

Your letter was received and your effort became known. I hope that, day by day, you may add to your effort and give importance to this newspaper, for it shall progress step by step and shall attain to the praiseworthy station.

The detailed Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in regard to Exhortations and Education are many. Ask for them and print them in the paper. You have permission. Whenever, in the future, detailed Tablets are written, copies will be sent to you for publication.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Extract from Tablet to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab in reference to the foregoing Tablet: "A new Tablet is revealed for the Editors of the *Star of the West*. Translate and forward it to them. The volume of this newspaper, God willing, will grow to the dimensions that you outline. There are many detailed and general Tablets by 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon purely exhortational matters, pertaining to moral and spiritual development. Print them by degrees in the *Star of the West*. Likewise, whenever, in the future, you receive any detailed Tablets, you should print them in its columns. God willing, the number of its subscribers shall also increase."

II:3, 28 April 1911 [II:3:3]

Words of Bahá'u'lláh

O my servant! O Joseph! Hear the tone of God and do not compare this day with any other day, neither the wonderful, sweet Word of God with any other words; look to the apparent matters with thine own eye and do not follow anyone in knowing the Greatest and Brilliant Orb.

In this day, the beloved of God must not hesitate or delay an instant in teaching the Cause of the Manifestation, and must summon the people continually, with great admonition and conciliating words, to the Religion of Majestic Oneness; because, verily, in this day, to the soul who is the cause of guidance to another soul the recompense of a martyr in the way of God will be assuredly recorded by the Pen of the Cause, for his deed.

II:3, 28 April 1911 [II:3:3]

The difference between material civilization and divine civilization

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá¹
To Mr Arthur S. Agnew, Chicago Illinois.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

Thou Servant of the Beauty of Abhá!

I received thy letter, and the books that thou hadst sent have been received. Convey, on my behalf, most wonderful Abhá, greetings unto Mr Herbert R. Windust, Miss Gertrude Buikema and Miss Mary Lesch. During hours of leisure, when in the middle of the night I engage in supplications, I shall beg for assistance and favour in their behalf. Indeed, they have made a great effort in the printing and publication of the letters (i.e., tablets).²

As to the difference between the natural (i.e., physical or material civilization which is in the present day in force, and the Divine civilization shall be of the results of The House of Justice: The material civilization prevents and safeguards people from committing evil deeds, through the force of the laws of retaliation and correction. Thus, you see how prohibitory laws and rules of correction are constantly in circulation and yet, by no means, any (adequate) law of retribution is to be found; and in all the cities of Europe and America spacious prison buildings have been founded and established for correcting and punishing the criminals.

But the Divine civilization will so train mankind that no soul will commit crimes, except rare (or few) individuals, which exception is of no importance whatsoever. Consequently, there is much difference between preventing people from evil actions and crimes through correction and retaliation or through violent punishment, and so training them, enlightening them and [II:3:4] spiritualizing them that they will shun crimes and evil deeds without any fear (however) of punishment, prevention or retaliation. Nay, they will consider crimes themselves as the greatest punishment and mightiest retribution, will be attracted to the virtues of the human world and devotedly spend their lives in that which is conducive to the enlightenment of mankind and to spreading qualities acceptable in the Threshold of the Almighty.

Consequently, consider what a difference and distinction is there between the material civilization and the Divine civilization! The natural civilization prevents men from doing harm and wrong through force and punishment and thus withholds them from committing crimes. But the Divine civilization so trains men that the human individuals avoid sins without having any fear from (material) punishment; and the very sin itself becomes unto them as the severest punishment. And they will engage in acquiring human virtues, gaining that by which mankind will be uplifted and that which will enlighten the human world with the utmost zeal and fervour.

O Thou Creator! Bring the American friends nigh unto the Kingdom of Abhá and suffer their deeds and actions to be in conformity with the Commandments and Exhortations

¹ First of a series of Tablets containing Exhortations to moral and spiritual development.

² Refers to the compilation of three volumes of *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, by the Bahá'í Publishing Society in America.

written in the Tablets. Make them firm in Thy Love and steadfast in Thy Cause. Attract them unto the Bahá'í Beauty and cause them to attain infinite warmth and fervour. Bestow upon them a firm footing and give them a heavenly power in order that they may engage in Thy service and spread the Signs of the Kingdom.

Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty! Thou art the Compassionate, the Gracious, the Seer!

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

Convey, on my behalf, the most wonderful Abhá, greeting to his honour, Mr MacNutt and Mrs MacNutt.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:3, 28 April 1911 [II:3:4]

Extract from recent Tablet to the friends in Khurásán, Persia

The news of the attraction of the hearts of the believers of God ignited the candle of happiness and created spiritual joy. 'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled to the land of Joseph of Canaan and became well known in the servitude of the Holy Threshold. Although the attack of the sects and the false rumours and statements in the newspapers are intense, yet it is my hope that this journey may become fruitful and the Voice and Summons of the Cause of God may move these regions; some seeds may be sown and watered and be assisted by the downpour of the rain of the Mercy of the Almighty. Assuredly they will grow and become green and verdant.

Praise be to God! that through the Bounty and Favour of the Most Great Name—May my life be a sacrifice to His believers—the Voice of the Cause of God is raised in all countries and the Fame and Melody of the Word of God is spread in every region. In these days the Cause of God is progressing and advancing in America, and in Asia there is the clamour of Turk and Tajik. The Bahá'ís have founded an English newspaper in the capital of Japan, which is edited and circulated by his honour, the learned Professor Baraku'l-Alláh, of India. Some of the American believers are expecting to make a trip to China and Manchuria so that they may raise the Voice of the Kingdom in those parts, and in Europe and Asia the Trumpet of the Supreme Concourse is heard.

God be praised! Notwithstanding this divine, Majestic Cause, the promotion of the Word of God and the diffusion of the Fragrances of God, a few impotent ones, who are less than the flies, desire to break the Covenant and violate the Testament. How fruitless and weak is their endeavour! The screech of the owl is discordant before the Melody of the Kingdom and the cawing of the crow is drowned before the harmony of the [II:3:5] Nightingale of Significance; the weak bat with its shattered broken wing cannot soar with the white-winged Gabriel, and the darkness of humiliation and remorse cannot cover the rays of the Sun of Truth. Were there any justice they would all testify that this Pen is not moving the East and the West except through the Confirmation of the Blessed Perfection, and this Melody is not imparting rejoicing and delight to the world except through the assistance of the Most Great Name. When the blind souls deny the existence of the sun, they think they have accomplished a great feat, while heedless of the fact that they have proved more than anything else their own ignorance.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

II:3, 28 April 1911 [II:3:7]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America¹

...

One day, the Editor of an American journal, in an interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked, "Have you many followers in America?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, "I have a few friends in different cities who love Me." ...

When we left New York last January for Egypt, we carried with us many supplications and earnest entreaties from sincere and loving souls, begging us to ask 'Abdu'l-Bahá for a final word as to his wish in connection with the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, saying, that many demands were being made upon them for money to support other enterprises which were represented as of equal importance as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; that they were in a state of perplexity and uncertainty as to their duty in this important matter.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "When you return to America, call together those sincere souls who have asked this question and say: The most important thing in this day is the speedy erection of this Edifice (the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár). Its mystery is great and cannot be unveiled just yet. In the future it will be made plain. I want everyone left free to act as he wills. If anyone wishes to put money into other things, let him do so. Do not interfere with him in, any way. But be assured, *the most important thing at this time is the building of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.*"

Percy F. Woodcock.

P.S.—A Tablet recently received by Mr Mountfort Mills contains the following: "Announce on my behalf my warmest greetings to Mr Flowell, and say, The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Chicago is of the greatest importance. This is a Bahá'í Temple, a supreme House of Worship, a place of spiritual gathering and of the manifestation of Divine Mysteries. The friends of God must endeavour with all their hearts and souls that this structure may be raised and completed."

II:4, 17 May 1911 [II:4:6]

Tablet to the American friends from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translate this Tablet in great haste, and with its original, print and spread. (Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab—Upon him be Bahá'u'lláh!—To the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful:

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye friends and the maidservants of the Merciful!

When the deposed Sultán of the Ottoman Empire, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, arose in tyranny and oppression, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was incarcerated in the prison of 'Akká and was surrounded with the utmost surveillance of police, detectives and men of the Secret Service. The door of communication was entirely closed and the means of correspondence was prevented. If any soul approached the house he was searched; nay, rather, threatened with dire persecution. The affairs reached to such a degree that, not being satisfied with these restrictions, the Sultán sent an oppressive investigating Commission, so that with all kinds of wiles, simulations, slander and fabrication of false stories they might fasten some guilt upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá in order that he might crucify Him, or cast Him into the sea, or banish Him into the heart of the

¹ Letter by Percy F. Woodcock, 21 April 1911.

distant and unknown Sahara of Feyzan (Africa).¹ That oppressive investigating Commission exercised its rights with tyranny and passed the sentence that 'Abdu'l-Bahá merited all kinds of persecution. Finally they decided to send Him to Feyzan, and when they cabled this decision to the palace of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, an answer was received that the matter of Feyzan was approved by the Imperial Order. Then that unjust investigating Commission returned to Constantinople. They were in the midst of the sea when the cannon of God boomed forth before the palace of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, a charge of dynamite was exploded, a number of people were killed, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd fled into the interior of his residence, difficulties and trials surrounded him, and incidents and events developed rapidly. Therefore he did not find the opportunity to oppress 'Abdu'l-Bahá; public revolution was started, which ended in his deposition, and the Hand of Divine Power released the neck of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the chains of the prison of Joseph and the fetters and manacles were placed around the unblessed neck of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd. Be ye admonished, O ye people of insight! Now 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with the greatest power, has hastened to the country of Egypt from the land of prison. Praise be to God, that through the Bounty and Providence of the Blessed Perfection, no sooner did he land in Alexandria than the Word of God was promoted and the melody of the Kingdom of Abhá was heard. All the newspapers wrote innumerable articles. Some gave the utmost praise; others raised a great cry, saying: "The arrival of this personage in this land will shake the pillars of Religion and will shatter to pieces ancient customs and conventions. He attracts every one he meets and when he loosens his tongue in any meeting, it creates faith in the hearts of the deniers." The papers are still writing detailed articles and will continue to do so.

Now the friends and the maid-servants in America have written innumerable letters and all of them are pleading that 'Abdu'l-Bahá make a trip to that country. Their supplications and entreaties are insistent. In view of the differences among the friends and the lack of unity among the maid-servants of the Merciful, how can 'Abdu'l-Bahá hasten to those parts? Is this possible? No, by God!

If the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful long for the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they must immediately remove from their midst differences of opinion and be engaged in the practice of infinite love and unity. No Bahá'í must open his lips in blaming another one, he must regard backbiting as the greatest sin of humanity, for it is clearly revealed in all the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh that backbiting and fault-finding are the fiendish instruments and suggestions of Satan and the destroyers of the foundation of man. A believer will not blame any soul among the strangers, how much less against the friends. Fault-finding and backbiting are the characteristics of the weak minds and not the friends. Self-exaltation is the attribute of the stranger and not of the Beloved. It is our hope that the believers and the maid-servants of the Merciful in America may become the cause of the union of the East and the West, and unfurl the Standard of the Oneness of the Realm of Humanity. Now, we observe that strangeness, lack of unity and the utmost difference exists among the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful. Under such a condition, how can they arise to guide the people of the world and establish union and harmony between the nations of the earth? His Highness Christ, addressing His disciples said: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" [II:4:7]

O ye friends and maid-servants of the Merciful! If ye are yearning for my meeting, and if in reality ye are seeking my visit, ye must close the doors of difference and open the gates of affection, love and friendship. Ye must pulsate as one heart, and throb as one spirit. You must be like the waves, though they are innumerable they constitute the all-encircling sea.

O ye friends and maid-servants of the Merciful! Praise be to God, ye are the fish of one ocean, the birds of one rose-garden, the trees of one orchard and the flowers of one paradise.

¹ Fazzán (Fezzan), the southwestern region of modern Libya.

Then why this difference? Why this lack of harmony? Wherefore this condition?

Verily, verily, I say unto you, were it not for this difference amongst you, the inhabitants of America in all those regions would have, by now, been attracted to the Kingdom of God, and would have constituted themselves your helpers and assisters. Is it meet that you sacrifice this most glorious Bounty for worthless imaginations? No, by God! Should you reflect for one moment, you shall become enabled to destroy instantly the foundation of this difference by absolutely refraining from backbiting and fault-finding amongst yourselves. Adorn with infinite love and concord the assemblage of beatitude, bring about the meeting of happiness, establish the banquet of the oneness of the realm of humanity, loosen your tongues in praising each other, and then anticipate the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in your midst.

Aside from all these considerations, some of the náqidín¹ have come secretly amongst you and are expressing their firmness in the Covenant and with all kinds of intrigues and strategies are creating disorder and calamities, so that ye might be deprived of the Lights of the Divine Testament and subjected to the darkness of violation.

Is it worthy of you to be engaged with differences amongst you and thereby enabling the náqidíns² to spread a noose and chase such firm believers as you are?

I beg of God to confirm you in union and concord that you may become the cause of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity. Live and act in accord with the Divine teachings, be abstracted from all the attachments of the human world, characterized with merciful characteristics, release yourselves from the nether world, become heavenly souls, spiritual beings and the angels of Paradise.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 28 April 1911.

II:4, 17 May 1911 [II:4:7]

Record of Third Annual Convention of Bahá'í Temple Unity³

Monday, 1 May 1911

The commune of silence was followed by Mr Mills reading the following Tablet, revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

HE IS GOD!

O my God! O my God! We are servants who have sincerely turned our faces unto Thy Grand Face; severed ourselves from all else save thee in this Great Day and are assembled together in this glorious meeting of one accord and desire, and unanimous in thought to promulgate Thy Word amid Thy creatures.

O my Lord! O my Lord! Suffer us to be signs of guidance, standards of Thy Manifest Religion throughout the world, servants of Thy Great Covenant—O our Exalted Lord!—appearances of Thy Oneness in Thy Kingdom, the Abhá, and stars which dawn forth unto all regions.

O Lord, make us as seas rolling with the waves of Thy Great Abundance, rivers flowing from the mountains of Thy Glorious Kingdom, pure fruits on the Tree of Thy illustrious Cause, plants refreshed and moved by the Breeze of Thy Gift in Thy wonderful vineyard.

O Lord, cause our souls to depend upon the signs of Thy Oneness, our hearts to be dilated

¹ Náqidín (nakazeen) or náqidu'l-mitháq—Covenant breakers.

² Naqíd, pl. Náqidín. Covenant-breaker.

³ Extracts.

with the Bounties of Thy Singleness, so that we may become united as are ripples on a waving sea; become harmonized as are the rays which shine forth from a [II:4:8] brilliant light; so that our thoughts, opinions and feelings become as one reality from which the spirit of accord may be diffused throughout all regions.

Verily, Thou art the Beneficent, the Bestower! Verily, Thou art the Giver, the Mighty, the Loving, the Merciful!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

... [II:4:9]

[Fragments of the morning session of the Third Annual Convention of the Bahá'í Temple Unity, 1 May 1911.]

In responding for the Chicago Assembly, Mrs Corinne True said: "When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was asked what would best promote the Cause and bind together the friends, he replied: 'First, the character of the teachers, and, second, the work for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. The teachers must so live that their deeds will teach the people, even if they do not teach by word of mouth. The teachers are of the first importance; their lives must be examples.'"

...

Responding for [the] Seattle Assembly, Mrs Ida A. Finch read a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, from which the following is a quotation:

"Through the boundless Favour, I hope that in Seattle by the endeavour of the beloved of God, certain souls may arise who may prove a radiant lamp to the world of humanity and merciful spirit to the phenomenal body; that they may be the cause of the purification of souls and the means of sanctification of hearts; that they may know this mortal world as fleeting shadow and call the rest and repose, the pleasure and blessing, the wealth and sovereignty of the earth, the waves of the sea of imagination; that they may arise in such wise to live by the Divine Teachings and Exhortations of the Blessed Beauty as to sparkle even like the morning star from the horizon of holiness."

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:3]

Brief answers to seven questions¹

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and Mírzá Raffie,² to Mr and Mrs Ostburg, Boston, Mass.

HE IS GOD!

O ye two seekers of Truth!

Your letter was received and I became informed of its contents. Some of the letters you have forwarded have not been received, while others have been received at the time of the intense persecutions of the enemy, so it was impossible to reply. When this last letter was received I found opportunity to answer it, notwithstanding the multiplicity of occupations, so that you may know how much ye are beloved in this spot and accepted in the Kingdom of God. As there is little time, brief answers are given to your questions:

Answer to the first question: The spirits of the sons of the Kingdom after the disintegration of this body ascend to the world of Eternal Existence; but should you ask of the place, know thou that that world of existence is the world of unity, but the grades are different. For instance, the mineral existence has a grade, but that mineral being has no knowledge of the vegetable kingdom. It (the mineral existence) has no information of a higher realm nay,

¹ Second of a series of Tablets containing exhortations to moral and spiritual development.—Ed.

² Mírzá Raffí'.

rather, according to appearances, it may deny the higher grade. Likewise the vegetable life has no knowledge of the animal kingdom. It is entirely heedless and unconscious of that kingdom, because the grade of the animal is higher than that of the vegetable. The vegetable, according to its limited environment, is veiled from the knowledge of the animal kingdom, and it may deny it, although the animal, the vegetable and mineral live in the world of existence. Likewise, the animal cannot comprehend the intelligence of the faculties of man, which is the generalizer of the universal and the discoverer of the mysteries of beings, so much so that while living in the East he organizes and founds institutions in the West, and he reveals hidden things. Though he abides in Europe he discovers America. Though he dwells upon the earth, he unravels the realities of the solar system. The animal is entirely unconscious, nay, rather, a denier of this intelligent force, which penetrates into the unknown and comprehends the general as well as the particular ideas of this illimitable universe. Likewise the people of the world lack the knowledge of the world of the Kingdom, nay, rather, they deny it. Do we not hear from their lips the words, such as these: "Where is the Kingdom? Where is the Lord of the Kingdom?" But these souls are like unto the mineral and vegetable who know nothing of the animal and human kingdoms. They neither see nor search. However, the mineral, the vegetable and the animal kingdoms all live in this world of existence.

Answer to the second question: The Divine trials are in this world not in the world of the Kingdom.

Answer to the third question: The human reality in the other world has no physical likeness, nay, rather, it has the likeness of the Kingdom, which consists of the harmonious element of the realm of the Spiritual Kingdom.

Answer to the fourth question: The centre of the Son of Truth and of the Supreme World is the Divine Kingdom. Those souls who are purified and sanctified, after the disintegration of this elemental tabernacle, hasten to the Divine Realm, and that Realm is in this universe, but the people of this world have no knowledge of it, just as the mineral and vegetable kingdoms have no knowledge of the animal and human kingdoms. [II:5:4]

Answer to the fifth question: His Highness, Bahá'u'lláh, has raised the Canopy of the Oneness of the Kingdom of Humanity. Whosoever enters under the shade of this all-inclusive Tent, his heart and soul become detached from other tents.

Answer to the sixth question: Whenever a difference of opinion arises between two parties, refer it to the Centre of the Covenant; so that the difficulty might be solved.

Answer to the seventh question: His Highness, Bahá'u'lláh, has appeared for the benefit of all humanity, summoning all to the Divine Table upon which is spread the Heavenly Food. But today the majority of those who partake of this Heavenly Food are poor. That is why His Highness, Christ, said: "Blessed are the poor." Wealth prevents the people from entering the Kingdom, as it is stated by Christ: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." But should a rich person not be prevented from entering the Kingdom because of wealth and riches, glory and influence of this world, that rich person will become favoured in the threshold of the Almighty and accepted by the Lord of the Kingdom.

To be brief, Bahá'u'lláh has manifested for the education and training of all humanity. He is the Teacher of all, whether rich or poor, black or white, oriental or occidental, northern or southern.

Regarding the people who come to 'Akká; some of them make wonderful progress; extinguished lamps they were, they became ignited, withered were they, they became fresh and young; dead were they, and they became alive, returning to their respective countries electrified with the dynamic forces of the Most Great Glad-Tidings. On the other hand, others

have come and left without being touched by this great force.

O ye two attracted ones towards the Kingdom: Thank ye God that ye have made your house the gathering-place and the assembly of the believers.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 22 February 1910.

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:4]

Recent Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

New York State

To the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful—New York (State):

... [names omitted]

HE IS GOD!

O ye who are attracted to the Beauty of Abhá!

Your letter was received; it indicated that a new union and harmony is created among those souls. This glad tiding produced a great happiness and a new hope was seized that perchance the friends of New York, God willing, may become united and harmonized with the heavenly power. Today the most beloved and acceptable deed before His Highness, Bahá'u'lláh, is the union of the friends and the concord of men, and the most unacceptable is difference and disharmony.

Praise be to God that ye have become assisted with this Most Great Bounty, that is, unity and harmony, and become the cause of the happiness of the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

His Highness, Bahá'u'lláh, said, That if Religion and Faith become the cause of difference, enmity and hatred, undoubtedly its non-being is better than its being. Consider ye how much emphasis He has placed upon love, harmony and affection.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by M. A. Sohrab, March 1911. [II:5:5]

Philadelphia

To the believers of God and the maidservants of the Merciful, Philadelphia. Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. Upon him be Bahá'u'lláh!

HE IS GOD!

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

It is some time since news has reached me from you. Today the illumined photographs you forwarded fourteen months ago were received. By looking at these pictures I remembered you and am writing you this tablet so that you may know I have not forgotten you and am always engaged in your mentioning and your illumined pictures are ever present.

O ye friends and maid-servants of the Merciful! It is easy to advance toward the Kingdom, but it is difficult to remain firm and steadfast. Therefore endeavour ye as much ye can to make your faith firm like unto a well-rooted tree and produce blossoms and fruits. Neither be ye agitated on account of the blowing winds of tests and trials. The firmer the roots of the tree the greater its blossoms and fruits. Because the apostles of Christ remained firm and

steadfast they became assisted in the most great services and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit descended upon them uninterruptedly. If ye seek the illumination of the Kingdom ye must arise with infinite resolution. Be ye not discouraged or lukewarm on account of troubles and vicissitudes. Show ye an effort so that that region may be illumined, the Kingdom of God may raise its tents and the breaths of the Holy Spirit may quicken the souls.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 28 April 1911. [II:5:6]

Mrs Cecilia M. Harrison

Through Dīyá' Afandí Baghdádí to Mrs Cecilia M. Harrison, Chicago.

HE IS GOD!

O thou attracted maid-servant of God!

Your letter was received. From its contents, heart attracting meanings were understood; for they indicated entire attraction by the Kingdom of Abhá and the attachment of the heart to the Supreme World.

The chanting of the verses, whether done individually or collectively, is the cause of manifesting the effect of the Word of God in the hearts, and the means of igniting the fire of the love of God in the breasts. But it is as thou hast written that the Condition required is, the hearts must become like pure and polished mirrors, and the spirits attain perfect joy and happiness by the divine glad-tidings.

Assuredly the blessed souls who direct their entire attention to the Lord of Hosts, who are severed from the nether world and submerged in the outpourings of the Realm of Might, if they travel in various parts of America, associating with all and visiting the assemblies while surging with the love of God, they will certainly be the cause of the unity of the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful. This is indeed most beloved and acceptable, productive of great results and conducive of great good.

The enclosed paper sent by thee contained beautiful expressions and delightful statements. I ask God that thou mayst awaken the people of America thereby from the sleep of negligence and prove to be to them the means of knowledge and wisdom.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Amín U. Faríd, 2 June 1911.

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:6]

Tablet to the Bahá'ís of England from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

HE IS GOD.

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Your letter which was written by heavenly inspiration, whose contents and meanings are full of interest, and whose discrimination springs from hearts that shine, has been received. Of a truth, the believers of London, being steadfast servants, stand firm. They shall not slacken, nor, in the lapse of time, shall their light grow dim. For they are Bahá'ís, children of Heaven and of the light of the Godhead. Surely, without doubt they shall be the cause of spreading God's Word, and the channel for spreading the Divine Teachings and bringing about the unity and equality of mankind.

It is easy to accept the Kingdom, but it is difficult to endure therein for the tests are hard

and heavy. On all occasions the English are firm and are not turned aside, being neither prone to begin a matter for a little while nor ready to abandon it for a little reason through failing in zeal. Verily in every undertaking they show firmness.

Though you dwell in the West, praise he to God, you have heard the Divine Call from the East, and like unto Moses you have become warmed by the fire of the Tree that has been lighted in Asia, and you have found the true Path, becoming kindled like lamps, having entered into the Kingdom of God. Now in thanksgiving for this bounty you pray for blessing upon the people of the world, till by light of the Kingdom of Splendour their eyes become illuminated and their hearts become even as mirrors attaining the rays of the Sun of Truth.

My hope is this: that the outbreathing of the Holy Spirit be inspired into your hearts, that your tongues begin to reveal the mysteries and to expound the meaning and the truth of the Holy Books. May the friends become physicians to cure by the Divine Teachings the deep-rooted diseases of the body of the world, to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead and awakening to the sleepers. Be sure that the blessing of the Holy Spirit will descend upon you, and that the Hosts of the Kingdom will come to your aid.

Upon you be the Glory of God!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá
Given at Ramleh, Egypt, May 1911. Translated by Tamaddun'ul-Mulk.

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:7]

News of the cause in London

We were favoured with the foregoing beautiful Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to the Bahá'ís of England, in reply to a joint supplication sent to him early in the year.

Miss Buckton has just returned from her second visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The following are a few of the words she brings back from him: "A Bahá'í is known by his deeds. The Kingdom of God is not in any Society; but some seekers go through many Societies as a traveller goes through many cities, till he reaches his destination. *If ye belong to a Society already, do not forsake your brothers.*" ... "The highest and most successful way to spread the Cause of the Kingdom is by deeds. This is open to all. Join yourselves to those who work for the poor, the weak and the unfortunate;—this is greatly to be commanded. *To spread the knowledge of the Kingdom by teaching requires the skill of the physician;—a wise physician does not offer help to those who do not need treatment!*"

27 May 1911

Arthur Cuthbert

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:9]

The Bahá'í Faith a teaching of peace

Address made before the Third National Peace Congress, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, Saturday,
6 May 1911.

Charles Mason Remey

"We desire but the good of the world, and the happiness of the nations. ... That all nations should become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened. ... These fruitless, strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the Most Great Peace shall come. ... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."—Words of Bahá'u'lláh.

Over half a century ago, before the attention of Western thinkers had to any degree been

directed toward the problem of Universal Peace, there was born in the Orient a movement for peace and brotherhood, the call of which is now being heard in the Occident.

The Bahá'í Faith has for its object, not only international conciliation, as considered from the political and economic view points, but essentially the unification of the people of all races and religions along spiritual lines.

Religious and racial hatred has been the chief cause of warfare. Through the removal of these prejudices the followers of this Faith believe that Peace will be established among nations. Through it thousands of Christians, Moslems, Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, and Buddhists, of every race and nationality, are being firmly united in the universal brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.

In the month of May 1844, there arose in Persia a teacher, calling himself the Báb, who proclaimed himself to be the forerunner of "He whom God would Manifest"—One who would shortly appear with spiritual wisdom and power, through whose teaching would be established the "divine kingdom" of Peace upon earth. The Ministry of the Báb lasted six years, and was followed by his martyrdom, as well as the martyrdom of thousands of his followers, which was brought about by the Muslim clergy upon the charge of heresy.

Shortly after the martyrdom of the Báb, the promised one, whose coming he had foretold, appeared in the person of Bahá'u'lláh.¹ Under the most severe persecution, Bahá'u'lláh, together with some of his followers, was exiled to Turkey in Asia, then to Turkey in Europe, and later on, in 1868, was sent to the town of 'Akká, a penal colony situated on the Mediterranean, just north of Mt Carmel, in Syria. Here in 'Akká he lived and taught until he passed out of this mortal world in the year 1892. He gave his teachings and spiritual instructions, yet during his Ministry his cause was not explained and established in the world in general. To this end Bahá'u'lláh commanded his followers upon his departure to turn their faces toward his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as their spiritual guide, the explainer of his teachings, the one who would establish his cause in the world, the one upon whose shoulders his mantle would fall.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, also known as 'Abbás Afandí, from 1868 until 1908, because of his teaching, was held a state prisoner in the town of 'Akká. At present he is in Egypt and there is a possibility that he may visit this country of America. He makes but one claim for himself, that of service in the Path of God. His name, 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás, means "'Abbás, the servant of God". He is the spiritual leader of the Bahá'ís, and is their example to be [II:5:10] followed in teaching this great faith in the world, He is making the spiritual life of Bahá'u'lláh possible, and bringing it within the reach of the people.

While there have been three teachers in this Cause, Bahá'u'lláh is the central figure, about whom the other two revolve. It is from his name, Bahá, that the Faith takes its name. The Báb and his Faith were but introductory to, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his work are explanatory of, the Bahá'í Faith.

This religious teaching is brief and simple. Each of the founders of the great religious systems of the world is looked upon as having been inspired by the one spirit of truth, which is God. The form and letter of the teachings of these various leaders differ because of the differing conditions of humanity to which they ministered, but in spirit each taught the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man. In the various religions the fundamental truths are one and the same.

Moreover, each of the prophets taught of the coming of a great teacher, and of the establishment of a Universal Religion. The Jews await the coming of their Messiah, the

¹ Bahá'u'lláh means "The Glory of God".

Christians the coming of the Christ, the Moslems the coming of the Mahdi, the Buddhists the coming of the fifth Buddha, the Zoroastrians the coming of Sháh Bahrám, and the Hindus the return of Krishna.

The Bahá'ís teach that the spirit of these promised teachers is one and the same, and they believe that in Bahá'u'lláh was manifested again this one spirit of truth, The Word of God. Therefore in his mission and teaching he has accomplished the hopes of the peoples of all religions. They believe that he was spiritually endowed with the wisdom and understanding necessary to found a new form of religion, applicable to the needs of this day, one which will embrace within its fold people of all races and religions, uniting them in one human brotherhood.

The Bahá'í teaching is in no sense an eclectic philosophy. It is not a theology, nor does it put forward doctrine or dogma. It is essentially a religious faith. It seeks to change man's nature not by enforcing upon him laws from without, but by developing the higher nature of the individual from within.

Among the Muslims the Bahá'í teaching has had a phenomenal spread. The several recent progressive changes in the Islamic world in Persia have only been made possible through the introduction into that country of such progressive thought, and freedom from the superstitions of the past, as the Bahá'í Faith stands for and takes with it wherever it goes. The progressive Muslim finds the Bahá'í teaching to be quite in accord with the spirit of the Qur'án and he accepts it as a new testament added thereto.

In like manner the Jew sees in this Faith the fulfilment of the hope of the millennial age held out to him in his Bible and realizing this he finds himself at one with the Muslim and the Christian.

In going farther into the Orient one finds staunch Bahá'ís among the remnant of the ancient Zoroastrian faith. These received this message and believed its principles because in their ancient holy literature they find hidden away its simple truths.

Thinking Hindus are also being reached by the Bahá'í thought, and through its positive principle of action and service in bettering humanity they are working to free themselves from superstition and caste. Thus they are in sympathy with the progress of the world along material and spiritual lines together, whereas formerly their progress was limited because of the negative phase in which Hinduism has been during so many centuries.

The enlightened believer in Gautama, the Buddha, finds in his own teaching the promise of peace and universal brotherhood on earth which makes it easy for him to detect and recognize the fulfilment of the same in the Bahá'í Faith. To the Buddhist, therefore, the idea of this Faith for the readjustment of earthly conditions and the establishment of peace, is a welcome one.

Of all people, none have taken up the Bahá'í teaching with more fervour than those scattered here and there, where this message has reached, throughout Christendom. To them it fulfils and accomplishes the hopes of Christianity and they are taking hold of the teaching as a practical power in daily life. They are applying its principles and are holding out a helping hand to their co-workers in various parts of the Orient. Through this spirit of oneness with the Orientals a bond between the East and the West is established, a bond which will strengthen and grow until all peoples Occidental and Oriental will be as one people—until the great universal civilization, which is so rapidly casting its signs before it, shall stand accomplished.

The Bahá'ís have no form of admission to their ranks, nor have they any enrolled membership. They do not form a sect. Those who sympathize with their aims they consider

as friends and co-workers. As people work with them, they gradually imbibe the spirit and life inspiring the body of workers until they stand forth as exponents of this new faith. The Bahá'ís have no outward institutions as barriers to differentiate nor to separate them from other people.

Some of the ordinances of this teaching touch upon the following subjects:

Religious unity: *All men are free to believe and to worship as they will, but they are exhorted to unite in faith, for only through spiritual unity will mankind attain the highest development.*

Tolerance: *The Bahá'ís should not separate themselves from people who are not of their belief, nor should they denounce nor antagonize those holding views other than their own. They should mingle freely with all people and show forth their faith through love and service to their fellow men.*

Peace: *Warfare should be abolished and international questions should be settled by arbitration. In order to facilitate international communication, one language should be chosen from those already existing, or one devised for that purpose.*

Government: *Representative legislation is most conducive to the welfare of the people. The Bahá'ís should be loyal and law-abiding citizens in whatever country they may dwell. They should not glory in that they love their country, but in that they love their kind.*

Worship: *Prayer supplemented by a pure and useful life in this world form the elements of true worship. Faith without works is not acceptable. Everyone should have an occupation which conduces to the welfare of humanity, the diligent pursuance of which as in itself an act of worship.*

Resistance: *Harshness should be met with gentleness and hatred with love. With these weapons the Bahá'ís will overcome all opposition.*

The Church: *In this Cause there is no priesthood apart from the laity. Each one who receives the spirit should share it with those whom he meets in daily life. All are teachers. Teaching is given without money and without price.*

Religious government: *"The House of Justice", a central assembly, the members of which are selected by general vote, is to preside over the affairs of the Bahá'í world. Its work has to do with charitable and educational matters and the general welfare of the people.*

Temperance: *In all matters moderation is to be observed. Man should not use intoxicating liquors as a beverage. The taking of opium and kindred drug habits are most emphatically denounced, and gambling is also forbidden. The use of tobacco is discouraged.*

Admonitions forbidding mendacity, slavery, cruelty to animals, and various offences, together with rules regarding public hygiene, education of both sexes and other matters need not here be mentioned, as they are already provided by Western civilization, though in the Orient the need for these is very great.

The effect of these ordinances cannot be overestimated. In the Orient, where religion is a far more potent factor in every day life than it is here in the West, religious exhortations and injunctions have inestimable weight in the lives of the masses of the people. [II:5:12]

I have made a study of the Bahá'í Faith, and would like to add a few words of personal testimony regarding what I have seen among the Bahá'ís in many parts of the world.

In Persia, where this Faith had its birth; I found that the Bahá'ís had not only overcome the hatred and antipathy which has for centuries existed between Christian, Jew, Zoroastrian and Muslim, but through the uniting spirit of their teaching this previously existing enmity had been replaced by a most binding fraternal spirit. In the Bahá'í Assemblies all differences of

the past had been superseded by the strongest of ties. In that country these people have suffered much because of the fanaticism of the surrounding people. Thousands of their members have in the recent past been massacred, while in the present they are under many difficulties. As recent as 1901 over one hundred and seventy Bahá'ís were massacred in one town by the Muslims.

In Southern Russia and in Turkistan I have visited Assemblies of Bahá'ís. In these territories the Faith is protected by the Russian Government, for it is understood that the Bahá'ís stand for Peace and are in no way connected with the many revolutionary movements which continually keep those countries in a state of unrest.

In Egypt and Syria, as well as Turkey, I have met groups of Bahá'ís working along progressive lines, but in those countries; as well as in Persia, the outward progress of the work is not as great as the unseen progress. This is due to the prejudice and persecution of the Muslims, which often leads to bloodshed.

In India the principal centre of the Bahá'ís is in Bombay. There I found many Pársís¹ or Zoroastrians taking part in the work. In Calcutta, Baroda, Allahabad, Agra, Lahore, Poona and other cities there are assemblies, and in these meetings Christians, Hindus and Muslims mingle as brothers.

In Burma there is a large Buddhist element amongst the Bahá'ís. Last year I spent some, time travelling in that country, and was most hospitably received by the Bahá'ís in several towns and cities. In Japan I found the Bahá'í teaching to be attracting some attention and in China, too, the Faith to have a beginning. Here in these United States, as well as in Great Britain and Europe, I have visited many assemblies and found the work progressing among people of all classes and of varying religious thought. Being essentially a spiritual Faith this teaching appeals alike to the enlightened and to the uncultured as it does to people of various religions, races and nationalities.

Notwithstanding the previous attitude of the religionist, which is usually antagonistic to beliefs other than his own, the moment he becomes imbued with the spirit of the Bahá'ís he no longer limits his interest to the mental confines to which he has been accustomed. He becomes a citizen of the world, freed from national, religious and racial prejudices. This is noticeable in the Occidental Bahá'í, while in the Oriental Bahá'í it is many times more so, because of the surrounding background of ignorance, superstition and fanaticism against which he stands out emancipated in bold relief.

One who has lived in the Orient and known the Oriental people will at once recognize the importance of the religious factor in bringing about Universal Peace. It is the religious differences between the Oriental and Occidental which have created the great chasm between Eastern and Western thought, manners and customs. There being no religious thought in common between the East and West, there is no ground upon which their respective peoples can meet, hence the necessity for a common religion which only can solve the problem. The Bahá'í Faith is working directly to bring about confidence, understanding and unity between the Oriental and the Occidental peoples. Bahá'u'lláh, like all world movers, was far ahead of his time. A Universal religion, International Arbitration, Peace, a Universal Language, Universal Suffrage, in fact, a Universal Civilization, with all of its universal institutions, was unthought of by the world when he, over half a century ago, first announced these principles. Now the world in general is awaking to the necessity for those very institutions to which thousands of Bahá'ís have borne witness by persecution and martyrdom. [II:5:13]

Progress is the resounding chord of this day. Progress in religion is needed more than progress in anything else. The world is now ready for a live and progressive Faith of

¹ Pársí, pl. pársiyán.

brotherly love which is broad enough to take in every race and every people; a Faith which will lead and create progressive thought and progressive institutions; a Faith which will actually produce a change in men's natures, developing within their souls divine virtues; a religion which does not destroy but which fulfils the religions of the past; a religion free from dogma, applicable to all races and conditions, the unique object of which is Peace and the Universal Civilization. Such a faith is the Bahá'í Teaching.

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:13]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The maidservant of God, Mrs Corinne True, Chicago. Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

The question of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is very important and is superior to every matter; surely put forth utmost effort for it. In the fact that you have registered the name of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the contribution book, I became very happy.

Concerning his honour, M. Muṣṭafá Baghdádí, indeed he was an honourable person, who devoted his days to service in the Kingdom of God, became confirmed in excellent services, a cause of guidance to many, was firm in the Covenant, a promulgator of the Religion of God. Regarding this a comforting letter was written to Dīyá' Afandí.¹

The receipt you have sent was received.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The following was written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own hand at the bottom of the page:

HE (IS GOD)!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Today in America no matter is greater for the elevation of the Word of God than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Surely give it the utmost importance. I am always waiting that a good report regarding the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár should come.

In most of the cities of Persia, even in some of the villages, a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár has been founded.

Now the beloved in America must make effort to establish one Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

This double Tablet was translated by Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, 1 June 1911.

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:13]

Portion of a recent Tablet to Mrs I. D. Brittingham

If the believers of God in New York and other cities of America establish, in a befitting manner, union and harmony with spirit, tongue, heart and body, suddenly they shall find 'Abdu'l-Bahá in their midst. Unless this union is brought about, the Breath of the Holy Spirit shall not have any effect, for the physical body must find capacity, so that the life the Spirit may breathe through it. If the Beloved of the union of the friends and the harmony of the believers become manifest, the East and the West of America shall be perfumed through the

¹ Dr Dīyá' Mabsut Baghdádí ("Zia Effendi") is the youngest son of M. Muṣṭafá Baghdádí.

sweet fragrance of the Paradise of Abhá, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár shall be constructed, the outpouring of the Sun of Reality shall descend, the everlasting glory of the friends of God shall become apparent and the heavenly life be attained.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 28 April 1911.

II:5, 5 June 1911 [II:5:14]

A letter answering an inquiry as to what is
the difference between the metaphysical teaching of the present day and that of the Bahá'í
Revelation
Ellen V. Beecher

Many of the teachers of the so-called New Thought school have laid down as their first principle—and as a fact—that, as God's creatures, we possess in embryo not only His attributes and His power to dominate our whole being as we will, but they assume that "*all is good*", because all is a part of God.

Again, that as man holds and operates the creative life forces—which some designate as love—he is himself the "I am" of his being. Then, by reason of this fact and by the use of will and intelligence, he may not only heal the body, and free it from disease and deformity, but he may do all things, and bring all conditions to himself, by concentration and affirmation.

Lastly, all of these attainments are by his own will and word, because man is an *integral part of God*.

This is what we understand to be the foundation or fundamental precepts of the so-called "Science", which has been elaborated and enlarged upon by its ardent followers, until its beautiful word pictures have attracted a large part of the civilized world to its fold.

"Well," you say, "the effect of such teaching must be uplifting to the thinking mind." Yes, it has been exceedingly comforting, and has enthused many souls who were in darkness; and thrown light and joy upon their paths, and brought health to their bodies as well. But let us see if the foundation stone in this structure is based upon the Truth of God's Word, or upon a basis which cannot stand before His judgements in the latter day, when the "wheat and the tares", which have grown side by side so long, shall finally be separated, and the chaff be burned with the "fire" of God's Love; for "our God is a consuming *fire*" of all theories and things of man's intellect alone.

We cannot find any revelation in any of the great and accepted religions from God which states or tries to prove that man is an inherent part of Himself. That God is *within* all is true. We were created by God. He breathed the breath of life in us, which was spirit, and endowed us with the *possibilities* of attaining *His attributes* and eternal life. All life has come from Him; but that did not constitute man any part of God's Essence. Man was made in the image of God. An image is only a representation of something which is a picture of the mind, or an idea put in form—the likeness of an object formed by reflection.

Man, therefore, is no more a *part* of his Creator than the watch is a part of the watchmaker, or the shadow a reality of the thing which cast it. Man is not even in the image of God's *Essence*; for that cannot be expressed; he is simply in the image of God's *Manifestation*.

Before man was created, God *thought a form* by and through which He could make Himself known to the world, and through which He could speak the Word; and then He honoured man by creating him in this beautiful Image of the Anointed Manifestations of Himself.

It is true that the human spirit may come to recognize the power and work of the Holy

Spirit; and by its own development (by grace) come into at-one-ment with the Mind or Will of God, and so attain great wisdom, and even perfection; but on his own plane, [II:5:15] never on God's plane. We may be the *adopted* sons and daughters of God, but no part of His Essence.

All religious sects agree as to the Oneness of God; but we find the *Singleness* of God emphasized in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. If God be Single, it is a self-evident fact that man cannot be any part of His Essence from any standpoint. As we have said, man may possess the attributes of God, but they are His gifts, as man comes into at-one-ment with His Will.

The Bahá'í bases all spiritual truth upon the Oneness¹ and Singleness,² then, of God; consequently the Bahá'í knows that man's powers are limited, and his daily confession before the Lord of Glory is: "I testify that I am powerless and Thou art Powerful; I am weak and Thou art mighty." Let us turn to the words of Bahá'u'lláh, himself, for confirmation. In the *Book of the Iqan*, which is one of his greatest works, he says:

"It is evident to the possessors of knowledge and illumined minds that the Unseen Divinity and Essence of Oneness hath been and is everlastingly hidden in His own Essence, and will be eternally concealed from eyes and sights in His own Identity. ... No relation, connection, separation, union, nearness, remoteness, position or reference is possible between Him and the contingent things, inasmuch as all in the heavens and earth have become existent by the Word of His Command, and have stepped forth from utter and absolute non-existence and nothingness into the court of the existent and visible—through His desire, which is the Will Itself."

Bahá'ís recognize the fact that man *may* dominate his body and soul; may heal the body of its diseases, caused by an unbalanced mind; and overcome defects in character, by an understanding of the law of concentration and the human will. But you observe that the above process is based upon the *intellect*, or the knowledge of material law; upon reason, and the five senses; all of which belong on the human plane and will never enter the realm of Spirit, for Spirit [the] *knows*. It has no need of reason and intellect in that sphere. We apprehend Wisdom to be the gift of the Holy Spirit to those whose wills have been yielded to the Will of God; for until one's will has been yielded to Him, his intellect and reason will veil him from the inner significances of God's Word and purposes. Wisdom is the knowledge of the Divine Law, which cannot be obtained through reason and research alone.

You may ask if a man has no need, then, of intellectual pursuit and attainments? If he should cease to develop his brain faculties and abandon the realm of reason? By no means, for these powers are given us that our capacity may be enlarged on this plane, so that God may express Himself through us and use us in His kingdom on earth, to prepare those who are seeking Him and be better able to meet all sorts and conditions of mankind—so helping them into the light from their own standpoint; for until man has been quickened from within, he must be taught from the intellectual side of his nature; he must be reasoned with. We must be able "to give a reason for the hope that is within us," and be able to state the truth so as to be comprehended. It is our privilege to enlarge our possibilities on every plane, but always to keep in mind the fact of our limitations.

The trend of metaphysical movement within the past few years has been to cause man to assume God's power to be his own, by his right in being a part of God; and its tendency in many cases has been to turn the mind from the Oneness of God to self and self-glorification.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Servant of God, whose office is to unlock to man spiritual truth, says,

¹ "Oneness, in its true significance, means that God alone should be realized as the One Power which animates and dominates all things, which are but manifestations of Its energy."—Bahá'u'lláh

² "God, singly and alone, abideth in His Own Place, which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description and definition, height and depth."—Bahá'u'lláh

[II:5:16] that the Holy Spirit dominates every part of the human being when its will is subservient to His Will; that by it we may be healed in body and soul; by its operation we may be transformed and attain to wisdom and spiritual power which nothing on the material plane can withstand. In speaking of his own station, he says that the Holy Spirit moves his limbs.

Note the difference between, the two processes: one is attaining physical power and understanding of the natural laws given by Infinite Mind for the control of matter only, while the other is accomplished by the Holy Spirit alone—man's part being simply to yield his will to its guidance and quickening influence.

The highest attainment, as taught by *The Christ* in Jesus, could be gained only by a complete renunciation of self, a complete submission to the Will of God in all events.

But what does Bahá'u'lláh teach? He has instructed us that all past teachers from God gave renunciation of self as the highest attainment or station possible in their time, but, in this great day, this is but the *first* station; that "the servants of God shall never attain to the shore of the Sea of Knowledge except by complete *severance* from all that is in the heavens and earth."

Perhaps you can get a clearer idea of man as he is if I quote from the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They have stated: "As the world travels in a circle, so also do human beings work out their lives in cycles. Man begins with God, and from His hand he first reaches the *Mineral* condition or kingdom, on his descent into matter, and contains latent force or power of growth. Then he reaches the *Vegetable* kingdom, which is still only matter, but it has the power of growth added. Then he progresses to the *Animal* kingdom, which has the power of the former conditions with a third power added—that of sensation. At birth man enters the *Human* kingdom. This progression is only by the power of God in matter. The seed of the child grows by the power of God into the human being, just as the seed grows into the tree by the power of the sun. The human being has the powers of all the other conditions, and has reached the point opposite and farthest from God; has passed through all the material condition of the circle by the hidden power of God." Man is now ready to begin ascending the scale of spiritual life. "The soul starts from God, and if it enters the spiritual realms, it may return to God."

"There are three births of man: first, the material; second, to be born of water, or the Truth and Knowledge of God; and third, to be born of the Spirit. "... To be born of the Spirit is to give up material desires, and to take on all the qualities of God, and thus he begins to ascend the other side of the circle. The spiritual half has an indefinite number of conditions, but always progressing upwards." Bahá'u'lláh has applied a new light to the torch of Truth, so that man may see how to live the true Christian life; how to gain victory over egotism by sacrifice and servitude.

We hold that there are two distinct phases of optimism. One is based on the assumption of conditions, which the objective mind has first conceived and pictured, as it were, on the walls of the subjective mind. By holding this thought or picture without wavering, we may possibly bring things to pass. We may brighten our own paths by happy, cheerful thoughts, and help uplift others who are in negative states of mind. But this effort must be diligently continued, for all depends upon our own power to hold the pictures formed.

The other kind of optimism is wholly based on the spiritual mind. It comes by a calm and absolute trust in the power of God to bring to pass all things for our highest good, whatever the *seeming* may be. Circumstances and environments cannot destroy it. Our *good* may often come through severe tests and trials, so that it may not appear as such on the face of it, but by faith in the power and promises of God to do all things, the silver lining of every cloud is made visible, and one is enabled to obey His command, given through Bahá'u'lláh, to "Cheer up thy

heart with delight, that thou mayst be fitted to meet Me and become a mirror of My beauty.”

II:6, 24 June 1911 [II:6:3]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Spiritual Assembly of Baku, Russia¹

Upon them be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O ye friends of God! O ye manifestors of bounties and favours of the Beauty of Abhá!

That illumined Orb (Bahá’u’lláh) hath risen from the horizon of sanctity and holiness to shed Its Rays upon the expanse of the universe and that mysterious Beloved hath rent asunder the veil of concealment and appeared in the Assemblage of Humanity so that the wooers of His heart-captivating Beauty attained to His meeting, and torrents of spiritual teachings have descended from His Holy Lips, that we may be enabled to hear with the ear of the spirit, walk in the Path of the Beloved; see His Attributes and Manners; behold His Character and Principles; drink the Cup of Bestowal, taste the sweetness of His Reality, obey His Religion and emulate His glorious Example.

O ye friends! His gentle nature was excellent and His sweet disposition sublime. He was in the utmost humility and submission, and perfect kindness and praise. Worthy courtesy adorned His Being. He was a refuge for every affrighted one; an asylum for every discomfited one; a fountain for every thirsty one; a Highway of Salvation for every wandering one; a healing to every sick one, and a dressing for every wounded one. In brief, ye have undoubtedly heard and read His Holy Instructions. But alas! we have entirely neglected them and are pursuing our own desires, following our own opinions, seeking our own ideas, and chasing our own shadows! Is it not a shame to change His Rose Garden into a bramble patch? His Delectable Paradise into a ruined abode? To seek to eradicate His Foundation and completely destroy His structure? To forget the Divine Instructions and cast behind our backs [II:6:4] the Commands of God; with our lips to speak of the waves of the tumultuous Ocean, while inwardly we are dying of thirst; and while claiming divine wealth of consciousness, we are so poverty-stricken in spirit as to be but illusive phantoms—blown about by every wind?

I declare by the Bounty of the Blessed Perfection that nothing will produce results save intense sincerity! Nothing will be productive of fruit save complete advancement toward God! Everything is condemned save severance and every idea is fruitless and unacceptable save supplication, communion, prayer and obedience! We must entirely collect our scattered thoughts, purify and sanctify the house of our existence from every attachment and make the palace of our hearts the nest and shelter of the Dove of Holiness. Then, and not till then will the significance of confirmation and assistance become evident and known, the power of the Kingdom become apparent, and the hosts of the Supreme Concourse run swiftly into the arena of heavenly conquest, to gain victory over the East and the West of the hearts, and make the North and South of the spirits of men the flowery regions of the Love of God!

Praise be to God that the Province of Caucasia—Baku—is a glorious light in the Lamp of Oneness, a wonderful effulgence from the Sun of Beauty of the Divine Beloved. Its believers are sincere and its friends are the favoured ones in the Threshold of Oneness.

Truly I say this is a most great Bounty and a most eminent Gift!

Upon ye be the Glory of God!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

¹ Issue begins with an extract from the *Lawḥ-i-Sulṭán*, taken from Browne’s translation in *A Traveller’s Narrative*, page 395, with stylistic amendments.

Portions of Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Thou hast written concerning the meetings and gathering-places of the believers of God. Such assemblies and gatherings will greatly aid the promotion of the Word and all the audience, whether friends or not, will become affected. But when the friends have the intention of entering into these meetings they must disengage the heart from all other reflections, ask the Inexhaustible Divine Confirmation, and with the utmost devotion and humility set their feet in the gathering-place. Let them not introduce any topic in the meeting except the mentioning of the True One, neither must they confuse that merciful assembly with complex outside questions. They must either teach or open their tongue in propounding arguments, either commune or supplicate and pray to God, either read Tablets or give out advices and exhortations.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

You have written concerning the spiritual meetings. The foundation of the spiritual meetings must be the teaching and delivering of the Cause of God. In these meetings the believers and maid-servants of the Merciful must proclaim the proofs and arguments and explain the signs of the appearance of the beauty of Abhá—May my life be a sacrifice to the beloved ones! Meanwhile they may read some Tablets, and Communes, and at the end of the meetings, if they desire to sing with the utmost supplication and meekness, it is acceptable. But the fundamental principle of the establishment of spiritual meetings is for the sake of teaching and delivering the Truth so that those souls who are present may become informed of the Divine Evidences and Proofs.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Thou hast inquired regarding the teachings and instructions of Bahá'u'lláh! Thou must instruct the people of the world in the Love of God, that they may eradicate the foundation of warfare and strife, be attracted by the Glad-tidings of the kingdom of Abhá, lay the basis of love and amity, raise the melody of affinity, and the oneness of the Kingdom of humanity; transmute tyranny and persecution into love and faithfulness efface the traces of bloodshed and carnage; construct the edifice of reconciliation, dispel the darkness of estrangement, diffuse the light of unity; change the poison of animosity into the honey of sympathetic affection; destroy the religious, national and social prejudices from the individuals of humanity; live and act, with and toward each other as though they were from one race, one country, one religion, and one kind.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

But regarding teaching the Truth: One must teach with wisdom, amiability, good-naturedness and kindness. And should anyone circumscribe conditions (for teaching the Truth) it will become rare.

But concerning the established (organized assemblies), altogether outside conversation must not be introduced therein. Nay, rather, conversation must be limited to the reading of verses, the perusing of Words and affairs which pertain to the Cause of God, such as explaining proofs and evidences, delivering clear and irrefutable arguments and announcing the signs of the Beloved of the creatures.

Those souls who are in that assembly before their entrance therein must be adorned with utmost purity, turn their faces toward the Kingdom of Abhá [II:6:6] and enter with infinite

humility and meekness, and when someone reads Tablets they must be silent and attentive. Should anyone desire to speak, he must do it with the utmost courtesy and with perfect eloquence and fluency by the consent and permission of the people of the assembly.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The believers of God must assemble and associate with each other in the utmost love, joy and fragrance. They must conduct themselves (in the meetings) with the greatest dignity and consideration, chant divine verses, peruse instructive articles, read the Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, encourage and inspire each other with love for the whole human race, invoke God with perfect joy and fragrance, read the verses of glorification and praises of the Self-Subsistent Lord and deliver eloquent speeches.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Thy mission in America for the present is this: Thou must travel as far as possible to every part and pass through cities and towns, summoning everyone to the Beauty of Abhá, raising the Call of the Kingdom and proclaiming at the top of thy voice:

“A hundred thousand glad-tidings be upon ye that the Sun of the Reality of the Beauty of Abhá hath shone forth from the Horizon of the Contingent Being and hath illumined the regions with the lights of the Most Great Guidance. The realities of the Old Testament and the Gospel are already fulfilled and the Mysteries of the Heavenly Books have become manifest. This is the century of the Merciful One and the Period of Joy and Gladness. O ye heedless ones, become mindful! O ye sleeping ones, be awakened! O ye blind ones, become seeing! O ye deaf ones, become hearing! O ye dumb ones, become speakers! O ye dead ones, become living! O ye deprived ones, take a portion! This is the effulgence of the Merciful and the moving of the Depthless Sea. This is the outpouring of the wonderful and new springtime and the falling of the showers of the Bounty of the Most Great Lord!”

This is thy mission.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Thy letter was received and read. Thou hast invited me to America, saying: “In that region and in that country there are many fragrant and multi-coloured flowers; likewise there are thorns and thistles; but 'Abdu'l-Bahá should not look upon the thistles of the desert. He must hasten to that country for the sake of the flowers.” This simile is very beautiful; but when a gardener invites a man to his garden, first he will arrange all the flowers with the utmost elegance, beauty and art, then he will invite his guest. Moreover, there are differences among the flowers. Therefore pray thou that harmony may be created so that your country may find the capacity for the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I have the utmost yearning to meet all of you; but unless the conditions which have been previously mentioned are realized, my trip to those parts would be difficult, for it would produce no results.

I hope that all the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful may be united with each other so that 'Abdu'l-Bahá without any cloud may travel from the East to the West. It is hoped that this unity may become realized.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:6, 24 June 1911 [II:6:8]

Four questions and answers

Questions, sent by Professor Cairns, Edinburgh, 24 June 1910:¹

- 1) Is it right to speak of the Báb and of Centre as Manifestations, or as Incarnations?
- 2) Do the Bahá'ís teach the doctrine of reincarnation?
- 3) Did Bahá'u'lláh claim to supersede the Revelation of Jesus, the Christ?
- 4) Did Centre claim to be greater than Jesus, the Christ?

Answers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the servant of God), Haifa, 20 July 1910:

O daughter of the Kingdom!

Your letter has arrived. Its contents caused spiritual happiness and heartfelt gladness.

I wish to answer in detail, but at present my health is not very strong; I am fatigued, so am obliged to write in short. When I feel better, I will write at length, for verily, you are occupied with the work of the Kingdom and are serving the world of Humanity, and therefore are worthy of correspondence.

Now I will write shortly.

1st Answer. The Bahá'ís believe that the incarnation of the Word of God, meaning the changing of the nature of Divinity into Humanity and the transformation of the Infinite into the finite, can never be. But they believe that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are Manifestations of a Universal Order in the world of humanity. It is clear that the Eternal can never be transient, neither the transient Eternal.

Transformation of nature is impossible. Perfect man, Manifestation, is like a clear mirror in which the Sun of Reality is apparent and evident, reflected in its endless bounties.

2nd Answer. In the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, the reincarnation of the spirit in successive bodies is not taught.

3rd Answer. Bahá'u'lláh has not abolished the teachings of Christ. He gave a fresh impulse to them and renewed them; explained and interpreted them; expanded and fulfilled them.

4th Answer. Bahá'u'lláh has not claimed himself to be greater than Christ. He gave the following explanation: That the Manifestations of God are the Rising Points of one and the same Sun; i.e., the Sun of Reality is One, but the places of rising are numerous. Thus, Beauty is One, but it is shining upon several mirrors.

Your own answers were good; and now I have myself answered in short.

Upon you be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Munírih Khánum.

II:7 & 8, 1 August 1911 [II:7&8:11]

Recent Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Mr Thornton Chase

Through Mirza Ahmad to Mr Thornton Chase.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

¹ Questions asked by Mrs Jane Elizabeth Whyte, Scotland.

O thou herald of the Kingdom!

I received thy two letters, an old one and one of recent date, and both of them were read with the utmost attention. Praise be to God! that thou didst not waver before the tests; nay, rather thou didst remain firm and steadfast. When the tree sends down its roots into the bowels of the earth, then, it will bring forth blossoms and fruits. Now, Praise be to God! that in this day of the kingdom thou art firm and steadfast. Rest thou assured that thou wilt become the recipient of confirmation and assistance and the object of infinite bounties.

Thou hast asked about the statement in the Hidden Words, which reads: "O Son of Spirit! Turn thy face so that thou mayest find Me within thee. Powerful, Mighty and Supreme." This is the statement to which His Holiness the Christ, referred His apostles in the Gospel, saying, "The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in you." [II:7&8:12]

This is evident that, when the hearts are purified and through divine education and heavenly teachings become the manifestors of infinite perfections, they are like clear mirrors, and the Sun of Truth will reflect with might, power and omnipotence in such a mirror, and to such an extent that whatever is brought before it is illumined and ignited. This is a brief interpretation because of the lack of time. Therefore, do thou reflect and ponder over it so that the doors of significance may be opened before thine eyes.

In regard to the philosophy of the Theosophists, these people have borrowed some remarks and statements from the heavenly Books, but they have not attained to the Reality. Notwithstanding this, they have made these appearances the foundation of their faith and religion. However, the reality of the question of Unity is thus:

The Sun of Truth hath shone faith from the Horizon of Unity upon all the regions. All contingent things are clad with the garment of existence through the rays of the sun. Were it not for the rays of the sun no being would step forth upon the arena of life. Everything would have remained hidden; nay, rather, the life of the terrestrial beings is continued through the light and heat of the sun to such an extent that all the infinitesimal atoms, which move through this realm of earth, owe their life to the reflection of the sun. Of course, each being manifests its inward tendencies according to its ability and capacity. However, no matter how much the sun reflects itself through all the contingent beings, yet it never leaves its supreme height and exalted station. It (the Divine Sun) is not divided among these beings, so that every being may become a part and a portion of Divinity.

Descent, division, transmission and transmigration in the stations of life are the conditions of the contingent beings, but the Eternal Reality is wholly beyond and above these conditions; for when you behold that a being is subject to division, descent and disintegration, this is a proof of the contingency and impermanency of that being. The Ancient, the Ever-living, and the omniscient Lord, who is above the comprehension of humanity and is qualified with self-existent perfections, will never descend to the stations of life, and will not be divided so that every man may become an atom or a part of Him. Children can understand the untenability of this proposition. This is the pure imagination of the weak minds.

Therefore, according to their theory, the Manifestations of God are infinite in number, and this would leave us to believe in the theory of the "Concatenation of life"; but concatenation is false, and change is the essential condition of the contingent realities, and not of the Eternal Reality. Ponder deeply over the above explanation, so that it may become evident to thee that by Unity is meant the outpourings of the Divine which appears and manifests in the realities of all existence and especially in the unity of man.

The story of the cock that you have written is very appropriate. (This refers to the play of Chanticleer wherein the Cock supposed the sun to be caused [II:7&8:13] to arise through his crowing, until he was chagrined to learn that its rising was independent of him and his voice.)

Associate with the utmost love and friendship with the Theosophists, and make them comprehend this unity of humanity, which is the unity of the outpouring of the Divine, so they may attain to the essence of the facts.

In regard to the verse, which is revealed in the Qur'án, that His Highness Christ, was not killed and was not crucified by this is meant the Reality of Christ. Although they crucified this elemental body, yet the merciful reality and the heavenly existence remain eternal and undying, and it was protected from the oppression and persecution of the enemies, for Christ is Eternal and Everlasting. How can He die? This death and crucifixion was imposed on the physical body of Christ, and not upon the Spirit of Christ. ...

Regarding my coming to America, it depends upon the realization of conditions of which I have already written to that country. If those conditions are brought into fruition, rest thou assured that I will present myself, otherwise, it will be difficult.

Upon thee be the Glory of God!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá
Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 8 June 1941. Washington, D.C.

Miss Juliet Thompson

To the attracted maid-servant of God, Miss Juliet Thompson. Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received and its contents became evident.

If America attains to the capacity of the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I will travel to that country and all the difficulties shall be solved.

There is no doubt that the tests are severe. The more a soul resists and shows firmness and steadfastness, the greater will be his progress, and he shall soar to the sublimest heights of the Kingdom. ...

O thou daughter of the Kingdom! Thou hast expressed the hope of my Presence in America. It depends upon capacity and merit.

O thou who art attracted to the fragrances of God! Endeavour thou as far as thou canst to become the cause of the unity and harmony amongst the believers of God. ...

Announce on my behalf to Mrs MacNutt "I do not forget thee and my beloved friend, Mr McNutt, for one breath; nay, rather, I beg continually for your divine confirmations and supreme assistance." ...

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. 3 June 1911.

II:9, 20 August 1911 [II:9:3]

The first Universal Races Congress¹

Held in London, England, 26-29 July 1911.

Mr W. Tudor-Pole

...

... Great interest was aroused on Thursday during the discussion on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's letter to the congress, the full text of which follows:

Alexandria, 29 May 1911.

¹ Reprinted from the *Christian Commonwealth*, 2 August 1911.

To the President, First Universal Races Congress.

My Dear Friend: Your letter of invitation has been received, and I am much obliged for it. It is my utmost desire to be present at such a gathering, for I am thoroughly confident that beneficial results shall surely follow these meetings, and that they [II:9:4] will become the means of establishing friendship and love among the world's different races. Thus the basis of enmity may be destroyed and the tent of unity of the world of humanity be raised throughout all regions.

I regret much that circumstances may prevent me from attending, but I will endeavour as much as lies in my power to attend. Failing to do so, pray excuse me.

With a sincere heart I supplicate at the Divine Threshold that this congress may be successful in founding a noble institution which shall be permanent and everlasting; that it may ignite a candle from which a heavenly light shall beam, and plant a tree whose fruit may be friendship, love and unity between all the children of men, so that conflict and warfare may be abolished, and patriotic, racial, religious and political prejudices become unknown. Peace should replace strife, enmity be superseded by love, estrangement annihilated, and unity established. The what has been spoken of in the heavenly books will become well rooted in the hearts of all, and the glad-tidings of the sacred writings be fulfilled. In conclusion I offer my utmost appreciation and respect to such a blessed congress.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:9, 20 August 1911 [II:9:5]

Letter from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the First Universal Races Congress

When travelling about the world we observe an air of prosperity in any country, we find it to be due to the existence of love and friendship among the people. If, on the contrary, all seems depressed and poverty-stricken, we may feel assured that this is the effect of animosity, and of the absence of union among the inhabitants.

Notwithstanding that such a state of things is obvious to the passing traveller, how often the people themselves continue in the sleep of negligence, or occupy themselves in disputes and differences, and are even ready to slaughter their fellow-men!

Consider thoughtfully the continual integration and disintegration of the phenomenal universe Unification and constructive combination is the cause of Life. Disunion of particles brings about loss, weakness, dispersion, and decay.

Consider the varieties of flowers in a garden. They seem but to enhance the loveliness of each other. When differences of colour, ideas, and character are found in the human Kingdom, and come under the control of the power of Unity, they too show their essential beauty and perfection.

Rivalry between the different races of mankind was first caused by the struggle for existence among the wild animals. This struggle is no longer necessary: nay, rather interdependence and co-operation are seen to produce the highest welfare in nations. The struggle that now continues is caused by prejudice and bigotry.

Today nothing but the power of the Divine Word, which embraces the Reality of all things, can draw together the minds, hearts, and spirits of the world under the shadow of the heavenly Tree of Unity.

The Light of the Word is now shining on all horizons. Races and nations, with their different creeds, are coming under the influence of the Word of Unity in love and in peace.

The Blessed One, Bahá'u'lláh, likens the existing world to a tree, and the people to its fruits,

blossoms and leaves. All should be fresh and vigorous, [II:9:6] the attainment of their beauty and proportion depending on the love and unity with which they sustain each other and seek the Life eternal. The friends of God should become the manifestors in this world of this mercy and love. They should not dwell on the shortcomings of others. Ceaselessly should they be thinking how they may benefit others and show service and co-operation. Thus should they regard every stranger, putting aside such prejudices and superstitions as might prevent friendly relations.

Today the noblest person is he who bestows upon his enemy the pearl of generosity, and is a beacon-light to the misguided and the oppressed. This is the command of Bahá'u'lláh.

O dear friends! the world is in a warlike condition, and its races are hostile one to the other. The darkness of difference surrounds them, and the light of kindness grows dim. The foundations of society are destroyed and the banners of life and joy are overthrown. The leaders of the people seem to glory in the shedding of blood—Friendship, straightness, and truthfulness are despised.

The call to arbitration, to peace, to love, and to loyalty is the call of Bahá'u'lláh. His standard floats since fifty years, summoning all of whatever race and creed.

O ye friends of God! acknowledge this pure light; direct the people who are in ignorance, chanting the melodies of the Kingdom of God, until the dead body of mankind quickens with a new life.

Guide the people of God. Inspire them to emulate the lives of the holy ones who have gone before. Be ye kind in reality, not in appearance only. Be ye fathers to the orphans, a remedy to the sick, a treasury of wealth to the poor, a protector of the unfortunate.

Where love dwells, there is light! Where animosity dwells, there is darkness!

O friends of God! strive to dissipate the darkness and reveal the hidden meanings of things, until their Reality becomes clear and established in the sight of all.

This Congress is one of the greatest of events. It will be forever to the glory of England that it was established at her capital. It is easy to accept a truth; but it is difficult to be steadfast in it; for the tests are many and heavy. It is well seen that the British are firm, and are not lightly turned aside, being neither ready to begin a matter for a little while, nor prone to abandon it for a little reason. Verily, in every undertaking they show firmness.

O ye people! cause this thing to be not a thing of words, but of deeds. Some congresses are held only to increase differences. Let it not be so with you. Let your effort be to find harmony. Let Brotherhood be felt and seen among you; and carry ye its quickening power throughout the world. It is my prayer that the work of the Congress will bear great fruit.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:9, 20 August 1911 [II:9:7]

Persian section editorial

We have received from London the advance publication (a large book) of the papers prepared for reading at the first Universal Races Congress, and among them is one from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is the briefest of them all, being very short, only two pages; and its character is entirely different from all the others. Theirs are largely from the point of view of country and race; his is universal. Theirs spend much time and words to tell of their ancestral greatness and the abilities of their land and race; he uses few words and little time to teach the *oneness* of all mankind, their individual and mutual duties, and the needs of the time. Theirs look to scientific progress, philosophical discussions, courts of arbitration, commercial interests, or socialistic ideas, to bring about the advance and better welfare of mankind. He

goes at once to the root of the matter and says: "Today nothing but the power of the Divine Word, which embraces the Reality of all things, can draw together the minds, hearts and spirits of the world under the shadow of the heavenly Tree of Unity. The Light of the Word is now shining on all horizons Races and nations, with their various creeds, are coming under the influence of the Word of Unity in love and peace."

In brief, the thought of practically all of those who submitted papers to the Congress, was from the human point of view, while that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was from the Divine Seeing. His was primary, theirs secondary. His presentation referred to the very seed and root of the matter; theirs to the branches and twigs, or results. They failed to perceive that all the advances of science, philosophy, ideal and action grow out of the spiritual enlightenment of mankind through the radiance of the Sun of Truth, which is now bathing the world [II:9:8] in splendour. He points mankind to the Word, the Spirit, and its workings in the hearty of men; they point to the results, as though they originated with man alone. Several of them speak at more or less length of Religion as affecting the ideas of men and nations, but they limit religions to racial conceptions rather than to the Spirit of God as an active, actual Power among all men.

But it is a wonderful and glorious sign of the times and a proof of the working activity of the Spirit, that men from many nations, grown under different trainings, coloured with different mental and spiritual ideas, should gather in such a congress, without political intentions, and only with the purpose of promoting the mutual acquaintance, respect, friendship, peace and prosperity of the races of mankind. It is another of the fast multiplying proofs of the Divine Mission of Bahá'u'lláh.

Without any apparent instigation or influence from Bahá'í sources, it proceeds to forward greatly the very principles which Bahá'u'lláh came to promulgate and to impress on mankind in this time of the ending of the old and the establishment of the new. This fact alone is sufficient to prove that the Word of Bahá was the declaration of that Divine Spirit which is working in the consciences and hearts of men all over the world to bring to pass that which He proclaimed as the duty of men in this new age. Those writers and speakers from many nations were busily calling attention to the appearance of the "new earth"; while 'Abdu'l-Bahá proclaimed to them the advent of the "New Heaven".

The new earth must indeed be prepared for the establishment upon it of a new heaven. This is true of the physical world, the conditions and environments of mankind, as it is of the individual man, who contains within himself the earth and heaven of his dual nature. But there can be no re-creation of the earth itself except it be from the power of the Spirit, its Creator. Men of perception note the wonderful changes going on in the material realms of earth and mind, the revealing of hidden laws and power, the discoveries of actions and conditions which conduce greatly to the improvement of man's abilities, but they do not yet perceive that all this advancement comes from the presence and action of the Mighty Spirit of God, that Universal, Invisible, Creating Light of Divine Intelligence, which surrounds, penetrates and permeates every atom of existence, throughout all space and the "Spaceless". All things—"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from alcové and cometh down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17) O that men would recognize the bounty of God and turn to Him in praise and thankfulness for all that they have and are!

Thornton Chase

II:10, 8 September 1911 [II:10:3]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Muhammad 'Alí Khán

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

To Muhammad 'Alí Khán, Tíhrán, Persia.

HE IS GOD!

O thou intimate companion!

The flame of reformation is ignited in the heart and soul of Persia and the spirit of every real reformer is longing for better conditions. For Persia is sick and is suffering with intense agony. But the children of the East are abiding under the shade of the banner of discord and are completely heedless and veiled. Now, what remedy can be applied! The sick Persia is flying away from the physician; nay, rather that thirsty one is depriving himself of the sea of the salubrious water of health. Therefore, this exiled one has found no other alternative than to turn his face towards the West and raise the melody of the Kingdom; for to a certain degree the insight of the people in those parts is open and they are familiar and associate with reason and understanding. When Joseph found that his envious brothers and his jealous relations and friends were heedless and unmindful, he unveiled his face in the market of the Egyptians, so that in exile he might destroy the foundation of strangeness and raise the banner of unity. Therefore, it is the aim of this exiled one, that, God willing, he may become the Herald and carry the glad-tidings of the Kingdom to the empires of the West. Perchance the splendour of the Beauty of the real Joseph—the Most Great Name—May my life be a sacrifice to Him—may shine from the countries of the Occident; and I beg of God that the glances of mercifulness may assist.

I hope that the bounties of the True One may become realized in thee, but it is conditional upon thy serving the Real Master and living in accord with the manners and behaviour of the real Bahá'ís and showing the utmost sincerity and beauty of intention.

Upon thee be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Anna M. Dahl

To Anna M. Dahl, Pittsburgh, Pa.

HE IS GOD!

O thou seeker of Truth!

Thy letter was received and thy thankfulness became evident. Glorification of God is the cause of attraction of confirmation and draws down the bounties of the Glorious Lord. Therefore the glances of the providence of [II:10:4] the True One shall ere long encircle all the family. I pray God that Pittsburgh may be blessed. It is not permitted to distribute Bahá'í pamphlets and literature through the streets and markets. On account of the lack of time a brief answer is given.

Upon thee be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Adolph M. Dahl

To Adolph M. Dahl, Pittsburgh, Pa.

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of God!

Thy letter was received. Praise be to God, that the call of the Kingdom of Abhá reached Pittsburgh. Should the friends of God show firmness and steadfastness, the ray of the light of the Kingdom of Abhá will shine and that state and city will become illuminated.

Endeavour thou that thou mayest study the Persian language thoroughly, so that thou mayest read the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and comprehend their meanings.

In reality, if someone should go to the Netherlands and engage in teaching the Truth great results would follow. Although such a person cannot be found for the present, yet before long he shall be discovered.

I supplicate and entreat at the Kingdom of Abhá and ask heavenly confirmation for thee. Perchance, God willing, at some future date we may meet each other.

Upon thee be the Glory of God!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

San Francisco

Through the maid-servant of God, Mrs Helen S. Goodall, to the Members of the Assembly of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, San Francisco, California.

HE IS GOD!

O ye faithful friends!

The maid-servant of the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh has written the joyful news that the friends in that region have established an Assembly, have engaged in the spreading of the teachings of God and have arisen with the utmost endeavour, sincerity of intention, and enkindlement with the fire of the Love of God so that that country may become a main-spring of the signs, and that city become illumined, and a number of souls like stars of the Horizon of Holiness may shine in the assemblage of the Kingdom of man (humanity).

This Assembly was organized at the right time. It is my hope that it may become a magnet of confirmation. If it remain firm and steadfast this Assembly will become so illumined that it will be a full, refulgent moon in the Horizon of everlasting Glory.

Report and write to me the services which are accomplished by this Assembly so that they may become the cause of spiritual happiness and joy to the heart.

Upon thee be the Glory of God!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:10, 8 September 1911 [II:10:5]

Impressions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá while at Ramleh

Mr Louis G. Gregory

I am asked by the *Star of the West* for impressions gathered during a recent pilgrimage to 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Ramleh and the Holy City. Now I can respond but briefly; but later I hope that a full account may be given to the friends of the Cause of all the valuable lessons received from the Perfect Man.

It is the will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that all the friends should be united and happy in the light of the Kingdom. On one occasion Bahá'u'lláh said, "My Presence is happiness and peace. Hell is the hearts of those who deny and oppose." Today the happiness and peace of the Glory of God (Bahá'u'lláh) are reflected in the clear Mirror of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Thus by meeting him one meets all the Prophets and Manifestations of cycles and ages past. It is difficult for one to realize at the time, or for a long time afterwards, the true honour of such a meeting. To one who realizes even faintly who this Servant of God is and what powers he represents, such a meeting is high above all the honours of earth. But no soul can give adequate testimony of what 'Abdu'l-Bahá may be to any other soul. With mental and spiritual horizon more or less limited, each pilgrim discerns according to his capacity the Majesty and Power that radiate from the Centre of God's Covenant.

At Ramleh, ‘Abbás Afandí¹ might at times be seen walking about the streets. Oft times he would ride upon the electric tramway, making change and paying his fare in the most democratic fashion. His reception room was open to believers and non-believers alike. Upon a visit to some unfortunates one day, I asked if they knew him. “O yes,” they responded, “he has been in this house.” Thus in one way or another thousands of persons had opportunity to see ‘Abbás Afandí; but among these how few perceived ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!

Viewed with the outer eye, he seemed about the medium height, with symmetrical features. His lineaments indicate meekness and gentleness, as well as power and strength. His colour is about that of parchment. His hands are shapely, with the nails well manicured. His forehead is high and well rounded. His nose is slightly aquiline; his eyes light blue and penetrating; his hair is silvery, and long enough to touch the shoulders; his beard is white. His dress was the Oriental robes, graceful in their simplicity. On his head rested a light tarbush, surrounded by a white turban. His voice is powerful, but capable of producing infinite pathos and tenderness. His carriage is erect and altogether so majestic and beautiful that it is passing strange that anyone seeing him would not be moved to say: “This truly is the King of men!”

On the rational plane his wisdom is incomparable. During the time of my visit persons of culture were present from different parts of the world. But people of acquired learning are but as children to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They were reverent in their attitude toward him and one of them, an Oxford man, [II:10:6] praised his wisdom with much enthusiasm. They sought his advice and found it of the highest value in application to life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has the power to make his friends very happy. What music and harmony, joy and peace, may enter into the lives of those who attain this meeting! He has a balm for every wound and feeds hungry souls with the Manna of his Perfect Love. One of the friends at Cairo, a noted worker in the Cause, exclaimed, “If I could only see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once a week!” At ‘Akká and Haifa were to be found those who had spent most of their lives with him. But they were all longing for his Presence. Among the letters received by him at Ramleh was one from the daughter of a king, expressing as her utmost desire a visit at the threshold of his door. This is the Power of the Spirit.

Thus the friends of the Cause may catch a glimpse of what is in store for them if he visits America. Nor should we spare any pains or hesitate at any sacrifices to ensure his coming. The Reality of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the supreme joy of the Kingdom, is found by promoting that which tends to unity and harmony among the friends of God and the whole human family.

“O Son of Man: Lift up thy heart with delight, that thou mayest be prepared to meet Me and to mirror forth My Beauty.”

II:10, 8 September 1911 [II:10:8]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Extract from a Tablet received by Áqá Mírzá Ṭarázu’lláh of Qazwín,² Persia, concerning the *Star of the West*:

In regard to the *Star of the West* which in Rasht fell into the hands of strangers. There was a wisdom in this. It will have great effect in the future. The editors of the newspapers are mistaken. The literature of the Bahá’ís has encircled the world and not alone Persia. The derision and the scorn of the editors of the newspapers will be the cause of their own undoing and regret. They must loosen their tongues in thankfulness and praise and glorification that—Praise he to God! Persia has found such influence in America that a magazine like unto the *Star of the West* is founded. This behoveth them to be thankful and not complain. This is

¹ ‘Abbás Afandí (Abbas Effendi), the name by which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is known among those who are not believers.

² city 140 km NW of Ṭihrán.

the cause of the glory of Persia and the Persians and not their shame. How long this community does not behold the wonders and miracles of Thy Lord!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:11, 27 September 1911 [II:11:2]

Towards spiritual unity¹

An Interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Dialogue between 'Abbás Afandí and Rev. R. J. Campbell, M.A.

...

Some months ago I received private information that 'Abdu'l-Bahá might possibly visit this country, and recently he dispatched from Switzerland the telegram published in our columns a fortnight ago. On Monday evening of last week "The Master," as his followers naturally call him, arrived in London, and on Tuesday I had the privilege of meeting him. "What is he like?" Let me quote the words of one who visited him at 'Akká a few years ago:

"He is of middle stature, strongly built. He wears flowing light-coloured robes. On his head is a light buff fez with a white cloth wound about it. His long grey hair rests on his shoulders. His forehead is broad, full, and high, his nose slightly aquiline, his moustaches and beard, the latter full, though not heavy, nearly [now quite] white. His eyes are grey and blue, large, and both soft and penetrating. His bearing is simple, but there is grace, dignity, and even majesty about his movements. ... We see the benignity and the kindness of his countenance."

It was interesting to find 'Abdu'l-Bahá well acquainted with *The Christian Commonwealth*. "He is very pleased with what you write in your paper," were the first words, after a cordial welcome that came through the Interpreter. "Some of the papers write things that he does not like and are not correct, but you write about what you know." The production of an early copy of our last issue caused some merriment. The fact that it was printed a day before the date it bore amused him, and when the paragraph, "A meeting between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the editor of *The Christian Commonwealth* took place yesterday (Tuesday) afternoon. Some particulars will probably appear in our next issue," was translated to him, he said, with twinkling eye, he was very pleased with our "prophetic writing". Of the preceding passage, referring to the fundamental unity of all religious faith, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "You have written all that I can say to you. That shows that we are one in spirit."

... [II:11:4]

... Three years ago, on the proclamation of the Turkish constitution, he became free. During his long imprisonment he thought not of himself, but of others; he enjoyed continual communion with God, he ministered to the needs of his fellow-prisoners, and it was because he lived this unselfish life that he survived while many others perished. "A captive for the cause of God," his interpreter explained, "his prison was to him as a palace. His body was suffering, but his soul was free."

The invariable tendency on the part of the followers of a great religious leader is to attribute to him supernormal powers. 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphatically disclaims possessing any such, and even deprecates the description of himself as a prophet. He told me he had never spoken a single word implying that he had right to such an [II:11:5] appellation. "I am simply a servant of God," he said, "and I do not wish to be called anything more than that." He assured me that he has no desire to found another sect. "The foundation truth of Bahá'u'lláh is the foundation truth of all religions. The principles of the prophets of Israel and of Jesus Christ and of other religious teachers have been largely forgotten; Bahá'u'lláh has renewed them.

¹ Extracts reprinted from *The Christian Commonwealth*, London, England, issue of 13 September 1811.

Therefore, the Bahá'ís have for the followers of other religions the greatest love and yearning, because they know that mankind is one. Bahá'u'lláh seeks to promote and establish friendship and union. He addresses himself not to a sect, but to the whole world. We are all branches of one root, blades of grass in one meadow. It is misunderstanding that has caused divisions and differences between mankind. If the truth were brought to people they would understand that they are all one, and each would say, "This is the truth I have been looking for. Because the principles taught by every true prophet are the same; there is no difference between them."

"What is the distinctiveness of the Bahá'í faith? What is its special contribution to world-religion?"

"The proclamation of the unity of mankind, and consequently, peace between all nations and also the renovation of the teaching of the prophets whom God has sent to the world, and its presentation in a form suitable to our time. When Bahá'u'lláh appeared in the East proclaiming the unity of mankind all the powers of Persia were directed against him but in spite of all opposition he spread his message. For fifty years he endured, often in chains, the greatest suffering; four times he was exiled from country to country but his voice could not be silenced, his influence could not be stopped. As a result of his life and teaching the different sects of Persia are becoming one family of God; the Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians who have accepted Bahai-ism are now in the greatest unity and harmony. There is no more any war between them; each honours the head of other religions: Muslims are honouring Moses and Christ; Christians are honouring Muḥammad and Moses; Jews are honouring Jesus and Muḥammad. They have learned to love one another, and are becoming one. The cause of unity is the cause of life itself, it is divine; that which leads to division or hatred is satanic. Religion should make for unity. The prophets did not come to bring about distrust and separation. Ignorance is the cause of division and hatred. Religion is like medicine; it is meant to cure, but in the hands of unskilled or bad physicians what should effect a cure may create disease, what should give life may cause death. Therefore we must strive with all our strength, with all our heart, to promote only that which leads to unity and life."

...

... In one conversation I sought his impressions of England. Coming straight through to London, and having so far had only a few motor drives in the West End, he has not had much opportunity of observing the life and habits of the people generally, but already he has been much impressed by the freedom we enjoy. "I admire the liberty you have in England and the use you make of it," he said. "Every person in this country can go his own way and say what he thinks without anyone making him afraid; in fact, he is king of himself."

"Do you consider we have too much liberty?"

"Oh, no; you all seem to be perfectly comfortable and perfectly safe. Freedom of thought and speech enlarges the circle of one's understanding and leads to progress and unity. English people ought to be happy."

... [II:11:6]

...

I happened to be in the room when Rev. R. J. Campbell was announced. There were also present several English ladies, Mr Dreyfus-Barney (who kindly acted as interpreter), Tamaddun'ul-Mulk ('Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary), ...

Meeting between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Mr Campbell

...

'Abdu'l-Bahá first inquired after Mr Campbell's health, and said he had been very anxious to

meet him. The conversation then proceeded as follows:

R. J. Campbell: I have long looked forward to this opportunity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: That is proof that both our hearts are at one.

R.J.C.: I think that is true.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: There is a Persian saying that hearts that are at one find their way to one another.

R.J.C.: I do not think that saying is peculiar to Persia.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Often two people live in the same house in constant intimacy, but their hearts are not united. Here are two men, one living in the East and one in London, whose hearts were coming to meet one another long ago. Although in the material world we were far apart, we have always been near in the spiritual world. The real nearness is the nearness of the heart, not of the body.

R.J.C.: The spirit knows no nationality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Praise be to God that now there is between us a material as well as a spiritual tie, the union is perfect!

R.J.C.: I am so glad that you took the resolution to come to England, even though you can remain only a short time.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From the time I left Egypt my purpose was to come here, but I remained a few days on the Lake of Geneva for change of air.

R.J.C.: I know many of your friends who are also mine.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: I have read your sermons and speeches.

R.J.C.: And I have read yours.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: That is a proof of unity. As I have read your sermons (with a humorous smile), you have to read mine.

R.J.C.: I see on my left one who has spoken from my pulpit (Tamaddun'ul-Mulk).

'Abdu'l-Bahá: We are all friends of one another (hands raised as in benediction). We have spread the proclamation of universal peace, therefore we are friends of people all over the world. We have no enemies; there are no outsiders; we are all servants of one God.

R.J.C.: That is good.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Worshippers of one God, we are recipients of the graces of one God. Men have made differences and divisions; God did not establish them.. God has created every one, and treats every one equally. He is merciful to all and gives food (lit. "livings") to all. God knows every one. To him none is a foreigner. We must follow his example.

R.J.C.: What is distinctive of the Bahá'í movement as compared with the faith out of which it came?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Báb foretold the coming of One after him who would address the whole world. We are the followers of that One—Bahá'u'lláh. When he manifested himself, some of the followers of the Báb did not receive him. Those are called [II:11:7] Bábís; the disciples of Bahá'u'lláh—are Bahá'ís. The Báb came as a reformer of Islám, and foretold the coming of a greater one in his footsteps. Instead of confining his revelation to the Muslim world, Bahá'u'lláh gave it forth to

all mankind. The narrow-minded ones, even those who meant well, could not understand so broad a movement, they were not strong enough to follow Bahá'u'lláh; they said, "He is speaking a language we cannot understand." Therefore they are called Bábís.

R.J.C.: What a close parallel to primitive Christianity! The Judaising portion did not wish the Gospel to go any further.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: It has come about, by their narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness, that the Bábís are now opposed to all the other religions; they want to keep rigidly to the teaching of the Báb, and convert everybody to it. The Bahá'ís recognize the truth in all religions. They come from the same root, but there is now that difference.

R.J.C.: A difference of attitude.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Their conduct is absolutely different.

R.J.C.: How many Bábís are there?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Very few.

Interpreter: Perhaps 200 or 300 in Persia.

R.J.C.: It is suggested that there are three million Bahá'ís.

Interpreter: There are no statistics. The Bábís are more politicians than anything else. Some Persians, who do not live the life, are not acquainted with the life, claim to be Bahá'ís, because they know the Bahá'ís are the advanced people.

R.J.C. (to 'Abdu'l-Bahá): I should like you to visit the City Temple.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: I should like to come. I know that the City Temple is a centre of progress in the religions world, and seeks to promote a universal understanding. As you have been a promoter of unity in the Christian world I hope you will strive to bring about unity in the whole world. A man first wants unity in his own family, and then as his intelligence expands he wants unity in his village, then in his town, then in his country, then in the world. I hope you will strive to unify the whole world.

R.J.C.: We are doing what we can. We believe that religions are many, but Religion is one.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The principle of religion is one, as God is one.

A Lady: Mr Campbell's reform movement in Christianity is helping the world of Islám. The attitude of the New Theology is one Muslims can understand; they cannot understand the divisions of Christianity.

R.J.C.: I have had some evidence of that.¹

II:11, 27 September 1911 [II:11:8]

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the City Temple, London²

"O noble friends, seekers after God, praise be to God! Today the light of truth is shining upon the world in its abundance. The breezes of the heavenly garden are blowing throughout all regions. The call of the kingdom is heard in all lands, and the breath of the Holy Spirit is felt in all hearts that are faithful. The Spirit of God is giving life eternal. In this wonderful age the East is enlightened, the West is fragrant, and everywhere the soul inhales the holy

¹ A talk by Rev. Campbell on "The use of the will in prayer" at the City Temple that evening has been omitted.

² This is almost identical to the version in *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London*. Some of the differences (word order, plural for singular, etc.) may be simply accidental, others are corrections of minor grammatical errors in this version.

perfume. The sea of the unity of mankind is lifting up its waves with joy; for there is real communication between the hearts and minds of men. The banner of the Holy Spirit is uplifted, and men see it, and are assured with the knowledge that this is a new day. This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men, and a drawing together of all races and all classes. You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundations of true humanity. The gift of God of this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men shall live as brothers. In the days of old an instinct for warfare was developed in the struggle with wild animals; this is no longer necessary; nay, rather, co-operation and mutual understanding are seen to produce the greatest welfare of mankind. Enmity is now the result of prejudice only. In the *Hidden Words* Bahá'u'lláh says 'Justice is to be loved above all.' Praise be to God, in this country the standard of justice has been raised; a great effort is being made to give all souls an equal and a true place. This is the desire of all noble natures. This is to-day the teaching for the East and for the West; therefore, the East and the West will understand each other and reverence each other, and embrace like long-parted lovers who have found each other. There is one God; mankind is one; and the foundations of religion are one. Let us worship Him, and give praise for all his great prophets and messengers who have manifested his brightness and glory. The blessing of the Eternal One be with you in all his riches, that each soul according to his measure may take freely of him! Amen.

After the service, in the City Temple vestry, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a few sentences in Persian in the pulpit Bible and added his signature, as follows:

This book is the Holy Book of God, of celestial inspiration. It is the Bible of Salvation, the noble Gospel. It is the mystery of the Kingdom and its light. It is the Divine Bounty, sign of the guidance of God.—'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Asked by Mr H. W. Chapman his impressions of the service, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "It Is an assembly which is turned to God. The light of guidance is shining luminous here. The bounty of the Kingdom was spread, and all hearts were praying to God." As he took his departure 'Abdu'l-Bahá said in English, "I am very happy." So were we all!

II:11, 27 September 1911 [II:11:9]

Report by Mr Remey

Mr Chas. Mason Remey, of Washington, D.C., has returned from London, Eng., bringing the following message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the friends in the West.

Regarding the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Its building is the most important of all things. This is the spiritual foundation. For that reason it is the most important of all foundations. From that Spiritual Foundation will come forth all manner of advancement and progress in the world of humanity. Therefore, how great is its importance." Later on 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that the believers have many duties to perform. They should associate themselves with and assist all good causes. Aiding and supporting educational, charitable and other philanthropic institutions should form a part of their work. They should serve and unite with all people in humanitarian works.

Reprint book 2

Vol. II, Nos 12–19 (16 October 1911—2 March 1912)

and

Vol. III, Nos 1–18 (21 March 1912—7 February 1913)

II:12, 16 October 1911 [II:12:2]

The vanishing of the veil¹

Eighteen months ago Archdeacon Wilberforce, who had been watching the Bahá'í Faith for some time with interest, sent a message to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. "We are all one," he said, "there, behind the veil." And 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied from his home in 'Akká, "Tell him the veil is very thin, and that it will vanish quite."

... [II:12:12]

... 'Abdu'l-Bahá prayed: "O God, the Forgiver! O Heavenly Educator. This assembly is adorned with the mention of thy holy name. Thy children turn their face towards thy kingdom. Hearts are made happy and souls are comforted. Merciful God! Cause us to repent of our shortcomings! Accept us in thy heavenly kingdom and give unto us an abode where there shall be no error. Give us peace. Give us knowledge, and open unto us the gates of thy heaven.

"Thou art the Giver of all! Thou art the Forgiver! Thou art the Merciful!"

II:12, 16 October 1911 [II:12:3]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London²

"You are all one family; you have grown out of one root. Each of you is like a branch, a flower, a fruit. You must look on no one as a stranger. You should try to show the greatest love to all men and to every creature. I have come to you as to my own people-brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. My bond is with all mankind; so should yours be. Try to follow the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, then each one will shine like a star. Since the time of Adam there has been no other teaching; until the end of time there will be no other."

On Friday morning, the 8 September, 'Abdu'l-Bahá received a small party of earnest spiritual souls, in Lady Blomfield's drawing room: He walked in smiling and said, "Good morning," in English, then taking a seat, he enquired through the interpreter, Tamaddunu'l-Mulk, "How are you? Are you all happy? You are welcome."

I replied, "Yes, we are all very well. We thank you. It is a great privilege to meet you."

He said: "I have journeyed by sea and land for the pleasure of seeing you all. I needed a change, but my desire was to know you all. Praise be to God, that I have seen the luminous faces and the heavenly hearts of the friends in London. People are turning their faces toward God. They are seeking the Divine Bounty. Therefore they will receive a heavenly blessing which I pray may be bestowed upon all. May you love all and serve all, because serving mankind is serving God. Everyone should be kind. Everyone should strive for unity and endeavour to serve mankind. All nations should become as one nation and each should serve all.

"Do not make personal distinctions. All are God's servants. All are under His protection."
[II:12:4]

...

'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "There is no difference between Paris and London. All these limitations, all these divisions into various nationalities are, due to the weakness of man. If man's mind were broad enough," he said, tapping his brow, "if it were strong enough, these divisions

¹ Reprinted from *The Christian Commonwealth*, issue of 20 September 1911. Reported by Peggy Scott.

² At Mrs Thornburgh-Cropper's home.

would vanish. The, earth is God's earth and all the peoples of the world are under His grace and favour."

The portrait of Dr Platon Drakoules, of Athens, a leading Greek reformer, was shown to him. He objected to the use of the term "leader" but blessed his work and also that of the "active people" of the "Unity Church", four of whom were present, and sent salutations to all its members, saying, "You are striving to please God. Today all distinctions between man and man fall away; there only remains the degree of striving to serve. He who serves most is nearest to God. The satisfaction of mankind is the satisfaction of God."

Again looking at the picture of Dr Drakoules, he said to Mrs Drakoules: "From this portrait I gather the goodness and spirituality of your husband." Then he said, rising from his chair, "I pray for God to bless you and help you all."

On the 12 September, Mrs Thornburgh-Cropper gave her second "At Home" to the friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There were about forty-five present. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the following discourse:

"Thanks be to God, this is a good meeting. It is very enlightened; it is spiritual; it is heavenly. As has been said by a Persian poet, the celestial globe is in such a form that the under part is, as it were, a reflection of the upper part. That is to say, whatever exists in heaven is reflected in this world. Now, praise be to God that this meeting of ours is a reflection from the Heavenly Concourse. It is as though we had taken a mirror and gazed into it. This reflection from the Heavenly Concourse is love. As harmony and love exists in the Supreme Concourse, so it is reflected here. In the Supreme Concourse the desire for God exists and thank God it is here also. Therefore, if we say that this meeting is heavenly, it is true. Why? Because we have no other desire except for that which comes from God. We have no other object save the mentioning of God.

"Some of the people of the earth desire conquest over others; some of them are longing for rest and ease; others desire a high position; some of them desire to become famous; thank God that our desire is for spirituality and for union with God.

"Now that we are gathered here our desire is to hoist the Standard of the Unity of God, to spread the Light of God and to make the hearts of the people heavenly. Therefore I thank God that He is causing us to do this great work. [II:12:5]

"I pray for all of you, that all of you may become heavenly soldiers and that you may everywhere spread the news of the Unity of God and may enlighten the East and the West and give to all hearts the love of God. This is my utmost desire and I pray God that your desire way be the same.

"I am very much pleased with you all. I am pleased with the English king and government and with the people. You may thank God that you are free. You do not know what lack of freedom there is in the East; but when anyone comes to this country he is very content. I wish God's protection for you."

On Friday, the 22 September, Miss Jack and Miss Herrick invited friends to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá at 137A High Street, Kensington, and about eighty accepted their invitation.

It was a decidedly cold day after the hot weather, and the air felt raw. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá had taken his seat, he asked: "Are you all well? Are you all happy?" He places great significance in these two questions which he always asks, thereby impressing us that true Bahá'ís must be well in spirit and ought to be correspondingly well in body, and always happy, whatever the circumstances. Then he said:

“Although the day is cold for me to go out, yet I have come to see you. For the lover there are no difficulties; all is easy. For love I have journeyed to London. I see that all present are in harmony and love and with longing turning their faces towards God. All are attracted to the Kingdom. I give thanks that they are looking towards God, their only desire being to seek the world of the Kingdom, to see the Light of God and to partake of the Heavenly bounty.

“The East and the West are becoming one and showing the signs of Unity and Love. The hopes of Bahá’u’lláh are that there be no more separation or discord, for ye are all the waves of one sea, the birds in one heaven and mirrors of the same Bounty. Your civilization has grown under the banner of Jesus Christ, you have the light of reason, and just government has been established in the West.

“The Sun of Truth arises in the Orient and shines from the East to the West. Then civilization and education appear in the Occident and spread from West to East; but the Light of the Kingdom shines from East to West. This is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the spring time of heaven, when the heavenly civilization is being bestowed upon the people.

“It has come now when they were not shining with this Light, nor caring for it. I hope that the Western people will now receive this New Light and become illuminated by it, and that the East may have improved civilization from the West.”

... [II:12:6]

...

How is one impressed by meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? To see, hear, or meet him can never, it seems to me, be a shock, a startling surprise, or an overwhelming impression. It is a perfectly natural and simple experience, and may even, at first seem rather disappointing; but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will ever grow upon you, even if the meeting is only once. Gradually, you will realize, more and more, that it is you have been in the presence of and made contact with. Not a personality, nor a dazzling individual, but so wonderful a state of perfect detachment and consecration have you encountered that it seems as if you are being lovingly addressed by the Holy Spirit Itself. It is a great lesson to us of a man’s perfect attainment. We see before our eyes the attitude towards God each one of us ought to assume, so that each one in his place may be fully enabled to love all mankind abundantly, and act with the greatest wisdom, always shedding round him joy and happiness.

Coining into ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence, we may forget everything, cease to believe anything, and may say he is but an Oriental man after all. We may question whether we are even a believer. We may desire to revise everything, that we may have only the truth and nothing but the truth. Then, Lo and behold. Truth stands out boldly! We still believe, but this belief which formerly floated high upon the surface of the sea—where it was rocked and tossed by every wind—now floats more deeply, being well ballasted, so that outer things henceforth can little affect it.

When we look at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with the eye of insight, meditating upon the words of love and wisdom emanating from him, remembering the hosts of people so deeply affected by them, and realizing that only a very few careless or mistaken directions from him could immediately and probably would sacrifice over a million human lives, then do we grasp some little idea of the wonderful Guidance given him in the midst of the difficulties with which he has ever been surrounded. In the light of this, the personality first encountered disappears; it is sunk, it is resolved in his perfect consecration, in his absolute abandonment to the Spirit. As you look, a veil seems to come over his eyes, and you wonder where he is gazing. He, the individual person, seems as if eclipsed by the very divine Spirit of God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is there, but only as the material focal-point perfectly serving the Light, as an existing object upon

which the invisible Radiance impinges, and which thus becomes manifested unto us in all manner of wise, loving and fruitful ways. So doth the Reality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá impress the soul as it advances.

25 September 1911 Arthur Cuthbert

II:12, 16 October 1911 [II:12:8]

'Abdu'l-Bahá at Bristol¹

Last Saturday afternoon 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived from London with a few friends to spend the weekend at the Clifton Guest House. After a rest he expressed the wish to see the country around Bristol. What impressed him most was the fresh, green of the woods and fields, the spaciousness of the open downs, and the absence of smoke.

The same evening about eighty friends assembled to listen to the words of the great Persian teacher. Mr Tudor Pole took the chair and introduced him by a few words on the Bahá'í Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá then rose and spoke with impressive dignity, Tamaddunu'l-Mulk translating:

The master says that he has come from very far to see you, and that you are very welcome. He praises God that after forty-two years of imprisonment for the faith he is able to come to you. 'Abdu'l-Bahá then continued: "These people are very spiritual, with hearts looking towards God, waiting for the glad tidings. They have come through the power of the Holy Spirit, therefore we thank God. May he send you straightforwardness to guide you to your holy mountains and blessed places; the Truth has come, let its holy springs water you. It is evident that day follows night, and after dawn the sunset. Just as the sun sets and rises and sets again, so Jesus Christ appeared on the horizon of this world like a sun of Truth, bringing light and joy to the whole world. But the people now are not in such close touch with his spirit; their religion and faith are not so strong. The people are searching after material things instead of looking forward to the kingdom. Again God has sent light and truth into the world. The heavenly star has appeared in Persia; a new spiritual illumination is now penetrating throughout the world (the result of Bahá'u'lláh's teaching). The great light shall spread through all lands." 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that our hearts should become as mirrors and be ready prepared for the glad tidings of the dawning of a new age. Jesus Christ said that we should be born again through the spiritual fire and love of God and be baptized by the water of life and the Holy Spirit, that we may obtain everlasting life. 'Abdu'l-Bahá went on to say: "Be very kind and serve every one; become lovers of justice and pray for the whole of mankind; help the poor and the children; heal the sick; shelter the refugees; and be known by your lives as the children of God; so may that sun become the light of the world, casting its radiance upon East and West. May the world become a new world; may war and slaughtering cease and the most Great Peace come. God help you to spread this Divine teaching, and to establish everywhere the characteristics of Jesus." He then prayed as follows: "O God, these people are your servants; they turn their faces to you to receive the manifestations of your bounty. Brighten all these hearts and bless their souls. Give them new life to follow your teachings. Let them enter into your kingdom, and bestow on them the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Open their eyes to the light and help them to serve mankind. Thou art a powerful giver and merciful. God bless you all."

...

¹ Reprinted from *The Christian Commonwealth*, issue of 27 September 1911. Reported by Peggy Scott.

II:12, 16 October 1911 [II:12:11]

Quote

Regarding Bahá'u'lláh and himself, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "Bahá'u'lláh is the root, I am the Branch. The root of a tree does not bear fruit. The fruit is found upon the branches."¹

II:13, 4 November 1911 [II:13:3]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Through Aqa Ahmad Sohrab and Jinab Mr Remey. To all friends of Abhá in America:

Upon them be the Glory of God!

O friends of Bahá'u'lláh!

Your letters reached me and were read with great joy. Praise be to God, that they are the proofs of Saith and assurance in the Kingdom of Abhá. They are witnesses of firmness and steadfastness and earnest supplication.

His highness Jesus says if the Promised One manifests in the East, his signs will appear in the West. Now give thanks to God that as the Great Sun arose in the East, his Brilliant Light shone upon the West and brightened the western world. Therefore you must give a thousand thanks every moment that though you were apparently very far off, in reality you were near.

A blind person cannot see the sun though near, but eyes with sight can see it from a thousand miles' distance. For this the Great Almighty be praised, that in the far west the nostrils are perfumed by the Holy Fragrance.

Appreciate this Bounty, be happy and joyful for this Divine boundless Bounty. With great love you have asked for the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America, I also greatly wish to go to the friends and see their interesting faces. But during this journey I have no time. I must go back to the East, this is according to wisdom. Therefore with great regret and sorrow at separation I am obliged to return. If it pleases God next year I will take a journey towards the West so that I may engage myself in seeing the faces of the friends, in proclaiming the Word of God and in spreading the Divine Fragrance and the calling of the Kingdom of God in the great meetings and assemblies.

If you only knew in what condition of tumult and excitement of longing is the soul and heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to see you, then surely, because of the greatness of your happiness you would express your joy in music and song and engage yourselves in the melodies of the Supreme Court in worshipping and praising Almighty God.

Upon you be the Glory of Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:13, 4 November 1911 [II:13:4]

Farewell to 'Abdu'l-Bahá²

... [II:13:5]

...

Then "The Master" rose to give his farewell address. An impressive figure, the face rather worn, but the eyes full of animation, he stood for about fifteen minutes, speaking in soft, musical Persian. From time to time he gently stroked his white beard, and with hands

¹ Extract from a letter written by Charles Mason Remey.

² Reprinted from *The Christian Commonwealth*, London, England, issue of 4 October 1911.

extended, palms upwards, he closed with a prayer:

O noble friends and seekers for the Kingdom of God! God be praised! we see the light of love is shining in the East and the West; and the tent of intercourse is raised in the centre of the world for the drawing together of hearts and souls. The call of the Kingdom has gone all over the world. The annunciation of the world's Universal Peace has enlightened the world's conscience. My hope is that by the zeal and ardour of the pure-hearted, the darkness of hatred and differences will be entirely abolished, and the light of love and unity will shine more brightly. This world shall become a new world. Things material will become the mirror of the Kingdom. Human hearts will meet and embrace each other. The whole world shall become as a man's native country; and different races shall be counted as one race. Then disputes and differences will vanish, and the Divine Beloved will be revealed in the society of mankind. It is because the East and the West are illumined by the One Sun, all races, nations, and creeds are the servants of the One God. The whole earth is one home, and all peoples are bathed in the ocean of God's mercy. God created all. He gives sustenance to all. He guides and trains all under the shadow of his bounty. We must follow the example God himself gives us, and do away with all these differences and quarrels. Praise be to God! the signs of friendship are appearing, and a proof of this is that today I—an Easterner—in the London of the West have received extreme kindness, regard, and love, and I am deeply thankful and happy. I shall never forget this time I have spent with you. I leave you with extreme regret, and with prayers for you, that all the beauty of the Kingdom may be yours.

II:13, 4 November 1911 [II:13:6]

The work in California

“The future of California, whether in regard to its material affairs **or** spiritual affairs, is very important. It is my hope that the people of California may become the sons and daughters of the Kingdom and be the means of promoting the religion of God.

“Regarding the Exposition of 1915 which will be inaugurated in San Francisco in America: From now undoubtedly the Bahá'ís must arrange and prepare ways and means so that a great number of them may be present on that occasion.”—‘Abdu'l-Bahá.

...

Helen S. Goodall

II:14, 23 November 1911 [II:14:3]

With ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris

Mary Hanford Ford

To one who has visited ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in his prison home at ‘Akká, the delight of seeing him in the western world is almost indescribable. I was not so fortunate as to be with him in London, but I had the good fortune to arrive in Paris shortly after he reached that city, and for two weeks I was able to see him every morning.

He rented his own apartment in Paris, and a little fair-haired, pleasant-faced French maid presided over its domestic functions and answered the bell.

“This is my home and the home of my friends,” said ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, and every one was admitted here without question, no matter to what cult or nationality he belonged, no matter how shabby were his clothes. A background of Persian men was always present, for all the Persians in Paris apparently camped in the home of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá during his stay there, but besides the Persians there were French, Germans, English, Hindus, and a large sprinkling of Americans, among whom the tall figures of Mr Woodcock and Mr Mills were always noticeable.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, of course, paid all his own expenses in Paris, and the apartment he rented was a commodious one provided with the best modern conveniences, and containing a great drawing room which could easily accommodate from seventy-five to a hundred people.

Here the interested ones gathered every morning between ten and twelve, though it was whispered that even before dawn eager seekers were admitted to private interviews with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and naturally those who did not wish to be seen entering his house came in the early hours.

'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks only the Oriental tongues, but he understands all that is said in any language, and in Paris his wonderful words were translated by M. Dreyfus into especially perfect French. The little company assembled at No. 4 Avenue de Camoëns never knew exactly at what time the eagerly expected one would appear. Sometimes he came joyfully, waving a good morning to all, or best of all, greeting each one with a warm hand clasp. At other times, when there had been bad news from the seat of war in Tripoli, he would enter with sadness written upon his eloquent countenance, and it was on such occasions that he gave the two little talks on war that I send you.

Sometimes his address was very short, but always his presence was so stimulating that no one had the slightest consciousness of disappointment when he arose and left the room. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is like a great magnet drawing together the noblest forces of nations and individuals. He is purely synthetic, not analytic, and his cohering power is enormous—he focalizes the temperament of every listener. The stimulus of his presence in this way is something quite indescribable; it must be experienced to be comprehended. But if one did not understand Persian or French, the electric contact with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his marvellous and poetic utterance would be sufficient to transform phlegmatic materialism into spiritual possibility.

The effect of this electric presence was that of clear and prodigious thinking which swept away like cobwebs all trivialities of sect and disunion, and pierced through to the divine harmonies which unite one to God and his neighbour. Every one who listened to 'Abdu'l-Bahá must have realized that this was no sectarian founder of a cult. This was a spiritually endowed messenger whose message touched [II:14:4] all mankind, who came out of his prison to remind men of the mighty lessons God has spoken to lift us out of barbarism and cruelty, from war to peace, and that in this day we must follow even the letter of these heavenly lessons.

So he spoke always of peace, always of conduct, giving to his own followers definitions of their mission which were very positive, and must have sounded a trifle strange to some who perhaps may have retained a slightly sectarian bias, even under the inspiration of this divinely powered Prophet of Unity.

"You are a society banded together for the increase of friendship among nations and races, and of brotherhood among men," he said one day, waving his hand toward the circle before him, and constantly he adjured us to realize the privilege that was ours in being first to receive the "Breeze of God" which must always rise in the East and blow towards the West, and which is now floating again from that wonderful Orient into the faces of the expectant Occident.

It was exceedingly interesting to watch the faces of those who came each morning to listen to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and observe the gradual but evident change of thought which took place in them so that hard lines gave way before invading gentleness and light irradiated countenances and eyes which previously had considered only material difficulties. I have not time to recall the countless instances of this sort. They were, of course, always intensified by an interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself. Sometimes people stayed with him three minutes,

sometimes half an hour, for there were many waiting to speak with him. The time of the interview did not matter much and I never shall forget a dear little friend who is cashier of a big business house in Paris. She is devoutly unselfish, and eager only to do her utmost for every one. She had a three minute interview. As she entered, 'Abdu'l-Bahá advanced toward her with his hands outstretched.

"Ah, you are aflame! You are alive!" he cried. "How happy I am when people come to me who are alive not dead!"

Then he took her hands and said to her just the tender and inspiring words she needed, assuring her that God would always guide her. She was only in his room three minutes, but she came out with a look upon her face I shall never forget. Each day I was in Paris I went into the big shop where she was cashier, and the lovely look was still upon her face. I am sure it will never leave her.

I send you the striking passages from some of the talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá while I was in Paris. My versions are, of course, not complete or perfect. Mírzá Asadu'lláh, who was present, carefully took down 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words in Persian, and they will no doubt be translated and given us later. My own translations are merely the result of notes taken at the time and are necessarily incomplete. But certain significant words were of great moment and these I always preserved.

The two points 'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed desirous of impressing upon his hearers especially were the fact that man has freed himself from the trammels of material conditions through the use of his spiritual gifts, and that possessing this power he should apply it for good, for the establishing of a perfect civilization, the abolition of cruelty and injustice, and the institution of love as the absolute rule.

To attain this he insisted it is only necessary to *think right*, and again and again, in various modifications he repeated the wonderful words: "While they make war, you *think* peace; while they create destruction, you *think* construction; while they are guilty of cruelty, you *think* tenderness!"

Talk on the battle of Benghazi

I am not happy this morning, I am full of sadness. The news which the paper brought us was such as must fill one with anguish.

Animals fight, and when they fight it is for a cause, an end to be gained. [II:14:5] Men are fighting now, for what? For the ground, our sepulchre, our tomb, our cemetery!

The earth is the first and lowest of terrestrial things created by the Divine Will—and it is our tomb, our sepulchre, our cemetery; our death, not our life and these men are fighting not for liberty or an ideal, but for ground, for the place of death not life, for a sepulchre, a tomb, a cemetery!

God has never forgotten the world, and no matter how black have been its conditions, there have always been societies established for the cherishing of love and equality and fraternity.

You are a people banded together to increase friendship among nations and races and brotherhood among men. So now, while these men are creating death, you think life, while they are guilty of cruelty, you think tenderness, while they make destruction, you think construction, while they create war, you think peace.

We must hope, we must not despair. We must look forward to the time when war and dissension will disappear, when love and unity will reign, and the light of God will shine upon all banners and into all hearts, and unite them to one another and to Him.

The earth is God's

There has been another battle today and much blood has been shed. The poor have given their lives as a sacrifice to the greed of others. Men are fighting for the earth—for land—and it belongs to no one but God. Kings have fought for it from Charlemagne to Napoleon I, yet they had no right to it. One fought wrongfully to wrest it from another who wrongfully possessed it. All people are merely tenants of God upon the land, yet nevertheless empires have disappeared in the struggle for its possession, and again men are shedding blood for the ownership of mere land.

While man might become a centre for good, for amity, he fights like ferocious beasts for the right to land.

God wishes man to establish just equality, not to transgress laws, to help one another and live together in love. Do what God asks, be the cause of unity and peace—wipe out the horrors of war and hatred!

Be ye capable of all good, eager to work for the cause of unity and peace, sacrificing all for this. Be eager to suffer for such an end. Forget yourself, forget personal danger, personal evil and inconvenience. Have no fear of evil to yourself in the great cause of unity and peace. Be dissolved in love, so that you may lose consciousness of everything except the good of all.

Love

I met a man this morning who belongs to the sect of Buddhists and I said to him, "What is your message?" He replied "l'Amour, Love!" I said, "Yes, but what besides that?" He repeated, "Love, that is all, that is the only message."

But the word *Love* is not a message; the word Love indicates an infinite thing, and how shall we bring an infinite thing into relation with humanity which is finite?

There are in reality many kinds of love, and each in itself is infinite and finite. There is the love of country, or the patriotic love, there is the family love, there is the love of friendship, the love of man and woman—each one is finite and limited. There is only one love which is infinite and unlimited and divine, and that is the love which comes with the Breath of the Holy Spirit—the Love of God—which breaks all barriers and sweeps all before it.

Animals are completely subject to nature, they are its slaves. They live and [II:14:6] die in the places in which they are born, they are the victims of storm and flood, they are hemmed in by desert, forest, by the great rivers and the sea.

But man has conquered nature, and is free. He is no longer the slave of the physical world, he dominates it and is free. He compels the physical world to do his will. He crosses wide spaces, sails over the ocean, and is beginning to fly through the air. He is in *all things a freed being*, and can give his commands to that nature in the midst of which he was born.

So man who is freed from material things and dominates nature, should learn to render his love also unlimited and divine. He should open his soul to the Breeze of God, that it may blow through him and break down all barriers.

So, if you love, endeavour to love divinely. If you love your country, love it not with the narrow feeling that it must be loved because it is yours alone, but with the greater consciousness that your home is a part of the universe. If you love brother or comrade or wife, love each one as a part of God, and not with the narrow sense of possession which renders the love selfish and exclusive. Then the Breeze of God blowing constantly through your love will purify it and make it divine so that the Breath of the Holy Spirit will enter into your being and unite you to God.

But do not seek the honours and loves of this world, seek rather God and His love, and then

the Honours and Loves which belong to Him will be yours. All the glory of the heavens is his, all the beauty of the flowers, the scent of the roses and the colours of the sunset. But more than this the beauty of the soul is His, so that when you look long upon His beauty, it takes many forms and reappears in your consciousness in many figures. But all other beauty fades and disappears, all other honour but His becomes insignificant, all other love but His is undesirable.

Wisdom

The greatest treasure of man is wisdom. Through this he is lifted into great power, through this he becomes the mirror of Divine Love. He comprehends the past; he possesses the future. In all this man is infinitely superior to the rest of creation. The sun which brings life to the vegetable world, and gives it bloom and fragrance is, nevertheless, in spite of all its splendour, limited. It cannot go beyond the law which controls it, which co-ordinates its movement.

In the animal world it is the same. The elephant with all his strength and intelligence is bound by the law of his existence. He cannot go beyond this law or control it. With the beautiful birds which fly through the air in such seeming freedom, it is the same. They are bound by the law of their existence.

Man alone is free, man alone controls the environment which surrounds him, he alone makes nature his slave. Though he is of the animal world and cannot naturally live in the water, he has conquered the ocean, and if he wills may pass his life upon the bosom of the sea.

Though limited by space so that under ordinary circumstances he can only hear speech within a certain area, he has *captured the word* and can send it as far as he will through the marvellous agency of electricity, which he has made his own.

So also he has conquered space by means of photography, and can send pictures where he will, of all that he sees. He dominates the nature which enslaves all else, and has made it his obedient servant.

It is a pity that with this dominance and power which have become his, man has not willed to render perfect the civilization of all the world. But he does not. If he chose he could create a Paradise upon the earth, but instead of peace he makes war, instead of love he sows cruelty, instead of harmony he creates discord. [II:14:7]

I shall pray for you that you may be impelled to use the power that is given you for divine purposes, that you may be the source of concord between individuals, that instead of war you may create peace, instead of cruelty you will create love, instead of discord you will make harmony.

The Holy Spirit

The Divine Reality is far removed from man. It is absolutely remote and independent in its essence—beyond the comprehension of man—abstract, limitless and impersonal.

Man is limited, weak, fearful, poverty-stricken and helpless. The Divine Reality represents the Power Absolute, capacity for all things, fulfilment for all the needs of man.

The Divine Reality is to man what the sun is to the earth. The sun is life, radiance, heat, energy, power. The earth is dead, inert, helpless, incapable of initiative or change. It is poor, cold, and without resources.

The sun in its remoteness could never reach the earth, and the earth, wretched indifferent clod, could never attain to the glory and splendour of the sun. In order that one may gain the other, that life and fragrance may come to the helpless earth floating alone in dim space, there must be an intermediary. In some way the life-giving power of the radiant sun must be brought to the sodden earth, and this becomes possible through the media of light and heat.

Through their means the glory of the distant luminary is transmitted to the dark ball of earth, and instantly it becomes the home of fragrance and blooming life. The glory of the magnificent source of light touches our dim planet and banishes death and darkness.

As there must be an intermediary to transmit to earth the life-giving power of the sun, so there must be an intermediary to bring God to man, and this is found through the ever-present efficacy of the Holy Spirit. As the media of light and heat carry fragrance and bloom to the earth, so the intermediary of the Holy Spirit brings to man warmth, perfection and inspiration.

The wonder-working rays of the radiant sun fall upon the dull earth, carrying there richness and glory. The earth alone is but a senseless clod; touched by the sun it becomes life, energy, budding and blossoming wealth.

So the Holy Spirit touches the heart of man and wakens him to eternal life. Like the sun to earth it brings to man warmth, energy and perfection. It gives him all possibilities. The cause of life widens before his eyes, eternity opens to him, and becomes his, he no longer knows fear, for the wealth of God is his, and every moment is his inviolable possession. Limitations disappear, and as he becomes more and more sensitive to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, all things are his own.

Without the sun the earth is only the habitation of death, and would remain forever in its frozen clasp, were it not for the intermediary of light and heat stirring its inert mass and transforming into budding energy and accomplishment all its repellent hardness.

So without the intermediary of the Holy Spirit man would remain dull, helpless and deprived of all attainment. But touched by that Divine Elixir he becomes tender, loving, responsive, and capable of every perfection of life.

The treasure

Each one has in his environment a treasure. Let him seek that treasure eagerly, search for it with patience. Then when he has found it, there is another treasure still to be discovered in the same place for which he must also search. [II:14:14] He must dig as the miner digs in his mine, to its uttermost depths, eager to seek, seek, for the jewel that is hidden there in the darkness.

It is the natural law of human life that man should seek thus for the best that is about him. Thus his vital force expands, and man becomes greater in his effort. He is thus most fully capable of the union with God which may be his.

The Orient is the germinating place for the soul. It is here that the Breeze of God is felt. Here Moses' Law was given, here Christ's Word was spoken, here Muḥammad's banner was flung to the air.

The Occident on the contrary is the place of expansion. The West applies and solidifies that which the East suggests. It gives physical form and shape to the ideals of the East. But the Breeze of God does not blow there. It must be engendered in the East. Yet the Word of Christ has been developed in the West. It was the Occident which unfolded the teaching of Christ into a great civilization, which shows how wonderful was the Word of Christ, and how wonderful is the West. [II:14:15]

But now the Breeze of God is no longer felt in the West. Its power is stilled, while in the East it is again forceful, fragrant, alive. Once more the West must receive the Breeze of God from the East. It cannot be stayed or hindered, it will blow from the East to the West; but it will be most beautiful if you will be the avenue through which it comes. If you are not that avenue, it will seek another channel, but blessed will be your privilege if through you it wins its way into the hearts of the West, rousing into fragrant life all the spiritual bloom and

richness of that great country, and bringing new life to the world.

I will pray that it may be so.

II:14, 23 November 1911 [II:14:8]

Editorial

We are happy in presenting a recent portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in this issue of the *Star of the West*. As is generally known, for many years, he did not permit a photograph of himself to be made, although reproductions of one taken when he was a young man, had a limited circulation among the friends some years ago. In answer to a communication regarding it, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expressed his wish, which we quote herewith, believing it will be read with interest at this time: “Verily thou hast seen the physical picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá printed by the rays of the phenomenal sun (the photograph) and thine eyes became overflowing with tears. Beg thou of God that He may show thee his (‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s) spiritual picture printed by the rays shining from the Merciful Kingdom. Then the attraction of God shall overtake thee, and make thee as a spark of fire aflame with the love of God.”

II:14, 23 November 1911 [II:14:9]

With ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Switzerland

Letter from Miss Juliet Thompson¹ [II:14:10]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá not being very much occupied during those days, we were with him constantly, sailing on the lake or driving through the mountain roads with him. The day of my arrival one of the Persian brothers, returning from a drive with him, told me this story:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, he said, to relieve the horses in a steep climb had gotten out of the carriage and walked. They passed through a village. The villagers clustered around him. They bared their heads and called him “Father”. One woman ran into her house and brought out some country bread and cheese. “Accept this, dear Father,” she said. (Blessed are the pure in heart!)

One drive I shall never forget. It was a drive through scenes of rare beauty, roads winding among great hills that were as steps to the near Alps. Sitting opposite ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the carriage, I saw him in a way I should like to leave to the future—were it possible for me to express it!—his powerful head vividly defined against the most sublime of backgrounds; for those near mountains of the Alps, their heads hid in rolling clouds, were his background—perfect symbol of mystery!

As an artist I should like to say to those who have not seen ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that his head is the strongest and most nobly sculptured that it is possible to conceive.

One more touch I must give—a few words overheard in passing two ladies:

“He has so kind, so simple an air,” said one.

“Yes,” replied the other, “and eyes of fire!”

We passed fertile hills, covered with vines and corn—or fruit trees; we passed foaming mountain torrents; we passed little villages, and always the background of these verdant scenes was the panorama of the lonely Alps, their heads wreathed with clouds. And nothing escaped his eyes. Never shall I forget his keen, sympathetic, eager, delighted observation—his tender interest in all human traces—his joy in the beautiful. He particularly seemed to enjoy the gentle hillsides—the green—the signs of verdure (think of his life spent in arid, stony ‘Akká!). Whenever he passed a village—a human habitation—we saw his heart went out to

¹ Extracts.

it—though how much that heart went out these hearts could not know! We never passed a church, its spire delicately rising among the hills, but that he pointed it out to us. Once in the drive we saw a little village built on a barren height. This seemed to concern—even to trouble him greatly, and he referred several times to it. “How cold it must be for them there in winter!” he said, and told us of just such a village in Persia where the people in winter moved down to the valley.

Once he broke a silence thus: “There was no one in the world who loved trees and water and the country so much as Bahá’u’lláh!”

We were too moved to answer and again there was silence. And in that silence some realization came to me of the sacrifice of these Holy Ones, who accept with joy all privation, all suffering to lead us in the way of freedom—to imbue mankind with that love which will make us brothers—to purify, then unite the hearts. How great must be their love for us—how their hearts must bleed over us—that they can joyously court such suffering! A great enough love indeed to enkindle the whole world *from one heart!* How else save “with heart and life” could we respond to such love? One day he said to me: “The child does not realize the love of the parent, but when it becomes mature, it knows.” “Can the creature,” I asked, “ever realize the love of the Creator? “Yes, if not in this world, then in the next—as a sleeping one awakens.”

To turn to the day of our drive. We came to a great waterfall,—a sparkling, snowy torrent, dashing down a black precipice. He had us stop the carriage, and [II:14:11] walking to a spot at a little distance from us, on the very edge of the embankment, he watched for a long time in silence that immaculate outpouring. I can still see the figure of quiet power—the face of luminous purity—the Perfect Man—intent upon that manifestation of the power and purity of Nature.

Nature then had an added glory to me. I realized as never before her beauty and significance. That great *Hidden Word* recurred to me: “All things in the heavens and the earth have I ordained for thee except the hearts which I have appointed as the place for the descent of the manifestation of My beauty and glory.” I saw Nature not only as a book of divine allegories, but fascinating for her own sake—for the sake of her loveliness—and her secrets, which in this day when “the earth is revealing her news” she is giving up ever more freely to man. Watching ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as he communed with the bounty of Nature, I felt deeply the spiritual value of the arts and sciences. And ever since that drive—that little journey through country and town with the one of the perfect understanding and sympathy, this world has been God’s world to me. I have understood better the subtleties of detachment—have seen where the emphasis should be placed. As one of our sisters, who also saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá this summer, said very beautifully on her return: “In himself, he uplifts humanity into the spiritual station.” Does not this clothe the whole of humanity, comprising the world of nature, with a new dignity, and disclose boundless possibilities?

The simplicity of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, his normality, give one the real clue to the spiritual life. His teaching is a Religion of Joy—of “expansion and fulfilment” on every plane—not of deprivation and asceticism. And this leads me to touch on another most beautiful attribute of his. We know well that his frequent injunction is, “Be happy!” Perhaps his most frequent question is: “Are you happy?”—and his own abundance of perfect happiness, of undimmed joy, is ever overflowing in the most delicious humour—the most irresistible humour that ever won a heart. Religion in the past took on an aspect of fear. This ‘Abdu’l-Bahá smiles away, teaching us the perfect repose and joy of the spirit’s confidence in God as Love—the “radiant acquiescence” in Divine Guidance.

As we drove away from the waterfall, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, smiling, to me: “If I come to America, will you invite me to see such waterfalls?” “Does your coming,” I smiled in return, “depend on my invitation?” “My invitation to America,” was the reply, “will be the unity of the

believers.”

We drove to an old inn in a cleft between two mountains, and sitting in the open porch at a rough table, had the simplest of country refreshment. Just as we were entering the inn a little group of peasant children, bunches of violets in their hands to sell, pressed around ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They did not seem to see the rest of us. I can still see the dull little peasant faces raised wonderingly, to that face—the out-stretched hands full of violets. He took from his pocket a handful of francs and gave to them abundantly. How he gives—gives—gives! His love seems never content with giving. Tirelessly he gives of his spirit and heart—like a tender father he gives of material things—little keepsakes, or, in lovely symbol, flowers.

In the future I am sure stories will abound in that countryside of the sojourn there of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then those little peasants, looking back to that moment of wonder at the sublimity of a face, will muse: “Was it he? Did we see him? It must have been he!”

I should like to speak here of something which was of unparalleled beauty to me: His power of attraction for the children. It was moving indeed to see their upward glances when he passed or stood near them, and the looks of love which he bent, as he lingeringly fondled the little heads, on those pure baby souls, so fresh from their Creator! Not that they could know, but in their innocence they felt. If only all might *remember!* [II:14:12]

To return to the drive. As we passed a little church in Thonon, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expressed a wish to attend it on Sunday. And this leads me to another, most vital subject: His attitude of perfect accord with the churches, demonstrated in St John’s and in the City Temple in London, where he freely gave the Message of Unity.

That these churches should have opened their doors for our Message is indeed beautiful, and a proof of two things: Of the freedom and illumination of the men who serve as their ministers, and of the wisdom of the London Bahá’ís. For it was the Bahá’ís who took the first step by connecting themselves with these two churches, some having pews and working in the City Temple and some in St John’s church. Thus, by demonstrating clearly, through sympathetic action, our oneness with the Christian world, they have been instruments to open these churches to the benediction of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. And I, having witnessed this beautiful demonstration and the result of it, feel that we cannot live too close to the Christians.

But not only do the London Bahá’ís make connection—or rather, manifest oneness with the Christian world, but with all progressive thought and activity, so that, again through their instrumentality, we find the Universal Races Congress opened to the presentation of our Message, *The Christian Commonwealth* and the Theosophical Society of Bristol sending cables of greeting to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on his arrival in Europe, and later becoming firm friends; the Theosophical Society in London, the Brahma Sohraj Centre, the Settlements, more centres than I can name, reverently welcoming him, while many distinguished individuals have sought his wisdom, to receive the unequalled blessing.

This wonderful harvest has been the result of diligent and wise seed-sowing in the world of thinkers and workers. While I was in Thonon, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to a little group of us: “This is the time for sowing the seed. The most important thing now is to spread the Cause of God. When harvest time comes, think how sad it will be if there is nothing to reap!”

So again I repeat I feel that we cannot be too active now.

The subject of our real oneness with all that is true and good in every progressive movement reminds me of a very beautiful message which I read while in London from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a socialist. Socialism, he said, was one of the leaves on the Tree of Life. Then he called this soul to come into the shade of the Tree of Life that he might partake of all its fruits.

At luncheon one day in Thonon we had a distinguished visitor who asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá about our economic questions. He said there were many who felt that material problems should be solved first; that, in order to level the way for the spiritual advance, we should first better social conditions, and he spoke of a friend who felt this so strongly that, though connected with the church, he was making it his life-work.

“Such people,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “are doing the work of true religion.”

Then he went on to say that a new order of things must come but it must have a solid foundation, and that no foundation was solid save religion, which was the Love of God. When this unshakeable basis of the Love of God was established in the world, then inevitably would the structure of a new social justice rise, and a new individual love and justice.

Before I close I must tell you the story of one day. We were to go to Vevey that day by boat, and in a little group of eight, we accompanied ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the landing. It was in the freshness of early morning. The fishermen had hung out their nets in the sun. The dew was on the lilies in the grove in the shade of which we waited for the boat. Suddenly the Master left us to stray off alone. When we saw him next he was walking in the distance on the very edge of the lake, beyond that golden film of fishnets. It was then that the “veils of plurality were rent” for me—and I saw the essential oneness of all the Holy Messengers—the One Flame in many lamps. [II:14:13]

The morning was misty, the veiled lake and mountains were like the world of dream. We gathered around him in the boat while he sat in our midst, the embodiment of command, yet of holiest sweetness; a combination of utter evanescence and supreme power impossible to convey in words. Suddenly he broke a silence by saying:

“Others are going from an immortal to a mortal kingdom, but the Bahá’ís are journeying in the Ark of the Covenant from a mortal to an immortal world.

“The Jews had turned towards an immortal kingdom, but when they looked backward to mortal things they became dispersed.

“Again Christ led men on to an Immortal Kingdom; therefore their signs remained.

“God be praised for now you are on a Ship bearing you to Immortal Worlds. Day by day your signs will become clearer.”

Could I only make clear to you that picture, the bow of our boat cleaving the mists, till we seemed to be actually navigating the ether; could I only make clear the figure sitting in our midst, I know you would feel there was no “looking backward” for those who had seen that journey so symbolized.

That night, when I sat for the last time at the table of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, our dear sisters, Elizabeth Stewart and Lilian Frances Kappes on their way to a life of consecration in Persia, were with us.

Breaking a revealing silence, with that speech which uplifts the soul in joy indescribable, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“To the refreshing water of the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh come many and various birds from many lands and at these cooling streams slake their thirst.

“When the Lamp is ignited the butterflies flutter around the Light.”

“May we,” said Lilian Kappes, “be ready to singe our wings at that Light.”

“Good!” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “I am very much pleased with your answer!”

Juliet Thompson

II:14, 23 November 1911 [II:14:15]

News notes from Paris

On Sunday, 29 October, a dinner, followed by a meeting, was given to 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the home of Madame Gabriel Sacy. It was distinctly a French reunion and 'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed pleased of the fact. On entering he took the photograph of Monsieur Gabriel Sacy, kissed it and said: "This home is as my own."

Among his words during the dinner were these:

"I am from a far away country and here in Paris, at your table, I find in union, love and happiness, Persians, Arabs, Turks and French, which proves that we are of one race and that all men are brothers. The God of Persia is the God of France, of Turkey, of Italy, etc. He is One and the same, so in loving Him we are united. Paris is the universal centre of culture and learning, of science and the arts. She must also be the centre of spirituality. There are all sorts of fruits; some can only ripen in a cold climate; others need the warmth and others yet the tropical sun. So it is with Paris. The greatest efforts are necessary that she may blossom and bear fruit."

About sixty people came to the meeting after dinner. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke for nearly an hour, interpreted into French by Mírzá 'Azízu'lláh Khán. Every one was impressed with his beautiful personality and his words of love, demanding of all to unite their efforts in asking of God the unity of mankind, universal peace and love.

"We must not fear difficulties and labour. They lead us to the noblest end. We must resist the whole world, for the world wants war; unite our efforts and with divine love we will succeed."

'Abdu'l-Bahá gave his first public conference in Paris, as guest of the "Alliance Spiritualiste", on 9 November. This Society, which has for its aim the encouragement and development of spirituality, constitutes a neutral and impersonal territory of study for all creeds and schools of spiritual thought. There could not have been a more appropriate setting for the exposition of the principles of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. The "Salle de l'Athénée Saint-Germain" was crowded to the doors by an interested and attentive public. Mme J. Beauchamps, the President of the Society, opened the meeting and in a few sincere words welcomed 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the name of the "Alliance Spiritualiste". A short address was delivered by Monsieur Le Leu, General Secretary, who dwelt upon the beauties of the Bahá'í Revelation, the most purely spiritual movement of all times, and upon the role it was to play in the future. Finally 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose and in the profound silence began to expose the principles of the Bahá'í Revelation with a language coloured and imaginative and touchingly human. He spoke at length and with impressive clearness and repeated several times his contentment at finding himself in the midst of so large a gathering, whose unity of sentiment and spirituality were forcibly apparent. He finished by chanting a prayer for all those present. The reunion was terminated by an admirable appreciation of the Bahá'í Revelation, on the part of Monsieur Jounet, and on leaving the hall one felt that the afternoon had been a complete success.

Madame d'Ange d'Astre

II:15, 12 December 1911 [II:15:3]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Mr Albert Smiley

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab to his honour, Mr Albert Smiley, the founder of the Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration. May God assist him!

HE IS GOD!

O thou great and respected personage!

The details of the Conference of Peace and Arbitration which is organized under your presidency has been read in the papers of the East and the West and the utmost joy and fragrance was produced; that, praise be to God, in the continent of America, under the presidency of a glorious personage, the Conference of International Peace is convened. Today in the world of existence there is no more important and greater cause than this for it is conducive to the promotion of happiness in the commonwealth of humanity and is the cause of tranquillity of all the nations and countries and the prosperity of the individuals of the human world. What cause is greater than this! It is evident that it has the utmost importance, nay, rather, it will be the cause of the illumination of the East and the West and the reason for the manifestation of the Countenance and the Face of God in the world of humanity and the appearance of infinite affections. Therefore, although this longing one has no acquaintance with your honour, but this great cause and this eminent effort of yours became the cause of my having infinite love for you while absent. Consequently I am engaged in writing you this epistle.

The matter of international peace was instituted by His Highness, Bahá'u'lláh, sixty years ago in Persia in the year of CE 1851: From that time innumerable epistles and tablets were spread first in Persia and then in other parts of the world, until about fifty years ago He clearly stated this matter of universal peace in the *Book of Aqdas* and has commanded all the Bahá'ís to serve faithfully with heart and soul in this great cause, give up their possessions and wealth for it and sacrifice their lives in case of necessity. He has taught them to spread the unity of nations and religions and proclaim in all the regions of the world the oneness of the kingdom of humanity. There are different religions in Persia, such as Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and different sects. Through the power of Bahá'u'lláh such affection and love is produced among these various religions that now they are associating with each other with the utmost unity and concord like unto fathers, sons, brothers, mothers and daughters. Whenever they gather in a meeting if a stranger enters in that gathering he is astonished by the love and affection that they manifest. There, is not the slightest [II:15:4] sign of difference and separation. Some of the tablets of Bahá'u'lláh concerning this matter are translated in America. Seek, perchance you may find them, then you shall realize what a permanent structure Bahá'u'lláh has raised in this world of existence, the result of which will be the oneness of all humanity. Likewise, innumerable tablets have been written with the pen of this longing one. Ask for them, too; perhaps you may find their translations in America.

To be brief, as His Highness Bahá'u'lláh in this period of man has planted a fruitful tree in the garden of the oneness of the human race, and as your honour is engaged in reality to irrigate this garden, therefore I found it necessary to express my gratitude and happiness to you, so that your good name may be spread not only in Persia but throughout all Oriental countries and the people of the East may remember your name with great respect. I hope that the principles of international peace and universal reconciliation may be established firmly among the individual members of humanity and its fragrance may be spread throughout all the regions.

I beg of you to accept the expressions of my highest consideration.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 9 August 1911.

Mr C. C. Philips

Through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, to his honour Mr C. C. Philips, the Secretary of the Mohonk Conference on' International Arbitration.

HE IS GOD!

O thou perfect man!

The Conference on International Arbitration and Peace is the greatest results of this great age. This brilliant century has no likeness and similitude in the history of man. From every standpoint it is distinguished above all other centuries. It is specialized with such excellencies that the shining star of the heavenly confirmations shall gleam from the horizon of this century upon all the future cycles and periods. One of the most extraordinary events of this time, which indeed is a miracle, is the founding of the oneness of this realm of humanity and its essential branches, such as Universal Peace and the unity of the different nations, in this arena of existence.

Persia was at one time the centre of religious difference, antagonism and oppression, to such an extent that pen is unable to describe. The adherents of different nations and religions considered it their religious duty to shed the blood of their opponents; they pillaged and ransacked each others property and did not fall short of oppressing their own flesh and blood. The hatred between the various religions attained to such a height that they considered each other unclean. Should a Jew enter a Muslim home, he would be made to sit upon the ground; if he drank water from a cup, that cup was destroyed or washed again and again; for the Jew was considered unclean. Such was the hatred and rancour among the different religions and nations in Persia. [II:15:5]

About sixty years ago His Highness Bahá'u'lláh through the Heavenly Power proclaimed the oneness of the Kingdom of man in that country and addressing the concourse of humanity said: *"O ye people! Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch!"*

About fifty years ago in the *Book of Aqdas*, He commanded the people to establish the Universal Peace and summoned all the nations to the Divine Banquet of International Arbitration so that the questions of boundaries, of national honour and property, and of vital interests between nations might be decided by an arbitral court of justice; and that no nation would dare to refuse to abide by their decisions. If any quarrel arise between two nations it must be adjudicated by this international court and be arbitrated and decided upon like the judgement rendered by the judge between individuals. If at any time any nation dares to break such a treaty all the other nations must arise to put down this rebellion.

Bahá'u'lláh has clearly stated that this Universal Peace is the cause of the tranquillity of the realm of creation. Now as the International Conference on Arbitration is organized in America and as this problem is a branch which will ultimately bring about the unity of the world, therefore we remember you with the utmost respect, that praise be to God you have arisen to perform such a universal service. God willing, that Conference will progress day by day and will bring about all-embracing results and will establish reconciliation and universal love between the different nations, races and peoples of this world.

I beg of you to accept the expressions of my highest consideration.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 22 August 1911.

Mrs Ella Goodall Cooper

Through his honour Mirza Ahmad and Mírzá Munír, to the maid-servant of God, Mrs Ella Goodall Cooper.

Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD.

O thou who art attracted to the Kingdom of God!

Thy detailed letter was received. Its perusal produced the utmost happiness, for it

evidenced the fact that thou hast attained to the knowledge of the reality of tests; that tests endured in the path of God are conducive to confirmation; nay, rather, they are heavenly powers and the bounties of the Realm of Might. But to weak believers tests are trials and examination, for, on account of the weakness of their faith and assurance they fall into difficulties and vicissitudes.

However, to those souls who are firm and steadfast, tests are the greatest favours. Consider thou that at the time of an examination in sciences and arts, the dull and lazy pupil finds himself in calamity. But to the intelligent and sagacious student examination in learning produces honour and infinite [II:15:6] happiness. Alloyed gold, subjected to the fire, portrays its baseness, while the intensity of the flame enhances the beauty of pure gold. Therefore, tests to the weak souls are calamity and to the veiled ones the cause of their disgrace and humiliation. The point is this, that in the path of Truth every difficulty is made plain and every trial is the matchless bounty. Therefore, the believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful must not relax during trial and no disaster must deter their service in the Cause of God. ...

You have written that upon your return you have compiled whatever you saw and heard (at 'Akká) and you have received the invisible assistance, that the teachings, which were like invisible seeds, have sprung to life and verdancy, spreading branches and leaves and producing blossoms and fruit. Indeed what you have written is true.

His honour Mr Chase is a blessed soul, good and pure. He is engaged in the service of the Cause and is a herald of the True One. Ere long he will be assisted with great confirmation.

You have asked regarding the influence of evil spirits. Evil spirits are deprived of Eternal Life. How, then, can they exercise any influence? But as Eternal Life is ordained for holy spirits, therefore their influence exists in all the divine worlds.

At the time you were here, this question was accordingly answered, that after the ascension of the godly souls, great influence and wide-spreading bounties are destined for them, and all encircling signs in the seen and unseen are decreed for them.

When the souls leave the bodies they do not assume elemental bodies. Whatever man thinks regarding this is but his own imagination.

When man desires help and communication from holy souls, he puts himself in a condition of self-unconsciousness and becomes submerged in a sea of meditation; then a spiritual state, which is sanctified from matter and all material things, becomes visible and apparent to him. Then he thinks he beholds a form. Its appearance is like unto a vision.

Man beholds in the world of vision various images, communicates with them and receives benefits, and in that world of vision he thinks they are physical temples and material bodies, while they are purely immaterial.

Briefly, the reality of the soul is sanctified and purified above matter and material things, but, like unto the world of vision, it manifests itself in these material forms and visages. Likewise in the psychic condition, one beholds the spirits like unto the physical forms and visages.

To be brief, the holy souls have great influence and intense effect, and their influence and continuity do not depend upon physical existence and elemental composition.

Ponder ye, that during sleep the human body and the five physical senses, viz., sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch are passive, i.e., all physical forces are inactive. Notwithstanding this, human reality has spiritual life and the [II:15:7] spiritual powers are penetrative, and wonderful disclosures are made in both the East and the West, and perchance one may discover some matters, which, after a long time, may become apparent in the physical world.

Therefore it has become evident that the continuity and influence of the human reality does not depend upon the physical instrumentality; nay, rather, the physical body is an instrument over which the human spirit spreads a luminosity. It is like unto the sun, which shining upon the mirror, causes its brilliancy, and when the reflection is withdrawn from the mirror, it becomes dark. Likewise, when the luminosity of the human spirit is withdrawn from the body, that instrument becomes useless.

To be brief: Humanity consists of the spiritual reality, and that reality is penetrative in all things and it is that reality which discovers the invisible mysteries, and through that reality all sciences, arts and inventions become known and manifest. Whatever thou beholdest of the works of man is but a faint ray of that reality. It encircles all things and comprehends all things.

Reflect thou, that all these existent sciences, crafts, industries and arts were at one time in the world of invisibility, unknown and unconcealed mysteries. As the spirit of man environs all things, therefore he has discovered them and brought them from the unknown world into the arena of manifestation. Therefore it is evident and established that the human spirit is the discoverer of things, the seer of things and the comprehender of things.

But regarding the progress of the spirit in the world of the Kingdom after its ascension, it is wholly beyond space and time, and developments, after leaving this body, are spiritual and not terrestrial. It is like unto the progress of the child from the world of the foetus to the world of maturity and intelligence, from the world of ignorance to the world of knowledge, from the station of imperfection to the pinnacle of perfection.

As Divine Perfections are infinite, therefore the progress of the spirit is limitless.

Whatever the European and American historians have written regarding His Highness Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, most of it is falsehood.

Consider ye, is it possible for a person afflicted with epilepsy to establish such a great nation? Therefore, this statement of the European historians, regarding that Holy Personage, is unqualified falsehood.

Reflect ye, that that illustrious Personage was born in the Sahara of Arabia among the ignorant tent dwellers, affiliating and associating with them until he grew to manhood and maturity; never studying the sciences and arts; nay, even he was apparently illiterate and uninstructed. Notwithstanding all this, he brought forth such a nation, established such a religion and uttered such explanations regarding scientific questions with great perspicuity, and raised such a community from the nadir of ignorance and barbarism to the zenith of civilization and prosperity! Through his influence, science, literature, philosophy, crafts and trades made wonderful progress during the medieval ages in Andalusia and Baghdád.

Now is it possible that such an illustrious Personage be afflicted with epilepsy?

Relative to the Paradise explained by Muḥammad in the Qur'án, such utterances are spiritual and are cast into the mould of words and figures of speech, for at that time people did not possess the capacity of comprehending spiritual significances. It is similar to that reference to His Highness Christ who, addressing His disciples said, "I shall not partake of the fruit of the vine any more until I reach the Kingdom of My Father." Now it is evident His Highness Christ did not mean material grapes, but it was a spiritual condition and a heavenly state which He interpreted as this fruit.

Now whatever is revealed in the Qur'án has the same import.

Regarding the Most Great Name, its influence, both in physical and spiritual affairs, is indisputable and certain.

In the last Tablet (to the Board of Council of New York), in which I have stated, "I am not Christ and am not eternal," the meaning is this, that I am not Christ and not the Eternal Lord! But I am 'Abdu'l-Bahá This is its real purport. Undoubtedly those souls who are under the shadow of the Blessed Cause, believing and assured, firm and steadfast, and living in accord with the Divine exhortations and advices, all of them are confirmed in the Everlasting Life.

Regarding the materializing of spirits through mediums: A person finding himself in a state of trance, or unconsciousness, is like one who sleeps; whatever he feels and sees he imagines to be matter and of material things, but in reality they are wholly immaterial.

O thou maid-servant of God! Arouse ye the people and make them cheerful through the glad-tidings of God, and quicken them through the spirit of gladness and heavenly rejoicing. The essence and foundation of all is to advance toward the Kingdom of Abhá and to be attracted by the Beauty of God. Whatever produces any influence in the world of existence is on account of the Love of God, which is the Spirit of Life and the cause of salvation.

Convey on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá wonderful Abhá greetings to the believers and the maid-servants of the Merciful.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 29 September 1908.

II:15, 12 December 1912 [II:15:8]

An interesting article pertaining to the Bahá'í Faith, from the pen of Mrs J. Stannard, appeared in *The Egyptian Gazette* (Alexandria), in its issue of 16 November. We reprint it herewith:

The Bahá'í Faith

To the Editor, *Egyptian Gazette*.

Sir: Having only just returned from Europe, I learn that there have been some recent allusions in the press to the above Persian religious movement and its leader, 'Abbás Afandí, or 'Abdu'l-Bahá ("Servant of God") as he prefers to be addressed by his followers and co-workers.

His visits to Switzerland, London and Paris having evoked widespread interest and indeed enthusiasm wherever he stayed. I venture to ask permission for a little space in order to make a few observations on matters that are surely of historic importance and significance.

The world of Islám at least should open a wide door of hospitality to this great teacher with his message of peace and religious unity for through the beauty of his teachings and philosophical knowledge he has done more in Europe and America to remove obsolete intolerance against the Muslim Faith than any reformer of our days. We live in stirring times of change and progress and now when once again the cries of war and race prejudices are being raised it is well if public attention be turned a little towards the Bahá'í movement and what it [II:15:9] stands for in our world today. The mere personality and influence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reveal the consistency of his message and teaching since he practices what he claims to show, and that is the brotherhood of man irrespective of colour or creed, and the inherent unity of all religions. At his house and table for many years could be met at any time pilgrims and followers adhering to almost every kind of faith and race under the sun. They met and sat together in complete harmony of thought and aim, for they were Bahá'ís. Jews, Moslems, Christians, Pársís¹ and Hindus—I have met all these varied types at different times in Syria

¹ Pársí, pl. Pársiyán.

round 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and we fraternized as though we belonged to one great family.

For forty years, nay from childhood, has 'Abbás Afandí suffered every kind of misery that bigotry, exile, and unjust imprisonment could inflict—a life spent in sacrifice and devotion to those high ideals of love, charity and compassion that Christians generally appropriate as their special religious prerogatives. Both 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his great father Bahá'u'lláh (the founder of the Bahá'í movement, and foretold by the Báb in his book, the Bayán, 1814–1852) stood true to the light within, and this raised them above the petty divisions, quarrels and barbarities which have ever been the ordinary outcome of religious prejudices and enmities. "God is One. Ye are all brothers," said the prophet. "By what right does one mean declare another unclean or claim that one race is superior and another inferior?" "All are before God as the varied flowers in the beautiful garden of the Universe." Great leaders who found movements or pioneers of science have ever had to suffer for their just views. As Jesus was hounded to His death through political and religious fanaticism, so was the Báb martyred and the Bahá'í prophet tortured and imprisoned. It is claimed that great causes evoke great leaders and reveal characters that cannot be measured by puny standards. Names that have come down to us through posterity as human "lighthouses" are souls that stood faithful and unshaken to the noblest that lay within them. They did and bore because anything else was impossible. Natures that scorned compromise or weak subterfuges, they stand, the eternal "crucified" types to the lesser human standards.

Those of us capable of judging and weighing have the good fortune to recognize in one day teachers and bold thinkers of the 'Abbás Afandí and Tolstoyan type, and that we can recognize them is due to the persistency with which such souls live out the precepts they inculcate. It is not a matter of verbal philosophy only, but of practical daily and hourly demonstration. If the pioneer treads paths that seem too idealistic for our poor strength, if we do not feel in us that same urge to the heights of their endeavour, at least the humblest of us may refrain from casting stones in their way, we can repress the cheap criticism that may give these tireless workers needless pain or trouble. Let us show generosity and approval for good intentions even if we feel ourselves above and beyond their influence. Observations such as these spring to the mind almost inevitably when one has lived in the world some time and had the good (or bad) fortune to engage in work that makes for progress and advance in the world of humanity.

It was a matter for deep rejoicing to find that our Christian outlook in Europe has advanced so truly and thoroughly on lines of tolerance and philosophic understanding, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá found at once the interest and sympathy in his work, which for many bitter years he has failed to find among the very people who stood to gain all in higher development and progress by listening to his wisdom. Let the Eastern world judge their leaders by the tests of life and action, not by their well sounding phrases. 'Ulamás¹ who are content to roll out grandiloquent Quranic expositions, or Christian priests who tell people how to live and do nothing themselves, are no longer honoured teachers in the life of today. "Some are content with words, but the truth of words is tested by deeds and dependent upon life. Deeds reveal the station of man" [II:15:10]

... "The principle of Faith is to lessen words and to increase deeds. He whose words exceed his acts knows verily that his non-being is better than his being and death better than his life." These virile words from the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh reiterate some of the strong sentiments in the Qur'án and Gospel, yet the world's judgements too often incline towards the plausible theoretician or armchair philosopher whose hands are mostly idle.

Some of our most honoured names in the London religious and intellectual world have met and heard 'Abdu'l-Bahá. People travelled long distances in Europe to see and speak to him.

¹ 'Alím, pl. 'ulamá' (Pers. 'ulamá).

He addressed two vast Sunday audiences in the City Temple and St John's, Westminster, besides countless other public meetings. In Paris where he is now staying he is also attracting the interest and keen sympathy of thinkers in the intellectual ranks.

It remains on his return later to his native East for the friends of Islám to pay a just and generous tribute to this brave worker in the cause of peace and unity and thus consolidate the work of true brotherhood really going on among people of different nations at the present time.

Yours, etc., J. Stannard

An editorial of equal interest commenting upon the foregoing article appeared in the same issue. In quoting it, we italicize certain statements to which we would direct the attention of the friends of the Cause in the West:

The return of 'Abbás Afandí

The letter from Mrs J. Stannard, which we publish in another column today, recalls the fact that 'Abbás Afandí, the leader of the Bahá'í movement, is shortly expected to return to the country where he has spent such a large part of his time since the Young Turks released him from his long imprisonment at Acre. His presence here last year did not arouse the curiosity that such an interesting and commanding personality might have been expected to evoke. His venerable figure might have been observed by the initiated, a quietly amused spectator at aviation meetings and the like, or gently expounding his doctrines to a few eager disciples in the shady walks of Nouzha Gardens.¹ But his doings attracted less public notice than those of comparatively unimportant officials and infinitely less than those of Faríd Bey. Islám remained indifferent—if we disregard the early revillings of the local Muslim press—the greater part of the Christian community, it is safe to say, was entirely ignorant of the fact that we had such a mighty teacher in our midst, a man whose followers are said to number over a million in Persia alone, and whose doctrines are spreading in America and elsewhere with astonishing rapidity. The indifference, or hostility, of Islám is the more remarkable since, as Mrs Stannard observes, 'Abbás Afandí has probably "done more in Europe and America to remove obsolete intolerance against the Muslim faith than any reformer of our day." The Bahá'í Faith tolerates all faiths, apparently believes in all faiths up to some point never very clearly defined; and it has done Islám the service of explaining to the Far West that Muslims are not merely the Mormons of another hemisphere. Tolerance so sublime as 'Abbás Afandí's is not easy to understand, even in the Twentieth Century, and though Mrs Stannard tells us that the followers of every known religion were to be found in the Bahá'í circle we cannot help doubting whether any very orthodox Muslims—or Christians either, for that matter—were numbered among them. As far as Egypt is concerned, at all events, the new religion has made little perceptible progress and has met with nothing but indifference or active hostility from the representatives of the older faiths. The voice of the Eastern Tolstoy, with his doctrines of peace and good will, has been drowned in the present outburst of patriotism and militant religion, just as the Western Tolstoy was shouted down in Russia, just as the Master from [II:15:11] whom both derive their teaching, was shouted down by the patriot Pharisees of Jerusalem.

But to Christians, at all events, and English Christians in particular, 'Abbás Afandí's return on the present occasion should arouse a real interest. He returns from a remarkable visit to London and Paris, from conferences with the leaders of religious thought in England and France, from addressing vast audiences at the City Temple and elsewhere, on all of which occasions his personal triumph has been striking and complete. No one who has had the privilege of meeting and conversing with the Bahá'í leader can be surprised at this, and it

¹ Ḥadá'iq al-Nuzha ("Pleasure gardens"), Alexandria, Egypt.

needs but little imagination to be impressed by the dramatic picture of this venerable Oriental in his white robes speaking to crowded congregations of London "City men", expounding in the Persian language those "high ideals of love, charity and compassion", which, as Mrs Stannard remarks, Western Christians have been too apt to regard as their own special prerogatives. Such scenes were reported at length by our London contemporaries and reproduced from time to time in these columns during last summer. *Yet we must frankly admit that to us this is the least attractive side of the Bahá'í movement. If Bahai-ism has found favour in the United States it cannot be forgotten that countless other "religions" have become popular there which would not have been taken seriously in any other country in the world. About the London meetings, also, there was a certain air of gush and self-advertisement—not on the part of 'Abbás Afandí, but on the part of his enlightened friends—which was quite patent to all who are familiar with that kind of religion which will listen to anything so long as it is unorthodox, new, sensational. We cannot help regretting the "lionizing" of 'Abbás Afandí.* In the East his religion will find its true home and exercise its beneficent influence upon nations newly awakening to a sense of their unity and power. We can, then, the more heartily welcome him back to Egypt, fresh from achievements in the Western capitals which have afforded yet another proof of his remarkable personal and intellectual powers.

The criticism of the "lionizing" of 'Abdu'l-Bahá should be received in the same kindly spirit in which it is made. In justice, however, to the friends in England, we quote the following extracts from a letter written by Mr Tudor Pole, of Bristol, to the *Star of the West*:

"Since 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in England and especially since he was my guest here, I have had some special opportunities for communion which have proved of immense service to me and to others. There are one or two points of considerable moment that have been borne in upon me as a result and in communicating them to you it should be understood that I do so on my own initiative and that the suggestions I make are not at the direct suggestion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself. He is a most remarkable figure in history and his love and wisdom are boundless, yet of course he is simply the servant of his Father who was undoubtedly a great Messenger of God, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá claims no other distinction. ... There seems a tendency in America and elsewhere to focus too great attention on 'Abdu'l-Bahá rather than upon the Manifestation Itself. ... 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I can see, does not wish for references to himself save as the servant of God, the inspired exponent of his Father's great message. To idolize 'Abdu'l-Bahá in exaggerated terms or forms is to delay the spread of the Bahá'í spirit of *Unity*. ... We are wonderfully blessed to have him among us, but imagination, exaggerated emphasis must not be laid upon his personality or the whole movement will suffer. This is a matter of supreme import."

In our opinion, this "lionizing" and "idolizing" of great souls is most natural. Hero worship and adoration of personalities seemed necessary and [II:15:12] inevitable during the childhood and youthful epochs of humanity just closing—for we are now entering upon the epoch of maturity for the race. "Following the Letter (a synonym for personality) rather than the Spirit," has been recognized by mature souls of the past, as a weakness of humanity. Even today many sincere Christians fail to distinguish between Jesus (the man) and the Christ (Spirit) manifest in Him. To those who do understand this distinction, idolizing is as intolerable as it is to the one being idolized—for every Servant of God admonishes the attracted ones and followers to abstain therefrom. Repeatedly, 'Abdu'l-Bahá firmly but kindly, manifests this quality of greatness.

We should not go to the other extreme, however, and recognize only the Spirit, ignoring the personality. To deny the personality, is to deny the purpose of creation and a reason for our existence in the image of God—the human form. Consider the *Hidden Word*: "O Son of Man! In My Ancient Entity and in My Eternal Being was I hidden. I knew My Love in thee, therefore I created thee; upon thee I laid My Image, and to thee revealed My Beauty."

The Bahá'í Revelation clearly teaches the Oneness and Singleness of God, i.e., the Manifested and the Secluded, the Personal and the Impersonal—phases should be considered of equal importance—holding both before the inner sight in perfect balance. Equilibrium is a characteristic of maturity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stated, that if it be the Will of God, he will visit America during the coming year. Let us begin now to “prepare the way” and help to make his “path straight” by becoming spiritually poised.

II:16, 31 December 1911 [II:16:3]

Discourses by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Given at Paris, France.

17 October 1911

I wish you to study the works of the Blessed Beauty and to live according to His teaching. The basis of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is as follows: “Bear in your heart great love to all races on earth, to the ends that unity may be established between them. Take an interest in everyone and find out how you can help them, so that all may see that your love is truly universal. Do the Will of God, do not only speak about it; the elect of God do this. People do much speaking to advance their own glory and to make themselves appear superior to their neighbours. But if you do the Will of God and do not blazon it abroad, then you will change the whole world. They who do most speak least.

Man must ever be thinking of drawing nearer to God.

Look at the Italians, they pretended to love humanity, yet they wished to seize Tripoli for their own advancement, not for the good of humanity.

I hope that you will some day be able to hinder such actions, and thus enable justice to reign everywhere. I hope you will be able to make all hearts pure and tender, all efforts sincere, so that everyone may work for the good of humanity. This is my prayer and desire.

18 October

The Relation between Thought and Action.—You must not only think thoughts, but do actions. The reality of men is their thoughts and their spirits, not their material bodies. Man and animal with regard to matter are partners. The difference is that man has the power of thought.

Thoughts may be divided into two classes: 1. The world of thought alone. 2. The world of thought which expresses itself in action. For instance, philosophers belong to the first class, for they only *think* heavenly thoughts and do not do heavenly deeds. Whereas spiritual teachers belong to the second class, for they express their high and noble thoughts in actions as soon as they think them.

Question: If one refuses the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh during his lifetime, may he hear of it after death?

Yes, he will hear of it in his next life, but through the mercy of God alone, not through his own ability.

Question: Are we not able, through love and faith, to make those on the other side hear of the Cause who had not heard of it while on earth?

Yes, surely sincere prayer always has its effect, and it has a great influ- [II:16:4] ence in the other world. We are never cut off from those who are there. The real and genuine influence is not in this world but in that other.

Question: In what condition is the soul before entering the body?

In a state of potentiality, possessing no consciousness as we understand it.

Travelling.—Travelling is a very good thing. It opens the eyes and broadens the horizon.

In the East one may behold vast and desert places where once lay peopled towns; this shows the Hand of Almighty God. History shows us how every nation which was against the Will of God has eventually been quite destroyed; and, accordingly, each nation which has listened to the Voice of God has prospered. When travelling one makes discoveries of strange things, i.e., the Emperors of Rome ruled over many thousands of people and were famous and powerful, but now the Emperors are dead and their power has vanished. Whereas the Christians began by being a small band of eleven disciples following Christ and living after His teaching, now there are many Christians all over the world and Christ's influence shall never die.

19 October

On Healing.—Healing comes from God, if the heavenly benediction be upon us while we are being healed, then only can we be truly healed. All depends upon God. Medicine is merely an outward form or means by which we obtain heavenly healing; without the Heavenly Benediction it is worth nothing. If man looks at the nature of the world around him, he will see that all created beings are dependent upon something, i.e., man is dependent for his life upon the air which he breathes, likewise the animals which are upon the earth, and each created being is dependent for its life upon some material circumstances. Man, therefore, and all creatures are prisoners of nature. The sun must follow his law, the earth must follow his law of motion, the sea also hers. But, by the spiritual power of God, which, through His Bounty, He has bestowed upon men alone, man is enabled to defy the laws of nature in many and wonderful ways, i.e., it is the law of nature that man should walk upon the earth, but he defies this law, for he sojourns upon the water and also flies, like the bird, through the air.

Through the wonderful spiritual power which God gives to man, man is enabled to reach the Kingdom of Heaven; but behold! man is not grateful and is careless of the great mercy which God has shown him.

20 October

The sun shines upon the earth, giving light and warmth to all creatures. The Sun of Truth also shines, giving light and warmth to the souls of men. All existing creatures need the sun to shine upon them and develop them that they may grow. The souls of men also need the Sun of Truth to shine upon them, to educate and encourage them. Circumstances that benefit the body do not benefit the soul, and the soul of man is his reality, not his body, i.e., there are some men who are perfected in material things and very backward [II:16:5] in the spiritual. Likewise many, who are at the bottom of the social and material ladder, are very much advanced spiritually.

Galien,¹ a Greek Philosopher who died at the time when the Christian Religion was in its growth—and was not himself a Christian—wrote many books about material civilization and development. He states as his belief that Religion is the basis of all true civilization, that is to say that not only must the brain and gifts of a nation be educated, but also the moral character. The Christians; he points out, are an example to show the truth of this theory, for theirs was the basis upon which the largest and most prosperous civilization of the world had been founded and their morals were very high. They were taught not to fear death, and to love their neighbours as themselves and live only for the good of humanity, and only to think of doing good to mankind. If these principles had been carefully carried out by the followers of Jesus Christ, then there would be no need for the world to be reawakened. But winter fell

¹ Aelius Galenus or Claudius Galenus; (129–c. 200/c. 216), sometimes known as Galen of Pergamum.

upon the hearts of men, and God sent His prophets to shine upon them with the Spring of the Sun of righteousness that they may be again awakened and blossom forth and bear fruit. Because mankind has shut its ears to the Voice of God and has neglected His teachings, wars and tumults, unrest and misery have fallen upon them. Let us make every effort to reopen the hearts of men to the Will of God. I pray God to give you power to bring humanity beneath the rays of the Sun of Truth and Peace.

23 October

When a man has found joy in one place he returns to that same place to find his joy again. When a man has found gold in a mine he will return again to that mine to find more gold; this is a natural law and shows forth the vital and spiritual powers which God has bestowed upon man, and the natural instinct which is born in him. The Great Light of the Spirit has ever arisen in the East, but it has shed forth its radiance into the West. And in the West has it found its greatest force of expansion.

The Christ rose like a star in the horizon of the East, but the Light of His influence has taken root more firmly in the West. This shows us how that the people of the West are very faithful in their hearts and they do not easily forget. The West is like a good plant. When the rain falls gently upon it to give it nourishment and the sun shines upon it to give it warmth, then does it blossom forth and bear good fruit.

It is a long time since the Sun of Righteousness has shed its Radiance upon the West, for the Face of God has been hidden by the sin and forgetfulness of man; but now, thanks be to God! the Sun shines forth in all its glory and the breath of the Holy Spirit is watchful over the nations. Let us pray to God that the light and refreshment may awaken the people and give them new life, that they shall find a second life and there shall be a new creation. Humanity shall put on a new garment and the Mercy of God will be showered upon the people. My earnest desire is that you will work for this [II:16:6] end, that you may be the cause of it. It is certain that the Flag of Divinity has been raised and the Sun of Righteousness of God appears upon the horizon. Be faithful and loving workers that you may be among the blest of God and receive the benefits of the Kingdom of Abhá.

25 October

I regret that you have been kept waiting so long. Yet, I have waited so many years in prison before I could see you—surely you do not mind waiting a little to see me. Our hearts are always together and the Bounty of the Kingdom of Abhá binds our spirits in one. For have we not one aim, one desire and one prayer? Therefore we are always together.

Last night, when I returned home, I did not sleep. I lay awake thinking and I said to myself: “Here am I in Paris. O my God! what is Paris and who am I?” I never thought from the darkness of my prison that I should come here and be among you, for I was condemned to perpetual imprisonment. When I read the document which told me of my sentence, I said to the officials: “It is impossible!” And they were astonished. Then I said to them: “If ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd were immortal and I myself were immortal, then would it be possible for him to condemn me to be in prison forever, but as we are not immortal, then it is impossible. My spirit is free and that can no man imprison.”

Now you see the powers of God, that I am no longer in prison, but here in Paris, talking with you. I am thankful to meet the spiritual friends and you also must be happy that God has allowed me to come among you. For who indeed would have thought it possible that I should be here talking in Paris?

Farewell words to Europe

1 December

I bid a loving farewell to the people of France and England. I am very much pleased with them. I counsel them that they may day by day strengthen the bond of love and amity to this end—that they may become the sympathetic embodiment of one nation—that they may extend themselves to a universal Brotherhood to guard and protect the interests and rights of all the nations of the East—that they may unfurl the Divine Banner of justice—that they may realize and treat each nation as a family composed of the individual children of God and may know that before the sight of God the rights of all are equal.

For all of us are the children of one Father. God is at peace with all His children: why should they engage in strife and warfare among themselves? God is showering down kindness; why should the inhabitants of this world exchange unkindness and cruelty?

“Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.”

Beware! Beware! Lest ye offend any heart.

Beware! Beware! Lest ye hurt any soul.

Beware! Beware! Lest ye deal unkindly toward any person:

Beware! Beware! Lest ye be the cause of hopelessness to any creature.

II:16, 31 December 1911 [II:16:7]

The Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in America

Through DÍYÁ’ Afandí, Chicago—Upon him be Bahá’u’lláh!—to Claudia Stuart Coles, Washington, D.C.—Upon her be Bahá’u’lláh!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art enkindled by the fire of the love of God!

Verily, I have perused thy beautiful letter of wonderful composition, which proveth thy firmness, assurance and steadfastness in the faith; and thy singing the verses of holiness to thy Merciful Lord. Blessed art thou from this great gift. Joy be unto thee from this vast providence.

Know thou that the building of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is the greatest foundation in those regions. God said in the Qur’án, “It is those who believed in God, and the Last Day, shall build the Temples of God.” It is incumbent upon thee and upon all, to put forth the best effort in these days, in building this glorious Temple; raising the tumult of commemorations therein, during the wing of the night, at dawn, and at eventide. It is incumbent upon ye (men and women) to be united, in this great Cause, so that ye may be confirmed by the Divine Bounty, and Merciful Spirit; become increased with energy and power; gain a recompense, and estimation. I implore God, and supplicate Him to make your feet firm in the straight path, and in the upright way.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The foregoing Tablet from our beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reached me in London and I think will be as a glad clarion call to all in regard to the work of the Cause. Over and over in Tablets about the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has given to each soul a call to service for the glory of God. It is not Chicago, nor America, nor a group of believers, that are to be glorified by the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, but the Living God, and when the Light of the Guidance of God says “it is incumbent upon ye, men and women, to be united in this great Cause,” surely every soul who believes that the Day of God is here, will, as one body, arise for “this great service”.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá expects to attend the Convention to be held in Chicago during the coming spring-time. Unquestionably, he will dedicate the site of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár at that time.

Through the guidance of God this site has been chosen, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wish that there be room for ample grounds is being obeyed. He has said that “all shall unite.” If those of us who call ourselves believers, for a few short weeks shall lay aside our own ideas of what seems to us best for the Cause and do that which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says is the most important work at this time; if we can take the step outlined for us by him, believing, seeing, feeling, hearing and trusting in his wisdom; if in selflessness, humility and unity we serve together in earnest effort—his desires will be fulfilled and the site of the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* (The Dawning Place of the mentioning of God) found ready for his consecration. Every one has deep responsibility; no one human being knows in full the demands upon another soul; no one can judge the work of another—that is God’s work; but each soul can, in humble faith, face squarely the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in regard to what he says is “the most important work”, and, in the measure of seeking, find light and hope and power that will be dynamic in its realization.

Prayerfully studying this Tablet in humility, in reverence, in faith, let us unite to work shoulder to shoulder as inspired atoms of one great tool with which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá can lay the foundation of the cause of Confirmation to the Cause. Then truly “will we become increased with energy and power; gain a recompense and estimation.”

O Lord, make our feet firm in the straight path!

Claudia Stuart Coles

II:16, 31 December 1911 [II:16:8]

Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to America

To the friends of God and the maidservants of the merciful in America:

HE IS GOD!

O ye friends of God and the beloved maidservants of the True One!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has the utmost longing to meet you, but now he is obliged to return to the East, for he has promised many friends and they having travelled a long way, will be disappointed if the meeting is not brought about. Therefore, he has returned to Egypt, and hopes that during the next spring no obstacle may arise, so that with infinite joy and fragrance he may hasten to America to meet the friends, to unfurl the banner of rejoicing, to spread the Glad-Tidings of the Kingdom of Abhá, to illumine the meetings and gatherings with the Rays of the Sun of Truth, to perfume the nostrils with the Fragrances of Holiness, to impart gladness and delight to the hearts, to attract the souls to the Realms of Might, to grant the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—so that in this nether world the congregation of the Righteous Ones may be firmly established.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The bounties of the Most Great Name are descending. Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The Lights of the Kingdom of Abhá are shining. Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The Doors of Heaven are opened and the call of the Kingdom is raised.

Upon you be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by M. Ahmad Sohrab, New York, 16 December 1911.

II:16, 31 December 1911 [II:16:9]

Letter to the American Bahá’ís

It was on the 7 December that I left ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Marseilles. My last request of him was to assist and confirm all the American Bahá’ís in the accomplishment of great services. He said: “The American friends will be assisted and helped.” For a moment he was silent. Then

he raised his head and continued, saying: "All those who have unselfish motives, whose hearts are devoid of any personal interests, will be assisted in this Cause. They will be confirmed by the heavenly cohorts—rest thou assured."

'Abdu'l-Bahá was very much pleased with the result of his work in London and Paris. While leaving Europe physically, his spiritual presence will be the cause of great benediction for countless ages to come. During my stay in Paris, having been permitted to live in the same apartment with him, I daily witnessed the marvellous power of his love and active interest in all those who are concerned in the uplifting of the human race. His great power in imparting happiness to all those who are depressed or are passing through a period of trials and tests, cannot be measured by human criterion. This one power alone distinguishes him above all men, for, notwithstanding the complexity of problems that he must solve daily and the thousand and one details that he must attend to for them, yet he is always beaming and imparting happiness to all those who come in touch with him.

We are looking forward with great anticipation to his visit to America, which will be some time in the early part of the spring. It is now the opportune time for all the friends in America to arise with one purpose and with one aim to prepare the way in a practical manner.

The Persian-American Educational Society has taken definite steps for the arrangement of his visit to America and will deem it a pleasure and a privilege to assist the friends all over the country with practical suggestions. His presence in America will be one of the most significant events of the twentieth century and the effect of his words will be far reaching. He does not come to visit any sect or religion or nationality, but he comes to meet ninety million Americans whose open mindedness for truth and whose open heartedness for the highest ideals of life are well known all over the world. In 'Abdu'l-Bahá we will see a representation of divine virtues and human perfections. He will come to us with the noblest thoughts of peace and brotherhood which have been crystallizing for ages in the Orient. He will represent to us the longings and the hopes of many million Bahá'ís in the East. May we all be ready to stand firm in his presence. May we all be assisted to accomplish our duties. May we all be inspired to prepare the way for him. The time is short, the opportunities are many and it lies in our power to take part in this great spiritual work. The standard of truth will be raised, the signs of the Kingdom of Abhá will be spread, the wintry season of dogmas and superstitions will be changed into the balmy spring time, the highway of righteousness will be paved and men of all races and nations will walk therein, [II:16:10] singing the songs of the Kingdom and raising the voice of glorification toward the Supreme Concourse. Army of the Kingdom of Abhá, be prepared for review by the Supreme Commander!

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

II:16, 31 December 1911 [II:16:14]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

HE IS GOD!

O servant of the True One!

What thou hadst written was known. It was a clear evidence of thy thoughtfulness and mindfulness in the Cause of the most Merciful One. I supplicate God that thou mayest at every moment advance in the grades of [II:16:15] divine love and devotion, spiritual attraction and merciful sentiments; and be benevolent and a comfort to both friends and strangers.

It is mentioned in the Gospel that a man called His Holiness, Christ, "Good Master". His Holiness said unto him, "Why callest thou Me good? None is good save One, that is God." So 'Abdu'l-Bahá wishes a sin covering eye and conceals the people's faults as far as possible; for he considers himself incapable and deficient in the Servitude of the Lord. Therefore, being

engaged in his own short-comings, he does not care about the sins of others, but always asks remission and forgiveness for them, and seeks bounty and grace in their behalf.

If a fault is committed by someone and I treat him with kindness, this is not on account of my negligence; but as I acknowledge my own short-comings and am cognizant of my own state, I do not show any opposition to others.

It is recorded in the Gospel that an adulteress was brought to the presence of Jesus Christ and confessed her sin. Those present asked Him why He did not command her to be stoned. He said, he who does not deserve a legal punishment, that is to say, "he that is without sin", may get up and stone the adulteress. All of them looking upon themselves found themselves sinful, and "went out one by one".

Now it is this condition which must always be had under consideration, otherwise the matter will be difficult. It is said in the Qur'án, "Hadst thou been severe and hard-hearted, they had surely separated themselves from about Thee." But the people must be just. If, notwithstanding their injustice, they receive favours, this will make them mindful and admonished. As to my short-comings in case of other persons who are firm, devoted and steadfast: I always acknowledge and confess my weakness and my failure and the beloved of God will certainly excuse. When a letter is received from them, I have done my best possible to send them an answer. Moreover writing letters has nothing to do with that pure, spiritual and divine love. Many persons in the blessed days (i.e., in the time of the Blessed Perfection) were recipients of favours, and had numerous long Tablets, but in this day wavered in such a manner that they did not hearken to or obey the divine commandments, and overlooked even the commands revealed in their own Tablets. Yet there are some other souls who have in this day not, been addressed in the Day of the Blessed Perfection. This is from the Bounty of God; He grants to whomsoever He willeth. God is the possessor of Great Bounty.

The essential thing and the real nearness to God, is to be steadfast in the Religion of God, to serve His Cause and to be in Servitude at the Threshold of Unity. This is necessary.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr D'iyá' M. Baghdádí, 23 September 1911.

II:17, 19 January 1912 [II:17:2]

Alliance Spiritualiste of Paris reception to 'Abdu'l-Bahá

9 November 1911

... [II:17:3]

...

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I am very grateful for the words and sentiments expressed by the general secretary. I give thanks to God to find myself in Paris in such a spiritual assembly.

If we look at the atmosphere of this meeting, we see that the spirit floats in it, the bounties of God descend, the aid of the Holy Spirit is seen. Thanks to God, these hearts are endowed with spiritual sentiments; the vibrations of the soul make themselves felt.

The spirit is like the sea, this assembly like the waves—though they are numerous, they all come from the same sea; though they apparently have different forms and aspects, the unity of the spirit is manifest.

All the prophets and Divine Manifestations have come to educate men, in order that the unity of the human world may shine clearly and distinctly, [II:17:4] so that there remain no

authority to the waves; that the authority be peculiar to the sea, for the spirit is like the sea and the bodies are like the waves.

It is said in the Gospels, "Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God." This heavenly Jerusalem is not made of stone, of lime and of clay, but it is made of the divine teachings which shine among men by the power of the spirit. For a long time, the divine teachings had been forgotten, no trace remained of the light of the heavenly Jerusalem. When Bahá'u'lláh manifested Himself from the Orient, the light of His divine teachings shone forth in Persia unto other parts of the world. This divine teaching is the heavenly Jerusalem which has again "come down out of heaven". Although that edifice had fallen to pieces, it is founded anew. The corporal and material forces ruled over the Orient; now the spiritual forces have taken their place.

Thanks to God, I see at Paris a respectable assembly which lives by the breath of the soul. Man is not man by the body, he is man by the spirit, for by the body he is the associate of the animal; that which distinguishes him is the spirit. As the sun illumines the earth, so the spirit illumines the body. It renders man celestial; gives him kindness by the breath of the Holy Spirit; makes him understand the reality of things; discovers all sciences; offers eternal life; unites the nations; joins the Orient and the Occident, and changes the human world into a divine world. Consequently, those who receive the bounties of the Spirit give life to others.

Now, you who are spiritual ought to be glad and joyful for the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, who is the founder of spirituality in this age. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are only spiritual. One should seek the Truth, which is the cause of the manifestations of the spirit, for the spirit will not make itself felt by the senses, but it will manifest itself by the hidden faculties. Though the human body is sensitive, its spirit is hidden; it is the spirit which commands the body.

The spirit acts in two ways: One way is by instruments; that is, it sees with the eyes, it hears with the ears and speaks with the tongue. These instruments work by the spirit, which is their motor; though its senses are manifested by the body, they come from the faculty of the spirit. The other way is that of being and acting without instruments; as in dreams and visions, it sees without eyes, hears without ears, speaks without the tongue, walks without feet. All the faculties of the spirit are clear and distinct in the world of visions. Hence it is evident that the spirit acts in two ways: First, by the instruments of the body; second, without the instruments of the body.

Thus it is that one's body may be in the Occident and the spirit finds out the situation in the Orient, and it directs and conducts the affairs there. Therefore it is evident that the spirit is powerful and the body weak.

The body is like the crystal and the spirit is like the light. Though the crystal be extremely transparent, its brilliancy and splendour belong to the brightness of the light. To be luminous, the light does not need the crystal, but the crystal to be bright needs the light. Even so the spirit does not live by the body, but the body lives by the spirit.

If the body is mutilated, the spirit conserves always its greatness and power. For example: If the hand of a man is cut off, the spirit keeps its authority and sovereignty; if the eye becomes blind, the spirit remains clear sighted; but if the attributes of the spirit leave the body, immediately the [II:17:5] body becomes nothing. Thus it is affirmed that man is man only by the spirit and not by the body.

This spirit is one of the divine bounties, a manifestation of the Sun of Truth; but if the human spirit receive the breath of the Holy Spirit, then it is a pure spirit. The breath of the Holy Spirit is the divine teaching; in it the spirit finds eternal life. It is the heavenly light and illumines the human world by the divine qualities. Hence we must endeavour to act according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Let us endeavour from day to day to become more spiritual, to bring about the unity of the human world, to practice human equality, to diffuse the divine mercy, to show the love of God to all those who are on the earth, so that the spiritual faculties may shine in all their splendour; that no authority remain to the body, so that the spirit, which sustains and rules the human world, may form one being, one person. Differences and disputes will exist no longer. The divine Jerusalem will be founded universally. All men will be the inhabitants of the same kingdom and they will take their part in the divine bounties.

I thank God to find myself in your assembly and I am grateful for your spiritual sentiments. I pray God to increase your sentiments each day; to strengthen this union and accord, so that the prophecies of the Holy Scripture become visible, for this epoch will be great, this century will be divine; the traces of all the scriptures will be seen; the signs given by Christ will become manifest. It will be the great day of the Lord. Divine justice will shine. It will be the time of peace, of justice, of union and of happiness. I hope that at this epoch the corporal world will become the reflection and echo of the divine world. Such is our hope, and, thanks to God, we agree in this desire.

I ask God that you may live by the breath of the Holy Spirit, that you be united, that all the hearts be filled with the love of God, that your tongue pronounce often the Name of God, that your actions be spiritual, that your sentiments be like those of the inhabitants of the Kingdom, in order that the human light, which is the image of God, may shine brilliantly.

O God! Kind, generous, merciful; illumine this assembly with the light of Thy love; vivify these souls with the breath of the Holy Spirit, offer the heavenly lights and the great bounties, give us Thy help, show us spirituality, give us the light of a good conduct, give to the spirits infinite bounties and generosity.

O Creator! We are poor, give us of the treasure of the Kingdom; we are humble, glorify us in Thy Kingdom; we are homeless, protect us, shelter us; we are seekers, lead us by Thy limitless favours; we are silent, give us an eloquent tongue; we are weak, give us the strength of the Kingdom.

O Creator! He who pardons! Pardon our faults; grant us bounties; forgive us our sins, teach us divine politeness. Thou art the One who gives; Thou art the One who offers; Thou art kind!

II:17, 19 January 1912 [II:17:6]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the friends in Stuttgart

Upon them be the Glory of the Most Glorious.

HE IS GOD!

O friends and maidservants of the Merciful!

Thanks be to God! that you have been gathered together and celebrated the birthday of the Báb with much joy and amity and were engaged in remembering God.

From the rose-garden of that meeting a beautiful fragrance has reached to the nostrils of these friends; and the light of God's love hath shone; therefore, it was a cause of delighting the hearts of these friends. I ask God, by His infinite mercy, that such meetings may be held often.

Likewise, that the entertainment every nineteen days may become current among you; so that the friends and maidservants of the Merciful may be engaged in praising and remembering God and singing to Him, and may become the cause of guiding the people.

Upon you all be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mírzá Yúḥanná Dáwúd, 15 August 1911.

Through Mírzá Yúḥanná Dáwúd, London, to the maidservant of God, Margarethe Döring, Stuttgart.

HE IS GOD!

O daughter of the Kingdom!

Your letter arrived, and its contents showed that Mr Gregory, by visiting the blessed Tomb,¹ hath received a new power, and obtained a new life. When he arrived at Stuttgart, although black of colour, yet he shone as a bright light in the meeting of the friends. Verily, he hath greatly advanced in this journey, he received another life and obtained another power. When he returned, Gregory was quite another Gregory. He hath become a new creation. Reflect on the Grace of the Kingdom of Abhá and see how it enlightened such a person. It has made him spiritual, heavenly, divine and a manifestor of the graces of the world of humanity. This man shall progress.

Thank God that you esteem Miss Knobloch, because she was the cause of your guidance. With weeping and supplication I ask from the Kingdom of Abhá, that He may vouchsafe heavenly blessings upon your father, mother, [II:17:7] sisters and brothers; and graciously enlighten Frl. Schaffer, Frl. Andrassy and Fran. Kusterer with the Light of Guidance.

Convey my greetings to Herr Kruttner, and Herr Richard Bauerle. I supplicate to the Divine Glory, and ask for them bright hearts, merciful spirits, seeing eyes and hearing ears.

I ask God to make you a firm rooted, verdant and fruitful tree in the Paradise of Abhá.

Upon thee be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mírzá Yúḥanná Dáwúd, 15 August 1911.

Through Mírzá Muḥammad Yazdí, Alexandria, to the friends of God in Stuttgart.

Upon them be the Glory of God!

HE IS GOD!

O my true friends!

The friends on their return from Stuttgart are praising all the friends of the Merciful in that city, saying: Praise be to God! that the friends are in utmost attachment and are ignited by the Fire of the Love of God. They are occupied in naught but the Divine commemoration. And also the contents of your letter proved your great love.

It seems that the Light of the Sun of Truth will shine powerfully in Stuttgart and all over Germany; the Breath of the Holy Spirit will show forth a great result, and the Bounty of the Word of God will spread over all.

I give you the Glad-tidings that your advancement in the Divine Kingdom will be great and that the Doors of the Kingdom are opened to all the people of Germany.

Who will embrace it first? I hope that the called ones of Germany may become the chosen ones.

Therefore you should seek no rest; nay rather endeavour day and night to guide the people, to give sight to the blind, to give life to the dead and to grant Everlasting Life.

Upon you be the Glory of God!

¹ Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí, Israel.

December 1917 (Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

II:17, 19 January 1912 [II:17:8]

News notes¹

Rejoice! Rejoice! Because of the Glad-tidings! You have attained to the light of the Kingdom. The glory of the Sun of Truth penetrates all regions.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Glad-tidings I send unto you. The doors of the Kingdom are open. The heavenly manna has descended upon you.

Rejoice! Rejoice! There were many holy messengers sent into the world; they came after one another, and all diffused the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Praise God! Praise God! That you have turned your faces toward the Kingdom. The rays of the Sun of Truth are illuminating you.

Strive with your heart and soul that the Heavenly Light may descend upon all people and that through it every heart may be enlightened and that the spirit of the human race may partake of Its glory. Work and strive until all regions of the world are bathed in this Light. Fear not when trouble overtakes you. You will be criticized; you will be persecuted; you will be cursed and reviled. Recall in those days what I tell you now: Your triumph will be sure; your hearts will be filled with the Glory of God, for the heavenly power will sustain you, and God will be with you. This is my message to you.

II:18, 7 February 1912 [II:18:3]

An address on truth

Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on 24 November 1911, at the home of Mademoiselle Gastea, Paris, France.

All the divine prophets are the Manifestations of Truth. His Highness Moses declared the Truth. His Highness The Christ spread the Truth. His Highness Muḥammad established the Truth. All the elect of God proclaimed the Truth. His Highness Bahá'u'lláh unfurled the ensign of Truth. All the sanctified souls who have stepped into the arena of existence have been the lamps of Truth.

Truth is the oneness of the kingdom of humanity. Truth is love among the children of men. Truth is the proclamation of Justice. Truth is divine guidance. Truth is the virtues and perfections of the human world. Truth is equality between the people of all countries. Truth is the illumination of the realm of man.

All the prophets of God have been the heralds of Truth. All have been united and agreed on this principle. Every prophet predicted the coming of a successor and every successor acknowledged the Truth of the predecessor. Moses prophesied the coming of Christ. Christ acknowledged Moses. His Highness Christ foretold the appearance of Muḥammad, and Muḥammad accepted The Christ and Moses. When all these divine prophets were united with each other, why should we disagree? We are the followers of those holy souls. In the same manner that the prophets loved each other, we should follow their example, for we are all the servants of God and the Bounties of the Almighty are encircling every one.

God is in peace with all His children, why should we be engaged in war? God is kind to every one, why should we oppress each other? The foundation of divine religion is Love, Affinity and Concord. Praise God, that this cycle is the period of illumination! Minds have made great progress; intelligences have been unfolded; the means of unity and agreement are

¹ Message sent to Bahá'ís in Stuttgart through Lady Bloomfield, Mrs Earle, Mírzá Asadu'lláh and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. Report by Frederich Schweizer.

being brought about and communication between the races of men is rapidly being established. Now is the time that all of us may embrace the law of peace and treat each other with honesty and straightforwardness. Let the religious prejudices be wiped away. Let the law of racial supremacy be discountenanced. Let political Expediencies be done away with. Let the love of country be superseded by the love of the world. Let us all deal with each other with infinite kindness. We are all the servants at the one Divine Threshold. We are all receiving the rays of truth from the same Sun of Reality. We must all believe in all the prophets. We must all acknowledge the divine authority of all the heavenly [II:18:4] books. We must wash our hearts free of all human prejudices. We must *serve God*. We must propagate the oneness of the realm of humanity. We must be the cause of the appearance of the perfections in the world of man. We must not be like the beasts of prey. We must not allow carnage and bloodshed. We must regard the blood of men as sacred. We must not shed the holy blood of man for the paltry earth. We must all agree upon one fundamental principle. That principle is the *oneness of the kingdom of humanity*.

Consider ye! What things are transpiring now in Tripoli! How many fathers have become without sons! How many, little children have become fatherless! How many kind and affectionate mothers are weeping for the death of their sons! How many women are lamenting and mourning over the cruel death of their beloved husbands! This sacred blood of humanity is shed for a piece of land! The beasts of prey never fight for this aim. Everyone is contented in his own place. The wolf is satisfied after receiving his share of life. The leopard will creep into his own lair after partaking of his food. The lion will crouch in his own jungle. No one intelligently or on purpose will ever entertain the desire to oppress another.

Alas! Alas! Although pitiless man brings under his dominion all the nests of humanity, yet he aspires for more. On the other hand, we easily realize that God has given to man divine intelligence, but he has become worse than the beasts of prey. The beasts of prey do not tear in pieces the members of their own species. No matter how ferocious a wolf may be, he cannot kill more than ten sheep in one night, but man is becoming the means of destroying hundreds of thousands of his fellow beings in one day. Now, be just! How can this agree with reason? If a man kills his brother he is called a murderer; if he crimsones the battlefield with the blood of hundreds of thousands of innocent men, he is hailed as a great conqueror! If a man steals ten dollars from another he is considered to be a guilty thief, but if he has pillaged a large country he will be known in history as a patriot. If he destroys with fire one house he is accused of arson, but if he bombards a city with the fire of cannon he is called a victorious being. All these events connote the evils of human ignorance, the blood-thirstiness of the nature of man and the lack of faith. For if man believes in divine Justice he will not consent to the suffering of any soul and he will not allow the shedding of one drop of blood; nay, rather he will exert himself day and night to make one soul happy.

Now, praise be to God, the signs of intelligence are becoming manifest among the people in some parts of the world. This is the dawning of the dayspring of the Most Great Peace. This is our hope: to spread the oneness of the realm of man, to destroy the foundation of hatred and animosity from among the people, to make manifest the Greatest Peace, so that the nations of the world may affiliate with each other and all the governments may strengthen between themselves the bonds of love and unity, the International Court of Arbitration may be established and all the world-wide problems and difficulties which arise between the nations may be adjudicated in that Universal Court. [II:18:5]

The solving of these international problems depend upon the increase of the number of the lovers of Peace, and those who are devoted to the greater friendship of nations may add their power to the public opinion which revolves around the Peace of the World. Then, through the powerful demonstration of the people of peace and reconciliation, all the nations will be forced to accept the doctrine of Peace.

Love is illumination. Love is the cause of life. Hatred is conducive to death. Undoubtedly wise men prefer life to death, unity to discord, and will endeavour with heart and soul that these impenetrable dark clouds may vanish and the Sun of Reality may shine forth; this world may become another world; this mound of earth may be changed into a delectable paradise, the East and the West may embrace each other, the North and the South may clasp hands of true fellowship, so that the true, divine Love may become unveiled in the world of man. For to love man is to love God, and to be kind to the people is to serve God. Pray and exert yourselves with heart and soul so that you may become the means of creating love among the children of men. We hope that through your efforts religious, racial and political prejudices may pass away, and the tired world may receive peace and tranquillity.

You who have children know of a fact how beloved they are to you. Those who are bereaved of the meeting of their children because they are killed in fighting, are like unto you. Consider, what will be the mental agitation of a mother and a father when they look upon the body of their son steeped in blood! Will they have any more desire to live? Will they have any composure, any comfort? Those who are now at war in Tripoli are passing through agonies and their fathers and mothers are in a desperate mood.

God has created us to be loving and compassionate toward each other, and not draw the sword before each others' faces. We must adorn the gathering of love and peace, and not drill soldiers for the ranks of the army. We must organize courts of justice. God has given to us eyes so that we may look upon each other with the eyes of the Love of God. He has granted us hearts so that we may become attached to each other and not show enmity and rancour. Consider how God has been good to man! He has given him understanding, intelligence and sentiment so that he may exert these divine faculties in the path of love and not in the way of harm. We must supplicate God that He may confirm and assist us to become the embodiment of the perfections of man; not to extinguish the torch lighted by the Hand of Majesty; not to stop the down-pouring of the Rain of Mercy; not to cut His green and verdant trees; not to prevent the descent of heavenly blessings, but to become confirmed in such wise as to adorn the realm of humanity, to illumine the East and the West, to create means of the interdependence of man, to destroy the basis of war and to become the cause of the affiliation of the hearts.

This is our hope! This is our utmost aspiration! We beg of God to assist us therein. His Highness Bahá'u'lláh dawned from the horizon of [II:18:6] Persia and spread to all parts of the world the rays of the Most Great Guidance. He invited all to the Greatest Peace and gave advice to all, especially to Napoleon the Third, who was at that time Emperor of France. For fifty years He suffered everything in life so that by degrees the hearts became attracted to the Most Great Peace. Now, praise be to God, this light is continually spreading its benefits and ere long the Banner of the Most Great Peace shall become unfurled. We will exert ourselves day and night so that the world of man may become harmonized and the Sun of Truth and the Rays of Reality may enlighten the East and the West.

A glimpse of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris

Alice R. Beede

After a morning talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at his apartment No. 4 Ave. de Camoëns on 15 October 1911, all those present were invited that Sunday afternoon to meet him at four o'clock at 22 rue Seeden Rollin pre Saint Gernais (Seine) outside the walls of Paris, where a real Bahá'í settlement work is carried on by Mons. V. Ponsonaille and his good wife. They are poor people. He is employed as a collector for one of the large department stores in Paris. Having received the Message, he felt his work for the Cause of God was among the very poor children, waifs and those who had no parents; so with his wife, some years ago settled his home here and by going without their noon day meal (which to the French means much) they could give

it to these little ones. They started in an old car where they met together to read the Tablets and hear the Word of Bahá'u'lláh. It was not long before many came and it grew so that the clergy of many sects desired to have it consolidated under them. Mons. Ponsonaille did not consider this the way to serve best and he declined all these offers. At last, they grew so very jealous that they, with the help of the priests, took the car from him. The Bahá'í friends in Paris offered to build a place for his work and Mons. Ponsonaille told them if they would furnish him the boards and nails that he would build it himself, which he did, and it was here that we went, and after three months spent going around Paris every day, I assure you I had never seen such a dirty, miserable quarter.

After leaving the train on the main street, we walked down to the end of a narrow lane or street without sidewalks, on which doors opened to places where soldiers and women were drinking and screaming, while from the small windows bedclothes were hanging out, and women and children could be seen. It was with joy we at last saw a familiar face and Mons. De Scott, the artist, pointed to the small gate through which we passed and by the discarded car into a small board cabin about 20×25 feet. At one end was a raised platform and desk of rough boards. I can only say as my eyes fell first upon The Greatest Name hanging in a frame from this desk and I saw the crowd of [II:18:7] miserably poor, dear little ones gathered there, and as my ears caught the music of their voices (for they were singing), tears filled my eyes and a great lump choked me. Then I looked and saw we were but a half dozen who had come as guests, and all, like myself, were deeply affected. It was Madam Ponsonaille, a woman with a strong, kind and most intelligent face, who evidently had taught the children to sing and who with her whole heart was leading and keeping time for them, for they had no instrument. After the song Mons. Ponsonaille read a Tablet sent by the Master, for he called 'Abdu'l-Bahá "The Master", and it is quite evident that they all know him as the Master. Mons. Ponsonaille, who has a delicate, most refined face—that of a gentleman in its fullest sense—talked for a time; they sang again, and then all their little heads were turned towards the entrance and it was evident that their hearts were full of expectancy and they longed to see the One who had promised to come to visit them. The oldest of these children were not over fifteen—from that down to babies in the arms—all ages and kinds, clothed cleanly in clothes that had no fit, or were misfits rather.

At last there was a silence. Then all arose to their feet as 'Abdu'l-Bahá quickly entered and walked up the narrow centre passage to the front and stood. Mons. Dreyfus-Barney and Tamaddunu'l-Mulk took their places on the side. Mons. Dreyfus-Barney acted as interpreter. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "I am very glad to be here with you. I am very glad to see you all here. I love you very much. I have been in many beautiful houses, but this is more beautiful to me than any of the others, for the spirit of the love of Bahá'u'lláh is here. You are all receiving the teachings of God and learning how to act and live and some day you will be great and wise for having learned the truth. I have seen many beautiful rich children, but to me you are more beautiful, and I love you all (as Christ loved little children) here. Monsieur and Madam Ponsonaille are your spiritual teachers. They give you food and understanding eternal of God, while your parents are giving you your material food and care for your bodies. You must love these good friends." Turning to Monsieur and Madam Ponsonaille, he said: "This is a great work you are doing for the love of God in this great day, through the power of Bahá'u'lláh. Your station is great. Your names will go down through all the ages. Kings and Queens have never been talked of and remembered as you will be. You are workers in the Kingdom of Abhá and I am very happy and love you very much." Then with his head upturned and the palms of his hands upturned together, as if to receive in them the pouring down of the Holy Spirit, he chanted a prayer and blessing, and coming down from the small elevation, on which he was standing, to where the children were, all crowded close around him, and laying his hands caressingly upon some of their heads and taking the hands of others with a loving smile

to all, with difficulty he passed down the aisle to the door. Near me were some rough boys whom [II:18:12] I was often obliged to quiet before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered the hall. But after he came they never moved nor spoke and when he passed out they fell over each other in their great desire to have him take their hands.

Outside the door stood Mons. Ponsonaille, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, putting his hand inside his gown, took out many gold pieces and gave to him as he bade him good-bye. He walked down the street toward the carriage so quickly that our little party was at least twenty feet behind. Oh! what a sight. In every doorway and window were people—and such people! A very poor man held the carriage door open as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered with his little party, Mons. and Madam Dreyfus-Barney and Tamaddunu’l-Mulk. The crowd were fighting and calling names but a gendarme and Mons. De Scott protected us as we passed on safely.

So ended a never-to-be-forgotten day, having seen ‘Abdu’l-Bahá among the children of the poor of the streets of Paris and I thought again of the light I saw twice on Fridays in ‘Akká and wondered if they were missing him and longing for his return and loving help. The thought comes to me now of what the world’s poverty will be after his departure and to us who have been fed from his hand on the Bread of Life.

II:19, 2 March 1912 [II:19:3]

Aims and ambitions of Bahá’ís

Spoken by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Paris, 6 November 1911

- I. Pity and good-will towards all mankind.
- II. The rendering of service to humanity.
- III. To guide and enlighten hearts.
- IV. Each member must try to be kind to everyone and to show forth great affection towards every living soul.
- V. Humility towards God and constant prayer to Him so as to be enabled to grow daily “Nearer God”.
- VI. Always in every word and action to be faithful and sincere, so that each member may be known to the world as embodying the qualities of Sincerity, Faith, Kindness, Love, Generosity and Bravery. That we may be detached from all that is not God, attracted by the Heavenly Breath, divine beings—so that the world may know that a Bahá’í is a perfect being.

II:19, 2 March 1912 [II:19:3]

Some teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

From Discourses given in London and Paris

These are wonderful days! We see an Eastern guest received with love and courtesy in the West. I have been drawn here, in spite of my ill health, by the magnet of your love and sympathy.

Some years ago an ambassador was sent from Persia to London where he stayed five years. (His name was ‘Abdu’l Hasan Khán.) When he returned to Persia they asked him to tell them about the English people. He answered: “I do not know the English people. Although I have been in London five years, I have only met the people of the Court.” This man was a great man in Persia, and sent to England by princes, and yet he did not know the people, although he lived among them five years. Now I, a prisoner, come to England for the first time, and although my visit is so short, I have already met many dear friends and I can say I know the people. Those I have met are true souls working for peace and unity. Think of this subject: What a difference there is between this time we are living in now, and seventy years ago! Think of the progress! the progress toward unity and peace!

It is God's will that the differences between nations should disappear. Those who help the Cause of Unity on, are doing God's work. Unity is the Divine Bounty of this brilliant century. Praise be to God, there are many societies and many meetings held for Unity. Hatred is not so much the cause [II:19:4] of separation now as it used to be; the cause of disunion now is mostly prejudice.

Heaven has blessed this day. It was said that London should be a place for a great proclamation of the Message. I was tired when I boarded the steamer, but when I reached London and beheld the faces of the believers, my fatigue left me. Your great love refreshes me. I am very pleased with the English believers.

The feeling that existed between the East and the West is changing in the Light of Bahá'u'lláh's teaching. It used to be that if a Westerner drank from the cup of an Easterner the cup would be thought polluted, and the Easterner would break it. Now it is, with believers, that when a Westerner dines with an Easterner, the vessels and the plates that he has used are kept apart and revered in his memory.

One day some soldiers came to the house of a believer and asked for one of his guests to be brought to them, that they might take him to his execution, according to their warrant. The host gave himself up in his guest's place and was killed in his stead. This is an instance of true brotherly love.

Be kind to all strangers. Those who come from all parts of the world, make them feel at home. Speak to those from Turkey, Japan, Persia, China, all countries, find out where they live, ask if you can be of service to them. The English are so polite and conventional that to Easterners they often seem cold. You must forget conventionality when you speak with them, they are not accustomed to these ways.

When you see a foreigner, perhaps you think he is a thief, or even a murderer; you think you must be careful. Don't think of yourself. Even if what you suspect be true, still go out of your way to be kind to them—it will help them to become better.

Let those who meet you know without your saying so that you are a Bahá'í. You must manifest the most sincere love for all. Your hearts must burn with love for all. Let the people see that you are filled with universal love. If you meet a Persian, talk with him without ceremony, ask where he lives and try to help him. Likewise speak to all strangers who seem lonely and give them your willing service. Be loving to them, Turks, Arabs, Indians, Chinese, Americans, Japanese—all. If they are poor, help them with money; if they are sad, comfort them; if they are distraught, quiet them; till all the world shall see that you have in truth the universal love. It is all very well for you to say that you agree with all this, that it is good—but you must put it into practice.

The "reality" of man is thought—not his material body. Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to the rest of the created beings. If his thought is directed continually towards [II:19:5] heavenly subjects, he becomes saintly; if, on the other hand, his thought does not soar above things of this world, he is little better than an animal.

Thought is of two kinds:

- a) *Thought that belongs entirely to the world of thought.*
- b) *Thought that results in action.*

The thoughts of our Lord Jesus Christ belonged to a high spiritual world, but he also

brought them into the world of action.

Some men and women have exalted thoughts, but if they do not realize them in the world of action, they are useless. The power of thought is dependent on manifestation in the world of action.

Nevertheless in the world of progress and evolution thought has an effect, even if it is not always expressed in action. To this class of thought the majority of philosophers give expression; their thoughts are above their actions, too high for them to live up to themselves. The difference between philosophers and spiritual teachers is this: Spiritual teachers follow their own teaching, bring down into the world of action their spiritual conceptions and ideals, whereas mere philosophers do not. We often find philosophers emphasize the importance of Justice, while in their private lives they are most unjust (Alexander and Aristotle). This state is impossible with spiritual teachers. No man can separate himself from his thought.

In order to bring about a state of peace and unity three things are necessary:

- a) To know b) To have the intention c) To put into practice

Unity is good. To *know* this is not sufficient. You must *intend* to promote it, you must work for it. Knowledge is a good thing, but it is only the first step. If knowledge is alone it is stationary. These meetings teach us that Unity is good, and that suppression (slavery under the yoke of traditions and prejudices) is the cause of disunion. To know this is not enough. All knowledge is good, but it can bear no fruit but by action. It is well to know that riches are good, but that knowledge will not make a man rich; he must work, he must put his knowledge into practice. We hope the people will realize and know that Unity is good, and we also hope that they will not be content to stand still in that knowledge. Do not only say that Unity, Love and Brotherhood are good; you must work for their realization.

The Czar of Russia promoted The Hague Peace Conference and proposed the decrease in armament for all nations. In this Conference it was proved that Peace was beneficial to all countries, and war destroyed trade, etc. The Czar made a very good speech, though after it was over he, himself, was the first to declare war (against Japan).

Knowledge is not enough. We hope by the Love of God we shall put it into practice. A spiritual universal force is needed for this. Meetings are good for engendering spiritual force. To know that to reach a state of per- [II:19:6] fection is possible is good, to march forward on the path is better. We know that to help the poor and to be merciful is good and pleases God, but knowledge alone does not feed the starving man, nor can the poor be warmed by knowledge or words, in the bitter winter.

The magnet of your love brought me here. My hope is that the Divine Light may shine here, and that the Heavenly Star of Bahá'u'lláh may strengthen you, so that you may be the cause of the Oneness of Humanity, that you may help to make the darkness of superstition and prejudice disappear and unite all creeds and all nations.

We have had wars and disputes for over 6,000 years. Even if we look on this state of affairs as an experiment, surely it is sufficient, surely it is time to stop. This is a brilliant century. Eyes are open now to the Beauty of the Oneness of Humanity, of Love and Brotherhood. The darkness of suppression will disappear and the Light of Unity will shine. We cannot bring Love and Unity to pass only by talk. Knowledge is not enough. Wealth, science, education are good, we know that, but we must also work and study.

Knowledge is the first step; Resolve, the second step; Action, the fulfilment, is the third step. To make a building, first of all one must make a plan, then one must have the power

(money) to build, then, after all these preparations, one can build. One forms a Society of Unity—that is good—but meetings and talk are not enough. In Egypt these meetings take place, there is only talk and no result. These meetings here in London are good, the knowledge and the intention are good, but how can there be a result without action? Today the force for Unity is the Holy Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh. He manifested this Spirit of Unity. Bahá'u'lláh brings East and West together. Go back, search history, you will not find a precedent for this.

The Universal Races Congress was good. The result of it was intended to be the furtherance and progress of Unity among all nations, a better international understanding. The purpose was good. The causes of disputes among different nations are always due to one of the following classes of prejudices:

a) Racial, language b) Theological c) Personal d) "Beliefs", customs, traditions

It requires a *universal* active force to overcome these differences. A small lamp could light a room, a larger could light a whole house, a larger still could shine through the city, but the sun is needed to light the whole world. A small disease needs a small remedy, but a disease which pervades the whole body needs a very strong remedy.

The differences in languages cause disunion between nations. There must be one universal language. The diversity in Faiths is also a cause of separation. The true foundation of all Faiths must be established, the outer differences abolished. There must be a Oneness of Faith. To end all these dif- [II:19:7] ferences is a very hard task. The whole world is sick—this is a very bad illness to cure.

The world is wrong, just because people talk too much and do not carry out their ideals. If action took the place of words, the worlds would change very soon. A man who does good and does not talk about it is perfect. The man who does very little good and magnifies it in his speech, is not good. If I love you, you know it, I need not tell you all the time; on the other hand, if I did not love you, you would know it also, and you would not believe me if I said I did love you a thousand times. People speak too much because they seek fame, because they wish to be thought better than their brethren. Those who do most good say the least about it.

Look at the Italians for instance. They speak a great deal about humanitarianism and socialism, and yet see how disgracefully they have behaved towards the Turks. But why should we blame them? I hope you will always avoid tyranny and oppression, and that you will always uphold and practice justice towards all men and keep your hearts pure. That is what I expect of you.

The great causes of separation among the people are:

a) Racial c) Religious e) Personal
b) Political d) Traditional f) Commercial prejudices

Bahá'u'lláh has abolished these. None can say that this is not good. Anyone who denies this is ignorant. God has created the world as one—the boundaries are marked out by man. God has not divided the lands. Each man has his house and meadow; horses and dogs do not divide the fields into shares. That is why Bahá'u'lláh says: "Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country, let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind." All are one family, one race. All are human beings. Differences as to partition of lands should not be the cause of separation among the people. One of the great reasons of separation is colour. Look how this

prejudice has power in America, for instance. See how they hate one another! Think over this. Animals do not quarrel because of their colour! Surely man should not, who is so much higher in creation. What ignorance exists. White doves do not quarrel with other doves that are blue, because of their colour but white men fight with dark coloured men. This racial prejudice is the worst of all.

All are one. In the Old Testament it says that God created man like unto His own image. In the Qur'án it says: "There is no difference in the creation of God!" Think well. God has created all, cares for all, and all are under His protection. The policy of God is better than our policy. We are not as wise as He.

Disease is of two kinds: (a) Material (b) Spiritual. For instance, a cut of the hand; if you pray for the cut to be healed, and do not stop it bleeding, you will not do much good, this needs a material remedy. [II:19:8]

Sometimes if the nervous system is paralyzed through fear, a spiritual remedy is necessary. Madness, incurable otherwise, can be cured through prayer, but an abscess cannot be cured by prayer alone. Extreme cases need prayer. It often happens that sorrow makes one ill. That can be cured by spiritual means. Blindness is physical, not spiritual. They say our Lord cured blindness; it was blindness of the soul. ("They have eyes and see not, ears they have and hear not.") He brought on spiritual awakening.¹

All healing is of God. There are two classes of causes for illness: (a) Material, (b) Spiritual. If the sickness is of the body, a material remedy is needed; if of the soul, then a spiritual remedy.

All is in God's hands. Aristotle made a special study of the digestion, but he died of a gastronomic malady. Avisen was a specialist of the heart, but he died of heart disease. Dinradi (?) was a thorax specialist—he died of consumption. God is the only all powerful doctor.

Kings have all the power the world and man can give them, yet sometimes God shows them their feebleness and dependence on Him by allowing them to be in need of a very little thing. The elephant, the largest animal and the strongest, is troubled most of all by the fly. The lion has a worm that troubles him greatly. If man looks at nature he will see that all that exists is captive. All are dependent. Man, to begin with the highest of all created beings, is dependent on a great many things for his life. The first is air; a few moments without air would be sufficient to kill him. Then he is dependent on water, food, clothing, warmth and many things. See how he is surrounded by dangers of all sorts and illnesses. It is the same with all created beings, animals, plants; look how much is necessary to their existence! All that exists is feeble, poor, captive. The freedom of man depends alone on his spiritual power. All that exists are prisoners of nature. Consider the sun, that enormous, powerful globe around which we travel, even he cannot escape the law of nature—he cannot move out of his course or shade his radiance—and again the sea cannot escape, she has no will of her own. Only man is enabled by Divine Power to control, in a small degree, the laws of nature. It is the natural law for man to live on land, yet he sails on the sea. It is natural for man to rest on *terra firma*, yet he flies. It is natural for a man to walk no faster than three or four miles an hour—he makes himself engines which take him sixty or more miles an hour. It is natural for a man to be able to speak with another at a distance of ten yards, but he makes himself the telephone and telegraph with which he can speak and send messages to a distance of a hundred, of a thousand and more miles. In these cases nature is the prisoner of man.

¹ Refer to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 65.

Look what great power God has given man and yet how sad it is that so much ignorance still remains.

I hope you will always be the cause of revealing the Divine Light to the people and that the power of the Spirit will lead you into the Kingdom of God.

III:1, 21 March 1912 [III:1:3]

Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh

From discourses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London and Paris.

The first principle of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is

The Search after Truth.

In order to search after the Truth, men must shut their eyes to all the traditional superstitions of the past.

The Jews have traditional superstitions, the Christians also; also the Zoroastrians, the Buddhists. All religions are bound by traditions and dogma, all consider they themselves are right and the rest are wrong. The Jews believe themselves to be the only possessors of the Truth and condemn all other religions; the Christians say their religion is the only true one and all others are false; likewise the Buddhists and Muslims, all limit themselves. If all condemn one another, where can we search for Truth? All contradict one another, all cannot be true. If each considers their Religion as the only true one, it is impossible for them to see the Truth in the others.

If a Jew is bound by the external practice of the Religion of Israel, he can never understand that Truth can exist in any other Religion but his own. We must, therefore, detach ourselves from forms and external practices of Religion if we wish to see the Truth and reality of others. We must abandon the prejudices of tradition.

If a Zoroastrian believes that the Sun is God, how can he be united to other religions? The idolators believe in their idols, how can they understand the Unity of God?

It is clear then that in order to search after Truth we must detach ourselves from superstition. If all men would follow this principle, Truth would be found and they would have a clear vision.

If five people meet together to search for Truth, they must begin by putting aside their own special convictions and renounce their own prejudices. In order to find Truth we must give up our small ideas. The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and every one else to be wrong, is the greatest obstacle in the path of Unity, and Unity is necessary if we desire to find Truth.

Therefore we must renounce our own particular prejudices and superstitions if we are in earnest in our search for Truth. Unless we make a distinct division between dogma, superstition, prejudice, on the one hand, and Truth on the other, we shall never succeed. When we wish to find a thing we search for it everywhere, therefore we must carry this principle out in our search for Truth.

Science must be accepted. Light is good in whatever lamp it is burning; a rose is beautiful in whatever garden it grows; a star has the same radiance from whatever point it rises.

Have no prejudices. You trust love the Sun wherever it rises. If the Sun of Truth shines in Jesus, it has also shone in Moses and in [III:1:4] Buddha. That is what is meant by the Search for Truth.

It means also that we must put aside all we have learned before and recommence our education. We must not be attached to any one religion or personality, for fear of at last

becoming bound by superstition. When we are once detached we can seek the Truth and arrive at our goal. Then we shall see Truth in the reality of all religions, for Truth is in all.

The first discovery we make in our search for Truth will lead us to the Unity of Mankind.

The second principle

The Unity of Mankind

Yesterday I spoke to you of the First Principle of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, the Search after Truth. It is necessary for a man to put aside all he believed before in the nature of traditional superstition and regard all religions as equal. He must not love and cling to one, and detest another. He must search for Truth in all, and if his search be earnest he will succeed.

The Second Principle is the Unity of Mankind. All are servants of the One God—and God reigns over all and has pleasure in all alike. All men are of one family, the crown of humanity rests on the head of each man. In the eyes of the Creator all are equal. He is kind to all, He does not favour this nation or that nation, all are His creatures. If this is so, why should we divide one race from another, creating superstitions, differences between one people and another?

The only difference between men is the difference in degree. Some are like children, who are ignorant and must be educated and reared to maturity; some are like the sick and must be treated with tenderness and care. None are bad or evil. We must not feel repelled by these poor children, we must be kind, we must teach the ignorant and tend the sick.

Consider: Unity is the cause of existence, love is the cause of life; and on the other hand separation is the cause of death. In the world of creation, for instance, all things owe their existence to Unity. The elements which compose wood, stone or minerals, are held together by the Law of Attraction; if the law ceases to hold these elements together, if they are separated, then the object will not exist. The law of attraction has brought together certain elements in the form of this flower, but as soon as the law of attraction is withdrawn from this centre, the flower will decompose.

So it is with humanity. The great Law of Attraction, Harmony and Unity forms this wonderful creation. When the law is no longer active on the body of a man, he dies. So it is evident that attraction, unity, harmony and love are the causes of life, whereas repulsion, disunion, in-harmony and hatred cause death.

We have seen that whatever causes separation in the world of existence causes death. Therefore, it is the same in the world of the spirit.

All who are servants of the one God must be united in the law of attraction. They must, therefore, avoid all hatred, disagreement and discord.

We find, if we look at nature, that the gentler animals group together, the lambs, the deer—and also that the wild animals live apart from civilization in the forest, the tiger, the lion and the wolf. Two wolves can live together, but a thousand lambs can share the same fold and remain at peace. Two eagles can dwell in the same place, while a thousand doves can make their habitation together. Man should at least be numbered among the gentler animals—but when he becomes ferocious, Ah well!

The point is this: Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed the Unity of the World of Mankind. [III:1:5] All people are of one family, and all should feel to one another as father, mother, sister, daughter.

I hope you will spread this teaching of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh has said that if it were possible one should love one's enemy and act the same

towards him as though he were a friend. If all followed this principle, the greatest Unity and understanding would be established in the hearts of men.

The third principle

Unity of Religion and Science

Yesterday I spoke to you of the Second Principle of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, the Unity of Mankind. The first, as I have said, is the Search after Truth. The third is the acceptance of the Relation between Religion and Science.

There is no contradiction existing between True Religion and Science. When a Religion is opposed to Science it becomes mere superstition. How can a man believe that which Science has proved impossible? If he believes in spite of his reason it is rather ignorant superstition than faith.

The origin of Science and Religion is identical. Religious principles have all been based on Science. The Unity of God is logical and can be understood through scientific study. All religions teach that we must do good. This is logical, the only way humanity can progress. We must be generous, sincere, faithful, law-abiding. All this is reasonable. All religious laws conform to reason and are logically suited to the people for whom they are made and for the time in which they are practiced.

Religion has two principal parts: (a) Practical and (b) Spiritual. The spiritual part never changes. All the manifestations of God and the Prophets have taught the same truths and have given the same spiritual law. The Sun of Truth has sent forth many rays to illumine the human intelligence, the light is, always the same. They all teach the same code of morality. There is no division in the Truth.

The practical part of religion deals with outer forms and ceremonies. This is the material part of the law and guides the customs of the people.

In the time of Moses there were ten offences deserving capital punishment. When the Christ came the law was changed. The old law, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, was changed to one of mercy and forbearance. In the old days the punishment for theft was the cutting off of the right hand; in our days this law could not be applied. Nowadays he who curses his father is allowed to live; then he was put to death.

So we see that, whereas the spiritual law of religion never changes, the practical law treating with actions changes with the necessities of the time.

It is the spiritual and moral part of religious law that is the most important of the two. All questions of morality contained in the law of every religion are logically right. If religion is contrary to logic, then it is no longer a religion but merely a tradition. This is certain. Therefore, put all your beliefs in harmony with science. There must be no opposition. Religion and science are the two wings with which man's intelligence can soar into the heights. It is not possible to fly with one wing alone.

All religions of the present day have fallen into superstitious practices, which are out of harmony both with true principles of the teaching they represent and with the scientific discoveries of the time. This has the effect of making people think that science and religion must of necessity be opposed to one another.

If religion conformed to science, there would be a great unifying, cleansing force in the world which would sweep before it all wars and disagreement, all disunion and in-harmony, and men would be united in the power of the love of God.

Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh (continued)

From discourses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London and Paris.

The fourth principle¹

Abolition of Prejudices

Another principle of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is this: That you must renounce all prejudices—religious, racial, political and national—for all these have made the world sick.

This is a grave illness and one that can be the cause of destruction to humanity. All wars and bloodshed have been caused by either of these prejudices. The sad wars that you see in the world in these days are caused by fanatical religious hatred of one people for another or prejudices of race and colour. Till all these differences are abolished humanity will never be at peace. That is why Bahá'u'lláh has said that these causes of separation are destructive to humanity.

Consider the nations of so-called religious people. If they were really adorers of God they would obey His law which forbids them to kill one another. All religions teach that men should love one another and that a man must look to his own faults before he condemns another; that he must not think himself superior to his fellows, for we know not in the end who will be judged the best. How many men there have been who began a saintly career and finally fell to the greatest humiliation. Look at Judas Iscariot, how well he began and how sadly he failed in the end. On the other hand, remember Paul the Apostle. He was an enemy of Christ, but he became the best of His servants. Therefore we must keep in mind that it is wrong to judge others. The end of man is not known to us. How can we think ourselves superior to anyone? We must, therefore, have no prejudices. We must never say: "I am a believer, he is an infidel; I am of the elect, he is an outcast." We can never tell the final judgement. We must not judge, we must give help to those who are not so blessed as we are. We must instruct the ignorant, we must tend the child and bring it to maturity. When we see a man in the depths, we must take him by the hand and lift him to our side. We must think of those who have fallen as our friends, not our enemies.

The prejudice of race is mere superstition, for God created us all men of one race. In the beginning there were no limits, no boundaries put to the different lands. There should be no different nations, we are all men, all descendants of Adam. We must not think of a man as an Englishman or a Frenchman or a Persian. This is all mere superstition.

How can we uphold a war that is caused by superstition? God has not made men to destroy one another.

In the eyes of God all races, tribes, sects and classes are equal. He sees no difference in them. The only difference existing between men in God's sight is in the degree of service. The lovers of humanity, these are the superior beings, of whatever race, creed [III:2:4] or colour. There are some who shine as lamps and there are others who rise like stars in the sky of humanity. In short, the only difference existing between men is this, there are earthly men and heavenly men. God does not ask if a man comes from the East or West, from the North or South.

A great cause of division among the people is the political prejudice. There are people who find pleasure in causing discord. These people love only their own country, even to the destruction of others. They collect armies and send them to destroy other nations in order to achieve worldly fame, for the joy of hearing people say: "Such a country has defeated another

¹ First instalment is in Vol. III:1.

and brought it under the yoke of a superior government.” This glory is bought at the price of blood, and yet it is not lasting. Those who have triumphed will in their turn be conquered, and those who are subjected will in due time become victorious. Consider the history of the past. How many times has the French nation conquered the German nation, and yet France herself has been conquered by Germany. It is the same when we remember the past relations between England and this country.

As these victories are only temporary, why do men attach so much importance to them and shed blood for their sake?

Man should be an example of the power of Divine Teaching and faithful to the law. Why does he put all his effort into destruction and separation?

I hope that in this luminous century the Divine Light will shed radiance over the whole world and that the Divine Bounty will seek out every man. The Light of the Sun of Truth is for all. Humanity will be freed from the chains of prejudice and superstition.

We must follow God’s policy. Man’s politics are weak, but the policy of God, the Creator of all, is strong; it is the best and we must follow His example. He gives alike to all of His Divine Bounty—we are all His servants. The servant follows his master’s example.

I pray the Kingdom shall come on earth, that the shadow shall disappear before the radiance of the Sun of Truth.

The fifth principle

Equality of Sexes

God has created all creatures in couples. In the vegetable, animal and human kingdom, all are of two sexes, and there is absolute equality between them.

In the vegetable world there are male plants and female plants. Both have equal rights, there is no difference between them. Each possess an equal share of the beauty of their species.

In the animal world all are male or female. Each have equal rights and there is no difference between them, they each share the advantages of their kind.

In all these realms of nature the sexes have equal rights; but when we come to the world of humanity we see a difference.

This difference is caused by education. In God’s creation neither is superior to the other, there is no distinction, no difference. Why do men make a difference?

The capacity of women is the same as men; if she were educated with the same advantages the result would be the same; in fact women have a superior disposition to men, they are more receptive, more sensitive, their intuition is more intense. The only reason of their present backwardness in some directions is because they have not had the same educational advantages as men.

In the necessities of life women are superior to men, they are the cause of existence of men themselves.

If a mother is well educated, her children will also be well taught. If the mother is wise, the children will be wise; if the mother is religious, the children will also be religious. If the mother is a good woman, then the children will also be good. The future generation depends then on the mothers of today. Is not this a vital position of responsibility, for women?

Surely God does not wish such an important [III:2:5] instrument as woman to be less perfect than she is able to become! Divine justice demands that men and women should have

equal rights, there is no difference between them, neither sex is superior to the other in the sight of God.

Nearness to God depends not on sex but on the luminosity of the heart; he or she with the greatest faith, these are near to God. Women must try then to attain greater perfection to be man's equal in the world, to make such progress that men will be forced to own them as their equals in every respect. In Europe women have made greater progress than in the East, though they are not yet physically as far advanced as men. It is my hope that they may progress rapidly until humanity will be perfected.

God's Bounty is for all and makes all progress. Soon men will have to acknowledge women as their equals and there will be no need to struggle for their rights.

When children have finished their studies for the term, an examination is given them and it is by the result of this examination that one can tell their knowledge and capacity. So it is with women. Let actions show one's power, there is no need to speak of it.

One of the Principles then of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the Equality of Sex. Women must make the greatest efforts to attain human virtue and to bring about the Unity of Mankind.

They must struggle to spread the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh among the people, so that the Light of the 'Divine Bounty may envelop their souls.

The sixth principle

Equalization of Means of Livelihood

Among the most important principles of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the equalization of the means of living among men.

There are in the world at present numerous cases of men who are either too poor or too rich. While some live in palaces, others have nowhere to lay their head; some have many courses at their meals, while others scarcely have enough bread to keep them alive. This state of affairs is wrong and must be remedied.

The remedy, however, cannot consist in the bringing to pass of equality, absolute equality among men; this would be impossible. There is needed some organization which will bring about an order in this disorder. Equality is a mere dream and absolutely impracticable. If Equality existed the whole order of the world would be destroyed. In mankind there is always a difference in degree. Since creation men have never been the same. Some have superior intelligence, others are more ordinary and some are devoid of intellect. How can there ever exist equality between those who are clever and those who are not? Humanity is like an army. An army must have a general, captains and soldiers, each with their appointed duties; it cannot consist of generals only, or captains, or soldiers only—there must be degrees in the organization.

Lycurgus, the philosopher sovereign of Sparta, intended to promote the welfare of his country. He wished to equalize the means of living in Sparta. So he divided the inhabitants into three divisions. The first third was composed of his own family and relatives. Of these he made governors and chiefs and gave them power over the people—of the second third, which consisted of the people dwelling in the country parts of Sparta, a class of agriculturists who cultivated the land and possessed large farms. The third class was that of the workmen and farm labourers and men of trade. The first class consisted of nine thousand people, and those who belonged to this third were superior to the rest of their countrymen and profited by exemption from the laws which bound the lower classes. These were the chiefs of the people and controlled the government and politics of the Spartans. They held the balance of peace or war in their hands; though if war were carried on they were not obliged to take part in it if [III:2:6] they did not wish to do so. The children of the nine thousand were sent to school at

the age of six years old and there they were taught the use of arms and the art of war. When they had completed their military education at the age of twenty years they were fitted to rule and take part in the government of the country. Sparta was divided into nine thousand parts and each part was governed by a member of the superior class. The second third, the farmer class, were obliged to give a tenth part of their produce to the government; the third class also were forced to give an annual tax to the government. Lycurgus made the Spartans swear that they would maintain the same order of government when he left the country and that they would not alter it till his return. Having secured their oath, he left Sparta and never returned. Lycurgus renounced his high position for the good of his country, for the equalization of property. After a time all was destroyed, his constitution came to an end. Equality is impossible.

Some are too rich, some are too poor, some have millions and some have nothing. An organization is necessary to control this state of affairs. It is necessary to limit riches or it is necessary to limit poverty. Either extreme is wrong. There should be a medium state. If it is right for a capitalist to possess a great fortune, then it is also just that a workman should have means of existence. If poverty is allowed to reach a condition of starvation, it proves that there is a tyranny. Men must see that this does not happen in any case. There must be special laws. The rich must give of their plenty. If they have more than they need they must think of those who are in want.

The government of a country should make laws which conform to the Divine Law. The Law of God exacts that there should be neither excessive wealth nor excessive poverty.

The seventh principle

The Power of the Holy Spirit

In the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh it is written: *“Whatever progress is made by man, he always needs the Power of the Holy Spirit, for the power of man is limited and the Divine Power is without limit.”*

In history we see that all truly great men who have helped on the progress of humanity have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Often these men were, at first, insignificant.

The Prophets of God have not all come out of learned schools of philosophy, they were mostly men of simple origin, lacking the knowledge of reading and writing. The power by which they were raised above men, and by which they became teachers of the Truth, was the Power of the Holy Spirit. Their influence on humanity, by virtue of this power, was great and penetrating.

Now look at the philosophers in comparison, men of great learning and abnormal intellect: Plato, Aristotle, Pliny and Socrates—their influence on the world of humanity was limited and restrained. Plato with all his wonderful knowledge and philosophy never moved a man to the extent that he would sacrifice his life for the teaching, while simple men filled with the Holy Spirit influenced humanity to such an extent that thousands would die to uphold their teaching. The Prophets of Juda and Israel: Jeremiah, Isaiah, were simple men, as also were the Apostles of Christ. Peter, the chief of the Apostles; did not know how to count the days of the week. He used to divide the produce of his fishing into seven parts, and when, having taken one part a day for use, he arrived at the seventh portion, he knew it was the Sabbath Day. Consider this and then think of his future state, to what glory he was brought through the influence of the Holy Spirit. Whoever, then, receives this Power is able to influence all with whom he is in contact. The greatest philosopher without this Spirit is powerless; his soul is lifeless, his heart dead. Till the Holy Spirit breathes in his soul he can do no good work.

No philosophy, no system, has ever changed the manners and customs of the people for the

better. The morals of the philosophers who are not enlightened by the Divine Spirit [III:2:7] are inferior. An ignorant man, filled with the Holy Spirit, is powerful. He who is educated by the Holy Spirit, can in his turn educate others in the same Spirit.

I pray for you that you may be helped by the Holy Spirit and that you may receive the education thereof.

The life and morals of a spiritual man are in themselves an education to others. Let your thoughts, words and actions bring life to those around you. Do not think of your own limitations, dream only of the welfare of the Kingdom of Abhá. See the influence of Jesus Christ among His apostles, then consider their influence on others. These simple men were helped by the Power of the Holy Spirit. So may you receive the Divine Assistance. Our capabilities are limited, but the help of the Kingdom of Abhá is limitless.

The earth of itself has no properties of life, but it is fertilized by the sun and the rain. The earth must not consider its own limited power. Likewise may you be given life, may the rain of the Divine Mercy and the sun of Truth make your gardens fruitful, so that many beautiful flowers of exquisite fragrance and hue may blossom there in abundance.

Turn your minds away from your own forces, your own selves, and make your souls ready to receive, to overflowing, the Divine Power of the Spirit and the blessings of the Infinite Bounty.

If you thus keep yourselves in readiness you will become to the world of humanity a burning flame, a star of guidance, a fruitful tree. I pray that you may receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit. This is my counsel to you.

The eighth principle

Justice

In life man should hope for reward and fear punishment. It is necessary that this hope and this fear should be considered by those in authority and those who have important posts in the government. If the officials are not guided by these sentiments, it is to be feared that they will not act as they ought to.

This hope and fear are like pillars that support the altitude of the world. There is no better prevention of tyranny than these two sentiments, hope and fear. In reactionary governments where fear does not exist, the administration is badly managed.

There are both political and spiritual consequences. A man who takes into consideration spiritual consequences is a perfect government official. If a man is guided by religious feeling and by the respect of the law, he will act in a perfect manner.

A minister of government, if he is guided by Divine faith, will always act for the good, above all if he knows that the consequences of his act are without limit. Such a man will detach himself from tyranny and will work for Justice.

If men believed that they will reap the consequences of their actions in the next world, they would never act contrary to Justice. You see then how important it is that a minister of state should be religious.

At the same time religious interests should not be brought into politics. Religions should treat of morals; politics of material circumstances. Those in authority should occupy themselves with the lives of men, they should teach ideas of service, good morals and develop the habit of Justice. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." In Persia there are among the most important ministers of state religious men who fear divine punishment; the others, however, do not think of the consequences of their acts. This is the reason why they have great difficulties in Persia.

Friends of God, set forth the example of justice! Justice is a universal quality. From the highest to the lowest justice should be sacred: from the sovereign to the merchant, the minister of state to the artisan, all must be just. Be just, respect the rights of each man—"do unto others as you would have them do unto you." A workman who commits an injustice is as much to blame as a tyrant. Each one of us can choose between justice and injustice.

I hope you will be just in your relations with others, that you will never harm your fellows, that you will respect the rights of all men, and above all consider the rights of others before your own.

III:1, 21 March 1912 [III:1:6]

Why a new Revelation?

Ellen V. Beecher

The followers of Bahá'u'lláh, especially in America, are constantly confronted with the vital question: Is not Christianity complete in itself? And this query is quite worthy of consideration by all inquiring minds in the religious world. It is conceded by those who are alert to Truth, and interested in history; as well as the events of this present age, that through the influence of Christianity a large part of mankind has become more or less civilized, refined and educated; while its teachers and missionaries are still putting forth mighty efforts to spread its teaching far and wide.

Why then do we need another Revelation from God at this time?

Is Christianity complete in itself? The word Christianity covers much that Jesus the Christ would not recognize nor endorse. Under its head are man-made creeds upon creeds, with dogmas many, and philosophies untold. Very much is and has ever been taught about Christ, and what He intended to give humanity by His life, teaching and death, but His deep, vital, and far reaching work has not yet been fully grasped by the so-called Christian world, so that in a measure His ministry has been a seeming failure after these two thousand years, as far as the salvation or unity of mankind is concerned.

It was believed by Christ's followers that He was a perfected Being, inspired by God himself as a world Saviour, and He certainly was all of this. In and of Himself, and His message, was all that man required to enable him to unfold to his highest possibilities as man "in the Image of God" for all Eternity. But the failure has come about on man's part, for he has not grasped the inner or spiritual meaning of the Word, which was from the beginning, and which "was God". It has rather been Jesus the divine man which has been worshiped more than the Word.

Prom all time Infinite Mind has revealed Himself as the Living Word in the flesh, but it has been unheard or overlooked by the masses. The Word is One, and so simple that "A wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein." It is by the Word that man is regenerated, made whole wherever and whenever it is perceived by his Soul. And when he has been "born again" in reality, he comes into at-one-ment with the One Living God. Then this world becomes to him a veritable rose garden as it were, and mankind one great soul in many bodies.

This has been the plan of the Almighty for man from all Eternity. Should we then question His Love and Mercy in sending revelation upon revelation to this earth? Has not His far reaching eye seen the utter failure on man's part to understand and appreciate the Christ teaching as It has appeared in the flesh again and again? and could He fail in making every effort to fulfil His promises in man? Consequently the same Holy Spirit has again revealed the Truth which must resuscitate, and enkindle anew the fire of His Love in hearts. Why should the so-called Christian world question the action of the Spirit, while branches of its own organization have been proclaiming for two thousand years that this same Christ would come again to prepare the world for the reign of Peace promised in the Garden of Eden?

Had the Christian religion brought about the fulfilment of these prophecies before the coming of Bahá'u'lláh? What means this mighty tide working towards universal Peace and arbitration, of the world-wide conferences and congresses to discuss the possibilities of disarmament? What has inspired the President of the United States to invite other great nations to unite in one common brotherhood, who shall have one purpose, that is to wipe out in due time all causes for war?

To those who have eyes to see or ears to hear the meanings of this movement are most clear and sure, for such souls have heard the voice of Him who has spoken all down the ages, and speaks today by His Word in Bahá'u'lláh. What is the difference you ask between the teachings of Christ Jesus and Bahá'u'lláh that such a change should come as is proclaimed by the followers of the later Prophet? All of the fundamental points set forth by the first of these great Manifestations is again presented by the latter. The difference is not in the teaching, but in man's conception of the Word whenever it may be proclaimed.

Bahá'u'lláh, is the fulfilment of the Word [III:1:7] as revealed in Jesus, in Moses, and in Abraham. Each Manifestation presents His message according to His own phraseology, perhaps best suited to the age of His advent, while each one was chosen to fill a certain station or office, through which He should minister to mankind.

Abraham, being absolutely obedient to the commands of God without question or hesitation, was proclaimed "the Father of all Nations". Moses was the great Law Giver, upon whose commands all common law has been based ever since. Jesus Christ came to sacrifice His life that the way for man back to God might be opened, or made clear; hence He was called the Saviour of man. While Bahá'u'lláh, is to fulfil all prophecy, and bring the world into the promised "Day of Peace", by giving laws and commands which will eventually rule and unite all governments, and remove all vital differences among, and between nations. He has given searching admonitions which He said "*descended from the Source of Majesty, through the tongue of Power and Strength upon the prophets of the past,*" and that "*He hath taken Its essences and clothed them with the garment of brevity, as a favour to the beloved, that they may fulfil the covenant of God; that they may perform in themselves that which He has entrusted to them, and attain the victory by virtue of devotion in the land of the Spirit.*"

The first of these Hidden Words is "*O Son of Spirit! The first Counsel is: Possess a good, pure and enlightened heart, that thou mayest possess a Kingdom Eternal, immortal, ancient, and without end.*" And again: "*O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, wherefore love Me, that I may acknowledge thee, and in the Spirit of life confirm thee.*"

In the "Book of Laws" written for all races and governments Bahá'u'lláh, has settled all social, political, and economic questions of this day so clearly, justly and effectually that all men will wonder as they are given to the world. When He had revealed the message in full by writings many, He passed out of the body, leaving them to His Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whom He proclaimed as the Centre of God's Covenant with men, that he might interpret the meanings, and promote them as rapidly as possible.

Both Father and Son insist that progress shall be attained by natural growth, or unfolding of all great events, rather than by revolution, hence 'Abdu'l-Bahá is giving his life to the Cause, and the thousands of all nations and religions who have come to acknowledge the Oneness of God, and the brotherhood of man through his wonderful personality and teaching is a proof of his power and God-given commission.

Bahá'u'lláh, has proven the existence of the Lord of Glory, and made so plain His plans that the infidel and agnostic cannot fail of an understanding, if he sees fit to investigate its truths with a desire to know, and these facts cannot fail to break down all barriers between the so-called great religions of the world.

This revelation is not a new Religion but the very essence of God's Word as taught by the Christ, but not perceived by Christianity at large.

If there is no difference between the teaching of Christ and Bahá'u'lláh why then need we turn from the one to follow the other?

The same question has been asked at the appearing of every one of God's Prophets, and each one has been rejected by the former religions. Jesus said that if the Jews had understood the message of Moses they would have accepted Him, for His coming had been proclaimed for thousands of years. The personality of each Messenger becomes the stumbling stone over which the creatures of all ages have fallen, and in the fall have lost sight of the Creator, so in time darkness and materiality have covered the face of the earth, selfishness and greed have destroyed the Garden of God, until the few souls who are ever listening for His Voice and crying out for light and knowledge have prevailed. Then in due time when the world has evolved to such a condition as is needful for His all wise purposes, another Prophet is sent with the Word of Life.

Had the priesthood of the former religions that exist today been listening only for the Word they would gladly receive the message of Bahá'u'lláh, for every condition which Christ and all other prophets proclaimed would prevail in "that Day" is now being fulfilled. Why question the horizon from which the Light proceeds? Search the Scriptures of all religions and behold the Glorious Sun of Truth that has arisen once more to deliver man from sin and self. [III:1:8]

In this last triune¹ Manifestation is fulfilled every promise of the Infinite to man up to the date of the thousand year millennium, as termed in the Christian Bible. Beyond that period we know nothing, as far as man's advent on the earth is concerned. When we shall need further light to carry on the work of God's Kingdom here He will reveal His Spirit through the flesh, as He has continued to do all down the ages.

God is Spirit, an Essence, unknowable, hence the creation of man through whom He may make known the knowledge of His Word.

III:3, 28 April 1912 [III:3:3]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival in America²

Wendell Phillips Dodge

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the eminent Persian philosopher and leader of the Bahá'í movement for the unification of religions and the establishment of universal peace, arrived 11 April on the steamship *Cedric* from Alexandria, Egypt. It is his first visit to America, and except for a brief visit to Paris and London last summer and fall, it is the first time in forty years that he has gone beyond the fortification of the "prison city" of Acre, Syria, to which place he and his father, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í movement, were banished by the Turkish government a half century ago.

He comes on a mission of international peace, to attend and address the Peace Conference at Lake Mohonk the latter part of the month, and to address various peace meetings, educational societies, religious organizations, etc.

When the ship news reporters boarded the *Cedric* down the bay 'Abdu'l-Bahá was found on the upper deck, standing where he could see the pilot, his long, flowing oriental robe flapping

¹ (1) The Forerunner, the Báb, *the Door*; (2) The Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh, *The Glory of God*; (3) The Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Servant of Bahá*.

² This story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival in America was written by Wendell Phillips Dodge, a reporter for the New York City News Association, who boarded the *Cedric* at quarantine and interviewed 'Abdu'l-Bahá coming up the bay. It was given to all of the New York newspapers, and, through the Associated Press, was sent, though boiled down considerably, to newspapers throughout the world.—Editors.

in the breeze. He was clothed in a long, black robe open at the front and disclosing another robe of light tan. Upon his head was a pure white turban, such as all eastern patriarchs wear.

His face was light itself as he scanned the harbour and greeted the reporters, who had been kept waiting at quarantine for three and a half hours before they could board the ship with the customs officers, owing to a case of smallpox and several cases of typhoid fever in the steerage, which had to be removed to Hoffman Island for isolation, and the ship then fumigated. He is a man of medium height, though at first sight he seemed to be much taller. He is strongly and solidly built, and weighs probably one hundred and sixty-five pounds. As he paced the deck, talking with the reporters, he appeared alert and active in every movement, his head thrown back and splendidly poised upon his broad, square shoulders, most of the time. A profusion of iron grey hair bursting out at the sides of the turban and hanging long upon the neck; a large, massive head, full-domed and remarkably wide across the forehead and temples, the forehead rising like a great palisade above the eyes, which were very wide apart, their orbits large and deep, looking out from under massive overhanging brows; strong Roman nose, generous ears, decisive yet kindly mouth and chin; a creamy white complexion, beard same colour as his hair, worn full over the face and carefully trimmed at almost full length—this completes an insufficient word picture of this “Wise Man Out of the East”.

His first words were about the press, saying:

“The pages of swiftly appearing newspapers are indeed the mirror of the world; they display the doings and actions of the different nations; they both illustrate them and cause them to be heard. Newspapers are as a mirror which is endowed with hearing, sight and speech; they are a wonderful phenomenon and a great matter. But it behoveth the editors of the newspaper to be sanctified from the prejudice of egotism and desire, and to be adorned with the ornament of equity and justice.

“There are good and bad newspapers. Those which strive to speak only that which is truth, which hold the mirror up to truth, are like the sun: they light the world everywhere with truth and their work is imperishable. Those who play for their own little selfish ends give no true light to the world and perish of their own futility.”

Dr Amín U. Faríd, a young American- [III:3:4] ized Persian physician and surgeon, who is a nephew of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and who acted as interpreter, then told of how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent most of his time on the way across standing beside the wireless operator, himself receiving numerous messages through the air from his followers in America.

Talking to the reporters in his stateroom aboard the *Cedric*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told of an incident which occurred in the Holy Land last winter, and it shows what a rare sense of humour this great world figure has. An enquirer, about to set off to Jerusalem, was one day discussing with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the subject of pilgrimage:

“‘The proper spirit,’ said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in his quaint way to the enquirer, ‘in which to visit places hallowed by remembrances of Christ, is one of constant communion with God. Love for God will be the telegraph wire, one end of which is in the Kingdom of the Spirit and the other in your heart.’

“‘I am afraid my telegraph wire is broken,’ the enquirer replied.

“‘Then you will have to use wireless telegraphy,’ I told him,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, laughing heartily.

When the ship was abreast the Statue of Liberty, standing erect and facing it, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá held his arms wide apart in salutation, and said:

“There is the new world’s symbol of liberty and freedom. After being forty years a prisoner

I can tell you that freedom is not a matter of place. It is a condition. Unless one accept dire vicissitudes he will not attain. When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed a release.”

Then, waving adieu to the Statue of Liberty, he continued:

“In former ages it has been said, ‘To love one’s native land is faith.’ But the tongue in this days says. ‘Glory is not his who loves his native land; but glory is his who loves his kind-humanity.’”

“What is your attitude toward woman suffrage?” asked one of the reporters.

“The modern suffragette is fighting for what must be, and many of these are willing martyrs to imprisonment for their cause. One might not approve of the ways of some of the more militant suffragettes, but in the end it will adjust itself. If women were given the same advantages as men, their capacity being the same, the result would be the same. In fact, women have a superior disposition to men; they are more receptive, more sensitive, and their intuition is more intense. The only reason of their present backwardness in some directions is because they have not had the same educational advantages as men.

“All children should be educated, but if parents cannot educate both the boys and the girls, then it would be better to educate the girls, for they will be the mothers of the coming generation. This is a radical idea for the East, where I come from, but it is already taking effect there, for the Bahá’í women of Persia are being educated along with the men.

“We have only to look about us in nature;” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued, “to see the truth of this. Is it not a fact that the females of many species of animals are stronger and more powerful than the male? The chief cause of the mental and physical inequalities of the sexes is due to custom and training, which for ages past have moulded woman into the ideal of the weaker vessel.

“The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the scales are already shifting—force is losing its weight and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an ageless masculine, and more permeated with the feminine ideals—or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more properly balanced.”

“What is a Bahá’í?” asked one of the reporters.

“To be a Bahá’í simply means to love all the world, to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for Universal Peace, and the Universal Brotherhood,” replied ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The ship now, pointed its nose up the North River, and, gazing in a look of bewildered amazement at the rugged sky line of the lower city formed by the downtown skyscrapers, the “Wise Man out of the East”, remarked, pointing at the towering buildings:

“These are the minarets of Western World commerce and industry, and seem to stretch these things heavenward in an endeavour to bring about this Universal Peace for which we are all working, for the good of the nations and mankind in general.

“The bricks make the house, and if the [III:3:5] bricks are bad the house will not stand, as these do. It is necessary for individuals to become as good bricks, to eradicate from themselves race and religious hatred, greed and a limited patriotism, so that, whether they find themselves guiding the government or founding a home, the result of their efforts may be peace and prosperity, love and happiness.”

The ship now reached its pier, where were anxiously waiting several hundred Bahá’ís, as

the followers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are called, who had been craning their necks down the river for a first sight of him since early morning. The ship docked shortly after noon, but, fearing that a demonstration in public would not be the best thing for the Cause, and not liking that sort of thing, the venerable Persian Divine did not leave the ship until the pier had been quietly cleared of his followers, who were told to meet him in the afternoon at the home of Mr and Mrs Kinney, where he greeted them a few hours later.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s first public address in America

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the head of the Movement for the Unification of Religions and for the establishment of Universal Peace, made his first public address in America at the Church of the Ascension, Fifth avenue and Tenth street, Sunday morning, 14 April. The Rev. Dr Percy Stickney Grant, rector of the church, had invited him to deliver the principal sermon of the day, at the 11 o’clock service, Dr Grant conducting the service up to that point. The church was crowded even to the aisles and throughout the regular Episcopal service preceding the sermon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and his interpreter, Dr Amínu’lláh Faríd, sat back of the choir to one side of the altar. The keynote sounded by the venerable Persian philosopher and religious leader was that humanity, generally speaking, was emerged in a sea of materiality.

In introducing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the congregation, the Rev. Dr Grant said:

“It is a personal gratification that I have the honour and pleasure to welcome to this place of worship a messenger from the East, freshly bearing a message of the gospel of peace, good will and love to all mankind. In him we see a master of the things of the spirit. He comes with a plan of construction and of reconstruction, and has brought to these shores a touchstone of love and of peace. Modern life to him is only a fabric to be understood and exemplified. He believes in the fundamental unity of all religions; he believes that the great faiths of the world belong together. He believes that the spirituality of the Orient should shake hands with the materiality of the Occident. Let us shake hands together.

“This great representative of the East comes to tell us that knowledge and more knowledge will bring about a realization of peace and unity. He is a man with a spirit of understanding. But, some will ask, ‘what has he done to prove his sincerity’. An exile from his native land from the age of nine; a prisoner for forty years, are the badges of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sincerity.

“We are going to listen in the fashion of the East and listen to a great student.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then came forward, wearing the costume of the East. On his head was a white turban, such as is worn only by the Patriarchs; and he was robed in the long flowing light tan tunic or cloak worn by Persian divines. His interpreter, Dr Faríd, wore the conventional frock coat of American dress, but also wore the black Persian fez.¹ Beginning in a low, though sonorous voice, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:²

III:3, 28 April 1912 [III:3:6]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Washington, D.C.

Joseph H. Hannen

The hearts of the friends in Washington were gladdened and their souls refreshed by the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from Saturday, 20 April, to Sunday 28 April, inclusive. Words are inadequate to describe the joy imparted by this visit, nor can one yet realize all it has meant to us. Time will tell, as the seed germinates and develops into the plant, reproducing itself in turn until from each tiny life-germ there shall come into existence a rose garden, which

¹ *Tarbúsh* (Arabic) (“tarboosh”) from the Persian *sar-púsh*, “cover, lid”. English fez (from the red dye made in Fez, Turkish fes). Felt headdress in the shape of a short tapered, cylindrical, peakless hat, usually red, and sometimes with a tassel attached to the top.

² The Talk that followed can be found in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 11–13.

touching another, and that in turn still others, shall transform the world into the garden of Paradise!

Days of waiting were rewarded when, at 1:33 am on Saturday, 20 April, 'Abdu'l-Bahá reached Washington on the Pennsylvania Railroad. In accordance with his expressed desire, there was no notice given of the hour of his arrival, and no delegation to meet him. The arrival was as simple as the Guest, and yet as memorable to those who were privileged to witness it, as the majestic simplicity of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! The train was just on time. Among the usual crowd of travellers there was a quaint note lent by the party of Orientals, in the midst of whom, cool, collected and ever the Master of the situation, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was seen. Quietly he passed through the gates, stopping at the threshold to greet the children of Mírzá 'Alí Qulí Khán. The admonition of the guard to "pass along—don't block the passage", disturbed the Servant of God not at all—nor was it repeated, it might be added. Besides the Charge d'Affaires of Persia, his family and the Secretary of the Legation, there were present the President, the Treasurer and the Secretary of the Persian-American Educational Society, with a few of the friends who happened to be at the station at the time. After greeting the children most affectionately, 'Abdu'l-Bahá walked with Mírzá 'Alí Qulí Khán,—the other members of his party following to the automobile section of the Union Station, where the car of Mrs Barney-Hemmick was waiting. On the way, the first words spoken were to the effect that America is greater than Europe. Mírzá 'Alí Qulí Khán, to whom these words were addressed, replied that America was only awaiting his coming.

Accompanied by Dr Faríd, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was driven at once to the home of Mr and Mrs A. J. Parsons, 18th and "R" Streets, [III:3:7] where he was entertained during his sojourn. The other members of the party, Siyyid Asadu'lláh, Mírzá Maḥmúd and Dr Getsinger, had accommodations nearby.

The first public meeting was the third and final session of the Orient-Occident Unity, held in the spacious hall of the Public Library. This hall, which normally seats about 400, had been taxed to its utmost capacity, fully 600 persons having gained entrance and about 100 more standing in the hall outside. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered the building, crowds lined on either side of the steps stood silently and most respectfully, with heads bared—and this was an unconscious and spontaneous tribute of an American Saturday night crowd! Upon his entrance into the hall, the audience rose at once and remained standing until he bade them be seated. His address, delivered at once, was received with close interest, and at its close the Conference was adjourned. Practically the entire audience remained to shake his hand.

The second public meeting was at Studio Hall, where friends were assembled at the usual hour for Sunday School, 11:15. The hall was beautifully decorated with plants and cut flowers. The children were in the front seats and received his special attention. At the close of this service he passed before each row, shaking the hand of every person present, some 200 or more. On this occasion he appeared most happy.

The third meeting was a vast gathering at Universalist Church, in pursuance of an appointment made some time previously. Here more than 1,000 persons were gathered. More than an hour before the time announced the entire lower floor of the church was filled. The Pastor of the Church, Rev. John Van Schaick, Jr., clad in the robes of his office, introduced 'Abdu'l-Bahá with a most glowing tribute to his life and teachings. At the conclusion of a brief address, the formalities contemplated were dispensed with, and nearly everyone remained to meet the distinguished speaker.

Receptions were held at the home of Mrs Parsons every afternoon at about 5:00 o'clock, from Monday to Friday, inclusive. The large parlour, seating 150, was crowded each afternoon, and the interest grew as the week advanced. Many persons prominent in social, official and diplomatic circles were present, beside numbers of well-known men and women of literary

and scientific attainments.

On Tuesday, 23 April, at noon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the student-body of more than 1,000, the faculty and a large number of distinguished guests, at Howard University. This was a most notable occasion, and, here, as everywhere when both white and coloured people were present, 'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed happiest. The address was received with breathless attention by the vast audience, and was followed by a positive ovation and a recall. That evening the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, the leading coloured organization in Washington, was addressed, and again the audience taxed the capacity of the edifice in which the meeting was held.

On Wednesday afternoon one of the most beautiful functions of the week was successfully planned and carried out. At the Studio Hall more than 100 children, with as many adults, parents and friends, gathered. 'Abdu'l-Bahá received and embraced each child, seeming most happy in their presence, and then delivered a wonderful address. 'Abdu'l-Bahá presented each child, before he left, with a gift.

On Wednesday evening 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited Mrs Dyer's home, where the meetings are held regularly on that night. More than 100 persons were present and were made happy by his address.

Thursday morning a large delegation from the Theosophical Societies of Washington was received, calling to pay their respects officially.

Friday morning the ladies of the Unitarian Church—President Taft's church—were addressed, a large attendance crowding the room in which the talk was given.

Friday evening, the last public meeting was addressed at the Continental Hall of the Daughters of the American Revolution. This is one of the most spacious halls in Washington, and the very finest location possible. It had not been contemplated to have such a large meeting that evening, but the interest became so intense that it was deemed necessary.

Saturday evening a reception was given, under the auspices of the Persian-American Educational Society—Orient-Occident Unity—by Mrs Parsons. This was the culmination of the visit, from the standpoint of meeting the representatives of social and diplomatic life, large numbers of whom had become interested, through Mrs Parsons' afternoon receptions, as well as through an afternoon reception held at the Persian Legation on Tuesday. [III:3:8]

Sunday the gentle guest, who is a Host in himself—the Servant of God, who is Master of the situation at every point—departed for Chicago. Therefore, with the fragrance of both gatherings dominant, this brief outline of historic events will be closed, while the incidents narrated will live forever!

III:3, 28 April 1912 [III:3:10]

Report of meeting at Universalist Church

4 pm, Sunday, 21 April 1912

Introduction by Dr John van Schaick, Jr.

In behalf of the officers and members of this Church, I have the honour of welcoming you to Washington. We feel that we are honoured by the presence of one who has so faithfully served God and humanity. The Faith of this Church is summed up in two great doctrines: Belief in the Universal Fatherhood of God and in the Universal Brotherhood of Man. Because we believe that God is our father and that we are all His children, we believe also in the immortality of the soul. We believe that Revelation is progressive. We hold with Jesus that when the Spirit of Truth is come He will guide us into all Truth. We look for more Truth in each age and every country. What you have done as a great Leader, as a Servant of God, for

Universal Peace, Universal Knowledge, Universal Brotherhood, calls forth our deepest gratitude. After arrangements for this meeting had been made, I received a letter warning me that I should be false to my belief if I held it. That letter quoted Jesus as saying, "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers." I do not believe that Jesus ever said it. It is not consistent with what we know of the breadth of His nature. But some of His followers say that all other Leaders are thieves and robbers. Against such narrowness this Church has always stood. We stand today humbly seeking the Spirit of Truth, and we gather here today because we believe that you are one of those who do not count their lives dear unto themselves, but seek only to serve God.¹

III:3, 28 April 1912 [III:3:12]

Appended note

Dr Van Schaick: "Tell 'Abdu'l-Bahá that we are all stronger and better and richer for his words of wisdom and for his spirit of love."

'Abdu'l-Bahá replies that he is greatly pleased with the occasion, with this audience, and especially with the Minister. For he sees evidently that your intentions are good and that your aim is the good pleasure of the Lord. You have all gathered together to pray to the one God, that you may turn to Him in order that you may obtain His favour. Such an audience as this is a source of great happiness to him. Therefore he shall pray for you, heart and soul, asking blessings in your behalf.

III:4, 17 May 1912 [III:4:27]

A stroll with 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Culminating in a typical Bahá'í meeting under the trees of Lincoln Park, Chicago.

Honore J. Jaxon

During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's stay in Chicago at the Plaza Hotel, it became a matter of frequent occurrence for him to take a morning or evening stroll in Lincoln Park—that magnificent pleasance where lawns and woods extend northward from the hotel for several miles along the shore of Lake Michigan.

On these occasions it was usual for him to accept the escort of any of the friends who might have the good fortune to be on hand and at leisure at the time of starting; and one of the most interesting of these episodes was the one of which there is presented herewith an outline as illustrated by the camera of a friend who although belated at the start, had been guided through the mazes of the park to the place where the little party was pursuing its way among the trees.

Near the lakeward side of the middle portion of the park is an unusually well stocked zoological department. The many strange and beautiful forms of bird and animal life herein presented proved very interesting to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as he walked among them with a manner which somehow reminds one of the legends of St Francis of Assisi, and the all-consciousness said to have been displayed by that loveable saint in his communings with the birds and animals of his day; and it was here that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was moved to grant permission for the first of the pictures taken during this stroll—the occasion chosen being at a time when the cortege found itself grouped very conveniently for camera purposes between two lines of iron palisade.

Photographic operations being thus pleasantly initiated, 'Abdu'l-Bahá next consented to a group picture which was suggested to the minds of some of the ladies while the party was

¹ This Introduction was translated orally into Persian, by Dr Amín U. Faríd, after which 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose and spoke as follows.

descending a broad and noble flight of masonry stairs that had been built to accommodate a steep inflection of the footway as it passed through a wooded dell.

From this point, 'Abdu'l-Bahá directed his course to a place where—springing from the midst of heavy bushes on either shore—a single arched foot-bridge rises high above a wide lagoon, whose dark waters are said to have closed over many a discouraged soul that had chosen the crown of the bridge as the place from which to cast a final “longing, lingering look” at earth and sky. The landscape disclosed from this viewpoint is indeed one of the fairest in Chicago; and it is worthy of remark, that it includes in its northernmost reaches the spot where on the distant horizon the grounds of the coming Chicago Mashriqu'l-Adhkár slope down to meet the waters of the lake. “Beautiful,” was the comment made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in English, and with quiet but loving emphasis, as he gazed northward from the parapet of the bridge. His glance comprehended both the wide-spread panorama and the placid waters beneath, and there sprang into being among the friends present a strongly marked impression, that he was moved to special prayer by becoming innately aware of the thrilling human experiences connected with the scene.

Before leaving the bridge 'Abdu'l-Bahá acceded to another group picture while the friends were seated at the summit, and also to a remarkable full-length picture of himself alone, which has been reproduced as the frontispiece of this issue. The course of the morning's walk then turned back toward the animals' quarters; and here, while apparently engrossed in contemplating the movements of a majestic polar bear, 'Abdu'l-Bahá delighted the friends by exhibiting coincidentally the charming sense of humour and the all-consciousness which are alike so strongly marked in him. No sooner had the picture been taken of 'Abdu'l-Bahá standing alone on the bridge, then the friends commenced to express to each other their desire to secure a similar picture that would show the beautiful silver locks that flow down from under his turban and ripple across the collar of his robe at the back. His seeming absorption in study of the great bear suggested to all, simultaneously, that this was the opportune moment; and a joyful conspiracy was at once entered into—everyone quietly tip-toeing out of range, while the active agent of the proposed photographic larceny set up his tripod and prepared for a time exposure that would insure a satisfactory clearness of detail in the desired picture. Soon a perfect focus was obtained and apparently everything was ready, but just as the members of the little group were holding their breaths in thrilled anticipation of success—at the very moment, indeed, when the operator had seized the bulb, the pressing of which would open the shutter and start the exposure of the film—'Abdu'l-Bahá turned suddenly around with a delighted little chuckle, and playfully smote the would-be thief across the back of his neck with a light touch of his walking cane, thereby conferring one unique distinction which the recipient of this “love-tap” is probably cherishing as a happy memory!

And now came the most striking feature of the morning's experience and the subject of the closing photographic illustration. From the episode of the bears' den, 'Abdu'l-Bahá led the friends toward the lake, and taking one of a number of seats conveniently disposed under a group of trees, invited the friends to likewise be seated. They found themselves arranged in a circle, and, after dictating an answer to a letter which had been read to him that morning as he had walked along, 'Abdu'l-Bahá suddenly commenced talking to them in a strain of intimate and friendly counsel which exalted the hearts of all present, and warmed the determination of each one to be doubly on guard against any future possibility of becoming a cause of disunion or discord. Two striking gems we herewith [III:4:29] reproduce: “Some of you may have observed that I have not called attention to any of your individual shortcomings. I would suggest to you, that if you shall be similarly considerate in your treatment of each other, it will be greatly conducive to the harmony of your association with each other.” And then, as a concluding delight of the morning's spiritual feast, this charming illustration of the subject of organization: “I want you to be organized like a flock of the doves of Heaven, whose attitude

and conduct toward each other is a symbol of that which will take place among human beings when human beings shall become willing to accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit." With these words, the homeward course was taken, and so concluded a typical and memorable Bahá'í meeting in a park, which will ever hereafter be associated in memory with the blessed influence of the "Servant of Bahá".

III:6, 24 June 1912 [III:6:6]

Interview between a prominent Rabbi and 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Entering the room the Rabbi saluted, which was answered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in like manner.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "You are most welcome Rabbi."

Rabbi: "I have long desired to meet you."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Very good; very good."

Rabbi: "Your address yesterday was excellent. I have had the pleasure of hearing you upon two other occasions, but your address of yesterday had an extraordinary universality. You have very clearly established the teachings of brotherhood but I am afraid that although your principles are very lofty they will not be accepted by all the religionists and the workers for peace."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Reality will always be victorious. No one can stand before the onward march of reality. The phenomenal is always conquered by the eternal. All the contingent beings are defeated by the will of heaven. One small Arabian boy can lead two thousand camels in the Sahara. One intelligent Hindu boy can conquer an elephant."

Rabbi: "It is true. In the Bible we have the statement that 'A little child shall lead them'"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Truth will always be victorious; therefore it does not know defeat but the people of reality must exert great effort, and if the people of reality neglect to display this effort that is another matter. The people of reality must demonstrate their willingness in this direction. They must realize that the greatest reality of this age is the oneness of the human world. They must forget traditions and imitations of the past. For instance, if we look upon the Catholic religion we see that they believe that an important part is the transubstantiation; that is, the change of the bread and wine into the body of Christ. If we ponder a little we realize that this is a non-essential. It is imitation and the reverse of reality.

"Again, if we look at the Hindus we see that they have made images and worship them as deities, and they have eight million such deities in, their temples. It is evident that these are superstitions and imaginations. They worship the cow, the stone, the water and the forces of nature—all these are imitations of the past and they have no foundation whatever."

Rabbi: "Do you then regard the transubstantiation as being on the same ground as the worshipping of idols?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "All these are imitations. They have no reality. As these are the opposite of realities, therefore they have no foundation. Everything that keeps man away from God, is an idol. Everything which detracts man's attention from God is an idol, no matter what it is."

Rabbi: "Then every channel between God and His creature is an idol?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Consider, let us not bind ourselves with imitations. Let us study the condition of the Jews for a moment. When they were in Egypt they were captives; they were poor; they were prisoners in the hand of Pharaoh; they were ignored; they were a dependent people, they were surrounded by all kinds of troubles and vicissitudes; the people looked down upon them; they were considered as outcasts. Then Moses came. He gathered them together; inspired them with the power of unity; imparted to them new life; taught them the

laws of God encouraging them in the morals and virtues of humanity; delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh; freed them from the bondage of captivity; educated them, trained them and carried them away from the land of darkness into the holy of holies of light. Their power was increased; their majesty became refulgent; their fame was spread throughout the world, until they were enabled to found the Solomonic sovereignty. In philosophy and art they attained such heights that the philosophers of Greece and Rome travelled long distances to learn from them. Now is it possible to say that to revere and respect these souls is equivalent to the worshipping of idols? We must respect Moses because he achieved a work which no one else could do. It is an evident fact that His Holiness Moses was a [III:6:7] channel between God and man. No further proof is required for this. I do not attempt to prove the validity of Moses by pointing to his turning the rod into a serpent; instead I give evident proofs.

“Again you will note that His Highness Christ was a Jew. Ponder well over this matter: The Jews were captives in the hand of the Romans; they were their slaves. From every standpoint they were scattered and impoverished. Nebuchadnezzar carried seventy thousand of them into captivity at Babylon. Even today the tombs of Esther and Daniel are there. And afterwards what did Titus, the Roman Emperor, not do! He entirely destroyed the foundation of the Jewish temple. The effect of the destruction of Titus is manifest up to this time for we see them scattered all over the world. His Holiness Christ appeared and established unity among the Romans, the Greeks, the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Europeans and the Americans. He established a bond of unity between all the nations. All the great prophets, the kings and the worthies of the Jewish nation could not make the Persians believe in Moses. All the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nehemiah, et al., could not make one Zoroastrian believe in Moses. But one Jew came and many millions believe in Him. He spread His name in the East and in the West. He caused the Bible to be translated in all the languages of the world, and today nearly every home contains a Bible. He demonstrated throughout the world to all the nations of the world that the Jewish people were the chosen people, that the Jewish prophets were the prophets of God, that their books were the books of God, that their words were the words of God. This is evident. These are not intellectual or traditional evidences but they are such evidences as permit of no discussion. Look at America. You see a Bible in almost every house that you enter. See what Christ has accomplished. Witness what one soul who was crucified has accomplished.

“When He was living upon the earth He was alone, ridiculed and rejected by His own people. Almost everybody cursed and ridiculed Him. His own relatives left Him; even His disciples almost abandoned Him; they placed upon His head a crown of thorns and paraded Him over the streets, and finally they crucified Him. He was alone! alone! but the traces of His work and the signs of His message have filled the world. Man must be just. After these statements no one can deny the greatness of Christ. Now is it evident to you that all these conditions among the nations are on account of injustice? If they had all been just they would have been united on this principle: that these prophets were channels for the bounty of God, for they were the first teachers of mankind.

“The philosophers are also teachers but all they could do was to teach themselves and a few other souls. But the prophets of God taught the whole world. They trained all the children of men in morals and ethics. Who can say that they failed to accomplish their work, and who would give the names of the philosophers the first place?”

Rabbi: “Indeed, indeed you are one of the greatest logicians of the world. Up to this time I have been talking to you as a man; now I will address you as a Rabbi. Your premises and syllogisms do not agree. It is not correct to say that Christ has accomplished all these things, for but few of his teachings were accepted until about three hundred and fifty years after his crucifixion—“

'Abdu'l-Bahá here exclaimed: "I understand, I understand," and then continued: "His Highness Moses laid the foundation but the result of His teachings became apparent during the time of Solomon. If there had been no Moses there would have been no Solomon. The sovereignty of Solomon was the outcome of the principles of Moses. If there had been no Moses the children of Israel would have been entirely lost, and up to this time they would have been slaves in the land of Pharaoh. Their very name would have disappeared from the page of history. Moses laid down a few principles, but the results of those principles became apparent five hundred years afterward. If an inquirer is just he will realize that Moses laid with His own hand Solomonic universality. Likewise if His Highness Christ had not laid the foundations of Christianity, the evident signs which we see today would not have been realized.

"I scatter the seeds today, six months hence they may become apparent. In the meantime, can anyone deny the germination of these seeds, and when they are grown, repudiate the fact that these plants owe their origin to the seed?"

Rabbi: "Suppose that Christ was the Promised One of the Jews; how did the doctrine of divinity creep in among the Christians?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Do not look upon the Christians of today. The Christians are today sub-[III:6:8] merged in the sea of imitation. It is evident that man is the highest of God's creatures on the face of the earth. For example, there are certain attributes which are apparent in the mineral kingdom. The vegetable kingdom has the attributes existing in the mineral kingdom with another attribute, which is the power of growth. The animal has the attributes of the mineral and the vegetable kingdoms but with another attribute, which is the power of instinct. Therefore the animal is a composite of the mineral and vegetable kingdoms, but man has the virtues of the mineral kingdom, the virtues of the vegetable kingdom, the virtues of the animal kingdom and another distinct virtue, which is that of intellect, consequently man is the highest creation of God. He is the peerless creature and in him are contained all the virtues of the human world.

"Christ was the mirror; God was the Sun. The Sun appeared with all its effulgence and splendour in the mirror; that is, the virtues, the perfections and the characteristics of God appeared in Christ, This is what is meant where it is written in the Bible that 'We have created man in our own image.' The perfect man is the visage and image of God, just as the mirror reflects the sun. We can not say that the sun has come down from heaven and has taken a place in the mirror. The sun is eternal, living in its own station. It had no ascent or descent, entrance or exit; but the rays and the heat of the sun have become fully reflected in the clear mirror. That is why Christ said the future is in the sun and the sun is in the future. The Sun of Truth reflected itself in the mirrors of Moses and Christ."

Rabbi: "Most wonderful! We must name this divine philosophy the philosophy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I am extraordinarily delighted to have had this privilege to talk with you."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "I am very happy indeed to meet you."

Rabbi: "I hope I will have the pleasure of meeting you again."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "God willing. May you be under His protection."

III:7, 13 July 1912 [III:7:4]

Interviews with 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Interview of W. H. Short, Sec. N.Y. Peace Society and Hudson Maxim with 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Hotel Ansonia, New York City, 15 April 1912.

Notes by Howard MacNutt.

Interview with Mr W. H. Short

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "You are very welcome; I am most happy to greet you. I have looked forward with much pleasure to this meeting. Welcome! Welcome!"

Mr Short: "It gives me great happiness indeed to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I too have looked forward to this meeting. The New York Peace Society extends him greetings and welcome to our city and our country."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "You are indeed a servant to humanity. A servant to humanity is a servant to God. Your mission is a high, holy and sanctified one; there could be no greater, no holier mission than that of bringing peace to this warring world. Therefore I have waited for you with the greatest longing.

"In this day the majority of mankind are endeavouring to destroy the foundations of the happiness of the world. How many are engaged in the invention of means for the destruction of human kind; how many are employed in the science and practice of war; how many are occupied in various kinds of strife and antagonism; how many stand ready to shed the blood of innocent men, their brothers! So it is that history is blackened with this record of human intention and accomplishment. Every hour war is threatened upon some new pretext; today patriotism is its basis, tomorrow religious prejudice, racial egotism, territorial greed, commercial selfishness—it matters little what the excuse may be—blood is shed and human beings torn to pieces upon battlefields. Political interests clash; a great war follows; sadness, gloom and cruelty envelop the world.

"But you are endeavouring to uplift the standard of peace in the world. You must continue to work until the world is released from these prejudices which are bringing about such inhuman conditions. For the clouds of war will surely vanish from the horizons. There is no doubt that your work is the greatest work and its outcome certain."

Mr Short: "All the members of the New York Peace Society feel the truth and inspiration of what you have said."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "You must rest assured and let there be no traces of doubt in your souls that God is your Assister and Helper. The Heavenly confirmations will descend upon you more and more. God will protect you and give you new strength continually. Your world-motives will conquer the world of men; all obstacles will disappear before your advance; no earthly power can resist the onrushing power of Peace. For this power is assisted by the Power of God and that which is divinely assisted must prevail. Consider how the Cause of Christ was confirmed. How many resisted it! What mountains of obstacles were raised against it! What hostile forces sought to destroy its foundations! Yet the kings and emperors of the world could not resist its spread and establishment. No power of earth can withstand the onflow of the Spirit of Truth. If earthly kings and kingdoms come in its way, it will conquer and they will be overthrown, always. For your cause is Truth itself and Truth is Omnipotent. If all nations arise to prevent, they will be vanquished and you will be victorious. [Visitor much impressed.] You are a servant of God, not a servant of this world. A servant of God is he who gives some benefit to the world of man."

Mr Short: "We belong to a race [Anglo Saxon] which has wielded the power of oppression. We have been the oppressor, not the oppressed. The whole matter of World Peace presents a different aspect to the western mind.

"Justice, human rights and religion are controlling motives of the men of the New York Peace Society. We must confess that hitherto Americans have not felt the welfare of Eastern countries to be as important as the develop- [III:7:5] ment of our own interests. We have not known enough of the ideals of other countries. As a rule we meet only immigrants and

discontented wanderers from foreign lands. But recently this has been changed and the aspect is wider. Our press is not the reflector of foreign news. Our people travel in distant countries; but few important and influential foreigners come to visit us. Our purpose in the Peace Society is not only to establish the doctrines of peace but to defend the principles of human brotherhood; to acquaint the people of this country with foreign matters and provide opportunity that they may meet and know foreign men. Therefore we take advantage of every opportunity to introduce such men to our people. We will be very glad and greatly honoured to arrange a reception under the auspices of the New York Peace Society at which 'Abdu'l-Bahá can address a large assemblage, meet our friends and exchange mutual sentiments. I have just come from the home of Mr Carnegie. He is not able to go out owing to a throat affection, but will be glad to receive 'Abdu'l-Bahá at his home. Mr and Mrs Carnegie will attend the Peace Conference at Lake Mohonk in June. As I understand 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be there also, the meeting with Mr Carnegie might be mutually arranged then. Acquaintances and friendships begun at Lake Mohonk will be most pleasant at a reception thereafter."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "I go to Washington next week. Is there time enough before my departure to arrange the plans suggested?"

Mr Short: "It would be better if we had more time. Something could be arranged, but it is doubtful."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "How many days in advance would be necessary?"

Mr S.: "There should be at least two weeks. Almost any date would be suitable except Friday, 10 May."

13 May finally decided upon.

Interview with Mr Hudson Maxim

Mr Short remaining.

Mr Hudson Maxim, scientist, inventor and expert upon explosives, was then announced. He entered.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Welcome! Welcome! Very welcome!"

Hudson Maxim: "I am glad to hear you speak English."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "My life has been spent in the Orient where foreign languages are seldom used. Otherwise I would have acquired English. Language is the great barrier between nations. When thoughts are interchanged destinies become one. All languages are difficult of acquirement for the real language is deeper than the outer words."

Hudson Maxim: "Are you speaking in Turkish?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "In Persian. I also speak Turkish and Arabic; Turkish is very difficult. In the East it is thought that acquiring Turkish is equivalent to the study of three other tongues."

Hudson Maxim: "I understand you are a messenger of peace to this country. What is your opinion about modern war? Shall the great nations maintain armament and defences as a guarantee or warrant against war? Here is an article I have written upon this subject. Shall the nations have an international police navy which protects and insures peace in the world, or shall they disarm and have no navies?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Everything that prevents war is good."

Hudson Maxim: "Christ said He came to make war. Caesar was great in history because he was great in battle and military skill."

'Abdu'l-Bahá "We have the history of the world for nearly six thousand years. Before that

there is no record. During these six thousand years there has been constant war, strife, bloodshed. We can see at a glance the results, achievements and outcomes of war. The history of warfare and strife is known, the effect apparent. Have we not a sufficient standard of experience in this direction? Let us now try peace for awhile. If good results follow, let us adhere to it. If not let us throw it away and fight again. Nothing will be lost by the experiment,”

Hudson Maxim: “Evolution has now reached a period in the life of nations where commerce takes the place of warfare. Business is war, cruel, merciless.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “True! War is not limited to one cause. There are many kinds of war and conflict going on, political war, commercial war, patriotic and racial war; this is the very civilization of war.”

Hudson Maxim: “Do you consider the next great national war necessary?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “I hope your efforts may be able to prevent it. Why not try peace for awhile? If we find war is better, it will not be difficult to fight again; but if we find that peace is the [III:7:10] glorification of humanity, the impulse of true civilization, the stimulus to inventive genius and the means of attainment to the good-pleasure of God, we must agree to adhere to it and establish it permanently.”

Hudson Maxim: “There is much newspaper talk about the United States fighting Japan. There is no prospect of it whatever. We don’t want to kill good customers. Commercial energy is more profitable to us. Competition of commerce is as severe, trying and as cruel as wars of olden time. Science has made war expensive; so expensive it don’t pay to fight. We make more money by being peaceful, so long as the other fellow keeps quiet and sticks to business. If an English navy came over here and bombarded New York a week they would injure themselves more than us. The expense of ammunition and equipment would cost a great deal more than the damage inflicted by their guns and shells. You are right in advocating peace. I am an advocate of peace from another standpoint. I would make war so expensive that the nations could not afford to fight and therefore would agree to maintain peace.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá “The product of human invention, genius and the outcome of human disposition to kill and fight have well-nigh reached their limit. It seems as if the art of war could not be carried further. In ancient times when nation fought against nation, probably one thousand would be killed in battle, the expense would not be great, the outcome of victory decisive and final; but in modern times the science of war has reached such a stage of perfection that in twenty-four hours one-hundred-thousand could be sacrificed, great navies sent to the bottom of the sea, great cities destroyed in a few hours. The possibilities are incalculable, inconceivable, the after effects even more dreadful than the initial shock. In Egypt, the fellaheen who till the Nile banks, gather four or five harvests from the soil. Suppose they are called away from their peaceful pursuits, take up arms, expend their possessions for powder and go to war. The first consequences are grievous enough, but the after-results are even more deplorable. The country suffers beyond all power of estimation; agriculture is crippled, abandoned, sustenance fails, poverty and suffering continue long afterward. Furthermore, how many wars there have been in the Orient during past centuries; war and peace in constant succession; but your country America remained unaffected by them or their consequences. The news of war might reach Europe and America long after it had happened. But all this is changed in the present century. As soon as war is declared in any part of the world, all human attention is directed toward it; commerce and the machinery of nations are paralyzed; the whole world thrown into a condition of grave uncertainty. Therefore it is evident that the time has come to end war and establish peace. This is an exigency and requirement of the present century.”

Hudson Maxim: "Fewer are killed in modern engagements than in the battles of ancient times; the range is longer and the action less deadly."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "How about the war between Japan and Russia?"

Hudson Maxim: "Less men are killed in war in a year now than are killed by our industries through preventable accidents."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "War is the most preventable accident."

Hudson Maxim: "The short sword was more deadly in battle than the quick-firing gun, for the reason that massed men come together in hand-to-hand conflict and the slaughter was fearful. At Mukden two-hundred and fifty-thousand soldiers retreated without loss. In ancient times many thousands would have been overtaken and killed. War is no more dangerous now than automobiling."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "History shows that in war between [III:7:11] the Roman and Persian Empires extending over a period of twenty years, in which one-hundred thousand men were engaged upon each side, only five or six thousand were killed. In modern warfare there are bombs which kill men like stripping leaves from a tree. An Egyptian general who had served in war against England was accused of cowardice at a meeting in Syria. He asked those present, 'Have you ever seen an English shell? When you see one explode among troops you will be excused for defeat and cowardice.'"

Hudson Maxim: [Making diagram] "The effect of a bomb is not so great as expected. Most of its force is expended upward into the air. It is impossible to mass men close enough to it for a full utilization of its energy. If its explosive energy could be expended in the right direction, it would do plenty of killing."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The greatest intelligence of man is being expended in the direction of killing his fellow-man. The discovery of high explosives, perfecting of death-dealing weapons of war, the science of military attack, all this is a wonderful manifestation of human intelligence; but it is in the wrong direction. You are a celebrated inventor and scientific expert whose energies and faculties are employed in the production of means for human destruction. Your name has become famous in the science of war. Now you have the opportunity of becoming doubly famous. You must practice the science of peace. You must expend your energies and intelligence in a contrary direction. You must discover the means of peace; invent guns of love which shall shake the foundations of humanity."

"The guns you are now building cause the death of man; you must build guns which will be the cause of life to humanity. Henceforth your life and energy should be given to this blessed purpose. You must work and experiment along this line. This work and accomplishment will be more wonderful than all you have done heretofore. Then it will be said by the people of the world, this is Mr Maxim, inventor of the guns of war, discoverer of high explosives, military scientist, who has also discovered and invented means for increasing the life and love of man; who has put an end to the strife of nations and uprooted the tree of war. This will be the most wonderful accomplishment of any human being. Your name will glow with mention throughout the history of ages and ages. Then will your life become pregnant and productive with really great results. Consider this: the inventor of high explosives has discovered the means of universal peace; an active worker in the science of war has become a factor in the assembly of love!

Then will your name be recorded in the pages of history with a pen of gold. No man in history will equal you in fame and greatness. You will be doubly renowned. God will be pleased with you and from every standpoint of estimation you will be a perfect man."

III:7, 13 July 1912 [III:7:6]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá with the children of the friends in Chicago

From notes taken by Ella Goodall Cooper and Ella M. Bailey.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá meeting with the children of the friends in Chicago on Sunday morning, 5 May, was an event that shall ever be remembered by all who were present.

Although many lived considerable distance and found it necessary to arise as early as five o’clock, yet promptly at the appointed hour of eight, about thirty–five children were on hand to greet him and receive the spiritual baptism in store for them.

They were gathered in a circle in the middle of the beautiful parlour of The Plaza, the parents and friends making another circle behind them. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered all arose. While he took the seat prepared for him, the children sang without accompaniment, “Softly His Voice is Calling Now”.

Then followed the scene that is indelibly stamped upon the minds and hearts. He called each child to him in turn, took them in his lap, petting and stroking the hair and hugging and kissing the little ones, pressing the hands and embracing the older ones, all with such infinite love and tenderness shining in his eyes and thrilling in the tones of his voice, that when he whispered in English in their ears to tell him their names, they answered as joyfully and freely as they would a beloved father. To each child he gave a little different touch, patting some on the breast, some on the back and some on the head. He blessed them all. There was no suggestion of haste and a hush fell upon the group—a quiet, vibrant, eloquent silence—making many to feel that it was just such a picture Jesus must have made and which has touched the hearts of all child-lovers for these two-thousand years.

The children’s joy and his own happiness seemed to culminate when one dear little tot ran to him and fairly threw herself into his arms. When he let her go she stood for a second and then suddenly laughed aloud with perfect joy, which found its instant echo in a ripple around the whole circle.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then stood and spoke as follows: “You are the children of whom His Holiness Christ has said, you are the denizens of the Kingdom; and according to the words of Bahá’u’lláh you are the very lamps or candles of the world of humanity, for your hearts are exceedingly pure and your spirits are most delicate. You are near the source; you have not yet become contaminated. You are like lambs, or like a very polished mirror. My hope for you is that your parents may educate you, spiritually, giving you the utmost ethical training. May your education be most perfect so that each one of you may be imbued with all the virtues of the human world. May you advance in all the degrees, be they material degrees or spiritual degrees. May you all become learned, acquire sciences and arts, acquire the arts and crafts; may you be useful members of human society, may you be conducive to the progress of human civilization; may you be a cause of the manifestation of the divine bestowals, may each one of you be a shining star, radiating the light of the oneness of humanity towards the East and West; may you be conducive to the unity of mankind; may you be conducive to the love of the whole. May the reality deposited in the human entity become apparent through your efforts. I pray for all of you, asking God’s aid and confirmation in your behalf.

“You are all *my* children, you are my spiritual children. The spiritual children are very dear, they are dearer than physical children, because it is possible for physical children to prove unspiritual, but you are all spiritual children, therefore you are very dear; you are most beloved. I wish for you progress along all degrees. May God aid you. May you be surrounded by His gaze of kindness, and may you be nurtured and attain maturity under His protection. You are all blessed.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then divided a bouquet of flowers which was upon the centre table, and also gave to each child an envelope full of rose petals. He then walked slowly around the circle, laying his hand in blessing upon each little head, his face beaming with divine [III:7:7] love as he murmured a tender word to each one.

The children thought they were dismissed, but he made them still more happy by taking them all into Lincoln park to be photographed with him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then expressed a desire to walk alone and strode majestically away, with his hands clasped behind him. All eyes followed him. He walked over to the noble Lincoln statue nearby and for a few moments stood gazing up at it, making a remarkably impressive and significant picture—the lonely figure of our immortal Lincoln gazing down upon him who is today giving to the world spiritual emancipation.

Many of the children lingered under the trees or played upon the grass in the glorious spring sunshine, seemingly reluctant to leave the place where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had so abundantly blessed them, or, perhaps, with the hope that some further expression of his love for them might be forthcoming ere they returned to their homes; nor were some of them disappointed, for, as he came toward a group of little ones under the trees, he gathered them in his arms and submitted to another photograph.

This glimpse of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with the children of the friends in Chicago, would not be complete without reference to the beautiful photograph of him and little Musette Jones, reproduced on page 2 of this issue. It was taken in his suite of rooms at The Plaza. A copy of it was later presented to him and over her heart he wrote the word “Rúhíyyih”, meaning Spiritual.

III:7, 13 July 1912 [III:7:7]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the friends in Chicago

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 13 May 1912, New York City.

O ye beloved friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Two days ago, through the protection and providence of the Blessed Perfection, I reached New York. Since my arrival I have met the friends of God and associated with them.

The minister of the Unity Church in Montclair, New Jersey, repeatedly invited me to address his congregation. Therefore, yesterday I went to Montclair and spoke before an audience composed of many hundreds of people. Truly, I say, the minister, the deacons of the church and the officers exercised the greatest love and consideration. In introducing the Cause of God and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the minister gave an address in the utmost eloquence and fluency of tongue and instead of reading from the Old and New Testaments, he said: “I will read from the new Scriptures.” He then read extracts from the Words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. (Extracts from the address of the minister, Rev. Edgar Wiers, will be sent to you by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.)¹

I addressed them on the subject of Divine Unity, the oneness which exists among the Manifestations of God, such as His Highness Moses, His Highness Abraham, His Holiness Jesus Christ, His Holiness Muḥammad, His Highness the Báb, and the Universal Manifestation, His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. The audience listened with utmost attention and joy.

Last night by the invitation of the International Peace Forum, I appeared in the Grace Methodist Church, New York City, and delivered a detailed address before an audience composed of nearly two thousand people. Irrefutable proofs and incontrovertible evidences were expounded, demonstrating the absolute necessity of establishing the Most Great Peace

¹ See page 12.

and International Arbitration. I proclaimed that His Highness Bahá'u'lláh had upraised this ensign fifty years ago in the Most Great Prison in 'Akká.

With utmost longing 'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled to Chicago to meet the Friends of God. Praise be to God! he found the beloved rejoiced by the glad-tidings of God and attracted to the Kingdom of God. In churches and gatherings, while in Chicago, he spoke and scattered the seeds and raised the most glorious mention of the Kingdom of Abhá. You have seen with your own eyes that not one soul met him with opposition. Every soul who appeared in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned happy, rejoiced and assured. This became possible by the inexhaustible Bounties of the Beauty of Abhá and the victory and confirmation of His Highness the Almighty.

Having returned to Washington, we met very important personages, and all that was expressed was listened to with profound attention; no soul hesitated in belief; we spoke with everyone according to his merit and capacity. Many questions were asked by different important seekers on religious, political, socialistic, civic rights, scientific problems and deep spiritual subjects. Answers to every one of these questions satisfied the interrogator. No soul hesitated in the acceptance of truth.

In Chicago you had a like experience when all questioners were equally satisfied. Now 'Abdu'l-Bahá scattered the seeds of Truth in Chicago and the "Breeze of God" was wafted over that city. The friends of God must water those seeds and through the power and confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá must labour so that those seeds may grow and develop in that field, become verdant and green so that many harvests may be gathered. This result will be attained through unity and harmony and the love and communion of the hearts. Therefore, the friends of God must first ignite this lamp of unity in their own gathering and afterwards hoist the tent of the oneness of the world of humanity.

His Highness Bahá'u'lláh addressing the children of men, said: *"Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch."* The only difference lies herein: Some are ignorant—you must bestow upon them knowledge; some are heedless—you must make them mindful; some are asleep—you must awaken them; some are sick—you must heal them; some are children—you must educate them; so that the world of humanity, through the power of God, may attain to maturity. Man must exercise kindness toward those who are sick and immature and not be impatient or displeased. The shepherd must gather together the scattered flock and not disperse them. These are the principles of the people of Bahá. You must live and act in accord with these teachings.

'Abdu'l-Bahá is always expecting to hear wonderful news from you. He is ever anticipating that, through the power of confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá the world of human thought may be stirred with tremendous exhilaration in Chicago. This will be attained through the excellent conduct, the unity, the magnanimity and the spiritual utterances of the friends of God. In that time the radiant faces of the beloved ones will become illumined in the Kingdom of Abhá the fame of their union and concord will be spread throughout the east and the west and their spiritual victories will embrace the north and the south.

If, at any time, an unimportant and ignorant soul arises in opposition, do not heed him nor consider his objection of any importance. We have had in the past opposers who have been among the world's celebrities; we have [III:7:9] had enemies like Násiri'd-Dín and 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, two powerful kings; but all of these people, through the power of the Kingdom of Abhá have vanished and disappeared from the face of the earth and today the Banner of the Covenant is unfurled and waving over all the races.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant

Charles Mason Remey

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the exponent and leader of the Bahá'í Faith, who is now in America, arrived in New York on the eleventh of April of this year.

Never before has any Eastern teacher received such a warm welcome in America as has been accorded to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Not only have the hearts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's followers and friends in this country gone out toward him in the greatest of love, but a multitude of people have arisen and have warmly and heartily espoused the principles of international, interracial and inter-religious brotherhood which 'Abdu'l-Bahá is teaching and demonstrating to the world.

During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's recent visits to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Washington and other cities, thousands have crowded to see and to hear him, and these people have been gladdened by the joy of the Lord which 'Abdu'l-Bahá radiates so bounteously to all who allow themselves to come within the magnetic field of his great love for all humanity.

In these days of the foundation of the reign of Peace upon earth, the hearts of the people in general are being subconsciously awakened and spiritually drawn to seek the spirit of unity and harmony. Therefore when the Lord's Messenger comes with the glad tidings of Peace it is to be expected that the souls of the many who are seeking that Peace should be attracted by his spirit, joyfully receive his teachings and follow in his path.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has received no greater hospitality than that accorded him by the clergy in America. Pulpits in so many churches have been opened to him that on account of the time it has been possible for him to accept comparatively few of these invitations to address religious congregations. The doors of various secular societies and associations have also been opened to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and in many conferences he has voiced the message of the Peace of the Covenant of which his life of service is the Centre.

Only four years ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá was completing his fortieth year in the prison of 'Akká in the Holy Land, where he had been incarcerated by the former despotic Turkish government because of this progressive Bahá'í Message of Peace and Brotherhood. Now all this is changed. In Turkey Constitutionalism has taken the place of despotism, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá has come out from his prison to the West to establish the Unity of the Covenant of God.

Many people have been drawn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá by a spiritual force which they could not explain; a force which affected them so deeply as to make them observe that a change had been produced in their very souls. These people are now realizing the reason why 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence and words have a spiritual effect that no other man's presence nor words have. This is because he stands in his mission, quite distinct from other men. In his life of service to mankind is centred the great power of the Divine Covenant.

The Covenant of God has ever been the source of man's spiritual enlightenment in past ages; it is the source of his spiritual enlightenment in this present day, and it will be the source of his spiritual enlightenment during the ages to come.

Through Abraham God made a Covenant which was fulfilled and renewed by Moses, and in like manner by the Christ, Muḥammad, and the Báb who was the immediate forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh the founder of the Covenant of this present day.

All of the prophets and mouth-pieces of God heralded the coming of the great latter day Messiah, *"The Ancient of Days"*, who would found and establish God's Kingdom of Peace and

Unity upon earth. Bahá'u'lláh is that Promised One. He is the fulfilment of the Covenant made through the prophets of the past. He has brought the Kingdom of Peace upon earth, and as the point of guidance for the further establishment of His Kingdom, He appointed His beloved son 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be [III:7:10] the Centre of His Covenant, the establisher and promoter of His Kingdom and Peace in the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's life of service is the Centre of the life of the Kingdom which is the Bahá'í cause. His servitude to God and service to mankind is the heart from which the life force of the Kingdom is flowing to all the members of that growing spiritual body. He is the interpreter and the expounder of Holy Writ. Bahá'u'lláh commanded all to turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá who is the Greatest Branch branched from the Pre-existent Root—the Centre of the Covenant of God.

III:7, 13 July 1912 [III:7:16]

The Centre of the Covenant

The time has come when the Bahá'ís of the West should understand what is intended by "The Centre of the Covenant"; therefore we are pleased to publish in this issue the article from the pen of Charles Mason Remey, "'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant." A tablet regarding this important subject was recently revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá through Mr Remey. We publish it herewith:

Tablet to Mr Remey

To his honour Mr Remey—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received and I was informed of its contents. Explain the matter according to the following Teachings, and do not add one word thereto:

His Holiness Abraham—Upon him be Peace!—took the Covenant of His Holiness Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His appearance. His Holiness Moses took the Covenant of the Promised One, His Holiness the Christ, and gladdened the world with the glad-tidings of His Manifestation. His Holiness the Christ took the Covenant of the "Paraclete"—which means His Holiness Muḥammad—and announced the glad-tidings of His Appearance. His Holiness Muḥammad took the Covenant of His Holiness the Báb, and the Báb was the Promised One of His Holiness Muḥammad, for He gave the good news of His Coming. His Holiness the Blessed Perfection—Bahá'u'lláh—was the Promised One of His Holiness the Báb. The Blessed Perfection has prophesied of the coming of a Promised One after one thousand years, or after thousands of years. That Personage is the Promised One of the Blessed Perfection, and He will [III:7:17] appear after one thousand years or after thousands of years. Likewise with the trace of the Supreme Pen He has taken a great Covenant and Testament from all the Bahá'ís, that after His Departure they must obey the Centre of the Covenant and must not deviate one hair's breadth from obedience to him. He has commanded in the most explicit term in two instances in the Book of Aqdas and He has appointed most unmistakably the interpreter of the Book.

In all the Tablets, especially the chapter of "Branch", whose meanings are all 'Abdu'l-Bahá—that is, "the Servant of Bahá"—everything that is necessary is revealed from the Supreme Pen. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the interpreter of the Book, he says that the chapter of "Branch" means 'Abdu'l-Bahá, it refers to the servitude of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and nothing else.

In brief, one of the special favours of this dispensation of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh which is not seen in past Manifestations is this: that He has left no place for difference. For in His own

Day, with the Trace of His own Supreme Pen He has taken a Covenant and a Testament. He has pointed to the one who should be looked upon as authority by all, He has shown the interpreter of the Book and has closed the doors of outside interpretation.

Everyone should thank God that in this Blessed Cause He has tranquillized all and has left no place for hesitation. Therefore obedience and submission must be shown and the face turned completely to him (the Centre of the Covenant).

Restrict discussion to this and do not exceed thereto, so that it may become the cause of fellowship and the remover of differences.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by M. Ahmad Sohrab, Montclair, N.J., 24 June 1912.

Notwithstanding that Bahá'u'lláh pointed to the one who should be looked upon as authority by all and named the interpreter of His Words, leaving no place for difference and misunderstanding, yet it is known that shortly after the departure [death] of Bahá'u'lláh difficulties arose. The following interview between Badí'u'lláh [brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá] and Howard MacNutt at the home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká, Syria, 10 January 1905, is a presentation of this important subject of "The Centre of the Covenant" from another standpoint. It is printed in the *Star of the West* at the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

Interview with Badí'u'lláh

Another afternoon, Badí'u'lláh came in to see us. Our conversation had been upon "loyalty to the Covenant". After the interpreter had explained our views, Badí'u'lláh listened gravely for a while, then said: "Nine days after the ascension of the Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* [Book of the Covenant] was read. After a few days Muḥammad 'Alí Afandí [brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Badí'u'lláh] and a part of the family withdrew from 'Abbás Afandí ['Abdu'l-Bahá]. The other members of the family were instigated by words of Muḥammad 'Alí to the effect that the Blessed Perfection had written in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* [Book of the Laws] that no Manifestation should appear for one thousand years and that 'Abbás Afandí was taking the title of "Manifestation" to himself. This was the cause of the breaking away of part of the family, including myself. Afterwards I saw some of the actions of Muḥammad 'Alí and realized that the reason he had withdrawn from 'Abbás Afandí was not on account of the words of Bahá'u'lláh in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* but that it had been occasioned by his own feelings. And I saw too that these actions were not consistent with the commands and writings of the Blessed Perfection. From this I saw and knew clearly that the cause of his withdrawal had been hatred of 'Abbás Afandí. The brother of the wife of Muḥammad 'Alí, Mírzá Majdí'd-Dín, was sent by Muḥammad 'Alí to Damascus with a letter for the Governor of Damascus. In that letter Muḥammad 'Alí wrote a complaint against 'Abbás Afandí. This messenger was also instructed to tell the Governor by word of mouth certain things which would injure the Cause further for 'Abbás Afandí. The letter and messages were duly delivered to the Governor-General of Damascus. In twenty-five days the messenger returned. Just about that time a telegram came from the Sulṭán to the Governor-General of Beirut who telegraphed it to the Governor at 'Akká: "'Abbás Afandí and his brothers shall not be allowed to go outside the city." I was deeply grieved by these happenings. After thinking over the matter carefully I concluded that the best course would be for Muḥammad 'Alí and all the family to come here to 'Abbás Afandí and reach some understanding so that discord and disunion might no longer exist. I thought they should come themselves and ask for the truth of these rumours set afloat by Muḥammad 'Alí concerning 'Abbás Afandí. I myself carne first to 'Abbás Afandí and told him what I wanted to accomplish. Then I went to Muḥammad 'Alí and said "Do come with me to 'Abbás Afandí so that all the terrible trouble may cease." All the family were happy about this proposal of mine, except Muḥammad 'Alí himself. I spoke a great deal to him and tried to

persuade him to follow my advice but without success. I have written out in detail all the conversations I had with ‘Abbás Afandí upon these matters. What I am giving you today is but a brief synopsis of them. After hearing my words Muḥammad ‘Alí spoke a great deal to his family and those who followed him, uttering falsehood and thus driving them further and further away from the prospect of unity. When I finally realized that reconciliation and harmony were impossible I was so deeply grieved that I became very ill. When I recovered I wished to leave ‘Akká and determined to do so if I could secure permission. I wrote to the Governor-General of Beirut asking that I “might be removed from this prison to another prison as the conditions were [III:7:18] so distasteful to me here.” I took a copy of this letter. Although this prison was the best of all homes to me on account of the Blessed Perfection’s life here, yet I was so miserable I wished to leave at any sacrifice. By the way, all I ever heard ‘Abbás Afandí say proved the rumours set afloat by Muḥammad ‘Alí to be false and untruthful. After I had written to the Governor-General of Beirut, I wrote to the Sulṭán, copying this letter also. There is a prison on the Island of Rhodes where criminals and offenders are sent. In my letter to the Sulṭán I asked that I might be sent to it. I forwarded this letter to a man in Constantinople asking him to present it to the Sulṭán. Afterwards I saw ‘Abbás Afandí and learned that he did not sanction this action, so I wrote immediately to the man in Constantinople, saying, “Do not deliver the letter.” I also wrote to the Governor-General of Beirut countermanding my wish to be removed from ‘Akká. If the letter had been delivered to the Sulṭán it might have been too late to change the result. The prisoners at Rhodes are mostly Jews and Turks. As time went on I found it impossible for me to remain with Muḥammad ‘Alí. Finally I went to talk with him again. Accompanying me as a witness to the conversation was Siyyid ‘Alí, a brother of a son-in-law of ‘Abbás Afandí. I said to Muḥammad ‘Alí, “If you will go with me to ‘Abbás Afandí, come and go with me now.” He said, “I will not go.” I then took my family and left the house. I have written two accounts regarding this matter,—one brief, another in full detail, beginning at the time of the Ascension of the Blessed Perfection. The short one has been translated into English; the long one is not yet translated (January 1905). The latter account explains everything fully and clearly shows that Muḥammad ‘Alí’s action and behaviour was not on account of his love for the Blessed Perfection but on account of his personal feelings and jealousy. Since I came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with my family, fifty men and women have come back to him in love and loyalty. Five or six returned after a few days; and only day before yesterday five others came to him,—about fifty in all. The adherents to Muḥammad ‘Alí do not number fifty all told. In ‘Akká there are two, in Haifa three, in Teheran one and in other places a few. Only this small number remain in support of him. And why is this so? Because it was not for the Glory of God but for his own personal motives that Muḥammad ‘Alí acted so. The Blessed Perfection said, “My Cause is to unite men and bind them together; and those who violate this command step away from the protecting Shadow of My Word.” He commanded that we must sow the seeds of love in our hearts, not the thorns of hatred. Therefore if any of the sons of the Blessed Perfection follow His Word they are under the Shadow of His Command and Protection; and if not, they are afar off. For example, if the Sulṭán has a Governor who obeys the Sulṭán it is the duty of the people to love and obey him because he himself is obedient. I wish this explanation to be perfectly and clearly understood in America. In the Persian Hidden Words, Bahá’u’lláh says “O Friend! In the garden of the heart plant only flowers of love and cling to the Nightingale of Love and yearning.” All must know and realize that he who says that which is not in accordance with the Words of the Blessed Perfection or speaks that which causes discord to arise in human souls is assuredly not one of the servants of God and a follower of the Blessed Perfection. It is impossible for a true lover to desire to harm his beloved. If he does that which injures his loved one it is evident that his love is not true. The sign of a true lover is that all his actions aim to please his beloved. The first quality of a real lover is that he sacrifices his own desire for the wish and desire of his beloved. Muḥammad ‘Alí has followed his own will and desire

and has left the Will and Desire of the Beloved. This is why he failed and fell.

III:8, 1 August 1912 [III:8:5]

Interview at Hotel Ansonia, New York City¹

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Rev. J. T. Bixby and Rev. Howard Colby Ives present.

13 April 1912

From notes by Howard MacNutt

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The origin of man is one; the consummate intention of all human existence must likewise be one. The development of a tree is from a seed; the purpose of a tree's existence therefore is to produce a seed. The fruit of man is love and unity, the development of spiritual susceptibilities through the influence and infusion of Divine Love. The union of East and West must be accomplished in the soul of man fortified by the Divine Spirit. This spiritual bond of unity, this power of Divine Love is everlasting. Its appearance in the soul of man is the purpose of his creation.

America is a great instrument for the accomplishment of world unity. No other nation of the world stands in a similar position of influence and responsibility. The fundamental question is the unification of religious belief. In Persia during the last fifty years a wonderful evidence of such unity has appeared among the various sects and denominations of religionists. What is witnessed in that country is [an] historical account and record which cannot be denied. The accomplishment of a fundamental religious unity in Persia is therefore a nucleus which proves the possibility of universal peace among the world nations.

Consider the kingdom of the animals. There is no strife among them on account of colour or creed. If you select a pigeon from Persia, another from Germany, another from France, America and so on, you would find them living together in complete union and love. Because one was American it would not object to its companion from Persia. The birds of white plumage would not shun those of black and brown. They would not notice this difference in colour, but would dwell together in peace and harmony. Should we not at least attain to their state and possibility? We have reason; we have consciousness. God has taught us through these channels that we were created for unity and love. The heavenly Prophets have revealed the principles of His Will and Word. Let us live in accord with those principles and thereby live in unity with each other.

When the adherents of the former despotic government of Persia found that this unity and harmony was being accomplished among the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, they arose in bigotry and persecution against them. The clergy especially perceived that their vocation and means of livelihood were threatened. They persecuted the Bahá'ís with bitterness and ferocity. They misrepresented this Cause to the Government, saying, "These are the people of rebellion and revolution; these are the enemies of the Sháh"; whereas in fact down to the time of the recent revolution in Persia the Bahá'ís have taken no part whatever in political questions and disturbances. Their clamorous persecutors were the real revolutionists. These discontents wanted Constitutional rights and privileges. They were politicians, not religionists. Today there are many political parties in Persia. Notwithstanding the spread of rumours intended to excite prejudice against the Bahá'ís, unity and love increased among them, for falsehood cannot stand against the on-rushing stream of Truth. These enemies said, "The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh sanction one wife and nine husbands";—"the principles of Bahá'u'lláh are

¹ This interview was prompted by the fact that an article prepared by Rev. J. T. Bixby for publication in the North American Review had been objected to by Bahá'ís to whom it had been submitted, as incorrect and misleading. Although the truth embodied in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá completely disprove the erroneous statements, the article in question slightly amended, was afterward published. It should also be noted that 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his preliminary setting forth of the historical accomplishment of the Bahá'í Movement disqualifies the writer and his motive before a question is asked.—*Editor.*

communistic and proclaim treason against the throne and government". All kinds of false and dangerous reports were circulated until even European travellers passing through the country were influenced to believe them. How different was the reality! While the Bahá'ís have practical laws upon moral, ethical, civil and governmental questions, their obedience to these laws is always conducive to the uplift, purification and improvement of human conditions and never destructive to the develop- [III:8:6] ment of individual, community or nation. Furthermore, the Bahá'ís consider it more blessed and a greater privilege to bestow than to gain and receive. They believe that bestowing good upon another freely is the greatest means of help to both. This is not the principle and practice of their calumniators who make even religion a source of livelihood. According to Bahá'í principles justice and equity in government are not to be attained by force and rebellion against the existing order of things.

The solution of economic questions for instance will not be accomplished by array of labour against capital and capital against labour in strife and conflict, but by voluntary attitude of sacrifice upon both sides. Then a real and lasting justness of conditions will be brought about. If a capitalist is forced to give up a portion of his income and possessions there will be no love in his heart; no permanent benefit in his action. But if it be given in the spirit of the Love of God, everything will be accomplished. As it is now, the forces of labour strike and the capitalist retaliates. If the latter should voluntarily add to the scale of wages love is evident and the greatest good results. Briefly; among the Bahá'ís there are no extortionate, mercenary and unjust practices, no rebellious demands, no revolutionary uprisings against existing governments.

In Persia Bahá'í teachers never accept the slightest coin for their work. This is so noticeably true that when such recompense is refused it is customary to hear the statement "These are Bahá'ís". This is the strongest proof of the Bahá'í principles and their power of accomplishment. How different are the methods and actions of the clergy and priesthood of Persia, whose demands upon the property and possessions of the people are equivalent to pillage and plunder. For instance, when a man dies, the clergy takes possession of one-third his goods and the other two-thirds goes to his heirs. Then they accuse the Bahá'ís of doing this;—whereas, in fact, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh are forbidden to accept anything whatever from the property of others. The Bahá'ís are accustomed to give rather than to receive.¹ For instance, ten thousand dollars have been sent to Chicago from the East toward the erection of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

Rev. Bixby: Did not Professor Edward Browne, of Cambridge University, England, go to 'Akká and was he not received there by Bahá'u'lláh?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Professor Browne visited the East, interviewed various people and automatically wrote down all he heard. Naturally when he met the enemies of Bahá'u'lláh he heard nothing favorable. Would you go to the Vatican to hear praises of the Protestants? Would you consult Jewish rabbis as to the reality of Christ? In his first book, Professor Browne praised Bahá'u'lláh, but the second account, in which he publishes the statements of enemies, is the reverse. His books do not agree.

Rev. Bixby: Is Professor Browne correct in his statement that 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote "A Traveler's Narrative"?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The writer of "A Traveler's Narrative" was not one person. It contains a statement of Bahá'í principles. If a book was to be written setting forth the essence of

¹ Note: In conformity with this principle: Before the departure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the orient for his visit to this country a large amount of money contributed by friends here was forwarded to him with the request that he accept it toward defraying his expenses. He returned the money with a blessing, asking the donors to apply it to some philanthropic object. During his stay in this country, his gifts to churches and charity have been many and most generous in amount. *Editor.*

Christianity, a number of Christians would come together for that purpose.

Rev. Bixby: Is "A Traveler's Narrative" substantially correct?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: It is an authority.

Rev. Bixby: What is understood to be the relation between the manifestation in Bahá'u'lláh and the manifestations in Moses, Jesus and others?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: It is one basis, one foundation. Abraham proclaimed the Truth, Moses raised the Standard of Truth. Jesus established the Truth. Can we say that any one of them did not found it? All the prophets have been chosen by God to promulgate The Word. There can be no multiplicity in the Truth itself. The teachings of the Manifestations are of two kinds;—first, the Word of God in its outer or material aspect; second, the Word of God in its spiritual or inner significance. The first named is changeable; the second unchangeable. The essential principle of their teaching is spiritual. All the Prophets have come to spread these principles. Each confirms the spiritual utterance of the former and changes the material forms of teachings and ceremonials. For instance, the Ten Commandments revealed by Moses were applicable to the time in which he appeared. They were not applicable to the time of Jesus. Therefore He abolished and superseded them. [III:8:7] He also abolished certain laws of Moses which were no longer necessary. But this change and renewal is of secondary importance to the Spiritual Reality of the Word in Moses and Jesus, for it is the foundation and it is One and Unchangeable.

Rev. Bixby: Has Bahá'u'lláh revealed obligatory prayers?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The mode and requirements of East and West are different. It matters not whether we bend the head in the East or the knee in the West. The purpose of prayer is to come nearer to God;—to pray from the heart fervently. If the heart is pure, it is beautiful for the tongue to express its ecstasy.

Rev. Bixby: By what authority is Bahá'u'lláh placed with Abraham, Moses and Jesus?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Today we believe Bahá'u'lláh to be an educator of humanity, as Abraham, Moses and Jesus were educators. Are His teachings worthy of serious attention? He originated and proclaimed them. He caused others to believe and follow them. What is the function of a teacher and educator of humanity? By what evidence shall we recognize him? Is it not his power to train and develop, as children are trained at school? Has Bahá'u'lláh trained the children of humanity? If He has opened the doors of human hearts to a higher consciousness, He is a heavenly Educator. If He has not accomplished this we are privileged to deny His claim and teaching. For the aim and function of an Educator is to train the children of humanity. This is His greatest proof; that He has power to uplift humanity. Bahá'u'lláh either taught higher lessons or did not. If He did, He has fulfilled His claim. The mission of a physician is to heal sickness and relieve the ailing. When he heals there is no doubt of his ability as a physician. If he cannot heal the sick he is disqualified. We accept the Teachings of Moses, Jesus, Abraham and Adam because unmistakably they came to educate humanity. For example, Moses arose at a time of the lowest ignorance and humiliation of the Hebrew nation. Did He not free them from the bondage of Egypt? Did He not train, educate and organize them as a nation and people. As a consequence of His discipline did they not attain a zenith of power? Yes, unmistakably,—up to the time of Solomon. The philosophers of Greece came to Palestine, sat at the feet of the Hebrew sages and were taught by them the fundamental principles of life. Moses produced this result from ignorance and slavery. Can we deny history? Can we deny that He was an Educator?

Rev. Bixby: Has Bahá'u'lláh done this?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Yes! In Persia especially He has accomplished this miracle of training and

education. Ere long, Persia will attain a high degree of civilization.

Rev. Bixby: Is Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl an apostle, prophet or one delegated with special authority?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: We do not have apostles, prophets and special leaders, because all are servants. We have no ecclesiastical order or authority. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was trained and taught by Bahá'u'lláh; His disciple in this sense. He was near to Bahá'u'lláh; but he has no special station except the station of service.

Rev. Bixby: Were the "Letters of the Living" appointed by the Báb abrogated by Bahá'u'lláh?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The "Letters of the Living" were at first eighteen in number. The Báb said, "Go forth and teach others the Message you have received." Among them were some of great ability, who became prominent. Some disappeared. They were not appointed as a secret order. Bahá'u'lláh did not abrogate their function. As an organization of believers in the Báb it passed away by itself, naturally. The Báb said, "These are the acceptors of my teachings." They had no official station. He did not depend upon them as His clergy. They were servants of the Cause of God. Whoever is near to God is a servant of God.

Rev. Bixby: Did not Şubḥ-i-Azal occupy an authoritative position?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'u'lláh educated him just as He educated Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and myself. Şubḥ-i-Azal separated voluntarily. He did not follow his Teacher as we have done. Therefore we do not mention his name. We have no quarrel with those who differ, but are commanded to love them.

Rev. Bixby: How can we receive more from the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh than from the Words of Jesus?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Jesus and the former Prophets laid the foundation of the Cause of God,—the Heavenly Kingdom. But their followers forget and overlook the foundation. Christ said, "Ye must be born again of water and spirit." "As children from the womb, so must ye be born again of Spirit" The essence of His meaning was that those who were taught by Him and became His real followers would [III:8:8] become free from world-imperfections; they would become perfect, redeemed from animalism and human passions, transformed into angels; that is to say the earthly would become heavenly. These are the real disciples of Christ. These are real Christians. Galen, a Greek philosopher, who was pagan and not Christian, writing upon the subject of "Ancient Civilization of Nations", states that "the greatest shaping influences in the civilization of nations are religious principles; and that the effect of Christianity upon the lives and morals of its adherents is a great proof of this statement." Now Bahá'u'lláh came and brought a new life into the hearts of mankind. He reversed the order of many former teachings. Vast numbers of His followers live in accord with the principles He set forth. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl for instance, whom you have named, was firmly fixed in his religious belief. Under the influence of Bahá'u'lláh's words, he arose to serve this Cause. He was thrown into prison two years;—he was persecuted and driven out of Persia. Under all conditions of distress and suffering, he was thankful and filled with happiness, constantly Serving the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. This is the strongest proof that the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh have within them the same power to mould and influence human lives as the Teachings of Jesus. They free the souls of men from world-attachments and imperfections. They open the doors in this age of the world to perfection. The Jews admit that Jesus appeared in the world and taught heavenly principles. If Christ had not appeared after Moses the mention of Moses would have been lost. The foundation of Jesus and the foundation of Moses were the same. The foundation of Bahá'u'lláh is likewise the same as Moses and Jesus. All religion has the same foundation.

Furthermore, consider how Bahá'u'lláh has upraised the standard of Christ in the East, in

countries and among peoples where there was formerly no mention of Christ's name. He established the truth of the Bible among those who shunned and hated the Bible. They considered it a righteous act to burn and destroy the Book of Christianity. Bahá'u'lláh has taught them to read the Bible.

Rev. Bixby: Was Christ the Word?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'u'lláh has clearly explained and defined the "Word". Christianity, as explained by its followers has taught that Christ is the Word and the Son of God. What is the meaning of this? Bahá'u'lláh has explained that seers and prophets are as letters incomplete in meaning. He shows that human intellects are imperfect, incomplete, but Christ was the All-Surrounding Word and synonymous with Perfection. As He contained all Perfections and Attributes He was the Word and this wonderful title was conferred upon Him. But seers, prophets and disciples are as "letters"—without complete significance.

Rev. Bixby: Was Bahá'u'lláh also the Word in the flesh?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Yes! Because He had all the perfections.

Rev. Bixby: Did Abraham embody the Word?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: We cannot differentiate the attributes of the Word of God; we cannot differentiate perfections. Abraham announced the Divine Truth. It is not necessary to lower Abraham to raise Jesus. It is not necessary to lower Jesus to proclaim Bahá'u'lláh. We must spread the Truth of God wherever we behold it. The essence of the question is that all these Great Messengers came to raise the Divine Standard of Perfections. All of them shine as stars in the same heaven of the Divine Will. All of them give Light to the world.

Rev. Bixby: Did Bahá'u'lláh fulfil Jesus as Jesus fulfilled Moses?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Yes! by spreading the renown and glory of Jesus. The aim of Moses, Jesus and Bahá'u'lláh was to train humanity toward divine perfections. Can we train the world upward by imperfections?

[At the conclusion of this interview 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose and came toward Rev. Bixby, his arms filled with large white roses. As he placed them upon the bosom of his visitor, literally burying him in them, he said, "These beautiful roses will express to you the love and fragrance of the Bahá'í Spirit."]

III:10, 8 September 1912 [III:10:3]

Taking of the moving picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant

J. G. Grundy and H. MacNutt

Shortly after 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in New York City, a moving picture concern requested him to pose before their camera. He replied at once, "Khaylí khúb" ("Very good"). Some of the Bahá'í friends who were present were very much upset by the decision and hastened to inform him that his photograph would be scattered all over the country in moving picture houses and theatres. He replied, "Bisyár khúb" ("Most good"). The result was that he appeared before the camera at the entrance of the Hotel Ansonia, for a very short film.

It was a wonderfully impressive sight, for, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as he approached the camera, was exhorting Bahá'u'lláh to bless this means for the spreading of the Heavenly Cause throughout the world.

Early in June we conceived the idea of an extended motion picture in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá, would appear in various scenes. He consented at once, and made every effort—after several postponements on account of the weather—to have the picture completed. The response of

the friends by subscription was most willing and generous. The picture was taken at the home of Mr and Mrs Howard MacNutt, 935 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, N.Y.

The first scene was somewhat curtailed by the fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, did not remain in focus, but hurried into the house, somewhat disarranging the scenario. This happened also in the fourth scene where he appears alone; we had hoped he would stand longer before the camera. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, seemed very much impressed by all the scenes, especially the final ensemble—his utterances coming forth with wonderful intensity and power. All these were never-to-be-forgotten scenes, but those who beheld his countenance in the final utterance of the "Glad-Tidings" will treasure the memory of it forever. [III:10:4]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's object in this motion picture is that it shall become an instrument for spreading the message of the Bahá'í Revelation throughout the world. From the negative secured he intends to take a number of films into the East—Egypt, Persia, India and other countries. The influence this will exert is beyond any power of estimation.

Furthermore, it is our intention—'Abdu'l-Bahá's consent having already been willingly given—to take a record of his voice on the Edison talking machine. This record will be heard in conjunction with the moving picture film and slides. Human power of invention can go no further in reproducing 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for the benefit of the coming generations. The greatest effect will be apparent in those coming years long after the Blessed Subject himself has passed from this earthly world. Consider what this means! The beloved friends one hundred years from now will be able to see the form, face, and actions of the Beloved Centre of the Covenant; and even more, listen to the actual tone of his voice speaking the words which the pictures so eloquently portray.

It is our hope and expectation that the exhibit of the moving picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with its accessories, will become a most powerful instrument in this country for the spreading of the Most Great Message of Peace and Unity. May all Heavenly blessings follow this earnest effort.

[On Sunday morning, 11 August, the Bahá'ís of Chicago were privileged to see the moving picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for the first time. The occasion was made doubly enjoyable through the presence of Mr Howard MacNutt, who told how the picture was taken—the substance of which is incorporated in the foregoing. The film shown is owned by the *Star of the West*.

An exhibition of the moving picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá with complete accessories was given at Golden Gate Theatre, W. 128th St., New York City, 14 August. Explanatory talks were given by Mr MacNutt and Mr Grundy, stereopticon slides were shown, making altogether an interesting programme of over an hour.

Hearing of the moving picture film owned by the *Star of the West* in Chicago, the Bahá'ís of Muskegon, Fruitport (Michigan) and vicinity expressed a desire to see it. Through the efforts of Mrs Corinne True, whose summer home is in Fruitport, and Mrs Helene Bagg arrangements were made, and on Sunday morning, 25 August, it was exhibited in Muskegon. The showing of the picture, the presence of Miss Gertrude Buikema, Mr Albert R. Windust, and Mr George Latimer, of Portland, Oregon—who had recently visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in Dublin, New Hampshire—was made the occasion of a happy outdoor Bahá'í gathering at Lake Michigan Park during the afternoon. Mr Latimer read from notes taken while with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and addresses were made by the friends.—The *Editors*.]

Talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at 261 West 139th St., New York City Home of Mr and Mrs Arthur P. Dodge, 16 April 1912.
Notes by Miss Juliet Thompson.

Question: Shall we have a temporary Mashriqu'l-Adhkár?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: In those places where they have no Mashriqu'l-Adhkár they rent a house and call it by that name. Today the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chicago has great importance. All the Bahá'ís must turn their faces in that direction. Why is it so important? [III:10:8] Because it has become known throughout the East and the West that the Bahá'ís wish to build a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. It has found great importance. All ears are waiting for news coming from Chicago about the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

The matter of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár does not depend upon personal endeavour,—it needs united endeavour. When in 'Ishqábád the believers desired to build the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, all the friends centred their attention upon that place. There was no personality anywhere. And thus they were able to build.

Question: Those who assume the direction of Bahá'í affairs are often criticized. If a man has a superior intellect, should he come down to the station of those who are less capable?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Capacity and privilege in this Cause are intrinsic. Whosoever has a greater power of speech, whosoever has a greater power of attraction, whosoever has a greater sincerity, will advance, no matter what happens. In other movements, positions are like public offices; but in this Cause the people advance because of their innate qualities, because their works echo in the hearts of men.

In Persia there are many Bahá'ís who are the centre of all the friends. When the friends of God find that a soul has arisen to serve the Cause in sincerity, they accept him with heart and soul. They do not doubt him; they believe in what he says and consider that to believe in what he says is to believe in and to obey God. It is true that all souls are not equal. Some souls are in high stations of exaltation,—in the vanguard of the army; some are in the second rank. This is an innate Cause. The friends of God must have utmost consideration for those souls who are sincere and endeavouring to serve in the Cause.

For example, when we see a man doing public service, we must have consideration for him; if he gives a good address, we must praise him; if he makes wise suggestions, and if good intentions appear from him, we must have for him the greatest consideration.

I will relate to you a story, the conclusion of which you will understand: After the appearance of the Báb, the disciple who succeeded Him was called "Bábu'l-Báb". He was almost worshipped. When His Highness the Báb had passed away, all hearts turned to Bábu'l-Báb. While His Highness Bábu'l-Báb was travelling with three hundred and sixty staunch believers, His Highness Quddús, who was another great teacher, was as his disciple,—like his servant. While Bábu'l-Báb sat, Quddús always stood before him. But one day there came a great change. Quddús was found sitting and Bábu'l-Báb standing before him. All were astonished. Then His Highness Bábu'l-Báb, addressing the people, said: "I did not before know the station of Quddús. Tonight I realize that I am less than the dust of his feet." Later he sacrificed his life in the path of Quddús.

The believers in this city must have the utmost consideration for each other. None must try to precede the other. Those souls who are distinguished among the friends must receive due consideration.

Question: Does not this distinction come about naturally when one is severed, and is it not a spiritual distinction rather than intellectual?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Distinction¹ is good—all distinctions are good—distinction of intellect—distinction of sincerity—all; because distinction means development.

Question: Is not distinction dangerous for the individual?

'Abdu'l-Bahá, (laughing): All people are in danger. Man, in whatsoever degree he chances to be, is in danger. Can you single out a man who is beyond danger?

We are all servants of the One Threshold. These remarks are unnecessary. We must serve this Threshold. This is truth. We must love each other perfectly. If we are in such a state, the confirmations of God will reach us. If other discussions creep in, there will be a cessation of confirmation. Service must be rendered to this Threshold. The Blessed Perfection Bahá'u'lláh has trained us that we may pass our time in the discussion of things spiritual; that is ideal. We must be engaged in things conducive to the onward growth of man. Hence we must pray that He may accept us at His Threshold; that He may preserve us; that He may usher us into His Kingdom. This is praiseworthy. This is essential.

Question: Suppose you reason out something, and your reason tells you it is true? In the *Seven Valleys* it is said that when the “fire of Love becomes ablaze, the harvest of reason is consumed.” How is this?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: That is not to be taken literally. It has an inner meaning. It refers to ordinary reasoning. For example: a soul in Persia who became a believer endangered his very life. Now, what would the ordinary [III:10:9] intellect say? Preserve your life! Preserve your property! But he who is set on fire with God's love will forego all possessions. On such occasions his actions appear insane; but he is in a sacrificial state. Honour, glory, everything pertaining to himself, is sacrificed. Bahá'u'lláh means that the harvest of reason becomes consumed by the fire of faith. In such a state a man appears insane. Those who see him under such circumstances would say: “Here is a man who has good position, who has honour, affluence, influence,—a man of competence, and he has sacrificed all of these in the path of some mysterious thing!”

Question: What are the “seventy-two degrees of insanity” spoken of by Bahá'u'lláh?

Answer: One is to forfeit possessions, to forfeit estates. One is to forego name, honour, fame. One is to forsake relatives, station. *Et cetera* [ended 'Abdu'l-Bahá, laughing], *et cetera*, *et cetera*. Each one of these is a distinct insanity!

III:10, 8 September 1912 [III:10:16]

The trumpet call: “life” or “death”—which?

Although the *Star of the West* has published only a portion of the Addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, delivered in America, it must be evident to many that he is talking upon every subject necessary to the investigation and acceptance of the Reality of Religion, both scientifically and spiritually.

That all may be alive to the truth of this statement when reading forthcoming Addresses in the *Star of the West*—for there are many forthcoming—and realize the importance of the matter, we respectfully direct the attention of the friends to the following:

Previous to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's recent decision to journey to the Pacific Coast, and during his return visit to New York City, in answer to a question from one of the friends, he gave the impression that he would not go west again and would depart in one month for the Orient.

¹ Refer to *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 189–190.

When it was remarked that this would disappoint a great many people [we quote the letter received by us], *“he replied that he had talked on every subject, from the scientific as well as psychological basis and that he breathed on the souls and spirits of all the—Bahá’ís in such a way that had it been upon bone, it would have taken on flesh (meaning, as 1 understood it, that he had given really life-giving spirit) and that if their souls were not on fire now, verily they were dead—just as a tree which is not green and does not show forth any signs of life though the most nourishing life-giving rains are pouring down upon it, and the fresh spring breezes blowing down upon it. In all this he seemed to say that he had done all that he could do and now it lay upon those whom he had blessed to do the rest. If they were not awakened after all this, then, verily, they were as dead and dried up.”*

The Editors

III:11, 27 September 1912 [III:11:3]

With ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Dublin, New Hampshire

Joseph H. Hannen

At a mean altitude of something like 1,700 feet (and that, if one may be pardoned an apparent anachronism, is no *mean* altitude) the historic village of Dublin lies, a gem amid the verdure-clad hills of New Hampshire, and recently shining with particular lustre because of the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá The Servant of God, and the consequent centring of the spiritual rays, which focus from all the world where he is.

The village of Dublin proper is three miles from the railroad, the station being Harrisville. Antedating the railroad, it is one of the points which even that willing servant of the people, which winds and twists tortuously in an effort to oblige all, has not reached. And this is fortunate for the preservation of the beauties of nature. The population of Dublin during the summer is about five times that of the winter, and as a resident says, it might as well be locked up in midwinter, as indeed it is isolated by the elements. But now the winters are usually busy seasons of building, as new summer homes are planned, the while nature is creating materials for the glorious panorama of recurring spring and summer. For many picturesque and splendid estates are to be found here, making of this favoured spot a kind of Switzerland, with lines softened because of the wooded hills and the abundant verdure of the earth, which burgeons and blossoms in almost tropical luxuriance.

Here the traveller is reminded of Haifa, in Syria, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá agreed to the resemblance, adding, “It is warmer there!” for even in midsummer the air in Dublin is delightfully cool and the nights almost cold.

Hither the writer with Mrs Hannen and Miss Knobloch was bidden, to spend a night and a day. Reaching Harrisville late in the afternoon of Tuesday, 30 July 1912, our first and joyful surprise was to be met at Harrisville by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who had come over from Dublin with Mrs Parsons for that purpose, the latter also welcoming an expected guest. Mírzá Valí’u’lláh Khán was on hand to interpret and to add to the home-coming aspect of the occasion. First bestowing his guests in a waiting automobile and seeing to their comfort and happiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá joined Mrs Parsons and Mrs Ford in a carriage, and we were rapidly whisked to the Dublin Inn, a quaint and exquisitely-appointed hostelry just suited to the surroundings. Such is the magic of this place that in the vastness of the hill-country even the “honk, honk!” of the auto, seemed subdued, and the sense of being part of a scene of primal magnificence was not disturbed by the means of transportation, the electric lights and modern conveniences which abound. Dublin has long been known to the friends as the summer home of Mr and Mrs Arthur J. Parsons, and now for a time it is the Spiritual Summer Capital of the Republic of Religions—God’s Covenant with man of which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the Centre!

At the inn we found Mrs Hoagg and Mrs Cline, of San Francisco, and we learned that Mr

George Latimer, of Portland, Oregon, was also a visitor. As we had come from Portland, Maine, and Washington, the meeting of extremes was evidenced by the fact that the little party of pilgrims were from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, San Francisco to Washington, thus spanning the continent from two points, a demonstration of the power of the Word of Bahá'u'lláh. Then in the party with 'Abdu'l-Bahá were representatives of Persia, Syria, Russia and Egypt. A cosmopolitan gathering truly, and one which is attracting much attention in that section; although the naturalness and simplicity manifested by all makes them seem quite at home. This was manifested by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the station; the master of the situation, issuing his orders quietly, passing around among trainmen and officials, the scene might well have been in 'Akká or Haifa! [III:11:4]

As soon as we were comfortably ensconced at the Inn, 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited us, and there ensued one of those delightful meetings which characterize such occasions. He asked if we were well; if we were happy, if our rooms were comfortable, and exhibited the tender solicitude of a host to his guests, or more properly, a father to his children. Then ensued the following:

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "In returning, I will certainly go to Europe."

Miss Knobloch: "To Stuttgart?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Perhaps." (Laughing)

Mrs Hannen: "They are supplicating for it."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "See how much we have moved from one place to another. How far New York is from here: Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, the many places we have visited. And now these ladies have come to invite me to come to California. They are supplicating that I should come to California. Now these two have come to insist that we shall go; and letters are coming about it. A letter came yesterday from the Spiritual Assembly, asking how it came that we went to other places and not there. Now Mrs Hoagg is going to build an aeroplane and take me there. What do you advise? Shall I ride on it?"

Mrs Hannen: "It would not be very safe."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "When I ride on it, it is the Ark of Noah. This aeroplane will become the Ark of Noah." (This was accompanied by an exchange of smiles which showed 'Abdu'l-Bahá's keen sense of humour.)

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Tonight I have promised to be present at the house of Mrs Parsons at 8 o'clock."

When told that we were happy to have had 'Abdu'l-Bahá with us, the reply was, "I am very happy also."

At 'Abdu'l-Bahá's House, Dublin, Wednesday morning, 31 July

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Anyone whom I send to a place is confirmed; anyone. One of them is Miss Alma Knobloch. God has confirmed her. In the beginning she was teaching in Stuttgart. Now she is in Leipzig."

One of our party was obliged to leave on the afternoon train because of a promise made to another; 'Abdu'l-Bahá desired all to remain, but upon hearing of the facts said, "Let two remain and one go."

"The Bahá'ís must be prompt in the fulfilment of their promises, and perform whatever promise they have given."

"In reality, the length or shortness of the meeting has no influence whatever. It depends upon capacity. A piece of dry wood, as soon as it comes in contact with fire, receives the

ignition, but a piece of wet wood, even if it stays in the fire a long time, is not ignited; it will only produce smoke and fumes. No matter how long a piece of stone is in the fire it will not dissolve. Therefore the length of time has no sway whatever. There must be capacity. Although the length of time of the meeting with Mr Hannen is short, yet it is my hope that its results may become manifold. From here with a shining face, a merciful heart and a heavenly power may you return and become the cause of the guidance of the people; to be the cause of the firmness of the souls in the Covenant.

“I desire to answer some letters that Miss Knobloch has sent. They have been here for some time, but there has been no opportunity whatever to answer them.”

After a time of dictation to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab: “I am writing while you are silent. Is this permitted? [To Miss Knobloch and Mrs Hannen.] You enjoy it because the letter is to your sister. It is fortunate for her that I find time to answer today. Letters come by bundles, but there is no time to answer them.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá finished dictation, and surveying the mountains with a convenient field-glass, commented on the beauty of the panorama. It was indeed matchless—superb. In the distance a chain of mountains stretched, lofty Monadnock the highest, the others reaching as far as the eye could see. In English he said: “Good mountains; good green; good meadow; good plain; good view. Speak to me. Speak to me!” Told of the study of the Íqán in the Wednesday night meetings in Washington, his comment was, “Very good! Very good! It is very good to memorize the logical points and the proofs of the Holy Books. Those proofs and evidences which establish the fact that Bahá’u’lláh is the fulfilment of the Promises of the Holy Books. These proofs ought to be collected and memorized. As soon as someone will ask you—What are your proofs?—you may cry out at the top of your voice and say: ‘Here they are!’”

A question was asked based upon the familiar reply to those who say there is good in all things: “What shall we say when they ask, ‘Of what use are the flies and mosquitoes?’”

“Answer the questioner: ‘What is the use [III:11:5] of your creation? What benefit have you given to the world?’ The same benefit that you have given to the world, the mosquito has. You say that the mosquito harms, and sucks in the human blood; but you kill animals and eat them. You do not suck blood, but decapitate the animals. Therefore, you are more harmful than the mosquito. By this, I mean that man commits greater sins. But that which is the reality of the matter is this: The world of life, the world of existence is connected, each with the other. All the created beings are the members of this stupendous body. Each one is a member, and that member should not remain imperfect. If that member is, for instance, harming the human body, but it is useful from some other standpoint, because it is one member of the members of this creational book, is it allowable that a member of the members of this great world be imperfect? For instance, we do not know what is the use of this nail. It grows and it is cut again. We see that we have the nail; but we do not know that there are a thousand wisdoms within the creation of this nail. For instance, men ask: Why should we have the beard; why should we have the moustache? They shave. But in reality there is a great wisdom in this. It is healthful. The skin receives the oxygen through the beard.”

Asking for further questions, the problem of contributing for the care of Bahá’ís who may be sick or infirm, was presented; in view of the fact that there are many demands at times and the friends are able to do but little, generally speaking.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “The Friends must strive and show efforts and assist. Whosoever is a believer and assured, firm in the Cause, there is no doubt that he will contribute towards the assistance of the poor. This is an evidence of the faith. But if a person comes in contact with another who is in the utmost need, and he sees that he can help, and if he fails, this is an evidence of the weakness of his faith. If his faith is firm and strong, it is impossible for him not

to assist. There is no greater trial than the test of riches. Whosoever you see that he is helping and assisting the poor ones according to his ability, know of a certainty that his faith is strong. Continue according to your ability, not beyond your power, and tell him to content himself with it. Not that he may receive your assistance and not look out for himself. He is not able to work, that is why he needs assistance; if he were able to work it is not allowable to assist him. Lazy people should not be assisted; otherwise everybody would leave his work and expect others to support them. There would be no end to it. But there may be someone who is either unable to work or is striving to find some work and is not able to find it; it is not really a shortcoming but he cannot succeed. Such souls are to be assisted. The aim is this, that the friends of God must assist each other, and in assistance be greater than all the other communities of the world. If one of the friends find out that another has no food for this evening, for instance, he should not rest, he should not sleep till he finds food for him. All the members of humanity are in need of each other.”

At 9:30 am, 31 July, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the veranda of His house

Walking to and fro and addressing Mr Latimer: “The Bahá’í must first be informed of the Principles and Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh then go forth and spread the Message. It is like unto a soldier, who must arm himself with the buckler and armour, and then he enters the battlefield to fight against the foe. But if he goes to fight without arming himself, he will be defeated. The Bahá’ís are the Army of God. Their defensive armours or weapons are: First, Faith; second, Assurance; third, Severance; fourth, Complete Attraction to the Kingdom of Abhá. If they are armed with these weapons, they will gain the victory in whatever field they may enter. As long as he is not equipped with these weapons, he will not be successful. He must cut himself entirely from all imitations. In Persia we were under the sword. From one moment to the other we had no assurance of life, and during our long imprisonment we were in constant danger. As we were not attached to this life, we were entirely forgetful of these outward conditions. Therefore we remained firm. We did not notice the gleaming, flashing swords around us. But in reality we were happy. [Here he laughed heartily.] At that time there were many severe tests, but there was abundant spirituality. We were walking on the earth, but in reality we were soaring toward the Supreme Concourse. [Laughing]: What were those days, and what are these days! Those days were the cause of the development of the souls. Those days people progressed and advanced spiritually. During the eventful days of Náṣiri’d-Dín Sháh, those people who were Bahá’ís were fearless, filled with the glad-tidings of God, overflowing with supplication and [III:11:6] communion. When a Bahá’í walked in the streets, in his heart he was praying to God, begging of God—‘Make me a sacrifice in Thy Path! Let the enemies surround me, carry me to the arena of martyrdom, make me a ransom to Thy Cause!’ It is very easy now to be martyred, but it was very difficult at that time. Those frightful looking soldiers, those horrible executioners, those dreadful farrashes,¹ and especially the cannoneers with their fierce moustaches. They threw fear into the hearts of the staunchest and the firmest. Yet the friends were most firm and resolute before the faces of these beings of terror. At the time of trials, wonderful confirmations descend upon man, regenerating him and making him a new creation.

“Mírzá Qurbán ‘Alí, who was one of the Seven Martyrs, a man of great piety and learning, was a strong Bábí, but he was very fearful and timid. He was so fearful of being known as a Bábí that when he met the friends in the streets he would not look at them. He shunned their association. Yet the enemies found him out somehow, and brought him into the prison house. As he was well known among the military class for his wisdom and devotion, two of these influential officers went to Mírzá Taqí Khán, the Prime Minister, and interceded for him. When the Prime Minister found out that such important men were interceding for him, he

¹ Farrásh, pl. farráshún.

became very lenient and told them to bring him to him so that he might recant. This Prime Minister was such a domineering and blood-thirsty man that the army was in constant fear of him, so that when he was reviewing the army if he just turned his eyes upon one of the soldiers he would tremble and shake with fear. Finally these two officers took Mírzá Qurbán ‘Alí to the Prime Minister, and they were so happy in the thought that he would be released before long. When he came before the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister looked at him and said: ‘These friends of yours have interceded for you. Are you ready to repudiate ‘Alí Muḥammad (the Báb)?’ Mírzá Qurbán ‘Alí, looking around, saw the executioner about fifteen feet from him, standing, and then he turned to the Minister and asked: ‘Whom shall I repudiate, ‘Alí or Muḥammad?’ (Muḥammad being the Prophet and ‘Alí the son-in-law, they are considered the Holy Ones in the Muslim world. The name of the Báb is composed of these two.) The Prime Minister became so angry that he ordered the executioners to take him away and kill him, and he left the presence of the Prime Minister with serene face and a heavenly smile on his countenance. At such a time, a firm believer is known!’

III:12, 16 October 1912 [III:12:8]

Correspondent¹

The Christian Commonwealth

The Tablets presented herewith are self-explanatory. We might add, however, that the matter came up when Mr Albert Dawson, editor of *The Christian Commonwealth*, wrote to Mr Joseph H. Hannen suggesting that someone be appointed Correspondent of his paper for the Bahá’í Cause, offering space in his columns. The letter was sent to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the following was revealed:

To his honour Mr Hannen—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!—Washington, D.C.

HE IS GOD!

O thou my heavenly friend!

The letter which was written to you by the Editor of the *Christian Commonwealth* was perused. It is better that you be the Correspondent of this Journal, and spread it everywhere. This person (Mr Albert Dawson) is a very excellent man, and showed us great love while we were in London. Therefore, the American Bahá’ís must exercise toward him much respect. You correspond with him and send him the enclosed Tablet.

Show this Tablet that I write to you to all the Bahá’ís, so that those friends who are able may subscribe to his paper.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To his honour Mr Albert Dawson—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!—London, England.

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved friend!

The letter which thou hast written to Mr Hannen was read. I became very grateful and thankful to you. We have appointed Mr Hannen to be your Correspondent, and we are hopeful in the Divine Favours to confirm and assist you in all the affairs.

It is my expectation to be in London before long, and then I shall find you there.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

¹ Heading added.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

III:12, 16 October 1912 [III:12:10]

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

At Leland Stanford Junior University, Palo Alto, California

8 October 1912, 10:15 am

Translated by Dr Ameen U. Famed; stenographically reported by Miss Bijou Straun.

The greatest attainment in the world of humanity has ever been scientific in nature. It is the discovery of the realities of things. Inasmuch as I find myself present in the home of science—for this is one of the great universities of the country and well known abroad—I feel a sense of keen joy.

The noblest body of men is a body of men devoting its energies to science, and the noblest centre is a centre devoted to the study of sciences and arts. It ever tends to the illumination of the world of humanity, for science is the cause of the eternal honour of man, and the sovereignty of science is far greater than the sovereignty of kings. The sovereignty of rulers comes to an end; a king may be dethroned, and a sovereignty may come to a terminus, but the sovereignty of science is everlasting. For it there is no end.

Regard the philosophers of past ages. Their sovereignty is still manifest. The Roman empire passed away with all its grandeur. The Greek sovereignty passed away with all its grandeur. The past sovereignties of the Orient are but memories, whereas the sovereignties of Plato and Aristotle still continue. Even now, in all the schools and universities of the world their names are the subject of commemoration. But where do you hear the names of bygone kings? They are all forgotten and rest in the valley of oblivion. Hence we learn, verily, that the sovereignty of science is greater than the sovereignty of rulers.

Kings have invaded countries and achieved conquest through the shedding of blood, but the scientist, through his achievement, invades the lands of ignorance, conquering the realm of the mind and the heart. Therefore his conquests—the scientific achievements—are everlasting.

This being a centre of education, I am very happy indeed to be present, and in your behalf do I seek confirmation, aid and assistance. May you attain extraordinary progress in your educational pursuits. May you prove as radiant lights, which shall flood regions, exploring the dark recesses of ignorance.

Inasmuch as the greatest and most fundamental teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is one relative to the oneness of humanity, I desire to speak to you of the fundamental oneness of phenomena, which subject is one of abstruse nature dealing with Divine philosophy.

It proves that fundamentally all existence [III:12:11] passes through the same phases, and that every given phenomenon epitomizes the others. An old philosophic statement in Arabic declares that “all things are involved in all things.”

You will readily agree that all phenomena are nothing more nor less than aggregate expressions of single elements, and a given cellular element has its coursings or journeyings through various stages, or myriad stages, of life.

For example, the cellular elements which have gone into the makeup of the human organism at one time were in the vegetable kingdom; at another time in the animal kingdom; and, prior to that, in the mineral kingdom. They have ever been subject to transferences from one state of being, or life, to another. They have gone through myriad forms and phases, and in every form exercise special functions. The journeyings of phenomena are continuous. Therefore, every phenomenon you can see is expressive of the other phenomena. The

difference is one of transferences and the length of time for processes.

For example, it has taken a certain time for this cellular element in my hand to go through the various processes of metabolism. At one time this cellular element was in the mineral kingdom, and it had its various changes and transferences in the mineral state. Then it was transferred to the vegetable kingdom, and there in the vegetable kingdom it possessed various grades and stations. Finally, it reached the animal kingdom, and in the animal kingdom it presented itself in various forms of animal organisms and in the form of man in the human kingdom. Thus it has its transferences and its coursings. Again, it reverts to its primordial elemental state, namely, the mineral. Thus it is subject to infinite journeyings, as it were, from one to another, experiencing every stage of being and life. When it appears in any distinct form or image, it has its opportunities, virtues and functions.

In the mineral kingdom it was possessed of certain mineral virtues. In the vegetable kingdom it presented vegetable virtues or qualities. In the animal kingdom it presented animal virtues—the senses. In the human kingdom it is imbued with certain qualities peculiar to the human state.

Hence, it becomes evident that every single element of phenomena is subject to transferences in myriad forms and manners, and in every form it has its peculiar virtue. Thus it becomes evident that phenomena, fundamentally, are one; that is to say, existence is fundamentally one.

If all phenomena in existence are possessed of that oneness, how much more should man possess that oneness in its state of idealism?

It is evident that ideality, as regards oneness, is expressed only in the human kingdom.

Verily, the origin of material life or existence is oneness, and its termination is the self-same oneness.

With all this fundamental unity of all phenomena, is it becoming of the world of humanity (which fundamentally is one) ever to wage war, or entertain strife?

Man is the noblest of creatures. He is possessed of the mineral virtues in his body. He is possessed of the vegetable virtues, to-wit: the virtue augmentative, the power of growth. In the animal kingdom he presents certain qualities, or functions, peculiar to the animal state, because he is possessed of sensibilities plus the human qualities, and that is a sound mind.

Considering this great oneness, is it behoving that man should ever think of strife and sedition? Is it meet that he should wage any war when all phenomena are at peace and interdependent? All the elements are at peace. Is it meet that man, who is the noblest of creatures, should remain ferocious? God forbid such a state!

Consider, when these contingent elements enjoy a state of commingling, or fellowship, then the result is life. It is freshness; it is radiance; it is comfort; it is composure, and conducive to life.

Just now, these phenomena, which you observe here and there, are all at peace. The sun is at peace with the earth upon which it shines. The zephyrs are at peace with the trees. The elements are at peace. When the least injury attacks them, when the least in-harmony and discord occur among them, do you know what happens? You will have the San Francisco earthquake and fire. That is the result of war among the elements. Just a little quarrelling will result in a big fire, such as you had in San Francisco a few years ago, and all its attendant losses.

This is in the mineral kingdom. Then consider what will be the result of discord, sedition and war in the human kingdom, a superior kingdom of creation. How great will be the

attendant catastrophes! This is especially so when we regard the fact that man is endowed by God with mind and intellect. Verily, mind is the noblest gift of God. Verily, it is a faculty which is an effulgence of God. This is manifest and self-evident.

For instance, consider how all phenomena [III:12:12] other than man are subjects or captives of nature. They cannot deviate one hair's breadth from the postulates of nature. For example, the sun, although colossal, is a captive of nature. It cannot deviate one hair's breadth from the laws of nature. Likewise, all these great orbs in this interminable universe are captives of nature. They cannot deviate one hair's breadth from the regulations of nature. This earth of ours, this planet, is subject to nature.

The mineral kingdom in its entirety is subject to nature. The vegetable kingdom, with all its processes of growth, is the captive of nature. The animal kingdom is the captive of nature. The elephant, large as it is, with all its huge body, cannot deviate one hair's breadth from the institutes of nature. But this little man, small as he is, with his weak body, because he is confirmed by the mind, which is an effulgence of the Divine effulgences, can break and explode the laws of nature.

For example, according to the rules of nature, man was destined to be a denizen of the earth. He was to inhabit only the earth, but through the application of his mental faculties he breaks this law, and becomes a bird, and soars in the air. He becomes a fish, and in a submarine investigates the secrets of the sea; or he builds a fleet and sails over the seas—thus breaking laws of nature.

All the sciences and arts which you now enjoy were once mysteries of nature, and, according to the mandates of nature, they should be hidden and latent. The human intellect has broken this law and discovered the realities of objects. It has taken these mysteries out of the plane of invisibility and has brought them onto the plane of visibility. It has classified these laws, this being contrary to the postulates of nature.

For example, electricity was once one of the hidden or latent mysteries of nature, and it would have remained hidden if the human intellect had not discovered it. Man has broken the law of nature, and out of that invisible treasury has taken this energy and brought it onto the plane of visibility. Little man takes such a rebellious force as electricity, and arrests it in an incandescent lamp. This is extraordinary! It is beyond the ken of nature. In a few moments the East can communicate with the West. This is a miracle! This is beyond the power of nature. Man takes the voice and arrests it in a phonograph. The voice naturally should be a free agency, for the law of nature thus demands, but man takes it and puts it in a box. This is against nature's laws.

In all the other little things man changes the ways, and all the other discoveries were mysteries of nature. According to Nature's postulates, they should have remained hidden, but this human mind, which is the greatest of Divine effulgences, has verily broken the law of nature, and is constantly taking out of Nature's laboratory new and fresh things.

Having such a great bestowal of God, which is the greatest potency of the world, is it becoming of us to remain still like the ferocious animals, like the wolves fighting each other, killing each other? This is contrary to the law of nature, to the world of humanity.

If the animals exercise ferocity, it is simply for their sustenance, and they are deprived of the benefit of intellect. They do not reason, and cannot discriminate between justice and injustice, and therefore they are excusable. But man, when he exercises ferocity, does not do it for his food or sustenance. He does it for greed. Then is it becoming that such a noble creature, with such a delightful creation, with such a sound mind, with such lofty thoughts, with all his scientific achievements, with all these liberal thoughts, with all the new discoveries, with all the great achievements of the arts, with all the possibilities facing man as

to his perceptions becoming keener, as to achieving noble things in life—for him still to go on to the battle-field, to spill the blood of his fellow men?

Man in this world is the edifice of God! He is not a human edifice. If you destroy an edifice built by man, the owner of the house will feel grief indeed, and will feel wrath against you. How much more it is when man is destroying an edifice founded by God. Undoubtedly does he deserve the wrath of God.

God has created man noble. God has created man a dominant factor in creation. He has specialized man with particular bestowals; He has conferred upon him mind; He has given him perception; He has given him the faculty of memory, the faculty of discrimination; He has endowed him with keen perceptions, the five senses. With all His good gifts to man, which were to make him the manifestation of virtues, which were to make him as a radiant candle, which were to make him a source of life, which were to make him an agency of constructiveness—shall we now destroy this great edifice of God? Shall we destroy to its very foundation, this great body-social or politic? [III:12:13]

When we are *not* captives of Nature, when we *can* control ourselves, shall we allow ourselves to be captives of Nature and act in accordance with the exigencies of Nature?

In Nature there is the law of the survival of the fittest. If humanity be not educated, then, according to the natural institutes, the law of the survival of the fittest will demand of man supremacy.

What is the object of all the schools and colleges? What is the basis for the universities? They are for the purpose of rescuing man from the exigencies of Nature, to relieve or rescue from him the defects of Nature, and to endow him with the capability of controlling the benefits of Nature.

Consider: Were you to relegate this plot of ground here to Nature, leave it in its primordial status, it would become a thorny place and useless weeds would grow therein, but when we cultivate it, it becomes fertile soil, yielding a harvest.

Were you to leave these mountains to their original state, they would become jungles with no fruitful trees. When cultivation is followed, then these gardens will yield fruitful trees, and then yours will be a variegated flower garden to enjoy.

Therefore, the world of humanity should not be left to its naturalism. It is in need of education, and, according to the Divine education, must it be educated. The Holy, Divine Manifestations of God were teachers. They were the gardeners of God, in order that they might transform the jungles into fruitful orchards and make of the thorny places delightful gardens.

Then what is the particular function of man? It is that man should rescue himself, save himself, from the defects of Nature, and become qualified with the ideal virtues.

Is it behoving for us to sacrifice these ideal virtues and these possibilities of advancement? God has endowed us with a power whereby we can even *overcome* the laws of Nature. Ours is the power to wrest the sword from Nature's hand, and then use that sword against Nature itself. Is it meet that we should be captives of Nature still, and fail to act according to the exigencies of Nature, which demand the law of the survival of the fittest? That is, shall we allow no difference to exist between us and the ferocious animal, but continue exercising a ferocity like unto it?

There is no baser state than that of the ferocious type. There is no greater degradation for man than this. There is no worse debasement than the battle-field. It is the cause of the wrath of God! It is the cause of the destruction of the foundations of man.

Praise be to God! I find myself in an assemblage, the members of which are all peace-loving and advocates of international peace, the thoughts of all being for the oneness of humanity, and the ambition of all is to render service to the cause of humanitarianism.

Thus I supplicate God that He may confirm and aid you, that each one of you may at last become a professor emeritus, that each one of you may become the cause of spreading science, that each one of you may become a standard-bearer for peace and a bond connecting the hearts of men.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh fifty years ago declared the necessity of peace among the nations, and the necessity of liberalism in the form of peace among the religions. He declared the necessity of peace among the races and peace among the countries. He says that the fundamental basis of all religions is one, that religion was aimed to be a bond to unite in fellowship all men, that the differences which have arisen are due to blind imitation (or dogma), and that these dogmatic institutes are distinct from the foundations of the prophets; that because the blind imitations are various, they have caused differences and sedition, but that if the reality underlying religious teaching should be investigated *all* the religions would be unified, that religion would be the cause of unity and accord, the cause of binding together the hearts.

If a religion should prove to be the cause of dissension and discord, He declared it is better to do without religion entirely, for religion then is a harm, and the absence of that which is a harm is better than its presence.

Religion was destined to be a remedy of God. It was to be a panacea for the ails of humanity. It was to be a salve for the wounds of man. But if its misapplication, or misuse, has caused such a havoc, causing battle and war among men, causing bloodshed among humanity, irreligion is better than religion.

He emphasized international peace exceedingly. He declared humanity to be mankind—*one*. All are the progeny of Adam. That is, they are the lineage of one personage, one family. However, it has become such a big family, such a large family. You cannot conceive of various races or distinct types in one family. If some of the members of a family were of a certain person, and if some were members of the offspring of another person; in other words, if we had two Adams for our [III:12:14] father, then we might say we had some difference. But because we belong to one progeny, one family, and they are not various or divergent, therefore such names distinguishing one from the other, as “This is Italian, this is German, this is French, the other is Russian”—this is nonsense. We are all human, and we are all the servants of God, and we all come from Mr Adam’s family. Then what is this superstitious idea?

All these distinctions or boundary lines have been created by people who were despotic. Their aim was fame, their aim was conquest of land, and they made use of the patriotic feeling.

They themselves enjoyed luxuries in their lofty palaces, surrounded with every ease and affluence, enjoying the most delightful food, enjoying feathery couches for sleep, and for exercise preferring the ball room. To the poor people—the farmers, the labourers, the soldiers—they said: “Go to the battle-field while we are enjoying ourselves. We are captains and officers; you are soldiers. Go to the battle-field.” The others said: “You are destroying our homes. Why?” They answered: “Because they are Germans; we are French.” But those who instigated it were all self occupied. They did not let go of their pleasure. But the blood of the innocent poor was shed. For what? For a superstition such as “this is German, the other is French,” when both are human; both belong to Adam, one family, one people.

This prejudice, or limited patriotism, is so often used when patriotism in the larger sense includes all nationalities. There must be peace among all nations. God created one earth, one sphere, one globe, and one mankind. This earth was to be the habitation of man. But we have

come forth and have imagined certain superstitious boundary lines. They are purely imaginary, yet we pronounce one section Germany, the other France, and we let them fight. We say: "O, this is Germany; this is patriotic; this is a great country and should be helped and assisted," but of the other we say: "Let it go down; let us destroy it; it is evil; it is a bad country; the people ought to be killed." Why? The line is imaginary, absolutely, and for these imaginary boundary lines is it becoming for the precious blood of man to be spilled, and for him to behead his fellow men? For what?

After all, a claim for territory is a claim just for the dust—the love of, or attachment to, dust. Did you ever stop to think that we live on this earth of dust for a few days, and then we remain beneath it forever? So it is our *graveyard* eternally. Is it becoming of man to fight for his graveyard, which devours him, an eternal cemetery? For man to fight over his *grave*, to kill one another for his *grave*—what an ignorance! What an inadvertence! What a thoughtlessness on the part of man!

I hope that you people are reasonable enough not to fight over your graves, and that you will enjoy the utmost of fellowship, like one family brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers—enjoying peace and having a good time.

III:13, 4 November 1912 [III:13:8]

Tablet to the Editor of *The Palo Altan*

To his honour Mr H. W. Simkins—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

At the time I met you and felt the susceptibilities of your conscience my heart and soul became greatly attached to that dear friend (i.e. yourself) and the utmost love was produced, and the spiritual emotions were obtained. Your visit gave me the utmost happiness. The address delivered in Stanford University and published completely in your paper was observed today—and on account of it I became both pleased and grateful. In order to express my pleasure and appreciation for this service of yours I am writing you this epistle.

I shall never forget your cordiality, and as long as life lasts I shall remember you. I beg of God, that that dear friend (yourself) may become like unto a shining star in the horizon of Reality, and become the cause of bestowing spiritual life upon the world of humanity.

The address delivered at the Jewish temple establishing the validity of His Holiness Jesus Christ and inviting the Jews to believe in Him is enclosed herein. From its powerful contents you will realize that though there were many conservative Jews in the audience, yet in the most dauntless manner the validity of Christ was proven. After reading its contents should you think it best you may print it fully without abbreviation in the columns of your paper that others of the Jews may read it. Perchance this may prove an impetus for their respect for, and belief in Christ, that this strife and contention that has lasted between the two nations for two thousand years may disappear, and the oneness of the world of humanity be unveiled.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!
'Abdu'l-Bahá

III:13, 4 November 1912 [III:13:11]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in San Francisco, California¹

Frances Orr Allen

...

The next morning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá made quite a different visit—not to one of the great universities, but to the humble home of one of the friends, Charles Tinsley, a coloured man, who was confined to his bed on account of a broken leg. During this visit, 'Abdu'l-Bahá told a

¹ First section is in the *Star of the West*, III:12, pp. 9–10. This section consists of extracts.

beautiful story of a ruler who trained the subject he loved best in order to fit him to hold the most important place in his kingdom—told how he scourged him, and maimed him, and caused him all manner of sorrow and suffering that he might know for himself what these conditions were in reality, meanwhile assuring him that he loved him and that only through this training could he be fitted for the great place he had destined him to fill.

...

The most remarkable public address given during the visit to the Coast was on Saturday morning, 12 October, at Temple Emmanu-El. It was a wonderful sight, 'Abdu'l-Bahá standing in the pulpit of that magnificent synagogue, between pillars of palms. The morning sunshine came dimly through the beautiful coloured windows, descending as in benediction and approval of the call to righteousness, once more being given to the chosen people of the Lord. In their own synagogue, he proved to the congregation the validity of Christ. He called upon them to investigate Reality,—not to be bound by dogma. He urged them to respect the name of Christ and of Muḥammad, and, above all, exhorted them to be kind.

From the synagogue 'Abdu'l-Bahá was driven to Mrs Goodall's Oakland home, where Children's Day was to be observed. The afternoon was especially for the little ones, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá loves so tenderly. The spacious parlours were filled with the children and their parents and friends, and the rooms were sweet with the fragrance of many flowers. The children greeted him with the beautiful song, "Softly His Voice Is Calling Now". Calling them to him, he gave them candy and flowers, and then went to each one, child and adult, and gave an envelope, containing rose leaves. He named the children "radiant children". They followed him about and he took the little ones in his arms. Later the children gathered on the steps, where a photograph was taken. It was a beautiful afternoon. Truly one who has not seen 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the children has missed a great deal.

At 3:30 o'clock of the following day, Sunday, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in the reading room [III:13:12] of the blind, at 1665 Jackson Street, San Francisco, where during the week instruction is given in manual training. To this meeting were invited, also, the blind from the Adult Home in Oakland, and the children and youth from the State Educational Institution in Berkeley. The service opened with a beautiful song by a child. 'Abdu'l-Bahá first paid a tribute to Mrs Rowan, through whose efforts the teaching at this place is made possible. Then he spoke of how, in receiving education, the blind are being endowed with sight. He told them—even though deprived of sight, having insight—they must not sorrow. Sight is only for a time, but insight is divine and discovers the Kingdom, sees the beauty of God. Though deprived of a drop, they possess the ocean, for insight comprehends all the other senses. He closed by saying, "May you not see dust, but purity—see the beauty of Christ, of Bahá'u'lláh and all holy souls."

In the evening, many of the friends gathered in the parlour and 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them of his visit to the beach. He likened humanity to a sea,—at times smooth, at other times in motion. The sea in motion is most like life, even when tempestuous; when in motion, each hour brings results. He said: "Seek to dive in the spiritual sea and bring up pearls; seek to find that sea."

At the conclusion of the talk, he spoke of musical instruments, saying all are imperfect, but that Bahá'u'lláh brought to earth a heavenly, divine instrument where each soul could find and strike his note and the music would be a heavenly chorus, and eternal. At this gathering there were Persians, Swiss, Hindu, Holland, Canadian, French, English, Japanese and Americans—all in love and fellowship.

Wednesday, 16 October, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and party returned from a short visit to the country. To the nine Portland friends, who had arrived, he said, "Be happy, no tears! no tears!" Some of

these friends had come at great sacrifice. One little boy said to his mother, "Why do you cry, mother? It is silly to cry *here*." In the afternoon 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the Century Club on Equality between men and women. He spoke of woman's superiority in kindness and tenderness, and, when necessary, in valour and courage.

The evening of 16 October will never be forgotten, because of the memorable feast, held at the home of Mrs Goodall, in Oakland. The beautiful rooms were filled with tables, adorned with yellow chrysanthemums and pyramids of fruit. The friends gathered quietly and talked in low but joyous tones. All seemed to feel the evening to be one set apart from all other evenings, for at this feast it was our great privilege to have 'Abdu'l-Bahá with us. There were one hundred and ten present, friends from the Bay Cities and also from Portland and Seattle.

When all were seated at table, 'Abdu'l-Bahá requested that we partake of the food so bountifully provided, while he walked about speaking words of wisdom and love, giving us the spiritual food, for which we hungered. Then, from the stairs, he pronounced a benediction upon all assembled, and soon the friends quietly withdrew. It was the most spiritual meeting. Gathered under one roof were people of different nations and various nationalities, the young and old, all meeting in love and fellowship, and in devotion to the Servant of God in this day.

...

Tuesday evening, the farewell meeting of the friends was held at the home of Mrs Goodall in Oakland. This was another especially memorable occasion. All realized that at this meeting would be given final words of exhortation and farewell. There was a reverent hush as 'Abdu'l-Bahá told of Bahá'u'lláh and of the two years He passed in solitude. At the close of this narrative, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose, and, in no uncertain terms, declared himself to be the *Centre of the Covenant*; and exhorted all believers to firmness, calling upon them to spread the message of the Kingdom both by deed and word. In farewell, he took each one by the hand, giving to each the Greatest Name.

...

From the University at Berkeley many of [III:13:13] the East Indian students came to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to them and to the Japanese friends he showed great favour. It was most interesting and gratifying to witness the beautiful spirit of love and kindness in the friends who gathered to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed himself much pleased with San Francisco and greatly enjoyed his visits to Golden Gate Park. He took especial interest in the flowers and would often leave the automobile for a walk along the shore of some one of the small lakes. But even on the drives and during the walks he dispensed blessing—giving many wonderful lessons to those whose great privilege it was to be with him at those times.

...

III:13, 4 November 1912 [III:13:14]

'Abdu'l-Bahá at the grave of Thornton Chase

Los Angeles, California, 19 October 1912

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in speaking of Mr Chase told the friends in San Francisco and Los Angeles to annually visit the grave of Mr Chase, to pray and have a meeting there and detail his earnest endeavours, service and great love for the Cause. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that Mr Chase's station was not known while he was alive but in the future years it will be known. Among the friends are many whose stations are not known while alive, but after their death, in the course of time their station becomes manifest. Annually the friends will visit the grave of Mr Chase on the day 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited it.

Upon our arrival in San Francisco, 4 October 1912, when one of the Bahá'ís gave the news of the departure of Mr Chase, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "This revered personage was the first Bahá'í in America. He served the Cause faithfully and his services will ever be remembered throughout future ages and cycles. He has written many books in this Cause and they will be studied carefully by the coming generations. He travelled once to 'Akká and there we associated with each other for several days. Indeed he became free from the troubles of this world. No matter how long he might have remained here, he would have met nothing else but trouble. The purpose of life is to get certain results; that is, the life of man must bring forth certain fruitage. It does not depend upon the length of life. As soon as the life is crowned with fruition then it is completed, although that person may have had a short life. There are certain trees which come to fruition very quickly, but there are other trees which attain to fruition very late; the aim is fruit. If the tree brings forth its fruit young, its life is short; it is praiseworthy. How regretful it is that a man may live a long life and yet his life may not be crowned with success, like unto the cypress tree which does not give any fruitage. Praise be to God! the tree of Mr Chase's life brought forth fruit. It gave complete fruit, therefore he is free. He attained to eternal rest. He is now in the Presence of Bahá'u'lláh. His Holiness Jesus Christ lived only thirty-three years, but the world is filled with the fruits of his life. Others have lived a hundred years, with no result and no fruitage from their lives. There was a rabbi in Tiberius who lived 120 years, but the tree of his life was fruitless. He had great enmity against Jesus Christ. He often used to argue: 'The ephemeral life is subject to many trials and vicissitudes; there is no enjoyment in it.' The life of Mr Chase was spiritual in character; his services will ever be remembered and he has already attained to the desire of his heart."

On Saturday, 19 October, at 1 pm, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and about twenty-five Bahá'ís of Los Angeles arrived at the cemetery Inglewood. The place is charming, the meadows are green and there are many trees. 'Abdu'l-Bahá silently walked ahead of the friends and he was followed reverently by them. There are many flower beds and the fragrance thereof reached the nostrils. Most of the friends carried bouquets of flowers in their hands. After arriving at the grave, 'Abdu'l-Bahá scattered his flowers and then one after another of the friends gave him their bouquets and he divided them and scattered them over the grave. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá standing at the head of the grave and raising his hands toward heaven, uttered the following prayer:

Prayer

O my God! O my God! Verily, this is a servant of Thine, who did believe on Thee and in Thy signs; verily he hearkened to Thy summons, turned to Thy Kingdom, humbled himself at Thy holy threshold, was possessed of a contrite heart, arose to serve Thy cause, to spread Thy fragrances, to promote Thy word, and to expound Thy wisdom.

Verily he guided the people to Thine ancient pathway, and led them to Thy way of rectitude. Verily he held the chalice of guidance in his right hand and gave unto those athirst to drink of the cup of favour. He presented himself at Thy lofty threshold, where he laid his brow on the fragrant soil of Thy garden and circumambulated Thy all-glorious and sublime abode, the traces of which are wide-spread and the fragrances of whose loyalty are sensed everywhere. Later he returned to these vast and extensive countries and proclaimed Thy Name amongst the people, until his respiration ceased and his outward sensation was suspended, returning to Thee with a heart throbbing with Thy love and with an eye opened to Thy direction.

O Lord! O Lord! Submerge him in the ocean of Thy glory. O Lord! O Lord! Usher him into Thy delectable garden. O Lord! O Lord! Usher him into Thy lofty paradise and cause him to be present in Thy meeting of transfiguration. O Lord! Submerge him in the ocean of Thy lights.

Verily, Thou art the Clement! Verily, Thou are the Merciful, the Precious, the Omnipotent!

Then after the prayer he spoke as follows:

“Mr Chase was of the blessed souls. The best time of his life was spent in the path of God. He had no other aim except the good pleasure of the Lord and no other desire except the attainment to the Kingdom of God. During his lifetime he bore many trials and vicissitudes, but he was very patient and longsuffering. He had a heart most illuminated, a spirit most rejoiced; his hope was to serve the world of humanity; during the days of his life he strove as much as he could—he never failed—until he witnessed the lights of the Kingdom of Abhá, and he was guided by the lights of Guidance. He summoned the people to the religion of God; he suffered them to enter into the Kingdom of God; he wrote books and epistles regarding the proofs and evidences of the Manifestations of Bahá'u'lláh. In reality he has left behind him certain signs which will never be forgotten throughout ages and cycles. In reality this personage was worthy of respect. This personage is worthy of having the friends visit his grave. The traces of this personage will ever shine. This is a personage who will not be forgotten. For the present his worth is not known but in the future it will be inestimably dear. His sun will ever be shining, his stars will ever bestow the light. The people will honour this grave. Therefore, the friends of God must visit this grave and on my behalf bring flowers and seek the sublimity of the spiritual station for him and have the utmost consideration for the members of his family. This personage will not be forgotten.”

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

III:13, 4 November 1912 [III:13:15]

Tribute to Thornton Chase from Brooklyn, N.Y.¹

... [III:13:16]

...

The readings included the Tablet written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in memory of another brother:

“O Beloved! O Faithful Brother! Where is thy beautiful face? Where is thy eloquent speech? Where is thy serene brow? Where is thy radiant beauty? Where is thy flame enkindled by the Fire of the Love of God? Where is thy attraction to the Perfumes of God? Where is thy discourse in praise of God? Where is thy determination to serve in the Cause of God? Where are thy beautiful eyes? Where are thy smiling lips? Where is thy noble countenance? Where is thy graceful form? Thou hast abandoned the human world and ascended to the Kingdom. Thou hast attained to the Divine Grace. Thou hast reached the Threshold of the Lord of the Celestial Kingdom. Thou hast abandoned the bodily lamp, the mortal garment, the earthly elements and the life of this world. Thou hast kindled thy flame in the Lamp of the Supreme Concourse and thou hast entered the Paradise of Abhá. Thou hast taken shelter in the shadow of the Tree of Life and attained the Meeting with God in the Abode of Paradise. Thou wert a divine bird which has forsaken its mortal nest. Thou hast flown to the Garden of the Divine Kingdom and attained thy brilliant station. Thou hast already sung the verses of the Mercy of the Lord the Clement. Thou art a grateful servant, and thou hast entered into the joy of thy Lord. Verily thy Lord hath chosen thee for His Love;—hath guided thee to the side of His Holiness, caused thee to enter into the Garden of His Nearness and permitted thee to behold His Beauty. Thou hast laid hold of Eternal Life and attained to Everlasting Well-Being,—to the Good-Pleasure of God,—to His Delight—and His All-Sufficient Favour. Thou hast become a star in the Highest Horizon, a light among the Angels of Heaven, and a living soul in the Exalted World, resting upon the Throne of Immortality. I ask God to enable thee to attain to His Nearness and His Union;—to rejoice thee by His Presence;—to

¹ Extract.

increase thy brightness and thy beauty;—to grant thee honour and glory. We remember thee continually and never forget thee. We pray for thee night and day. We see thee in the Supreme Horizon of Abhá!

“O Beloved! O Faithful Brother!”

Howard MacNutt

III:14, 23 November 1912 [III:13:3]

The “Day of God”

Selections from *The Bahá'í Proofs*, by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpáygán.

In the Name of God, the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá!

O ye people! Know—may God the Exalted assist ye through a spirit sent from Him!—Verily, when ye consider carefully the announcements in the Heavenly Books and perceive the glad tidings in the Holy, Divine Writings, ye will find they agree in promising the coming of the “Day of God” and foreshadowing the arrival of the “Hour” wherein the Face of God will be manifested, the regions of heaven and earth will be illuminated by His coming, all former things will be changed by His rising, and every sorrow effaced. The essence of all that is recorded concerning these glad tidings is this, that when oppression and tyranny prevail throughout the world; when distress and tribulations are intensified among the nations; when divergencies of religions and creeds become grave and widespread, and the heaven of worship of the Merciful God is riven and overthrown; when the greed of souls grows fierce to violate men and property; when terrors and adversities prevail; at that time the Divine Herald will arise, the Holy Heavenly Spirit will descend, announcing the coming of the Manifestation of the promised Lord and proclaiming the approach of the dawn of the Orb of His Glorious Beauty. Then will the Path be made plain, hearts brought nigh unto God, breasts healed, griefs dispelled and tears wiped away. Then will the glorious Lord arise and utter a Call which shall shake the pillars of this lofty edifice. He will cry out in a voice which shall fill the expanse of the world and summon all the nations of the earth, both East and West, to God, The Mighty, The Glorious! Then will He institute for them new laws, and trace out for them a plain, direct path.

And after the setting of the Sun of His Beauty, the breeze of His Presence being hushed, the Glorious “Branch” extended from the Tree of His Essence will arise; the dawning Moon will shine from the horizon of the Heaven of His Bounty, diffusing the lights of His Religion, establishing the Temple of His Worship and sitting upon the Throne of His Glory. His holy Word will penetrate all regions until the saying be fulfilled, “The earth will be illuminated with the Light of its Lord, in the day of judgement.”

With the rising of such Divine Souls and the shining forth of such Heavenly Lights, the clouds of fictitious beliefs will be dispersed and the pearls of the Realities of Knowledge will become manifest; religious divergences will be removed and nations will be united in worshipping the Merciful One. So the worship of Satan shall pass away. In that Day, God will “make all things new”. Everywhere affairs will change, until all parts of the earth shall rejoice. Enlightenment, learning, arts and trades will become universal among mankind. The remote ones of the world will be brought nigh; nations and peoples will be harmonized; the rancours and animosities hidden in breasts shall be removed, and love, affection, attraction and brotherhood become general throughout the world. Then souls will be cheered by the wafting of the fragrances of joy, and hearts will rejoice at the blowing of the Breezes of Gladness. The Lord will destroy all vestiges of tyranny, oppression and rebellion through His Power, and will propagate evidences of Equity, Justice and Charity.

He will judge between nations, render justice between people, correct souls and unite hearts. Then the time of spoiling will pass away, and the days of warring cease; the swords

will be made into ploughshares, the spears into pruning-hooks; no nation will raise sword against another, and no “multitudes will wage wars together”.

In a word: the Fragrances of Resurrection will stir and the Breezes of Life will blow; the “dead” will be quickened, the darkness of former things be dispelled, and the lights of ideal virtues will shine; the emblems of true humanity will be raised in all places, [III:13:4] and the Lord of Heaven and Earth will illumine all regions, both East and West.

The Báb—The Gate

Then know, O ye people, that in the year CE 1844, the Star of Guidance dawned, the Planet of Purity shone forth, the Fountains of Knowledge gushed out in one of the best lands of the Orient, when the Tree of Grace was ignited in the city of Shíráz, the chief town of the province of Fárs, Persia. The Most Great Báb (Gate) arose, preaching to the multitudes and peoples, heralding the expiration of the gloomy night, foreshadowing and clearly declaring the coming of the great and dreadful “Day of God”. He raised this call betwixt the heaven and earth: *“Rejoice! Rejoice! The Morn of Guidance hath indeed appeared, the gloomy night hath cleared away, and the Dawning of the Beauty of God, Abhá is at hand. The springtime of the Return of the Realities of Regeneration path come!”* All regions trembled with this most sweet call and the Resurrection appeared through the supreme Message. The storms of oppression blew and the whirlwinds of rancour stirred in the breasts of religious doctors. Then the brilliant Flame was extinguished, the spiritual Fragrance ceased and the Beauty of the Merciful One was martyred in the city of Tabríz, the chief town of Ádharbayján, under the sentence of a satanic and impious one. Calamities and afflictions appeared, animosity and malice showed forth and the dark clouds of discord became violent; until the appointed time came and the Signs of the arrival of the “Day of God” were manifest in all directions.

Bahá’u’lláh—The Glory of God

Then dawned the Sun of the Beauty of the Promised One; then arose and beamed the Orb of the Face of the Adored One. The Hour arrived, the Resurrection came, the Trumpet sounded and the dawn of the Manifestation shone forth. Bahá’u’lláh arose; the Beauty of the Supreme God appeared and called out with a voice that filled all regions, causing the “seven strata of the earth” to tremble.

Now the *promised* God hath indeed come, the Beauty of the Adored One hath appeared, the appointed “Day of God” hath dawned and his irrefutable and glorious Command hath arisen. The Lord hath descended in the shadow of clouds; the earth is shining with the Light of the Face of its Lord, the Bestower; the Bridge is extended, the Book is appointed, the curtain is lifted and the veil is removed. Showers of Verses have fallen, branches of Knowledge have put forth leaves and become flourishing in all directions. The dead have arisen and the lifeless are resurrected. The rivers of Knowledge and enlightenment have flowed from his Supreme Pen and He hath broken the seal of the “Sealed Wine” with his Generous Finger. He hath explained in His Holy Tablets the realities of the Words of the Prophets, and hath disclosed in His precious Writings the meanings of the symbols of the Elect, until all the seals of the Prophets have been opened and the aims of the Messengers become unveiled to the possessors of pure hearts. He instituted new laws which are destined to unite all nations and multitudes; issued a glorious Command which will bring together all religions and creeds, enjoined His Saints to love all nations and exhorted them to serve all the people of the world. He enacted for them devotional ordinances, such as fasting, prayer, pilgrimage, almsgiving and other rites and ceremonies. He forbade crimes and sins, such as murder, adultery, theft, backbiting, lying, calumny and other iniquities and offences. He commanded them to submit to the laws of government, urged them to obey kings and princes and to respect those who are good among the learned men and doctors. He exhorted them to universally spread enlightenment, to

educate their children of both sexes and absolutely prohibited them from that which may create oppression and hatred in the world. He forbade them from cursing, execration, insult, strife, conflict and all that is calculated to separate hearts or perturb souls. He even forbade them from carrying arms without the permission of rulers, and from everything that may cause confusion.

During His last days He wrote the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* (The Book of the Covenant, Testament or Will) with His blessed fingers in which He clearly stated and appointed the Centre of the Covenant, directing peoples to the Orb of the Universe. In this Book He again exhorted His friends and followers to show forth good characteristics and noble attributes, so that there may appear pure and chaste souls among His believers; shining and beaming stars in the heaven of His Cause.

Likewise, the torrent of His Verses and the shower of His Graces abundantly poured [III:13:5] down, until the time of Disappearance drew nigh, and the Sun of Truth was concealed in the veil of Absence. The Lord ascended to the Supreme Court of His Might, and His blessed Identity was hidden in His Invisible, Furthermost Essence. This calamitous event and lamentable disaster happened in the month *Dhí'l-Qa'dih*, AH 1309, which corresponds to the month of May CE 1892.

'Abdu'l-Bahá—The Servant of God and the Centre of His Covenant

When the Sun of Guidance was set and the rustle of the *Sadratu'l-Muntahá*¹ hushed, then the Orb of the Covenant dawned and the Moon of the Testament appeared with the utmost brilliancy and effulgence. The glorious “Branch extended from the Ancient Root” arose to promote the Word of the King of the Day of judgement, and now He is crying and heralding throughout all regions: *“The Judgement of God hath come; respond ye, respond ye unto the Call of God! Harken ye, harken ye, to the Melodies of God! Inhale ye the Fragrances of God! Be illumined, be illumined with the lights of the Face of Bahá'u'lláh! The promises of the Prophets have already been fulfilled, the prophecies and the Messengers realized; the Day of Judgement hath come, and mankind hath stood before the Lord of the creatures!”*

III:14, 23 November 1912 [III:14:5]

Supplication revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O God! Assist me with the hosts of the Supreme Concourse and make me firm and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament. I am weak in the Covenant and Testament; confer upon me strength. I am poor; bestow upon me wealth from the treasures of the Kingdom. I am ignorant; open before my face the doors of knowledge: I am dead; breathe into me the Breath of Life. I am dumb; grant me an eloquent tongue, so that with a fluent expression I may raise the call of Thy Kingdom and quicken all of them in firmness to the Covenant. Thou art the Generous, the Giver and the Mighty!

III:14, 23 November 1912 [III:14:5]

The “Centre of the Covenant”

Selections from *The Bahá'í Proofs*, by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl.

In the Name of God, the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá!

To the people of Faith, the clear appointment of the Centre of the Cause, after the Departure [death] of the Manifestation [Bahá'u'lláh], is considered *the most important point in religious matters*, as it is the greatest channel which connects the servants of God with Holy Divine Truth. They are all sure and convinced that the Centre of the Covenant is no other than His Holiness, 'Abdu'l-Bahá; for, apart from the Divine signs that were manifest in Him, Bahá'u'lláh

¹ A Tree planted at the end of the Road for the guidance of the traveller.

clearly and implicitly, verbally and in writing, directed all of His servants to the blessed Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and, under all circumstances, clearly showed that He was far distinguished above others, in order that all the servants should look unto Him alone, and follow His Commands. For it is only through His explanation and decision that all discord is removed. Consequently the Bahá'ís appreciate the determining of the "Appointed Centre" as the greatest of the Divine Providences, and account His blessed Being as an impregnable fortress which protects the Divine Religion from the doubts of the sceptic and fanciful imaginations of men.

But notwithstanding all this, as Bahá'u'lláh foresaw, that when His Beauty of Oneness was concealed under the veils of disappearance, the people of desire, through jealousy, would hold to groundless doubts and suspicions and disregard the prohibition to interpret the Book. He, therefore, prior to His Departure, revealed the blessed *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* [Book of the Covenant, the Will of Bahá'u'lláh]. This He wrote, and sealed it with His own blessed Hand and Seal, in order that the darkness of discord might not again obscure the brilliant Horizon of the Cause of God, and the calamities and disasters which afflicted other religions might not overtake this Faith. In this Book (His Covenant) He clearly indicated that the purpose of the "Branch extended from the Ancient Root", revealed in the blessed Verse of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, was the Centre of the Circle of Names, the Exalted Branch of the Blessed Tree of Abhá, His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then He, for the second time, enjoined, through an unchangeable and irrefutable command, all His "branches", "twigs" (relatives), and the Bahá'ís without exception, to look unto that Dawning-place of Divine Light, and to know Him as the Source and Origin of the commands and prohibitions of the Heavenly Religion. He [III:14:6] desired, by this clear elucidation, to counteract the imaginations of the ignorant, extinguish the world-consuming flame of jealousy and hatred of the people of error, and guard the Divine Religion from divisions and sects which are, according to the judgement of common sense and the clear texts of the Holy Tablets of God, the most deplorable for religion and humanity. By this He sought to preserve the Divine Word from human doubts, suspicions and artifices.

But alas! All these clear texts of God, commanding people to turn to the Day-spring of the Light of the Covenant, did not check the evil thoughts of the people of discord; and His repeated exhortations and advices did not soften the hard hearts of the men of hostility, nor prevent them from ruinous discords and divisions. For when, in May CE 1892 (*Dhi'l-Qa'dih*, AH 1309), Bahá'u'lláh ascended to His Most Holy Station, and nine days after His Departure, the Book of the Covenant of God was chanted in the Holy Tomb in the assembly of believers, the gloom of animosity and disappointment became instantly manifest upon the faces of those who had groundless pride and desire for leadership, and who sought to raise discord and contradiction. On the other hand, cheerfulness and joy were manifest in the shining faces of those who had no desire but that of seeking the Truth and telling the Truth. Some were seated upon the right hand of certainty, firmness and steadfastness in the solid Covenant of God, and some stood upon the left hand of unhappiness, in their impossible desire and erroneous thoughts. The former became distinguished for their firmness and inflexibility; noted for the effectiveness of their word, their good name and success in assisting the Cause, while the others were distinguished by their instability, degradation and shame. From that day, the thorn of violating the Covenant of God grew in the Garden of the Bahá'í community and the signs of senseless hatred and hostility proceeded from a limited number of persons who are known as the "náqidín" ["nakazeen"] (violators of the Covenant).

Although these people who violated the Covenant received, during the life of Bahá'u'lláh and after His Departure, every kindness and favour from His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who considered their welfare and prosperity before His own and that of the faithful believers, yet, on account of jealousy and selfishness, they violated the Cause of God. Thus came to pass that

which was prophesied by the Prophets—especially Christ—concerning the people of the right hand and the people of the left hand; and each will receive the reward of his deeds according to the justice of God. Two important points increased the flame of the fire of jealousy in the hearts of these náqidín, whose number does not exceed thirty. One was that the Bahá'ís of all countries refused to accept the seditious books and pamphlets forwarded to them by the náqidín. According to the command of Bahá'u'lláh, they unanimously determined not to pay any attention to these intrigues and temptations, but took shelter, with the utmost union and harmony, under the banner of the Centre of the Covenant. Another point was that during a short space of time the Cause of God became far more widely spread than before, through the fluent pen and brilliant explanations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; so the number of the Bahá'ís became enormously multiplied since the Departure of Bahá'u'lláh. The fame of the Dawning-Place of the Light of the Covenant spread throughout all religions, and His Holy Tablets became scattered as rose-petals throughout all countries. His Great Name has filled the world with awe and the renown of His glorious deeds has reached all in the east and west.

III:14, 23 November 1912 [III:14:9]

“The Centre of the Covenant”

As the twenty-sixth of November is known among the Bahá'ís as the “Feast of the Appointment of the Centre of the Covenant”, the *Star of the West* devotes this issue to a presentation of the important question of the Centre of the Covenant.

During 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in America, he awakened the friends to a realization of the greatness of this matter and the necessity of understanding it and turning to the appointed Centre and remaining firm therein, saying:

“Today, the most important affair is firmness in the Covenant, because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences.

“In former cycles no distinct Covenant was made in writing by the Supreme Pen; no distinct personage was appointed to be the Standard differentiating falsehood from truth, so that whatsoever he said was to stand as truth and that which he repudiated was to be known as falsehood. At most, His Holiness Jesus Christ gave only an intimation, a symbol, and that was but an indication of the solidity of Peter's faith. When he mentioned his faith, His Holiness said, ‘Thou art Peter’—which means rock—‘and upon this rock will I build my church.’ This was a sanction of Peter's faith; it was not indicative of his (Peter) being the expounder of the Book, but was a confirmation of Peter's faith.

“But in this Dispensation of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) among its distinctions is that He did not leave people in perplexity. He entered into a Covenant and Testament with the people. He appointed a Centre of the Covenant. He wrote with His own pen and revealed it in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the Book of Laws, and *Kitáb-i-'Ahd*, the Book of the Covenant, appointing him ('Abdu'l-Bahá) the Expounder of the Book. You must ask him ('Abdu'l-Bahá) regarding the meanings of the texts of the verses. Whatsoever he says is correct. Outside of this, in numerous Tablets He (Bahá'u'lláh) has explicitly recorded it, with clear, sufficient, valid and forceful statements. In the *Tablet of The Branch* He explicitly states: “*Whatsoever The Branch says is right, or correct; and every person must obey The Branch with his life, with his heart, with his tongue. Without his will, not a word shall anyone utter.*” This is an explicit text of the Blessed Beauty. So there is no excuse left for anybody. No soul shall, of himself, speak anything:¹ Whatsoever his ('Abdu'l-Bahá's) tongue utters, whatsoever his pen records, that is

¹ Bahá'u'lláh's admonitions to the teacher: “*The effect of the word spoken by the teacher depends upon his purity of purpose and his severance*” “*The words must be according to what has proceeded from the Mouth of the Will of God and is recorded in Tablets*”; and His command to turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpretation thereof, also recorded in Tablets, is what we understand by these statements.—Editors.

correct; according to the explicit text of Bahá'u'lláh in the *Tablet of the Branch*.

“His Holiness Abraham covenanted with regard to Moses. His Holiness Moses was the Promised One of Abraham, and He, Moses, covenanted with regard to His Holiness Christ, saying that Christ was the Promised One. His Holiness Christ covenanted with regard to His Holiness ‘The Paraclete’, which means His Holiness Muḥammad. His Holiness Muḥammad covenanted as regards the Báb, whom He called, ‘My Promised One’, His Holiness the Báb, in all His books, in all His epistles, explicitly covenanted with regard to [III:14:10] the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, that Bahá'u'lláh was the Promised One of His Holiness the Báb. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh covenanted, not that I (‘Abdu'l-Bahá) am the Promised One, but that ‘Abdu'l-Bahá is the Expounder of the Book and the Centre of His Covenant, and that the Promised One of Bahá'u'lláh will appear after one thousand or thousands of years. This is the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh made. If a person shall deviate, he is not acceptable at the Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh. In case of difference, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá must be consulted. They must revolve around his good pleasure. *After ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, whenever the Universal House of Justice is organized it will ward of differences.*

“Now I pray for you that God may aid you, may confirm you, may appoint you for His service; that He may suffer you to be as radiant candles; that He may accept you in His Kingdom; that He may make you the cause of the spread of the light of Bahá'u'lláh in these countries, and that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh may be spread broadcast.

“I pray for you, and I am pleased with all of you, each one, one by one; and I pray that God may aid and confirm you. ... At present, farewell to you!” *The Editors.*

III:14, 23 November 1912 [III:14:12]

In praise of “The Greatest Branch”

Written by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, 24 November, and read in Washington, D.C., 26 November 1902, at the celebration of the anniversary of the Feast of the Appointment of The Centre of the Covenant.

In the Name of God, the Most Holy, the Abhá!

O ye beloved of God and His friends! Praise and glorification behove the Holy Court of the True One, the Exalted, who has, in this great age and wonderful cycle, primarily caused the Shining Star of the Blessed Being of the First Point (the Báb) to appear like unto the beaming orb of the morn from the horizon of the world; has rejoiced and revived the creatures through the glad tidings of the advent of the New Day, and the Manifestation of the Glorious Lord. Praise be to God! Who subsequently caused the Sun of the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá (Exalted is His Supreme Name!) to dawn forth in the midst of the heaven of power and grandeur. After the disappearance of these two Lights a third Splendour became manifest from the Sinai of Epiphany, and the Orb of the Covenant shone forth from the firmament of beatitude, the apex of exaltation and glory, with the most marvellous effulgence. Through these three Shining Lights, the darkness of the nations, superstitions, will be dispelled, the dust of discord of the people will be subsided by the showers of mercy descending [III:14:13] from the clouds of Divine Providence; the banner of peace will be hoisted; the mortal world will be clothed in the excellent robe of ideal humanity; the bond of perfect love will be strengthened among contradictory nations and repugnant peoples; and the world, east and west, will become the Paradise of Abhá and as a garden bringing forth fruits of Divine Grace. We, therefore, praise Him in such glorification from which the lights of sincerity may gleam forth and scintillate throughout ages and epochs; and we thank Him in such sanctification from which the pure fragrances of meekness and humbleness will be diffused and exhaled with the duration of nights and days!

O ye beloved of God and His friends! This Great Day has been assigned to the Blessed Name

of the Lord of the world, the Sign of Pre-existence, the standard of Divine victory among nations, the Light of the heaven and the earth, the Point around which the Supreme Concourse revolves, in the kingdom of Names—His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (May the life of the creatures be a sacrifice to Him!); Ye are all attracted to His Love, united in His servitude, overshadowed under His banner, and are assembled together in this excellent meeting, with rejoiced hearts and shining faces, speaking the praise of the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá, and uttering the glorification of the Centre of His Covenant, His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

How can this servant duly praise and thank God, the Exalted, who hath enabled him to make his tongue fluent in glorifying the Centre of the Covenant in this wonderful meeting, in the presence of His chosen ones and friends? Again I praise Him for this wondrous confirmation and glorious success. Verily, He is the Mighty, the Praiseworthy!

How can this weak one befittingly glorify and sanctify a Most Holy Personage with whose Name all the ancient and heavenly Books are adorned and who has been announced and prophesied by the tongue of the prophets and chosen ones, from the beginning to the end? Every prophetic page seems like unto a heaven, studded with the beaming stars and shining pearls of the praises of the Orb of the Universe; or like unto a rose-garden decked and embellished by the verdant leaves and fragrant flowers of the glorification of the Centre of the Covenant. Again we praise Him with such words whereby hearts are cheered and breasts are dilated, and we thank Him in such hymns whereby the light of bliss and beatitude shine forth from the horizon of the hearts!

O ye beloved of God and His friends! Consider how in the second Psalm David (Peace be upon him!) has announced the appearance of the Son of God in dominion and judgement, and how he hath warned the kings and judges of the earth to serve Him! Consider in the fourth chapter of Isaiah how that great prophet has foretold the appearance of the Exalted Branch of the Lord in the utmost beauty and glory, and how God hath appointed Him a place of refuge for the saved ones. Consider how Isaiah has spoken in the eleventh chapter of his book that the lofty Branch of the Blessed Tree shall appear from the root of David, and shall grow out of the Holy Lands; how the spirit of supremacy and power, of counsel and Divine wisdom shall rest upon Him; the lights of glory and divine grandeur shall beam forth from His Shining Face; how He shall hoist the pavilion of universal Peace and Divine equity, and assemble all the various and contradictory nations, including weak and strong, high and low, under the shadow of union and harmony.

Reflect upon the 26th verse of the 30th chapter of the book of Isaiah, how God the Almighty, has clearly spoken that in the day when Israel shall be saved, and the sins and errors of the heirs of Abraham effaced, the Shining Moon of the Centre of the Covenant shall gleam forth in the utmost Glory and Splendour, and the beaming lights scintillating from the brilliant Face of that dawning-place of Supremacy and Lordship shall be like unto the Sun of Truth! Consider how, in the first few verses of the 42nd chapter of Isaiah, it is clearly shown that in the last day, God, the Exalted, shall elect the Bearer of the Banner of His servitude, confer upon Him the Holy Spirit of His Divinity, unfurl the standard of the Supreme Covenant and Testament in His Name, and shall protect Him, with His Strong Hand, from the deceit of the violators and the devices of the people of rancour; that Servant of the Lord shall become a Banner for the people’s salvation and a Light for hearts and souls; shall restore the blind and deliver the captives; direct those who sit in darkness unto light; place all the creatures under the standard of universal peace, security and absolute emancipation, and make the tongues of all in the east and west fluent in new hymns and wonderful glorifications!

Likewise, consider the 7th chapter of Dan- [III:14:14] iel. First, in the 9th and 10th verses, God hath announced the Manifestation of the Great Lord, the Ancient King, the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá (Glorified is His Supreme Name!) and hath spoken of the founding of the

sound religion and manifest law and of the rise of the hosts of chosen ones and holy ones.

Then He hath said in the 13th and 14th verses of the same chapter that the Excellent Branch shall be extended from that Ancient Root, and the Spirit of God descended from Heaven shall shine forth from His Beaming Face, and Glory and Kingdom shall be conferred upon Him from God; His command shall influence all nations and multitudes, and His Kingdom shall continue forever.

Likewise, consider the 8th and 9th verses of the 3rd chapter of Zechariah, where the great prophet has clearly prophesied that in the day of the Most Great Manifestation, the dawning of the Sun of the Ancient Beauty, God, the Exalted, shall bring about the removal of the nations' iniquity and the elimination of the people's calamities by the rise of that Excellent Branch extended from the Pre-existent Root; and He hath made the restoration of the Holy Lands, the covenanted country of the prophets and chosen ones, dependent upon the power of that Blessed Being.

Likewise, in the 12th and 13th verses of the 6th chapter of the same book, God, the Exalted, hath explicitly promised Zechariah that in the Day of the Lord's Manifestation the Blessed Branch shall grow up out of the Pure Tree of Divinity, shall bear the Glory of the Lord, shall sit and rule upon His Throne, and shall build the Temple of the Divine worship; the banner of universal peace and eternal beatitude shall be hoisted among all mankind through the council of peace held between the Branch and the Lord.

Consider the New Testament: in every instant in which His Holiness, Christ (Glory be to Him!) and His eminent disciples have announced the coming of the Kingdom of God, they have spoken of the rising of the Excellent Branch and of the dawning of the Orb of the Covenant. Especially His Holiness, John, has adorned all the prophecies of his *Book of Revelation* with this Glorious Name, and has clearly stated the appearance of the Covenant of God in the Day of the Lord's Manifestation. He has explicitly said that in that Great Day, the New Holy City shall be illuminated with lights shining from the Face of the Lord and His appointed Branch; the rivers of wonderful enlightenments, which would impart life to the people of the world and save nations, shall flow forth from the Throne of the Lord and that of the Centre of His Covenant. Nay, rather, he hath elucidated that those written in the Book of Life of the Excellent Branch shall be saved, and those overshadowed: under His Ancient Standard shall inherit everlasting glory.

To resume: the tongues of all the prophets sung the praise of His Blessed Name, and the hearts of the chosen ones rejoiced at the announcement of His coming, until that Most Holy Being was born in the Day¹ of the Manifestation of the "First Point" (Exalted is His Supreme Name!). The birthday of the "Branch extended from the Ancient Root", coincided with the day of the appearance of the Lord's precursor, and the "Mystery of God" was realized by this coincidence. In His childhood He was nurtured under the favours of the Most Holy Beauty of Abhá, until, at the age of nine, He escorted the Ancient Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) from Teheran to Baghdád. He shared with the Beauty of Abhá in every calamity and affliction during their exile from Baghdád to Constantinople, Adrianople, and finally to 'Akká (the prison), and endured unbearable sufferings. The Tongue of Grandeur was always uttering the greatness of His station, and appointed His Holiness, the Excellent Branch, to the position of the "Centre of the Covenant". In a Tablet revealed by the Beauty of Abhá to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while the latter was in Beirut, He said: *"We have appointed Thee a protection to all the creatures, a guardian to all in the Heaven and the earth, and a fortress to those who believe in God, the One, the Omniscient!"*

O ye beloved of God! How can I duly praise the Lord of mankind, the Centre of the Covenant (May the life of all the creatures be a sacrifice to Him!), and how can I explain the

¹ 23 May CE 1844.

loftiness of His station! For He is the One Whom all the Divine Manifestations have praised and extolled.

Let us now offer our humble efforts in praising and glorifying God, the Exalted, Who has honoured us by serving the Centre of His Covenant, hath made us know in His Name, and hath placed us under the shadow of His Glorious Banner. We thank Him in such praises whereby the faces of the steadfast ones are illuminated!

Praise be to God, the King of the Heaven and the earth!

(Signed) Abu'l-Faḍl

III:15, 12 December 1912 [III:15:3]

A glimpse of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Green Acre¹

... [III:15:4]

The day of his farewell address in Dublin, New Hampshire, the people were so moved that many eyes were wet with tears. They could not bear to see him go away. When some of the friends expressed their sorrow he said: *"The mature wisdom requires this. I must go everywhere and raise the call of the Kingdom. As the days of my life are limited in this world, I must perfect my services; I must go everywhere and raise the summons of the Kingdom!"* He uttered these words with a countenance shining with the splendour of God and with such spiritual condition that all wept like children.

He is indeed the Master!

III:16, 31 December 1912 [III:16:2]

With 'Abdu'l-Bahá on SS *Celtic*

5 December: The wonderful farewell of the New York friends at the dock will ever be remembered. (Midnight) The sea is smooth. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is very well. He had dinner at ten in his cabin.

6 December: The sea is as calm as a mirror. The Master walked on deck for an hour and spoke of many of the friends. In a Tablet revealed in his cabin he said: "This is the Ark of Noah, its moving power is the Fire of the Love of God and its Captain is Bahá'u'lláh." (11 pm) He spoke to us about the early life of Bahá'u'lláh. Wonderful story. He sent two boxes of roses to the captain and is feeding all the stewards on candy and fruit. Lovely night.

7 December: The weather is as balmy as spring; the sailors marvel at such weather at this time of the year. Captain called on 'Abdu'l-Bahá and expressed pleasure in having him on the ship. (6 pm) Sky clear. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said he would like to see a big storm. He said: "In future people will cross the Atlantic in airships; steamers will only carry freight."

8 December: Cloudy, but sea calm. Had an hour's talk with the Beloved. He spoke of Columbus and the discovery of America, concluding: "I want two souls like Columbus in America who may be filled with the love of Bahá'u'lláh and spread His Teachings. Then you shall see the results. Columbus discovered America; they must establish the oneness of the world of humanity."

9 December: (10:30 am) The sea is getting rough. (5 pm) Storm. Went on deck and saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá watching the storm. He said: "Look at that imperial wave, how it mounts high and devours the smaller waves! It is a wonderful sight. This is the best day. I am enjoying it."

10 December: The storm continues.

¹ Extract.

11 December: The storm is at its height.

12 December: The sea has calmed down. We are all very happy because the trip is nearing its end. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is well. (11 pm) Tonight the Master addressed the passengers of the first class. More than sixty were present. He spoke about his nine months in America. They were all greatly impressed and came and expressed their pleasure.

December 13th: Since three o'clock we occasionally see land. (Later) We are now near the docks. (11:30 pm, Midland Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool) Here we are at last in the most beautiful hotel in the city. When the steamer docked there were about twelve Bahá'ís waving their handkerchiefs and welcoming 'Abdu'l-Bahá to England.

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

III:16, 31 December 1912 [III:16:3]

'Abdu'l-Bahá at Green Acre

Charles Mason Remey

With the fulfilment of the Divine promises of the past in the coming of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth, there have appeared countless signs in the realm of humanity indicative of this great day. These, when viewed in the light of this new revelation, are seen to be as ways preparing people and making them ready to receive the Manifestation of God, to accept His teaching and to abide according to His laws.

One of the earliest of these signs was the so-called Millerite, or latterly known Adventist Movement which taught people that the coming of the Lord was very near at hand. Following this were very many other movements in various parts of the world, all of which were forecasts of this great event to which the prophets of all ages testified "The coming of the Day of God", when the Covenant of God should be fulfilled and the Divine promise of "Peace on earth" would be realized by all mankind.

Most people recall the Congress of Religions held in connection with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Before this gathering representatives of all the great world religions spoke, each expounding the philosophy of his own religious system. The effect of this philosophic congress was that of broadening the public mind, and many people realized that the one spirit of Truth was at the root of each true religion.

Shortly after the Columbian Exposition, Miss Sarah J. Farmer, of Eliot, Maine, established the summer school at Green Acre, on the Piscataqua. Her idea was to provide a platform open to all, from which each might proclaim his message, whatever it might be, the only restriction being that each speaker [III:16:4] should expound his theories in the spirit of toleration toward all holding views other than his own.

At Green Acre there gathered scholars and speakers from every nation, race and religion. Thus began the work of trying to *find a* common ground upon which all people could meet in brotherhood.

In the abstract Green Acre has always stood for peace and harmony, despite that in the concrete she has harboured under her tent such a heterogeneous combination of creeds, philosophies and doctrines.

In the spring of the year the land is prepared to receive the new crop. During the process of ploughing whatever is growing is sacrificed, uprooted and overturned in order to make ready the soil for the seed to be sown. Such has been the work of each of these movements, which has prepared the souls of people for the Bahá'í Message of Peace and Brotherhood. Each has been the direct cause of a general sacrifice, uprooting and overturning of the doctrines, ideas

and thoughts imposed upon mankind from the people and thinkers of the past, and thus has humanity been prepared to receive the revealed Word of God which is the seed of the Kingdom.

In the days of Babel the people tried to make a way to heaven out of the material of this earth, and great confusion resulted. Never has any organic or spiritual unity resulted from the coming together of people upon the basis of creeds, philosophies or doctrines. Such theories, which come from the minds of men, are not spiritual truths, but are the products of human minds, therefore they form no foundation whatever for divinely spiritual realities. When people deal with such unrealities, confusion always results, yet this very confusion creates spiritual hunger and thirst and causes people to earnestly seek God in spirit.

When the Bahá'í Message was given at Green Acre, some storm-tossed and seeking souls responded to the call and a small centre of the Faith was there established. Each succeeding season has added to both the spiritual strength and material numbers of this group until this year these people of the Covenant had the blessed privilege of welcoming to their midst 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant.

'Abdu'l-Bahá remained in Green Acre one week. His addresses and interviews were many. The hearts of all who contacted with him were quickened with the joy and love of the Kingdom, and many souls were spiritually confirmed, realized his mission and received *through him* inspiration to follow in his path of service to humanity.

The people of the future will understand the spiritual importance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's work at Green Acre. One thought which he reiterated more than once was that now the people assembled at Green Acre should devote their time and attention only to the *spiritual reality of religion*. Spiritual reality is spiritual life and light, while the creeds, philosophic systems and doctrines of the past ages blind people to the basic truth of all religions, which basic truth has again been given to the world through the inspired revealers of the Bahá'í Faith.

It was quite evident to all that 'Abdu'l-Bahá enjoyed the spiritual atmosphere of the Green Acre people, for gathered there he found many responsive souls. These friends are confident that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit, which was indeed a spiritual benediction, is going to have a great and lasting effect upon their community, for now all wish to adhere only to the spiritual realities, freeing themselves from all else. 'Abdu'l-Bahá prophesied great things for the future of the work at Green Acre if the people adhered firmly to the spiritual reality of Truth.

The original Green Acre ideal had its mission to perform. It gathered together people to receive the spiritual teachings of the Bahá'í Message. That being accomplished, it has fulfilled its mission according to the lines prescribed and outlined by its founder. Little did Miss Farmer and her friends realize, when they started this work, that the Covenant of God would be proclaimed there, and that the Centre of the Covenant would actually appear there and teach the people!

Now, through the bounty of God, a new and a great opportunity is offered to Green Acre, that of becoming a great centre for the study of the Covenant and the investigation of spiritual reality. Green Acre has diligently sought the Truth from all sources, and she has found it, and now her work lies in nurturing souls in the pure reality of *The Word of God*.

'Abdu'l-Bahá is supplicating God to make firm in the Covenant the friends in all parts of the world. It, therefore, behoves every one to seek shelter in the Covenant, realizing that this is the day of the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

III:16, 31 December 1912 [III:16:9]

A crumb from the table of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“The sword has been working over six thousand years and has become dull. We must look about us for another sword to take its place. The greatest sword is the tongue. Its authority and sway is over hearts. The sword of steel sheds blood; the sword of speech bestows life. One takes away life; the other grants it. This one is temporal in action and effect; the other is eternal. This one is of metal; that one is the Love of God. This is the difference between the two swords we possess. Today the real sword is the tongue. Too long it has remained in the scabbard, unused, rusty. We must take it out and use it more and more every day.”

III:17, 19 January 1913 [III:17:2]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s arrival in England

Isabel Fraser

‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Liverpool from New York on the White Star liner Celtic, 13 December.

The boat was late and it was about nine o’clock before it docked. Miss Elizabeth Herrick, formerly of Liverpool, now of London, had gone up to Liverpool a day ahead to arrange for the addresses. M. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney had come from Paris to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and a group from Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds, in all about a dozen, watched the great liner come slowly up the stream, literally out of the dark night. Suddenly we caught sight of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the ship’s bow, and as she hove to he walked slowly down the long deck till he stood quite alone, in the very centre of the centre deck. All eyes on the landing stage were at once riveted upon him as he peered over the ship’s side into the rain and gloom of Liverpool. The huge modern boat made a fitting frame for the Master-symbol, as it is of this outpouring of power, designed as it is to bring brothers into closer touch, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the Centre of this dispensation, appeared standing in command.

To the little group on the landing stage it seemed ages before the first, second and third-class baggage was arranged in the customs, and the porters and reporters dashed aboard.

Finally we caught sight of the Well-Beloved’s white turbaned head, and directly back of him, as they came slowly down the gang-plank, one of the Persians carried a tiny Japanese orange-tree from California. Laden with fruit, it looked like an offering from the tropics as it swayed in the gusts of the broad Mersey.

He stayed two days in Liverpool, stopping at the Adelphi Hotel. During that time he made two addresses, one to the Theosophical Society on Saturday night, 14 December, and one at Pembroke Chapel, a Baptist church, Sunday evening, 15 December. He left for London the next morning.

Since leaving London a year ago, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has travelled far. From here he went to Paris, and from thence travelled to Alexandria and Cairo. Last April he visited the States, going as far west as San Francisco. It was in this city that he made his famous address to the Jews, speaking on the relations between Judaism and Christianity, an address which is far-reaching not only from the Jewish but from the broad Christian standpoint.

On being asked what the Jewish attitude toward him was on that occasion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Many of those present came up and shook me by the hand, and a certain Jew came to me as I was leaving the synagogue and said, ‘I am ashamed to be prejudiced any longer.’ And, again, as I was walking one day in the street another Jew came to me and said, ‘We were neglectful and heedless, and you enlivened us; we slept and you awoke us. It behoves us to remain steadfast now and look to true knowledge, and forget our 2,000-year-old differences.”

The search for truth

Address of 'Abdu'l-Bahá before the Theosophical Society, Liverpool, England, Saturday night,
14 December 1912.¹
Isabel Fraser

When I was in America, I had many opportunities of addressing the Theosophical Society there. In every city I spoke once to them, and in some cities many times. The Theosophists are very dear to me, for they have abandoned all prejudice. They do not abide in the confines of dogma, but are seeking truth in a spirit of freedom. All the religions of the world are submerged in prejudice. A Jew is a Jew because his father was before him. A Christian is such for the same reason, and it is the same with a Muslim. All follow the precepts of their fathers, refusing to go forth and seek for themselves.

We both (Theosophists and Bahá'ís) have abandoned all dogmas in our earnest search for truth. But look at the tribes and nations of the world—why are they seething with contention? Because they are not seeking truth. Truth is one. It admits of absolutely no division and accepts neither limitations nor boundaries. All dogmas differ, hence the nations are opposed. The different dogmas make wars and strifes. Behold the events of these days! If it were not for these differences in religions there would be no wars.

We would not see what is now taking place in the Balkans if both sides were sincere seekers after truth.

Regard Persia: in that land there were many tribes, governments and religions, but they cut down the barriers of dogmas, became followers of Bahá'u'lláh and are now as one. Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians, et al., meeting together as we are doing here to seek for truth. Truth is one, so they became united.

All the different religions of God that have risen on the face of the earth have one purpose: to educate man and to inform him of the spiritual, the luminous, the divine, so that he may partake of heavenly spirit and find eternal life, show forth the virtues of mankind, and from a world of darkness enter a world of light.

There is no other reality of meaning to the different religions. Their purpose is one, the teaching is one.

Man may be said to have three natures: The first is sunk in darkness and here he is a prisoner to his desires for here he is co-possessor of the same qualities as the animals. The second nature might be called his human nature and in this human nature is the home of the mind and the soul. The third is his likeness to God and this he possesses in proportion to the divine qualities he imparts, the breeze of the holy spirit, pure spiritually, luminosity.

All the religions, all the prophets, all the great teachers had no other purpose than to raise mankind from the animal to the divine nature. Their purpose was to free man and to make him an inhabiter of the realm of Reality. For although the body of man is material, his reality is spiritual; although his body is darkness, his soul is light; although his body may seem to imprison him, his soul is essentially free. To prove this freedom, the prophets of God have appeared and will continue to appear, for there is no end to divine teachings and no beginning.

The thoughtless say that the power of God is occasional; some will say that this material universe is hundreds of thousands of years old. But the power of God is eternal and the

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to a group of earnest listeners while remaining seated and spoke in Persian, M. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney, of Paris, acting as Interpreter.

creation of God is likewise eternal. Divinity is dependent on creation. Can you imagine a king without a people? Can you imagine our sun without light and heat? The sun to us means light and heat. The king needs his kingdom and the qualities of God are eternal. As long as God exists his creation will exist and the manifestations of God in the divine teachers have always existed as an energy of God and will always continue to exist.

The very greatest blessings of God are represented by these divine beings who come and who will continue to come forth to humanity for hundreds of thousands of years. They represent the blessings of God and the blessings of God never cease.

Always hope that one day a Sun of Truth will rise and bring a Dawn whose light will destroy all the darkness of the human world, will unite hearts and make souls happy, do away with contention and establish universal Peace. Then there will be no divisions. All [III:17:4] will be united and live as one family under the flag of unity and love. Then will mankind be inspired with a new progress and show forth diverse virtues. A new spirit will be given to him and the new world will be invested with a divine beauty. I hope we will always be expecting the appearance of such a One, for he will have education marked with a divine power. Such a One will be superhuman in all conditions, able to subdue material limitations, able to free man from his bonds of country and unite east and west. Such a One will make the Kingdom to appear, for such a One is, in his essence, superior to the laws governing human education. In his essence he is a universal teacher and does not depend on human means for knowledge. He does not need the light from a human lamp nor yet from an astral body. His mission is to give light.

Such an One is a pure mirror in which the Light of Reality is reflected on the world of humanity.

We must be looking for such an One to the end that we may be attracted when he comes to go on wings flying to such a One, born with a new spirit each day to do new works. Thus we will invite this greatest of divine blessings to appear.

Again let us look at Persia! More than 20,000 there have sacrificed their lives—joyfully giving them in the path of God. They were supplemented by hosts of Heavenly spirits so that they never tired of any kind of trouble; they never complained; nay, as trouble increased, their efforts increased and day by day they were enlightened with the Light of the Eternal.

My hope for you is that you may do all in your power to invite to this earth God's greatest blessing in your search for truth.

III:17, 19 January 1913 [III:17:4]

'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses Pembroke Chapel

Liverpool, England, Sunday, 15 December 1912.

Isabel Fraser

After a few appreciative words of welcome by the Rev. Donald Fraser, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the congregation at Pembroke chapel, at the evening service, 15 December. Mr Fraser welcomed this herald of peace and expressed his deep appreciation and honour at having 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his church.

He made a remarkable picture as he stood in the pulpit, which at first he hesitated to ascend, saying that he did not like to be above the rest of the people. But when it was pointed out to him that he would not be above some of them—the gallery—and that they could hear better, he complied. He said in part:

"Tonight I am exceedingly happy to find myself in an assembly, the members of which are a recognized factor in philanthropy and well being. Therefore, I supplicate at the throne of God

that He may bestow divine confirmations upon you that at all times you may be the vehicle of divine mercy and the means of prosperity to the individual members of the world of humanity.

“Man should endeavour always to realize the Oneness of Humanity. We are all the children of God; all created by God; all provided for by God and all under the protection of God. God is kind to all His children. Why should they wage war between themselves? God is the Real Shepherd—all are His sheep. There is no difference whatever among the members of the flock. He educates all of us, is compassionate to all of us; protects all of us. Ponder and you will understand that with the bounties of God there is no restraint. His grace encompasses all mankind. All live under His bounty.

“What benefit do we ever draw from separating ourselves one from another? Why should we wrangle and battle to kill each other? God is kind. Why are we unkind?

“The first separating principle is religion. Every sect and community has gathered around itself certain imitations of Reality in ceremonies and forms, and as these imitations differ, contentions follow. Each division is encompassed with thick clouds through which the Sun of Reality cannot penetrate. If these divisions should forget the differences in imitations and seek for the underlying Reality, all would be united and agreed and fellowship would be established between the organizations of mankind.

“As His Holiness Muḥammad states, ‘God is Love upon Love, with Love.’ Therefore it is evident that the foundation of Religion is Love and the fundamental purpose of religion is Unity. The Religion of God is honour to humanity; why make it the cause of degra- [III:17:5] dation? Why make it the cause of darkness and gloom? Assuredly it is a thousand pities that the cause of such a glorious reality should become the cause of degradation and hatred.

“It was at a time of great darkness that His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh appeared in Persia, summoning all to love and friendship. Now, in Persia, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and other contending religionists who heard the words of Bahá’u’lláh are living in the utmost state of love and reciprocity.

“This Cause is great and it was at great cost that Bahá’u’lláh strove to spread these principles in the world. During his life he was imprisoned, his property was pillaged. He was separated from his friends and 20,000 of his followers were martyred. They sacrificed their lives in the glorious cause of doing away with imitations and limitations, to this end that Unity might be established among the children of men.

“Nations sometimes say, ‘We wish to extend our boundaries!’ Consider with me for a moment, ‘What is the earth?’ We live for a few years on its surface and then it becomes our eternal cemetery. Millions of generations are buried there. It is the universal graveyard of humanity. Is it praise worthy to engage in war for a cemetery—to pillage the wealth of nations for an eternal graveyard?

“Praise God, this nation at this time is striving with all its energy for International Peace. Rest not from your endeavours until international peace become established. This is my request of you and my earnest hope for you is that you may always be protected.”

After the hymn, “All People That on Earth Do Dwell,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pronounced the following benediction in Oriental fashion, with hands outstretched and upturned: “O Thou most kind Lord, this reverent assembly is calling on Thy name. These souls are seeking Thy good pleasure. They are seeking the prosperity of the world of humanity. O Lord, confer upon their souls life evermore. O Lord, forgive their sins and keep them in Thy protecting shade in both worlds. O Lord, confer upon them Thy great pleasure. All are servants of international peace, all are servants of humanity. Thou art The Merciful, The Generous, The Forgiver, The

Almighty, The Praiseworthy!"

Afterward, in the vestry, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote the following beautiful blessing for the Rev. Donald Fraser. He inscribed it in Persian in the church book: "O Thou Kind Almighty, confirm Thou this servant of Thine, Mr Fraser, in the service of Thy Kingdom. Make him illumined; make him heavenly; make him spiritual; make him divine! Thou art the Generous, the King!"

III:17, 19 January 1913 [III:17:5]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London

Isabel Fraser

A remarkable cosmopolitan gathering filled the large hall at the Westminster Palace Hotel, Friday evening, 20 December, to listen to an address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá His topic was one that is agitating many of the thinking minds of today—the vast subject of Peace.

... [III:17:6]

...

'Abdu'l-Bahá commenced speaking at once, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab translating. 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained seated. He spoke earnestly, jesticulating freely and one could almost follow his thoughts as the light and fire played over his countenance. He spoke on the subject of Unity and Peace and expounded some of the teachings Bahá'u'lláh gives for the attainment of these two much-desired conditions of the world today. He said:

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Scientists tell us that the world of matter is made up of constellation of molecules which hold it in its various forms; each molecule consists of a similar constellation of atoms which in turn recent discovery shows is made up of tiny worlds of electrons. Thus we see that this law of affinity is the very basis of existence.

As in the material, so in the spiritual world, love is the attracting force that welds together the constituent elements into a composite unity and holds them firm against disintegration.

Love is the cause of life, and hatred or animosity spell death or disintegration. Just as affinity is the fundamental principle of composition, the greater affinity, love, is the light of unity and the lack of love is the darkness of separateness. Love is conducive to existence, difference is conducive to disintegration. Love is the cause of the illumination of the whole of humanity, discord and dissension are the cause of the destruction of the human race.

All the divine messengers have come to this earth as specialists of the law of love. They came to teach a divine love to the children of men; they came to minister a divine healing between the nations; they came to cement in one the hearts of men and to bring humanity into a state of unity and concord. In this pathway, each one of these divine Manifestations of God's love has accepted innumerable calamities and hardships. For the sake of a realization of love and concord amongst men, they have sacrificed their lives. How many persecutions have they suffered; so that they might bring into a state of harmony those contending nations and religions; so that they might create peace and consolation between these various peoples of the earth!

Let us consider His Holiness Jesus Christ: how many trials he accepted along this pathway, how many difficulties and persecutions, even giving up his life. He chose for himself the cross, so that the light of love might shine in the hearts of men, and the various contending nations come into a state of affinity and love, so that love might encompass the hearts of humanity. This was the purpose. When a holy and divine man shows us the way and sacrifices himself like Jesus Christ for the sake of love and affinity amongst the children of men, our duty is plain; it is evident that we, likewise, must follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

We too must be ready to sacrifice our lives, so that this love may live. We must accept every hardship, so that this love may come to the hearts of the people.

Consider carefully that for the last six thousand years there has been constant strife and warfare amongst the people. All the wars which have occurred in past history have been the basis of the destruction of the human race; love, on the other hand, has been the cause of cementing the people together.

Consider how Jesus Christ, through the power of his love, brought a state of harmony between the Egyptian nation, the Assyrian nation and all the nations of ancient times. Such a unity and concord was realized amongst these various peoples that the pages of history are adorned with their accomplishments, although formerly these nations were in a state of constant strife and contention. Formerly their business was war, but, through the Breath of the Holy Spirit, unity became a creative factor. The great and wise men of the world have ever striven hard, so that the hearts of humanity might be cemented together by the heavenly teachers, whose mission it is to bring into the world this divine state of love.

The foundation of all religion as taught by all the divine messengers has been love and affinity. A hundred thousand pities alas! that the divine message has become the means of warfare and strife!

In the Balkans blood is being freely and copiously shed, lives are being destroyed, houses are pillaged, cities are razed to the ground, and all this through religious prejudice; while in reality the foundation of the religion of God is love. All the divines and holy manifestations invite the exercise of love. In reality we are living in the midst of the greatest proof of divine love. For at a time when, in the Orient, there existed the utmost state of strife and sedition, warfare raged between the nations; warfare raged between the religions and between the various sects; darkness encompassed the horizon of the Orient, and each religion asserted its claim over the other—at such a time, under such circumstances, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh shone from the horizon of the East. He declared that the reality of all religion is one, that all religions have the same foundation for their teaching. He taught men that the foundation of the religion of God is love. Alas, that they should have entirely forgotten this foundation! They have created blind dogmas, and as these blind dogmas develop, we observe constant bloodshed and strife. If all the religions and sects were to quit themselves from all past limitations and search diligently for the foundation has the foundation of the divine religion is one), there would follow unity and concord, these terrible events would not happen, bloodshed would cease, and hatred between the hearts of men would be dispelled. Heavenly illumination would dawn, divine love would be created, the efforts of the divine teachers would be held and would yield results, hearts would be knit together, the basis of strife and quarrel would be forgotten, divine justice would be revealed and divine radiance diffused.

In order that the darkness of strife and sedition might be entirely banished from the human world, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh established and taught certain declarations or principles. The first principle which He proclaimed was the principle of the Oneness of the human family. He said, "Humanity constitute the sheep of God's flock. The real shepherd is God." The real shepherd is compassionate and kind towards all the members of his flock. Humanity was created by God; He provides for all, protects all. He is kind to all. Why should we treat each other harshly? He has made a plea for love, not for difference, or hatred, or animosity.

God created humanity; none of us were created by Satan. All are edifices of God, therefore we must strive that these edifices be protected and not seek to destroy them.

The second principle of Bahá'u'lláh concerns international peace and to this end He wrote all the nations and sent special epistles to the rulers and kings of the earth. Likewise he proclaimed peace amongst the religions. Was not peace the foundations of religion? It is time

that these limitations and dogmas be done away with, that the foundation of the religion of God be made the means of union and good fellowship.

Again, He proclaimed inter-racial peace, for humanity is the progeny of one Adam—all belong to one lineage. “This sphere is one globe,” He said, and is not divided, the various continents on the face of the globe are in reality one native land, inhabited by one human family; therefore, there should not exist between the various countries this warfare and strife.

Another principle of Bahá'u'lláh is that religion must ever be the means of love; that is, if so-called religion be the cause of hatred and animosity, it is better to quit such religion. Every affair, every matter which in the world of humanity is the cause of love, that matter is good; but if it is creative of difference amongst the children of men, that matter is evil. If it be a cause of hatred amongst the people, it is absolute evil. Irreligion is better than that so-called religion. The people have made religion the cause of warfare and strife, while the reality of religion is the cause of unity and love.

The fourth teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is relative to the conformity of science and reason with true universal religion. If it is contrary to science and reason, it is superstition. A theory which is not acceptable to the mind of man and which science rejects is devoid of reality. It is a vision of superstition.

The fifth teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is relative to prejudice, which must be abandoned. [III:17:8] National prejudice must be forgotten, racial prejudice must be obliterated, and patriotic prejudice must likewise be lifted from amongst the people.

Since the beginning of history all the wars which have occurred have been caused primarily through religious prejudice, or racial prejudice, or patriotic prejudice. As long as these prejudices are not broken, the world of humanity will not attain to perfect peace and tranquillity.

Another teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is relative to the equality of men and women. In the human family of God there is no distinction. God is no respecter of gender. The religion of God is one. The human family share in common all the faculties; they share in common all the divine bounties. God has not accredited any difference between the male and the female. The same education must be given to women as to men, so that they may acquire science and arts, so that they may advance along the course of civilization, in order that they may become proficient and attain to the level of men.

In the Orient women have been very degraded in the past, men giving no importance to them, thinking that men were created superior, but through the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh who declared that a great calling is destined for women, they promoted the facilities for the education and training of the girls. In a brief space of time the girls and the women alike have advanced along the pathway of education. Now, in the country of Persia alone, many schools have been organized for the girls, and girls are engaged in the study of the sciences and arts.

The seventh teaching of Bahá'u'lláh concerns itself and is in accord with this system of universal education; it is that all the children should study and acquire a profession, that there should not remain a single individual without a profession whereby he can earn his livelihood. Bahá'u'lláh further declares that through the equipment of science and art the misunderstandings which have prevailed between religion and science will become reconciled.

The non-conformity of science and religion has been the greatest factor in keeping the religions apart.

If this misunderstanding be taken away from amongst religions, perfect love will be established. For example, for nearly two thousand years there has been strife and contention

between Jews and Christians and it is evident that if the cause thereof be understood with intelligence, it would wipe away from among them all discord; there would remain love and concord.

While in California, in a Jewish Synagogue, in San Francisco, I spoke on this subject. There were nearly two thousand Jews present. I said to them, "This long misunderstanding which has been between you and the Christians is very pitiable. You think that His Holiness Christ destroyed all the foundation of the Mosaic law. You think that He degraded the law of Moses, you go further and think that His Holiness Christ was the enemy of Moses, while all these things are contrary to history. The first teaching that His Holiness Christ gave was in regard to the prophethood of Moses. The first mention He made was in praise of the law of Moses. His Holiness Christ spread the foundation of the law of Moses, but He abrogated and extended that law to accord with His times. Before the appearance of Christ the name of Moses was confined to Palestine only, but His Holiness Christ spread the name of Moses throughout the world, and promulgated the Old Testament throughout the nations. Were it not for Christ, who would have heard the name of Moses in America? Were it not for the existence of Christ, how would this Bible have been spread so broadcast for 1,500 years? You could not translate and spread this Bible throughout the nations were it not for the blessings of Christendom. The Old Testament has reached every corner of the globe, His Holiness Christ established the fact that you are the people of God. Let us be fair and see whether Christ was the friend of Moses or His enemy? Let us be just. Was there ever a greater love than this, and was there ever a greater assistance than this? His Holiness Christ spread the name of Moses everywhere. He proclaimed the teachings of the Old Testament.

Consider how this lack of understanding of the Jewish people has created enmity and strife. His Holiness Christ was the first to proclaim world-wide the name of Moses. Read the Gospel and you will find out how His Holiness Christ reverently mentions His name.

The paramount declaration of Bahá'u'lláh is that peace must be realized between all the nations of the Earth. International tribunals will be established and certain representatives from amongst all the governments of the earth will be sent to that inter-parliamentary gathering. The era of "the parliament of [III:17:9] man" will be ushered in. This international tribunal will be the court of appeals between the nations. Fifty years ago Bahá'u'lláh wrote to all the rulers of the world about this international tribunal of arbitral justice.

These are some of the teachings in the religion of Bahá'u'lláh—all of which would take a great deal of time to expound. I will just add that it is my hope that during these days in which this Peace Conference¹ is discussing negotiations for terms of peace, you will strive to the utmost that peace measures and peaceful negotiations may be carried on among them. I am very pleased that I am living in London during these days. I supplicate that the Conference may be crowned with success, so that peace may be established in the Balkans, so that this bloodshed may cease, so that this Conference may become a working basis for the future international peace. May all the nations and all the countries of the world strive with us, that in the future there may be no war and no bloodshed.

As the English government is a just government and as the British nation is a noble nation and accomplishes whatever it undertakes, it is my hope that in this matter it will manifest the utmost wisdom and sagacity, so that the sun of peace may dawn on the horizon of the Balkans, so that eternal fellowship may be realized among them, and whenever in the future there is any difficult problem a conference may be called for its settlement, so that through these various conferences all the troubles of humanity may be solved.

May there remain no more war and strife; and tranquillity dawn on the world of humanity

¹ Held in London during armistice of Balkan-Turkish war.

expressive of the world of light, so that this nether world may be transformed by love and concord and may become the foretaste of the other kingdom. Then all humanity will be sheltered under the shadow of the Almighty. This is my hope, this is the highest desire of my life day and night. I pray and I beg confirmation from God for this government, that this nation may be assisted to hold aloft the banner of international peace.

... [III:17:10]

...

“The Blessing” by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Again a deep and reverent hush fell on the people as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the blessing in Oriental fashion with hands outstretched and palms upturned:

“O Thou Kind Almighty, we supplicate at the Throne of Grace for mercy for the blood that has been shed in the Balkans; the children that are being made orphans; the mothers losing their dear sons; the sons who have become fatherless; the cities that have been destroyed; the many hearts that have been filled with sorrow; the many tears that are being shed and the many spirits that are in a state of agitation!

“O Lord, be merciful, extinguish this spirit of war, this consuming fire, this peril, this gloomy darkness! Cement together these hearts, let the sun of Thy Truth dawn upon all.

“O Lord! this world is dark, guide us toward a brilliant light. The horizons are glooming with the clouds of war; disperse these impenetrable clouds. Grant us holiness and calm! Dispose of these quarrels, illuminate the horizon of life, so that the sun of real loyalty may shine with its rays. May these dark hearts become illuminated, may these blind eyes become open, may these deaf ears become gifted with hearing.

“O Lord! cause Thy divine justice to appear in this world. Summon these people to the Banquet of International Peace, so that they may live together in the utmost state of love. May all the religions and all nations embrace each other with this spirit of universal kindness, and may hatred be forgotten.

“O Lord! confirm this just government in the establishment of peace, so that it may hold aloft the banner of reconciliation in the Balkans. May the light of love shine and flame forth undefiled. O Lord! Thou art Almighty; Thou art Merciful; Thou art Clement; Thou art Kind!”

III:18, 7 February 1913 [III:18:8]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the “Salvation Army” shelter

London, England, Christmas night, 1912.

Isabel Fraser

On Christmas night ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited the poor of the Salvation Army Shelter, Westminster, where each year a Christmas dinner is provided for those who have no homes and no friends, and but for the shelter would have no lodgings. There were about 1,000 present on this occasion. It was a most impressive scene—the dinner for the homeless and the Master from the East delivering Christ’s message to the poor. As a true test of attention, many of the hungry men forgot to eat and listened intently.

With that wonderful tact ‘Abdu’l-Bahá displays on all occasions, his message to the homeless was simple, direct and short. He said:

“I feel tonight great joy and happiness to be in this place, because my meetings and callings have ever been mostly with the poor, and I call myself one of them. My lot has ever been with those who have not the goods of this world. When we look at the poor of humanity, we behold a world of brothers. All are the sheep of God; God is the real shepherd. The poor have ever been the cause of the freedom of the world of humanity; the poor have ever been the cause of

the up-building of the country; the poor have ever laboured for the world's production; the morals of the poor have ever been above those of the rich; the poor are ever nearer to the threshold of God; the humanitarianism of the poor has ever been more acceptable at the threshold of God.

“Consider his Holiness Christ: He appeared in the world as one of the poor. He was born of a lowly family; all the apostles of Christ were of humble birth and His followers were of the very poorest of the community. This is what Christ states in the Gospels. ‘It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.’ This testimony of Christ of the exaltation of the poor ones in the sight of God is sufficient. It is easy for the poor, very easy for them to enter into the Kingdom of God. In another place Christ speaks of the charity of the poor ones of the world as praiseworthy. The poor ones have capacity. They were favoured at the threshold of God. If wealth were a necessity, Christ would have wished it for himself: He lived a simple life, and one of the titles of Bahá'u'lláh was ‘the poor one’. In Persian His title was ‘darvish’¹ and that means one who has not a slave.

“All the prophets of God were poor, His Holiness Moses was a mere shepherd. This will show you that in the estimation of God, poverty is greater than the accumulation of wealth—that the poor are more acceptable than the lazy rich. A rich man who spends his wealth for the poor is praiseworthy. Consider that the poor are not born in a state of solvency; they are not tyrannous. All the tyranny and injustice in this world comes from accumulation. The poor have ever been [III:18:9] humble and lowly; their hearts are tender. The rich are not so.

“Sorrow not, grieve not. Be not unhappy because you are not wealthy. You are the brothers of Jesus Christ. Christ was poor; Bahá'u'lláh was poor. For forty years he was imprisoned in poverty. The great ones of the world have come from a lowly station. Be ever happy; be not sad! Trust in God and if in this world you undergo dire vicissitudes I hope that in the Kingdom of God you will have the utmost happiness!”

At the close of his talk, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá made a practical demonstration of his tactful love for the poor. In generous conformity with Bahá'u'lláh's teachings that “our words should not exceed our deeds,” he left twenty golden sovereigns and many handfuls of silver with Colonel Spencer of the Army, so that the poor might enjoy a similar dinner New Year's night. Colonel Spencer told the men that they were to have this New Year's dinner in ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's honour. The Master was just leaving the hall when this announcement was made. With one accord the men jumped up and waving their knives and forks gave a rousing farewell cheer.

Before leaving ‘Abdu'l-Bahá was shown all over the shelter and at the outer door he said to the attendant officer in charge, “May God prosper you. May you all be under the protection of the Almighty!”

III:18, 7 February 1913 [III:18:9]

‘Abdu'l-Bahá at the Cedar Club, London

2 January 1913

L. Heron-Oliphant

Through an insistent rain and blustering wind, the motor bore us across the Albert Bridge to the borough of Battersea. We turned from one of the important highways into a dark, narrow, drizzling street, to stop before an inviting open door. The Cedar Club House is maintained by the Women's Service League, a noble institution of devoted workers, who provide sustaining food to toiling mothers and see to it that their children receive the best nourishment during the first year of their lives. A similar stratum of this poverty is unknown to American communities. In London and other great cities of the Old World a pall of

¹ Darwīsh, pl. daráwīsh.

hopelessness seems almost to overshadow human effort that offers alleviation, for there are generations of pauperism with its deep-rooted evils. The fine courage of these benefactors and their zeal in preserving life despite the ever-hovering discouragement, mark their influence as a spiritual reality.

Here it was that 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose to spend the remaining hours of an afternoon. We entered a large assembly room, radiant and warm with the spirit of Christmas cheer. Masses of green and red decoration repeated, as it were, the season's welcome. At two great tables, spread the length of the long walls, were seated nearly sixty women with over a hundred little folk. There were evidences of a substantial high tea, the major part of the feasting being over.

A platform, near the door through which we passed, held the usual paraphernalia for speakers. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was expected to deliver an address from this formal elevation, but as the real friend of the poor, he walked straight among them, into the body of the room. This, at once established the charm of comradeship. With light characteristic step, he walked up and down the centre aisle, his eyes and smile beamed happiness. As he mingled with them, his words were translated: "I am very glad to be among you, who are blessed in God's name with children. They are the true signs of his spiritual love. The most divine gifts of God. These little ones will grow to be fruitful trees. We must look to them for the founders of many beautiful families. Let their education be directed in the ways of purity and useful service. Here are the seeds of the future race and upon them may be granted God's blessing."

'Abdu'l-Bahá stopped at the end of one table, patted the head of a wan little child in its mother's arms. A tiny hand stretched out and the Master gently closed it over a bright new shilling. Down the long rows of women and children he passed from one to another, pausing a few moments to bless each little upturned face, and bestow a silver coin. The remarkably tender hands caressed a baby's cheek or chin. One could hear him pronounce distinct words of comfort to the tiniest members of the audience. In the arms of one mother were twin children almost completely detached in sleep from the ceremonies of the moment. The Master bent over them, placing two pieces of money under the rosy chins—two pairs of deep blue eyes opened wide in the spell of wonder. [III:18:10]

The absence of tears from the many wee souls, who are not given to complacently accepting strange faces, singularly illustrates the infinite sincerity of the very young, who respond to the same quality that is ever present in matured spiritual character. One noticed, too, the thoughtful gaze of the women as they watched the distinguished visitor in white turban and brown burnouse,¹ moving in their midst. It is often too true that the very poor are keenly suspicious of foreigners, especially if their mission is a religious one, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá brings into every environment a profound truth and sympathy that seems to crush the barriers, raised by isolated imaginations.

The expression of tolerant, grateful, understanding was in the very faces of these people. No one could have desired a more cordial co-operation than was tendered to the Master by the assembled members of Cedar Club. A vote of thanks, followed by a volume of accordant cheers, marked the departure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

As we drove away he said, "I am truly happy when among the gatherings of the poor. It brings full joy to my heart. I come in contact with those in high stations of life, and those rich in worldly possessions, but my joy is in being with those who are in material poverty, for their sufferings draw them nearer to God in spiritual gain."

¹ An Arab or Moorish hooded cloak. Arabic burnus, also barnús, burnús.

“Abdul-Baha introduces Mirza Wargha to the New York friends” Varqá and his son (ibn Varqá)

The visit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to America, rejoiced and delighted the hearts of the believers. The Cause of God progressed day by day and the number of new believers increased. It can even be said that the climate of America improved.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talk on Friday, May 31 1912, introducing, Áqá Mírzá Valíyu’lláh Khán Varqá, in His blessed residence at New York, where a good number of people attended.

“Today, I would like to introduce you to Áqá Mírzá Valíyu’lláh Khán. This young man was the son of Áqá Mírzá Varqá. Mírzá Varqá was the son of Hájí Mullá Mihdí.

“Hájí Mullá Mihdí became a believer in Yazd. He consented to suffer severe blows and faced much persecution; several times he received the bastinado. Ultimately, he was compelled to leave his native land, setting out toward ‘Akká.

“On this long trek, which is a few times the distance from here to Chicago, he endured toil and afflictions. He travelled some of the way on foot and some of it on horseback. Along the way as he travelled on foot towards ‘Akká, he recited prayers, wept and wailed, and tenderly lamented the oppression meted out to the Blessed Beauty.

“Eventually, he reached Mazra’ih, located near ‘Akká. It was there that he died in a state of utmost detachment, absolute rapture, complete attention, and unmitigated ardour.

“I [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] myself constructed his resting place, which is in Mazra’ih, with my own hands.

“His son, Áqá Mírzá Varqá, from the time of his early youth, rather from his childhood, embraced the Cause of God and became a Bahá’í. He was truly blessed and victorious. His face was fixed on the Abhá Kingdom, and he was eloquent and articulate to the utmost. His speech was decisive; his arguments were evident. None could hold their own against him, and he would prevail over whomever he debated. Where both poetry and prose are concerned, he was unmatched in all of Iran. He was a celebrity of this age.

“Even Zillu’s-Sultán, the eldest son of the king, who had murdered several Bahá’ís, attested to me that Mírzá Varqá was the foremost individual of Iran and a man of consummate accomplishment.

“Later, Mírzá Varqá and his brother, Mírzá Húsayn ‘Alí, travelled long distances on foot and arrived at ‘Akká, where they were honoured with the privilege of meeting the Blessed Beauty.

“This was the first pilgrimage of Varqá. Afterwards, the Blessed Beauty instructed him to travel to Iran and teach the Cause of God. Mírzá Varqá returned to Iran and successfully promoted the divine Word in all its cities.

“Following this, the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh occurred, after which Varqá and his two sons, Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh and Mírzá Rúḥu’lláh, went to ‘Akká and stayed with me awhile. I later sent them from ‘Akká to Iran and instructed them to be engaged in teaching the Cause of God, so there they went, devoting their days to exalting the Word of God and spreading His sweet savours.

“Eventually, they reached Zanján, where Varqá and his son Rúḥu’lláh, who was twelve years of age, were arrested, put in chains, and thrown into jail. From there they were conducted, in shackles, to Tehran, where they were imprisoned.

“Then, while confined to a house in Tehran, those two esteemed souls were martyred with the severest inflictions of torment. While fettered, Rúḥu’lláh would lift up his chains, kiss

them, and say, 'I give Thee thanks, O my God, that on Thy Path Thou hast placed these chains upon my head. O God! Thou art the Capable, the Kind. Though I am but a child, make me firm and steadfast in Thy Cause.'

"In brief, those honourable souls were martyred in confinement. At the moment of his martyrdom, Rúḥu'lláh cried out, 'Yá Bahá'u'lláh!'

"Those respected souls left behind two remnants for us: one, Mírzá 'Azízu'lláh Khán; the other, Áqá Mírzá Valíyu'lláh Khán. [III:18:11, Pers. page 4]

"Mírzá Varqá was a person without like or peer. He was the embodiment of the love of God and one accepted at His most holy threshold.

"Therefore, recount their detachment and divine attraction, in particular the detachment of that child—how, filled with the love of God, and with what remarkable joy and spiritual ecstasy, he laid down his life and won a martyr's death!" [1]

[1] Provisional translation by Nasser and Rezvan Saeedi. Amended by Adib Masumian, June 2022. Scans and Persian text of the speech are also available in *Khítábát-i-Ḥaḍrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol. 2, pp. 107–109. (see <https://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/ab/KA2/>)

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III:19, 2 March 1913 [III:19:3]

With 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London

Extracts from letters written by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab,
16 December 1912

At nine o'clock this morning we left the hotel in Liverpool, walking to the Lime street station, where we were to take the train for London, Monsieur Dreyfus-Barney going before to secure tickets. Arriving at the station we took our compartment, M. Dreyfus-Barney, Ahmad Yazdí, Mrs Fraser and Miss Herrick travelling with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. On the way he spoke to Mrs Fraser and Miss Herrick and said, "I am most pleased with you. You are the real servants of the Covenant." To Mrs Fraser he said: "You have written excellent articles in the papers in regard to the Cause, I will never forget these services of yours. You must become like a burning torch so that you may be able to melt mountains of snow. Europe is filled with mountains which are snow-capped all the year around. May you attain to such a degree of heat that you may melt the snow. Europe is submerged in materialism. People are not thinking of God. All their attention is turned toward matter and nature. Like unto the cows they graze in the meadows which are overgrown with grass. They can see nothing beyond their noses. America is much better. People in that country are investigating the Reality. They are more susceptible to spiritual life."

At one-forty pm the train reached Euston station, London. About fifty Bahá'ís were there to welcome 'Abdu'l-Bahá Lady Blomfield with her two daughters and automobile were at the station. The Master went to 97 Cadogan Gardens without an interpreter. Later on they told us that he spoke English to them all the time. Lady Blomfield is a very remarkable woman, a most sincere Bahá'í, an active worker, and an enthusiastic speaker; really a wonderful woman.

'Abdu'l-Bahá rested part of the afternoon. After a walk in the garden nearby, the newspaper men and women came. The subjects covered a wide range; a review of his trip in America, a message to the people of London, a synopsis of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and

many minor questions. Then he attended to his mail, acknowledging [a] telegram from Stuttgart expressing happiness at his safe arrival; invitations from Edinburgh, etc. The Master is going to visit that country.

At eight o'clock we had dinner, at which several people were present, among whom was a minister of a church in Switzerland who had heard the Message. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke with him in detail, giving him an account of an imposing religious procession in Denver and its contrast with the simple life of Christ. It was very graphic, very impressive and showed distinctly how far Christianity has lost sight of its original foundation.

17 December 1912

This morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about America and the probability of his return to that country. He said: "God willing! If I go to America another time I will go differently; but it is very difficult. This first trip was made with great exertion." As I was reading one of his addresses delivered in America, he said it would be well if all his addresses in that country could be printed in one or two volumes. At present, he declared, they are all scattered and not collected. He called attention to how quickly the Paris and London addresses delivered last year were printed; and this was done through one woman, Lady Blomfield. Some one mentioned the name of a prominent wealthy woman and he said: "One of these poor, sincere and honest women is more beloved by me than a thousand millionaires; just now this Lady Blomfield is dearer to me than all the queens of the world."

In Belfast, Ireland, lives a fine Bahá'í, a splendid believer. She travelled all day and night to see the Master. He welcomed her [III:19:4] most cordially and said: "You must become the cause of the illumination of Ireland. In Persia a woman came to the city of Ardistán from one of the surrounding villages. She was made radiant and became a Bahá'í. She returned to her home. In one year she was enabled to ignite forty lamps, but now you must ignite four thousand lamps in one year. Praise God, that you enjoy freedom in this country. There was no freedom in Persia. They used to kill the Bahá'ís. If a Bahá'í desired to teach another, he had to do it with the utmost precaution." This lady said that in speaking about the Revelation to the people, many are afraid of a new religion, saying, "Our old religion was good enough for our ancestors and it is good enough for us." The Master said: "They are like unto those souls who say: 'We don't like fresh flowers but we are satisfied with withered and decayed flowers.' Decayed flowers do not have sweet fragrance; their odour is not good; they have no freshness and charm. The fresher the flower the sweeter it is and the more charming. If old and decayed flowers were good then the Adamic flower would have been sufficient. Every new year needs a new flower, new fruits are necessary, fresh and gentle breezes are needed. Every new day requires new food, you cannot partake of the decayed food of yesterday."

Speaking to Miss Jack, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Those souls who consider themselves as imperfect, they are the people of the Kingdom. Those persons who prefer themselves above others are egotists and worshippers of self; they are deprived of the graces of the Lord of mankind."

An Englishman, who is an Arabic professor in London, came with his wife to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who spoke to him in Arabic about America: "The American people investigate everything. Their minds are open, their ears are listening. They comprehend the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They are thirsty for this salubrious water. They are a mighty nation, a noble people. They love the Reality. They are not limited. They have a vast country and enjoy all the material blessings. God has perfected His bounties for them. They listen to every discussion with dignity, urbanity and politeness. If it is in accord with reason they will accept it, if they do not understand they ask questions. But the Egyptian people are very prejudiced, they are very dogmatic." After talking with this Arabic scholar on many other interesting topics he came out to the reception room where people were gathered and gave a wonderful

address. It was on the conformity of all the problems of life with science and reason. It was most interesting.

In the afternoon a reception was held at Caxton Hall. There was a large gathering of people. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke on various subjects paying a great tribute to the Americans and emphasizing the love and unity which exists between the two countries. Then the chairman of the meeting made some appropriate remarks and refreshments were served. The Master walked back to his apartment. No sooner had he arrived than people began to come.

When they left the apartment 'Abdu'l-Bahá told us one of the most thrilling incidents in the life of Bahá'u'lláh; how His property was pillaged; how with eleven others He was put in prison and later on brought before the clergy; how they bastinadoed Bahá'u'lláh; how He was threatened with death by the populace and how at last He was saved from the claws of these wolves. It was most interesting to hear him speak about these incidents in the life of Bahá'u'lláh of which we know nothing.

18 December 1912

This morning Madame Dreyfus-Barney arrived from Paris, and the question of his trip to that city was discussed. She looked well and happy. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered an address on the spiritual worlds. The address was very inspiring and eloquent. It conferred spiritual uplift and exalted our aspirations above this mundane life. He spoke with Divine authority; his words were born of the spirit; his utterances created conviction; his very presence was a heavenly proof.

Professor Browne, who has written so much on the Bahá'í Faith, was present at the meeting and afterward he was called to the Master's room. "The last time I met you," he said, "was twenty-two years ago in 'Akká under different environment, but now I have the pleasure of seeing you in London." Then discussion commenced in Persian, for Professor Browne speaks Persian fluently. Many subjects were discussed: about Persia, history of the Faith, education of woman, inventions, etc.

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá went for a walk. After walking a few blocks he called a taxi and we—the Persian friends—drove through the famous Hyde Park and Regent Park. It was a rainy day and the streets were not very clean. [III:19:5] Then the Master spoke about the cleanliness of Broadway, New York, and its wonderful illumination by night. He told them about the Ben Hur horses, the advertisement of Spring Water, the advertisement of pepsin, the advertisement of automobiles; and many others which are lighted at night; he told about the electric office in Denver which is a tall and magnificent building, how at night the whole structure; is lighted from top to bottom. Our Persian friends in the taxi enjoyed the recital very much. (Perhaps if I told them of the wonders of the new world they would think me out of my wits.)

After dinner a minister from one of the suburbs of the great Metropolis called. 'Abdu'l-Bahá praised his lack of prejudice and his fair-mindedness, saying that many of the ministers of today teach men prejudices and blind dogmas. Then he told him the story of the Jewish Rabbi in Tiberias who was giving to the Jews such lessons that made them haughty and filled with pride and prejudices.

In the afternoon the Counsellor of the Persian Embassy called. Again 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about the greatness of America, its wonderful civilization and the Balkan war was touched upon.

Then the president of the Esperantists of England called, bringing with him the first translation of the New Testament in Esperanto, which he offered to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Master spoke a great deal of the necessity of an international language, that the nations must organize

an International Congress of Language, ratify it and then let it be studied in all the schools. He said: "All through America I have encouraged the Bahá'ís to study Esperanto and to the extent of my ability I will strive in its spread and promotion."

Later Hájí Amín, who is an old Bahá'í of the type of Siyyid Asadu'lláh, arrived with three young Persian Bahá'ís from Paris. They had been staying in Paris for the past two weeks awaiting the arrival of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They came from Persia. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá received them, they threw themselves at his feet and wept. It was a touching scene. He took them up, kissed their cheeks and showed them much love. Hájí Amín is a wonderful Bahá'í, the Master loves him very much and he is like a kind grandfather to all the friends in Persia. Whenever the name of Hájí Amín is mentioned, those who have seen him before are made happy.

19 December 1912

It was most interesting to see dear Hájí Amín this morning come to 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the other Persians in the most reverential and happy manner to ask of the one they recognize as the Centre of the Covenant what they should do and what course of action they should follow as long as they have the privilege of being with him. An interesting incident of the Cause was unfolded when Hájí Amín opened his handkerchief, in which he had petitions from many believers in the Orient. What caught my eyes at first glance were two small loaves of bread and an apple which were sent from a Bahá'í from far off Russia. This was all this poor man could send to the Beloved with his devotion and love. 'Abdu'l-Bahá looked at this love offering with such tenderness, with such joy and kindness in his eyes, that I shall never forget it. He ate a piece of the stale bread and gave the rest to Siyyid Asadu'lláh for him to serve the rest at the table. Hájí Amín then told of the general news from Persia, how the friends are united and happy, serving the Cause faithfully, receiving the news of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's trip in America and holding divine feasts of peace and good-fellowship.

Then the long line of interviews commenced. One was an ardent suffragist, a militant one. 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised her that the women who are working for the interest of the enfranchisement of women should not commit unseemly acts, nor resort to violent measures, such as window smashing, police beating, train wrecking, letter-box destroying, etc.; nay, rather they should demand their rights with the power of intelligence, with scientific accomplishments, with artistic attainments. Unseemly deeds would rather retard the realization of their cherished hope. In this age a weak person resorts to frightful measures, but an intelligent person uses the superior power of intelligence and wisdom.

20 December 1912

We are now acclimatized to London weather. It has been very nice so far. About 8:30 this morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá came in the reception room. He had tea, and later on Hájí Amín and the other Persians arrived. By and by a few people gathered. Someone spoke about divorce, whether it is permissible in the Bahá'í Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said yes, but under certain restrictions. All means of reconciliation must be tried and if there is absolute incompatibility of temper, then one year's sepa- [III:19:6] ration is advised, perchance the old union might be established. However, if in the meantime they meet each other and no reconciliation is realized, then they start the year again.

Many people who called were mourning for the death of their husbands, daughters or mothers, and when at eleven o'clock 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered the crowded drawing room he spoke on the narrowness of this world, its trials, its vicissitudes, its ordeals and how a soul is really freed when it breaks this physical cage and ascends to the world of the Kingdom, when it wings its way from this dark world into the realm of radiance. Therefore, we must not feel unhappy over the fate of those who have departed from this life.

Mrs Dower, formerly Miss Stevens, authoress of "The Mountain of God", was among the

callers. She came from Southampton to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Three years ago she stayed three or four months in 'Akká and Haifa and gathered material for her book. The Master called her in and talked a great deal with her. His room gradually became crowded by eager listeners. He spoke about the "Promised One" and how all the nations and religions have circumscribed limits for His coming, and how when He came many rejected Him. She is writing a book, a novel, about the Second Coming of Christ.

This afternoon, Mr Lorge, a prominent English educator, called. The discussion was upon America, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the utmost praise to that country for its freedom, its civilization, its spiritual susceptibilities, its readiness of advancing toward the Kingdom of God, its quenchless thirst for knowledge, its progressive ideals, its future extraordinary illumination. I have never heard 'Abdu'l-Bahá so enthusiastic about the wonderful possibilities of America. "Europe," he said, "is steeped in a sea of materialism. People are either agnostics or full of religious superstitions. In America it is different, people are more spiritual, they seek the knowledge of God, they hail the truth no matter from what quarter it comes. If they learn that there is a house in China[,] architecture of which is a marvel, they like to know all about it. They analyze everything, they dissect everything. In brief, they are a nation of independent investigators." Then the question of spiritual communication was asked. He answered: "Yes, it is possible. Often people speak together without the means of tongue. There are two means of intercourse: one the outward tongue, the other the ideal tongue. When the spirit is in an abstract mood, when the heart is in a subjective state, then the ideal tongue can speak, but as long as the spirit is preoccupied and the heart is objective in its activity it is impossible to attain to that station. Consider: Is there not an ideal union between the loved one and the beloved? Often with a glance of the eye or a handshake a whole world of thought is conveyed without uttering a word. It is possible to attain to such a state if we are set aglow with the Fire of the Love of God, if we are attracted, if we are as a burning torch, if we overlook material phenomena and objects." In brief, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke a great deal along these lines, uttering many significant statements.

Then the Persian Ambassador came. 'Abdu'l-Bahá received him very graciously and kindly. He praised the republican form of government in America, its federal system, its liberal institutions, its educational system, and its vast resources. He paid a great tribute to Washington, D.C., and told about the parks, the avenues shaded by trees and the homes built amid beautiful surroundings. In Chicago and New York there are many large parks. Then he spoke about the situation in Persia, in Turkey, about the condition of the Persian students in Europe, etc.

In the evening we drove to Westminster Palace Hotel, where a great meeting was held. Many writers, thinkers, literary men and distinguished personages were in the audience. The audience was set aglow. All the faces were shining, and all the people were responsive. Indeed to have such a well attended meeting in London at this time of the year is nothing short of a miracle.

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In these days the Sun of Reality is shining upon these regions; many souls are being quickened and are alive to the importance of the Cause. Last night 'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked that many people may think that a Persian has come, giving lectures and that is the end of it. No! In future every word uttered in the far cities of America will be collected and preserved. This is through the Bounty and Favours of the Blessed Perfection.

As a result of last night's meeting many [III:19:7] came this morning to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá among them being a woman who had come forty miles to hear him last night and this morning she brought a book for the Master to sign. She told of a young man who is an invalid and dumb, but he is so eager about the Cause that he would like to have the photograph of 'Abdu'l-

Bahá with his autograph. Although he is dumb and his hands are completely paralyzed, owing to an automobile accident, yet he holds the pens in his mouth and writes very well. He reads a great deal and writes interesting articles for the magazines and papers. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent him a very beautiful message, that although he is speechless yet he has the language of the heart and speaks with the tongue of the intellect. He hopes that he will acquire the language of the Kingdom which is not in need of any outward means to convey the thought.

To another inquirer 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about the Holy Land, saying, "Syria is the abode of the Prophets. Jerusalem is located there, the traces of David and Solomon can be witnessed there, the birthplace of Christ is there. In Palestine the spirit of man is dilated, because all the Prophets have come from there; the Divine Call has been raised in that country, and the Holy Books have been revealed there." Then he spoke about America: "American people have great capabilities. In England also one witnesses the signs of awakening. In reality American and the English people are one. The governments and the nations of both countries are noble and democratic."

Many other men and women had interviews, each one of them with his or her peculiar problems. It was nearly twelve when he came into the crowded reception room and spoke about the various kinds of love: family love, racial love, patriotic love and human love, showing that each of these loves is not sufficient except the love which is spiritual and is born of the Breath of the Holy Spirit.

At 3:30 pm the Beloved, with Mrs Cropper, Siyyid Asadu'lláh and myself, left in Mrs Cropper's automobile for the Church where "Eager Heart"¹ is being presented. There were more than 1,200 persons present. The play on the whole was very effective, Miss Mary Blomfield, who took the part of Eager Heart, interpreted the character with a delicacy and artistic appreciation that was wonderful. There were such longing, such unutterable desire in every movement and word for the King. When Mary and Joseph came in with the child in her arms, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was so deeply touched that he wept. The story is so touching, so sincere, so holy and so above the sordid elements of life: The Master sat through the whole performance and was keenly interested in every act and move. When the play was finished he was invited behind the stage and congratulated the players and musicians for their delightful work. He gave them a long address about the prophecies of the Old Testament in regard to the Coming of the Messiah and how the Jews took those prophecies literally and what were their real significance. Toward the end the actors were introduced to him and when he reached the angels he recommended them all to be angels as long as they live.

After supper the Master told us the wonderful story of Mary Magdalene, who went to Rome, presented herself in person before the Emperor and delivered a message unto him from the Christians. It was a very romantic story. The Master admires so much the character of Mary Magdalene.

Love to all
Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

III:19, 2 March 1913 [III:19:8]

Cablegram from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

From 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to "Parsons-Remey, Washington, D.C.," dated at Paris, 14 February 1913: "I am Servant of Bahá. His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, is unique and peerless. All must turn to Bahá'u'lláh. This is the Religion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Firmness in Covenant means love and obedience to the Command of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Announce this."

(Signed) 'Abbás

¹ Christmas play written by Miss Alice Buckton.

On teaching

Surely it will require great wisdom to bring this Truth before the world; but we are assured constantly that to him who endeavours to teach for the sake of God only—wisdom will be given in sufficient measure by the Holy Spirit.

The teacher should teach as offering a gift to a king, humbly and submissively, not with force of insistence, imperiously—that is strenuously—but with gentleness and sweetness: submitting the argument and truth to the heart and intellect of the hearer as the servant of God, and therefore His servant—taking care at all times to adapt the offered food to the condition and station of the listener, giving milk for babes and meat for those grown stronger.

This food is to be offered *for the sake of God, only*, not for the hearer's sake, not for the benefit of yourself: but simply because God wishes His Manifestation to become known and to become loved by those who come to know Him.

If one teaches one whom he loves because of his love for him—then he will not teach one whom he loves not; and that is not of God. If one teaches in order to derive the promised benefit to himself, this too is not from God. If he teaches because of God's Will that God may be known—and for that reason only, he will receive knowledge and wisdom, and his words will have effect—being made powerful by the Holy Spirit, and will take root in the souls of those who are in the right condition to receive them. In such a case the benefit to the teacher in growth is as ninety per cent compared to the ten per cent of gain to the hearer, because he becomes like a tree bearing fruit through the power of God.

We are urgently instructed that the only real way to attain growth in the knowledge of the Truth of God, is not by hearing, but by *doing*; by being alive with the fire of the love of God and imparting as best we can to others the Tidings of the coming of the Kingdom. This is the day of teaching. We are all commanded to teach, but only in the way and for the purpose above named.

It is plain that this means entire self-abnegation, cutting the self from the world, abandoning all else save God and His Will, and in all humbleness doing His service for His sake only. [III:19:10]

We are taught that if we offer the Truth of these teachings to any one, and they are refused, we must not be at all anxious, but leave them to themselves and pray for them. We must use such wisdom as we have in presenting—but at no moment must we have anxiety for that person, but only for the spreading of the Truth of God; because at this time He (God) desires to be known.

The message in brief

Every spring of water is pure at its source: the farther it wanders through the dust and earth, the more it becomes impregnated with that which is not water. Thus he who would drink must find a new spring, or live in a condition of sickness through using the impure water.

When this condition has come and when the need for real or pure water arrives—the Great Provider of springs supplies a new one similar in kind and purity to the former—but sometimes of greater magnitude—that all the thirsty ones may drink to their heart's content, and become strong and well.

In the morning when the new daylight awakens the earth the air is pure and sweet, fresh, inspiring and filled with the medicine of life, but as the day progresses, the dust is stirred up, the smoke of man's devices poisons the air, and finally comes the darkness of the night, and

man enters into sleep.

So in every dispensation of God, His Prophet, His Mouthpiece appears—bringing water, light, air, [and] truth for the world. It is given forth pure by Him, but as the years pass man's self colours, distorts, muddies and poisons that Truth until spiritual night ensues when the Sun of the Heaven of Religion is darkened and the Moon of Religious teachings by the priesthood is split asunder—refuses to give its light and chaos threatens.

Then is seen in the East “the Sign of the Son of Man”, the freshening of the new dawn, and then appears the arising of the Glorious Sun of Truth and Revelation.

In this our blessed age, that Sun has shone forth with all of its Glory as never before, with a brilliancy and splendour which this old earth has never known until now, except in the way of promises.

Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, et al., all manifested the Truth “of the Father”; but each promised that a greater One should appear at the consummation of the ages. This One is *The Father* Himself.

All were pure mirrors showing to us the Sun of Righteousness reflected in themselves; but now the greatest of all, the manifested God *Himself*, Bahá'u'lláh (“The Glory of God”), has come!

The Sun of the seen and the unseen heavens of spirituality has shone upon the earth, upon mankind, in this lowest horizon, with wisdom, knowledge, law, compassion, suffering and patience, with generosity, sweetness, humbleness, with majesty, power, brilliancy and everlasting glory, teaching all who have ears to hear or eyes to see—by word of mouth, by word of pen, by precept and by example the way of God as it has never been given to the world before in all the ages of the past.

Blessed is he who sees and hears, and who walks therein!

IV:1, 21 March 1913 [IV:1:3]

Message to Bahá'ís throughout the world

From 'Abdu'l-Bahá

A new year's greeting

God, the Maker of the worlds, hath created the realm of humanity to be the Paradise of Eden (or the Garden of Paradise) if the edifice of Peace, Reconciliation, Love, and Faithfulness is founded on a solid and firm basis; nay, rather, He hath willed it to become the mirror, reflecting the Delectable Paradise. Then, and not until then, will all the divine bounties become manifold; happiness and well-being infinite; the virtues of the world of humanity revealed and resplendent; and the rays of the Sun of Reality visible from every direction.

Consider that his holiness Adam and others were living in Paradise. But as soon as strife became known between him and Satan, every one was driven away from Eden, *so that the children of humanity might learn a lesson and realize that quarrels and strife, even though with Satan, are conducive to deprivation.*

Therefore, in this radiant century, according to the heavenly teachings, altercation and dispute are not allowable, even though assailed by Satan himself.

Astonishing is it, that notwithstanding the inculcation of this lesson, yet man has remained ignorant. From one end of the world to the other, the realm of humanity is engaged in hostilities and war. There is enmity between the religions. There is hatred between the classes. There is war between the fatherlands. There is contention between the diplomats. How delightful it would now be could these black clouds be dispersed from the horizon of the world, letting the light of Reality shine; the dust of slaughter and the crime of shedding blood

be swept away; the breeze of providence from the Dawning-Place of Peace and Salvation be wafted; thus the world would become a new world, and the face of the earth receive new life from the rays of the divinely effulgent light of God.

Our hope is in the favours of the glorious Lord, trusting that His providence and protection will encircle us. May the bitterness of struggle, warfare, and the cruelty of the blood-shedding sword be changed into the sweetness of friendship, reconciliation, righteousness, and justice! May the tastes become sweetened, the nostrils perfumed, with the essence of the Rose.

May this New Year be made the occasion of the New Peace! May this conference be assisted and aided to inaugurate an era of peace with justice, and to establish the basis of a fair treaty and agreement, so that their work may be blessed for ever and ever.

[Reprinted from *The Christian Commonwealth*]

IV:1, 21 March 1913 [IV:1:4]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Clifton, England

Isabel Fraser

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a guest at the Clifton Guest House over the night of 16 January, arriving by train at noon and leaving at noon the next day. The host, Mr Tudor-Pole, took ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for a drive in the afternoon, after which he re-met many of the guests and neighbours who dropped in to renew their acquaintance of a year ago. In the evening about 150 gathered to hear the Master’s message. Mr Tudor-Pole was in the chair and introduced ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by giving a short account of the Faith and of its marvellous growth in the last few years. The Master entered, bestowing on them that smile which in itself is a benediction. It was a notable gathering of east and west, with the central saintly figure. Here and there was seen a scarlet fez which denoted the presence of eastern students. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on entering gave that courtly eastern greeting of raising the palms of his hands to his forehead, after which he told them that since last seeing them he had been half over the world. “In fact,” he said, “I have come to Clifton this time via Los Angeles and Chicago.” Then he began at once to speak, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab interpreting. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá commenced while seated on a couch, but soon he was on his feet, occasionally walking to and fro, and sometimes emphasizing a fact with upraised hand or standing still with eyes closed and his silver voice sunk low.

Address by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Every age requires a central impetus or movement. In this age, the boundaries of terrestrial things have extended; minds have taken on a broader range of vision; realities have been unfolded and the secrets of being have been brought into the realm of visibility. What is the spirit of this age, what is its focal point? It is the establishment of Universal Peace, the establishment of the knowledge that humanity is one family. Think on the conditions of this world of humanity. Nations have become like unto armed camps waiting to be ignited by the combustion of war.

Whereas in reality God has created man for love’s sake. God has endowed man with creation so that he may illumine the world with the flame of brotherhood and express the utmost state of unity and accord. This state would express God’s good pleasure; this would be the prosperity of the world of humanity. A thousand times alas! that this glorious century has been besmeared with war and strife, hatred and rancour. Bloodthirsty wolves are tearing the sheep of God. Destruction is more widespread than in all the ages of the past.

We hear on every side praises of the wonders of this cycle, its achievements, its refinements, its genius; calling the past the age of mediaeval horror. What mediaeval age held the horror of a Krupp gun, a Mauser rifle or a shrapnel shell that kills a whole camp? On the sea we have the submarine and the dreadnought. If you compare the past with this age,

impartial judgement will call this the age of human fratricide.

All the religions are revealed for the sake of good fellowship. The fundamentals, the foundations of all are fellowship, unity and love. The heavenly books were revealed and divine love bestowed to bring about peace. What has man made of religion? He has made it the cause of bloodshed and strife; enmity and hatred. Religion was destined to be a remedy for the sickness of humanity; an illumination for the darkness of uncertainty. Have we then forgotten the divine teachings, cast aside the heavenly books, created imaginary thoughts and illusions and made them the basis of rancour and strife? The Bible commands the practice of peace and justice. God desires love. In the gospel we find the golden statement that man should be expressive of love even unto his enemy; he should be expressive of love to his ill-wishers; he should be expressive of love to all his fellow men. He must have an eye to pardon; he must have an eye to benevolence. All the divine books invite men to these teachings. All the divine prophets suffered that man might realize these teachings. Consider what His Holiness Christ endured, how many vicissitudes he underwent, every day tasting a new poison, finally sacrificing his own life, so that the tent of love and concord might be raised over the world of humanity so that this dark world might be invested with divine light. Alas! that all the travail of these holy souls and sanctified prophets should be wasted. The world of humanity is in a stupor of sleep and it cannot grasp the realities. The horizons of the minds are still beclouded and the hearts are occupied with phantasmal longings. We seem never to think of the reason of creation; [IV:1:5] never to strive to proclaim those principles which enlighten humanity. In the sea of materialism we are sinking and of the Kingdom of God we know nothing. We are not living in accord with those precious teachings of God.

Nearly 60 years ago when the horizon of the Orient was in a state of the utmost gloom, warfare existed and there was enmity between the various creeds; darkness brooded over the children of men and foul clouds of ignorance hid the sky—at such a time His Highness Bahá'u'lláh arose from the horizon of Persia like unto a shining sun. He boldly proclaimed peace, writing to the kings of the earth and calling upon them to arise and assist in the hoisting of this banner. In order to bring peace out of the chaos, he established certain precepts or principles:

Investigations of truth

The first principle Bahá'u'lláh urged was the independent investigation of truth. “Each individual,” he said, “is following the faith of his ancestors who themselves are lost in the maze of tradition. Reality is steeped in dogmas and doctrines. If each investigate for himself, he will find that Reality is one; does not admit of multiplicity; is not divisible. All will find the same foundation and all will be at peace.”

The unity of the race

The second principle of Bahá'u'lláh proclaims the oneness of the human race. He states that humanity constitute the sheep of God. God is the real shepherd. When this shepherd is compassionate and kind, why should the sheep quarrel amongst themselves? Addressing all humanity, Bahá'u'lláh says, “Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. All the nations, peoples and tongues are the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits of this great tree of humanity.” God created all; protects all; provides for all and is kind to all; why should you be unkind? If God had not loved humanity he would not have created it. Creation presupposes love. God is the real father; all are his children. All the creatures are equal in this one family of God save whosoever is more kind, more compassionate,—he is nearer to God.

International peace

The third principle of the religion of Bahá'u'lláh is in regard to international peace. There must be peace between the fatherlands; peace between the religions. In this period of

evolution the world of humanity is in danger. Every war is against the good pleasure of the Lord of mankind. Man is the edifice of God. War destroys the divine edifice. Peace is the stay of life; war the cause of death. If an active, actual peace is brought about, the human world will attain to the utmost serenity and composure. Wolves will be transformed into lambs; devils into angels and terrors into divine splendours in less than the twinkling of an eye.

Religion must conform to science and reason

The fourth principle declares that religion must be in conformity to science and reason. If a religion does not agree with the postulates of science nor accord with the regulations of reason it is a bundle of superstitions; a phantasm of the brain. Science and religion are realities, and if that religion to which we adhere be a reality it must needs conform to the fundamental reality of all things.

Prejudice must be forever banished

The fifth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is this that religious, racial, political and patriotic prejudice are the destroyers of human society. As long as these prejudices last the world of humanity will not attain to poise and perfection. As long as these threatening clouds are in the sky of humanity, the sun of reality cannot dawn.

Equality of sexes

The sixth principle of Bahá'u'lláh regards the equality of men and women. The male and female of the human kingdom are equal before God. God is no respecter of gender. Whosoever practices more faith, whosoever practices more humanitarianism is nearer to God; but between the male and female there is no innate difference because they share in common all the faculties. The world of humanity has two wings, one the male; the other the female. When both wings are reinforced with the same impulse the bird will be enabled to wing its flight heavenward to the summit of progress. Woman must be given the same opportunities as man for perfecting herself in the attainments of learning, science and arts. God has created the man and the woman equal, why should she be deprived of exercising the fullest opportunities afforded by life? Why should we ever raise the question of superiority and inferiority? In the animal kingdom the male and female enjoy suffrage [IV:1:6] [laughter], and in the vegetable kingdom the plants all enjoy equal suffrage [laughter and applause]. In the human kingdom, which claims to be the realm of brotherhood and solidarity, why should we raise this question?

The social plan

The seventh teaching suggests a plan whereby all the individual members play enjoy the utmost comfort and welfare. The degrees of society must be preserved. The farmer will continue to till the soil, the artist pursue his art, the banker to finance the nation. An army has need of its general, captain, and private soldiers. The degrees varying with the pursuits are essential. But in this Bahá'í plan there is no class hatred. Each is to be protected and each individual member of the body politic is to live in the greatest comfort and happiness. Work is to be provided for all and there will be no needy ones to be seen in the streets.

The parliament of man

The eighth principle declares that there must needs be established the parliament of man or court of last appeals for international questions. The members of this arbitral court of justice will be representatives of all the nations. In each nation the members must be ratified by the government and the king or ruler, and this international parliament will be under the protection of the world of humanity. In it all international difficulties will be settled.

Universal education

The ninth admonition is in regard to education. All the children must be educated so that there will not remain one single individual without an education. In cases of inability on the part of the parents through sickness, death, etc., the state must educate the child. In addition to this widespread education, each child must be taught a profession or trade so that each individual member of the body politic will be enabled to earn his own living and at the same time serve the community. Work done in the spirit of service is worship. From this universal system of education misunderstandings will be expelled from amongst the children of men.

Universal language

The tenth principle is the establishment of a universal language so that we will not have to acquire so many languages in the future. In the schools they will study two, the mother tongue and the international auxiliary language. The use of an international auxiliary language will become a great means of dispelling the differences between nations.

There are many other teachings.¹ I have given you but a few. Praise be to God! that day by day we are advancing and every day we see some new blessing descending. Let all of us render thanksgiving to our generous Lord that he may bless our eyes with sight and give unto our hearts understanding. May we become resuscitated with the breath of the Holy Spirit. May we be enabled to leave behind the world of matter in beholding the bounties of God. The divine table is spread, the heavenly illumination is all-encircling; eternal life is provided for all; divine food is prepared for all! Therefore let us practice the divine essence of love and love each other from our very hearts and souls so that the East and West shall embrace each other and realize that all are the sheep of God. God is the good shepherd—then will we gather under the tabernacle of His mercy!

Afterward in the library the guests were afforded the honour of meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and one picturesque little group that lingered behind the rest pleased him mightily. There were five Egyptian students wearing the red fez, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s suite standing in the background wearing the black fez—there was a German, a Californian and a Welshman, whose work lay in a Universal Brotherhood movement and on whose work ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pronounced a beautiful blessing.

Then changing his mood and laughing heartily he talked in Arabic to the students and, as befitting the occasion, he emphasized again the great necessity for a Universal language. He said that in the future many such groups would gather from the four corners of the earth for the purpose of mutual understanding.

IV:1, 21 March 1913 [IV:1:16]

“Teach the cause! Convey the message! Awaken souls!”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uttered in England, 16 January 1913

The Cause has become very great. Many souls are entering it—souls with different mentalities and degrees of understanding. Complex difficulties constantly rise before us. The administration of the Cause has become most difficult. Conflicting thought and theories attack the Cause from every side. Now consider to what extent the believers in God must become firm and soul-sacrificing. Every one of the friends must become the essence of essences; each one must become a brilliant lamp. People all around the world are entering the Cause; people

¹ Note: On another occasion ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated that “the eleventh principle of Bahá’u’lláh is *The Power of the Holy Spirit, by which alone Spiritual Development is achieved*. No matter how the material world may progress, no matter how splendidly it may adorn itself, it can never be anything but a lifeless body unless the soul is within; for it is the soul that animates the body; deprived of the blessings of the Holy Spirit, the material body would be inert.”—*The Editors*

of various tribes and nations and religions and sects. It is most difficult to administer to such heterogeneous elements. Wisdom and Divine insight are necessary. Firmness and steadfastness are needed at such a crucial period of the Cause.

All the meetings must be for teaching the Cause and spreading the Message, and suffering the souls to enter in the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh. Look at me. All my thoughts are centred around the proclamation of the Kingdom. I have a Lamp in my hand searching through the lands and seas to find souls who can become heralds of the Cause. Day and night I am engaged in this work. Any other deliberations in the meetings are futile and fruitless. Convey the Message! Attract the hearts! Sow the seeds! Teach the Cause to those who do not know.

It is now six months that Siyyid Asadu'lláh has implored that I write a few lines to my sister and my daughters. I have not done this because I find I must teach. I enter all meetings, all churches, so that the Cause may be spread. When the MOST IMPORTANT work is before our sight, we must let go the *Important* one.

If the meetings or Spiritual Assembly has any other occupation, the time is spent in futility. All the deliberations, all consultation, all the talks and addresses must revolve around one focal centre and that is: TEACH THE CAUSE! TEACH! TEACH! Convey the Message! Awaken the souls! Now is the time of laying the foundation. Now must we gather brick, stone, wood, iron, and other building materials! Now is not the time of decoration. We must strive day and night and think and work. What can I say that may become effective? What can I do that may bring results? What can I write that may bring forth fruits? Nothing else will be useful, today. The interests of such a Glorious Cause will not advance without undivided attention. While we are carrying this load we cannot carry any other load!

IV:1, 21 March 1913 [IV:1:18]

“Crumbs” from the table of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

From notes by Mr Howard MacNutt

One of the Bahá'í Friends said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá “What we expected in connection with your visit to America has not happened and what we did not expect to happen has indeed come to pass. We expected an attitude of hostility toward you by the clergy and theologians. Instead of this they have welcomed you in the spirit of fairness and sincerity. We did not expect the churches and religious societies would open their doors, but they have done so and most of your important public addresses have been delivered from pulpits of various denominations.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied, “According to the record of three Gospels, His Holiness Jesus Christ went into the Temple of Jerusalem, rebuked the Jews for the degeneracy of their worship into materialistic forms and delivered the Message of Divine Glad-tidings. For nineteen hundred years this has been pointed out by Christians as a most wonderful event,—that His Holiness without opposition from the Jews was permitted to enter their most sacred place of worship and proclaim the Word of God. Consider what has happened in this century. During the past year we have been welcomed in churches and pulpits of Europe and America by different denominations,—upraising the Divine Standard of Unity, summoning man kind to the Glad Tidings of the Most Great Peace, proclaiming the Reality of the Kingdom of Abhá. And this has been accomplished not only without opposition but by invitation, and in a spirit of the utmost love and fragrance. Consider therefore the wonderful influence and importance of this in the future.”

“In my talks with the reverend doctors of religion and men of the peace societies I have spoken the Glad-tidings of Bahá'u'lláh, but always according to their varying need and capacity. As capacities differ, the purpose must be to satisfy the degree of hunger, destroy all possible antagonism and establish a point of agreement. We cannot induce men to lay down

their arms by fighting with there. War intensifies the spirit of strife. War begets war. We are peacemakers, not destroyers of peace. Therefore 'Abdu'l-Bahá finds the note of harmony which vibrates in every human heart. This is our subtle basis. Build upon it. Follow no other method. Talk about things upon which we agree and say nothing about things upon which we differ. We must disorganize humanism in order to construct a spiritual edifice in the world of humanity. This edifice is heavenly but its foundations are planted in the unity of human hearts."

IV:1, 21 March 1913 [IV:1:20]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the Believers of God and the Maid-servants of the Merciful throughout the World.

[Revealed several years ago]

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye spiritual friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

"Perfume Thou the East! Illumine Thou the West! Bestow Thou light to the North! Grant Thou life to the South!"

This verse hath been revealed from the lips of the *Centre of the Covenant* one year after the departure of Bahá'u'lláh. But the *Nakezeen*¹ (not understanding its spiritual purport) wondered and derided. Praise be to God! that now its signs have become manifest, its powers evident, and its proof plain. Thanks be unto Him! that the East and the West are stirred into cheerfulness, and through the Holy Fragrances all directions are perfumed.

The Blessed Perfection, in a clear text, hath promised us in the Book: "Verily I behold you from the horizon of Abhá and will make victorious whomsoever will arise in the service of my Cause with the hosts of the Supreme Concourse and the cohorts of the favoured angels." Praise be to God! that this victory and confirmation became visible and manifest and hath shone forth from the horizon of the world like unto the sun.

Therefore, O ye friends of God! Show ye forth an earnest endeavour and display ye a resolute effort, so that ye may become assisted in the adoration of the Ancient Beauty and the Manifest Light; to be the cause of spreading the light of the Sun of Truth; to infuse into the dead, antiquated body of the world a new spirit; to cast in the fields of the hearts pure seeds; to arise in the service of the Cause; to speak with eloquent tongues; to become candles of guidance in the assemblage of the world; to become shining stars in the horizon of the existent being; to become merciful birds in the rose garden of oneness; to sing the melodies of realities and significances; to spend every breath of your existence in the service of this conspicuous light; so that in the end ye may be freed from loss and failure and attain to the inexhaustible treasury of the Kingdom. For the life of man is wholly subject to danger and impermanency. A person cannot put his assurance even in one moment's continuity. Notwithstanding this, the nations of the world, deceived by the mirage of superstition, imagine themselves secure in the heavenly way. Alas! Alas! Former commu- [IV:1:21] nities in bygone ages entertained the same perishing thoughts; but by one of those periodical fluctuations they were all hidden under the ground, and afflicted with deprivation and loss, except those souls who had become pure evanescence and had arisen with a great self-abnegation in the path of God. Such souls shine forth as brilliant stars from the horizon of the Ancient Glory, and the results which emanated from their lives in succeeding ages and cycles are the proofs of this statement. Therefore, do not ye rest, neither day nor night; seek not ye for composure; talk ye of the mystery of servitude, and seek ye the path of thralldom; so that through the promised

¹ Covenant-breakers.

confirmations ye may receive assistance from the Kingdom of Oneness.

O ye friends! Dense and gloomy clouds have covered the horizon of the world, and the darkness of hatred, malignity, persecution, tyranny and the greatest cruelty is spreading. All the people are drunk with the wine of heedlessness; and bloodthirstiness and rapaciousness are considered the noblest excellencies of the world of men.

His Highness the Almighty hath chosen the friends from among the concourse of men and hath specialized them with the most eminent guidance and the highest gift; so that we may with our souls and hearts exert ourselves, sacrifice our lives, be engaged in the guidance of the people and the training of souls; so that the wild beasts may become the gazelles of the meadows of unity; the wolves the sheep of God; the bloodthirsty ones the heavenly angels; the fire of malice be extinguished and the flame of safety in the blessed tabernacle bestow illumination; the odour of the nether realm of infidelity be dispelled and the fragrances of the rose garden of faithfulness be diffused in all parts; the weak draw light from the Universal Reason and evil souls seek to be purified with the holy and divine Breath. There are needed manifestors for this gift; farmers for this field; gardeners for this rose garden; fishers for this sea; luminous stars for this heaven; spiritual physicians for these ill ones, and loving guides for these wanderers; so that they may bestow a share on those who are deprived, grant a portion to those who are shareless, give unmeasured treasure to the indigent ones, and show forth the power of proof to the seekers.

Glory be unto Thee, O my God! I supplicate unto Thee, O Thou my Helper! I invoke Thee, O Thou my Refuge! I utter to Thee my agonies, O Thou my Physician, and entreat Thee with all my heart, my soul and my spirit, saying: O my God! O my God! Verily, the gloomy night hath fallen upon all regions and the clouds of ignorance have extended in all directions; the people are immersed in the darkness of surmise and the tyrants are sunk in the depths of brutality and lawlessness. The red glare of the burning fire is flashing forth from the nether world, roaring, ominous voices are rising from the cruel, destructive and terrible armaments; every region is crying out with its dumb secret tongue: "Nothing that I possess hath benefited me and power and strength are taken away from me!" Verily, O my God, the lamps of guidance are extinguished; the fire of animosity is enkindled; wrath and antipathy are spread abroad and provocation and maliciousness are disseminated upon the face of the earth. Yet I see only Thy wronged followers who are crying at the tops of their voices and summoning the people:

Hasten ye toward affinity!

Hasten ye toward faithfulness!

Hasten ye toward generosity!

Hasten ye toward guidance!

Hasten ye toward union!

Hasten ye to behold the Light of the World!

Hasten ye toward love and prosperity!

Hasten ye toward peace and reconciliation

Hasten ye toward the law of disarmament!

Hasten ye toward harmony and success!

Hasten ye toward co-operation and mutual help in the path of guidance!

Verily, these wronged ones do sacrifice themselves with infinite joy and happiness for the sake of the people, with all their souls and spirits throughout all regions. Verily, Thou beholdest them weeping at the misfortunes of every one of Thy creatures and becoming grieved at the distress of Thy children; they are kind to all the people and pained at the sight of the calamities of the inhabitants of the world. O my Lord! make the wings of prosperity to grow upon their shoulders, so that they may ever soar toward the apex of their aspirations; strengthen their loins in the service of Thy people, and confirm them in the thralldom and

adoration of the threshold of Thy Holiness.

Verily, Thou art the Merciful! Thou art the Clement, and there is no God but Thee, the Powerful, the Compassionate, and the Ancient!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

IV:2, 9 April 1913 [IV:2:34]

'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses the Esperantists of Edinburgh and Paris

Address delivered in Edinburgh

7 January 1913—under the auspices of the Edinburgh Esperanto Society

From *The British Esperantist*, February 1913

Every movement which promotes unity and harmony in the world is good, and everything which creates discord and discontent is bad. This is a century of illumination, surpassing all others in its many discoveries, its great inventions, and its vast and varied undertakings. But the greatest achievement of the age in conferring profit and pleasure on mankind is the creation of an auxiliary language for all. Oneness of language creates oneness of heart. Oneness of language engenders peace and harmony. It sweeps away all misunderstandings among peoples. It establishes harmony among the children of men. It gives to the human intellect a broader conception, a more commanding point of view.

Today the greatest need of humanity is to understand and to be understood. With the help of the International Language, every individual member of a community can learn of world happenings and become in touch with the ethical and scientific discoveries of the age. The auxiliary international language gives to us the key—the key of keys—which unlocks the secrets of the past. By its aid every nation henceforth will be able easily and without difficulty to work out its own scientific discoveries.

It is a well-known fact that the Oriental student coming to the West, in his efforts to acquaint himself with the discoveries and achievements of western civilization, must spend precious years of his life in acquiring the language of the land to which he comes before he can turn to the study of the special science in which he is interested. For example, let us suppose that a youth from India, Persia, Turkistán or Arabia comes to this country to study medicine. He must first struggle with the English language for four years, to the exclusion of all else, before he can even begin the study of medicine. Whereas, if the auxiliary international language were taught in all the schools during his childhood, he would learn the language in his own country, and afterwards, wherever he wished to go, he could easily pursue his speciality without loss of some of the best years of his life.

Today if one wishes to travel abroad, even though possessed of several languages, he is likely to be seriously handicapped because he does not know the particular language of [IV:2:35] some one people. I have studied oriental languages profoundly and know the Arabic better than the Arabians themselves. I have studied Turkish and Persian in my native land, besides other languages of the East, nevertheless, when I visited the West I had to take an interpreter with me quite as if I knew no language. Now if the International Language were generally spoken, that and the Persian language would be sufficient for me in every country of the world.

Only think how the International Language will facilitate intercommunication among all the nations of the earth. Half of our lives are consumed in acquiring a knowledge of languages, for in this enlightened age every man who hopes to travel in Asia and Africa and Europe must learn several languages in order that he may converse with their peoples. But no sooner does he acquire one language than another is needed. Thus one's whole life may be passed in acquiring those languages which are a hindrance to international communication.

The International Language frees humanity from all these problems.

In a word, to understand and be understood, there must be an international medium. The teacher and the pupil must know each other's language, in order that the teacher may impart his knowledge and the pupil receive it. In all the world there is nothing more important than to be understood by your fellowmen, for upon this depends the progress of civilization itself. To acquire a knowledge of the arts and sciences one must know how to speak, to understand and at the same time to make himself understood, and this matter of understanding and being understood depends on language. Once establish this auxiliary language, and all will be enabled to understand each other.

I recall an incident which occurred in Baghdád. There were two friends who knew not each other's language. One fell ill, the other visited him, but not being able to express his sympathy in words, resorted to gesture, as if to say, "How do you feel?" with another sign the sick replied, "I shall soon be dead;" and his visitor, believing the gesture to indicate that he was getting better, said, "God be praised!"

From such illustrations you will admit that the greatest thing in the world is to be able to make yourself understood by your friends and to understand them, and that there is no greater handicap in the world than not to be able to communicate your thoughts to others. But with an auxiliary language all these difficulties disappear.

Now, praise be to God, that language has been created—Esperanto. This is one of the special gifts of this luminous century, one of the most remarkable achievements of this great age.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh many years ago wrote a book called "The Most Holy Book", one of the fundamental principles of which is the necessity of creating an International Language, and He explains the great good and advantage that will result from its use.

Now let us thank the Lord because the Esperanto language has been created. We have commanded all the Bahá'ís in the Orient to study this language very carefully, and ere long it will spread all over the East. I pray you, Esperantists and non-Esperantists, to work with zeal for the spread of this language, for it will hasten the coming of that day, that millennial day, foretold by prophets and seers, that day when, it is said, the wolf and the lamb shall drink from the same fountain, the lion and the deer shall feed in the same pasture. The meaning of this holy word is that hostile races, warring nations, differing religions, shall become united in the spirit of love.

I repeat, the most important thing in the world is the realization of an auxiliary international language. Oneness of language will transform mankind into one world, remove religious misunderstandings, and unite East and West in the spirit of brotherhood and love. Oneness of language will change this world from many families into one family. This auxiliary international language will gather the nations under one standard, as if the five continents of the world had become one, for then mutual interchange of thought will be possible for all. It will remove ignorance and superstition, since each child of whatever race or nation can pursue his studies in science and art, needing but two languages—his own and the International. The world of matter will become the expression of the world of mind. Then discoveries will be revealed, inventions will multiply, the sciences advance by leaps and bounds, the scientific culture of the earth will develop along broader lines. Then the nations will be enabled to utilize the latest and best thought, because expressed in the International Language.

If the International Language becomes a factor of the future, all the Eastern peoples will be enabled to acquaint themselves with the [IV:2:36] sciences of the West, and in turn the Western nations will become familiar with the thoughts and ideas of the East, thereby

improving the condition of both. In short, with the establishment of this International Language the world of mankind will become another world and extraordinary will be the progress. It is our hope, then, that the language Esperanto will soon spread throughout the whole world, in order that all people may be able to live together in the spirit of friendship and love.

IV:2, 9 April 1913 [IV:2:36]

Address delivered in Paris

From Persian notes; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the Paris Esperanto group 12 February, at a banquet which was tended him at the Hotel Modern, in that city. M. Bourlet, President of the Paris Esperanto Society, introduced 'Abdu'l-Bahá briefly, stating that one of the revealed principles of this great Peace Prophet's world religion was the establishment of a universal language.

There was a deep silence as 'Abdu'l-Bahá rose majestically. His remarks were punctuated by cheers and applause as he walked up and down the banquet hall, stopping to emphasize with frequent gesture. He spoke in Persian, M. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney of Paris interpreting into French. Here and there one noted that the French translation was undergoing still further interpretation by Esperantists who had neighbours that did not understand French but knew Esperanto: the occasion itself offering a noteworthy argument for the great necessity of a universal tongue.

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

In the material world of existence, human undertakings are divided into two kinds—universal and specific. The result of every universal effort is infinite and the outcome of every specific effort is finite.

In this age, those human problems which create a general interest are universal; their results are likewise universal, for humanity has become interdependent. The international laws of today are of vast importance since international politics are bringing nations nearer to one another. It is a general axiom that in the world of human endeavour, every universal affair commands attention and its results and benefits are limitless. Therefore let us say that every universal cause is divine and every specific matter is human. The universal light for this planet is from the sun and the special light here tonight, which is electric, illumines this banquet hall through the invention of man. In like manner the activities which are trying to establish solidarity between the nations and infuse the spirit of universalism in the hearts of the children of men are like unto divine rays from the Sun of Reality, and the brightest ray is the coming of the universal language. Its achievement is the greatest virtue of the age, for such an instrument will remove misunderstandings from among the peoples of the earth and will cement their hearts together. This medium will enable each individual member of the human family to be informed of the scientific accomplishments of all his fellowmen.

The basis of knowledge and the excellencies of endeavour in this world are to teach and to be taught. To acquire sciences and to teach them in turn depends upon language and when the international auxiliary language becomes universal, it is easily conceivable that the acquirement of knowledge and instruction will likewise become universal.

No doubt you are aware that in the past ages a common language shared by various nations created a spirit of solidarity among them. For instance, 1,300 years ago, there were many divergent nationalities in the Orient. There were Copts in Egypt, Syrians in Syria, Assyrians and Babylonians in Baghdád and along the River Mesopotamia. There existed among these peoples rank hatred, but as they were gradually brought nearer through common protection and common interests, the Arabic language grew to be the means of intercommunication, and

they became as one nation. They all speak the Arabic language to this day. In Syria if you ask any one of them he will say, "I am an Arab," though in reality he is not—some are Greeks, others Jews, etc.

We say "This man is a German, the other an Italian, a Frenchman, an Englishman," etc. All belong to the great human family, yet language is the barrier between them. The greatest working basis for bringing about unity and harmony among the nations is the teaching of a universal tongue. Writing on this subject, 50 years ago, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh said that complete union between the various sections of the world would be an unrealized dream as long as an international language was not established. [IV:2:37]

Misunderstandings keep people from mutual association and these misunderstandings will not be dispelled except through the medium of a common ground of communication. Every intelligent man will bear testimony to this.

The people of the Orient are not fully informed of the events in the West and the West cannot put itself into sympathetic touch with the East. Their thoughts are closed in a casket—the universal language will be the master key to open it. Western books will be translated into that language and the Easterner will be informed of the contents; likewise Eastern lore will become the property of the West. Thus also will those misunderstandings which exist between the different religions be dispersed. Religious prejudices play havoc among the peoples and bring about warfare and strife and it is impossible to remove them without a language in common.

I am an Oriental and on this account I am shut out from your thoughts and you likewise from mine. A mutual language will become the mightiest means of universal progress toward the union of the East and West. It will make the earth one home and become the divine impulse for human advancement. It will upraise the standard of oneness of the world of humanity and make the earth a universal commonwealth. It will be the cause of love between the children of men and create good fellowship between the various creeds.

Praise be to God, that Dr Zamenhof has constructed the Esperanto language. It has all the potential qualities of universal adoption. All of us must be grateful and thankful to him for his noble effort for in this matter he has served his fellowmen well. He has constructed a language which will bestow divine benefits on all peoples. With untiring efforts and self-sacrifice on the part of its devotees it gives promise of universal acceptance. Therefore everyone of us must study this language and make every effort to spread it so that each day it may receive a wider recognition, be accepted by all nations and governments of the world and become a part of the curriculum in all the public schools. I hope that the business of the future conferences and congresses will be carried on in Esperanto. In the future two languages will be taught in the schools, one the native tongue, the other the international auxiliary language. Consider today how difficult is human communication. One may study 50 languages and yet travel through a country and still be at a loss. I, myself, know several of the Oriental languages, but know no Western tongue. Had this universal language pervaded the globe, I should have studied it and you would have been directly informed of my thoughts and I of yours and a special friendship would have been established between us.

Please send some teachers to Persia, if you can, so that they may teach Esperanto to the young people. I have written asking some of them to come here to study it.

I hope that it will be promulgated very rapidly—then the world of humanity will find eternal peace; all the nations will associate with one another like mothers and sisters, fathers and brothers, and each individual member of the body politic will be fully informed of the thoughts of all.

I am extremely grateful to you and thank you for these lofty aims, for you have gathered at

this banquet to further this language. Your hope is to render a mighty service to the world of humanity and for this great aim I congratulate you from the depths of my heart.

IV:2, 9 April 1913 [IV:2:37]

Soul, mind and spirit

Talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 30 January 1913, at 30 rue St Didier, Paris.

From Persian notes; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

One of the ladies present has asked me to speak on the subject of soul, mind and spirit. She desires an explanation of these terms.

The terminology of ancient philosophers differs from that of our time. In later ages certain terms have developed through which we see these subjects in a different light. According to some ancient philosophers, the words soul, mind and spirit imply the underlying principles of life, expressing the various phases of the one absolute reality. They were different names for the operations of one essence. For instance, we say a man sees, hears and speaks—seeing, hearing and speaking are the different performances of the same power which animates man. Different schools of thought have given different names to the various operations of the one essence. For instance, when some speak of the emotions of consciousness they call it soul; when they express the discovering power of man they call [IV:2:38] it mind, and when they refer to the animating essence of the world of creation, they call it spirit.

The differentiation which we make of these subjects is as follows: By soul we mean that power which is the mover of this physical body which is entirely under its control and lives in accordance with its dictates. The soul that lives in the material world is dark for in the material world there is aggression, struggle, greed, vice and transgression. If the soul remains in this station, and moves along these paths it will receive no uplift, but if it becomes the recipient of the world of mind, its darkness will be transformed into light; its tyranny into justice, its ignorance into wisdom and its aggression into loving kindness. There will be no more struggle for existence and man will become free from egotism. He will be released from the material world and become the embodiment of justice, the personification of the virtues. He will become a sanctified soul and be the means of the illumination of the world of humanity and an honour to human kind. He will confer life upon the children of men so that all nations will attain to the station of perfection. To such a person we may apply the name of “a holy soul”.

The soul in itself cannot unravel the mysteries; but the mind is superior to the soul. The mind is a power whereby man can investigate the reality of every object. It unfolds to his vision the secrets of existence and leads him on and on to the station of divine sublimity. It frees man from the fetters of self and causes him to ascend to the pure heaven of sanctity.

The third power of man is the power of the Spirit. It is an emanation from the Divine Bestower. It is the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, the radiation of the celestial world. In short it is the essence of the Spirit of Faith of which His Holiness Christ speaks when He says, “Those that are born of the flesh are flesh and those that are born of the spirit are spirit.” The spirit is the axis around which the eternal life revolves. It is conducive to everlasting glory; it is the cause of the exultation of the world of humanity. Again His Holiness Christ says, “Whosoever has not received a portion of the spirit is as dead. Let the dead bury their dead.” In another place Christ says, “You must be baptized with the spirit.” This Spirit is the life of the world of humanity; the cause of eternal illumination. It inspires man to attain to the virtues and perfections of the divine world.

May each one of you become the recipient of the Spirit. This is my hope.

Individuality and personality

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 14 February 1913, at 30 rue St Didier, Paris.

From Persian notes; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sobrab.

Today one of those present asked a question on personality. From what source does it come? What are its attributes? What are its characteristic features or aspects?

Personality is one of two kinds. One is the natural or God-given personality which the Western thinkers call individuality. Individuality is the inner aspect of man which is not subject to change.

The second is personality. Personality is the acquired virtues and perfections, with which man is adorned.

When the individuality of man, i.e., his God-given natural virtues, is adorned with acquired virtues and perfections then we have character. When the infinite effulgences of God are revealed in the individual, then divine perfections which are invisible in all creation will become manifest in him.

For instance, one man is the manifestor of knowledge, i.e., divine knowledge is revealed to him. Another man is the dawning place of power, a third is wealthy, another is generous. Again a person is faithful, and another with whom you come in touch, is merciful. All these attributes are God-given and natural in man.

These are the manifestations of the unchangeable individuality. All of them are praiseworthy, because they are divine in origin. All these qualifications are created by God, they are loved by every one, for they are the significances of His names and attributes. The rays of His names and attributes have illumined the very essence of these qualifications.

As regards the personality which is the result of acquired virtues, that is also good. For instance, this mirror had once an individuality of rock. The rock going through the processes of purification, has reached to its present status of transparency. Now the rock in its original state was praiseworthy, [IV:2:39] but having acquired the second state, which is personality, it has become a mirror. In the beginning it was a piece of black stone, now it has become a pure looking-glass.

Therefore you can easily see that the personality or the acquired virtue has become the means of the appearance of greater perfections, which perfections are clearly visible in the mirror.

The rock was endowed by God with a distinct individuality. It acquired personality through the process of education. The individuality of all people is laudable, for everything God creates is based upon divine wisdom. In the creation of God there is no defect. However, personality has no element of permanence in it, it is a shifting, changeable quality in man which can be turned either way.

For instance, when man is the manifestor of virtues it strengthens the individuality, and suffers his hidden forces to come into active play. But if he acquires defects the beauty and simplicity of the individuality will be lost, and its God-given qualities will be stifled in the foul atmosphere of these imperfections. It is self-evidently manifest that every human being created by God is original; that is, those heavenly attributes which are the distinguishing features of the individuality are created by God and deposited in man.

But if later on the personality acquires sciences, he will become a wise man. If he is engaged in praise-worthy deeds he will be appreciated. If he strives in the study of knowledges he will become perfect. If, on the contrary, he runs after blameworthy vices he

will be adorned with exactly the same attributes.

For instance, God has created man to be just; if he does not practice justice, he has gone against the attributes of his individuality. God has created man to be merciful, but he becomes a tyrant. God has created man to be kind to all the children of men; on the contrary he is inimical and hateful. God has created man to confer life, but he becomes conducive to the destruction of life.

All of these are the perversions of the characteristics of the individuality and they are blameworthy, and disliked by all.

Personality is obtained through the effort of man, and through training and education. If a fruitless tree comes under the influence of a wise gardener, through the process of training it becomes fruitful.

If a piece of rock comes under the hand of a sculptor it will become a beautiful piece of statuary. The ruined places are built up by captains of industry. The ignorant children learn the secrets of phenomena under the tutorship of a wise teacher. The crooked branch becomes straight through the influence of the gardener.

Consequently it is evident that we have two modes for the expression of life—Individuality and Personality.

The former is the handiwork of God and the latter that of man. In short, the personality of some people is illumined, that of others is dark—the personality of some is the manifestation of divine justice, while that of others is the embodiment of infinite tyranny. The personality of some is guidance, while that of others is error. That which was hidden in the capability of these souls has been manifest. For instance, when you sow a seed, that which is hidden in the reality of that seed will become revealed and unfolded—the trunk, the branches, the leaves and the blossoms and the fruits which are in the seed as potentialities.

When pupils are being trained under the tutorship of a teacher, education will bring out what is hidden in their beings.

The clouds pour down, the sun shines, and all that which was hidden in the bosom of the earth will come forth.

Therefore the personality of man is developed through education, while the individuality, which is divine and heavenly, is praise-worthy in origin.

God has created poison and has shown that it is harmful to man. On the other hand sweet things are created by Him and are enjoyed by man. Thus it is in the nature of man to be harmed by poison, and to find enjoyment in sweets; but he changes his nature to such an extent that he takes poison, such as opium and arsenic in the form of a drug, and he accustoms himself to it to such an extent that if he does not receive it he may die.

Therefore man is capable of subjecting [sic—subjugating] his individuality to such a degree that poison which was the means of death, becomes the means of life. His nature becomes so degraded and his individuality so distorted that he will long for the poison if it is not given to him in time.

What is the cause of the change in the individuality? It is the acquirement of evil habits.

God benignly endows man with an individuality which enjoys the sweet and shuns [IV:2:40] the poison, but man through evil habits changes the creation of God, and transforms the divine illumination into satanic darkness.

So long as man is a captive of nature, submerged in the sea of materialism, pursuing the dictates of self and desire, he is vanquished and defeated. This passionate ego takes the reins

from his hands, and changes him into an animal. He will fall so low that he will be unable to judge good from evil. He will not be able to distinguish light from darkness, neither will he be able to behold the angelic attributes.

Therefore this acquired individuality which is the result of evil customs becomes the dominant note of his life.

I hope that all of you may be freed from these dangers, delivered from the world of nature, enter into the realm of light, and become divine, radiant, merciful, God-like and confirmed.

IV:2, 9 April 1913 [IV:2:40]

The pathway of the Disciples of Christ

Talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 11 June 1912, at 309 West 78th Street, New York City.

Interpreted by Dr Amín U. Faríd.

[After instructions upon certain matters, 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued:]

The essence of the intention is that I wish you to pray for me and I will pray for you. The pathway we shall walk together is the pathway of the Disciples of Christ. After the departure of His Holiness to the Supreme Paradise, the disciples who had followed His teachings met together in consultation upon the summit of a mountain near Jaffa. Such a consultation was never before held. They said to each other, "His Holiness Jesus Christ has been crucified. He offered His life in this way, gave up His rest and comfort, forfeited His happiness, renounced His possessions, family and life, and quaffed the chalice of martyrdom. He educated us in order that we might arise after Him in His Cause. He sacrificed His life that the oil in the lamps of our souls might become ignited and His Light shine forth from them. He suffered on the cross that we may irrigate the tree of His planting. He consented to a cruel death in order that the seed of His sowing might be cultivated and preserved by us. Now must we be loyal to His Holiness. If we wish to be loyal we must arise to carry out the duties of loyalty. Otherwise each of us will continue to seek after his own livelihood, rest and comfort; each, like other people, find repose, enjoy a family, have a household, provide food and strive to gain glory and power. Shall we do this?" All said, "No! We must be loyal and faithful to His Holiness Jesus Christ. Therefore with our worldly attachments we cannot attend to His service in a true spirit of severance. We must either be occupied with ourselves or engaged in His service. This Cause is a very great Cause; a Cause that is weighty and important, not light and trivial; a Cause that is not easy to carry and serve. First, to be severed and free from all other occupation we must give up and relinquish our family ties and that which pertains thereto. Because the management of a household and family is a hindrance to service. God has not created two hearts for man, one for living in the world and one for service in His Cause. Therefore either must we be occupied with our own service and affairs or with service to Christ. Is not this the ultimate arrangement? Yes! it is the ultimate arrangement! He who is tied to a family, let him then arrange to leave it; he who is not should not take a wife and the duties of a family; then will he be free, severed and without burden or hindrance in the service of God. Is this right? Is this the ultimate arrangement? Are we united upon this? Yes! Second, in the pathway of Christ there is strife, persecution, blame, imprisonment, banishment, suffering and many other burdens which we must accept. Have we accepted them? Yes! we have assuredly! Third, we must go among the peoples of the world, proclaiming the glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God, spreading the fragrances of Christ, summoning them to the Sun of Reality in order that this dark world shall become illumined. Is this the ultimate arrangement? Yes!"

Then they took an oath and covenant among themselves, embraced each other and descended from the mountain, some going to the Eastward, some to the West, North and South. So they were scattered. Some became traceless, as it is not known where they

travelled or where they died. It is said some died in India.

The reality of the condition is this: We must be loyal to the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty and be willing to give our lives for [IV:2:41] Him. We must sacrifice our comfort for Him; sacrifice all our conditions in the pathway of His service. If we do this, our service will be productive of great results. Otherwise God will raise up souls to do this work in our stead. Our purpose is that we shall arise in His Cause—not fettered by world conditions, not burdened by weight of material responsibilities. We must draw our thread from one direction whether it come or not. There are many threads; the right one will come to us. [Refers to seeking the right thread by which to unravel a skein.]

Now therefore I will pray for you and you must pray for me, “O Bahá’u’lláh! This is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! Confirm ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Thy Threshold! Strengthen him in loyalty to Thee! Make him self-sacrificing! Make him homeless, and without rest! Fill his heart with Thy love, so he will forget all else save Thee,—seeking no other comfort, grace, health or life, and sacrificing all for Thee!”

Pray in this manner for me and I will pray so for you.

Admonish the Friends so they will not backbite and criticize, voicing the mistakes and sins of others. Have a sin-covering eye. As soon as you see a trace of the Love of Bahá’u’lláh in a soul, revere that soul under all conditions.

IV:3, 28 April 1913 [IV:3:51]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answers many questions asked by theologians of Paris

Sunday Evening, 17 February 1913—Pasteur Monnier’s Theological Seminary, Paris.

From Persian notes; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

[The audience was composed of professors, clergy and theological students]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: How are you?

Pasteur Monnier: We are all feeling well and are exceedingly pleased to have you bless our Seminary.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: I am likewise most happy to find myself amongst you, and associate with you.

Monnier: We are very happy to find amongst us a person who has come on the part of God, and has brought to us a divine message.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: A person endowed with the power of hearing shall hear the mysteries of God from all things, and all creation will convey to him the divine message.

Monnier: If you permit us, we would like to ask a question.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Very well.

Monnier: As we are students of theology, and are in the rank of clergy, we would like to know who was Christ, and what was He? What is your belief about Him?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Our belief in regard to Christ is exactly what is recorded in the New Testament; however we elucidate this matter, and do not speak literally or in a manner based merely on the foundation of blind belief. For instance, it is recorded in the Gospel of St John, that in the beginning there was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now the majority of Christians accept this principle as a matter of belief, but we give an explanation and exposition which is accepted by reason, and in such a way that no one may find occasion to reject it.

The Christians have made this statement the foundation of the Trinity—but philosophers

deny it as mere superstition, stating that the Trinity as regards the identity of the Divinity is impossible; and in turn the Christians do not give a satisfactory explanation and interpretation to be accepted by philosophers.

As the former base their whole exposition of this subject upon the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the latter do not accept it, saying, "Is it possible to have three in one, and one in three?"

We explain this subject as follows: The eternity of the Word is not an eternity of time, for if this were an eternity of time, the Word would have been accidental, and not eternal. By the Word we mean that this creation with its infinite forms is like unto letters, and the individual members of humanity are likewise like unto letters.

A letter individually has no meaning, no independent significance, but the station of Christ is the station of the Word. Complete and independent significance is implied in a word. That is why we say Christ is the Word. By complete significance we mean that the universal bestowals of the perfection of Divinity are manifest in Christ.

It is obvious that the perfections of other souls are particular, or only a part, but the perfections of the Christ are universal or the whole. The reality of Christ is the collective centre of all the independent virtues and infinite significances.

For instance, this lamp sheds light, the moon also illumines the night with its silvery beams, but their light is not in their essence, they receive their light from another source; but His Holiness the Christ is like unto the sun, His light issued forth from His own identity. He has not received it through another person, therefore we give Him the comprehensive title of the Word. [IV:3:52]

By this we mean the all-comprehending Reality, and the depository of the infinite divine virtues.

This Word has an (honorary) beginning and not a beginning of time. For instance, we say this person has precedence over all. This precedence comes to him through the station and honour which he has now in life, but it is not a precedence of time.

In reality the Word has neither a beginning nor ending. It means those perfections which appeared in Christ and not His physical body. Those perfections were from the part of God.

It is similar to the rays of the sun which are reflected in a clear mirror. The rays, the light and the heat of the sun are its perfections which have become manifest in the mirror.

The perfections of Christ were the splendour and bounty of God. It is evident that these qualities were ever with God, even at this time they are with Him, they are inseparable from Him, because divinity is not subject to division. Division is a sign of imperfection, and as God is the Perfect One He cannot be divided.

It is clear that the perfections of the Divinity are co-equal and co-existent with the Essence. In that station there is absolute Unity. This in brief is the exposition of the Station of Christ.

Monnier: What is the similarity between the Cause of Christ and that of Bahá'u'lláh? And what relation do they hold towards each other?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The foundation of the religion of God is one. The same basis which was laid by Christ and later on was forgotten, has been renewed by His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh.

As we said, the object of divine religion is one—each religion is divided into two parts. The first part is essential, and it belongs to the world of morality. It is the exposition of significances and realities. It is the expression of the love of God, the knowledge of God. This is one in all the religions, unchangeable and immutable, because it is the reality, and the

reality is immutable and unchangeable.

The second part is non-essential. It belongs to practical life, to transactions and business. This changes according to the requirements of the time in which the Prophet lives.

For example, during the days of His Holiness Moses, the foundation and the origin of the religion of God spelled morality, and that was not changed in the Christian dispensation, but certain differences crept in through the change of the second part of the religion. For during the Mosaic period the hand of a person was cut off because he had committed a small theft; there was the law of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. This was according to the spirit of the age, but as these laws were impracticable at the time of Christ, they were abrogated.

Likewise divorce: It had become so universal and so easily put into practice, that the laws of marriage were too easily broken, therefore His Holiness Christ forbade it.

According to the exigencies of the time, His Holiness Moses revealed ten laws for capital punishment. It was impossible at that time to protect the body politic and preserve social security without these severe measures. For the children of Israel lived in the wilderness of Tur,¹ they could not protect their rights and establish safety without these severe measures.

As they were too antiquated in the time of Christ, they were abolished. The difference in the second part of religion is unimportant, because it belongs to the customs of life only, but the foundation of the religion of God is one. Therefore His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has renewed that foundation.

The Cause of Christ was wholly spiritual. He did not change anything save the Sabbath and the law of divorce. All the sayings of Christ deal with the knowledge of God, with the oneness of the world of humanity, the moral relations between the hearts, [and] spiritual susceptibilities.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh created these merciful sentiments in the most complete form and deposited them in the hearts of men. This is in keeping with the teachings of Christ, because it is the reality and the reality does not change.

Is it possible to say that divine unity is divisible, or the knowledge of God, the oneness of the world of humanity, universal love, and the solidarity of the human race, are ever subject to transformation?

No, I declare by God they are immutable, for they are the reality.

Monnier: What is the relation of Christ and Bahá'u'lláh with God?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: His Holiness Christ said "The Father is in me"—this we must understand through logical and scientific evidences, for if we do [IV:3:53] not conform religious principles and science and reason, they do not inspire the heart with confidence and assurance.

It is said that once John of Chrysostom was walking along the sea-shore and was thinking over the question of the Trinity, the possibility of three becoming one, and one three, trying to reconcile this with reason.

He was absorbed in this subject, when suddenly his attention was attracted by a boy sitting on the shore and putting water in a cup.

Approaching him, he asked, "My child, what art thou doing?" "I am trying to put the sea in this cup," he answered. "How foolish art thou," John replied, "in trying to do the impossible."

¹ "Tur' and 'Sinai' should not be taken literally; the first is an allusion to Mt. Sinai, which in this case means the Manifestation of God; the second, 'Sinai', represents the human heart." (Shoghi Effendi, *Light of Divine Guidance*, Vol. 2, pp. 66-7) Ṭúr as-Sínín (not "Mount Sinai" (a modern name) in the Sinai Peninsula) is also known as Jabal Músá ("Jabal Musa" or "Mountain of Moses"). Logic suggests that Jabal al-Lawz (28.654166, 35.305833) is the biblical "Mt. Sinai".

The child rejoined, "Thy work is stranger than mine, for thou art labouring to bring within the grasp of human intellect the conception of the Trinity."

Then John thought to himself that to understand this matter logically is beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

But we stated that every religious question must be tested by the criteria of science and reason, otherwise how can one accept it? If I propound a question which is rejected by the deduction of reason, it is not worthy of your acceptance.

Therefore let us investigate independently the reality of this matter and let us always be guided in our exposition by the light of reason and science.

What is the meaning of the Father and the Son? We say that this Fatherhood and Son-ship are allegorical, and symbolical. The Messianic Reality is like unto a mirror through which the Sun of Divinity has become resplendent. If this mirror states "The Light is in me" it is sincere in its claim; therefore Jesus was truthful when He said "The Father is in me."

When we look at the question from the above standpoint we see that the principle of the Trinity is explained. The sun which is in the sky, and the sun in the mirror are one, are they not? We do not believe that there are two suns, and yet we see that there are two suns.

We must investigate the reality, and not follow the imitation, for the Jews were expecting the coming of the Messiah, lamenting day and night—saying: "O God send to us our Deliverer!" But as they walked in the path of dogmas, rather than reality, when the Messiah appeared they denied Him. If they had been the investigators of reality, they would not have crucified, but have worshipped Him.

Monnier: Is the unification of religion possible? If so, when and how and through what channel will it be realized?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: When the devotees of religion cast away their dogmas and ritualism then the unification of religion will be in sight, and the realities of the Holy Books will become unveiled. In these days misunderstandings hold the upper hand. When these misunderstandings and blind imitations are relinquished then the Sun of Unity or religions shall dawn.

When I was in San Francisco I was invited to speak in a Jewish synagogue; there were nearly 2,000 Jews present in the Temple. I said, I desire to propound before you a question, but I request you to listen to it carefully, till I finish, and then if you have any objections, state them:

It is about 2,000 years that between you and the Christians there has been friction and opposition, but when we investigate the reality we find that such a state of affairs should not exist. Owing to the misunderstandings which today have blinded the eyes and exist among you and the Christians, you conceive that His Holiness the Christ was the enemy of Moses, the destroyer of the laws of the Pentateuch, the abrogator of the commandments of the Bible.

Let us now search after the truth, and discover whether this supposition on your part corresponds with fact or not.

When we investigate the reality we observe that Christ appeared amongst you at a time when according to your own historians the laws of the Torah were forgotten, the foundation of religion and faith was shaken. Nebuchadnezzar had come, burning the context of the whole Bible, and taking into captivity many Jewish tribes. For the second time Alexander the Great had come. For the third time Titus, the Roman general, devastated the land, killed the Jews, pillaged their property, and imprisoned their children.

At such a time, under such gloomy conditions, His Holiness the Christ appeared. The first

thing He said was: "The Torah is the Divine Book, Moses is the Man of God, Aaron, Solomon, Isaiah, Zechariah, and all the Jewish prophets are valid and true." Throughout all regions He spread the Bible.

For 1,500 years the Bible was not sent out of Palestine, but Christ promulgated it in all countries. Were it not for Christ the name of Moses and His Book would not have [IV:3:54] reached America. During 1,500 years the Torah was only once translated, but Christ was the cause of its being translated into 600 languages. Now be just, was Christ the friend or the enemy of Moses?

You say that He abrogated the Torah, but I say he promulgated the Torah, the Ten Commandments and all the questions which belong to its moral world. But He changed the following, that for a small theft one cannot cut off the hand. If a person blind another he must not be blinded, or if he breaks another's teeth, his teeth should not be broken.

Is it possible nowadays that for \$1,000,000 the hand of the culprit be cut off with the law? Or to establish the archaic laws of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth?

Therefore Christ changed only that part of the Mosaic religion which was not in accord with the spirit of His time. He did not desire to abolish the Torah.

You, yourselves, are of the opinion in this day that these laws are not timely but are out of date and impracticable.

Is it not true that the Christians believe that Moses was the Prophet of God, and all the Jewish seers were the Messengers of God, and the Bible is the Book of God? Has this belief of theirs harmed their religion? They answered "no". Then you may just say from your heart that Christ is the Word of God, then all these differences will end. The persecutions of the last 2,000 years have been on account of this fact, that you were not willing to proclaim these two words.

But I hope it is proven to you that Moses had no better friend than His Holiness Christ.

In short, misunderstanding between the religions is conducive to differences. When these misunderstandings and blind imitations are forgotten then the unification of the religions will become a reality.

Today the enmity and rivalry existing between the religions are over mere words.

It is an established fact that the followers of all the religions believe in a Reality, the benefits of which are universal; which Reality is a medium between God and man. The Jews call that Reality Moses, the Christians Christ, the Muslim Muḥammad, the Buddhists Buddha, and the Zoroastrians Zoroaster.

Now mark well that none of these religionists have ever seen the Founders, they have only heard His name. If they overlooked these names they would realize that they all believed in a perfect Reality which is an intermediary between the Almighty and His creatures.

Their dissension is over a word, otherwise they all share in common the belief of the Mediatorship between the Creator and the creature.

If you speak to a Jew about the medium or channel between God and man, without referring to any particular name or trying to make him believe in any special person, he would say—"Yes, this is right, but I say the name of this medium is Moses."

If you go on giving the exposition of this divine philosophy to the followers of each religion they will all agree with you in the abstract, but they will stick to the names of their own prophets, and arise in contention and strife over these names. But in reality and in

significance they are all believers and agreed. The Jew believes in Christ, but he knows nothing about it, he is quibbling over the mere word.

In short there have been wars and rumours of war amongst the people of the world for many thousand years; much innocent blood has been shed, many kingdoms and empires have been laid waste.

Now it is enough! Religion must be the means of good fellowship and love. It must upraise the standard of harmony and solidarity. If religion is conducive to hatred and enmity, irreligion is better, because such pseudo-religion gives no result, nay rather its existence is harmful to the welfare of the body-politic.

God has founded the religions so that they might be the bond of amity and mutual association between the people.

His Holiness Christ did not sacrifice His own life so that the people might believe that He is the Word of God; nay rather He gave up His life so that He might bestow Eternal Life to the world of humanity. That is why He said, "The Son of Man is come to give life to the world."

Later on this subject was forgotten by the people, certain blind imitations crept in, and the words Father, Son and Holy Spirit became current.

The original foundation was lost sight of. Christ said, "If someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the left." Is there any relation between this commandment and the bloody events taking place in the Balkans? No!

The religious differences between the Catholics and Protestants have caused in the past [IV:3:55] the destruction of 900,000 lives. No doubt you are aware of this fact. What relation have these events with the statement of Christ when He addressed Peter: "Put thy sword into the scabbard"? Therefore when we hold fast to the foundations of the religions of God, all these differences are dispelled.

Monnier: Is your aim to found a new religion?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Our aim is to free the foundations of the religion of God from dogmas, for the Sun of Reality is prevented from shining forth by black impenetrable clouds. We desire to dispel these clouds, so that the regions of the world may be flooded and illumined with its luminous rays, so that these foul clouds may never return. The rays of the Sun of Reality may encircle all countries, for this Sun has no beginning and no ending.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá* arose.)

Monnier: Our hope is likewise the spread of such ideals of unity, peace, and concord. We hope to be your co-workers, and co-labourers in this field.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: This is likewise my hope, that the utmost unity may be established between us, such a unity which is not ended by separation.

(*'Abdu'l-Bahá* went into the library, where several clergy and professors came to him to be presented. One of them said):

I desire to express our deepest gratitude and pleasure on the part of those present. In reality what you said was in keeping with facts. Our aim is likewise the establishment of universal peace and brotherhood.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Praise be to God that our aims and hopes are one, but we must strive to make this purpose realized.

A Professor: The International Congress of Religions will be opened in Paris during the month of July. We hope that you will be able to accept the invitation to take part in the

proceedings of that Congress.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: It is nearly two years that I have been out of Haifa. I must return. After 40 years of confinement and two years of continual travelling, all my powers are exhausted. I can hardly speak.

Professor: The invitation of the Congress will be sent to you, and we hope you will write a message that may be read during one of the sessions.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Very well.

IV:3, 28 April 1913 [IV:3:56]

Recent Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To his honour Mr Charles Mason Remey, Washington, D.C.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou illumined youth and my spiritual beloved!

Thy letter was received and its perusal imparted happiness impossible to describe. It was an indication of the loftiness of thy nature, the strength of thy effort and the purity of thy intentions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's happiness is caused by such matters. If the material luxuries of the whole earth were available to 'Abdu'l-Bahá He would not think for one moment that there is such a thing as comfort and luxury in the world. But when a soul-perfuming fragrance wafts from the rose-garden of the hearts of the friends to the nostrils of 'Abdu'l-Bahá such joy is realized that involuntarily I render thanksgiving unto the Blessed Perfection Who has trained such servants.

In brief, your letter imparted to me the utmost happiness. This thought of yours is very appropriate.¹ I hope that a new quickening may be produced in the hearts of the believers, and great firmness and steadfastness became manifest, that this may lead to the guidance of others.

Therefore, with a divine power, a heavenly resolution and purpose, an eloquent tongue and a heart overflowing with the Love of God, take in thy hands the Tablets and travel throughout the cities, even as far as Honolulu in Hawaii. Travel thou in all the American cities. Call every one to *Firmness in the Covenant!* Exhilarate every one with the Spiritual Wine of the Covenant! And guide every one to the diffusion of the Fragrance of GOD! Raise the cry of "*Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!*"² and call the name of "*Yá 'Alíyyu'l-A'lá!*"³ ("O Thou the Exalted, the Most Exalted!").

Awaken the friends, for ere long a test shall come. Perchance some persons outwardly firm and inwardly wavering shall come to those parts in order to weaken the faith of the friends in the Covenant of God. Let them be awake! Let them be mindful! As soon as they see a trace of violation of the Covenant, they must hold aloof from the violator. Day and night let them strive so that the Lights of the Kingdom of Abhá may encircle the globe and the darkness of error may entirely be dispelled. ...

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

¹ Referring to a letter telling of the spiritual awakening among the people caused by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America.

² A form of Bahá'u'lláh's name that is used as an invocation.

³ A form of the Báb's name that is used as an invocation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá at Stuttgart

From notes in German sent by Margarethe Doering and M. Schweizer, Stuttgart.

Translated into English by Mr Charles Ioas, Chicago.

'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived at Stuttgart, Germany, in the evening of 1 April 1913. The friends called the following day at the hotel, or met him in the afternoon at the home of Mr and Mrs Herrigel, where great numbers of people were present. All were radiant and happy, and rejoiced in his presence. When he entered he bowed to all sides and then sitting down asked, "How are you all?" after which he spoke the following words, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and Herrn Herrigel, and taken stenographically by M. Schweizer:

"Praise be to God! that I have come to Stuttgart, that I could meet with you. Praise be to God! because your faces are radiant with the light of the Glory of God; your hearts are attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá. Thank God that you have heard the call of God. You are living in the day of the Lord. You are living in the days of the radiances of the Sun of Reality. The rays of this Sun have poured into your hearts and souls. Your hearts are illuminated, your inner vision clear. Your spirit rejoiced in the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. Thank God that you are the elect of God. He has elected you because of His own love. The mercies of God have surrounded you. You must live in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh Be loving to all mankind. Consort with all religions in amity and fragrance. You must be the cause of the education of the world of humanity. At present the world is still very dark. From one side there threatens the darkness of ignorance; from another side black enmity is visible; from the other side we hear of war and rumours of war. We must, like a candle, shine with the light of Bahá'u'lláh in order that through your efforts this darkness may be dispelled. The light of the love of God can illumine the East and the West. It can change hatred and enmity into love and friendship. The clouds which veil the rays of the Sun of Reality must be dispelled and made to disappear. The world must be rejuvenated. Eternal life must be made possible. The rays of the Kingdom must shine forth. The breath of the Holy Spirit can quicken the dead. I shall always pray for you and I shall supplicate for divine confirmations for each one of you, in order that ye may become more enkindled day by day, more attracted, so that each one of you will become a herald of the Kingdom. This is the eternal glory. This is the eternal life. This is the entrance into the Kingdom of God, the dominion which will last forever.

"I am very glad to be here. It is my hope that through the bounty of God you may become givers of life at this time. May God bless you all! May the blessings pour down upon you!"

After these words 'Abdu'l-Bahá went into another room, saying that all who had not met him could come to him. To those present he made a short talk, after which he arose and shook hands with all.

In the evening of 3 April, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed a large public meeting in the upper hall of the City Museum. When he entered all arose. Happiness shone on all faces. After a short welcome 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke the following, which was translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and Mr Eckstein, and taken stenographically by F. R. and M. Schweizer:

"I came from a distant land. I have travelled twenty thousand miles until I came to you in Stuttgart. Forty years I was a prisoner. I was young when I was put into prison and my hair was white when the prison doors opened. After all these long years of the sufferings of prison life I willingly took upon myself all the hardships of a long journey. Now I am here in order to be united with you, in order to [IV:4:68] meet you. My purpose is that perchance you may illumine the world of humanity; that all men may unite in perfect love and friendship; that religious prejudices, national prejudices, race distinctions, all may be completely abandoned. The religions of today consist of dogmas. Because these dogmas differ from each other,

discord and even hatred is manifest. Religion must be the basis of all good fellowship. Think of the turmoil that today exists in the Balkans; how much blood is shed; how many thousands of mothers have lost their sons, how many children have become orphans, and how many buildings, villages, and cities have been destroyed! The Balkan states have become a volcano. All this ruin originates from the prejudices created by the different dogmas, called forth by superstitions and race prejudices.

“The essence of the religion of God is love, and the Holy Books bear testimony to that, for the essence of the religion of God is the light of the world of humanity; but mankind today has forgotten what constitutes true religion. Each nation and each people today hold to some definite dogma.

“Everything in the world is subject to change. But this transmutation and change are requirements of life. See, for instance, these flowers before us. They come forth from a seed. They grow to perfection, but when they have reached the state of perfection they go back again. This is the invariable law of creation. Likewise man develops until he has grown to maturity. When he reaches beyond the state of maturity he begins to decline. All religions of God are subject to this same law. They are founded in order to blossom out and develop and fulfil their mission. They reach their zenith and then decline and come to an end. So a few thousand years ago came Moses. He promulgated the ten commandments. Later these laws were changed, and this change was so complete that of the original nothing more was visible. Then God sent the Roman Empire to destroy the Holy Land, because the Jews had forgotten the law of God. They had in the end only a bundle of superstitions. When this religion had sunk to such a depth, God sent his Holiness Jesus Christ. His Holiness Christ appeared as the Light of the Sun, and He founded anew the religion of God. He revived the light which had been given by Moses and fulfilled that law.

“This should show you that religion is subject to change. So, also, religion is full of superstition. There is today nothing more than tradition to feed upon. Therefore our souls must strive day and night in order that the foundations of divine religion may again be newly revived. These traditions and these dogmas are like the husks surrounding the kernel. We must release the kernel from the husk. The world of humanity is in the dark. Our aim is to illumine mankind. It is natural that after the darkness of every night the brilliant day will come. It is our hope that this darkness may be dispelled and that the rays of the Sun of Reality will shine again. We are confident that the darkness will again be followed by the brightness of the day. It is our hope that after the cold winter a new spring will come, giving new life to nature, so that the trees of humanity will again sprout and become verdant in the gardens, so that they may bring forth leaves and blossoms and fruit. Thanks be to God, the illumined century has dawned. Thank God that this spiritual spring has come. Thanks be to God, that the reality of all things has been revealed. This century is the century of light. This period is the period of science. This cycle is the cycle of reality. This age is the age of progress and freedom of thought. This day is the greatest day of the Lord. This time is the time of eternal life. This age is the age of the breath of the Holy Spirit. This time is the time in which all is resurrected into new life. Therefore, I desire that all may be united in harmony. Strive and work so that the standard of the world of human Oneness may be raised among men, so that the lights of universal peace may shine and the East and the West embrace, and the material world become a mirror of the Kingdom of God, that eternal light may shine forth and that the day break which will not be followed by the night.

In this age every face must turn to God, so that spiritual enlightenment will go hand in hand with material education. Material education alone cannot make the world happy. Spiritual civilization must assist the material civilization. The men of science and philosophy are the founders of the material education, but His Holiness Christ was the founder of the spiritual, divine civilization. Material civilization serves the world of men, but the spiritual civilization

founds the world of morals. These two kinds of civilization must go hand in hand. The material civilization is like the lamp, but the spiritual civilization is like the light in the lamp. This lamp without the light is a useless thing. Therefore, in our day philosophy and science must go hand in hand with the spiritual civilization. The material civilization is like the body; the spiritual civilization is like the spirit which is the life to the body. So long as the spirit gives life to the body, we behold a living thing, but a body without spirit is dead. It is my desire that ye all may reach the state of spiritual civilization. Like as ye have made great progress in material science, so may ye also progress in the spiritual world. Then the light of the Kingdom of God will shine through all the world. May the Sun of Reality illumine the East and the West.”

Many meetings were held on 5 April. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the guest of the Esperanto Association. The president, Professor Christaller, welcomed him in appropriate words, in reply to which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá then addressed the gathering.

On Sunday, 6 April, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed a large gathering at the Hotel Marquardt. In the afternoon the friends met in the garden of Consul Schwarz, where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá consented to be photographed with those present. He arranged the group himself. Then he had flowers distributed in order that each might have one. When he went into the automobile of Consul Schwarz, he was surrounded by the friends. The children came to him and presented flowers. It was a beautiful picture, with the children around the car.

In the evening a large meeting was held in the hall of the Upper Museum. Miss A. S. Knobloch said a prayer, Miss Staebler sang and then Consul Schwarz introduced ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in an eloquent speech, which we hope to have translated in the near future. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá then addressed those present. When he had concluded he passed through the hall and shook hands with each one. From the hall ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to the home of Miss Doering.

On the 7th he visited the springs at Mergentheim with Consul Schwarz, and on the 8th departed for Budapest.

IV:4, 17 May 1913 [IV:4:70]

Meeting the capacity of the seeker

Louise Dixon Boyle

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has repeatedly referred to the various human types as differing “like flowers in the rose-garden of God”. And in this day of unity and universal realization, we see clearly the necessity of recognizing the “fragrance” of all types and of according to each his opportunity of “diffusion” or expression.

In giving the world this knowledge of the Day of God, no duty impresses itself so persistently upon the Bahá’í as the necessity to meet the capacity of the seeker, and to realize among human beings a marked dissimilarity in approaching the teachings.

It will be only in the perspective of history that the full extent of religious decadence during the past few centuries will be realized. Around the significance of divinity there has accumulated a false atmosphere, due to our human association of it with the tangible. And it is inevitable, in the dawn of a new spiritual age, that many souls—possibly destined for a particular activity in it—should experience a reaction in turning from their old conceptions. It is this reaction, perhaps, rather than an essential incapacity or antagonism, which withholds many from a full acceptance of the Bahá’í teachings. Such souls represent so large a proportion of the thinking people in the world today that it is impossible to confuse their spirit with that of the anti-Christ; although, undoubtedly, many of them, in searching hither and thither for truth, will permit the brief span of their lives to pass unsatisfied.

To assist all earnest inquirers to assimilate the teachings is the important privilege of

Bahá'ís today. Surely it must be such as remain in the restricted environment of dogma and self who represent the element of opposition, rather than they who have felt the new vibrations afar off and cast away tradition in an effort to approach them.

It was with particular reference to questions asked by this type of inquirer, after the receipt of recent cablegrams from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that the following notes were submitted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In returning them with interpolations he has "commanded"¹ that they be printed in the *Star of the West*.

After the departure of the Báb the friends of God were in a state of utter confusion and bewilderment. "A few who claimed to be the leaders of this scattered community, fearing the loss of their lives, were hiding in remote and inaccessible villages, not daring to associate publicly with the people. The believers of God were like sheep without a shepherd; not one knew his duty." It was at such a time as this, in the extreme necessity for guidance and authority, that Bahá'u'lláh came forth and declared Himself to be the Promised One. The perfect meeting of the demand with the supply, the need with its fulfilment, is one of the fundamental laws of God.

Now in our day 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said:

"The Cause has become very great. Many souls are entering it—souls with different mentalities and range of understanding. Complex difficulties constantly rise before us. The administration of the Cause has become very difficult. Conflicting thoughts and theories attack the Cause from every side. Now consider to what extent the believers of God must become firm and soul-sacrificing. Every one must become the essence of essences; each one must become a brilliant lamp. People all around the world are entering the Cause; people of various tribes and nations and religions and sects. It is most difficult to administer to such heterogeneous elements. Wisdom and divine insight are necessary. Firmness and steadfastness are needed at such a crucial period of the Cause."

He has said repeatedly:

"Today the most important affair is firmness in the Covenant because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences."

The finger of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, like that of a great physician, is upon the pulse of all the spiritual conditions forming the Kingdom of God on earth. He knows far in advance of any outward demonstration just what error will manifest itself as a menace to the Cause and a test to the believers. He knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves because His insight is unerring in the spiritual realm. We live in the world and accept the guidance of God to but a feeble and limited degree. The heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has always been turned to God and thus he has been the recipient of the holy confirmations since childhood. We know how these holy ones possess [IV:4:71] in its fullness in this day that "universal divine mind" whose power is "conscious, not acquired".

Man's knowledge of God and His manifestation in human form is the most profound of subjects. We are capable of considering it only through the assistance of these Holy Educators, who have given the world all its ideals, all its spiritual vocabulary.

So during his visit to America, in the full knowledge of conditions and with the utmost wisdom and insight, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred us to the proofs of his identity as the appointed Centre of the Covenant and the Greatest Branch, as a protection to us and to the Cause,—not in revocation of his standard of servitude so gloriously upraised in the world—in confirmation, rather than revocation of that most precious ensign of the Kingdom!

¹ In a Tablet to the writer of this article, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says: "I have commanded to print and publish this article in the *Star of the West* so that all the believers in the East and the West may read it."—*The Editors*.

Since the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in our midst people are everywhere attracted to the teachings. It is most important that we should not make of this matter a dogma to offend. The self or ego is still so prominent in the human consciousness that the first inquiry of the groping soul for light is, “What does your leader claim for himself?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá assumed the mantle of servitude to answer this very question. He stands in the midst of life today as an example, an embodiment of an ideal—the relinquishment of self. For us, his chosen friends, not to contribute to that ideal is to retard human progress.

“We must first teach the people about the Lord of the Covenant, who is His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. When they become believers in the Lord of the Covenant, then we must explain to them the Centre of the Covenant.” We must say: He claims to be the Servant of God; he is the Centre of God’s Covenant with man in this day. And as the spiritual perception of the inquirer expands in contact with the teachings the great station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will unfold to him.

“In giving the teachings we must not mention the violators of the Covenant and thus render their acceptance difficult.” In sharing this foreknowledge with the friends, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has made us partners, as it were, with himself, has assumed that we are superior to evil suggestion, and that we will know how to use this knowledge most judiciously to protect the Cause.

Let us pray that we may so fully accept the Divine Guidance in every act of life that in the moment of test and difficulty we may stand as pillars of wisdom and strength in the Cause of God, firm in the Centre of the Covenant, and, like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself, manifest toward all mankind the utmost tenderness, for only in this way may we lead them into the Kingdom.

IV:4, 17 May 1913 [IV:4:71]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the friends in the Orient

O Friends of God! O spiritual companions!

The Lord of the peoples of the world declares in the beneficent Qur’án: “And there is for you in the Prophet of God a good example”: That is to say, to follow His Holiness is a good example and to imitate that Real Leader is the means of acquiring success in both of the worlds. The followers of the Prophet were commanded to follow Him in all affairs and manners, and when some individuals, having recognized this safe path as the Straight Road, travelled therein, they became Kings in the Land of the Righteous and the Kingdom of the Elect. And those souls who tried to acquire comfort with ease, deprived themselves of all bounties and perished in the lowest ditch of despair. Their days came to an end and their happiness terminated. Their bright morn became dark, and their transparent cup became full of dregs and rust. Their uprising star descended, and their bright luminary set.

But those pure souls who followed (in the footsteps of the Prophet) shone in the Highest Horizon as the Stars of Guidance and arose from the Dawning-place of hopes with matchless brilliancy. They sat on the Throne of the Kingdom of Eternity and rested on the couch of Divine Success. Their traces are clear and their lights brilliant; their star is luminous and their attendants are the armies of angels of the Heavens of Immortality. Their palace is firm and their edifice is strong. Their light is illumining the world and their heat is confirming the world.

Now judge for yourselves: Those souls who followed in the wake of that Manifest Light acquired such bounties and stations! If we now follow in the footsteps of the Most Glorious Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) and the most Exalted Majesty (the Báb)—may my [IV:4:74] life be a sacrifice for those who suffered martyrdom in their path—what would be the result?

His Exalted Majesty (the Báb), from the beginning of the arising of His Beauty to the day of the Greatest Martyrdom, spent days and nights under severest trials, in the Path of God; He

made His breast a target for thousands of arrows of calamities, and with a breast pierced and torn, hastened to the Most Glorious Kingdom.

The Eternal Beauty—the Greatest Name (Bahá'u'lláh)—tasted of the poison of every calamity, drank of the cup brimful of all kinds of trials, made His breast the target for every arrow, made His neck indebted to every sword. He was incarcerated in a prison and was bound in merciless chains. He was exposed to the derision of the crowds of enemies and became a butt for the stones of miscreants. He was subjected to chains and collars, and was tightly bound with ropes and fetters. He was exiled from His native land and was carried to the land of Bulgars¹ and Serbs. In the Most Great Prison ('Akká) He suffered inexorable calamities and His blessed days ended in this cruel prison and dark dungeon, while a prisoner of oppression and injustice, and He ascended to His Kingdom.

Now, O faithful friends and companions of that Bright Countenance! Is it becoming that we should sit idle, even for one moment, practice delay, and seek ease and comfort, so that we be exposed to temptation and indolence, be occupied with our own thoughts and lose our hearts to strangers and kindred? Nay, by God, we ought not to rest for one moment day nor night; we ought not to pollute our pure hearts with the attachment to this world; we must prepare Divine Assemblies, establish Feasts of Love, sing the melody of the Most Glorious Kingdom, accompanied with stringed instruments and with drums and flutes; hasten, dancing and laughing with joy, to the altar of martyrdom, and offer body and soul, head and trunk, as a sacrifice!

O friends, be loyal!

O beloved ones, be firm and steadfast!

O imploring ones, trust in God and rely upon Him!

O humble ones, be attached to God and cling to Him!

Let us encourage each other and set all in motion. Let us strive to diffuse the Fragrance of God and engage ourselves in exalting the Word of God!

Let us ever be alert through the influence of the gentle breeze wafted from the Garden of Favour, and enjoy the Sweet Fragrance of the Garden of Unity!

Let us put enthusiasm and commotion into the hearts of the righteous, and excitement and joy into the hearts of the free!

Praise be to God, that the hosts of the Most Glorious Kingdom are coming together in large numbers and the Stars of the Highest Horizon are in uprising and ascension! The Banner of Guidance is in motion, the Cloud of Bounty is descending in a shower, and the Luminary of the Horizon of Significance is shining! The Feast and the enjoyment of the Kingdom are in complete harmony, and the Dawn of Favour is breaking with the Light of Guidance! It is the Melody of the Kingdom of Abhá which is descending from the Supreme Concourse, saying

O dead one, who art without heart and soul! Become alive! Become alive!

O sleeping one, in the water and clay! Be awake! Be awake!

O intoxicated one, who art witless and gone astray! Become sensible! Become sensible!

The horizons are full of fragrance! The eyes are full of light and the East is pouring down fire! Get rid of body and soul!

The time of sacrifice has come; the Merciful Breath abounds and the Divine Secrets are disclosed! Be a leader of lovers! Be a leader!

¹ A member of a tribe who settled in what is now Bulgaria in the 7th century.

The sweet song of the melodious singing bird from the Branch of the Cypress Tree in the Garden is expounding the problems of spirituality! Be acquainted with the mysteries! Be acquainted with the mysteries!

'Abdu'l-Bahá
Translated in 1909.

IV:4, 17 May 1913 [IV:4:72]

“O, My soldiers! My beloved soldiers! Forward!”

Talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá given in Stuttgart, Germany.

While 'Abdu'l-Bahá was one day looking out of his hotel window he observed a regiment of soldiers passing by in great array, and he said:

“They are ready to fight for their fatherland. How barbarous it seems to send men, who do not even know each other, to the battlefield in order to shoot each other down.

“The Bahá'í Grand Army consists of the invisible angels of the Supreme Concourse. Our swords are the Words of Light. Our armament is the armament of heaven. We are fighting against the forces of darkness.

“O, my soldiers! My beloved soldiers! Forward! Forward! Have no fear of defeat—do not have failing hearts. Our Supreme Commander is Bahá'u'lláh. From the heights of Glory He is directing this dramatic engagement. He commands us! Rush forward! Rush forward! Show the strength of your arms. Ye shall scatter the forces of ignorance!

“Your war confers Life; their war brings death. Your war is the cause of the illumination of all mankind; their war means the breaking and darkness of hearts. Your war means victory upon victory; their war is defeat upon defeat. Your war is the means of construction; their war is the origin of destruction.

“There are no dangers before you. Push forward! Push forward! Attack the enemy! Your efforts shall be crowned with the diadem of Eternal Peace and Brotherhood.

“His Holiness the Christ was fighting even upon the Cross, and His triumphant work continued through ages and cycles.”

IV:4, 17 May 1913 [IV:4:73]

Harriet M. Wise

6 February 1867—1 April 1913

On the morning of 1 April, at Hermosa Beach, California, our dear sister Harriet M. Wise ascended to the Supreme Concourse. For a long time she had been a patient sufferer, but her life was prolonged that she might taste the sweetness of the past year, when, in July, with Mrs Goodall and Mrs Cooper, of Oakland, she spent several glorious days in the presence of the Centre of the Covenant. She came home radiant in spirit but sick in body, and steadily declined in health.

Tablet to Miss Harriet M. Wise

HE IS GOD.

O thou who hast turned thy face towards the Kingdom!

I read what thou hadst written. Know thou that there is in the world of existence a Centre, for each great matter, and bounties shower from that Centre. For instance, in the circle of the sun, the sun is the centre of the light. Likewise there is a real Centre for pure Love and now that Centre is manifest in this world, from which the Lights of Love reflect to all parts of the Universe. If thou partake but one ray from that Centre, thou wouldst become self-sufficient

from the world, finding a new condition and witnessing an exaltation which overshadows all the existence. Pray God that thou mayest catch with all thy exertion the Lights of the Love from that Centre.

Upon thee be greetings and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

5 September 1905

IV:5, 5 June 1913 [IV:5:88]

The “strong rope”

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning “Firmness in the Covenant”.

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Harriet Cline of Los Angeles, California.

Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received. It was an indication that thou art spending thy days in the Commemoration of the Blessed Perfection, and art firm and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament and art holding fast to the “Strong Rope”.

Today firmness in the Covenant is the means of the promotion of the Word of God, and conducive to the effect of the word of man. Any explanation, which does not accord with the Covenant will have no effect whatsoever. Therefore, whosoever heralds the Covenant of God, unquestionably he is confirmed.

This has been tried a thousand times. Any soul who violates the Covenant and Testament *the least degree, immediately he is cut off*; even in this material world he will become afflicted with remorse and regret. Consequently as much as ye are able, call the people to the Covenant and make the souls firm and steadfast.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by M. Ahmed Sohrab, Paris, France, 29 March 1913.

IV:5, 5 June 1913 [IV:5:88]

Three kinds of persecution

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered during his sojourn in America [first two paragraphs are a revised translation].

All who stand up in the cause of God will be persecuted and misunderstood. It hath ever been so, and will ever be. Let neither enemy nor friend disturb your composure, destroy your happiness, deter your accomplishment. Rely wholly upon God. Then will persecution and slander make you the more radiant. The designs of your enemies will rebound upon them. They, not you, will suffer.

Oppression is the wind that doth fan the fire of the Love of God. Welcome persecution and bitterness. A soldier may bear arms, but until he hath faced the enemy in battle he hath not earned his place in the king's army. Let nothing defeat you. God is your helper. God is invincible. Be firm in the Heavenly Covenant. Pray for strength. It will be given to you, no matter how difficult the conditions.¹

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was sent to 'Akká, he experienced three kinds of persecution. Two

¹ First two paragraphs from *Crisis and Victory*, no. 308, pp. 155–156.

kinds were easy to bear. When he arrived in 'Akká they placed chains upon his limbs and circlets of steel were locked around his ankles and knees. While the guards were doing this 'Abdu'l-Bahá laughed and sang. They were as- [IV:5:89] tonished and said, "How is this? You are laughing and singing. When prisoners are ironed in this way, they usually cry out, weep and lament." 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, "I rejoice because you are doing me a great kindness; you are making me very happy. For a long time I have wished to know the feelings of a prisoner in irons, to experience what other men have been subjected to. I have heard of this; now you have taught me what it is. You have given me this opportunity. Therefore I sing and am very happy. I am very thankful to you." After a time the men who had been appointed to keep guard over me became as loving brothers and companions. They strove to lighten my imprisonment by acts of kindness. They said, "In order that you may not be subjected to the jeers of the people when you walk upon the streets we will arrange your clothing so these chains are not visible." They took the chains which were upon my limbs, gathered the ends together and wrapped them as a girdle around my waist, then arranged my clothing so no chains were visible. One day I wished to go to the hammám (public bath). The guards said, "It will not be possible for you to go to the bath unless these chains are removed; and furthermore it will attract notice from the people in the streets." 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "I will go."

The guards then carefully gathered the hanging chains around my waist, covered them with my clothing and we went forth. As we passed through the streets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá took the chains from his waist, flung their loose, dangling ends over his shoulders in full view and walked to the hammám, followed by a great crowd of hooting, jeering people. The guards were most unhappy, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in supreme joy because of this opportunity to walk in the freedom of the Pathway of God. After many years the doors of 'Akká were opened, the prison walls thrown down and the chains which 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd had placed upon the body of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were put around the neck of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd himself.

In brief, this kind of persecution was easy to bear. There was a second form of persecution to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá was continually subjected at 'Akká. Spies and enemies were constantly informing the authorities that he was plotting against the government, that he was secretly instigating revolution and teaching principles in opposition to the Muslim religion. In consequence of these reports and statements 'Abdu'l-Bahá underwent a great deal of restriction, difficulty and personal discomfort, but, Praise be to God! always in the utmost joy and exaltation. Sometimes the rigour of his restriction was increased; often he was threatened with death; often threatened with confinement in another prison fortress, but nothing was accomplished by his enemies that could lessen his complete happiness. On the contrary, the more falsehoods they invented, the more evident became his innocence and sincerity, the more constant his thanksgiving and rejoicing. This form of persecution was likewise easy to bear.

But there was a third kind of persecution which brought 'Abdu'l-Bahá sorrow and unhappiness, a persecution difficult to bear: the bitter words and criticisms of the friends. Where love was expected, hatred and jealousy was found; instead of friendship and kindness, envy and discord were manifested; instead of harmony there appeared dissension and ill-wishing; in place of assistance and appreciation, calumny, falsehood and slander. This is hard to bear.

Now, Praise be to God! turn all your thoughts and devote all your powers to the Divine Covenant. Unless a servant in the Cause of God is subjected to all these persecutions he is not fitted to spread the Heavenly Message of Glad Tidings. Follow 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Let nothing hinder or defeat you. God is your helper and God is invincible.

Training for service in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered during his sojourn in America.

I wish to train you until you have no other I thought, no other motive, no other wish than service in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The Divine Educators who have brought the Light of Guidance to this world found neither rest nor comfort by day or night. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Bahá'u'lláh,—all the Heavenly Messengers suffered the utmost privation and underwent extreme hardships in the Pathway of God. They were exiled from their native land, imprisoned, driven from city to city; they were homeless, hungry and found no rest; they lived in the fields and hid in caves among the mountains; the sky was their canopy, the hard earth their bed. But all these difficulties and hardships served only to increase their power and accomplishment. Through these privations and persecutions they were severed from the world. Although they walked upon the earth, they lived in Heaven. Deprived of material food they partook of the eternal fruits of Paradise. Homeless and forsaken in this world, they rested upon the Divine Couch of Nearness. Day and night they were unceasingly proclaiming the Call of the Kingdom and establishing the foundations of the Most Great Peace.

It was so likewise with their disciples and followers. All of them walked in the Pathway of God and drank the cup of martyrdom with thanksgiving. They sought no rest but service and hastened to the Supreme Concourse in the utmost joy and ecstasy.

Through my training you must become so fitted to spread the Glad-Tidings of the Abhá Kingdom that you will follow in the footsteps of these blessed ones in gladness. In Persia there is a wonderful breed of horses which are trained to run long distances at very great speed. They are most carefully trained at first. They are taken out into the fields and made to run a short course. At the commencement of their training they are not able to run far. The distance is gradually increased. They become thinner and thinner, wiry and lean, but their strength increases. Finally, after months of rigid training, their swiftness and endurance become wonderful. They are able to run at full speed across rough country many parasangs¹ of distance. At first this would have been impossible. Not until they become trained, thin and wiry, can they endure this severe test.

In this way I shall train you. “Kam-kam”, “kam-kam” (little by little, little by little), until your powers of endurance become so increased that you will serve the Cause of God continually, without other motive, without other thought or wish. This is my desire.

You must become impervious to criticism, unconscious of attack and abuse, nay, rather welcoming persecution, hostility and bitterness as the means of testing and increasing your supreme faith in God; even as His Holiness Christ instructed His disciples “Bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you.” Be therefore as spiritual adamant against these darts, arrows and swords of infliction. We will help each other to bear them. First by love and increased zeal in the Heavenly Cause. For by exercise the spirit grows stronger, more capable of withstanding, just as the muscle of the outer body increases its fibre through continual action. You must [IV:6:105] help me and I will help you to increase our service in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh Secondly; we will help each other grow more and more accustomed to punishment and persecution. Years ago in Baghdád the usual punishment for offenders and lawbreakers was the bastinado. The governor noticed that a certain band of men came repeatedly before him for trial. They were regularly found guilty of breaking the law, sentenced and whipped upon the feet. While the bastinado was being inflicted they appeared quite comfortable and evidently unconscious of pain. In a few days these same offenders

¹ A parsang or farsang is between 3 and 4 miles (6 to 7 km). Arabic *farsakh*.

would be back again, going through the same process. The governor made careful inquiry about them. It was learned that they lived together in a house and that every day it was their custom to bastinado each other until the skin upon their feet had become so hardened to the whip that the legal bastinado gave them no inconvenience whatever.

Now we, as offenders against the opinions of our friends and enemies, must assist each other to become impervious to their criticism, unconscious of attack, welcoming their whips. You must beat me and I will beat you with the whips of love. The more we beat each other the more capable of withstanding we will become. When the enemies find they are increasing our love, enkindlement and service in the pathway of Bahá'u'lláh, they will wonder and say, "How is this? Our words have no effect upon them except to make them love us more and give thanks to God for our scourging."

The Blessed Beauty Bahá'u'lláh won the hearts of his jailers and tormentors. No one could withstand Him. The intense flame of His love melted the hardest stone of hearts. The more chains of iron they put upon His body, the more He imprisoned them in chains of love. They looked upon Him in wonder; they became His followers.

IV:6, 24 June 1913 [IV:6:105]

Material and divine education

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered during his sojourn in America.

The heart of man is a garden. The real garden is in order, well planted, watered and cultivated. This is not so with the jungle. The jungle gives no evidence of cultivation. Where there is no gardener disorder prevails. Wild growth produces nothing. Human education is of great importance. It is especially necessary to educate the children. They are the young tender trees of God's planting. But the supreme education is Divine Teaching. Through it the most ignorant become wise and the lowest are elevated to the loftiest heights. This transformation in man is made by the Manifestations of God. Through them the wicked become righteous, the weak firm, the barren fruitful. One day's education under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is better than ten years material training in the universities of the world. Bahá'u'lláh has said two steps are necessary for human development;—Material and Divine Education. In the world of humanity, we see some seeking upward, some downward.

Material scientists endeavour to show the evolution of the species man from the monkey. The Prophets of God have been occupied in explaining that man has descended from the Divine Spirit. The professors and learned scientists of materialism glory in the evidences that the ape is the progenitor of humanity and make exhaustive efforts to discover proof of it. If we should ask the ape, he would say "Unquestionably we are all one,—of this I am certain without the aid of scientific inquiry, ethnological proof, biological deductions or geological findings; I believe what I see"—for the ape is a real, a true materialist.

The real materialist is the animal. Compared to the animal, man is but a tyro and novice in materialism. The animal is a natural materialist. He does not mention God and knows nothing about the Kingdom. He depends solely upon sense perception. That which is not perceptible to the senses he rejects. From this standpoint of knowing the greatest Plato is the cow, and the donkey is an arch philosopher. In the great university of nature, where nothing beyond the pale of sensibilities is classified as knowledge, the animal is a graduate and the human materialist but an under-graduate.

If a child is left to its own natural proclivities, without education, it will embody all human

defects. Education makes of man a man. Religion is Divine Education. There are two pathways which have been pointed out by the Heavenly Educators. The first is [IV:6:106] Divine Guidance and reliance upon the Manifestations of God. The other is the road of Materialism and reliance upon the senses. These roads lead in opposite directions. The first leads to the world of the Kingdom; the other ends in the world of human vices, and is contrary to the cause of Divine Guidance. For example;—consider a babe at the mother’s breast;—observe its natural aggressiveness,—its instinctive antagonism. It claws and bites the mother, even attacks the fountain of life itself. A barbarous and savage country is a country which has been deprived of education, where men are utter materialists like animals. Such a nation embodies all human defects and vices. They even kill and eat each other. Divine Education is the sum total of all development. It is the safeguard of humanity. The world of nature is a world of defects and incompleteness. The world of the Kingdom is reached by the highway of Religion and is the Heaven of all Divine Virtues.

IV:9, 20 August 1913 [IV:9:155]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Stuttgart and Esslingen, Germany

Extracts from Letters of Miss Alma S. Knobloch and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, addressed to Mrs Pauline Knobloch Hannen.

The most impressive feature of the letters from Stuttgart was the description of the children’s meeting, at Esslingen, about which Miss Knobloch wrote as follows:

“We have had some wonderful meetings; the one in Esslingen surpassed them all. It was the children’s meeting, last Friday, 4 April 1913, in the afternoon. They had secured a very pretty hall, which was most beautifully decorated with greens, plants and flowers, with large and small tables near the walls and round tables in the centre. About fifty children and eighty adults were present. In a smaller room adjoining the hall the children had been assembled holding flowers in their hands, forming two lines for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to pass through. It looked most beautiful as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came upstairs. He passed through a short hall and looked so pleased and delighted to see the dear children.”

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab says of this scene: “I was overcome with surprise, emotion and joy, and could not contain myself; the tears filled my eyes. It was the most beautiful, the most heavenly, the most artistic picture that I have ever seen in all my life. It was so beautiful! I cannot describe these things; one must feel them, see them. It was a glorious day for these people, in a far-away town in Germany, to see with their own eyes the Beloved of all nations. What love! What attraction! What enkindlement these German believers have!

“The children handed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá their flowers as he came to them and greeted them. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s hands were full, he handed the flowers to one of the Persians, and went up one side and down the other. Then he gave them small boxes of chocolates and bon-bons. They were radiantly happy. Then he spoke to them, saying: “These children are of the Kingdom, they are illumined with the Light of God. They have pure hearts, clear as crystal, wherein the rays are reflected. I love them very much. They are mine. I hope they will receive Divine education, that they may receive Heavenly training; become fragrant plants in the Garden of Abhá. They are very dear to me. May God guide and protect them, make of them useful men and women for the advancement of the Kingdom on earth:

“Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered the hall. I had to push the people back, for they had come to the door to see what was going on. He seemed greatly pleased, as he entered the hall, to see the decorated tables and the green background. After a little while, he gave an address, which I took down. Tea was then served, and cake and chocolate were on the table. A photograph was then taken of the entire group, a copy of which I am sending you. After this ‘Abdu’l-Bahá got into the automobile, the children crowding around and waving their flowers. Then one

after another stepped up and handed their fragrant tokens. O, it looked really beautiful; I cannot describe it, so wonderfully sweet! The children waving their dear little hands, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the auto, covered with flowers, waving his blessed hands to them. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that this event would go down in history. The following were his words spoken on the morning of 5 April, at Hotel Marquardt, Stuttgart: "The effect of last night's meeting will be put on record in the world of eternity. The mentioning of it will be throughout centuries and will be recorded in the countries of the Orient. Because these children are tender plants, their hearts are clear and transparent. They have not yet come to the dross of the world; that is why Christ said: "Blessed are the children, for they are of the Heavenly Kingdom, being pure of heart." That [IV:9:162] was a spiritual meeting, a heavenly meeting, the Light of the Kingdom was shining upon it. The Confirmation of the Spirit surrounded that meeting."

'Abdu'l-Bahá reached Stuttgart at 8 pm, 1 April, and alighting from the train, proceeded at once to the hotel. On the train he had said to the Persians: "This is the best thing; we will arrive in Stuttgart, take our rooms in the hotel, settle down and call up the friends. How surprised they will be! Is this not a fine plan? We are going to surprise them. Then when they come they will find us in their midst, and knowing nothing about it at all. Yes! This is the best plan." He sent for Messrs Herrigel and Eckstein, and Miss Knobloch, and it was arranged that evening that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would receive the friends during the morning hours at the Hotel Marquardt, engagements and meetings to be planned for afternoons and evenings. The first afternoon was devoted to a drive in the Royal Park with Mr Herrigel, following which the many friends who were gathered at his home were seen. Another meeting was held at Mr Herrigel's home that evening, at which 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, addressing the believers: "How attracted and enkindled are the German Bahá'ís! How full of love they are! Love does not need a teacher."

On the morning of 3 April, many interviews were conducted, and numerous children were present. At 3 pm, when the stream of visitors had been seen, Consul Schwarz came with his automobile and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was taken to the famous Castle Solitude. Returning to the Consul's home, a number of prominent men and women were addressed. At 8 pm the first public meeting was held at the "Burger Museum"; more than five hundred persons were present.

4 April, many groups were seen at the hotel. Among other things 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that morning, after four hours of consecutive talk: "I was most happy to see the believers of Germany so holy, so pure and so united. They are the Angels of the Paradise of Abhá. You pray that the flame of the Divine Fire may be ignited in all Germany." At 4 pm the party left in an automobile for Esslingen, where the children's meeting, previously described, was conducted.

On Saturday, 5 April, the morning was occupied with many interviews. At 3 in the afternoon an automobile ride was planned to the Royal Palace of Emperor Wilhelm. This most interesting and historical place is built after the plan of the Alhambra. In the evening 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the Esperantists.

A trip through the noted cherry blossom district, with the trees abloom, and leading through the Black Forest, was a feature of 6 April. Later group photographs, which are being sent, were taken at the Park in Wangenburg. This was followed by a ride to Zuffenhausen, where Mr and Mrs Schweizer were visited at their home in that town. That evening the largest public meeting of the series was given at the "Obere Museum", in Stuttgart. This was arranged by the women Bahá'ís. The day closed with supper at the apartment of Misses Knobloch and Döring.

7 April, Mergentheim-Bad, over 100 miles from Stuttgart, was visited, the trip being taken in

automobiles of Consul Schwarz. The night was spent there, returning to Stuttgart 8 April. At 8 pm the party left for Budapest, making exactly eight days spent in and around Stuttgart.

Joseph H. Hannen.

IV:9, 20 August 1913 [IV:9:156]

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Stuttgart

On the Evening of 6 April 1913, in Obere Museum (Small Hall),

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and Mr Eckstein, interpreters; stenographic notes by F. R. and M. Schweizer.

Translated from the German by Mr and Mrs Charles Ioas, Chicago.

...

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Many meetings are organized and established in all parts of the world; societies and organizations for the extension of general intercourse and extension of industry. These are societies in the interest of arts, and political parties are formed in different lands to watch the interest of the party. The establishment of all these societies is, in reality, only for the material life. Praise be to God! This illuminated assembly has no other purpose than to serve God. It is established to bring about the oneness of the human societies, it is organized to establish the companionship among different nations and races, to promulgate universal peace, so that all religions may again find the foundation of unity, so that all nations may come under the shelter of mercy, for the foundation of all religion is brotherhood, comradeship and friendship to all. But alas, a thousand times alas! Religion, which should serve to promote oneness and love among men, has become an instrument of animosity and hatred. Religion, which was established to build up and gladden hearts, has become a means of darkening the world. All the prophets appeared that oneness of men might be taught. How much suffering these prophets had to endure to unfold this illumination among men. His Holiness Jesus Christ offered His life. He endured the greatest humiliation; His head was crowned with a crown of thorns. He endured all things so that the world might again unite and that He might cement the hearts of men through His love. But today the first duties of religion are neglected. The first duty and the basis of each religion is the love of God. Love has vanished and hate and animosity have taken its place. Instead of these simple principles we now have dogmas and imitations, and because the dogmas and imitations differ we have constantly strife and war. Fanaticism is the only aim. These fanatics are actually thirsty for their brother's blood, they condemned one another and considered each other unclean.

When this darkness encompassed the horizon of the East, there appeared in the Orient, Bahá'u'lláh, who illuminated the East. He proclaimed the oneness of mankind. He announced that all humanity are the sheep of One Shepherd, and God is the only true Shepherd of these sheep. He is a kind and true Shepherd. He could not be kind toward His sheep had He not created them. If He did not love them He would not take care of them. Now if God [IV:9:157] loves all, why should we be unkind to each other instead of loving one another? Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed the ideal of universal peace among religions. The fundamental principle of religion is one and the same—all the prophets guided mankind to divine love. They have called them to the knowledge of God. They have taught them the unity of the human race. They have summoned them to the furtherance of human virtues. They have enlightened the fundamental law of morality. The differences of the various religions are the results of dogmas and imitations, so we must give up dogmas and turn our faces to the foundation of religion. Dogmas have always been the cause of strife, while religion was always the cause of Unity. Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed that religion will again bring love and friendship to mankind; if it does not fulfil this duty, then is it a failure. Religion must be the antidote for all illness. If the medicine makes the sickness worse, then it is better not to take it.

Bahá'u'lláh also said that religious prejudice is the destroyer of the foundation of material well being. All the messengers and prophets of God were the servants of ethics. The greatest to which man can attain is love. Love is the principle of creation. Love is the cause of illumination to the world of humanity. Love brings happiness and peace to men. That is why Christ said "God is love." The first and greatest command of religion is love. The best divine service is to announce and promulgate love among mankind.

Women used to be oppressed in the Orient. They were in every respect humiliated. They were deprived of the opportunity to gain knowledge. They could not study science or art, and in politics they had no voice at all. Men did not consider them their equal. Bahá'u'lláh announced that women have the same right as men. He uplifted their conditions. He said, "The world of humanity has two wings, the one is man, the other woman." As long as both are not sufficiently strong, the bird cannot soar to the highest summit of the mountain. When women once have the advantage of education and improvement, then will mankind reach perfection. The women in the Orient have made great progress. Many schools for girls have been established, in which they are taught sciences and arts. They now have the possibility of endless progress. In this short time many wonderful women among the Bahá'ís have shown that they are equally entitled to those achievements.

There are many wonderful teachings in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh which have been published in book form. They are such as will bring great blessing to the world and will be the means of establishing peace among mankind. In Persia many meetings are being held in which different religions are represented, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Zoroastrian. There is harmony and friendship among them. They are at all times ready to sacrifice their lives for one another. They serve with heart and soul in the cause of international peace. For the spread of this cause more than twenty thousand persons have sacrificed their lives, because the old despotic rulers have opposed the ideal of peace. All the followers of those religions were such fanatics that they were always ready to shed the blood of others.

Such occurrences as we hear of in the Balkans at present, and the blood which flows there, is only the outcome of religious prejudices. Both parties, the Christians as well as the Muslims, declare it is a holy war, and thus religion, which should be the cause of peace, has become the cause of strife. Religion, which should be the cause of uplifting humanity, has become the cause of her destruction. Religion, which is the giver of life, has become the cause of death.

In short, all these associations, which are organized for the gain of the country or extension of commerce or the interest of parties, bring only limited blessings. But the result of this assemblage will be everlasting, its favours are boundless, for it is established upon love. Its fundamental principle is that we should turn our faces toward the kingdom of God; its aim is that God may breathe upon us. It is our hope that the world of humanity may be united and I hope this assembly may become a fountain uniting the different religions, sects and nations. Truly, I say, Stuttgart ought to be very happy. I have seldom seen a more beautiful city. I have visited many large cities, such as Paris, London, etc., but never a place which is so pretty and attractive as Stuttgart. Wherever I go I see flowers and trees and fruit trees laden with blossoms, and I must not fail to mention, among other important things, her citizens. The administration here seems to be correct and kind and for that reason the people have great possibilities. It is my greatest desire that the inhabitants of this city may become the cause of spreading friendship and brotherly love throughout the world so that the light of brotherhood may shine from here, so that the world of humanity may become the abode of peace.

IV:9, 20 August 1913 [IV:9:158]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful in Stuttgart and Esslingen, Germany.

Upon them be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye dear sons and beloved daughters of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!

When the days that I was your associate and intimate, pass before the mind, the heart is stirred into cheerfulness. What blessed days they were! What radiant nights they were! They will never be forgotten.

With the memory of you every morning I arise and every evening I raise the song of supplication toward the Kingdom of Abhá and beg assistance and confirmation for you. I hope that, in Stuttgart, the Ensign of Signs may become unfurled, and the fire of the love of God may send forth such flames as will enlighten all around; that each one of those blessed souls may become like unto a lamp diffusing the light of guidance in all directions.

I send to those parts his honour, Mírzá ‘Alí Akbar, and his honour, Mírzá Luṭṭfu’lláh, that they may associate with the friends, convey to them the yearnings of the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and explain the degrees of the powers of the Covenant and the importance of the Centre of the Testament. These two persons are very blessed.

Assuredly the believers shall obtain joy and happiness through meeting them. Know ye this, that *today the greatest of all affairs is obedience to the Centre of God’s Covenant; the power of the Covenant shall stir the regions, and the spirit of the Covenant shall resuscitate.*

Therefore, all the believers, in all the meetings and gatherings, must mention the Covenant and raise the song of the Covenant.

Upon ye be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 9 June 1913, Paris, France.

IV:10, 8 September 1913 [IV:10:170]

“The orb of the Covenant”

Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and spread throughout America many years ago.

HE IS GOD!

O thou whom my heart addresses!

Know thou, verily, The Covenant is an Orb which shines and gleams forth unto the universe. Verily, its light will dispel darkness, its sea will cast out the thick froth of suspicions upon the shore of perdition. Verily, naught in the world can ever resist the Power of the Kingdom. Should all mankind assemble, could they prevent the sun from its light, the winds from their blowing, the clouds from their showers, the mountains from their firmness or the stars from their beaming? No! By thy Lord, the Clement! Everything (in the world) is subject to corruption; but The Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions.

Address thou the waverers and say: “Have ye forgotten that which transpired in the time of Christ? Are ye not informed of the events which took place in His blessed Day? Did not the Pharisees rise against Him? Did they not give verdict to the shedding of His blood, to the murder of His friends and to oppressing His chosen ones? Have ye not heard concerning the heretics, the violators of His Covenant (who appeared) after Him? Are ye not informed of

those kings, princes, learned and prominent men who persecuted Him? Did ye not see what has been the end of the persecutors?"

And do thou advise them and illumine their inmost part, and say unto them: "By God, *the True One! Verily, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is assisted by the Beauty of Abhá who helps him with a Power whereunto all the heads are made humble. You shall surely find the banner of hypocrisy reversed, the foundations of discord demolished and the Standards of Peace and Harmony waving throughout all regions!*"

O my friend! Verily, Bahá hath commanded me to be forbearing and patient, to conceal (their doings), to forgive and pardon. Otherwise, I would have rent their covering, disclosed their sins, divulged their deeds, depicted their character and unveiled their manners. Verily, thou art already informed of some of their deeds and it is sufficient for you.

Consequently, turn thy face unto the Kingdom of The Covenant, thy heart beating with the Love of God, thy soul attracted to the Fragrances of God, thy tongue speaking of the appearance of the Kingdom of God, thy insight rending veils asunder and disclosing the realities of things—and with a power which may move the heart of all in the world.

This is a confirmation from the Lord of the Effulgence, while all else save this shall never profit thee! This is that by reason of which thy face shall gleam, thy heart shall be dilated with joy, thy soul become pure, thy back strengthened, thy spirit rejoiced and thine identity quickened. Leave the people of suspicion behind thy back and adhere to the Manifest Signs.

By God, the True One! Verily, the people are drunken and asleep, confused and heedless, and this will drag them to the lowest of the low. This is no other than a manifest loss!

Upon thee be greeting and praise!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

IV:10, 8 September 1913 [IV:10:171]

The power of "The Covenant of God" alone regenerates mankind

Recognition of "The Centre of the Covenant"—the important matter before the world today.
Extracts from a letter to a Bahá'í Assembly in America.

Charles Mason Remey.

During my travels of the past few months I have found that while the problems of each assembly assume their own special character, there is but one vital universal question. This is that of *firmness in The Centre of the Covenant*. Until this matter is solved no problems are solved; and when this matter is solved (when we are firm in The Covenant), all of our problems are solved.

When the members of an assembly are each and all firm in The Centre of The Covenant they are then organically united and the life of The Covenant is manifest in their midst—thus the will and the desire of God may be accomplished. *In no other way can it be done.* We all must be firm in The Centre of The Covenant, in the love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

"The Root of all knowledge is the knowledge of God, Glory be to Him, and this knowledge is impossible save through His Manifestation."—From "Words of Wisdom", Bahá'u'lláh.

God has manifested Himself in this day, as in times past, that mankind shall be quickened and aroused from his human or natural condition of spiritual darkness into one of spiritual illumination or life eternal.

The spiritual, or divine life, of the soul is not a condition into which man can evolve by virtue of his human perfection. It is a condition into which he is born only through believing in, having faith in, and obeying the Manifestation of God sent unto him through the bounty of

the Eternal One.

The divinely quickened soul has within it that element of spiritual or eternal life which is not found in natural or human man. This is the line of demarcation or differentiation between the kingdom of man and the Kingdom of God.

In the mineral kingdom there is no physical life, while in the vegetable kingdom there is physical life. In the kingdom of natural or human man there is no divine or spiritual life, while in the spiritually quickened souls there is divine, spiritual or eternal life.

Eternal life or divine illumination is not spontaneously generated in the souls of men. Man receives this new life directly from the Manifestation of God or the "Word Revealed".

The Manifestations of God have been the unique centres from which the world has received all knowledge of God, and outside of these divine channels no divine enlightenment has ever come to humanity. Therefore, how necessary and important is it that in each prophetic day mankind should seek God's revealed Word, and abide there in centring their lives in the Manifestation of God.

Through each of the Divine Revelators of the past, God made the promise to man that during these latter days of the world He would establish His Divine Rule upon earth—that He would fulfil His Covenant, and establish His Kingdom Triumphant among men.

In the coming of the Báb who was The First Point, Bahá'u'lláh who was The Pre-existent Root, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá *The Branch, Branched from The Pre-existent Root*—in this triple coming is realized the fulfilment of all of the Divine Promises of the past and the establishment of the Covenant of God.

As the life in the branch of the tree is the same as that in the root, so the Divine Spirit manifest in 'Abdu'l-Bahá—The Branch—is the same as that manifested in Bahá'u'lláh—The [IV:10:172] Root—'Abdu'l-Bahá has sacrificed all in The Path of Bahá'u'lláh, and now the Power of Bahá'u'lláh is manifesting to the world through 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He is the Centre of Guidance—The Centre of The Covenant; therefore all must turn wholly and without reserve unto him, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá is The Chosen One, the unique channel through which the Power of God is being conveyed to each individual Bahá'í, as a member of God's Kingdom upon earth.

The believers may be compared to leaves upon The Branch. Through the branch, and through the branch only are the leaves nourished from the root of the tree. As the branch is the only intermediary between the leaves and the root, so 'Abdu'l-Bahá The Branch [for there is but one *Living Branch*, branched from Bahá'u'lláh, The Pre-existent *Root*], is the intermediary between the believer and the Pre-existent source of Divine Power which is Bahá'u'lláh.

As the Power and stability of the tree is due to its firm, organic connection with the root, so is the power and strength of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Power and Strength of God, because he is branched from the Pre-existent Divine Root of The Word of God manifested in Bahá'u'lláh. As the well-being of each leaf depends upon its firm and organic connection with the branch, so does the spiritual well-being of every Bahá'í depend upon his or her spiritual connection with The Branch, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In storm and tempest, when the tree is shaken, those leaves that are alive in the branch remain upon the tree; while in those leaves in which the life of the branch is not—the dead leaves—these fall to the ground, having no life in them. When the unity and steadfastness of the Bahá'ís is tested those who are strong in The Centre of The Covenant, those in whose souls lives the Spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—will remain firm and steadfast throughout all conditions, while those who are not firmly attached to *The Branch* will, with the first troubles, drop away from The Covenant. In this condition their station is a worse one than that of those who have

never heard The Lord's Call.

This day is seeing great changes in the religious thought of the world. Everywhere the natural world of man is being prepared for the Kingdom of God.

In the springtime the ground is broken and prepared to receive the seed, this preparation has to do with the mineral elements in which there is no life. When the seed is sown the elements of vegetation descend into the earth in which inorganic material grows the vegetable, an organic body against which the inorganic forces of the mineral kingdom have no avail. Although every force in the mineral kingdom is against the principle of vegetative life, yet notwithstanding this very opposition the vegetable lives, grows and dominates the mineral.

In like manner is every human condition of the natural man opposed to the life of the spiritual man. Before the Divine Messengers of God have sown the spiritual seeds of the Kingdom, the hearts of men, in which there were no elements of divine life, have through human trials and conditions been broken and prepared to receive God's Word. His Word has taken root and grown in the soil of the hearts of men while every element in the being of the natural or human man has been against the growth of the newly quickened spirit, yet it is because of this conflict that spiritual man has become strong and had dominion over the natural or human in man.

This natural human force against the religion of God has ever been the spirit of the Anti-Christ. Where the light is the brightest, the shadows are the blackest. In the day of each Manifestation, when God's Glory was manifest to illumine the hearts of men, those illumined souls who followed The Word have always been surrounded from without by the most subtle influences working upon them, to sever, if such were possible, their spiritual connection with the Channel of Divine Grace—The Manifestation of God.

The spirit of Anti-Christ is the spirit of denial of the Word Manifest. The opposition of the mineral to the vegetable causes the vegetable to grow firm and strong, and the opposition of the forces of human man, the spirit of the Anti-Christ, cause the divinely quickened souls to grow strong and steadfast in The Kingdom.

In this day humanity as a whole is being prepared for the quickening of God's Kingdom. Creeds, dogmas and philosophies of the past are being broken and shattered and are without spiritual effect. The religious thought of the present world is like shifting sand. This world thought is against the growth of the Cause of God—against the Bahá'í Cause—for the religion of Bahá is not merely a *Cause of God*, it is *The Cause of God*, outside of [IV:10:173] which there is no source of Truth in this world. It is *The Divine Covenant* and 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the *God-appointed Centre of that Covenant*.

The very fact that the Bahá'í Cause is the essence of the Creation of the New Kingdom, places it, in kind, above all other forces at work in the world. It dominates all.

In general the human philosophy of man is this: That by a natural process of evolution he evolves from a state of human darkness into one of spiritual illumination. That he has inherently within himself the spark of divine life itself, and this simultaneously develops without the instrumentality of a prophet or Divine Revelator, and then through his own virtues man attains to God's Kingdom.

It is curious that in this age people still cling to such imaginations when history shows that each new civilization has had its birth in a new religion, and that each new religion has had its quickening power through a Prophet or a new Manifestation of the one Pre-existent Word of

God.

Mankind has ever tried to create a way to Divine Grace through means other than those provided by God. It is recorded that at one time men tried to build a tower out of the materials of the earth in order to escape earthly conditions and arrive at heavenly conditions. Confusion fell upon them, and the affair ended in division and dispersion. We look back upon this story of the Tower of Babel and we see therein a vivid portrait of the spiritual condition of this world of the present day.

Before the mind of the world is the idea of the Millennial Age of Peace with all of its ideal institutions. Upon every hand institutions are being founded and carried on with the object in view of bringing about peace ideals. Instead of using spiritual means to achieve a spiritual end they are using material means! The divine institution of the Kingdom of God cannot be built with any other than spiritual means.

Regarding these mundane conditions which hold the world in a state of war, and trouble from which humanity cries out for freedom, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has repeatedly said that there is but one power which shall prevail against them and that power is *the power of The Covenant of God*.

God has established His Kingdom. His Kingdom is the Bahá'í Cause. This is His Covenant. It is the stone which has been rejected by the people of the world, and now it has become the foundation of "Peace on earth", having *its Centre* in The Centre of the Covenant.

For many years 'Abdu'l-Bahá has been imploring and calling the people to "firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant and Testament", which is firmness and steadfastness in *The Centre* of The Covenant which is *'Abdu'l-Bahá himself*. The reason for this repeated call is now becoming apparent to the Bahá'ís, for upon this connection, 'Abdu'l-Bahá depends the well-being of the Cause.

Consider: With the physical body its well-being depends upon the perfect connection or unity of each of its organs with the heart from which the life forces are forthcoming. 'Abdu'l-Bahá being the centre of spiritual life in the world today, is the heart of the Kingdom of God—the Bahá'í Cause—so the spiritual well-being of the Cause (as well as of its individual members) depends upon the connection of all the various members with *The Centre of The Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá*.

When an organ of the physical body is not in proper function with the heart, and does not receive nourishment through the blood, it ceases to function and dies. When a Bahá'í cuts himself off from 'Abdu'l-Bahá who is the source of his spiritual life, he dies spiritually and is no longer of the Kingdom. Therefore, it behoves all to keep in the closest of spiritual touch with 'Abdu'l-Bahá holding to his Word, obeying him in both the spirit and the letter and never for one instant looking in airy direction other than toward him—the *divinely appointed* Centre of The Covenant.

There are those individuals referred to as the *nakezeen* who, after embracing God's Truth and associating themselves with His Cause, have denied The Centre of The Covenant and dropped away from the Power of The Cause. They are as dead—as spiritual corpses—and from them goes forth *to the believers* a poisonous infection from which the believers must be protected lest they also become infected and in like manner fall ill and die to the realities of God's Kingdom.

Consider: Whenever an organ of the body becomes diseased the whole body suffers—the vital forces of the body flow to the ill member that it be resuscitated and again function normally. If; however, that organ becomes gangrenous or dies, and putrefaction sets in, it

becomes necessary to use the surgeon's knife. [IV:10:174] Thus, even a diseased member must be cut off from the body else the whole body will die.

When a Bahá'í is suffering spiritually, all of the friends should surround that soul with love, showing kindness and attention upon it in order to bring it back again into close communion with 'Abdu'l-Bahá—for there is but one cause of spiritual disease among the Bahá'ís, and that is a state of instability in The Centre of The Covenant.

But when a soul has wholly and completely severed himself from 'Abdu'l-Bahá—denied The Centre of The Covenant, whether either openly by words, or subtly in his heart in secret, that soul is dead spiritually.¹ It becomes a dead or gangrenous member of the body of The Cause. Its condition is infinitely more deplorable in this state than before it heard The Truth while it was yet in the human or the unquickened condition of the natural man. When a soul falls into such a state of violation of the Covenant, there is but one thing to do and that is for the friends to cut it off from the body of The Cause, *for if the friends do not sever themselves from such an one they will themselves become infected by this deadly condition, and then the whole assemblage of the friends will become diseased.*

In a recent Tablet The Centre of The Covenant states:

“Let them (the Bahá'ís) be awake! Let them be mindful! As soon as they see a trace of violation of The Covenant they must hold aloof from the violators.”

And again in another Tablet he says:

“Firmness in The Covenant means Obedience so that no one may say, ‘this is my opinion,’ nay rather he must obey that which proceeds from the Pen and Tongue of The Covenant.”

We Bahá'ís are commanded to treat the opposer of The Cause as the friend, and to shower kindness upon those who persecute and cause trouble for the Bahá'ís. However, the condition of the opposer of The Covenant, and the condition of the denier of The Covenant are wholly different. The opposer is one who has not yet been awakened to the Truth. He is outside of The Cause and can have no avail against it, whereas the denier is within the body of The Cause, and until he is taken out from the body of The Cause his diseased condition is infecting the whole body.

Physically a man has nothing to fear from poisons which are kept outside of his body. His danger lies when poisons enter into his body.

Imagine a family in which a death occurs. Although each of the survivors be in a state of perfect health, yet it is necessary to remove the corpse of the departed from the house, for with the putrefaction of the corpse the disease contagious would prevail and all would die.

We know that our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not wish any soul to be deprived of the Bounties of The Kingdom, nevertheless when *The Cause* of God is at stake, the individual who is damaging The Cause must go. 'Abdu'l-Bahá recently wrote

“Such souls are nothing but pure harm to The Cause of God, and it is very well that they go out, for the abominable deeds of such souls are like unto an axe at the root of The Cause.”

It is one thing to be merely “attracted” to the divine teachings of God's chosen revelator, and another thing to become so centred in His Chosen One as to sacrifice all in His Path. The first case is only to have one's attention called to the bounties of the kingdom; the second is to know and to recognize The Centre of Spiritual Guidance through, or from, which the knowledge of the Kingdom proceeds.

¹ Refer to Tablet to Albert Windust, *Star of the West*, XI:19, p. 319.

In the day of Jesus, the Christ, vast multitudes were attracted to Him and to His Cause, but of these there were but twelve men and a few women who believed to the point of recognizing in Him the Glory of God Manifest The Christ. This recognition was what quickened the souls of His Disciples and the early Fathers, and it was by this and by this alone, that they were given the power to go forth and [IV:10:175] give Christ's Message to the world. The great Christian civilization (the bounties of which the people of the world are now enjoying) had its birth or main spring in the Revelation of Jesus, and its spiritual quickening in those who, like Peter, recognized Jesus to be "The Christ, the Son of The Living God"; whereas those souls who were merely attracted to Jesus and before really believing slipped away from The Cause, played no part in the great organic growth of Christianity.

So it is again in this day of revelation. How many souls are attracted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá How many crowd to see him and to hear him, *yet the real blessing is that of realizing in him The Centre of God's Covenant.*

From the following quotation from the "Tablet of the Branch", revealed by Bahá'u'lláh the importance of this matter will be clearly understood

"O, ye people! draw nigh unto it [The Branch (The Centre of The Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá)] and taste the fruits of its knowledge and wisdom on the part of The Mighty, The Knowing One. Whosoever will not taste thereof shall be deprived of The Bounty, even though he hath partaken of all that is in the earth—were ye of those who know. ... Say. O people, praise ye God for its manifestation [The Branch] for verily The Branch ['Abdu'l-Bahá] is the most great power upon you, and the most perfect blessing upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whosoever turns unto Him hath surely turned unto God, and whosoever turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, denied My Proof, and is of those who transgress. Verily, He is the Remembrance of God amongst you, and His Trust within you, and His Manifestation unto you, and His appearance among the servants who are nigh. Thus have I been commanded to convey to you The Message of God, your Creator; and I have delivered unto you that of which I was commanded."

Following this and other similar commands revealed by Bahá'u'lláh the true and firm Bahá'ís have turned with implicit faith towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá *The Branch*, The Centre of The Covenant, in whom they find their illumination, their guidance, their strength, their hope, their all.

THEREFORE, RECOGNIZING IN 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ THE CENTRE OF GOD'S COVENANT, IS, IN THIS DAY, THE ONE ALL-IMPORTANT MATTER BEFORE THE WORLD, FOR IN HIM IS THE POWER OF THE COVENANT OF GOD, WHICH ALONE IS TO REGENERATE MANKIND.

The difficulties and problems of an assembly will solve themselves when everyone concentrates their faith in The Centre of The Covenant. Study "The Tablet of The Branch" and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's address upon "The Covenant" given in New York City, 19 June 1912, and also his Tablet upon "The Covenant". These latter were published in Washington, D.C., in pamphlet form. They can be obtained by writing to the Washington assembly.

My love and greetings to all the friend's.
Yours in The Centre of The Covenant,
Charles Mason Remey.
Honolulu, Hawaii, 19 July 1913.

IV:10, 8 September 1913 [IV:10:175]

Extract from a Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá
Spread throughout America many years ago.

O servant of God!

Know thou, verily, the Fragrances of the Garden of The Covenant have perfumed all regions, the Standard of The Testament is waving upon the castles of glory, and there is no refuge for those who flee from this strongly fortified Fortress!

Do the people of surmise imagine that there is for them any other retreat than this Blessed Region from which the Lights have shone forth, the mysteries have appeared and the signs are being diffused?

O servant of God! Arise to promote the Word of God, to promulgate The Covenant of God, and chant the Verses of God with such power whereby the elements of discord may tremble in those regions!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IV:10, 8 September 1913 [IV:10:176]

The Centre of the Covenant

Lest some of the friends may think, when reading Mr Remy’s excellent presentation of this vital subject—published in this issue of the *Star of the West*—that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is now teaching something *new* regarding “The Centre of The Covenant”, we have reproduced Tablets (see pages 170 and 175) which were spread throughout America many years ago, wherein is plainly stated that which is now becoming clearly understood.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has always maintained this position as *The Centre*, although for some years this Centreship has been veiled from the people because of their spiritual blindness.

In the following Tablet, recently received, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sends greeting to all who are “firm in The Covenant and Testament”:

To Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, New York City.

Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou my spiritual son!

Thy letter written on ____, 1913, was duly received. Thank God that thou art firm and steadfast in the Cause. Today the magnetic power that attracts the divine confirmation is firmness and steadfastness. The tree whose root is firm will yield luscious fruit.

The building whose foundation is solid will stand the rush of torrent and hurricane. The steamer which is built strongly will resist the battling waves. Therefore, thank thou God that thou art aided in firmness and steadfastness. Likewise, thy kind father and mother. I beg from the divine Favours that each one of you may be in the utmost state of firmness and steadfastness like unto a mountain and withstand the attack of all the people of the earth. Then ye shall observe how the divine confirmations shall descend uninterruptedly.

Convey on my behalf respectful greeting to all the believers and the maid-servants of the Merciful *who are firm in the Covenant and the Testament*.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 2 August 1913. Ramleh, Egypt.

Anti-Christ

In Mr Remey's article is mentioned the "spirit of anti-Christ". The words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding this subject, quoted below, may be of interest at this time:

"Some say 'Abdu'l-Bahá is anti-Christ. They are not informed of the Bahá'í principles. Bahá'u'lláh established Christ in the East. He has praised Christ, honoured Christ, exalted Him, called Him the Word of God, the Spirit of God, raised the Name of Christ to supreme summits of glorification. Throughout the Orient the Bahá'ís have illumined the lamp of Christ and spread his mention.

"Did not His Holiness Jesus Christ ignite the [IV:10:177] world with the Light of Moses? Did He not fulfil the Religion of Moses? Did He not spread the Book of Moses to the remotest East and West? Christ was the cause of spreading the Teachings of Moses and promulgating the Old Testament. Notwithstanding this, the Jews consider Christ the enemy of the Religion of Moses,—the destroyer of the foundations of the Law of Moses. The Pharisees blasphemed Him night and morning,—called Him 'Satan' and 'Beelzebub'. This is recorded in the text of the Gospels.

"History will repeat itself. Bahá'u'lláh will be assailed in the same way by those who are not informed of His principles and Teachings."

IV:11, 27 September 1913 [IV:11:190]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's "welcome" to California

Address delivered at the home of Mrs Helen S. Goodall, Oakland, California, 3 October 1912.

Dr Amín U. Faríd, interpreter; stenographic notes by Miss Bijou Straun.

I am going to say, "Welcome," to you, instead of your welcoming me. I am most happy to be here with you. I am exceedingly joyous, and I offered thanks to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh that the potency of His Word was instrumental in bringing about such a meeting.

In the world many people go from one country to another. Perchance they may go from here to the Orient; perchance some may come from the Orient here; but such journeys are for travel, or commercial purposes, or for some political reason, or the motive may be some scientific achievement, or they go on journeys in order to meet friends. All such meetings are accidental; they are concerned with the exigencies of the world of nature.

But I have come from the Orient to the Occident—this vast distance have I crossed with no commercial purpose in view, nor travel as an object, nor politics as a reason. It has been simply to meet you. Whereas the meeting of others is generally accidental, our meeting is real, essential—for the hearts are connected and the souls are attracted and the spirits are exhilarated, and such a meeting is real in character, and great are the results therefrom. The results are everlasting.

Consider the by-gone times. There occurred a meeting like this one—that is to say, that meeting emanated from the attractions of the conscience. It was due to the spiritual bond. It was due to the fraternity of heaven. Regard the results which have later become concomitant! What lights have shone therefrom! What a new spirit has been breathed thereby!

Therefore, I beg of God that this meeting of ours may likewise be a spiritual meeting, may be a heavenly meeting, may be a cordial bond, may be of divine susceptibilities, may be a result of the breaths of the Holy Spirit. Thus, may its traces be everlasting, may its results be eternal, may it be an indissoluble bond and an association inseparable. May it be a love which shall be never ending. This is my hope, and you who have turned to the Kingdom of God, and you who are set aglow with the fire of the Love of God, must so earnestly endeavour that this meeting shall give forth eternal results.

And what will bring this about?

This will be brought about by your acting in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. This is dependent upon your becoming resuscitated by the Divine Spirit. The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is, in relation to the body of the world, as the spirit of man is to his body. In relation to the body of the world (humanity), Divinity is as the light within a lantern. In relation to the soil of the hearts, it [IV:11:191] is the quickening shower. In relation to the spiritual growth of the trees, it is the vernal breeze; and in relation to the recovery of the diseased body politic, it is a quick acting remedy, because it is the cause of the oneness of the world of humanity. It is love among all mankind. It is a bond which unites all the religions. It is the unity which welds together all the races. It is the connection between all the countries. It is universal peace among the nations. It is universal peace among all the peoples. It is the universal peace which will bring together all nationalities. And undoubtedly it is the spirit of the world. It is the light of the world. Likewise, it is an impetus to the promulgation of knowledge, and it is the cause of agreement of religion with science and reason.

All the nations of the world today are subject to certain superstitions which animate them along the line of prejudice, hatred and rancour. These superstitions are the cause of warfare and battle. For blind imitations of religion are ever various and unreal; but the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are reality itself, and reality is the fundamental basis of all the divine religions. Hence these teachings are the very cause of uniting all humanity. They are the cause of love among the hearts of men, for they are reality.

The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are likewise concerned with good conduct, and good conduct is the greatest effulgence of the All-Glorious.

Unless ethics be improved, the world of humanity will be incapable of true advancement. Real advancement is dependent upon the world of humanity becoming a centre of divine morals, becoming a place of the effulgences of the Merciful, becoming a mirror reflecting the bestowals of God. Thereby the world of humanity will become the image and likeness of God. Until these virtues reveal themselves in the world of humanity, real progress and advancement will not be possible.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh addressing all mankind, says: "*Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.*" This signifies that the world of humanity is representative of one tree, and all mankind representative of its leaves, its blossoms and its fruits. Therefore, all the inhabitants of the earth have grown through their attachment to this tree and all are reared and nurtured through the shower of divine mercy. It is self-evident that this teaching is the very spirit of this age. It is life-giving, because through love it animates the people, and it casts alienation utterly aside. It brings all into friendship and unity.

Among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is one requiring man, under all conditions and circumstances, to be forgiving, to love his enemy and to consider an ill-wisher as a well-wisher. *Not that he should consider one as being an enemy and then put up with him, or to simply endure him, or to consider one as inimical and be forbearing toward him. This is declared to be hypocrisy. This love is not real.* Nay, rather, you must see your enemies as friends, ill-wishers as well-wishers and treat them accordingly. That is to say, your love and kindness must be *real*. Your well-wishing must be reality, not merely forbearance, for forbearance, if not of the heart, is hypocrisy. The people of Reality¹ will not accept it.

Among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is one on sacrifice. Man must arrive at the point of sacrifice; and the station of sacrifice is that of complete severance—that is, his possessions, his comforts, even his *life* must be sacrificed for humanity. Until man arrives at such a station, he is deprived of the effulgences of God and from the bestowals of the Merciful, and from the

¹ Meaning, the people of God.

breaths of the Holy Spirit, which, in this radiant century, have become apparent and resplendent.

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is one relative to the fact that God has created man to yield some fruit from his being, or existence, an eternal fruit, an everlasting result. If the world of humanity be confined to the short space of material life here, if man should devote his energies to temporary results—for the life of this world is short, the blessings of this world are temporary, the virtues of the world of nature are temporary, the happiness of the world of nature is temporary—this cannot be called fruitage, because it is temporary and hence useless. Nay, rather, man must be a blessed tree bearing eternal fruits. Thus everlasting spirituality may be his.

The real fruit of the human tree is everlasting, and that is the *love for God*, that is the *knowledge of God*, that is *service to the world of humanity*, that is *kindness to all mankind*, and that is endeavouring and striving for the *material and spiritual—or ideal—development of the world of man*. This is the [IV:11:194] everlasting fruit. This is the divine effulgence. This is the divine bestowal. This is the everlasting life.

The teachings are lengthy, but I state them briefly, and from these brief statements, which are fundamental, you must learn the full teachings.

Praise be to God! We have assembled here, and the cause of our gathering here is the love of God. Praise be to God! The hearts are kind toward each other and the heavenly radiance is resplendent.

I am hopeful that the hearts may be moved, the souls may be attracted, and that all will act in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

IV:11, 27 September 1913 [IV:11:192]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning "backbiting"

Tablet to Dr M. G. Skinner, Washington, D.C.

HE IS GOD!

O thou my doctor!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written regarding thy aims. How blessed are these aims, especially the prevention of backbiting! I hope that you may become confirmed therein, because the worst human quality and *the most great sin is backbiting*; more especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of backbiting could be shut eternally and each one of the believers of God unsealed his tongue in the praise of the other, then the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh would be spread, the hearts illuminated, the spirits glorified and the human world would attain to everlasting felicity.

I hope that the believers of God will shun completely backbiting, each one praising the other cordially and believe that *backbiting is the cause of Divine wrath*, to such an extent that if a person backbites to the extent of one word, he may become dishonoured among all the people, because the most hateful characteristic of man is fault-finding. One must expose the praiseworthy qualities of the souls and not their evil attributes. The friends must overlook their shortcomings and faults and speak only of their virtues and not their defects.

It is related that His Holiness Christ—May my life be a sacrifice to Him!—one day, accompanied by His apostles, passed by the corpse of a dead animal. One of them said: "How putrid has this animal become!" The other exclaimed: "How it is deformed!" A third cried out: "What a stench! How cadaverous looking!" But His Holiness Christ said: "Look at its teeth! How white they are!" Consider, that He did not look at all at the defects of that animal;

nay, rather, He searched well until He found the beautiful white, teeth. He observed only the whiteness of the teeth and overlooked entirely the deformity of the body, the dissolution of its organs and the bad odour.

This is the attribute of the children of the Kingdom. This is the conduct and the manner of the real Bahá'ís. I hope that all the believers will attain to this lofty station.

Upon thee and upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 12 August 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

IV:12, 16 October 1913 [IV:12:203]

'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Nineteen-Day Feast¹

Held 16 October 1912, at the home of Mrs Helen S. Goodall, Oakland, California.

Dr Amín U. Faríd, interpreter; stenographic notes by Miss Bijou Straun.

Praise be to God! you are the guests of Mrs Goodall. With the utmost love has she prepared this feast, and every kind of food is before you. The effulgence of the mercy of Bahá'u'lláh is resplendent. The hearts are attracted to the love of God. The eyes are turning toward the Kingdom of Abhá.

This is a heavenly feast, an excellent meeting. Surely this is praiseworthy. The Supreme Concourse now is beholding this assemblage, proclaiming aloud: *"Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye! Blessed are ye who are the servants of Bahá'u'lláh! Blessed are ye who are the manifestors of faith! Blessed are ye who have such radiant countenances! Blessed are ye whose hearts are like unto rose gardens!"*

Consider what a great bounty has been bestowed upon you, what a favour has been revealed unto you, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is now walking about amongst you commemorating Bahá'u'lláh! In the utmost of love am I walking about and greeting each and all of you.

Man is possessed of two types of susceptibilities. One is physical, the other spiritual, in character.

Physical susceptibilities have certain avenues of expression, and spiritual susceptibilities likewise have their avenues. The physical, or material susceptibilities have their channels of expression in the physical realm. Earthly fraternity is due either to a family relationship, or to a commercial bond, or to a bond of love based upon policy or politics, or to a racial bond which supplies that affection, or to a bond patriotic in foundation. These are physical susceptibilities and ordinary outward love. But spiritual susceptibilities, namely, real love and heavenly fraternity, emanate through divine channels. They emanate from faith, or they emanate from knowledge, or they emanate from the bounty of the Holy Spirit, or they emanate from the effulgence of the Sun of Reality.

Praise be to God! you are imbued with spiritual susceptibilities, for verily you have been gathered together in this meeting through the love of God. It is the bounty of the Kingdom which has summoned you here. It is the Most Great Guidance which has called you here. It is the power of attraction which has drawn you together here, and it is the bestowal of the Kingdom of Abhá which has invited you to this feast. These are spiritual susceptibilities, and these are emanations of the conscience. Because of these susceptibilities, this radiant youth is seated here, and in the utmost of love I am patting him on the shoulder.

I am happy to see you gathered here in love: Please continue eating while I talk.

¹ At this feast there were present about one hundred and twenty-five friends from the Bay cities, Portland, Seattle and Spokane. When all were seated at the tables, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, radiant with joy, passed through the spacious rooms fragrant with flowers, speaking as he walked about.

His Holiness Christ, on a certain eve, invited His disciples to His table, and while seated at that table, He gave certain admonitions and precepts unto them. As a result of the benediction and admonitions, the supper was called the “Lord’s Supper”. Inasmuch as there was present the material bread, and likewise the heavenly manna which was descending upon them, it was verily the Lord’s Supper.

Now this evening you have gathered in this assemblage and are seated at this bounteous table. Praise be to God! the material food is prepared for you. The heavenly manna also is present for you, and that consists of the love of God and the knowledge of God. You are turned toward the Kingdom of God, and you are overshadowed beneath His providence. The eternal bounty encompasses you all, and the light everlasting is all-surrounding.

This table, likewise, is heavenly in character. [IV:12:204] This food is manna from heaven. I hope earnestly that the results of the Lord’s Supper—that super which was in the utmost of love and fellowship and severance from all else save God—may be realized at this supper also. Thus may you associate one with the other in perfect fellowship and friendship, and may all of you rejoice in many such feasts. Thus may the hearts be exhilarated and the faces be turned to the Kingdom of Abhá. Then will you be instrumental in reconciling all the religions and all the races, and in creating a bond that will unite all the nations of the world. Thus, in the centre of the world, shall be pitched the tent of the oneness of humanity, and the standard of universal peace shall be unfurled and wave throughout the world. Then in the future there will be no doubt as to this supper being the Lord’s supper, for it is productive of love and fellowship, and will become the cause of the illumination of the world. Every supper that is productive of love and unity, the cause of radiance throughout the world, of international peace and of the solidarity of man, is undoubtedly the Lord’s supper.

In a word, His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh shone forth from the Horizon of the Orient, even as the sun, casting a radiance over the world. During His lifetime He did not rest a moment, nor did He repose comfortably one night. He suffered many trials. He was a prisoner. He was enchained. He was exiled. All these ordeals did He endure in order that perfect fellowship and love should blend the hearts together.

Praise be to God! the labours of Bahá’u’lláh have not been in vain, for among your hearts love has been created. All of you are together in the utmost of love. I hope that you will be the cause of transforming the whole world of man into a feast like unto this, wherein the hearts of all shall be welded together, the lives of all shall be glad-tidings. The world of humanity then will become as a tree, and all men as its branches, twigs, blossoms and fruits. This is my wish and desire.

In the utmost of joy partake of this feast.

Benediction

[After the feast, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stood on the [IV:12:209] balcony of the stairway and, raising his hands in blessing, pronounced a benediction.]

O kind Lord, verily this assemblage is longing for Thee and loving Thy beauty. Verily, these friends are set aglow with the fire of Thy love and are joyful because of Thy presence. They have turned to Thy kingdom, seeking naught but Thy good pleasure, desiring naught but to pursue Thy pathway, and seeking naught save Thy good will. Not a day passes but they are occupied with Thy commemoration and are ever ready to serve Thee.

O God, illumine these hearts. O God, make joyous these lives. O Lord, suffer these souls to attain to the superlative degree of spirituality in the world of humanity. O Lord, suffer these souls to become truly distinguished, and make them the manifestors of Thy favour and the recipients of Thy good gifts. Shine upon them with Thy radiant splendour, waft over them the

breeze of Thy providence, and pour upon them the rain of bestowals from the clouds of Thy generosity. Thus these souls, like the flowers of the rose garden, shall grow in verdure and freshness, and among all mankind shall they be redolent of delightful fragrance.

O Lord, confirm them all in Thy service, and aid them in guiding others to Thee. Brighten the eyes through witnessing Thy great signs; fill the ears with harmonies through Thy melodies; and refresh the nostrils through the fragrances of Thy Kingdom. Confer upon these souls the life everlasting, gathering them all together beneath the tabernacle of the oneness of the world of humanity.

Verily, Thou art the Almighty! Verily, Thou art the Powerful! Verily, Thou art the Giver of good gifts!

IV:12, 16 October 1913 [IV:12:205]

The visit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Mr Charles Tinsley

San Francisco, California, 10 October 1912.

[Mr Tinsley (coloured) was recovering from an accident]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: How are you? I am very glad to see you.

Mr Tinsley: I am well excepting this broken leg which has kept me in bed a long time. I am impatient to be up and out to work for the Cause.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: You must not be sad. This affliction will make you spiritually stronger. Do not be sad. Cheer up! Praise be to God, you are dear to me. I will tell you a story:

A certain ruler wished to appoint one of his subjects to a high office; so, in order to train him, the ruler cast him into prison and caused him to suffer much. The man was surprised at this, for he expected great favours. The ruler had him taken from prison and beaten with sticks. This greatly astonished the man, for he thought the ruler loved him. After this he was hanged on the gallows until he was nearly dead. After he recovered he asked the ruler, “If you love me, why did you do these things?” The ruler replied: “I wish to make you prime minister. By having gone through these ordeals you are better fitted for that office. I wish you to know how it is yourself. When you are obliged to punish, you will know how it feels to endure these things. I love you so I wish you to become perfect.”

[To Mr Tinsley] Even so with you. After this ordeal you will reach maturity. God sometimes causes us to suffer much and to have many misfortunes that we may become strong in His Cause.

You will soon recover and be spiritually stronger than ever before. You will work for God and carry the Message to many of your people.

IV:12, 16 October 1913 [IV:12:205]

“This is one of the meanings of sacrifice”

Talk by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to one of the friends, 22 October 1912.

God will assist you. One of the great prophets of the Orient, one of the worthies of the East, called ‘Alí, says, that whosoever seeks after anything and is serious about it, will find it. Seek and ye shall find. Whosoever knocks at any door and is persistent about it, there is no doubt that the door will be opened unto him.

Now, as long as you are interested in the Faith, and interested seriously, and you are investigating reality, you are the lover of reality, there is no doubt that you will attain.

When man dedicates his life to a cause, he must dedicate entirely, then he is really dedicated. It is not through word, but through deed. One must dedicate his life completely, fully, in reality, just as the dead branch sacrifices its life to the fire, and just as the oil sacrifices

its life to give light. This is the great station—the station of sacrifice. There is no greater station than this.

In Oriental language, there is the expression, “May my life be a sacrifice to you,” and a man writing a hundred letters a day might use these words a hundred times and yet he would not sacrifice anything for his friend. But this is a custom—a usage. Everybody who writes a letter to his friend says “May my life be a sacrifice to you,” and perhaps he does not realize the meaning at all.

The station of sacrifice is the great foundation. When you read the Old and New Testament, you will find that constantly the word “sacrifice” is mentioned. It is recorded that the Jews sacrificed sheep so that their sins might be forgiven. In the time of Adam, Cain made sacrifice of sheaves of wheat and Abel made sacrifice of sheep. Now this is a symbol, and this word extended after the time of Christ.

What is the symbol? Just as the sheep sacrificed its life, likewise this natural state of man, which is the animalistic state, must be sacrificed. How should it be sacrificed? The vices of the animalistic state of man must be entirely annihilated, and he must be characterized with divine virtues. It was a symbol and before His Holiness Christ appeared, all the Jewish prophets made sacrifice of animals. This was a mystery of that higher sacrifice and when Christ came he said, I will sacrifice myself for the sake of the salvation of all. What did He mean? He meant to change their characters, and in this way make them heavenly, in this way make them Godlike, spiritual and divine.

This is one of the meanings of sacrifice.

IV:12, 16 October 1913 [IV:12:206]

Interview between ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and a San Francisco newspaper reporter

To a correspondent of *The Examiner*, 3 October 1912. This interview was published next day in a form almost unrecognizable.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*.

Correspondent: Are you pleased with the United States?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The continent of America is most progressive. The means of instructions are prepared; the educational institutions are thoroughly equipped and the pupils are being systematically trained and educated. The wealth is on an upward tendency. Its government is democratic. Its advancement is unceasing. Its nation is hospitable. Its people are loyal, energetic and noble. Its inhabitants are free and the lovers of liberty. Its men are civilized and its women are cultured, refined and idealistic. On the other hand, all these advantages are on the material plane, and I observe the majority of the people are submerged in the sea of materialism and agnosticism. The natural civilization is well-nigh perfect; but it is in need of the civilization of heaven—Divine civilization.

Correspondent: What do you mean by “Divine civilization”?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Divine civilization is the light. Material civilization is the lamp. Material civilization is the body; in itself it is not sufficient, and humanity from every standpoint stands in sore need of divine civilization. Natural civilization ensures material welfare and prosperity; Divine civilization vouchsafes to man ideal virtues. Material civilization serves the physical world; divine civilization serves the world of morality. Divine civilization is a symposium of the perfections of the world of humanity. Divine civilization is the improvement of the ethical life of a nation. Divine civilization is the discovery of the reality of phenomena. Divine civilization is the spiritual philosophy. Divine civilization is the knowledge of God with rational and intellectual evidences. Divine civilization is Eternal Life. Divine civilization is the immortality of the soul. Divine civilization is the Breath of the Holy

Spirit. Divine civilization is heavenly wisdom. Divine civilization is the reality of all the Teachings of the ancient prophets. Divine civilization is Universal Peace and the oneness of the world of humanity. The Holy manifestations of God have been the founders of Divine civilization, the first Teachers of mankind, and the spreaders of the fragrances of holiness and sanctity amongst the children of men.

Correspondent: Are you satisfied with the American people?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The American people are a stranger-loving people. All nations are welcomed in their midst. They give to everyone the right of living and the pursuit of happiness. Here no one feels a foreigner, I am satisfied with all of them.

Correspondent: I have heard that you advocate the complete equality of men and women. This radical teaching coming from an Oriental thinker is of great interest and supreme significance. Just at this juncture the California women are clamouring for the right to vote for all the national and state officials, and your opinion on this important question will be greatly appreciated by the people.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The question of equality between men and women has made greater advancement in America than elsewhere, and day by day it is assuming greater importance and becoming nearer to realization. However, as long as complete equality does not exist between male and female, the world of humanity will not make extraordinary progress. The woman is an important column, and there is another equally important. If we aim to have a durable building, the foundations of both columns must be laid very deep. The women are the first teachers and instructors of the small children. They teach them and inculcate morality in their minds and hearts. Later they go to universities for higher education and specialization. Now if the teacher or instructor is deficient, how can the scholar be properly trained? Therefore, it is proven that the culture and refinement of the men are intensified and will bloom and attain to perfect fruition when the women are equally educated and given the same educational facilities. Consequently the women must enjoy all the learning they are able to assimilate, in order that they may reach to the same level as men. The same privileges and opportunities must be conferred upon women;—so that just as they share together life and its responsibilities, they may also share with him the same virtues of the world of humanity. Undoubtedly partnership in education and culture presupposes equality in rights. The world of humanity has two wings, one wing male, the other wing female. [IV:12:207] Both wings must become strong, so that mankind may soar to the empyrean realms of its destined perfection. But if one wing is left weak and the other strong, its upward flight will be slow. God hath created both human. They share together and in common all the faculties. No one is endowed with special privileges. How can we make a distinction which is unknown in the sight of God? We must follow the policy of God.

Moreover, there is male and female in the vegetable kingdom. They are on an equal footing. Inherently they enjoy suffrage and there is no distinction between them. Likewise in the animal kingdom the right of suffrage and equality is enjoyed without any feeling of superiority of privilege. Therefore, it is well known that there is no distinction of gender in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, although they are deprived of the faculty of reasoning, and they have not the power of distinguishing. How can we, who are confirmed with the bestowal of reason, and enjoy all the facilities with which man is distinguished from the animal, act, in this manner and build these false barriers? Many women have appeared who have won for themselves fame and name, for the versatility of their intellects and the brilliancy of their thoughts. Amongst the Bahá'í women many have shown remarkable capability in literature, sciences and arts, and have rendered distinguished service in every department of life.

In history many capable women appear who have displayed special genius in government

and political administration, such as Semiramis;¹ Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, and Queen Victoria, of England. In the religious world,—the Jews wandered for forty years in the wilderness and could not conquer the Holy Land. Finally a woman achieved the signal victory. During the Christian dispensation the apostles became agitated after the Crucifixion of Jesus; even Peter denied Him thrice, but Mary Magdalene became the cause of their becoming firm and steadfast. In the Religion of Bahá'u'lláh, Qurratu'l-'Ayn and many other Persian women demonstrated their knowledge and wisdom to such an extent that even the men were astonished, and listened to their advices and lectures.

Correspondent: What is your object in coming to America?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: I have come to America to promote the ideal of Universal Peace and the solidarity of the human race. I have not come for pleasure or as a tourist.

Correspondent: What do you think about women's fashions?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: We do not look upon the dresses of women, whether or not they are of the latest mode. We are not the judge of fashions. We rather judge the wearer of dresses. If she be chaste, if she be cultured, if she be characterized with heavenly morality, and if she be favoured at the Threshold of God, she is honoured and respected by us, no matter what manner of dress she wears. We have nothing to do with the ever-changing world of modes.

Correspondent: What is the greatest thing you have seen in America?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The greatest thing I have seen in America is its freedom. In reality this is a free nation and a democratic government.

Correspondent: What is your opinion about Turkey and the Balkan War?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: We have nothing to do with war. We are advocates of peace. Speak to us about the condition of peace. Go to diplomatists and militarists and ask their opinion about this war. But as regards peace: In the world of humanity there is no more important affair, no weightier cause. It is conducive to the well-being of the world of creation; the means of the prosperity of the nations; the reason of eternal friendship between the people; the cause of solidarity between the East and the West; the promoter of real freedom, and the Most Eminent Favour of His Highness the Almighty. We must all strive to upraise the flag of international peace, the oneness of the world of humanity and the spiritual brotherhood of mankind.

[The correspondent tried to ask a few more questions, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá interrupted him by this final statement while putting his hand on his shoulder and kissing his face:]

Consider how much I love thee, and to what extent I respect Mr Hearst, that notwithstanding the fatigue coming over me as the result of a very busy day, I have answered all thy questions.

IV:12, 16 October 1913 [IV:12:208]

“The lofty summit of unchanging purpose”

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Lua Getsinger, Ramleh, Egypt, 19 August 1913.

From the Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Thou must be firm and unshakeable in thy purpose; and never, never let any outward circumstances worry thee. I am sending thee to India to accomplish certain definite results. Thou must enter that country with a never-failing spirituality, a radiant faith; an eternal enthusiasm, an inextinguishable fire, a solid conviction, in order that thou mayest achieve those services for which I am sending thee. Let not thy heart be troubled. If thou goest away

¹ Samírámís, a mythical Queen and a historical early 9th century BCE Armenian Queen.

with this unchanging condition of invariability of inner state, thou shalt see the doors of confirmation open before thy face, thy life will be a crown of heavenly roses, and thou shalt find thyself in the highest station of triumph.

Strive day and night to attain to this exalted state. Look at me! Thou dost not know a thousandth part of the difficulties and seemingly insurmountable passes that rise daily before my eyes. I do not heed them; I am walking in my chosen highway; I know the destination. Hundreds of storms and tempests may rage furiously around my head; hundreds of *Titanics* may sink to the bottom of the sea, the mad waves may rise to the roof of heaven; all these will not change my purpose, will not disturb me in the least; I will not look either to the right or to the left; I am looking ahead, far, far. Piercing through the impenetrable darkness of the night, the howling winds, the raging storms, I see the glorious Light beckoning me forward, forward. The balmy weather is coming, and the voyager shall land safely.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn had attained to this supreme state. When they brought her the terrible news of the martyrdom of the Bahá'ís, she did not waver; it did not make any difference to her; she also had chosen her path, she knew her goal, and when they imparted to her the news of her impending death, no one could [IV:12:210] see any trace of sorrow in her face; she was rather happier.

Although she never cared for dress, that day she wore her best white silk dress and jewellery and perfumed herself with the most fragrant attar of roses. She hailed the chamber of death as a happy bride entering the nuptial bower of the bridegroom.

To this lofty summit of unchanging purpose thou must attain; like Qurratu'l-'Ayn, nothing must shake thy firm faith.

IV:12, 16 October 1913 [IV:12:210]

“I am summoning you to the world of the kingdom”

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Howard MacNutt, after the *Titanic* disaster.

A great steamship has been lost at sea. Today newspaper accounts of the *Titanic* are reflecting the sorrow and mourning of the whole world, all the power of man, all his pride and the skill of human invention were helpless against the power of the sea. Men of great wealth, men of prominence and celebrity, likewise men who were unimportant and unknown in the eye of the world,—all have found the same tomb under the waves. If this fate marked the end of human accomplishment, if this death was oblivion to human hopes and possibilities, the whole world might mourn. Unless the soul of man is quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit and he becomes vivified by the life of the Supreme Kingdom, all his powers, efforts and accomplishments are in vain. Look about you as we ride in this automobile. Shall any of these things you are now looking upon remain or endure? If you possessed all you could wish for,—these great buildings, wealth, luxury, the pleasures of life in this world, would any of these things increase your eternal happiness or insure you everlasting existence? I am summoning you to the world of the Kingdom. I am calling you away from this world. Nothing you can ever think of here will remain. You, yourself, will pass away as the roses wither at the touch of winter's breath. I wish for you heavenly happiness. I am praying that the confirmations of God may descend upon you, that you may become His servant, that you may go forth to save mankind from the bondage of this mortal world. I wish you to escape from this hell of materialism. Be not occupied with material things. Have no anxiety about your affairs. You are under the protection of Bahá'u'lláh,—in His service. Live in the spiritual world as I do. Think of nothing else.

Look out upon this great city through which we are passing. Then think of the wealthy men entombed in the ocean's depths. The powers of man in material civilization are wonderful, but all his accomplishments are as nothing,—he, himself, is as non-existent unless he upbuilds

in himself the civilization spiritual. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has no other thought than this. This is his heart, his soul, his station, his service,—to quicken mankind with Divine breaths and walk in the pathway of the Heavenly Kingdom.

When I was a young man I was devoted to music. So charmed and delighted was I with it that even an Arab clapping two sticks together in rude rhythm gave me great pleasure. Now my love for these things has gone completely. On the steamship crossing the sea a great modern orchestra played each night. The passengers listened to it with the deepest interest and enjoyment. But although the music was the very finest, the orchestra modern and most excellent, I found it occupied and disturbed my thoughts to such an extent that I retired to quiet reflection upon spiritual things.

I wish you to live in the world of the Spirit—to see the Divine Reality in everything,—to behold the illumination of the world of the Kingdom beyond and within the gloomy mask of this mortal existence. For the world of the Kingdom is a world of Lights, a world of happiness, a world of accomplishment, the real and eternal world.

[After a long pause,—looking reflectively out the window] I was asked to sail upon the *Titanic*, but my heart did not prompt me to do so.

IV:13, 4 November 1913 [IV:13:223]

“It is hoped a radiant palace may be prepared for thee!”

Recent Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a Christian Minister at Washington, D.C.

HE IS GOD!

O respected personage, thou seeker of Reality!

Thy letter was received. It was not a letter but a mirror in which was reflected the images of Reality. Therefore, through its reading and perusal the happiness of the heart was obtained. If the earthly house is destroyed, be thou not sad—may the palace of the Kingdom be upraised!

O thou bird of Reality! If thy terrestrial nest is ruined, be thou not unhappy—the heavenly nest is destined for thee. His Holiness, the Christ, the Holy Manifestations and the apostles possessed no nest whatsoever in this mortal world but in the universe of God, a glorious palace. It is hoped that through the Divine Bestowal, in a lofty station, in the universe of God, a radiant palace may become prepared for thee.

Consider that the palaces of former kings, from the day of Adam to the present time, are destroyed and ravaged by the relentless hand of time, but the towering palace of the believers of God are eternally built and never subject to destruction. Reflect carefully and thou shalt observe that all the foundations are uprooted but the foundation of the apostles of Jesus, which is becoming firmer and loftier day by day.

It is my hope that thou shalt likewise lay the basis of such a lofty palace. The foundation of this palace is to summon the people to the Call of the Kingdom of God; its galleries are the Principles of Bahá’u’lláh and its decorations the writings of the world of humanity; its radiant lamps are the lights of the Divine Kingdom.

Therefore, strive as much as thou canst to quicken the dead souls, to guide the erring ones, to cause to drink those who are thirsty and invite those who are hungry to sit around the heavenly table and partake of the Divine Food.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 13 September 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

IV:13, 4 November 1913 [IV:13:225]

First anniversary of the passing of Thornton Chase

Los Angeles Bahá'ís hold services in their Assembly Hall and at the grave.

In loving compliance with the request of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the friends in Los Angeles and vicinity celebrated the first anniversary of the passing of our brother, Thornton Chase. A party of ten went to the grave on the afternoon of 30 September, decorated the grave with flowers and spent an hour in prayer and communion.

...

We give you below extracts from two hitherto unpublished talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while in Los Angeles, in regard to our brother. The first is from his talk given on Saturday night, 19 October 1912, the evening of the day of the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to this sacred spot, and the second is the closing words of his final talk on Sunday, 20 October 1912 H. C. W.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

I came from San Francisco to see you and to visit Mr Chase's grave. Truly, Mr Chase was a glorious personage, having no desire save the good pleasure of God. His attention was directed to the Kingdom of God. He served during his lifetime. He was not at all wanting in service. He compiled certain books proving the validity of the Faith. As much as he could, he endeavoured to guide the people. You will never forget him, may you ever pray for him, be ever respectful to his family, and be a source of comfort to them. As many times as possible—at least once a year—you should make it a point to visit his tomb, for his spirit will be exhilarated through the loyalty of the friends, and in the world of God will it be happy. The friends of God must be kind to one another, whether it be in life or after death.

The deceased, his honour Mr Chase, was a blessed soul; he was a holy reality. His station in this life was not known. Yesterday I took a special trip and visited his tomb. At the time of visiting his tomb I found wonderful spirituality. *You must celebrate yearly, annually, the day of his departure from this life, and all of you, on my behalf, may go and visit his blessed tomb; and if possible spread a feast for the poor and give charity to those who are deprived on that occasion.*¹ Mention the services he has rendered, read passages from his words, and [IV:13:226] explain the history of his life. This is my wish. I have arranged that there may be placed a tombstone on his resting place, and have written a sentence that may be engraved on that stone. For I loved Mr Chase very much indeed. His heart was pure. He had no other aim except service to the Cause; he had no other thought except the thought of the Kingdom. Therefore he was very near to me, and at the threshold of Bahá'u'lláh he was accepted. The Blessed Perfection has invited him to His Kingdom. At this very moment he is submerged in the Sea of His Bounty.

Now, I say goodbye to all of you. At five o'clock I leave the hotel. But I will never forget you. You will ever be in my memory. I will ever pray for you and beg assistance and confirmation for you.

IV:14, 23 November 1913 [IV:14:240]

“Bring them together again, O Lord, by the power of Thy Covenant!”

Bring them together again, O Lord, by the power of Thy Covenant, and gather their dispersion by the might of Thy Promise, and unite their hearts by the dominion of Thy Love; and make them love each other so that they may sacrifice their spirits, expend their money,

¹ Note: *It would seem from this statement that 'Abdu'l-Bahá desires either or both of the days to be remembered: (1) The day of the departure of Thornton Chase, 30 September 1912; (2) the day of the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the grave, 19 October 1912.—The Editors*

and scatter themselves for the love of one another. O Lord, cause to descend upon them quietness and tranquillity! Shower upon them the Clouds of Thy Mercy in great abundance, and make them to characterize themselves with the characteristics of the Spiritual! O Lord, make us firm in Thy noble command, and bestow upon us Thy Gifts through Thy Bounty, Grace and Munificence.

Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Merciful, and the Benevolent.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IV:14, 23 November 1913 [IV:14:240]

Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Mr Roy C. Wilhelm

Upon whom be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou, my dear son!

Thy letter, dated 3 July 1913, was received. Its contents indicated the firmness and steadfastness of the believers of God and told of the holding of a divine meeting in your radiant, charming country place. Praise be to God, that that day was spent in the utmost joy and happiness. That annual memorial meeting will be the souvenir of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá especially when it is passed with infinite delight and gladness.¹

The confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá shall descend uninterruptedly upon those souls who are firm in *The Covenant*. Thou hast well observed that every firm one is assisted and aided and every violator is degraded, humiliated and lost. It is very astonishing that people are not admonished. They have observed how Mírzá Muḥammad ‘Alí, on account of the violation of *The Covenant*, descended to the lowest degree of humiliation and yet they do not become mindful. They have seen how others through disobedience to the Testament have fallen into a well of degradation, and yet they are not awakened. This Covenant is *The Covenant* of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. Now its importance is not [IV:14:241] known befittingly, but in the future it shall attain to such a degree of importance that if a king violates to the extent of one atom, he shall be cut off immediately.

Consider that during the life of Christ (may my life be a sacrifice to Him!)—His Cause had no importance whatsoever; nay, rather the people scoffed and ridiculed Him and according to the Text of the Gospel, they called Him, Beezlebug. Now you can see the importance which it had later. In short, thank thou God, that—praise be to Him!—in the garden of *The Covenant* thou art like a fragrant hyacinth and in the congregation of the love of God like an ignited candle.

Convey the wonderful Abhá greeting to his honour Mr Harris and his honour Mr Hoar and all the believers in God.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 2 August 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

IV:14, 23 November 1913 [IV:14:241]

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¹ Refers to a Feast given at West Englewood, New Jersey, 29 June 1913, by the Bahá’ís of New York city and vicinity, in commemoration of the Feast given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the same date in 1912—see the *Star of the West*, III:8, pp. 16–18.—*The Editors*.

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‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IV:14, 23 November 1913 [IV:14:242]

Service in the Kingdom

This article was approved by The Centre of the Covenant, and some copies in both English and Persian were spread in 1906.

In the teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is found recurring and recurring the command to SERVE; to go forth and teach and spread the glad tidings of the coming of the Kingdom;¹ and together with this command is his promise to all, that through doing this, his bidding they will receive Divine confirmation and spiritual strength.

In physical man the heart is the centre of the life of the body, and from it is sent forth the blood which feeds and nourishes every part of the body. In like manner is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the heart and centre of the body of believers in the world.

The Bahá’í Faith is The Covenant which is in this day established upon the earth, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the Centre of this Covenant. From him all members of it receive spiritual force and sustenance.

As the organs which make up the physical body of man are dependent upon connection with the heart in order that they may receive life force, so are the believers—composing the spiritual body of The Faith—dependent upon their connection with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for through Him and through Him only, can they receive the spiritual force and sustenance necessary for their growth and development in the Kingdom.

Regarding the organs of the physical body, one sees two factors in their various workings, namely, a receiving of energy and force, and a giving off of the same. The organs receive the life force from the heart and give it off according to their various functions; however, as soon as the supply of blood is cut off, the organ ceases to function and to give off energy; and, again, as soon as an organ ceases to do its work properly, the supply of life force from the heart is diminished. This is a law of nature in the physical realm which governs the healthy action of every member of the physical body.

Now consider the body of the faithful believers: If any one member severs his connection with the Centre of the Covenant—from whom all receive their spiritual force—he ceases to be a living and active member of the body; and, again, if he be not working and performing his function in the Kingdom, the supply of spiritual sustenance flowing to him from the Centre of the Covenant will be diminished in proportion as he fails to perform his work.

The well-being of any organ of the human body depends upon its continued action, and upon this also depends the well-being of the human body as a whole. So it is also with the body of believers. Each one has a special and a necessary work to perform, and his own salvation, as well as the general welfare of the body as a whole, depends upon his performing this duty.

¹ i.e., that the Kingdom has come.

In this day the believers are being tested and tried. There are great forces in the world working against them, and only the strong and steadfast ones will be able to stand. The only way by which one can obtain spiritual force and vitality to arise above all conditions and to attain to divine development of soul is through carrying out most minutely this command of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to work and to go forth to teach and to spread the Kingdom.

All are standing in the "eleventh hour" of this Great Day, and no one knows when the great world tests, of which 'Abdu'l-Bahá has so often spoken, will be upon "the faithful". When these calamities descend, there will no longer be any time to consider ways and means for carrying out his, commands.

So, now, while there is yet time, let all arise with steadfastness of purpose to carry out the Holy Command to SERVE, in order to establish themselves as faithful servants in The Lord's Vineyard.

Charles Mason Remey
Washington, D.C., January 1906.

IV:15, 12 December 1913 [IV:15:250]

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá uttered at Ramleh, Egypt

If you are sincere in your love for me, then love and serve the believers of God; then love and serve your fellow-men.

These days, I do not feel very well. My remedy is to hear that the believers love each other. Any other news makes me sick and unhappy. Let everyone speak to me about love and I will love him more. The friends must be real peacemakers; not stirrers up of strife nor sowers of seeds of discord, nor acting with superiority one over another.

I am now growing old. O, very old! All through my life I have carried on my back, gladly, the burdens of the believers; but now I ever anticipate hearing the good news of service actually accomplished by them. Save this, I have no other joy in the world.

Will they not make me happy?

Will they not answer my call, when the shadow of the last night of my earthly life is falling slowly across my path?

Will they not arise with superhuman energy and united effort to spread the Cause and impart to me new vigour?

Will they not listen to me?

How my heart leaps with joy when I hear the friends love each other, always overlooking one another's small mistakes; and that they are forgiving their enemies!

'Abdu'l-Bahá
Words uttered at Ramleh, Egypt, 28 October 1913.

IV:15, 12 December 1913 [IV:15:251]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

That which is the most important of all the affairs in this day is to teach the cause of God!

You must engage in the diffusion of the Fragrances of God, so that ye may impart life to the worlds, illumine the dark regions, confer new existence upon these mouldering, dead bodies, make intelligent and mindful these negligent hearts. Thus may they free themselves from this nether world and soar toward the Universe of the Almighty!

From a Tablet to Albert R. Windust, Chicago. Translated 23 October 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

A call to teaching!

Extracts from the “Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab”

This is the divine season of seed sowing

“It is not my duty to command particular persons to arise and *teach the Cause*. Whosoever arises to spread the Word and performs this service, will behold the Doors of Confirmation are open wide before his face. *This is the season of teaching*, and therefore it will yield results. In every season, something will be productive. If, during the seed-sowing time, we want to gather the harvest, we shall fail. If at the time of irrigating, we desire to do something else, failure will be the result.

“Now, this is the Divine season of seed-sowing. Every Bahá’í must become a heavenly cultivator. If, at this season, he performs the prayers of all the past and future ages, it will yield no fruit. My primal object of this long trip was to show, by deed, to the friends of God, that *this is the season of teaching* the Cause. Although ‘Akká and Haifa [Syria] are the headquarters of the Cause, and I should stay there and from those Centres administer the affairs of the Cause, yet I left everything and travelled throughout the earth to herald the coming of the Kingdom of Abhá.

“Any person desiring to be surrounded by the Confirmation of the Blessed Perfection [Bahá’u’lláh], must arise and *teach the Cause*.

“This is the Path!”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

From the “Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab”, 2 July 1913.

We must be up and doing

The Bahá’í Cause is much in need of real, earnest workers; workers who will surmount all opposition, meeting the antagonist as a firm rock before the blowing of the winds of tests and storms of trial. How many trees are uprooted by one tempestuous wind and how many ships have been wrecked by one storm!

There are many lands athirst for the Water of Life; let the friends of God irrigate them with the vernal showers now descending from the Kingdom of Abhá. There are many souls hungry for the Heavenly Bread; we must invite them to the Banquet of the Lord. The lethargic must become active, the sleeping ones must be awakened; the dispirited ones receive a share of the inexhaustible Favours, and the sweet music of the Supreme Concourse be heard.

We must be up and doing some kind of service, no matter how slight it is. Praise be [IV:15:252] to God! that the Orb of the Centre of the Covenant is shining and His Mercy is all-encompassing. He is teaching us, and gently and lovingly guides us in the right path. We all hope to serve him in some way or another; to win his good pleasure by sincerely walking in his footsteps; to become the signs of his love; the embodiment of his compassion, and the humble followers of his eternal law.

From the “Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab”, 3 July 1913.

The Cause of Bahá’u’lláh is the solvent for all problems

Whether we live in the East or in the West, the invisible Power of Bahá’u’lláh is unifying our scattered forces and training us for the service of His Kingdom—the kingdom of universal love and inter-racial amity. Today, the world of humanity is in need of this Power more than

at any other time. The keen competition which is carried on by the captains of industry and finance; the discontent and social unrest of the labouring classes; the bigotry and extreme fanaticism of religionists; the heat and bitterness with which fantastic controversies are upheld between sectarians; the spirit of superiority with which some nations look upon others; the lust of conquest and the desire for the extension of territory; the social and political rivalries between nations and governments, and the hatred and enmity existing between the different races: all these antagonistic forces clashing against each other, apparently aggravate the situation and make "confusion worse confounded".

But the Power of the Blessed Perfection has come to stay, bringing healing under its wide, outstretched wings. *This Power alone is the solvent for all these puzzling problems.* There may be found here and there some medicine to give temporary relief; but the lasting and permanent cure is the Bahá'í Power, which unites all peoples and sets at naught their seeming differences. This Power alone transforms the hearts, inspires the spirits, uplifts the minds, reveals the secrets of Love and unfurls the Banner of Divine Brotherhood.

From the "Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab", 5 July 1913.

The Power of the Cause

"The glad-tidings of the Kingdom of Abhá are effective over the hard stone and resuscitates the dried bones. Like unto the down pouring of the vernal shower, they cause the growth of roses and hyacinths, jasmines and jonquils out of the black soil! Although the inhabitants of that city are submerged in the sea of materialism and it may take some time before they are awakened, yet the Melody of the Kingdom of Abhá shall finally quicken them; the Cup of the Love of God will become full to overflowing, impart a wonderful exhilaration and allay the thirst of the thirsty ones."

Extract from Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Quoted in "Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab", 11 July 1913.

The basis of Bahá'í public teaching

"The basis of the Call [i.e., teaching and delivering addresses] must be the Oneness of the world of humanity, so that the religious fanaticism, sectarian bias, racial prejudice and political prejudice may be removed and all mankind may enter under the uni-coloured tent of the Oneness of the World of Humanity, the hearts may affiliate with each other, the souls be attracted, and the East and the West may embrace each other. This must be the basis of your addresses in public meetings."

How great movements have advanced

"All great movements have advanced through altruism, selflessness, and self-sacrifice, and *not through the interchange of public opinion.* It is my hope that all of us may arise with the greatest power to serve this most important Cause (Universal Peace) and become the means of the welfare of the world of humanity."

Extracts from Tablets by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Quoted in "Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab", 12 July 1913.

Concerning temporal and eternal sovereignty

"Know thou, verily, I say unto thee that the conditions of this mortal world, even if it be the kingship of the whole expanse of this globe, is ephemeral. It is an illusion. It is ended in

nothing; neither does it contain any results, nor, in the estimation of God, is it equal to the wing of a mosquito.

“Where are the kings and the queens? Where are the palaces and their mistresses? Where are the imperial thrones and jewelled crowns? Where are the mighty rulers of Persia, Greece and Rome? Verily, their palaces are in ruin and desolation, their thrones [IV:15:253] destroyed, and their crowns thrown to the dust.

“But the signs of any one of the maidservants of God who arose in the diffusion of the Fragrances of God, serving the Kingdom of God, summoning the people to the Word of God, are widely spread eternally and handed down through centuries and cycles; her dawn is ever luminous; her star always shining; her flag continually flying; her station divinely glorified; her crown scintillating; her message living; her fame immortal; her voice resonant, her spirit in the apex of the Kingdom and her effulgence in the horizon of the Realm of Might.

“I beg of God to make thee one of these maid-servants.”

Extract from Tablet by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Quoted in “Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab”, 14 July 1913.

The superlative degree of success and prosperity

“O ye believers of God! Supplicate and entreat at the Threshold of the Almighty to confirm you in the diffusion of the Fragrances of Holiness which are wafting from the direction of the Garden of God. Blow ye over all creation like the breezes of the early morn, and impart ye freshness and verdancy, through the Power of Truth, upon the flowers, sweet hyacinths and the roses of the garden of existence. This is the quintessence of meeting and the superlative degree of success and prosperity—for it causes the attainment of man to the Kingdom of Abhá, attracts him to the Sacred Court of His Highness the Almighty, and suffers him to reach the Sublime Presence of the Powerful and Omnipotent Lord.”

Extract from Tablet by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Quoted in Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab”, 21 July 1913.

Attracting souls to the Kingdom of Abhá

“If thou desirest to be confirmed in the service of the Kingdom of God, live in accord with the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, and that is: real love for the world of humanity and the utmost of kindness for the believers of God. This real love, like unto the magnetic power, attracts the Divine confirmations.”

“If a soul calls the people to the Kingdom of God according to the Principles of Bahá’u’lláh, there will be many listeners. First one must teach by deeds; then speak The Word! First one must become thirsty; then the salubrious water be offered. No matter how delicious the water is, one who is not thirsty will not enjoy it. Therefore, make ye an effort so that the people may become thirsty; then cause them to quaff from the Divine Chalice.”

Extract from Tablet by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Quoted in “Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab”, 24 July 1913.

The Editors

IV:15, 12 December 1913 [IV:15:256]

The most important work

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a little group of Americans in Paris.

I have planted the Seeds in America. You must nurture them and care for them. If you do

this, they will yield an abundant harvest. ...

You must arise with superhuman strength to spread the teachings for the Cause is GREAT; and whosoever shall arise in this Day to TEACH, know that he will be assisted by the Divine Concourse. This is not the day of silence! It is the day of the Proclamation of the Kingdom! It is not the day of rest. We must, ACT, ACT, ACT!

IV:15, 12 December 1913 [IV:15:258]

Exhortation

O people! The Doors of the Kingdom are opened; the Sun of Truth is shining upon the world; the Fountains of Life are flowing; the Daysprings of Mercy have appeared; the Greatest and Most Glorious Light is now manifest to illuminate the hearts of men.

Wake up and hear the Voice of God calling from all parts of the Supreme World—"Come unto Me, O ye children of men; come unto Me, O ye who are thirsty, and drink from this sweet Water which is descending in torrents upon all parts of the globe."

Now is the time! Now is the Accepted Time!

Look ye at the time of Christ: had the people realized that the Holy Spirit of Good was speaking to them through His Divine Mouth, they would not have waited three centuries before accepting Him.

And now is it meet for you that you are sleeping upon the beds of idleness and neglect, while the FATHER, whose coming Christ foretold, has come among us, and opened the Greatest Door of Bounteous Gifts and Divine Favours?

Let us not be like those in past centuries, who were deaf to His Call, and blind to His Beauty; but let us try and open our eyes, that we may see Him; and open our ears that we may hear Him; and cleanse our hearts that He may come and abide in our temples.

These days are the days of Faith and Deeds—not the days of words and lip service: Let us arise from the sleep of negligence, and realize what a great feast is prepared for us; first eating thereof ourselves, then giving unto others who are thirsting for the Water of Knowledge, and hungering for the Bread of Life.

These Great Days are swiftly passing; and once gone they can never be recalled. So, while the Rays of the Sun of Truth are still shining and the Centre of the Covenant of God is manifest, let us go forth to work, [for after a while the night will come and the way to the vineyard will not then be so easy to find.

The light of knowledge hath appeared before which the darkness of every superstitious fancy will be annihilated. The hosts of the supreme concourse are descending to assist all those who rise up to serve their Lord, to subdue and gain the victory over the city of the hearts, to proclaim the glad tidings of the coming of the Lord, and to unite the souls of his creatures.]¹

'Abdu'l-Bahá

IV:16, 31 December 1913 [IV:16:267]

"Let the new follow the new!"

A presentation of "The Covenant of God" as the only Source of Divine Knowledge to mankind, and the necessity of turning to the "Point" of its Manifestation in this "New Day".

Charles Mason Remey

¹ Last section added from the pamphlet 9 *The Bahai Revelation*, p. 14.

In contacting with the Bahá'ís in various parts of the country, one realizes that there is a point which the friends must understand thoroughly themselves before they can really teach the Cause, confirm others in the faith and bring them to the realization of the New Covenant, and its Centre who is now upon earth in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This point is: that the Bahá'í Cause is *The Covenant of God*, not merely one of many phases of Universal Truth (as some say), but that The Covenant of Bahá is *The Truth—the only Living Truth today!*

Another point is regarding the “Oneness and the Singleness” of God. For years our teachers have been proclaiming and explaining that part of the teaching concerning the *Oneness* of God's Revelation to mankind and with evident and good results, too, for it attracts souls and confirms them in the truth of their own past religion, whichever it may be. The truth of the Divine inspiration of each and all of the Holy Messengers, the founders of the world's religions, is most acceptable to the minds of men, for through the light of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh people are now seeing all of the Divine Revelations of the past to be as parts in the foundation of the one great spiritual whole, the completed structure which they now find realized in this, the latest and greatest of God's Revelations to the world—the Bahá'í Revelation.

When one sees the foundation of a house being laid, the functions of its various parts are not apparent; but when the superstructure is completed and one sees the entire building as designed by the architect, then he understands that each part of the foundation has a relation with every other part of the edifice, each being an organic, or necessary, part of the whole. So it is with religion. One can only understand the Revelations of the past, and their relation one with another, as he comes into the knowledge of the Bahá'í Revelation, for in the Bahá'í Cause all past religions are explained and completed. One sees that all Revelations come from one source—which is “The Word of God”; all are parts of the One Great Cause of God, established down through the ages in the hearts of men, the present-day Bahá'í Revelation being the completion of the plan of the Great Divine Architect, for the Spiritual Unity, quickening and solidarity of all religions—the Kingdom of God upon earth.

Thus, briefly, do we understand the *Oneness* of God's Truth.

Now there is the second part of the teaching in question, namely: The *Singleness* of God. This phase we are now realizing and understanding to a greater degree than ever before, through the spiritual awakening caused by the presence in our midst of The Centre of The Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, during his recent travels in America.

We understand that the Manifestation of the “Word of God” to the world (through which, and through which only, man becomes spiritually quickened and knows God) is One Spirit and is ever *single* in its manifestations to humanity. That is to say: That the one “Word of God”—which is not a creation of God, but an emanation from His Infinitude—manifests successively and singly through the various chosen prophets or Divine Mouthpieces sent to the people of the world.

Thus the “Word of God” in its *Singleness* manifested through Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, the Báb—the “first point” of the new cycle—and Bahá'u'lláh.

And now the fruit and the Power of the Spirit of the Word of God, as revealed in [IV:16:268] Bahá'u'lláh is manifest to all the world through the life of servitude to humanity of The Centre of The Covenant—he who calls himself 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is *The Centre* from which the spiritual effulgence (which appeared in these “latter days” in the blessed person of Bahá'u'lláh) is now being reflected to the world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's word is *The Truth*; his teaching differentiates between error and Truth. He is the Unique *Centre* of guidance and

illumination for all mankind.¹

By virtue of *The Singleness of God*, “the Word” is manifest through but one chosen individual at a time. As the phenomenal sun in the heavens is but one sun, though it appears each day at a different point upon the horizon, so is the Sun of Truth—which is “The Word of God”—one and the same throughout all time, notwithstanding that its points of appearance are successively many. The foundation and the Cause of God in the world today is this same Spiritual Sun shining in its *Singleness*, its rays going forth to the people of the whole earth from a new point, and this point is the revelation of God’s New Covenant upon earth.

Although the phenomenal sun has shone throughout the ages of the past, yet in order that we may be warmed and lighted by its rays, we must turn to it in its position in the heavens of *today*. It shone in the past for the world of the past. It shines today for the people of today! If the people of today refuse the sun’s light and energy, shutting themselves off from its light, saying that the light and energy given off from the sun in seasons past is all they desire, they would be in manifest physical loss. They would die! In like manner are those in manifest spiritual loss who cling to “the letter” and to the memories of the light of the spiritual days of the past and who refuse to recognize “The Word of God” manifest in this day; for as it was in ages past, so it is in this day, the Divine manifestation of *The Day* is the unique source of spiritual life in the world. Therefore, it is evident that the Manifestation of this day is the only source of spiritual life for this day and dispensation, which is that of God’s Kingdom upon earth.

The physical world receives from the physical sun each day sufficient physical force and energy to sustain it until the coming of the next day, when a fresh supply is given. In like manner, the outpouring of Divine energy, force and life proceeds from the Sun of “The Word of God”. With each Manifestation a supply of spiritual energy and force is given sufficient for the needs of that day, or dispensation. Then with the completion of that epoch and the advent of a new day of revelation, the former revelations are found to have become exhausted and are insufficient for the needs of the people, for if the people do not turn to the light of the new Manifestation, they find themselves in manifest loss. They become as spiritually dead souls, because the spiritual sources of the past, having fulfilled their mission, have become exhausted and are no longer sources of light for humanity; nay, rather, that same light is again manifest in the world, but now is shining from a new dawning-point, for “The Word of God” is *Single* and no longer shines from the dawning-points of former cycles.

Thus, Moses in His age, was the only source of guidance to the people, but with the coming of Jesus the Christ, a new day dawned; for when God manifested through Jesus, the day of Moses ended. Those who loved the Divine Light of the teachings of Moses were attracted to Jesus and believed in Him for in Him they found the same Divine Light of God which formerly had existed in Moses. Upon the other hand, those in whom the spirit of Moses had not penetrated, those who saw only “the letter” or the external side of His teachings, those who refused to look toward the new point of Revelation which was in Jesus—were entirely cut off from the source of Divine Light. They cut themselves off from the Christ and became spiritually dead because they refused the living Truth, “The Word of God”, the Christ as manifested in Jesus, and they were in darkness.

In like manner, in this day there are those who say, “What need have we for The New

¹ Note: It should not be construed from this paragraph and other statements in this article that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is understood to be a manifestation of the Word of God, Independent of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh. The cycle of Bahá’u’lláh extends for one thousand or thousands of years from AD 1844; but it is unique in that the “Most Great Characteristic” of the New Covenant is the appointing of a *Centre*, which now is in the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and after him shall be vested in the Universal House of Justice for a period of one thousand or thousands of years. (See *Star of the West*, IV:14, p. 238.)—*The Editors*.

Covenant of Abhá? Have we not Jesus? We want no other!" Indeed these people are in great loss, for they cling to "the letter" of the teachings of the Christian dispensation and not to the Divine Light which emanated from Christ's Holy Person. [IV:16:269]

In this, the day of The New Covenant, the *real* Christians are those who have within their souls the love and the light of Christ, and when they hear the Bahá'í Message, they respond to the Call of the New Covenant, for they see and recognize the New Covenant to be the return of the same Christ, "The Word of God", which has ever been the One Light of the world throughout all ages. Those in whose souls the love of God does not exist are as spiritually dead, they being Christians in name only. Christ said: "My sheep shall know my voice." Those who really are of Him in spirit know and recognize His voice, for in them is living the Truth of Christ. The people who cling to the outer forms of the dispensation of Jesus, and who refuse the Light of God in its new point of manifestation, these, like the Jews of old who rejected Christ, are in great loss.

The Revelation of Jesus was for His own dispensation—that of "The Son". But now the apostolic age is finished and completed, and a new Revelation has appeared. Now, the Revelation of Jesus is no longer the Point of guidance to the world as it was in the past, for now the same Christ, which was in Jesus, is again manifest in the Bahá'í Revelation, and those who desire the light, must now turn to God in His New Manifestation. Christ said, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now." This is the time for us to know those things. Now we are in the Day of "The Word" manifesting as THE FATHER, *The Father* of whom "The Son" and all the Prophets testified, and promised. If we refuse the Father, we also refuse the Son, and all of the prophets. We are then in total darkness, for we are refusing the Revelation of the present day and dispensation, which is the end of the Revelations of the past and the beginning of a new order of things upon earth.

In the parable of "The Lord of the Vineyard" (Matt. 21:33) Christ spoke of the prophets of God who were rejected by the world. He spoke of the coming of "The Son" who would be rejected and slain. (Here Jesus was prophesying of His own rejection by the world and of His crucifixion.) Then Jesus speaks of this "Latter day" coming, saying: "When the Lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will He do unto those husbandmen?" "They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men and will let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render Him the fruit in their seasons." This is one of the holy prophecies wherein is promised the coming of the Mighty Manifestation of God to the Earth, and the establishment of His Kingdom triumphant upon earth.

The physical seasons of the year are symbolic or typical of the seasons or phases of a dispensation of "The Word of God".

In the springtime, physical life is poured out upon the earth, and all things in which there is life awake to a greater and more active physical life, while new plants and shrubs spring up upon all sides out from the hitherto sterile and lifeless earth. Shortly comes the time of fruition, and summer is at hand; then the decline of the physical forces as autumn arrives. With the winter coldness comes a cessation of physical activities and much disintegration and death in the vegetable world, while those trees, shrubs, etc., in which life remains are not productive of fruits as they were in the springtime and summer. Then again comes the springtime and with the coming of the warm sun and rain those trees and plants in which physical life exists, manifest new life—stretching out their branches and putting forth new leaves to receive the life-giving rays of light proceeding from the sun, now returned with all of its former life-giving power and strength.

Upon the other hand, those dead trees and shrubs, in which life has become extinct, and

which but a short time before, outwardly appeared to be as perfect as those in which there was life, under these new conditions of springtime, disintegrate and decay with great rapidity.

Thus the dead and the living trees and shrubs stand side by side throughout the winter, and the casual observer sees them as being equal until the coming of springtime and then the outward differentiation takes place.

In like manner is the coming of the springtime of the dispensation of God's Truth upon earth. Through the shining forth of the Spiritual Sun of Truth—which is "The Word of God" manifested in The Temple of Chosen Man—the people of the world, as they turn to the point of Revelation, are quickened with Divine Life and bring forth in their lives the fruits of God's Kingdom; then in turn those souls sow the spiritual seeds in the hearts of others, quickening the souls of spiritually dead humanity with a new spiritual life.

Then, as time goes on, creed, form and dogma dominate and the spirit of the religion [IV:16:270] becomes exhausted, the people grow cold in faith; religion becomes material instead of spiritual in proportion as the temporal power of its institution increases. This is the winter season of a religious dispensation; a time of spiritual famine in the land! Then arrives another Springtime of Spirituality. The Sun of Truth again appears in its *Singleness* from another dawning-point upon the spiritual horizon, and a new Divine day, or dispensation, is assured in the One, same, Single and Eternal Word of God again going forth to humanity from a new point of Divine Manifestation. God's Message in its Oneness and Singleness is again given to all peoples great and small. His Word creates Divine susceptibilities and quickens souls hitherto dead, while those in whom the love of God exists, spring into new life, for they are those who are of Him, and in whose hearts abides His love; while other souls apparently as good, and often from the world's standpoint apparently better, do not respond. Those who do not respond, have no life in them; they remain in a condition of spiritual death which is one of Divine darkness or winter, and even the revealed Truth of the past avails them nothing. The world soon sees such souls in manifest loss, for even in this world are the spiritually alive and the spiritually dead souls differentiated one from another. There is but One Source of Divine Light. It is a *single* source.

Humanity has no choice of dawning-points. There is but One in each age. God appoints and prescribes the way. Man can accept and he may reject or refuse and thus cut himself off! Sacred history proves this point. For example: when God's Word was manifested in Jesus the Christ, it was the best of the people, from the world's standpoint, who refused Him; while those who were of no worldly account accepted Him and became the pillars of His cause. Theirs was the Divine blessing, and we find mention made of them down through the ages, while the worldly great of those days are in disfavour or entirely forgotten, because they preferred the former to those present-day Revelations, and thus became entirely deprived of the Truth.

Another important point is that in springtime the dead trees and plants in which there is no life are cleared away and consigned to the fire. So is the coming of a new day of Revelation: the people who are spiritually alive, are given more life, while all of the dead religions and philosophies, like dead wood, must be discarded. If this is not done, the past teachings will become a hindrance and a stumbling block to the growth of the New Cause, for were this year's tree held within the confines of the dimensions of its growth of last year, it could not expand nor grow. It must be free to develop the life within it to manifest without restriction.

So it is with the newly quickened souls in each Divine dispensation. They must detach themselves absolutely from all the philosophies, creeds and theologies of the past, so that the Spirit of God working and developing in their souls may grow according to the wisdom and laws of God, and not fear the scars and wounds of the stifling effects of human limitations.

There are two aspects to every Divine Revelation: (1) The purely spiritual Light or Divine teaching. This is ever one and the same, eternal and unchangeable. (2) The commands, laws and ordinances laid upon the people by the Manifestation. These are unchangeable during each dispensation, but end with the close of the dispensation and the beginning of a new dispensation,

Each Manifestation has manifested the one eternal and *single* Truth, and each has applied that Truth to the world according to commands, laws and ordinances always commensurate with the conditions of humanity to which He ministered. The spiritual welfare of the people in each age has depended upon their discarding all past ordinances, and teachings of former dispensations (save those which may have been required or reiterated by the Manifestation of the day), and by adhering only and wholly to His commands.

The seed takes root in the earth which is disintegrated from the hard, stony substances of the earth's surface. A seed will not grow when embedded in a perfect and beautiful stone. The stone must first sacrifice its condition of hardness and mineral perfection and become as dust before the seed will grow therein.

So it is with the seed of the Word of God. When this seed is offered to one of a hard heart, it does not take root—no, like the seed of the plant it grows only in prepared soil. This soil it finds in the souls of those who through sorrow and tribulation have been crushed and broken and who, like soft, rich earth, are penetrable and can absorb the water of the spiritual life which is The Love of God. There are those who have forsaken human aspirations and desire God, and are [IV:16:271] glad to free themselves from the hard and cold condition of humanity. These seek only the life-giving teachings of the living Truth. Stones offer no sustenance to growing plants—rather, in a stony garden only weeds will grow.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote: *“In this day he who seeks the Light of the Sun of Truth must free his mind from the tales of the past, must adorn his head with the Crown of Severance, and his Temple with the robe of virtue. Then shall he arrive at the ocean of Oneness and enter the Presence of Singleness. The heart must become free from the fire of superstitions, that it may receive the light of Assurance, and that it may perceive the Glory of God.”*

Bahá'ís must carry out this command implicitly and be severed from all and everything of the past—things both good and bad—everything. The established forms of the past, though good and profitable in their own days, are in this day detrimental to spiritual growth; unless these be ordered by the New Covenant, the ordinances of the New Covenant being perfectly adapted to the conditions of this new age.

When a community is fed upon foods which do not contain the living nourishment necessary to sustain life, or when the community is given impure water to drink—sickness and disease break out. In like manner, when in a spiritual assembly of friends, teachings other than those of the New Covenant are taught, a spiritual sickness falls upon that assemblage, and the people fail to attain to divine confirmation, and cease to attract people to the Kingdom.

We must all understand that with the coming of the New Covenant all teachings of the past ARE PAST, and that in this new Day of God only that which is revealed by the Supreme Pen, Bahá'u'lláh, and that which issues from The Centre of The Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is spiritual food for the people and is to be taught.

The teachings and institutions of the past Revelations were necessary in their days, and in those days were spiritual food for the people; but now all is changed. A new age has come and with it new and living spiritual food in great abundance. The Centre of The Covenant is now supplying all the world with the living food and drink of the Kingdom of God.

In the strata of the earth we find the fossil remains of the vegetation of past ages. These were once luscious and afforded good food for animals and man, but now who of us would eat these stony remains?

If we would thus differentiate between living and dead physical foods which have to do with the nourishment and life of the physical body, how much more careful ought we to be in choosing for our souls the living spiritual food of Divine Revelation of the New Covenant, pure and free from the dead teachings of the past, from which (like the fossils in the crust of the earth) the spirit of life has departed, leaving only the outer form or shell.

The coming of spring does not put life into the dead fossils, neither does the Manifestation of God have to do with the theologies and creeds of the past. Like the vegetable fossils, the religious forms of the past must be discarded.

I recall, some years ago, attending a free religious session at which a young Bahá'í teacher just returned home to America from India, had been asked to proclaim the Bahá'í Message. A large number of people were gathered together and our young friend gave a most beautiful address, explaining the Holy Cause successively from the view-points of each of the great religions of the past, and explaining how, in this day, the same "Word of God" which had created the religions of the past, each in its own day, was again manifest in the world creating the great universal religion which is God's Kingdom upon earth. He gave a comprehensive talk. It contained food for spiritual thought, and it gladdened and attracted the hearts of the people. Whereupon as soon as he had finished speaking the person presiding over the meeting, in a very delightful, pleasant and friendly manner, called the attention of the audience to the fact that the platform of those meetings stood for all teachings past as well as present, and thereupon she asked one who was present, to speak, a teacher of the most ancient of this world's philosophical systems.

This person arose and in a manner, which apparently seemed in sympathy with the Bahá'í address, quietly and persistently loaded the minds of the audience with so much of his ancient theology, that the effect of the Bahá'í address was quite counteracted, and the audience left the place in a confused state of mind.

Although at various times Bahá'í teachers spoke from that platform, there were few re-[IV:16:274] sults of a lasting nature, and all because those who upheld the platform insisted always in mixing with the Truth of The New Covenant the old forms and teachings of the past.

'Abdu'l-Bahá commands that nothing but *reality* be taught. There is but one reality in the world today and that is the *New Covenant*. As one travels through the various Bahá'í Assemblies it is clear to see that in those centres where the people have clung *exclusively* to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, shutting out from the meetings the very mention of all else, in those places there has been growth and fruition, fragrance and spirituality, because the people have been nourished upon the pure life-giving spiritual food of "The Word of God", and consequently have grown in the grace of the Kingdom.

The Centre of The Covenant is the Divine physician to the world besides whom there is none other. That which proceeds from him is the Word of God, and is to be obeyed. If it is not obeyed souls suffer; they deprive themselves of the bounty and blessings of God.

Every command of The Centre of The Covenant is to be obeyed implicitly. If anyone fails to follow, he deprives himself and is in manifest spiritual loss.

Now, in this day, it has been revealed by The Centre of The Covenant that the Message of the New Covenant is to be proclaimed and taught to the world. Of late this command has

flowed frequently from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

All true Bahá'ís must now arise to obey this call. Those who arise have the promise of the confirmations of heaven. If they do not arise, the blessings will pass from them to others whom God will raise up to do His work.

'Abdu'l-Bahá assures us that this is the day for sowing the spiritual seed of God's Word in the hearts of the people, so let us all arise to do the bidding of The Centre of God's Covenant, to spread the glad-tidings of the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom among men.

Humbly yours in the service of The Centre of The Covenant.

Charles Mason Remey.

IV:16, 31 December 1913 [IV:16:273]

A word picture of the "old" world

Look thou with seeing eyes at the world about thee and at the inhabitants thereof. Upon the stage of this immense theatre, most spectacular plays are being enacted. On one side thereof thou wilt see the victorious and the vanquished legions of profit and loss. On the other side thou wilt observe the waves of the sea of folly rising and falling. Cries are being raised on every side and the agonies of revolution, revolt and unrest reach unto the ears of progressive men. There is a tremendous strike and clash between capital and labour, and the war between the aristocrats and democrats is carried on relentlessly with bow and arrow, sword and javelin. The phalanxes of a great army are drawn in battle array, each division taking its position. Armed troops and artillery are to be found in every part of the field. The flash of the swords of enmity blind the eyes from even the most remote distance, the lightning effect of breast-plate and lance and the sparkle of the bucklers of hatred light up the night and bewilder the sight. In short: strife, battle, slaughter and war are prepared in organized perfection.

On the other hand thou wilt hear that from every house strains of music are raised, and confusing melodies of harp, lyre, cymbal and flute are heard, and mad revellers are dancing to the tunes, while they are inebriated with the wine of vanishing pleasures. In one place thou wilt behold the wanton and soiled decorations, and in another the flimsy shows of the gilded class of creatures. On the one hand is to be seen the embellishment and luxury made possible through illicit wealth, and on the other hand, the ravishing of this mortal world of its beautiful appearance.

From different parts are to be heard sighs of anguish, lamentations of poverty, cries of agony and misery,—and the calls for succour have reached to the gate of heaven. One hears the weeping of the hopeless, the appeals of the oppressed, the trembling murmurs of the helpless and the harrowing wails of the ship-wrecked in the sea of persecution. The heat of the conflagration of separation spreads on all sides, the fire of longing is raging with great intensity and the tongues of the flames of calamity leap forth in every direction. Here one sees the oppression of kings and the thoughtlessness of cabinet ministers; there one sees conflict on the battle field of thoughts and ideals by ambitious generals, statesmen and administrators of the nations and countries. They consult, scheme, plot and exchange views; they organize fallacious and superfluous companies and make false the established values; and thus do they lay and destroy the foundation of their political careers.

In short: when thou observest these things with the eye of reality, thou wilt see that the outcome, result and fruit of all these theatrical performances are mirages and their sweetness is bitter poison. A few days the earth shall roll on its axis, and these fleeting visions will be completely forgotten.

When thou shuttest thine eyes to this dark world and lookest upward and heavenward, thou wilt see light upon light stretching from eternity to eternity. The reality of the mysteries will be revealed. Happy is the pure soul who does not attach himself to the transient conditions and comforts, but rather seeks to attach himself to the purity, nobility and splendour of the world which endures.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

From Tablet revealed at Ramleh, Egypt, September 1913.

IV:16, 31 December 1913 [IV:16:274]

“The modern social religion”

Regarding this publication, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, says:

To Mr Horace Holley, author of the Bahá’í work, *The Modern Social Religion*.

HE IS GOD!

O thou son of the Kingdom!

A copy of the book written by thee and forwarded to this spot was received. The friends are engaged in reading it. They praise and commend your book most highly and appreciatively, God willing, it will be translated and I will likewise read it. Thank thou God that thou art confirmed and assisted; thy aim is to render service to the Kingdom of Abhá, and thy abject is the promotion of the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. Although the glory and greatness of this service is not known for the present, but in future ages it shall assume most great importance and will attract the attention of the most great scholars. Therefore, strive more and more as much as thou canst in this service, so that it may become the cause of thy everlasting glory and in the Kingdom of Abhá thou mayst shine like unto a star.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IV:17, 19 January 1914 [IV:17:286]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Prof. F. K. Cheyne of Oxford, England

In answer to the letter of Prof. Cheyne, [dated 23 October 1913. *Star of the West*, VI:17, pp. 287, 290.] ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed a Tablet, from which we are permitted to quote the following:

“O thou, my spiritual philosopher!

“Thy letter was received. In reality its contents were eloquent, for it was an evidence of thy literary fairness and of thy investigation of Reality. ... There were many Doctors [IV:17:287] amongst the Jews, but they were all earthly, but St Paul became heavenly because he could fly upwards. In his own time no one duly recognized him; nay, rather, he spent his days amidst difficulties and contempt. Afterwards it became known that he was not an earthly bird, he was a celestial one; he was not a natural philosopher, but a divine philosopher.

“It is likewise my hope that in the future the East and the West may become conscious that thou wert a divine philosopher and a herald to the Kingdom. ... Thy respected wife in reality deserves the utmost consideration. ... Praise be to God that she is also thy co-worker and co-partner in the perfection of the Kingdom.”

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IV:18, 7 February 1914 [IV:18:299]

Faith—knowledge—prayer—obedience

From *The Bahai Revelation* by Thornton Chase.

Faith in God is not intellectual yielding to argument through being convinced that certain statements are correct, but it is rather from a hunger of the soul, a knowledge of personal helplessness and the perception of a possible Mighty Helpfulness. Faith cannot rely on any man, but in God only; the required help must come from a higher power than man. The soul is craving that which does not pertain to humanity in itself. The latent spark of divine longing is awaking to seek its promise, and it turns, heavenward for the dawn of hope. It is looking for its Father, God.

Therefore, it is necessary that man shall have some knowledge of God, and for this he must turn toward the "Face" of God. "Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice; have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst: 'Seek ye my face'; my heart said unto thee, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'" (Ps. 27:8.) *His "Face" is the revelation of Himself in the realm of existence, where man dwells.* All the existence declares God and teaches of Him, but the heart-knowledge, the living knowledge, comes through His Incarnate Word, the human Manifestation of His Will. *Therefore, man must seek and find the Manifestation of God, believe in Him, accept His Word, obey His Commands, and follow Him in the pathway of sacrifice.* The Manifestation of God may be always known, because He provides the kind of help which the seeking soul requires, heart-help, spirit-help, creating help.

Man is a praying creature. When he finds himself in need, as he does from the moment of his birth, he strives by all means at his command to "pray" for help. All through his life he seeks aid from others; he is always in need, always begging for assistance. When he is awakened through any means to the hunger and helplessness of his soul, he hesitates not to pray to God, and, whatever may be thought of the action and working of prayer, it causes man to turn toward God and make it possible for God to answer him. Prayer changes his attitude from self-ward to God-ward.

If he prays for things that pertain to his worldly affairs, his spirit is not turned toward God, but toward himself. His prayer must [IV:18:300] be "in the Name of God", that is, in accord with the divine Word. The Name of the Manifestation of God signifies divine attributes; therefore, to ask "in His Name" means according to his nature and instructions, which are the nature and instructions of God. *No prayer is prayer to God unless it be in God's way,* according to His Word, and with a sincere desire for His Will to be done regardless of the personal will. Prayer, in its essence, is the abandonment of the personal will in favour of the Will of God. And such prayer God answers, because it is in agreement with His law and can be answered.

God asks man to pray to Him. He has given freely everything for the necessities of human life. He has filled the lands and waters with foods and taught man how to cultivate and use them; He has given the forests and all materials for shelter, the cotton and the wool, and enabled man to mould them for his comfort; He has given the reasoning faculties that man may progress in material welfare and exercise the ethical and moral knowledge offered to him; He has given conceptions of beauty that man may seek for more than the physical dimensions of existence; and He has implanted the perception of higher possibilities and a desire for eternal destinies, that man may turn his face toward the Infinite.

All of these have been without the asking, but for the greater, spiritual things. God tells man to pray that in so doing he may recognize his need, prove the reality of his desire, and put himself into the only attitude in which he can receive. One must face forward and hold out his hand if he would have the gift; he must meet the donor part way; otherwise there is no real gift. He who is in need will pray. He who hesitates to supplicate God for His most valuable treasures is standing in the station of pride, or has not awakened to their worth and his own need. ...

God demands obedience. It is not for man to question God's commands. A little thought shows that all the ordinances of God, expressed by His Manifestation, are for the uplifting and

good of man; how then can he question the methods revealed from the same Source? The Scriptures throughout lay stress upon obedience as of the utmost importance in the sight of God, and he who would attain the higher blessings should welcome the opportunities to obey. Everything in existence is under law, and all things obey freely, except man, who has been granted ability to disobey even God, and to obey himself. Man is always a servant; he obeys something; how much better for him to serve the Wise One, the True One, the Beautiful One, instead of his own ignorance and greed! “Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:16.)

The whole sin and consequent degradation of the Jewish people was their disobedience to God. He called them again and again to be His people. “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.” (Jer. 7:23.) “Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee; so shall it be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.” (Jer. 38:20.) ...

Obedience, then, is to the Manifestation of God, in whatever age he may appear.

The Voice of God, speaking through Bahá'u'lláh [in this Millennial Age], says: “O Son of Existence Keep My Commands for love of Me, and deny thyself thine own desires if thou wishest My Pleasure.” “O Son of Man! Neglect not My Laws if thou lovest My Beauty, and forget not My Counsels if thou art hopeful to attain My Will.”

IV:18, 7 February 1914 [IV:18:300]

The mysteries of prayer

From *Sacred Mysteries* by Mírzá Asadu'lláh

One of the commandments that exists in every religion is prayer.

What is the benefit of prayer that man should stand or kneel three or five times a day and read or chant certain words?

We answer, there is no doubt that the ordinances and precepts of God are for the purpose of promoting humanity to a higher station. Therefore, the benefit of praying must be something which elevates man to a lofty and spiritual station, and to set him free from the prison of this immortal world of nature.

In explaining this subject, we cannot but hold to the Utterances of God, which descended through the tongues of His Mouthpieces and Prophets:

God says: “The act of praying is a pillar of religion.” That is, religion is likened [IV:18:301] unto a tent, and the act of prayer unto the pillar thereof. If the pillar falls down, the whole tent will drop! In another place, He says, “Prayer is like the sight of the eyes in the Cause of God.” Also, “If the prayer of the sincere believer is accepted and answered, verily, all the rest of his acts and deeds will be accepted; and if his prayers are not accepted, verily, all the rest of his acts will be disapproved and rejected.”

These Divine ordinances are like the remedies and medicines which the skilful doctor gives to the patient (the sick). Consequently, it is better for the patient to simply obey the physician, use the medicine, in order to recover from his sickness.

Now, the Divine Doctor, God, knows the sicknesses of the spirit of humanity, which is imprisoned in this material body. The *ordinances and precepts* [given through His Mouthpieces and Prophets] are the remedies for the sicknesses and one of the ordinances is—“to pray”.

God says: “Prayer prevents the human being froth disapproved and foul actions.” That is to say, the remedy, which delivers the man [IV:18:302] from the foul acts disapproved by the

human intellect and caused by passion and satanic desires, is—praying to God. That is, if he continues to pray, he will overcome these evil habits!

That is why His Holiness, the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh], in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, commands everyone to pray.

Therefore, it is made evident that the first benefit is derived by the one who offers the prayer. This will save him from committing foul acts and from pursuing lustful desires. And it is certain that by leaving or abandoning the disapproved habits, the human soul is elevated to a holy and lofty station, and it is saved from the prison of the world of nature.

Another question: When praying, is it necessary to follow forms and customs laid down, or will it suffice to turn the attention of only the heart toward God?

Let it be known, first, that the commands for prayer are those of God, therefore, no one has authority to object or question why these forms are commanded, because God alone is cognizant of the mysteries contained within the ordinances; and, second, that the precepts and commands appearing in the Heavenly Books ought to be followed *exactly* as they are given, inasmuch as they are for certain purposes in accord with wisdom.

To illustrate: A physician gives medicine to his patient and prescribes that he shall take the medicine at certain fixed hours. If the patient should take that medicine all at once it would undoubtedly harm him, and perhaps cause other illnesses. This would be the fault of the patient, as he had not strictly followed the orders of the doctor. The Divine Commandments are likened to those of a physician, as they are for the healing of spiritual sicknesses. The servants of God should follow the Commandments as they are written in the Book, so that they may gain the desired result and be protected from injuries.

There is no doubt that the essence of prayer is the turning one's heart under all circumstances toward God. The great importance of turning the heart toward God, being understood, why should special material actions be necessary? If prayer in its essence consists of the approaching God with the heart, why should it be needful to mention Him with the tongue?

The answer is as follows: The aim, the intention of turning the heart, the tongue, the limbs, the members of the body toward God in worship is this: that the prayer of the man to God shall be with his *whole being*, and that *all of his members* shall take part in the act of worship. His heart should turn to God; his tongue should mention His Name; his limbs should bend in humbleness and his whole body should show obedience and servitude. Thus, the light of prayer may shine through the lamp of *his whole soul, spirit, intellect and body*; not that the heart alone shall be enlightened with the light of prayer but that every part of the man shall share in that illumination.

If the spirit approaches the Presence of God and the body is not partaker therein, it is as though one should worship in dreams while his body were asleep. If, however, the body acts in prayer, while the spirit is directed elsewhere, it would be like the movements of a child without thought, and thus aimless. But when the spirit, heart, tongue and all the members unite in worshipping God, then it will be as a perfect man performing an important act with reason and intellect.

Consequently, the first principle of prayer is the turning of one's heart to God. Second—the united and harmonious action of all the parts and members.

Let it be known that, in each cycle, the Holy Being of the Manifestation is the *reality* of prayer, inasmuch as he is the clear Mirror reflecting the Supreme God. The "First Point," the

Báb (May my soul be a sacrifice to him!) said: "Prayer, in its prime reality, is a name for the Manifestation of God." For example: In the cycle of his holiness, Jesus Christ, he was the real prayer: In the time of Muḥammad, he was the reality of prayer: In the great Day of "Him-whom-God-Shall-Manifest," the Blessed Perfection is the perfection of prayer.

Therefore, it is seen that one of the doors, through which one may enter the Kingdom, and attain the meeting of God, is prayer, but it should be offered exactly according to the rules laid down in the heavenly Books. *Today the firm ones in the Cause of God and His Covenant must thank God and give glory to Him that they have been awakened from the sleep of negligence.* They have heard the call to the Real Prayer from the blessed tongue of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have arisen to render service [IV:18:303] to the Cause of God, and have endeavoured to promulgate his Verses widely.

Now, in thanksgiving for this great mercy, we must strive to offer the real prayer, rather than merely the literal one. We must realize the true meaning thereof; that is—we should clothe ourselves with the attributes of the Blessed Perfection and become adorned with the divine qualities of His Mystery and The Centre of His Covenant, that we may be of the few who are "chosen", and not merely of the many who are "called".

IV:18, 7 February 1914 [IV:18:303]

"Why pray?"

From a Tablet revealed by the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Know thou verily these Divine Teachings are heavenly and spiritual. They penetrate in the heart as the penetration of the heat of the sun, the outpouring of clouds and the blowing of vernal winds at morning-time upon the trees. When the lights (of these Teachings) arose, they became spread, just as the shining dawn spreads upon the horizons. These wonderful traces shall surely appear throughout all regions and their lights will shine forth during centuries and ages forevermore.

As to thy question: *"Why pray? What is the wisdom thereof? For God has established everything and executes the affairs after the best order, and He ordains everything according to a becoming measure and puts things in their (proper) places with the greatest propriety and perfection—therefore, what is the wisdom in beseeching and supplicating and stating one's wants and seeking help?"*

Know thou, verily, it is becoming of a weak one to supplicate to the Strong One, and it behoveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the Glorious Bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns unto Him and seeks Bounty from His Ocean, this supplication is by itself a light to his heart, an illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exaltation for his being.

Therefore, during thy supplication to God and thy reciting, "Thy Name is my healing"—consider how thine heart is cheered up, thy soul delighted by the spirit of the Love of God, and thy mind becomes attracted to the Kingdom of God! By these attractions, one's ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is widened the water increaseth, and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of stating one's wants (i.e., praying).

IV:18, 7 February 1914 [IV:18:303]

The mystery of fasting

From *Sacred Mysteries* by Mírzá Asadu'lláh

Know thou that Fasting is a command given in all the Holy Books in all times.

The outward appearance thereof is restraining the self from that which is prohibited in the

Books.

Special times are appointed and particular forms are ordained by every religion. The Zoroastrians have certain forms, the Jews have others; the Christians, the Muslims, each differ in their forms, and the Bahá'ís have forms of fasting differing from all former religions. These apparent or outward differences were according to the exigencies of the times when given.

The outward fruit of fasting is the preservation of the material health through the purifying of the body once a year. The inward fruits pertain to the other states of existence.

In the world of soul its fruit is the sanctifying of the soul from the animal qualities and clothing it with the intellectual attributes, thereby releasing the soul from the lower human nature.

In the world of *mind*, it is the process of filtering, sifting out the dust and taints and dross of the self, and soaring to the Spiritual and Divine Kingdoms.

In the world of *spirit*, it is the longing, the aspiring to the stations of Divinity, and attaining to the meeting of God in both this world and those to come after death.

Thus one of the doors, through which one may attain to the meeting of God and entrance into His Kingdom, is fasting; *but success depends upon following the forms prescribed in the Heavenly Book.*

Another important point is this: Whoever, in this day, is firm and steadfast in The Covenant of the Blessed Perfection and keeps [IV:18:306] himself from turning to aught else save The *Centre of His Covenant*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is of those who fast. Therefore, it is incumbent that man shall adorn himself with the attributes of his highness, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and shall follow his example in dealing with the people of the world. He must consider the benefits of others rather than his own. He must consider the promotion of the Word of God, and the spreading of His Fragrances, even as the material gain of business, the cause of wealth and the capital of his prosperity.

Nothing, after prayer, will cause the development of the spirit, save fasting. The "First Point", the Báb, ordained for all the people to fast until they should reach the age of forty-two, but the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh] said: "We love fasting! Unless the people become old and weak, they should fast." Thus the limit for fasting was appointed. One should begin to observe the fast from the age of fifteen, and continue the observance of it until the body may become too weak to do so without injury. His Holiness, the Blessed Perfection, used to fast throughout the set time every year.

In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* the rules for fasting are as follows: Eating and drinking should cease before the rising of the sun and until the setting thereof. The traveller, the sick, pregnant women and nursing mothers are free from this obligation.

In Mark, 9:7-29, is related the story of the afflicted child who was brought to Jesus by the disciples after their vain efforts to cast out from him the spirit which tormented him and of his being healed by Jesus, who said, in reply to a question from the disciples, that: "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."

Thus Jesus taught that fasting and praying give strength to the spirit of man, so that it may become enabled to heal the different violent and strong sicknesses which possess him.

The results and fruits of these acts are innumerable, but the few that have been mentioned

are the principal ones. We ask the Merciful Lord that this blessed act may become a cause of quenching the fires of lustfulness, animosity and hatred.

Peace be upon him who follows and carries out the Commands revealed in the Heavenly Books!

IV:18, 7 February 1914 [IV:18:304]

“He is the worshipped one of all!”

“Regarding the phrase ‘He is God!’ written above the Tablets. By this Word is intended that no one hath any access to the Invisible Essence. The way is barred and the road is impassable. In this world all men must turn their faces toward ‘Him-whom-God-shall-Manifest’. He is the Dawning-place of Divinity and the Manifestation of Deity. He is the Ultimate Goal, the Adored One of all and the Worshipped One of all. Otherwise, whatever flashes through the mind is not that Essence of essences and Reality of realities; nay, rather it is pure imagination woven by man—consequently, it returns finally to the realm of suppositions and conjectures.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IV:18, 7 February 1914 [IV:18:305]

The divine wisdom in fasting

From table talks by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, by Mrs Corinne True

Question: What Divine wisdom is there in fasting?

Answer: The Divine wisdom in fasting is manifold. Among them is this: As during those days [i.e. the period of fasting which the followers afterward, observe] the Manifestation of the Sun of Reality, through Divine inspiration, is engaged in the descent [revealing] of Verses, the instituting of Divine Law and the arrangement of teachings, through excessive occupation and intense attraction there remains no condition or time for eating and drinking. For example, when his holiness Moses went to Mount Tur (Sinai) and there engaged in instituting the Law of God, he fasted forty days. For the purpose of awakening and admonishing the people of Israel, fasting was enjoined upon them.

Likewise, his holiness Christ, in the beginning of instituting the Spiritual Law, the systematizing of the teachings and the arrangement of counsels, for forty days abstained from eating and drinking. In the beginning the disciples and Christians fasted. Later the assemblages of the chief Christians changed fasting into lenten observances.

Likewise the *Qur’án* having descended in the month Ramadan, fasting during that month became a duty.

In like manner his holiness the Supreme [the Báb], in the beginning of the Manifestation, through the excessive effect of descending Verses, passed days in which his nourishment was reduced to tea only.

Likewise, the Blessed Beauty [Bahá’u’lláh], when busy with instituting the Divine Teachings and during the days when the Verses [the Word of God] descended continuously, through the great effect of the Verses and the throbbing of the heart, took no food except the least amount.

The purpose is this: In order to follow the Divine Manifestations and for the purpose of admonition and the commemoration of their state, it became incumbent upon the people to fast during those days. For every sincere soul who has a beloved longs to experience that state in which his beloved is. If his beloved is in a state of sorrow, he desires sorrow; if in a state of joy, he desires joy; if in a state of rest, he desires rest; if in a state of trouble, he desires trouble.

Now, since in this Millennial Day, his holiness the Supreme [the Báb] fasted many days, and

the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] took but little food or drink, it becomes necessary that the friends should follow that example. For thus saith He in the *Tablet of Visitation*: "They, the believers, have followed that which they were commanded, for love of Thee."

This is one wisdom of the wisdoms of fasting.

The second wisdom is this: Fasting is the cause of awakening man. The heart becomes tender and the spirituality of man increases. This is produced by the fact that man's thoughts will be confined to the commemoration of God, and through this awakening and stimulation surely ideal advancements follow.

Third wisdom: Fasting is of two kinds, material and spiritual. The material fasting is abstaining from food or drink, that is, from the appetites of the body. But spiritual, idea: fasting is this, that man abstain from selfish passions, from negligence and from satanic animal traits. Therefore, material fasting is a token of the spiritual fasting. That is: "*O God! as I am fasting from the appetites of the body and not occupied with eating and drinking, even so purify and make holy my heart and my life from aught else save Thy Love, and protect and preserve my soul from self-passions and animal traits. Thus may the spirit associate with the Fragrances of Holiness and fast from everything else save Thy mention.*"

IV:19, 2 March 1914 [IV:19:316]

A glimpse of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl at Ramleh

Isabel Fraser

A glimpse into the last days of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, as I saw him at Ramleh, a suburb of Alexandria, Egypt, last autumn, may be of interest.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá settled at Ramleh, he desired to have his old friend, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, near him. To do so he rented the upper part of a two-story house set in a garden of date palms. To have provided a more pretentious place would not have been at all in accordance with Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's modest habits. Here he lived alone. At first, 'Abdu'l-Bahá secured a cook who was to act as personal caretaker, for Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's health was failing and he needed such an attendant.

But sick or well, the old philosopher was a hermit. He loved his circle of friends, and he also loved his hours of solitude and contemplation. He was not used to having anybody constantly around administering to what he regarded as merely trivial needs; but he soon discovered a way to compromise with the unaccustomed situation. One day when 'Abdu'l-Bahá called, he found his venerable friend waiting upon the servant and treating him as though he were an honoured guest. Seeing that this was only an added burden to Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, he had the man dismissed.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's quarters resembled an unkempt library. There were books on every conceivable shelf and table, and even the floor was littered with volumes and papers. His place was a rendezvous for the learned shaykhs and Muslim mullás¹ of the ancient city of Alexandria; for he was looked upon as an authority on history, Persian literature, higher criticism and comparative religions.

His favourite outing was a visit to the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretaries which was just around the corner, and which beside housing the secretaries, was used as a guest-house for visiting pilgrims to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Here he would sit on the spacious veranda; the news would go forth and soon a little group would be gathered about him. On Friday afternoons a body of young native students from Alexandria came to him for lessons in the Sacred Books of Bahá'u'lláh.

¹ Mawlá, Pers. mullá, pl. mawálí.

To the many who were accorded the rare privilege of meeting this man of letters, both during his stay in America and on their pilgrimages to the East, I need not speak of his peculiar personal charm. With all his book learning he was not at all “bookish”. Gifted with one of those rare minds that explore all the channels of life with equal grace and facility—the same dignity and impressiveness with which he discussed a verse of the Qur’án with the learned shaykhs,¹ he put into the meeting of some sojourning American; often finishing with a personal pleasantry, for he was a ready humourist and made his guests instantly at ease. He had the placidness of a child and the air of one who was never in a hurry and had plenty of time to make radiantly happy the place where God had placed him.

That was his attitude toward the world; but in the presence of The Centre of The Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with head bowed and downcast eyes, he became the essence of humility. Even his voice, in answer to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s questions, became low and subdued. Never have I seen such a perfect and instantaneous agreement of mind and body to express humility.

One day when I was at his house, there were about twenty shaykhs who had come over from Alexandria to visit him. One who seemed to be the leader was a very learned and gorgeously attired young shaykh, who said with some pride that he had been educated in the oldest university in the world. He was the editor of a magazine in Alexandria and had come to interview Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl, who for more than an hour had been listened to with absorbed attention. His talk was interspersed with an occasional jest and his sharp eye would glance from one face to another to see if his point was understood. One might imagine the learned devotees in the early Christian era listening like this to the eloquence of St. Paul.

Suddenly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appeared. Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl faced the door, the rest of us had our backs to it and did not see him; there was a moment of silence and Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl stood with his head bowed, his whole attitude changed. He immediately became the most humble and respectful of servitors. Then quickly arranging a chair for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá he told him in a low voice, in answer to his questions, the subject under discussion.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued the subject, which was on the independent search for reality, further emphasizing the great necessity of investigating truth with a mind unbiased by theology or the limitations of other minds. [IV:19:317]

At the house of Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl he was an almost daily visitor. Whenever inquiry was made for ‘Abbás Afandí, as the natives all call ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the conjecture invariably was that he was probably to be found either at the house of Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl or in the rose garden, opposite, dictating Tablets.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s, love for his old friend, who for years had suffered banishment, imprisonment and persecution for his faith, was remarked by all. He said of him one day: *“Such men as Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl already belong to the Divine Concourse. All his interests are centred on the spiritual horizon rather than on this transitory phantasmagoria. All his efforts are turned toward the heavenly kingdom. He has no other thought. Such souls are aided by heavenly confirmations.”*

Chicago, 26 February 1914.

IV:19, 2 March 1914 [IV:19:317]

Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl

Ishti’ál Ibn-Kalántar²

¹ Shaykh, fem. shaykhat (many plurals). arabic an elderly, venerable gentleman; old man; elder; chief, chieftain, sheik, patriarch, head (of a tribe). Pers. designation may be used for leading ‘ulamá. In general, a tribal leader. Plurals: ashyákh, shikhhan, shíkhath, shiyakhath, shiyúkh, shuyúkh.

² *Nom de plume* of Dr ‘Alí-Qulí Khán. Kalántar, pl. kalántarhá.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was born in 1844, in Gulpáygán, a small Persian town, founded by Humá, the daughter of Darius I. The family to which his parents belonged was one of the most distinguished of that city, and, even to the present time, is well known for learning and knowledge. His father, Mírzá Riḍá, was one of the most noted Shi'ite doctors of religion in Persia; he died in 1871, at the age of seventy.

In the prime of youth, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl travelled to Işfahán and 'Iráq, with the object of perfecting his studies. Even in his boyhood he was noted for intelligence, sound memory, and diligence in discovering subtle scientific points, to such an extent that these qualities seemed to the people supernatural.

Before he was twenty-two years of age, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had perfected himself in the branches of Arabic learning, such as grammar, rhetoric, etymology and composition; although Arabic is a foreign language to Persians. In accordance with the wishes of his father, he also acquired a perfect knowledge of Islamic theology and laws. At the same time he studied mathematics, algebra, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy according to the Ptolemaic system. He also mastered the Aristotelian as well as the rational Islamic philosophy.

In October 1873, he left the town of Gulpáygán and went to Ṭihrán, the capital of Persia, where he took up his residence. A short time after his arrival, he was appointed the superintendent and professor of one of the oldest first class Arabic Universities of Ṭihrán, named the "School of Ḥakím-Háshim." There, students of different sciences gathered around him and attended his lectures.

In 1875 he became acquainted with a merchant named Áqá 'Abdu'l-Karím of Işfahán, an adherent of the Bahá'í Religion. As this merchant found Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl sagacious and free from prejudice, he invited him to investigate his religion. Although Áqá 'Abdu'l-Karím had no schooling, yet he possessed a shrewd, acute mind and an excellent character. He arranged interviews for Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl with learned Bahá'í teachers, such as his holiness the great Nabíl, entitled "The Learned One of Qá'im", the late Ḥájí Muḥammad-Ismá'íl of Káshán, entitled "Dḥabíh" [sacrificed], Áqá Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí of Ardistán, and others. They continued the controversy and religious and scientific debate during eight months. Finally, in September 1876, after this ample discussion and tedious argument, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, finding himself unable to refute and resist the proofs and demonstrations of the Bahá'ís, and esteeming the evidences of this Faith stronger than the proofs of other religions, acknowledged and embraced the truth of the Religion of Bahá'u'lláh, and became a convert to it.

When Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl acknowledged the truth of this religion, and, on account of the straightforwardness for which he was noted, could not conceal his belief, he openly propounded proofs and arguments of the truth of Bahai-ism, in his lectures to the students. Consequently, enemies who were jealous of him, always waiting to accomplish his downfall, availed themselves of this opportunity to speak of him in the presence of the clergy and prominent statesmen of Ṭihrán. The clergy denounced him, and, in December of the same year, he was arrested and put in chains by the command of Prince Kámrán Mírzá, entitled "Náyib's-Sultáníh" (Prince Regent), the third son of the late Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh, who was then the governor of Ṭihrán, Gílán and Mázinarán. This imprisonment lasted about five months. As a result of this imprisonment he lost all the property which he had inherited [IV:19:318] from his father. At the end of five months, he and other Bahá'ís imprisoned with him on account of their faith, were released, owing to the efforts of the late Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán, entitled Muşhíru'd-Dawlih, who was then Minister of War. Upon his release, the clergy of Ṭihrán tried their utmost to persuade him to verbally acknowledge Islám, and not to openly uphold the truth of the Bahá'í Religion. To this he would not agree, and patiently endured the most violent persecutions and afflictions rather than accede to the clergy and statesmen. Afterward he gained his living by means of his pen, and diligently laboured in spreading the

Bahá'í Religion.

In AH 1300 (CE 1882), came a great historical calamity. Large numbers of Bahá'ís were arrested in various Persian cities, for now this religion had become very prevalent throughout Persia and the Caucasus. A considerable number of the nobility, comprising Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians, Nuşayrís,¹ et al., had embraced it with the utmost sincerity, and even did not recant when in danger of their lives. Consequently the fire of envy and hatred flamed anew in the clergy and statesmen of Tīhrán, who considered themselves defenders of the first-named religion. They agreed with the Prince Kámrán Mírzá to persecute the Bahá'ís. So they falsely accused and calumniated them before the Sháh. Also in Rasht, Işfahán and Mázindarán, most of the clergy and statesmen determined to eradicate the Bahá'ís, and arrested a great number. Among these were Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl who was arrested in Tīhrán, along with a multitude of the Bahá'ís of prominence, merchants, traders, et al. He was confined for about one month in the house of the Prince, and several controversial meetings and debates were held—in the presence of the Prince, concerning this Religion.

The opponents of the Bahá'ís, consisting principally of members of the royal family, religious doctors and statesmen, constantly accused them of sedition and plots. Great efforts were made to alienate the mind of the Sháh from them and to persuade him to decree their suppression and slaughter. But as they could not be charged with any violation of the laws of the Government,—the Sháh became convinced of their innocence, and would not consent to sentence them to death, but commanded them to be put in chains in the royal prison. Thus Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and a number of the stanch Bahá'ís were imprisoned in chains and fetters for twenty-two months, subject to rigorous distress and hardship. During most of this time, nobody was allowed to see them. Twenty-four of them were, for fourteen days, chained to two long, heavy chains in a dark underground dungeon. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl relates that for about six months they received daily news of the plots and intrigues of their enemies, and expected death at any moment, having entirely resigned themselves to the will of God.

After the lapse of twenty-two months, the falseness of the accusations of the enemy was proven to the Sháh, and he commanded that the prisoners should be set free.

Released from this rigorous imprisonment, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl took up his residence in the village of Qulhak,² one of the well-known and delightful summer resorts of Tīhrán, where he remained about seven months, engaged in lecturing and writing. Again the Prince found an excuse for his arrest, a third time. He was imprisoned for six months in the royal building named Utáqih Nizám (the military department), whence he was released 5 February 1886.

Far about thirty years, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl travelled in remote countries. He journeyed northward through Persia, Turkey, the Caucasus, Tartary and Russia, as far as Moscow; eastward as far as the confines of China and Kash-Kar;³ to Syria and Egypt; and in 1901–1902 made a trip through Western Europe and America. During his arduous travels, he everywhere secured a good name for himself and his countrymen; he consorted with the men of learning of different religions, nationalities and schools; and acquired a vast range of knowledge which it would have been impossible to attain without undertaking extensive and toilsome journeys.

In AH 1303 (CE 1886), he received the Tablet written by Bahá'u'lláh in AH 1300, in which he was commanded to travel for the purpose of teaching the Word of God; and during his distant journeys, undertaken in compliance with this Command, many holy Tablets were revealed in praise of his strength and fidelity to the Cause.

While travelling, he has written numerous books, being considered a standard writer in

¹ Nuşayrís, pl. nuşayríya, nuşayriyyah. Related to nuşayr.—pl. nusseyrites.

² Qulhak is now in the NE part of Tīhrán.

³ Káshghar.

ancient and modern Persian, as well as in Arabic. In 1892, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl wrote, in Samarqand, the book entitled *Faṣṣlu'l-Khiṭáb* (Conclusive Proof), in answer to questions asked by Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí of Tabríz, one of the learned [IV:19:319] men of *Ádharbayján*. This book he wrote in the style of the doctors of theology, and in the introduction is given an account of the controversy in Samarqand between himself and Dr *Ásátúriyán Márcárd*, a Protestant teacher, in a meeting held by men of learning.

In 1898, he wrote the book of *Fará'id* in Persian, in compliance with the command of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In this work, he answers the objections of *Shaykh-'Abdu's-Salám*, entitled *Shaykhu'l-Islám* (a Muslim pontiff) of Tiflís.¹ The same year, he wrote the book of *Durar'ul-Bahá'íyyih* (The Brilliant Pearls), in Arabic, in answer to Dr *Núri'd-Dín* of India.

During the years 1901 and 1902, while sojourning in America, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl wrote the *Hujaja'l-Bahíyyih* (*The Bahá'í Proofs*), which was translated into English by *Ishti'ál ibn-Kalántar*, and published at that time. This work is well known to the scholars and thinkers of the Western world.

As late as December 1911, he wrote a scholarly answer to an opponent of the Bahá'í Cause, known as *Burhán-i-Lámi'* (*The Brilliant Proof*), which was published by The Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while in America.

His other epistles and pamphlets, which are scattered in all parts, are too numerous for mention in this article.

One of the theories originated by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was the "Proof of Stability", in demonstrating the Essence of the Self-existent One. This is one of the greatest and clearest logical arguments for proving the Divine validity of the religions and demonstrating the Essence of the Almighty. By a single rational proof, it demonstrates both the existence of God and the truth of the true Prophets. He first propounded this argument in the book of *Faṣṣlu'l-Khiṭáb*, in 1892, and for the second time, in the book of *Fará'id*, in 1897.

He was the first one of the Bahá'ís who demonstrated by rational and logical arguments, that miracles are not sufficient to prove the truth of the Manifestations of God. He was the first one who clearly explained the purpose of what was spoken by the Prophets, in the Holy Scriptures, as to the "words being sealed", to be opened at the "last days".² He was also the first to explain that the great religions of the world which have changed and governed the conditions of society, are seven in number; and that the "seven heavens" is a term by which the Prophets have symbolized the Divine religions. Before Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl propounded his theory, the point was not understood, for this number was not spoken of in the Divine Books and Tablets, nor in historical works.

He was the first one who demonstrated by rational proofs, why the Pagan religions are considered as polytheism, although they owe their origin to the Almighty, and acknowledge one God. For if by worshipping images, people are to be considered as polytheists, the Greek Church and Roman Catholics must also be considered such, while they are in reality, the "people of the Book", and believers in Divine Unity and true Religion.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had a wonderful genius in explaining subtle philosophical points, which skill was his speciality. He himself thought that he received this gift as a fulfilment of the prayer which the Blessed Perfection [*Bahá'u'lláh*] made for him in a Tablet written to *Hájí Muḥammad Kaẓím* of *Işfahán*. It is as follows: "*I beg of God to enable Faḍl (Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl) to teach His Truth, and to unveil that which is hidden and treasured in His Knowledge, with wisdom and explanation.*"

¹ Tbilisi.

² Bahá'u'lláh declared: "*Verily, We have opened the seal of the 'sealed Wine'.*"

Verily He is the Mighty, the Bestower!"

IV:19, 2 March 1914 [IV:19:321]

[From "In memoriam" section]

Those who have passed through death, have a sphere of their own. It is not removed from ours. Their work—the work of the Kingdom—is ours; but it is sanctified from what we call time and place. Those who have ascended have different attributes from those who are still on earth, yet, there is no real separation.

In prayer there is a mingling of station, a mingling of condition. Pray for them, as they pray for you! When you do not know it, and are in receptive attitude, they are able to make suggestions to you, if you are in difficulty. This sometimes happens in sleep. But there is no phenomenal intercourse! That which seems like phenomenal intercourse has another explanation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

V:1, 21 March 1914 [V:1:3]

"Today, divine powers reinforce the souls who are spreading the cause of God!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Message to the Bahá'ís throughout the world, delivered at the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh, 25 December 1913.

It is part of the Divine Wisdom that I should keep silent for a time! All that was required of me, that is, to raise my voice in the churches, synagogues, conventions, and meetings,¹ calling the attention of the people to the Kingdom of God and the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh—praise be to God! through the confirmation of the Blessed Perfection—is accomplished. Now it is the turn of the believers of God. Now I am ever expecting to hear the sweet voice of the friends raised and the watchword, "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!" reaching the ear of the heart and spirit.

Those souls who have become subservient to the will of God as manifested in the life and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh must know of a certainty that they attract unto themselves heavenly confirmation and assistance. Now, existence upon the Sacred Threshold is the magnet whereby aid is attracted. The more the believers humble themselves at the Divine Threshold, the more powerful and universal will be the descent of the Holy Spirit of new dedication upon them. The more they strive to teach souls the greater will be their power of sanctification and attraction.

Today divine powers reinforce the souls who are spreading the Cause of God. Whoever walks upon this highway is confirmed; those who appear now as dried plants will be changed into fruitful trees. God's blessing will rest upon all who enlist in the service. They are the flowers of the garden of Abhá—they must breathe forth their fragrance! ... They are the trees planted by the sacred hand of Bahá'u'lláh in the orchard of the Kingdom. He hath watered you with the rivers of His knowledge and hath protected you from winds and storms.

I hope that each one of you may become a tree laden with delicious fruits for the healing of the nations!

V:1, 21 March 1914 [V:1:4]

The feast of Naw-Rúz: 21 March

The Bahá'í New Year's Day

A talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Friday evening, 21 March 1913, at 14 rue Greuze, Paris.

Mons. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney interpreting.

¹ In Europe and America.

I am extremely glad to see you on this Naw-Rúz occasion. This day is considered holy by the Persians. ... From time immemorial this day has been consecrated for in this there is a symbol.

At this moment the sun appears at the meridian and the day and night are equal. Until today the North Pole has been in darkness. Today the sun appears on the horizon of the North Pole. Today the sun rises and sets at the equator and the two hemispheres are equally illumined. This sacred day, when the sun illumines equally the whole earth, is called the equinox, and the equinox is the symbol of the Manifestation of God. The Sun of Truth rises on the horizon of Divine Mercy and sends forth its rays. This day is consecrated to commemorate it. It is the beginning of spring. When the sun appears at the equinox, it causes a movement in all living things. The mineral world is set in motion, plants begin to shoot, the desert is changed into a prairie, trees bud and every living thing responds, including the bodies of animals and men.

The rising of the sun at the equinox is the symbol of life, and likewise it is the symbol of the Divine Manifestations of God, for the rising of the Sun of Truth in the Heaven of Divine Bounty established the signal of Life for the world. The human reality begins to live, our thoughts are transformed and our intelligence is quickened. The Sun of Truth bestows Eternal Life, just as the solar sun is the cause of terrestrial life.

The day of the appearance of God's Manifestations on earth must be a sacred day when man must commemorate God in prayer and praise. Among the ancient Persians this day was looked upon as the holy day of the year and on it hospitals and charitable institutions were founded. Collections for the poor are made on this day and every effort is put forth so that it may not be allowed to pass without leaving some divine traces. Throughout Persia one sees the historical traces of this sacred day by the many good works that have commemorated it.

I am spending this New Year's day in Paris. I hope for considerable results from this fact. [V:1:5] I hope that a powerful influence may remain in your hearts, signs of eternal joy and happiness that will illumine the lights of the Kingdom in this city. May the breezes of the Holy Spirit breathe upon you that your intelligence may progress and your souls be joyful in God. Thus will you become real and eternal beings, shining in the Divine Kingdom.

V:1, 21 March 1914 [V:1:5]

“Do not unloose your tongues save for conveying, the message!”

From a tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Now you must engage in the service of the Cause of God with the utmost firmness, steadfastness and resolution, and expend day and night in the promotion of the Religion of God. *Do not unloose your tongues save for conveying the Message!* Do not behold save the Kingdom of Abhá! Wish for no other companion save the True One. Do ye not desire other associate save turning thy face toward the Supreme Horizon. Do ye not search for any other delicacy save the Heavenly Food, and do ye not hope for any other sweetness save the love of the Beauty of Abhá.

Praise be to God, that the Standard of Victory is unfurled over that region, and the fame of The Covenant has reached the ear of every wise and intelligent person.

Spiritual means are prepared. The Merciful Table is spread and the Banquet and the Feast of the Lord is inexhaustible. Now is the time of attraction and ecstasy!—so that region may become wholly illumined and that worthless dust be changed into fragrant musk.

I declare by the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh]—May my life be a sacrifice to His believers—that if the believers arise to act according to the good-pleasure of the Blessed

Perfection, the lights will be revealed, the mysteries discovered, the veils rent asunder, the darkness dispelled, the verses of unity chanted, and the melodies of the spiritual music of the Glorious Lord sung!

SHOW YE AN EFFORT! WORK UNCEASINGLY! LABOUR DILIGENTLY;—so that the Everlasting Bounty be realized, Eternal Life be destined, and the nostrils be perfumed with the Holy Fragrances!

V:1, 21 March 1914 [V:1:5]

“Travel and spread far and wide the teachings of God!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s instructions to Bahá’í teachers

“Thou must live in such a spiritual condition that thy very presence in the meetings may transform the audiences.”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Mrs Stannard before her departure for India.

Consecrate all thy time to the service of the Kingdom of God and the propagation of its principles. Let thine own supreme concern be the promotion of the Word of God. Thou wilt ever be surrounded by the invisible angels of Confirmations and they will always come to thy assistance. Whenever thou dost enter a meeting, raise thy voice and say:

“O ye believers of God! This day is the day of your attraction! This day is the day in which you must diffuse the Fragrances of God! This day is the day that you must unfurl the Banner of the Kingdom of Abhá! This day is the day of Peace and Concord! This day is the day of the proclamation of the oneness of the world of humanity! This day is the day of forgiveness and leniency! This day is the day of Truth and righteousness! This day is the day of conciliation and beatitude! This day is the day of awakening and enkindlement! Waste not your precious time in fault-finding and back-biting. Polish the surface of the mirrors of your hearts from the dross of human frailties. If you live according to the standard of other communities, then what difference does there exist between you and them? Bahá’u’lláh has summoned you to such a lofty summit the very thought of which is too dazzling a prospect! He has not chosen you to be satisfied with water and clay!”

Thou must live in such a spiritual condition that thy very presence in the meetings may transform the audiences into the congregations of the elect and set aglow in their hearts the [V:1:6] fire of the Love of God. Exalt thy ambition! Universalize thy ideals! Spread thy wings of compassion over all the regions of the globe. If some people come to thee alone complaining against each other, don’t listen to them, don’t let them breathe the faults of others in thy presence. Tell them: “I have not come here to engage my time with these things. I am not a judge. *I have come to summon the people to the Kingdom of Abhá, to call you to unity and accord, to raise the dead, make mindful those who are unaware, awaken those who are asleep, breathe new life into the mouldering bones and sound the trumpet of resurrection!* Friends! It is high time for you to throw away these tales, these barren stories. God is not pleased with them, humanity is not pleased with them. Your time is too costly to be expended on these trifling events. You are made in the image and likeness of God. Your birthright is more valuable than all the treasures of the empires. Arise with heart and soul and let not these golden days slip by without results! This day is the day of the splendours of the Sun of Reality! This day is the day of the Lord of the Kingdom! This day is the day of the fulfilment of glorious promises! This day is the day of joy and fragrance!”

Petty bickerings and jealousies make one lose all the traces of spirituality, ex-communicate a person from the divine company of the worthy ones, submerge one in the sea of phantasms, suffer one to become cold and pessimistic and throw him headlong into the depths of despair and hopelessness! You must not listen to anyone speaking about another; because no sooner do you listen to one than you must listen to someone else, and thus the circle will be enlarged

endlessly. Therefore, say to them: "O friends! Let us come together, forget all our self-thoughts and be in one accord, and cry at the top of our voices, 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!'"

"This Call shall fill the East and the West, and will continue throughout ages and cycles!"

Extract from a Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

It is very acceptable and seasonable that thou hast taken this voyage. The Apostles of His Holiness Christ were always travelling and calling the people to the Kingdom of God. Consequently, walk thou in their footsteps. Travel thou to every country and under all circumstances raise the Call of the Kingdom of God. Mankind, like unto children, are satisfied with water and clay, and love to play with their play-things. Their ambitions are very inferior. Praise be to God! that thou hast a lofty ambition; therefore arise in calling the people to the Kingdom of God.

This Call shall fill the East and the West, and will continue throughout all ages and cycles. It is endless. That is why in this day, the wise and perceiving souls exalt the ideal and engage in heralding the Kingdom of God!"

"The progress of the Cause depends upon the energy and wisdom of the teachers"

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar on the eve of the latter's departure for Constantinople.

Thou hast been with me for a long time, and I have grown to love thee very much. When I love people I do not tell them to their faces. You know how much I love Mírzá Abu'l-Faql and Hájí Mírzá Haydar 'Alí, but I have seldom told them to their faces. I am sending thee away. Thou art not alone. The hosts of the Supreme Concourse are with thee. They will assist thee and reinforce thee under all conditions. Doctors tell me I must completely rest ... When I hear good news from the believers, then my health is improved. Now if thou longest to see me in good condition; go away and serve the Cause and instruct the souls. The news of thy spiritual conquest will make me well. Wherever thou goest, announce the wonderful Bahá'í greeting to the teachers of the Cause, and tell them on my behalf:

"The responsibility of the steady progress of the Cause depends upon you! You are the physicians of the sick body of the world of humanity! You must not stay anywhere for a long time. Travel ye from land to land like the Apostles of Christ, and carry with you the glad-tidings of the kingdom of Abhá to the remotest corners of the earth!"

"Why are ye silent? SHOUT! Why are ye sitting? MOVE! Why are ye quiet? STIR! This is not the day of rest and comfort: Travel ye constantly, and spread far and wide the Teachings of God! Like unto the stars arise [V:1:7] ye every day from a horizon. Like unto the nightingales, sing every day from a different rose-bush. Like unto the breeze, waft every morning from a garden. Do not stay a long time anywhere.

"Let the world profit by your teachings and learn from your examples! My health consists in the progress of the Cause, and the progress of the Cause depends upon the energy and wisdom of the teachers!"

"Speak with moderation"

'Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions to Mr Charles Mason Remey on the eve of the latter's departure for Europe.

Through whichever country thou goest, speak thou with *moderation*. Call the people to the oneness of the world of humanity; the dawn of the Sun of Reality from the horizon of Persia; the *servitude* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and then explain the *Centreship* of The Covenant—and *no more*. ... Speak in accordance with that which I used to speak in the meetings, i.e., speak with *moderation*."

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

V:1, 21 March 1914 [V:1:7]

Working in this manner shall bear fruit”

Extract from a Tablet to the Persian Bahá'ís, revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Consider how 'Abdu'l-Bahá forgot all thoughts and mentions and turned his face towards the countries and empires, cities and villages, mountains and deserts of the West. *Day and night he was engaged in teaching the Cause and conveying the Message.* The principle upon which his trip [throughout Europe and America] was directed was this verse:

“O God! Make all my ideals and thoughts One Ideal and One Thought, and suffer me to attain to an eternal, unchangeable condition in Thy Service!”

He sought no rest, neither did he breathe one breath of comfort. Notwithstanding the weakness of constitution, the infirmity of the body and the nervous fever, every night I was in a city, and each day among a community. Although at times I could not speak one word before large audiences, I delivered lengthy addresses. *Working in this manner shall bear fruit.*

V:1, 21 March 1914 [V:1:10]

One day, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was very tired, he said to several young Bahá'ís who came to see him: “My work is done. The tree of my life has yielded its fruits. I have set a fire in the world. Your duty is to add to its flame. My sons, it is now your turn. The members of my bodily constitution are well-nigh disintegrated. You are young, and your blood is pure; your intelligence is keen. You can bear the difficulties of this life. I would like to remain silent for some time, and listen to the incoming news of those who are endeavouring to spread the Fragrances of God. How far shall they succeed? How will they promote the Word of God? How will they raise the melodies and sing the songs of *'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!*”? Assuredly the Blessed Perfection is with such souls. They shall see with their own eyes the Confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh; just as I saw them when addressing large gatherings in churches and temples. I saw them hovering like the birds of paradise!”

From the Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 11 December 1913.

V:2, 9 April 1914 [V:2:19]

“Once the principles of the Bahá'í Faith are known in India, it will spread like wildfire!”

Extracts from the Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, dated Mount Carmel, January 1914.

An Indian Muslim Prince, who is travelling in the Holy Land with a retinue of servants, called this afternoon on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He was accompanied by the English Consul. He asked many questions, to all of which 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave satisfactory answers. He spoke with him in detail on the oneness of the world of humanity and the fundamental unity of all the religions. He had heard of the Faith in India, and therefore was delighted to come to the source and see “the Man who has freed humanity from dead dogmas and spiritless doctrines.” He stayed for more than an hour, and when he left he carried with him the blessing of the spiritual contact, and was imbued with His love of mankind.

In the course of conversation, this Indian Prince invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit that sect-ridden country and diffuse far and wide the fragrances of the teachings of universal love and fellowship. *“India needs these principles of tolerance and liberalism more than any other country in the world.* That thickly populated kingdom is a hot-bed of religious prejudices. The sphere of their thoughts is very contracted, and although there are some acute thinkers and practical reformers in their midst, the mass of the community frown at any suggestions or rules which change in the slightest degree their mode of living. The weight of immemorial customs has fallen on their necks like the rusty chains of ages, and while the corroding marks

are imprinted on their emaciated bodies, they hug the chains more closely. In order to gain the freedom of their limbs and the suppleness of their bodies, they must throw away these chains of superstitions and dogmas and fraternize cheerfully and joyfully with all the nations of the earth, irrespective of religion and race.”

After a silence, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “The cohorts of the Kingdom of Abhá are engaged in uninterrupted conquest. They are gaining victory after victory. God willing, Mrs Stannard shall win many signal triumphs in India. Once the Principles of the Bahá’í Faith are known in India, it will spread all over that country like wildfire. ... Mrs Stannard has dedicated her life to the Cause. She knows neither rest nor comfort. She does not sit tranquilly for one moment. Although she has a steady income, yet out of that she gives to the poor and the needy. She entertains no other idea save the service of the Kingdom and the promotion of the Cause. She is assisted by the Confirmations of God. There are certain persons whose ambitions are lofty. They are not satisfied with petty services and small things. They do not soil their wings with water and clay. Their highest aim is to adorn their inner beings with the infinite perfections of the celestial world. Thus the most cherished desire of Mrs Stannard is to spend the remaining years of her life in the spread of the Cause and service to humanity.”

V:2, 9 April 1914 [V:2:25]

“Thou shalt unfurl the standard of spirituality in the heavenly universe!”

It is several months since the New York Assembly was offered an audience room in the Parish House of St Mark’s Episcopal church, this city, for Sunday afternoon meetings, with the entire freedom of the platform, limited only to constructive methods.

The Centre of the Covenant, His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was cabled to for counsel, and his cabled reply was: “Accept invitation, Church Episcopal. Hold Sunday afternoon meetings.” An immediate acceptance of this invitation followed.

Beautiful meetings are now held there every Sunday afternoon.

Following is a Tablet recently received by our brother Mr Kinney, through whom this invitation was most unexpectedly tendered to the New York Assembly, and who wrote (as well as cabled) of it to the presence of the Centre of the Covenant. This Tablet is his reply:

To Mr Wafá Kinney, New York City.

Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received and its contents perused with the utmost of attention.

Convey infinite love and kindness on my behalf to ... and say to him: Praise be to God that He hath chosen thee from amongst the ministers so that thou may’st hearken to the call of the Kingdom of God, listen to the heavenly Melody, behold the Light of Reality, act according to the advices of His Holiness the Christ, promulgate the principles of Bahá’u’lláh, become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity and be ordained as the high priest of the Church of the Kingdom. All the ministers will be submerged under one of those periodic waves of the earth, leaving behind no name and no trace, but thou shalt unfurl the standard of spirituality in the heavenly universe of Heaven, extolling and magnifying the Lord of mankind with the music of the Kingdom. Thank thou God that thou hast attained to this most great Bestowal.

In short, O thou my Mr Kinney. O thou my spiritual child! Whatever ... deems advisable

concur with him and put in practice, and occupy your time with the diffusion of the Fragrances of God. Announce the utmost kindness to thy respected wife and all the friends.

Up to the present time, as a result of this long journey to America, my constitution was in the utmost state of weakness and feebleness, consequently I could not carry the weight of correspondence. As at the present writing the condition of my nerves is better and materially improved, therefore I am writing thee this epistle.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 23 February 1914, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

V:3, 28 April 1914 [V:3:35]

The “Gloomy Night” and the “Day of God”

A brief presentation of the Bahá'í message.

From *The Bahá'í Proofs*, by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl.

O people! when ye carefully consider the world, ye will perceive that all the nations of the ancient world have been totally incrustated by false worship of paganism and Sabeism; the darkness of imaginations and fictitious ideas has prevailed in every region, and entangling beliefs and evil customs accumulated in every clime. Inasmuch as the above-mentioned nations were ignorant of the meanings and original purposes of the texts revealed in the Heavenly Books, such as “ascent” and “descent”, “return” and “restitution”, “heaven” and “earth”, “sun”, “moon” and “stars”, “resurrection”, “death” and “life”, and many similar words which were upon the lips of the prophets since the ancient days, and were uttered by the Tongues of God from the foundation of the world; and as they understood such words according to their literal sense; therefore these nations fell into the gulf of the fictitious beliefs of paganism. Among these pagan notions were transmigration of souls, transformation of embodiments, worship of stars, animals and trees, services of genii, controlling spirits and other ruinous practises and pernicious beliefs,—which facts are evident to every informed historian, and to every student and archaeologist.

As the gloom of fictitious and superstitious beliefs prevailed in all parts of the world; as the clouds of ruinous practices, the dusk of pernicious actions, densely enwrapped all regions, and veils of suspicion hung upon every side; and as the earth was entirely covered by darkness upon darkness therefore the prophets—Peace be upon them!—have interpreted that long duration as the “gloomy night”, and the time of its disappearance as the “bright morning”, “the day when it shineth”.

Moses

The Great Lord Moses the “Interlocutor”, was the first one who arose in that dark and gloomy period and announced to the Jews the coming termination of that long night. He proclaimed the advent of the glorious “Day of God”. He taught them the Unity of God; made known to them the way of worshipping God; implanted in their hearts the expectation of the arrival of the “Day of God”, and explained to them the signs, symbols, tokens and wonders thereof. So also in the past days, Abraham [sic. Zarathustra], who was entitled, Zoroaster, appeared in Persian regions and taught the Pársí nation the worship of the merciful God, abolishing idolatry from among them, announcing the coming of the “Hour”, reminding them of the future Resurrection, explaining the signs and tokens thereof, and unveiling the appointed time. Moreover, he clearly stated to them that, verily, the Sun of the promised Beauty should dawn from the horizon of the East, and that the blessed Sadrat¹ would spring forth from a well-rooted tree of Persia. But, as at that time the hours of gloomy night were

¹ The Báb.

still far from the dawning-place of Manifestation, the false imaginary beliefs and pernicious worship of paganism prevailed even among the Hebraic and Persian nations; thus the worship of God was mingled with fire-worship, and the kings of Judea and Ephraim associated with nations rooted in paganism, such as the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Greeks, because the latter had assumed dominion over the lands of Palestine and the inhabitants thereof. On this account the Hebrews were compelled to live under the laws of these governments, to obey their kings, adore their demons and worship their idols. Yet, among them, the Jewish prophets, such as David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah and others—Peace be upon them!—were, during fifteen hundred years, reminding the [V:3:36] people of the coming of the “Day of God”, and reviving hopes in their hearts of the “Manifestation of God”. So these prophets were, in their cycles, as beaming stars which shone forth from the uttermost horizon of heaven; as lamps enkindled and aflame in the gloomy and obscure night.

Christ

In that way many generations passed, until the glorious Saviour arose and the brilliant star dawned from the horizon of Galilee. Then the planet of the Son shone from among the posterity of Abraham, the melodies of the Gospels pealed forth and the descent of calamities upon the children of Israel drew nigh. Our Lord Christ—Upon him is Glory and Grandeur!—arose and cried with loudest voice:

“Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!”

“Awaken and be mindful! The Hour of the Coming of the Kingdom of God approacheth!”

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!”

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God!”

Likewise, during His lifetime, He was continually reminding them of the approach of the “promised Day”, renewing and establishing the Signs of the Appearance of the Beauty of the Adored One, which had been prophesied by the prophets of Israel.

Christ declared that in “that Day” He will sit upon the right hand of His (the Father’s) Throne; will be authorized to make His commands effective; will be established upon the Seat of His Glory, and become the Shepherd of His sheep, through His Permission. He—Exalted is He!—heralded the approach of the Great “Hour”, the Mighty Day of Resurrection, until He ascended to the Supreme Friend. Then Apostles arose to spread His Cause and promote His Word, until all the European regions were illuminated by the lights of His Command, and became purified from the filth of paganism.

Muḥammad

Six centuries elapsed after the departure of Christ, until the Beams of Dawn appeared from Arabian horizons and the shining of the Morning Light was transmitted from the direction of Hijáz. The greatest signs of the “Hour” appeared and the mightiest tokens of the “Day of Judgement” became manifest. Muḥammad arose, crying out with the loudest call: *“The Sentence of God will surely come (to be executed); wherefore do not hasten it!”* This voice was heard from heaven: *“The time of their accounts hath drawn nigh unto the people, while they are turning away therefrom!”* He clearly stated that the “gloomy night” had expired and the dawning of the Sun of Truth from the Supreme Horizon was at hand. Through the light of His word and the power of His prophethood He illumined great nations and multitudes, from the remotest parts of Africa to the distant East; peoples who knew nothing concerning Unity and had tasted no drop from the fountain of Oneness; those who had denied the Prophets and falsely accused the Chosen Ones. The Word of Muḥammad and His prophetic testimony drove them out of the darkness of paganism toward the Light of the Worship of God. Thus they were

turned from denial of Prophets to belief in the line of holy messengers from Adam to Jesus, the Spirit of God.

Muḥammad announced to them *the coming of the "Day of God"*, and made with them a covenant to expect the descent of the Spirit (Christ) from the Heaven of the command of God. But He also clearly stated that the Precursor, who shall arise before His descent, to prepare the way before that "coming", will come forth from His (Muḥammad's) posterity; that through the Spirit (Christ) God will fill the earth with equity after it had been filled with injustice, and illuminate all regions with justice after they had been darkened by tyranny. Then He established books of traditions and prophecies, and filled pages with signs and tokens.

The Báb

The earth of enlightenment rolled around its axis for 1,260 years, until the "Hour" drew nigh and the appointed time arrived. Then the Star of Guidance dawned, the Planet of Purity shone forth, the Fountains of Knowledge gushed out in one of the best lands of the Orient, and the Tree of Grace was ignited in the city of Shíráz, the chief town of the province of Fárs. The Most Great Báb (Gate) arose, preaching to the multitudes and peoples, heralding again the expiration of the "gloomy night", foreshadowing and clearly declaring the coming of the great and dreadful "Day of God". He raised this call betwixt [V:3:37] the Heaven and earth: *"Rejoice! Rejoice! The Morn of Guidance hath indeed appeared, the 'gloomy night' hath cleared away, and the Dawning of the Beauty of God, Abhá, is at hand! The spring-time of the Return of the Realities of Regeneration hath come!"* All regions trembled with this most sweet call and the Resurrection appeared through the supreme Message.

Bahá'u'lláh

Then dawned the Sun of the Beauty of the Promised One; then rose and beamed the Orb of the Face of the Adored One. The "Hour" arrived, the Resurrection came, the trumpet sounded and the dawn of the Manifestation shone forth. Bahá'u'lláh (The Glory of God the Most Glorious) arose; the Beauty of the Supreme God appeared and called out with a Voice that filled all regions, causing the "seven strata of the earth" to tremble:

"Now the Promised God hath indeed come, the Beauty of the Adored One hath appeared, the appointed 'Day of God' hath dawned and His irrefutable and glorious Command hath arisen! The Lord hath descended in the shadow of clouds; the earth is shining with the Light of the Face of its Lord, the Bestower; the Bridge is extended, the Book is appointed, the curtain is lifted and the veil is removed! Showers of Verses have fallen, branches of Knowledge have put forth leaves and become flourishing in all directions! The 'dead have arisen and the lifeless are resurrected!"

The rivers of Knowledge and Enlightenment have flowed from His Supreme Pen and He hath broken the seal of the "Sealed Wine" with His Generous Fingers. He hath explained in His Holy Tablets the realities of the Words of the Prophets, and hath disclosed in His precious Writings the meanings of the symbols of the Elect, until *all* the seals of the Prophets have been opened and the aims of the Messengers became unveiled to the possessors of pure hearts. He instituted new laws which are destined to unite all nations and multitudes; issued a glorious Command which will bring together all religions and creeds, enjoined His Saints to love all nations and exhorted them to serve all the people of the world. During His last days He wrote the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* (The Book of the Covenant, Testament or Will) with His blessed Fingers, in which He clearly stated and appointed the "Centre of the Covenant", directing peoples to the Orb of the Universe.

The torrent of His Verses and the shower of His Graces abundantly poured down, until the time of Disappearance drew nigh, and the Sun of Truth was concealed in the veil of Absence. The Lord ascended to the Supreme Court of His Might, and His blessed Identity was hidden in His invisible furthestmost Essence. This calamitous event and lamentable disaster happened

on the 2nd of the month Dhi'l-Qa'dih, AH 1309, which corresponds to the 28 May CE 1892.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

When the Sun of Guidance was set and the rustle of the Sadratu'l-Muntahá¹ hushed, then the Orb of the Covenant dawned and the "Moon" of the Testament appeared with the utmost brilliancy and effulgence. The glorious "Branch extended from the Ancient Root", His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, arose to promote the Word of the King of the Day of Judgement, and now He is crying and heralding throughout all regions:

"The Judgement of God hath come; respond ye, respond ye unto the call of God!"

"Hearken ye, hearken ye to the Melodies of God! Inhale ye the Fragrances of God!"

"Be illumined, be illumined with the lights of the Face of Bahá'u'lláh!"

The promises of the Prophets have already been fulfilled, the prophecies of the Messengers realized; the Day of Judgement hath come, and mankind hath stood before the Lord of the creatures!"

For this Day is no other than "the end of the ages"; no other than the illumination of the horizons of earth, both East and West, with the Lights of the Forgiving Lord; no other than the changing of darkness into light, and of sorrow into joy and gladness; whereby hearts are cheered, souls are tranquillized, eyes are consoled and breasts are dilated.

This is the Day of God!

V:3, 28 April 1914 [V:3:38]

[From *Jam-i-Jamshíd*, Calcutta, 28 March 1914]

A message to the sons of Mazda

New light in the world

By Prof. E. C. Getsinger, PhD (Professor of Original Research and Physics), USA

America is considered to be the melting pot where all discoveries, theories, philosophies, religions and claims of any special sort, are put into the crucible of investigation and finally given their true value by the individual; for the American nation is composed of a people of independent thought,—the result of their splendid educational system.

Consequently, when an American student comes to these shores, it is a rather strange sensation for him to find that the educated classes—Pársís, Hindus and Muslims are settled in a state of satisfaction, non-seeking, non-searching, except in some prescribed channels, and aim at maintaining sacred traditions. Any new light must pass a prescribed test founded upon old views. With an American a new light stands upon its own merits regardless of preconceived ideas, and therein lies their success in getting at things.

It is rather strange, then, from an American viewpoint, that the Pársís, excepting a few, are entirely ignorant of a Persian Faith, which is of such vast moment to the Pársí community, and that in America they *have* accepted the Bahá'í faith by hundreds, and that it is the Americans who are spreading this Faith in all parts of the world.

And even those few Pársís who have heard or looked into the matter were oblivious to the possibilities of a spiritual force that lies underneath the outward momentum.

When the Americans heard of this Bahá'í Faith in 1898, they sent several delegations, one from New York, one from Chicago, and one from San Francisco, composed of from six to fourteen persons each, to visit the prison city of 'Akká [now in Israel] and investigate the truth

¹ A tree planted by the Arabs at the end of the road to guide the traveller. Here it refers to the Manifestation of God.

of the matter from the lips of the prisoner himself, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. All reported favourably and the Bahá'í Faith has since spread in America by leaps and bounds, the numbers being beyond computation.

In Persia, the Bahá'ís are numbered by the thousands and represent Muslims, both Sunnís and Shí'íhs¹—Pársís, Jews and Christians. Religious hatred is dissolved by pure love, and each respects the religion of the other; so that whole cities in Persia are of the Bahá'í Faith, and all this has happened by easy stages, without the sword of religious coercion, but by toleration and brotherly love.

That the Bahá'í Faith is of the greatest moment to the Pársí community can well be seen, for as soon as just one more step in Persia is made by this Faith, then the Pársís can remove his Sacred Fire back to its native home again, and worship in peace and safety, for religious toleration is one of the greatest Bahá'í Laws, and I am saying this as an American Bahá'í, who has intimately observed and known this Faith for the past sixteen years. Liberty and fair-play is dear to every American even if the drama of injustice is played in foreign lands; but at the same time we also expect that those mostly interested (Pársís) in the establishment of righteousness in Persia, should bestir themselves a little.

About a year ago, a delegation or party, of Pársís went to Persia to observe the trend of safety for investment, etc., and not to study Bahá'í influences. But upon returning they reported unfavourably on all points, except, that the only hope for Persia lies in the Bahá'í Faith and its spread among the Persians. One of the party repeated this to me about two months ago. And yet, if this is the Pársís's only hope, then why not lend more than a mere silent sympathy to that hope? The Persian Muslims have laid down thousands of lives—this is common historical knowledge—in order that their country be redeemed, and by these sacrifices the Pársís also are benefited.

Why have not the Pársís also sent a delegation to Palestine to investigate the matter at its fountain head? When the Americans did so it was only for truth's sake, and not because they have any other interests in the Pársí motherland. The American Bahá'ís have established schools in Persia, have sent American teachers to those schools and to them are admitted the children of every religion.

Some of the greatest scholars, writers, statesmen, travellers and humanitarians of our day have written most favourably of the Bahá'í Faith and Faith, and volumes sufficient [V:3:39] to fill a library are already extant from the pens of those men and women, most of them, while not pronounced Bahá'ís, are able to see the great influence of the Bahá'í Faith upon the entire social and economic problems of this age.

When Prof. Edward G. Browne, of Cambridge, visited Bahá'u'lláh (the founder) in the prison city, 'Akká, in 1892, this scholar in his own subsequent book on the Bahá'í Faith, admits that the spiritual force that emanated from Bahá'u'lláh (Splendour of God), caused him to fall to his knees in His Presence, when Bahá'u'lláh spoke the words that have since rung around the earth:

"We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations, that all nations shall become one in faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men shall be strengthened. That diversity of religion shall cease and difference of races be annulled. So it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come; and for this are we a prisoner and an exile."

Thus did the "Prisoner of 'Akká" speak on the fortieth year of his exile and imprisonment; and is there any hopeless tone in that speech after forty years of oppression and tyranny?

¹ SunnÍ, pl. sunnún. Shí'Í (Pers. shí'ih), pl. shí'yún.

Among the vast number of authors and writers on the Bahá'í Faith, I will mention just a few, whose books lie before me:

Horace Holley, London, author of "The Modern Social Religion". In that book, page 8, he says:

"Originating in Persia only a generation ago, the Movement has already penetrated far to the East and West, its followers numbering millions of men and women, who represent every religion, philosophy, race, class and colour. It is the Bahá'í teaching which extends religion so as to include modern science, economic conditions and morality ... in terms of our social evolution."

This book and others are on sale in Bombay book shops.

The venerable Professor Vambery, one of the greatest scholars of modern times, honoured by Kings and Emperors, just a few weeks before his death wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the present leader), a long letter of sympathy and love, from which I give brief excerpts:

"I forward this humble petition to the sanctified and holy presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who is famous throughout the world and beloved by all mankind. Although I have travelled through many countries and cities of Islám, yet have I never met so lofty a character and so exalted a personage as your Excellency, and I can hear witness that it is not possible to find such another I am hoping that the ideals and accomplishments of your Excellency may be crowned with success. Considering these results, every person is forced by necessity to enlist himself on the side of your Excellency and accept with joy the prospect of a fundamental basis for a Universal Religion of God ... and if God the Most High, confers long life, I will be able to serve you under all conditions.

(Signed) Vambery.

Professor Cheyne, of Oxford, England, wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in these endearing terms:

23 October 1913.

My Beloved Friend and Guide: I cannot forget your tender embrace when you were with me in my study. It has been a constant source of strength in memory and I fully believe it was the will of God. You help me constantly. With reverential love in Abhá, in which my dear wife joins, I am, beloved friend and guide,

(Signed) F. K. Cheyne.

Published in the *Star of the West*, Chicago, USA.

Bernard Temple, (now Editor of *The Sind Gazette*, Karachi) read a paper before the Royal Society of Arts, London, "Persia and the Regeneration", which was published in that Society's journal, saying:

"Sometimes the world has had cause to regret its inattention. Europe, at the present time (1910), is not showing itself regardful of the rise of the new religious movement, called 'Bahai-ism' of Persia. ... Shí'ih and Sunní Muslims in large numbers have been converted. In European Turkey, and more notably in Asiatic Turkey, they are increasing yearly. I conversed with some in Baghdád. In Egypt they are becoming numerous; also Morocco, Algeria, Tunis and Tripoli and the Northern Provinces of India. I have met Bahá'ís in Bombay, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Delhi and Lucknow. Converts from among the Sikhs of Amritsar, and the Brahmans of Benares; among the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand; amongst the Taoists of China and Shintoists of Japan.

"Many Persian Jews in Tíhrán have become Bahá'ís and I have attended some of their meetings. In Hamadan [about 370 km WSW of Tíhrán], one of the oldest Jewish settlements in the world, at least a third of the Jewish community has openly gone over to the Movement. No

Christian missionary to the Jews in any part of the world can boast a triumph equal to this. ... A more intellectual form of Bahai-ism has expanded into Europe, in Russia, Germany, France and England. In Baku I found a large number; in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Glasgow an appreciable number. The United States of America promises to become a great western stronghold of Bahai-ism; also Quebec, Montreal and Toronto, in Canada.

“Before going further perhaps I ought to state that I am not a Bahá’í.

“All this world-wide spreading while the founders were behind prison walls!

“The followers of Bahá’u’lláh already include members of the ruling family of Persia—Viziers, Deputies; Governors of Provinces and several Mullás!” [V:3:41]

The observations of Bernard Temple are first hand. He is a renowned Orientalist and traveller. No comments are necessary on his words.

S. A. Kapadia, Editor of *The Wisdom of the East Series*, in “The Splendour of God”, says on page 2:

“Wherever Bahá’ís meet they meet on common ground, throwing aside all antagonisms of the past, they rejoice in the glad communion of the present ... Brotherhood among them is not merely a ‘maybe’, it is a visible fact. Buddhists and Muslims, Hindus and Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians, sit at one board in amity, eat of one dish, and offer united thanksgiving to one Giver—the result of the light of ‘The Glory of the God’ (Bahá’u’lláh).

“Illumined by this light, men are no longer blinded by fear of one another, fear is utterly cast out by this light towards which Bahai-ism bids all men to turn.

“Visitors to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at his home in ‘Akká, are of many tongues and many nations. ... Many opposing people and professions eat at the table together and he himself waits upon his guests in sacred service to his fellowmen. ... A light that cannot fail to rend asunder the veil of separation and enable man to see and love man regardless of nation, origin, colour, caste or creed. This light of love shows man to man as he is.”

This is a word for Bahai-ism by the Editors of a religious series, that prove them to be experts in discernment of the inner life of the individual religions, ancient and modern.

It a recent article in *The Christian Commonwealth*, London, and reprinted in the February number of *The New Reformer*, Madras, Mr George, G. Andre, F.G.S., writes:

“No religious Movement has touched the spiritual life of the modern world so closely as that which is [V:3:42] associated with the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and his son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Persian, and its origin in the nineteenth century, in seventy years has spread all over the world. It stands out among other Movements as the form of the renovating force in the spiritual life of the world. We have in the Bahá’í teaching a regenerative force which may change the form of human society in a way and in a degree of which we can have in the present confused state of things, no adequate conception.”

“The Bahá’í Revelation may be rightly described as the greatest religious Movement of recent times. A Movement which reckons its martyrs by tens of thousands and the numbers of its adherents by millions. The first impression made on one is that its name ‘Bahá’í’, is a suggestion of a purified form of Islám. But though associated in its origin with the faith of Islám, as Christianity was with Judaism, yet it is a distinct and independent Movement—the answer to religious and social necessity. That part which the Bahá’í Movement is destined to play in the spiritual life of the world, is to be a saviour of the Great Religions ... A crisis has been reached in the religions of the world and men’s hearts are failing them in fear.

“Bahá’u’lláh did not profess to found a new religion in the ordinary acceptance of the word, that is, an organized religious system adapted to the needs of a particular race of people, but

to broaden the basis of each man's faith and to strengthen it.

“The essence of all religions is the love of God, and to discover the way to the Kingdom one must travel upon it. The people of Bahá must teach by their lives and manifest the light of God in their deeds,” says ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”

The Christian Commonwealth is circulated in all parts of the world and has over a half-million readers. Thus showing the wide circle of sympathy that is manifested from many sources for the Bahá'í Movement and its aims. The foregoing from the pens of eminent men, and recognized as peers in their fields of labour, testifies that the Bahá'í Movement is practically a “world renovating” fact; that it is actually a “Millennium period” already on the ascendant; that it is a “Resurrection” of spirituality already on the wing; that it is a “day of Righteousness and judgement” already at hand.

Nothing with even a semblance to these principles has arisen nor gone forth out of Persia during 2,500 years, which in the least bears traces of Zoroastrian prophetic fulfilment as does the Bahá'í Revelation—already an established fact throughout the world, and acknowledged as such by the most distinguished men of affairs in all countries, regardless of their religious convictions.

In the face of these facts, is it not presumptuous on my part to call the attention of the Pársí community to an event, already history, which possibly might be “the long desired Millennium” of Sháh Bahrám and Soshans?

It is true, that the Pársí community is small and for its own self-preservation and protection, the Pársís must set about their community a certain conservatism, and look askance at new cults and philosophies. But it must also remember that when we shut others out, we likewise shut ourselves in; and besides Bahai-ism is no cult, philosophy, nor new religion. It is the religion of the prophets of Írán—as promised since ancient times and has come in our day to all who can believe these glad-tidings.

Neither American nor English Bahá'ís have any interest in the advancement of Persia toward a habitable country, aside from humanity. But the Pársís have an interest that has slumbered for centuries in their hearts, and a hope that has never waned. And now since the Persian Bahá'ís (statement of the delegation) have cleared away the lurking danger, and given the Pársís a light on the path, a new hope almost realized, is it then too much to ask you, my fellowmen in Mazda, to also form a delegation to investigate Bahai-ism and see what relationship it has to your own expectations of the “Resurrection of Righteousness”?

I have met some of your learned men—in fact, too learned—who have heard, have read, have formed opinions about it, but only from exterior sources, have judged a world Movement by the air bubbles churned by the struggle.

Consequently, should my humble suggestion of an investigating delegation be followed, then please do not make the same “top-heavy”; but look to the spirit in men's souls. That is, those who can discern things wrought of God and His Spirit.

E. C. Getsinger

V:5, 5 June 1914 [V:5:65]

“This Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the first divine institute in America”

Through Dr Faríd, to the Secretaries of the Convention of Delegates for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár,
Charles Ioas and Gertrude Buikema, Chicago.

HE IS GOD!

O ye two candles of the Meeting of the Friends!

The secretary in the meeting of the spiritual ones must be shining as a candle, for he is the medium for communicating thoughts and the explanation of Mysteries.

Praise be to God that the Convention of the delegates for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was held in perfect order and that the members assembled in that spiritual meeting with radiant faces, heavenly hearts, merciful spirits and the glad-tidings of the Kingdom, and consulted and deliberated respecting the founding of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

Although hereafter thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be founded, yet as this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the first Divine Institute in America, therefore it is very important and its *results* and *fruits* are endless. Soon will some of its results become known and evident.

In brief: The delegates who congregated in that lordly Assemblage and engaged in the service of the Divine Kingdom must give thanks night and day, for they were thus aided and confirmed and left a "footprint" (trace) of which eternity is an inherent quality.

Although the importance of this Divine Institute is not very evident now, yet in the future it will be clear and plain as the sun.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Amín U. Faríd, Haifa, Syria, 20 July 1909.

V:5, 5 June 1914 [V:5:67]

[From *The North Shore Review*, 16 May 1914]

The Bahá'í Temple at Wilmette¹ to be built with money from every race, clime and religion under the sun

Isabel Fraser

"The Bahá'í Faith is not an organization. You can never organize the Bahá'í Cause. The Bahá'í Faith is the spirit of this age. It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahá'í Cause is an inclusive Faith: The teachings of all the religions and societies are found here; the Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, *et. al.*, find their highest aims in this Cause. Even the Socialists and philosophers find their theories fully developed in this Faith."

'Abdu'l-Bahá

"Open ye the gates of the Temple to all mankind," is the command of the Bahá'í leader, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whose teachings are today drawing together all nations, races and creeds. The Temple soon to be erected at Wilmette typifies the first visible fruits of this teaching in America. It is called the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which means "The Dawning-place of praises", and these praises are to be sounded through the medium of worship plus activity, for the inner temple, or house of worship, is to be surrounded by such practical accessories as a hospital, hospice for travellers, school for the study of higher sciences, orphanage, etc.

It is to be a new departure architecturally, for it is to be built on the plan of nine. 'Abdu'l-Bahá on his recent journey to America gave a graphic word picture of the structure as follows: "The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be like a beautiful bouquet. The central lofty edifice will have nine sides surrounded by nine avenues interlacing nine gardens where nine fountains will play. There will be nine gateways and columns and the nine will also be carried out in the galleries and dome. The mystery of this edifice is great, and cannot be unveiled yet, but its erection is the most important undertaking of this day.

¹ Wilmette is a suburb to the north of Chicago, which in the course of a few years will, undoubtedly, become a part of the metropolis. The building to be erected is known as the Chicago Temple.—*The Editors*.

“The Chicago Temple is the mother Mashriq’l-Adhkár of America, and in coming centuries many Mashriq’l-Adhkárs¹ in other cities will be the offspring. Think not that this Temple will be like the hundred thousand gigantic temples you see about you. The more the world aspires to a perfect civilization the more the matter of co-operation and mutual assistance becomes manifest. More and more is it evident that the continuance of humanity depends upon this inter-relationship. The Mashriq’l-Adhkár, which is the greatest of the divine foundations on this earth, will be the means for mutual help under all conditions whether in the degrees of truth and significance or in the stations of the material world, for the doors of these places are to be open for all sects—no differentiation. Because, with one thought and one aim ye are engaging yourselves in the building of this temple, O ye servants and maidservants of the Merciful, know verily that this great project will be conducive to the union and affinity of all the children of man. Know ye that when this Temple of God shall be built in Chicago, it will be to the spiritual body of the world what the inrush of the spirit is to the physical body of man, quickening it to its utmost parts and infusing a new light and power.”

World-uniting effort

The following supplication, couched in the beautiful oriental imagery that distinguishes the Bahá’í Revelation, shows in no uncertain way the deep spiritual love that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá though in far-away ‘Akká in the Holy Land, is [V:5:68] directing toward this gigantic world-uniting effort which is to bud into fruition in the centre of America on the shores of our inland lakes:

“O Lord, make these holy souls who have arisen to build this Temple the dawning points of light and the manifestors of Thy signs. Make each a leading cornerstone in this great edifice, a pillar of its pillars, for Thou art the Helper, the Supporter, the Rewarder! These souls have arisen to serve Thee well, and have begun their servitude. Confirm, aid and encourage each by the promise of Thy divine favours and make them of the elect. Verily, Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful, the Able, the Giver, the Shining, the Hearer and the Seer!”

“O God! O God! I implore Thee with throbbing heart and streaming tears, to aid each one who endeavours for the erection of the House of the Lord, the building wherein Thy Name is mentioned every morn and eve. Send down Thy benediction on whomsoever endeavours for the uprising of this Edifice among the sects and religions, and confirm him in every good deed of mankind; open the doors of riches and wealth unto him and make him an inheritor of the treasures of the kingdom which perishes not; make him the sign of giving among the peoples and reinforce him by the sea of Thy generosity and bounty, which is surging with the waves of grace and favour. Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Merciful and the Bountiful!”

It is interesting to note in passing, Mr Carnegie’s recent munificent gift of several millions for promoting religious unity throughout the world and especially for the purpose of bringing about a more complete understanding between the religions of the East and West, a subject in which Mr Carnegie is vitally interested.

A recent communication from Mr M. M. Holbach, an extensive traveller throughout the East, who is now visiting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Palestine, bears on the temple subject. He writes of the Bahá’í temple at ‘Ishqábád, which is the first of its kind in the world’s history. He says:

Sign of the times

“The Mashriq’l-Adhkár, or Bahá’í temple, at ‘Ishqábád, is indeed a sign of the times. That Russia should have permitted its erection is little short of a miracle. That the first church in the world erected not for the worship of sect or community, but for the members of all churches and all sects to meet in union, should be in a country we have always associated with religious intolerance, gives food for thought.

¹ Masháriq-Adhkár (places of prayers).

“Thirty–three years ago the first Bahá’í teacher went to ‘Ishqábád. The now populous city had not then come into existence. ‘Ishqábád was merely a camp of 60,000 soldiers in the wilderness.

“Áqá Muḥammad Riḍá, the present guardian of the temple, was the teacher who carried the Bahá’í gospel of peace and brotherhood to military ‘Ishqábád. He was a mason by trade, and in company with a fellow workman, also from Persia, who shared the new faith, he worked with his hands at building the new town, but at the same time he built even better than he knew, for from this small beginning has sprung the thriving Bahá’í community, which is roughly estimated at 1,000 persons, who, stimulated by a donation of 2,000 roubles from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself, have given so liberally of their worldly goods that ‘Ishqábád can claim forever the proud distinction of having erected the first Temple of Peace in the world.

“At first the Russian government refused permission for the erection of the temple, and a special petition was sent by the Bahá’ís direct to the Czar, who had the matter inquired into, and, finding that so far from there being anything political in the background, the followers of Bahá’u’lláh are enjoined never to take up arms or join in any revolutionary movement against the state, gave the required permission. The Russian government sealed its approval when the Governor of ‘Ishqábád—Koropatkin,¹ who afterward distinguished himself as general in the Russian-Japanese war—came in state to lay the foundation stone and deposited a silver box containing papers descriptive of the circumstances relating to the building. At this same ceremony the highest representatives of the different religious bodies in ‘Ishqábád—Christians, Muslims, Jews and Armenians—were present by invitation.

“Speaking of this the other day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: ‘Praise be to God! that Bahá’u’lláh has broken the barriers of religious prejudice. He has commanded all the Bahá’ís to consort with those of other religions and nationality with the utmost love and kindness and fellowship. They are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. ... We must make religion the cause of love and affiliation, and not the means of controversy and strife. Praise be to God! that we are all the children of the Kingdom.”

V:5, 5 June 1914 [V:5:71]

Sixth Annual Convention of Bahá’í Temple Unity

Chicago, 25–28 April 1914

Alfred E. Lunt

...

... One could not better render in a few words the supreme lesson of this Convention, a lesson not confined to the ranks of the delegates but felt in every Bahá’í community in the West, than in the following stirring Prayer given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a Tablet read at the first Convention held in America, in which He referred to those arising to serve the Cause of God:

“O my Lord, Make them Thy refulgent dawns which shine and gleam upon the Temple of Unity, so that they may be resuscitated from the tombs of negligence, unfurl the standard of virtue and chant the verses of self-abnegation and renunciation while hastening toward the altar of sacrifice. Verily Thou are especializing to Thy Mercy whomsoever Thou willest and verily Thou are powerful in all things.”

V:5, 5 June 1914 [V:5:71]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Extracts from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab’s Diary, 13 January 1914

Mr and Mrs Holbach had several questions to ask about the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár and its

¹ Aleksey Nikolayevich Kuropatkin, governor from 1890 to 1898.

accessories. In answer ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“When these institutions, college, hospital, hospice and establishments for the incurables, university for the study of higher sciences and giving post-graduate courses, and other philanthropic buildings, are built, its doors will be open to all the nations and all religions. There will be drawn absolutely no line of demarcation. Its charities will be dispensed irrespective of colour and race. Its gates will be flung wide to mankind; prejudice toward none, love for all. The central building will be devoted to the purposes of prayer and worship. Thus for the first time religion will become harmonized with science and science will be the hand-maid of religion, both showering their material and spiritual gifts on all humanity. In this way the people will be lifted out of the quagmires of slothfulness and bigotry.”

V:6, 24 June 1914 [V:6:43]

“The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause”

Utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in answer to questions asked by Dr Edward C. Getsinger during a few brief meetings, at Haifa, Syria, 26 January to 5 February 1915, and recorded by Dr Getsinger at the time.

No obstacle should be placed before any soul which might prevent it from finding the truth. Bahá’u’lláh revealed his directions, teachings, and laws, so that souls might know God, and not that any utterance might become an obstacle in their way.

Holding to the letter of the law is many times an indication of a desire for leadership. One who assumes to be the enforcer of the law shows an intellectual understanding of the Cause, but that spiritual guidance in them is not yet established.

The alphabet of things is for children, that they may in time use their reasoning powers. “Following the spirit” is a guidance by and through the heart, the prompter of the spirit. The Pharisees were extremely orthodox, holding strictly to the law. They were the cause of the condemnation and ultimate crucifixion of Jesus.

Several times tablets have been ‘Written to some friends regarding a small detail in the work of the Cause, which they might attend to, such as reporting [V:6:44] about Azalís,¹ náqídín, et al., and now we hear that such tablets are used as a proof of their authority over the friends in those regions. Although the books and writings of Abu’l Faḍl are used in many countries as text books, never did he even give a sign that he was an authority on any subject, consequently the gifts of God ever increased upon him, since he bore all honors in humility, until he attained to the supreme nearness.

The ones in real authority are known by their humility and self-sacrifice and show no attitude of superiority over the friends.

Some time ago a tablet was written stating that none are appointed to any authority to do anything but to serve the Cause as true servants of the friends and for this no tablet is necessary; such service when true and unselfish, requires no announcement, nor following, nor written document.

Let the servant be known by his deeds, by his life!

To be approved of God alone should be one’s aim.

When God calls a soul to a high station, it is because that soul has capacity for that station as a gift of God, and because that soul has supplicated to be taken into His service. No envies, jealousies, calumnies, slanders, plots, nor schemes, will ever move God to remove a soul from its intended place, for by the grace of God, such actions on the part of the people are the test of

¹ Azalí, pl. azálál.

the servant, testing his strength, forbearance, endurance and sincerity under adversity. At the same time those who show forth envies, jealousies, etc., toward a servant, are depriving themselves of their own stations, and not another of his, for they prove by their own acts that they are not only unworthy of being called to any station awaiting them, but also prove that they cannot withstand the very first test—that of rejoicing over the success of their neighbor, at which God rejoices. Only by such a sincere joy can the gift of God descend unto a pure heart.

Envy closes the door of Bounty, and jealousy prevents one from ever attaining to the Kingdom of Abhá.

No! Before God! No one can deprive another of his rightful station, that can only be lost by one's unwillingness or failure to do the will of God, or by seeking to use the Cause of God for one's own gratification or ambition.

No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God. By assisting in the success of another servant in the Cause does one in reality lay the foundation for one's own success and aspirations.

Ambitions are an abomination before the Lord.

How regrettable! Some even use the affairs of the Cause and its activities as a means of revenge on account of some personal spite, or fancied injury, interfering with the work of another, or seeking its failure. Such only destroy their own success, did they know the truth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá is the interpreter of the aims, intents, and purposes of the Words of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh) and is the interpreter of his own written words, and none can say that this or that is the intention conveyed therein, save 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create a division and discord is indeed one who errs.

Were not the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh one adaptable to the entire world and its diverse nations, it could not be a unique and universal Revelation, but its elasticity adapts itself to *all* conditions, and its spirit is one that moulds itself into every vehicle and need for the accomplishment of the divine plan of unity. [V:6:45]

But when some follow merely the hard and fixed letter of the law, they deprive it (the Revelation) of its elastic quality the spirit and endeavor to convert it into a hard instrument of inflexible qualities.

In this day every one must be tested, as the time of the "chosen ones" to prove their worth is indeed very short. The day of attainment is drawing to a close for them. The "first fruits" must be ripened in spirit, mellowed in love, and consumed by their self-sacrifice and severance. None other are acceptable as first fruits, and all who fail to attain to the standard through the tests, are relegated to the "many who are called".

The more one is severed from the world, from desires, from human affairs, and conditions, the more impervious does one become to the tests of God. Tests are a means by which a soul is measured as to its fitness, and proven out by its own acts. God knows its fitness beforehand, and also its unpreparedness, but man, with an ego, would not believe himself unfit unless proof were given him. Consequently his susceptibility to evil is proven to him when he falls into the tests, and the tests are continued until the soul realizes its own unfitness, then remorse and regret tend to root out the weakness.

The same test comes again in greater degree, until it is shown that a former weakness has become a strength, and the power to overcome evil has been established.

Blessed are they who are the means of making unity among the friends, and pity on those who *in the right or wrong* are the cause of discord. For instance: When one is in the right in a case in dispute, and his minority prevents him from establishing this rightful matter, instead of agitating the subject, if he will humbly submit to sacrifice his position for the sake of unity and peace, God will accept that sacrifice and ere long the rightful matter will be established without any further dispute, by the Divine assistance; whereas without such sacrifice and submissiveness great harm might ensue.

The friends must be prepared to efface themselves at all times. Seeking the approval of men is many times the cause of imperiling the approval of God.

The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause and mention the Name of God. We need not fear the enemies on the outside for such can be easily dealt with. But the enemies who call themselves friends and who persistently violate every fundamental law of love and unity, are difficult to be dealt with in this day, for the mercy of God is still great. But ere long this merciful door will be closed and such enemies will be attacked with a madness.

It has been a long time since letters have been received from the friends. Everything is first read by the censor, and all tablets likewise submitted to him, and as my mail alone would keep him very busy, we make no effort to trouble him. Tell Aḥmad Yazdí not to send any more mail to me under any circumstances.

Indeed, I contemplate no journey, for who would look alter the poor should I leave here to travel to America or elsewhere?

If you knew what great things would happen to the Cause after my departure, you would pray every day and night for my release and demise.

V:6, 24 June 1914 [V:6:81]

“I am ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and no more”

Tonight, I desire to speak to you on a most important subject, which you must engrave on the tablets of your hearts like unto the engraving of pictures on adamantine rock, to the extent that you may never forget it, and as you travel through life will relate it to the believers of God.

It is this: The Holy, Divine Manifestations are unique and peerless. They are the archetypes of celestial and spiritual virtues in their own age and cycle. They stand on the summit of the Mount of Vision and they foreshadow the perfections of the evolving humanity.

For example: during the dispensation of His Holiness Moses—Peace be upon Him—there was not a single human soul similar or like unto Him. He surpassed all the Holy Souls who came after Him, even the hosts of the Jewish prophets. In a similar manner all the people who lived during the cycle of His Holiness Christ—May my life be a sacrifice to Him—were under His spiritual authority. They had no will of their own. He was the Sun and the others were the lamps. He was unique and peerless, the centre and the focal point of the mighty forces. Everyone else was under His shadow. He was the Orb and the others were the stars. He was also unique and peerless. Everyone caught the rays of Light from Him, and was enkindled through His Fire. In a like manner was the epoch of His Holiness the Báb—May the life of aught else be a ransom to Him—and He was matchless and without a peer. All the rivers received their strength from that great sea.

Finally during the cycle of the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh]—May My life be a sacrifice to His believers—all are beneath His shadow. He is the Unique and Peerless One till the next Manifestation. It is, however, not definite that it will be 1,000 years; it may be 2,000, or 10,000 or 20,000 years; but it is definite that for the coming 1,000 years there will appear no Manifestation; for 1,000 years there shall arise no Sun. All the appearances will be beneath the shade of the Most Great Appearance; they will be as stars of guidance. All of them shall gather around this Fountain of Life; all of them will become illumined with the rays of this Sun; all of them will receive a share and a portion from this great Sea; all of them will become vivified with this soul imparting breeze and all of them will be under the down-pour of this rain. The aim is this: His Holiness the Báb gave the Glad-tidings concerning the Appearance of the Manifestation of God, and His Holiness, the Blessed Perfection, was the “Promised One” of all the nations and religions. The Báb was the “Morning Star”, heralding the glorious Dawn of the Sun of Reality. Now all of us are under Its shadow and receive the refulgent Bestowals from It.

I am ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and no more. I am not pleased with whomsoever praises me with any other title. I am the Servant at the Threshold of the Blessed Perfection [V:6:82], and I hope that this Servitude of mine will become acceptable. Whosoever mentions any other name save this will not please me at all. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and no more. No person must praise me except by this name: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’.

The Blessed Perfection and the Báb are unique and peerless in this Dispensation, and until the next Manifestation. The belief, the opinion and the thoughts of all believers must revolve around this common Centre. This oneness of belief must become fully realized so that in the future there may arise no differences. His Holiness the Báb was the “Morn of Guidance”. The Blessed Perfection was the “Desired One” of all the religions and nations, and all of us are under the Blessed Shade, non-existent and evanescent. All of us are the servants of this Holy Threshold. All of us are the thralls—meek, humble and lowly. All of us receive the Light from that Sun of Reality. There is no other mention, no other quality, no other appellation for us save this. *I am ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*. The believers must be satisfied with this explanation so that I may be pleased with them. All of the friends must be united on this matter. Praise be to God! that up to this time, through the Favour and Providence of the Blessed Perfection, no other title or word save “*Abdu’l-Bahá*” has appeared either from my tongue or pen. I hope that all the believers will walk in my footsteps so that I may become satisfied with all of them. Our highest aspiration must be this: that we may become confirmed to render some slight service in the Path of God. There is no greater station than this.

After the Departure of the Blessed Perfection and till the Appearance of the next Manifestation there is no other station save the Station of Servitude, pure and absolute. Not a servitude liable to interpretation; but an unconditional and unqualified servitude. This is the real fact. Whosoever expresses any other interpretation, I will not be pleased with him. This is my advice to you. This is my counsel to you. This is my desire. This is my good pleasure. This is my last request from all the believers of God! The balsam to my wound is servitude at the Holy Threshold. My Sadratu’l-Muntahá is servitude at the Holy Threshold! My highest destination is servitude at the Holy Threshold! My Supreme Paradise is servitude at the Holy Threshold! My Spiritual Temple is servitude at the Holy Threshold! The Most Shining Crown is servitude at the Holy Threshold!

What diadem is more glorious than Servitude at the Holy Threshold? I hope that all of us will become assisted in this servitude. I hope each one of us will become confirmed in absolute humility and meekness at the Holy Threshold. This is the Delectable Paradise of the righteous ones! This is the ultimate desire of the believers! This is the Zenith of the hope of the favoured ones!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Philadelphia

8–10 June 1912

A brief description containing various talks in the order in which they were delivered at the Hotel Rittenhouse; also talk at the home of Mrs Revell.

Miss Edna McKinney

On the eighth day of June, nineteen hundred and twelve, 'Abdu'l-Bahá Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, quickened the sleeping body of Philadelphia by his presence. 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived from New York City at the Broad Street Station at six o'clock in the evening, and was met by a few of the Bahá'ís. He was very tired and asked to go quickly to the hotel, the Rittenhouse, 22nd and Chestnut Streets, where he was met by several newspaper reporters to whom he spoke but briefly. Accompanying 'Abdu'l-Bahá was Mírzá 'Alí Akbar, Dr Amín U. Faríd and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Early Sunday morning the friends began to arrive at the hotel, and from ten on till late at night there was spread for all a wonderful feast. Each came and partook according to his desire and capacity, high and low, rich and poor, black and white—there is no distinction at the table of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This food brought Everlasting Life to all who feasted. Questions were asked and answered both in regard to personal matters and with regard to the work of the Cause in Philadelphia.

'Abdu'l-Bahá asked what was being done in Philadelphia. What meetings were held and how they were conducted. Mrs Revell answered that meetings were held at the homes of the friends; also one public meeting each week in a hall; that the Nineteen-Day Feast was observed; and that at all meetings the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá were read in the endeavour to spread the blessed message of unity and love to all inquirers.

'Abdu'l-Bahá then said that Philadelphia would be glorified through the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh. He said, "Write this down, that on such a day, in such a room¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá told you these things."

He then went on to say:

"I have come to Philadelphia to breathe into you the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh. My heart led me here.

"You must continue to keep the Nineteen-Day Feast. It is very important,—very good. But when you present yourselves in the meetings, before entering them, free yourselves from all that you have in your hearts;—free your thoughts and minds from all else save God and speak from the heart—that all may make this a gathering of love;—make it the cause of illumination;—make it a gathering of attracted hearts; surround it with the lights of the Supreme Concourse. Thus may you be gathered together in the utmost love.

"Turn to God and say: O God! dispel all those elements which are the cause of discord, and prepare for us those things which are the cause of unity and agreement! O God! cause to descend upon us Heavenly Fragrance and change this gathering into a gathering of Heaven! Grant to us every benefit and every food! Prepare for us the food of love! Give to us the food of knowledge! Bestow upon us the food of Heavenly Illumination! In your heart remember these things and then enter the Unity Feast.

"Each one of you must think how to make the other members of your assembly happy and pleased. Each one must consider all those who are present as better and greater than himself.

¹ Sunday, 9 June 1912, in the small parlour of the Rittenhouse, suite 423; 'Abdu'l-Bahá sat on a sofa in the north-west corner of the room.

Each one must consider himself less than the rest. Consider their station as high, and think of your own station as low. Should you act and live according to these behests; know verily and of a certainty, that such a Feast is indeed the Heavenly Food; that Supper is indeed the Lord's Supper. I am the servant of that gathering.

"This is the gospel I give to you."

'Abdu'l-Bahá then went to his room for a while. [V:6:84]

Different ones were continually arriving and joining the little circle of friends for no one seemed willing to go away. In fact when some did start to leave, thinking that they were intruding upon another's opportunity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá waved them back and said in English, "Be seated!"

Mr William Remey came in about this time and when 'Abdu'l-Bahá saw him, he greeted him most warmly.

"Your brother mentioned your name to me. You are greatly blessed by having such a brother. At present you do not know how greatly you are blessed, but you will see this with your own eyes. Your whole family will be glorified; they will be proud that they have such sons as Mr Remey and yourself.

"Consider how the Disciples were treated. While they were alive people would not have anything to do with them, but later on they felt greatly glorified if they had even the remotest relationship with them. They became respected and revered;—even the earth that was touched by their feet. Now the people prostrate themselves before their tombs, but they were persecuted while they lived. At that time people did not like to be known as relatives of these Disciples of Christ.

"While I was travelling in Palestine I came across a stony piece of ground. I saw that a number of people had gathered around one stone, kissing it, weeping and supplicating. I asked one, 'What is this?' He told me that the Apostles of Christ, once upon a time, had passed by this place and sat upon these rocks, but there were so many rocks they did not know on which the Apostles had sat. Therefore they prostrated themselves before all of them that perchance they might come across and kiss the right stone. In their own day the people beat them, put them in prison, ridiculed them, exiled them from their own cities and finally martyred them. They even did not give permission that they might be buried in their own cemeteries. They were not willing to have the body of His Holiness Jesus Christ put in the Jews' cemetery. The Apostles went and bought a piece of land and interred him. Then the Jews took their refuse there. Later men came and built a great church over it. This was built by the mother of one of the Caesars, after three hundred years. Even up to this time in certain parts it is known as the Church of Refuse. This is really the Tomb of Christ. It was the place where all the refuse of the city was gathered in the day of Christ. For three hundred years it continued in this manner. You can go now and see what wonderful change there is, see what a wonderful church is built, how many jewels and precious stones are collected there. The statue of Christ is bejewelled with all kinds of precious stones, so are the statues of Mary and others. How different the attitude of the people in the days of Manifestations. They persecute, deride and ridicule them, put a crown of thorns upon their heads, beat them in the street, spit in their faces and finally crucify them. But later on they worship their images, kiss the ground upon which they walked, or the stone upon which they sat. This is the attitude of the people."

During this time many people had been coming in and sitting down quietly. One of the ladies brought some flowers. Mrs Boyle was arranging them in a vase, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "You are serving too much, Mrs Boyle, you will get tired." Mrs Boyle replied that it was a pleasure to be permitted to serve and that she wished 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guests to see everything beautiful about him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "The guests are flowers themselves; they are the

flowers of the rose-garden of God; they will never wither; they will not disappear; they have perennial beauty and fragrance for evermore." He then turned to Miss Washington and said, "I have come to visit you here, do you accept a guest?"

Dr Kenneth E. Evans, Pastor of the Unitarian Church at which 'Abdu'l-Bahá was to speak during the morning, was announced and 'Abdu'l-Bahá left us for a few moments, telling us to remain seated. When he returned he was smiling. What a pleasure it is to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá smile! One realized then the true force of happiness and showing to the world a brave, noble exterior expressing the reality of a heart full of love to all humanity. ...

'Abdu'l-Bahá called a little girl to him and patted her hair, saying in English, "She is a very sweet daughter, a very sweet girl. Good daughter, very good, good daughter, good girl!"

After seating some late arrivals 'Abdu'l-Bahá turned to one of the ladies and said:

"You are extremely welcome. Are you happy? I have come here to make you happy. I have come here to give you the Message of Bahá'u'lláh; that this Message may become the cause of your happiness.

"Like unto a dove I carry a Message with [V:6:85] me wherever I go. Bahá'u'lláh has written a letter, a Message; He has put it on my wings; through His power He has made me to soar and I have brought that Message here.

"That letter contains the glad tidings of God; that letter is the call of the Kingdom; that letter is the heavenly signs; that letter brings you the glad-tidings that He, Bahá'u'lláh has accepted you, elected you from among all His creatures and prepared you for the sake of His Love for the whole human world; so that all may be enlightened with the Light of the Kingdom, sing the verses of Oneness, become the cause of the illumination of the realm of humanity, the source of everlasting happiness, the spreader of the cause of international peace;—so that all may find the Oneness of the world of humanity, promulgate oneness of thought, lay the foundations of unity of religions, establish universal education, announce the idea of racial oneness, proclaim one race from every standpoint, and illuminate the world of man with the Lights of God. This is the Message. This is the letter which Bahá'u'lláh has put upon my wings, and I give you that Message today. It is assured that if you accept the Message of the Blessed Perfection and live and act accordingly, you may bestow Everlasting Life upon the world of humanity.

"I have brought these flowers from the Orient so that you may perfume the Occident. This is a melody that I have brought from the East so that you may listen to it in the West. It is certain that you will listen to it. This harmony will stir the stones and even the plants; it will give hearing to the deaf, quicken heedless hearts and awaken the dead bodies; for this is the Melody of Bahá'u'lláh."

Turning to one of the gentlemen, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "How are you? You must speak now."

The gentleman replied that he had heard 'Abdu'l-Bahá speak in Washington and had come to hear him again in Philadelphia; that he was glad indeed to see the East and the West so affiliated.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "We have become your relatives. The East and the West have embraced each other. God willing they will become one; the East will become the West and the West will become the East; both of them will become one.

"We desire to wipe this Atlantic away and connect these two continents, so that the sea may not have any effect; it may not become the cause of separation, it may seem as though there was no Atlantic between the two hemispheres; that these two hemispheres be connected with each other; nay rather, they will be as one country. The East must become identical with the West and the West with the East. Do you think it is possible and it is good?"

It will be the age of the diamond; the diamond!"

Then the gentleman said, "God willing the wireless telegraph and the fast steamers will make this possible."

'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "Don't say, 'God willing,' say 'I hope'. When that wireless telegraphy of the consciousness is established and communication is realized, it will be like the communion between the mind and the heart. Think what wonderful unity is between these two human organisms. It is uninterrupted. The communication between the heart and the mind is continual, uninterrupted, and noiseless. But what a great knowledge it has; although it is voiceless its voice fills the whole world. Wireless telegraphy is good, is perfect, for wireless telegraphy consists of the vibrations of the air, which is the medium of the message from one place to another, but the other wireless telegraphy is realized through the vibrations of the Love of God.

"You have great capability. This is truth that I speak to you. Your sympathies are great, you have rapidity of thought. Therefore it is my hope that you may practice the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and live and act according to those principles. Teachings are revealed for the sake of practice and not for the sake of hearing or listening only. When man listens to certain teachings he must live them. To listen to the teachings is very easy, but it is difficult to bring them into our daily lives.

"It is easy to expound one thousand letters of teachings. It is still easier to listen to them, but it is difficult to put into practice one of them. Teachings are like an image reflected into a mirror. If these images find outward expression, wonderful results will be the outcome, but if they are only images in the mirror they remain valueless.

"His Holiness Jesus Christ brought blessed Teachings. He was the cause of the illumination of the world of man. He was the cause of Everlasting Life. He was the cause of the agreement of the sects of the world of humanity. He was the cause of the attainment of the good pleasure of the Manifest One, but His [V:6:86] teachings were more or less lost in the mirrors. All the books and libraries seek to bring these teachings fully into the outward realm of activity. If the teachings of His Holiness Jesus Christ had found full expression in the realm of visibility, this world would have become another world; it would have become the paradise of heaven; it would have become the image of the Kingdom.

"First, souls practice the teachings. These souls become the realization of the heaven of God; they illuminate the realm of man. Now it is my hope that you may become a perfect mirror reflecting the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh; not only in the mirror, but finding outward expression. Every night, may you think, 'Which one of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh shall I put into my daily life tomorrow?' Should you become assisted in the practice of one of the teachings of the Blessed Perfection, thank God for it a thousand times,—that you have become helped and confirmed in that service. This is my hope for you."

The gentleman asked, "Is Bahá'u'lláh the reincarnation of Jesus Christ?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "The Manifestation of the Essence of God is like unto the sun, which has different risings. The dawning places are different but the sun is always the same. The lamps are different but the light is one.

"Consider with the eye of reality. The aim of life is reality, and reality is one. Reality does not accept multiplicity. This is the essence of the teachings, and an established, self-evident fact. The light is the light no matter from what lamp it shines. The rose is the rose no matter from which rose-garden it comes. The fruit is the fruit no matter upon which tree it is produced. The breeze possesses life no matter from which direction it is wafted. Always think of the breeze and not of the direction. Look upon the flower and not upon the earth

which has produced it. Look upon the light and not upon the lamp. Look upon the jewels and pearls, not upon the depths of the sea. Search and find the pearls from whatever sea they may come, whether eastern sea or western sea. Find the pearls, find the jewels from whichever mine they may be; whether it be the mine of the north or mine of the south. Consider the teachings. If they are truth hold fast to them; but if they are untruth throw them away.

“We cannot say that the Manifestations are either greater or lesser. In order to make this distinction we must be greater than they. The only thing that we know is this—they are life. But to say that one is lesser and the other greater; this is beyond the comprehension of our intellects. In order to know that they are greater or lesser, we must surround them. But we are the surrounded, not the surrounder. We see that they bestow light,—that the rest of the world is illumined by them;—that is all. Do you not think that is the truth? We need a great teacher, a great professor to say that this teacher is inferior to the other teacher. We are all pupils. We only know that they are the teachers,—but so far as their degrees are concerned, we cannot comprehend them. If we want to do that we must be greater than they are, so that we may examine them and then find out which one has the greater knowledge. But as we are only pupils the only thing that we can find out and know is that they are teachers,—that they have brought certain teachings for the safety of the realm of the world.”

At the Unitarian Church

‘Abdu’l-Bahá with his party arrived at the church at eleven o’clock. The church was crowded and every available seat was taken. It was a most attentive audience which listened to those heavenly and humanitarian truths that morning.¹ The church seats about six or eight hundred. The pulpit is small and situated very near to the congregation. This was Children’s Day and there were many bright young faces.

Dr Evans introduced ‘Abdu’l-Bahá briefly and then gave over the morning to him. Dr Faríd acted as interpreter. At the close of the service ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked to pronounce a Benediction, after which the people crowded around him and he shook hands with all. The party then returned to the hotel and the various friends went to their homes, only to return to the hotel as early as possible in the afternoon.

Afternoon at the Hotel Rittenhouse

On arriving at the hotel later in the day we found about fifty people in the little parlour. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá waved us into the room and bade us be seated. As there were no chairs—we sat on the floor, which pleased ‘Abdu’l-Bahá very much. He said, “This is a cause of unity; see! the Occident is sitting on the floor like the Orient and the Orient is sitting on the chairs.” He laughed quite heartily, and then proceeded [V:6:87] with his discourse, which was in most part directed to a coloured believer from Harrisburg, Pa.:

“You have a good, pleasant country, excellent climate and polite, good mannered people. This is a populous country, and the prosperity of any country is dependent upon its people. One must not look at the house but at the dweller in the house. One must not look at the shell but at the pearl within the shell. One must not look at the garden but at the trees and flowers growing in the garden. If a country be in a state of the utmost prosperity but its people be without progress or perfections, it is valueless. If the dweller in the house be not worthy, no matter how excellent the house may be; if within the shell there be no pearls, of what use is the house, of what value is the delicacy of the shell itself? Now, we must endeavour in order that the delicate shells may contain brilliant pearls; these beautiful gardens produce fruitful trees. These brilliant pearls are the souls who are the lamps of the world of humanity, the fruitful trees of the divine garden, the stars of eternal glory. Strive that such souls may be found in your country.

¹ Refer to *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 172–176.

“I hope that in this city there may arise some who shall be as lights on the Horizon of Reality; jewels in the crown of humanity, foundation stones in the divine temple of Oneness, lanterns of the Love of God. This is my hope, that in time so it shall be. Praise be to God! You have capacity, your intentions are sincere, you are turning to God, you seek for inspiration from the Kingdom, you are receptive and enjoy with spiritual intelligence. I hope that you may be of the ‘chosen ones’.

“In Washington, in many gatherings and meetings, we spoke of unity between the white and the coloured races, presenting the subject with incontrovertible proofs and evidences. Whether logical proofs or traditional proofs, before God there is no distinction of white or coloured. Whosoever has a pure heart, his deeds are better and more acceptable before the threshold of the Almighty, though he may be red or yellow. It is evident the coloured and the white people belong to the same human family. In reality they are of the same human household in which colours, as in all departments of life, are used for adornment.

“If you enter a rose garden and find all the flowers of the same colour there is no enjoyment; but when you see white roses, dark roses, red and yellow—many kinds and colours, you will have perfect enjoyment. And why should not the same rule govern and prevail in the human family. For instance, in a flock of doves some are white, some are grey, some may be yellow or even red, but notwithstanding the difference in colours they live together in the utmost love and unity. Among the doves which belong to the animal kingdom, variety of colour does not become a subject of discord; they dwell peacefully with each other. Is it then befitting that in the human family that difference of colour should become the cause of strife? The dove knows that difference of colours does not harm it. Among horses some are red, some black, some white and some yellow, yet they are in the utmost affinity and accord. Most of the animals of the lower kingdom are of varied colours yet they associate peacefully, kind with kind. Is it befitting that man does not equal the birds? Indeed it is not.

“We said in the Washington addresses that the coloured race must be very grateful to the white race and the white race kind and helpful to the coloured race. The coloured race must be very thankful because the men of the white race sacrificed their lives and became the cause of their freedom. This magnanimity cannot be forgotten. Furthermore, through this the white race became the cause of freedom for the coloured race all over the world. The freedom of the coloured race in America became the cause of freedom for the coloured race in Africa and throughout the world. In Africa the coloured race was grossly ill-treated. Now they are free. This was because of the freedom enjoyed by the coloured race in this country, and the freedom of the coloured race in America was accomplished through the white race. The coloured race should be grateful to the white; they should never forget this. Therefore we must endeavour so that day by day the love of God may increase in the world of humanity, the laws of man find the common bond strengthened, the virtues of the human world be developed and divine love shed its rays upon the mind of man until humanity becomes the manifestation of the rays of Divine Love.

“Everything which is the cause of the promotion of love must be encouraged, and on the other hand that which is the cause of hatred and enmity must be shunned. God has sent all His messengers and Prophets to establish love amongst humanity. All the Heavenly Books [V:6:89] are written for the sake of Love. All the prophets have borne trials and martyrdoms in order that Love may become established in the hearts of the children of God. The wise men and philosophers of every age have suffered and endured so that this Love might become reality. But ignorant, selfish man does not let it become a reality. Every day a veil is created; every day a new darkness is seen. Every day an impenetrable cloud appears so that the rays of the Sun of Truth are not manifest. One must live fortified against passion and desire. We must obey the command of God. We must live according to the Good Pleasure of the Lord. The Good Pleasure of the Lord lies in Love. The Good Pleasure of the Lord is the illumination

of the world of humanity, and the illumination of the world of humanity is Love. I hope that all of you may become the manifestors of Divine Love. Like the angels may you become united! May you bloom like the flowers and trees in the garden! May you become fruitful like the trees in the orchard! So may you become Children of the Kingdom!"

After this talk 'Abdu'l-Bahá went for a walk and the friends gradually disbursed. There were many people present to whom the teachings were new.

At the Baptist Temple

At eight o'clock 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived at the Baptist Temple, Broad and Berks Streets. Dr Conwell went forward and greeted him most cordially, taking both his hands in his own, and seated him with evident pleasure and joy. The collection had just been taken and 'Abdu'l-Bahá directed Mirza Ahmad Sohrab to place money in the collection plate. This is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's invariable custom. In every church where he has spoken he has given towards its support, according to the needs of that church.

The talk¹ that evening was long and complete, going into detail on many points. It was listened to by about 2,500 people. After the service, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spent some time in Dr Conwell's study, meeting different ones. Here again, as in the morning, the people crowded around him to feel the touch of his hand or hear a word from him. Such is the power of the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Monday morning newspapers had most favourable items, many of them taking sections of the Sunday talks at the two churches verbatim. The Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh had already quickened the City of Philadelphia. Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to this city covered but [V:6:90] thirty-three hours, several thousand people heard him speak and many more read the blessed words in the papers.

At the home of Mrs Revell

At 9:30 Monday morning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the home of Mrs Mary J. Revell, where a meeting had been arranged. There were about fifty people present. 'Abdu'l-Bahá went into every room of the home and seemed very happy. He sat in a rocker by the front window and spoke these blessed words to all:

"This is a meeting, the members of which are strung together like pearls and all the pearls are brilliant, for all are Bahá'ís. The brilliancy of these pearls is not known for the present; their brilliancy will be known later on. Thank ye God that He has drawn you together through the Blessed Perfection. He has made you fruitful like unto trees. He has made you like unto a rose garden, the freshness of which will be known in the future. When the heat and rays of the Sun of Reality shine in the future, then the freshness and beauty of these flowers will be realized. In brief, render thanks to God, for your spirits are gladdened with the glad-tidings of God. Be forgetful of all other thoughts. Be filled with the Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh. Your thoughts must be of Bahá'u'lláh. Your mention must be of Bahá'u'lláh. Your life must be devoted to Bahá'u'lláh. Your firmness must be evident in Bahá'u'lláh for Bahá'u'lláh has endured for your sake infinite vicissitudes. All His life He was subject to persecutions. During the nights, He was not at rest. He did not sleep in peace for one night,—not one. Never did He find peace and composure. All His life He was subject to persecution. All His life He was exiled. All His life He was imprisoned. Therefore we must be loyal to Him; turn our faces to Him; praise His mention in this world; expound His teachings; quicken people with His Spirit, so that His Heavenly Image may descend and His Heavenly Power affect the hearts. Thus every day may we find a new spirit, every day may we make a new resolution, every day may we be confirmed and illumine the world of humanity. We must supplicate day and night, beg

¹ Refer to *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 176–182.

assistance and confirmation from His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh that we may become pure mirrors, that the rays of sincerity may perfect them, the virtues of the human world appear, the moralities of the Kingdom be reflected and that we may attain the high station of happiness. This is my advice to you. This is my request for you. This is my hope for you."

All day Monday he gave private interviews. After the meeting in the morning at Mrs Revell's home he met the friends who wished a personal word. After having seen most of them he slept for a few moments. Between one and two o'clock, two of the Bahá'ís went to the hotel and found 'Abdu'l-Bahá there alone. He talked to them in English. To one of them he said, "Why were you not at the Bahá'í home this morning? All the Bahá'ís were there. You should have been at this Bahá'í home." He was smiling and very happy.

At three o'clock 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his party took the train back to New York City. Although an indescribable feeling of sadness came over each and every one, still they know the Sun shall never set for Philadelphia again; she will go on and on until all promises are fulfilled, and the true spirit of "brotherly love" be fully realized. For 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said so and his words give life and are creative.

And here we wish to urge that all spread the Blessed Message of Bahá'u'lláh as much as possible, so that many more people may come to the Light of Reality. For it is a wonderful blessing and one that cannot be compared to anything else in all the world, even if one must travel far and under great difficulties to do so. The reward is far in excess of anything the heart or mind can conceive.

V:7, 13 July 1914 [V:7:97]

"Ere long this call will fill the world with its fruits"

It is nearly two years and a half that I have been a wanderer over mountains and deserts and a traveller over seas and lands. The journey was extended to many climes. ... The penetrative power of the Holy Cause has stirred the columns of the world. In many cities of America the Divine Call was raised. Likewise in the countries of Europe. In many churches, clubs, meetings and universities of America the Glad-Tidings of the Kingdom of Abhá were explained explicitly with a resonant voice, and no one arose in opposition. They listened most attentively and expressed their pleasure afterward. Ere long this Call shall yield the most glorious results and will fill the world with its fruits.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Extract from Tablet to Persian Bahá'ís

V:7, 13 July 1914 [V:7:98]

Tablet to Bahá'ís of Philadelphia

To the believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, Philadelphia, upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

... O ye friends and maid-servants of the Merciful! It is easy to advance toward the Kingdom, but it is difficult to remain firm and steadfast. Therefore, endeavour ye as much as ye can to make your faith firm like unto a well-rooted tree and produce blossoms and fruits. Neither be ye agitated on account of the blowing winds of tests and trials. The firmer the roots of the tree the greater its blossoms and fruits. Because the Apostles of Christ remained firm and steadfast they became assisted in the most great services and the confirmations of

the Holy Spirit descended upon them uninterruptedly.

If ye seek the illumination of the Kingdom ye must arise with infinite resolution. Be ye not discouraged or lukewarm on account of troubles and vicissitudes. Show ye an effort so that that region may be illumined, the Kingdom of God may raise its tents and the breaths of the Holy Spirit may quicken the souls.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 28 April 1911.

V:7, 13 July 1914 [V:7:104]

“I am waiting, I am patiently waiting”

Friends, the time is coming when I shall be no longer with you. I have done all that could be done. I have served the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh to the utmost of my ability. I have laboured night and day all the years of my life.

O how I long to see the believers shouldering the responsibilities of the Cause! This is the time of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Abhá! This is the hour of Union and Accord! This is the day of the spiritual harmony of the friends of God! All the resources of my physical strength are exhausted and the spirit of my life is the news of the Unity of the people of Bahá. I am straining my ears toward the East and toward the West, toward the North and toward the South, perchance I might hear the songs of love and good-fellowship raised from the meetings of the believers. My days are numbered, and save this there is no joy left for me.

O how I yearn to see the friends united like unto a strand of shining pearls like the brilliant Pleiades, like the rays of the sun and the gazelles of one meadow! The nightingale of significance is singing for them; will they not listen? The bird of paradise is warbling; will they not heed? The Angel of the Kingdom of Abhá is calling to them; will they not hearken? The Messenger of the Covenant is pleading; will they not obey?

Ah me! I am waiting, waiting to hear the glad news that the believers are the embodiment of sincerity and loyalty, that they are the incarnation of love and amity and the visible symbols of unity and concord! Will they not rejoice my heart? Will they not satisfy my cravings? Will they not comply with my request? Will they not fulfil my anticipations? Will they not answer my call?

I am waiting. I am patiently waiting!

'Abdu'l-Bahá

From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 2 April 1914.

V:8, 1 August 1914 [V:8:115]

Universal peace

Questions asked of and answers given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 11–14 May 1914.

Question: “What is the greatest need of the world of humanity?”

Answer: “Today in the world of humanity the most important matter is the question of Universal Peace. The realization of this principle is the crying need of the time. People have become restive and discontented. The political world of every civilized nation has become a vast arena for the exhibition of militarism and the display of martial spirit. The minds of the statesmen and Cabinet Ministers of every government are chiefly occupied with the question of war, and the council chambers are resounding with the call to war. Self-interest is at the bottom of every war. Greed, commerce, exploitation, the pushing further of the boundaries of the kingdom, colonization, the preservation of the treaty rights, the safeguarding of the lives

and interests of the citizens, are a few of the pretexts of going into war. And it has been proven by experience that the results of war are ruinous, both to the conquerors and the conquered. Countries are laid waste, public property trampled underfoot, commerce is paralyzed, fields crimsoned with innocent blood, and the progress of the world retarded. How can a person rectify a wrong by committing a greater wrong—shedding the blood of his brothers? The major part of the revenue of every country is expended over military preparations, infernal engines, the filling of arsenals with powder and shot, the construction of rapid-firing guns, the building of fortifications and soldiers' barracks and the annual maintenance of the army and navy. From the peasants upward every class of society is heavily taxed to feed this insatiable monster of war. The poor people have wrested from them all that they make with the sweat of their brows and the labour of their hands.

“In reality war is continuous. The moral effect of the expenditures of these colossal sums of money for military purposes is just as deteriorating as the actual war and its train of dreadful carnage and horrors. The ideal and floral¹ forces of the contending parties become barbaric and bestial, the spiritual powers are stunted and the laws of divine civilization are disregarded. Such a financial drain ossifies the veins and muscles of the body-politic, and congeals the delicate sensibilities of the spirit.

“There is not the least doubt that the nation or the government which puts forward an extraordinary effort in the promotion of Universal Peace, will be encircled with Divine Confirmations, and will be the object of honour and respect among all the inhabitants of the earth. Such an action will become conducive to the prosperity and well-being of mankind. Concerning this question of Universal Peace, fifty years ago His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh wrote to all the Sovereigns and Monarchs of the world, explaining in detail the benefits of peace and the evils of bloodshed. Among other things He hath said: ‘Originally mankind was one family, united and compact; later the members of this happy family were divided and subdivided through ignorance and prejudice. Now the time has come again for their final unification. Universal Peace will bring about this long-wished-for consummation.’

“Once the Parliament of Man is established and its constituent parts organized, the governments of the world having entered into a covenant of eternal friendship will have no need of keeping large standing armies and navies. A few battalions to preserve internal order, and an International Police to keep the highways of the seas clear, are all that will be necessary. Then these huge sums will be diverted to other more useful channels, pauperism will disappear, knowledge will increase, the victories of Peace will be sung by poets [V:8:116] and bards, knowledge will improve the conditions and mankind will be rocked in the cradle of felicity and bliss. Then, whether a government is constitutional or republican, hereditary monarchy or democratic, the rulers will devote their time to the prosperity of their nations, the legislation of just and sane laws and the fostering of closer and more amicable relations with their neighbours—thus will the world of humanity become a mirror reflecting the virtues and attributes of the Kingdom of God.”

Question: “What is your opinion concerning disarmament?”

Answer: “By a general agreement all the governments of the world must disarm simultaneously and at the same time. It will not do if one lays down the arms and the other refuses to do so. The nations of the world must concur with each other concerning this supremely important subject, thus they may abandon together the deadly weapons of human slaughter. As long as one nation increases her military and naval budget, another nation will be forced into this crazed competition through her natural and supposed interests. For

¹ I can only assume this has something to do with a floral formula that contrasts with the barbaric and bestial. Floral formula expresses concisely the structure (the number and arrangement by parts) of a flower by means of letters, numbers and symbols.

example, Germany has unceasingly added to a vast sum for the maintenance of her army; this alarms the French statesmen and volatile patriots, and affects the calm and steady nerves of the British across the channel. Immediately there will be rumours of war; German aggression, German ambition, the yellow journals write scaring editorials, jingoism becomes the topic of the capitals and the air will be filled with suspicions. Someone will see, for the purpose of expediency, a German dirigible flying over French fortifications or English forts, making observations, whereupon a hue and a cry will be raised from every quarter of the country, and thus there will be a corresponding increase in the estimates of the Minister of War for the defence of our homes and our hearths, our women and our sweethearts, from the attacks of strangers! The same argument is resorted to when the French nation adds one or two years to her military conscription, and the English Imperialists emphasize in public meetings the doctrine of the 'double standard power'. Now as long as Germany continues in her own military perfection, the French will walk in her footsteps, trying at every turn to increase their own war ammunition, to be prepared for any national crisis or sudden attack. Hence, it seems, the only solution lies in the fact of universal disarmament on the part of the nations.

"When we speak of Universal Peace, we mean that all the governments must change their fleets of battleships and dreadnoughts to a mighty fleet of merchant marine, plying the oceans of the world, uniting the distant shores and interweaving the commercial, intellectual and moral forces of mankind. But should England alone transform the character of her warships, she would be at the mercy of her enemies and would remain powerless and defenceless. The British Isles would unquestionably be threatened by a powerful invading, well-disciplined host. Hence, aside from any national prowess, the English people would be pushed into this weltering whirlpool of military and naval expenditures, and would be struggling to keep their heads above the seething water all around them, which, unless calmed down, would drown all of them, irrespective of any nationality.

"Once a person met his friend in the street, and after the exchange of courtesies, gave him a hard blow in the face. 'Why dost thou do this?' 'Hast thou not read in the Gospel wherein Christ says—Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also!—Now according to this admonition, let me smite thee on thy left cheek also.' The man submitted to the second blow quite willingly, and they parted. Next day, they met each other again, and the man received two more blows on his cheeks without any evident murmur. They met the third day, and he was going to inflict upon him the same blows. 'Wait a minute, my friend. I am not the only person in the world to live according to the Teaching of Christ. Thou also art one. I have obeyed Him two days, and the next two days will be thy turn.' With these words, he smote the man on his cheek, and asked him to 'turn the other also'.

"Now the question of disarmament must be put into practice by all the nations and not only by one or two. Consequently the advocates of Peace must strive day and night, so that the individuals of every country may become peace-loving, public opinion may gain a strong and permanent footing, and day by day the army of International Peace be increased, complete disarmament be realized and the Flag of Universal Conciliation be waving on the summit of the mountains of the earth."

Question: "How can Universal Peace be realized?"

Answer: "The ideals of Peace must be nurtured and spread among the inhabitants of the world; they must be instructed in the [V:8:117] school of Peace and the evils of war. First: The financiers and bankers must desist from lending money to any government contemplating to wage an unjust war upon an innocent nation. Second: The presidents and managers of the railroads and steamship companies must refrain from transporting war ammunition, infernal engines, guns, cannons and powder from one country into another. Third: The soldiers must petition, through their representatives, the Ministers of War, the politicians, the Congressmen

and the generals to put forth in a clear, intelligible language the reasons and the causes which have brought them to the brink of such a national calamity. The soldiers must *demand* this as one of the prerogatives. 'Demonstrate to us,' they must say, 'that this is a just war, and we will then enter into the battlefield otherwise we will not take one step. O ye kings and rulers, politicians and war-mongers; ye who spend your lives in most exquisite palaces of Italian architecture; ye who sleep in airy, well-ventilated apartments; ye who decorate your reception and dining halls with lovely pictures, sculptures, hangings and frescoes; ye who walk in perfect Elysiums, wreathed in orange and myrtle groves, the air redolent with delicious perfumes and vocal with the sweet songs of a thousand birds, the earth like a luxuriant carpet of emerald grass, bright flowers dotting the meadows and trees clothed in verdure; ye who are dressed in costly silk and finely-woven textures; ye who lie down on soft, feathery couches; ye who partake of the most delicious and savoury dishes; ye who enjoy the utmost ease and comfort in your wondrous mansions; ye who attend rare musical concerts whenever you feel a little disconcerted and sad; ye who adorn your large halls with green festoons and cut flowers, fresh garlands and verdant wreaths, illumining them with thousands of electric lights, while the exquisite fragrance of the flowers, the soft, ravishing music, the fairy-like illumination, lends enchantment; ye who are in such environment: Come forth from your hiding-places, enter into the battlefield if you like to attack each other and tear each other to pieces if you desire to air your so-called contentions. The discord and feud are between you; why do you make us, innocent people, a party to it? If fighting and bloodshed are good things, then lead us into the fray by your presence!'

"In short, every means that produces war must be checked and the causes that prevent the occurrence of war be advanced; so that physical conflict may become an impossibility. On the other hand, every country must be properly delimited, its exact frontiers marked, its national integrity secured, its permanent independence protected, and its vital interests honoured by the family of nations. These services ought to be rendered by an impartial, international Commission. In this manner all causes of friction and differences will be removed. And in case there should arise some disputes between them, they could arbitrate before the Parliament of Man, the representatives of which should be chosen from among the wisest and most judicious men of all the nations of the world."

Other questions and answers

What is the objective point of the Bahá'ís?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "In the world of humanity, every person is stimulated by a certain objective point. The objective point of a soul is the acquirement of wealth. He concentrates all his ambition around the actualization of this cherished hope. The objective point of another soul is to attain the highest official position. He strives day and night to gain the confidence of the public and the administrative authorities, so that they may promote him, through his merit, to the position of honour and fame among his fellow-men. The objective point of a third person is the acquisition of science and art. He spends all his energy and force in this direction. The objective point of a fourth soul is to satisfy his selfish appetites and lust. He thinks of no other things save those elements which might contribute to the gratification of his animal propensities. But the objective point of the Bahá'ís is to promote the Principles of Bahá'u'lláh, to unfurl the Flag of Divine Brotherhood, to serve the cause of Universal Peace, to spiritualize mankind through the Breaths of the Holy Spirit, and to establish the kingdom of justice, love and mercy in the hearts of the people of the world. This is the objective point of the Bahá'ís. Dost thou think it is worthy of emulation? In comparison to this, all the other objective points are trivial and unworthy of one's devotion. We must live in such a manner as to merit the attainment of this Most Great Bestowal! This is our glory! This is our comfort! This is the sublimity of our effort! [V:8:118] This is our highest desire! Supposing that we

might become the real Kings of this world, and all our hopes and wishes be realized, but not be confirmed in the spreading of the Cause—great regret would be facing us. And though we might be enabled to enjoy the rare delicacies of wealth and the refined privileges of education, and be not assisted in the service of the Holy Threshold, then manifest loss would stare into our eyes, everlasting remorse would encircle us, spiritual deprivation would be our share and harrowing grief would follow us. But if we arise in the diffusion of the Fragrances of the Paradise of Abhá, and lack all the means of material comfort, eternal benediction will be vouchsafed, heavenly exaltation will be granted and divine beatitude will be bestowed.”

“Does material pursuit prevent spiritual progress?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Material affairs are of two kinds. The first kind are those concerns that have no direct relation to life. They contribute toward luxury, effeminacy, indolence and voluptuousness. Indulgence in these things makes one negligent of God and stifles all traces of spirituality. The other kind are those affairs which contribute toward the maintenance of livelihood, adding to the comfort, happiness and progress of the human family. Spiritual powers come always to the assistance of such affairs, they increase the moral insight and responsibility of man and add to his awareness and mindfulness.”

“What does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expect us to do?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered: “I hope that whosoever hears your words, sees your deeds and beholds your manners and behaviour, may declare that these people are real Bahá’ís—the incarnations of love and amity. I have travelled far and wide, visited many countries, accepted many hardships and forborne many difficulties, in order that the souls may rise in service and dedicate their rest, their possessions, their wealth and their lives to the Cause of God. I desire that they may be drawn near unto God, and this is made possible only through the promulgation of the Religion of God. The Blessed Perfection sacrificed His country, His household, His wealth, His glory, His affluence and even His Life for the progress of the Cause of God. If He so renounced everything, so that the heaven of the divine Faith be upheld, then the duty of the believers is plain. I will pray in their behalf and supplicate for them the Confirmations of Bahá’u’lláh; thus just as the rays of the sun pour upon all the contingent beings, likewise the Effulgences of the Sun of Reality may so interpenetrate every fibre of their beings that each one of them may become like unto a fruitful tree. Now is the dawn of the morn of Truth. Those who live in the depths of the dark ravines and deep valleys do not see the first glimpses of the rising, glorious sun. Hence they cry out: We do not see the sunshine; we do not feel its warmth. But when the sun ascends to the zenith of the heavens, and stands at the meridian, then the valleys and ravines will be flooded with sunshine and even the blind will feel its heat.”

“What is the condition of faith!”

The Beloved One answered: “The condition of Faith requires that man ascend to and abide in the station of sacrifice. Without this attainment, ones faith is not perfect. The believers must soar toward the summit of self-sacrifice. Peruse the history of past Dispensations. All those sanctified souls who attained to the station of renunciation and reached the highest station of glory, are those who gave up their material joy, physical pleasures, comfort, rest and even life for the sake of Truth. These conditions of Faith the believers of Persia embodied in their lives. They were subjected to the utmost ignominy, oppression, imprisonment, their possessions were pillaged and many of them were martyred. Their faith was so firm that none of these tragic vicissitudes moved them. With the utmost ecstasy they renounced their possessions and sacrificed their lives. Nothing dismayed them. This is the condition of faith. When man has attained to this supreme station, then indeed his faith will be like the splendour of the Sun of Reality; it will be an emanation of the spirit of Divinity, and an effulgence of the luminary of Deity. You pray and I will pray also, so that we may all attain to

this sublime height of faith—thus universal results may issue therefrom.”

V:8, 1 August 1914 [V:8:119]

Work for the sake of God and for the improvement of humanity

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Wm. Jennings Bryan in 1912.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 13 May 1914.

While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was journeying toward California in 1912, he stopped one day at Lincoln, Nebraska, and called at the home of William T. Bryan, situated just outside of that town. Mr Bryan was at the time campaigning in some part of the States, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was graciously received by his charming wife and talented daughter. In the light of recent events, a translation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talk (informal), which I took down while he spoke, may have more than an historical interest to his friends and to our friends:

“I have come especially to Lincoln to repay the visit you made to me during your trip around the world. At that time I was much grieved because on your second visit to ‘Akká you were prevented from coming to see me by the surveillance of the guards. Those were difficult and troublesome days indeed! As it was impossible then to meet you, I was longing and praying for a greater opportunity and a better chance.

Consider the power of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh! I was a prisoner, and no one would ever have thought that I would be allowed to leave, for one moment, the fortified town of ‘Akká! But God took the chain from my neck and put it around the neck of ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd. He is now surrounded with far worse sufferings than those with which he surrounded me. I did not feel the pain of his fiendish persecutions, because I possessed the glad-tidings of the Kingdom, but he is afflicted with the pangs of regret and remorse as the result of his evil days. These dark days have come upon him as the consequence of his darker days of tyranny and oppression.

“No one then could ever predict that a day would come when I would travel throughout the United States, and more particularly visit in your hospitable home. From the day that I landed in America I have been anticipating meeting Mr Bryan and you. I am very sorry that he is not here, but, praise be to God, you are his noble and worthy representative.

“I love this country with an exceeding love, for its inhabitants are a noble people and its government is fair and just. Its citizens are enjoying the greatest amount of political and civic freedom. In reality every soul is a real sovereign and delights in the fruit of his hard-won liberty. No one is harassed by secret fears, and expresses his thoughts freely and with no compunction. The sphere of the minds is made radiant with dazzling ideals, and the circle for the discussion of progressive and advanced problems of the age is as large as heaven. Consequently I hope that this illustrious democracy may become confirmed in the establishment of Universal Peace, and Mr Bryan may become the standard-bearer of the invulnerable army of International Arbitration. I am very hopeful that he may fulfil my expectation, because the greatest principle of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh is Universal Peace. He wrote about it in wonderful epistles to the governments of the world, urging them to come forward and lay the foundation of International Conciliation among the religions, nations and races.

“America has demonstrated great organizing capacity in this direction, and I trust Mr Bryan will exert his utmost influence, so that the basis of the palace of Universal Peace may be firmly secured, and that through his wise and deliberate effort this sun may dawn from the horizon of the United States.

“In short, convey to your respected husband my love and warm greeting, and say to him on my behalf: ‘I called at your home and received a hearty welcome from your noble wife and daughter. I hope that before my return to the East I may have the pleasure of meeting you.

However, under all circumstances I shall never forget our meeting in 'Akká, and ever pray that you may become assisted in the accomplishment of such service as to cause you to shine like a brilliant star from the horizon of everlasting glory forever and ever. Your aims and intentions are honourable, and their full realization conducive to the public weal. In all your undertakings you have been aided by God in the past, and will be similarly reinforced in the future. If the wide scope of their results are not quite manifest now, they will become evident afterward. Work for the sake of God and for the improvement of humanity without any expectation of praise and reward. His Holiness Christ was not appreciated in His lifetime. The magnitude of His character and the sublimity of His teachings were duly recognized long after [V:8:122] His crucifixion. The present is always unimportant, but we must make our present so filled with mighty, altruistic deeds as to assume significant weight and momentous importance in the future. A shallow present will surely be followed by a superficial future. Christopher Columbus and his idea, before the discovery of America, were ridiculed and scoffed at, and he spent the last days of his eventful life in poverty, shame and prison. But now in whatever city I enter I see the houses, the parks, the streets and public buildings adorned with his picture and statue. All the prophets, philosophers, benefactors of the human race, leaders of great reforms, scientists, inventors and discoverers were not duly appreciated in their own days; nay, rather, they were persecuted, maligned, thrown into prison and if possible put to death. The fact is they should have honoured and adored them; but the people are not, as a whole, worthy to worship the reality; they apotheosize the phantasm—a supposed image formed by their minds.”

V:8, 1 August 1914 [V:8:120]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

[Revealed in 1913]

To the Editor of *The Christian Commonwealth*, London, England.

HE IS GOD!

O thou esteemed and kind friend!

After journeying throughout the United States of America, and the great capitals and metropolis of Europe, I have returned to the East. With the results of this journey I am most pleased and well satisfied—because I met noble people and associated with worthy souls, who are in reality the cause of honour and glory to the world of humanity. They were learned and wise, well-informed of the realities of events and the well-wishers of the human world, especially the advocates of universal peace.

In these days the world of humanity is afflicted with a chronic disease. It is one of bloodshed, the destruction of the divine edifice, the demolition of cities and villages, the slaughter of the noble youths of the world of humanity, children becoming orphans and women homeless and shelterless. What calamity is greater than this? What crime is more heinous than this? What disease is more dangerous than this? What folly is more direful than this?

Consider that in former days there were only religious wars, but now there are racial and political wars fought at staggering expense and sacrifice. A thousand times alas for this ignorance, this bloodthirstiness and ferocity! I became pleased with and grateful to the societies which are organized in the West for the promotion of universal peace, and with whose presidents, officers and members I frequently conversed. I hope that the sphere of the activities of these societies may become from day to day enlarged; so that the lights of the higher ideals may illumine all regions, the oneness of the world of humanity be proclaimed in the East and in the West, and the world of humanity may attain to composure and well-being. These revered souls who are the servants of the world of humanity and the promoters of the

cause of universal peace shall ere long shine like brilliant stars from the horizon of mankind, flooding the regions with their glorious lights.

In the past century freedom was proclaimed, and the foundation of liberty was laid in all the western countries. Praise be to God that the sun of justice shone forth and the darkness of despotism and tyranny disappeared.

Now in this radiant century in which the world of humanity is being matured it is assured that the Flag of Universal Peace shall become unfurled and shall wave over all regions of the globe. This is the most great principle of Bahá'u'lláh, for the promotion of which all the Bahá'ís are ready to sacrifice their possessions and their lives.

Notwithstanding my bodily weakness and infirmity, I have travelled East and West for the last three years. In every temple I cried out and before every audience I raised my voice for the enlistment of their sympathy. I [V:8:121] declared the evils of war, and explained the benefits of Universal Peace. I elucidated the causes which lead to the honour and glory of the world of humanity, and told them of the ferocity and bloodthirstiness of the animal kingdom. I showed the defects of the world of nature and made an exposition of the means whereby the illumination of the world of humanity is fully realized. I unfolded and caused the appearance of the foundation of the divine religions, and proclaimed the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. I demonstrated the existence of God by irrefutable, rational proofs, and proved the validity of all the prophets of God. I gave utterance to my inmost conviction that the reality of the religion of God is the cause of the life of the world of humanity; it is *divine civilization* and pure enlightenment.

By the explanation of all these principles my object has been no other than the promotion of Universal Peace. Praise be to God that I found hearing ears, observed seeing eyes, and discovered informed hearts. Therefore, I am well pleased with this journey.

But on the other hand the well-wishers of the world of humanity and the advocates of universal peace must make an extraordinary forward movement, organize important international congresses, and invite as delegates most progressive and influential souls from all parts of the world; so that through their wise counsels and deliberations this ideal of Universal Peace may leap out of the world of words into the arena of actuality and practical demonstration. It is true that this question is of paramount importance, and will not be realized easily. However, we must take hold of every means until the desired result is obtained.

Fifty years ago whosoever talked about Universal Peace was not only ridiculed but called a visionary and utopian. Now—praise be to God!—that at this time it has assumed such importance that everyone acknowledges that this question of Universal Peace is the light and spirit of this age. But they state that the pathway to this much desired goal is obstructed by a number of not clearly defined stumbling blocks, which, however, can be removed by intelligently and persistently educating public opinion.

I hope the noble leaders of the world of humanity who are the divine bestowals among the people, and the means of pacification among the nations, will arise with the utmost of effort and whole-hearted resolution to extinguish this world-raging conflagration, especially now that the blood of innocent people is freely shed in the Balkan States, the lamentations and moanings of the orphans are reaching to the very gate of heaven, and the disconsolate cries and harrowing agonies of the mothers penetrate our souls with the irresistible force of human tragedy. Thus through the endeavours of these guardians of the rights of mankind the world of creation may enjoy the repose of conciliation, the banner of Universal Peace be unfurled, the tabernacle of the one- [V:8:122] ness of the world of humanity be pitched, all mankind be gathered under its protecting shade, and the shining star of the eternal felicity and happiness

of the world of humanity may dawn with the utmost of brilliancy from the horizon of international comity, and the luminous orb of the spiritual brotherhood of all races and tongues may illumine that united gathering of humanity with the ineffable lights of God throughout countless ages and cycles.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 19 July 1913, Port Said, Egypt.

V:8, 1 August 1914 [V:8:122]

Talk with a Jewish Rabbi

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 19 May 1914.

This morning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went down stairs, and for nearly an hour he was walking in front of the hotel, watching the crowds of Jews who were selling cucumbers. Then a Jewish Rabbi, noted for his learning, called on him, and he invited him to come up and sit on the veranda. After a few preliminary questions about his own health and that of his relatives, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked him point-blank: "How long are you Jews going to wait for the coming of the Messiah? Day and night you are praying in your Synagogues to hasten His coming. Is He deaf that He does not hear your invocations? Do you imagine that His hands are tied? He came two thousand years ago, but you were then sound asleep and are yet afflicted with the same disease. Why do ye not open your eyes?"

The Rabbi replied: "The Christians claim that Jesus was the Son of God. Now if that was really so, would we have crucified Him?"

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "The title of sonship is first claimed by the Jews. There are many references in the Old Testament as to their being the sons of God. In the Psalms the title of the Son is given to David. Nay, rather, if you read Exodus, Chapter 4, v. 16, Chapter 32, v. 1-23, Chapter 7, v. 1, you will realize that the appellation of 'God' is given to persons and things. In the *Book of Job* you will read also that 'there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.' Now you who claim to be the sons of God and the first-born of Israel rose first in rebellion against God, Moses and Aaron. For we read in Numbers, Chapter 14, v. 2: 'And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them: Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God that we had died in this wilderness! and Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land.' Chapter 11, v. 4 and 5: 'And the children of Israel also wept again, and said: Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions and the garlic.' And when Moses and Aaron tried to remonstrate with you: 'All the congregation bade stone them with stones.' Moreover you cut to pieces Isaiah the prophet, and beheaded John the son of Zechariah. All these facts go far to show that you must not consider it an impossible thing for the Jews to crucify the Son of God." Then with warmth and eloquence he presented to him the irrefutable proofs concerning the validity of Christ, as he did in the Synagogues of America, and how divine education is essential for the progress of any nation. The Rabbi was dumbfounded, and could not say a word to contradict the arguments of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

V:9, 20 August 1914 [V:9:130]

Message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the beloved in America, through Mr Kinney

When you enter a public meeting deliver this Message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

O ye friends of God!

All the people of the world today are workmen of destruction or ruin. Everyone as though with an axe is striking at the root of the foundation of humanity. They hold in their hands great implements of warfare and destruction. Among the greatest is the axe of religious

prejudices or sectarian bias, as well as that of racial bias; another implement of destruction is the axe of patriotic bias; another is the axe of political warfare; another implement of ruin is the persistent accumulation of commercial benefit or profit; another, the love of conquest of new domains, as is also the enmity, hatred and bigotry among the nations and tribes. These souls are entirely inadvertent to the relations of the Kingdom of God, deprived of the relations of Unity, and despaired of the Life Eternal. *Although outwardly they may be extremely civilized, nevertheless they live in darkness.*

Now, God has chosen you from among mankind, and has guided you to the Kingdom, has enlightened your hearts with the love of God, so that you may be the cause of guidance to these people, in order that you may become a cause of guidance to the world of humanity. *He has appointed you as the builders of the edifice of true manhood.* Consider with what a power of morals you must arise in order to withstand all vicissitudes. All these people, all these promoters as workers of warfare and ruin are spreading the deeds of hatred among nations. *Now, consider with what a peace and concord you must go forth in order that you may be capable of overcoming the antagonistic forces.*

It is my hope that you may prove yourselves to be the first servants of the realm of humanity, and the builders of the edifice of Divine Justice. *That you may radiate the light of the Love of God* to such an extent as to be able to remove entirely the gloom and darkness of hatred, bigotry and enmity from among humanity. Know all mankind of all nations, sects and tribes as your kith and kin. Consider not their deeds, but only God. Seek your reward from Him and not from them. Know the aged of all nations as your fathers, the juveniles as your brothers and the children as your own. No matter what lack of courtesy or what severe persecution or stern expressions of hate and unfathomable enmity you receive, you must have no excuse like the following: “So and so has spoken unkindly about me,” “So and so has not done me justice,”—nay, rather you must have no excuse but live according to the Divine Teachings, whether humanity prove agreeable or disagreeable, whether humanity prove hateful or loving, whether it receives you or casts you out, so that perchance you may be assisted in hoisting the standard of peace and pitching the Tabernacle of Oneness and solidarity of the world of humanity—so that this temporal life may ultimate in the Life Everlasting, and this darkness of ignorance which has pervaded the whole world may be converted into the illumination of guidance. So that material man may become celestial, and the earthly souls become the heavenly souls; that the blind may become perceptive, the deaf attentive, the ignorant wise, the dead arise, so that, *in fact*, the Kingdom of God in the world of humanity may pitch its Canopy and its Tabernacle in the utmost glory.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

V:9, 20 August 1914 [V:9:137]

“This is the time of teaching”

To the Maid-servant of God, Mrs Isabella D. Brittingham, New York.

Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received. According to the clear text of the *Book of Aqdas* and the explicit contents of the *Book of the Covenant*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the Interpreter of *all the Works and Books of the Blessed Perfection*, and not only of the *Book of Aqdas*. This question is clear and evident to those who are informed of the Writings and Tablets (of Bahá’u’lláh). Were this not the case, every one would have given an interpretation according to his own inclination and considered his interpretation preferable to the interpretation of others—this would naturally

lead to great differences. If some one interprets one verse of the Verses of God, and his interpretation is not approved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá it is not authoritative.

Now is not the time for interpretation. *This is the time of teaching. All the believers must unloose the tongue of teaching the Cause of God. For teaching is the cause of the guidance of all the inhabitants of the earth; teaching is the means of the illumination of mankind; teaching is conducive to the enlightenment of the world of humanity; teaching is promotive of the confirmations of the Breaths of the Holy Spirit. This is the most great affair!*

But if a soul on reading one of the blessed verses utters an *explanation* which does not harm the Cause, do not oppose him; for his talk is based upon explanation (elucidation) and not on *interpretation*.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 12 July 1914, home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

V:9, 20 August 1914 [V:9:138]

“We have turned our faces to the Centre of the Covenant”

To his honour Mr Joseph H. Hannen, Washington, D.C.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou propagator of the Religion of God!

A few days ago an epistle was written thee. Although I have not much time, yet I immediately give an answer to thy letter (written to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab) so that thou mayst know how my heart is attached to thee. Truly I say in the Cause of God thou art sincere. Thou hast no other object save the good-pleasure of the Lord, and hast consecrated all thy time to the service of the Kingdom of God. On this account I have the utmost love for thee.

Praise be to God, that the problem of meetings is solved, and there is no more any cause for dispute. Now the believers must engage their time in teaching the Cause of God, and in the meeting no discussion should be carried on save the Cause of God. The members of the Bahá'í Assemblies must be infinitely kind towards each other and all their deliberations must be concerning the Kingdom of Abhá. Promiscuous discussion must be discountenanced, for these things will become the means of the luke warmness and apathy of those who are present. The Candles of all the meetings must be the Mention of God, the propagation of the Cause of God, the exposition of Divine Proofs and the elucidation of the Principles of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. When this condition is obtained, the meeting will become heavenly, celestial, godlike, illumined and the means of the guidance of the erring ones. It will yield most great results.

O thou servant of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh! *Inform all the believers that perhaps a number of calumnious articles will be sent to those parts by the people of doubts. The aim of such articles is to cause the wavering of the friends in The Covenant and The Testament. Therefore, they should not take notice of these articles, nay, rather, return them to the senders, accompanied with concise, full and sweeping answers—that we are firm in The Covenant and the servants of the Blessed Perfection. We do not give ear to such hearsays and incoherent statements. We have turned our faces to the Centre of the Covenant in accord with the incontrovertible Commands of Bahá'u'lláh, the Text of the *Book of Aqdas* and the Text of the *Tablet of the Covenant*. We have nothing to do with the people of doubts.*

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 6 August 1914; home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

V:10, 8 September 1914 [V:10:147]

Bahá’í Temple Unity Convention¹

[V:10:149] ...

“All those who have unselfish motives will be assisted in this Cause. They will be confirmed. The American friends will be assisted and helped.” [Quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá read by Mrs Haney.]

Public meeting, Monday evening [27 April]

Mrs Haney read from Tablets and among other things said:

The Bahá’ís have a single purpose. That purpose is to spread the Light of Truth in this dark world by word and by deed, for they are striving to walk in the path paved by the One through whom is coming to the world today all there is of Real Life. Real Life, Light, Love—the Centre of the Covenant of God—and this Divine Educator gives forth the law first, and then he lives it himself first, thus travelling the path and paving the way for humanity.

While at Stuttgart, April 1913, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to an artist:

“Can you paint upon the page of the world the ideal pictures of the Supreme Concourse? The pictures which are in the ideal world are eternal. I desire you to become such an artist. Man can paint those ideal pictures upon the Tablet of Existence with the *brush of deeds*.”

The Holy, Divine Manifestations are all Heavenly Artists. Upon the canvas of creation, *with the brush of their deeds and lives and action*, they paint immortal pictures which cannot be found in any art museum of Europe or America—but you find the masterpieces of these Spiritual Artists *in the hearts*.”

V:10, 8 September 1914 [V:10:154]

War and peace

Address by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Haifa, Syria

From *The Christian Commonwealth*.

The room at Haifa in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke was crowded with pilgrims, students, and friends. At times he was very animated and even passionate.

He mentioned that a few days previously he discussed with the German Consul the ominous signs of the European War, which had not then broken out. The Consul contended that a nation must go on increasing its military and naval expenditure if it desires to protect its growing commercial and national interests from the attacks of its equally powerful and expanding neighbours and rivals; that the greater the military equipment the more was the nation assured of making progress and developing its resources. Other Germans and members of other nationalities who were present all agreed with the Consul. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá urged that if the power of love and peace became predominant its effects would be greater than those of hate and war. “In the world of existence there is no power as efficacious and as penetrative as the power of love. Military power coerces and compels men into obedience through unnatural resort to force and violation, but mankind yield happily and willingly to the power of love.” If nations would use their resources in spreading love amongst mankind, in strengthening the ties of interdependence between nations and governments, and in establishing fellowship and affinity between the races, how different would be the result!

¹ Extracts

The German Consul and others raised objections to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ideas, but he insisted that neither the conqueror nor the conquered would benefit by the present conflict. He reminded them that the nations who were now seeking to destroy each other belong to one race and profess the same religion, and earnestly pleaded for the cessation of strife amongst the children of one Father.

V:10, 8 September 1914 [V:10:154]

Table talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

At Thonon, Lake Geneva, Switzerland, before many people of different nationalities.

O ye who are present!

How long this drowsiness and sleep! How long this ignorance and blindness! How long this heedlessness and misery! How long this oppression and injustice! How long this hatred and discord! How long this rage of ignorant ones! How long this grasping with frail imaginations! How long this strife and argument! How long this turmoil and these battles! How long these racial prejudices! How long these patriarchal prejudices! How long these political prejudices!

Does it not behove the believers to have their hearts submissive through the mentioning of God? Has God sealed the hearts and has the eye become veiled with the clouds of injustice, that the souls are not aware of God's bounty overflowing unto all?

He has created all with His Power, supplied all with His Mercy, and trained all with His Divinity. You will not find in the creation of the Merciful any differences. Then let us follow the glorious Lord in our good policy; dealing with justice, favour and generosity. Let us leave oppression and wickedness. Let us be as one family, with justice and kindness. Let us blend as water and wine. Let us unite as the unity of the souls. We can not establish a policy greater than the policy of God. We cannot find anything which is suitable to the world of humanity greater than the Bounties of God. Then be ye guided with the examples of the Lord. Do not change the gift of God—which is perfect unity—in this Path!

It is incumbent upon ye, O servants of God, to abandon this discord; establish harmony, love, equity, justice and mercy.

O ye who are present: The old centuries have passed and the carpet of hatred and struggle have rolled up, because this age has shone with the Luminous Lights, glorious bounties, admirable verses, apparent signs, lights which are dispersing the darkness—alleviating pain—conductive to unity and uprooting disharmony. Thus the eyes have seen, the ears have heard, and the hearts have comprehended.

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and

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V:11, 27 September 1914 [V:11:162]

Supplication

To the Believers of God and the Maid-servants of the Merciful, Portland, Oregon.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O Thou Heavenly Father!

Thou hast the hosts of the Kingdom and the spiritual angels. We, indigent souls are broken-winged birds; yet we yearn to soar toward the immensity of the Kingdom. We are thirsty fish; we seek the Sea of the Water of Life. We are the butterflies of the nether world; we long for the Lamp of the Realm on High. We are in the utmost weakness and feebleness; yet we are fighting against the armies of the world. Therefore, O Lord of Hosts! confirm us so that the army of Light may become victorious and the legions of the darkness be defeated. Assist us in the service of the Kingdom and acquaint us with the Divine Mysteries. Rejoice us with the glad-tidings of the everlasting sovereignty and bestow upon us a portion and a share of the Life Eternal. Suffer the tongues to be unloosed and grant sight to the eyes; so that we may behold the world of the Kingdom and may praise with an eloquent speech Thy Beauty and Thy Perfection.

Verily, Thou art the Bestower and the Kind!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

V:11, 27 September 1914 [V:11:163]

“The world is at the threshold of a most tragic struggle”

Stirring Talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá pertaining to the war in Europe.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*

Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 3 August 1914.

Dear Friends,

All over the city there is great commotion; people are wild with excitement. A new imperial Irade¹ has come from Constantinople that any and every man between the ages of 18 and 45 must be enlisted in the army register and be ready to leave at a moment's notice. For the last few days we have heard that war was threatening between Austria and Serbia, that open hostilities have already commenced, that Austria has attacked Belgrade, that Russia has threatened Austria that unless she desists from further encroachment, she will be obliged to enter the conflict. England, Russia and France on one hand; Germany, Austria and Italy on the other, are mobilizing their forces. The situation is very grave. Europe is entering one of the darkest crises of its political life. It takes a lively imagination to picture the six great Powers of Europe armed to the teeth, with more than 20,000,000 of soldiers, waiting for the final commands of their superiors to jump into the battlefield and cut each other's throats! No one can conceive of a greater folly and a more stupendous sin against humanity. Everybody here thinks that this war news is the first indication of “Armageddon”, the universal war which will teach mankind as nothing else could do, the barbarism of the present-day civilization and the futility of all the pacifist movements. Europe is sitting on the crater of a world-shattering volcano which may burst forth at any moment. The Russian, French and Austrian steamship companies have announced that their steamers will not touch the Port of Haifa for some time to come: Therefore, instead of ten to fifteen steamers a week, there will be only one steamer a week—belonging to the Khedivial Line. The small German colony is sending one hundred of its young men to protect the Fatherland. Thus you see that the atmosphere of this little Syrian port is permeated with wars and rumours of wars.

When the new Irade was proclaimed that all the Turkish subjects must come under the colours, there was a real panic in 'Akká and Haifa. One saw groups of anxious men gathered in the corners of the streets, talking excitedly about war. The women of 'Akká were so grief-stricken that they filled the air all night with their shrieks and lamentations. In a literal sense no one could sleep. The children of all the Persians who have lived in Turkey for the last forty years and married Arab or Turkish women are under the law of Military Conscription. No one

¹ A written decree (iráda[h], (Pers. irádih), pl. irádát) of the Sulţán of Turkey.

can attempt escaping, as no steamer is leaving the port. Large, flaring red bulletins are hung in the streets of Haifa, calling the “patriots” to arms. The upper part of these bills are engraved with pictures of swords and cannons, and the lower part contains the call to arms. No one understands the situation, and very few can guess what Turkey means to do with all these preparations. The prices of all foodstuffs have gone up, from 10 to 40 per cent, especially sugar, tea and flour, as well as naphtha.

This evening ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave a stirring talk on the aforesaid news of war in Europe. All the friends were impressed with his words of truth, and I will share them with you. He opened his address with these simple, dramatic words:

“A resurrection is set up! The world is topsy-turvy! The wrong side of human character is up! A general melee of the civilized nations is in sight. A tremendous conflict is at hand. The world is at the threshold of a most tragic struggle. The evil forces of war are plotting against mankind. The dark waves of [V:11:164] sinister motives and satanic passions are battling in the breasts of men. The shafts of intrigues and diplomatic deceits have blackened the sky of man’s conscience. The chancelleries of Europe have become the combustible storehouses of warlike thoughts. Menacing, hidden forces are brought upon the stage of spectacular play. Vast armies—millions of men—are being mobilized and centred at their frontiers. They are being prepared for the fearful contest. The slightest friction will bring them into a terrific clash, and then there will be a conflagration the like of which is not recorded in the past history of mankind.

“While in America, I spoke before many Peace Societies, Churches and Conventions, and foretold the fearful consequences of armed peace in Europe. I said Europe is like unto an arsenal and one tiny spark will cause a universal combustion. *‘O men! Come ye together and as far as possible try to extinguish this world-raging fire; do your utmost to prevent the occurrence of this general conflict; make ye an effort so that this flood-gate of human butchery may not be set loose!’* I found no one to listen to my advice. I searched, but there were no hearing ears. I cried out at the top of my voice, I pleaded, I enunciated the evils of war, but people were self-occupied, self-centred. And now *this is the result*. They have witnessed, they have experienced in the past that war is conducive to the destruction of the foundation of the edifice of humanity, the cause of devastation of the world of commerce, industry, arts and trade. The combatants—the conqueror and the conquered—are both *losers*. Neither party gains any substantial profit. The two combatants are like unto two ships which collide against each other. One may sink to the bottom of the sea, but the other will also carry away its injuries and bruises. Therefore, the victor and the defeated fail to obtain any benefit. The utmost is this: *Temporarily* one country holds the territory of another. This is of a short duration. In the course of the life of that nation, a time will sooner or later come when the conquered will become again the conqueror. In the political history of France and Germany and their wars, such reverses of national fortunes have often occurred.

“It is very strange to see how ‘Illusion’ has taken possession of the hearts of men, while ‘Reality’ has no sway whatsoever. For example: ‘Racial difference’ is an optical illusion! It is a figment of imagination, yet how deep-seated and powerful its influence! No one can deny the fact that mankind in total are the progeny of Adam; that they are the offshoots of one primal stock; yet the optical illusion has so radically misrepresented this plain truth that they have divided and subdivided themselves into so many tribes and nations. This is German, the other is French; that is English, a fourth is Italian, a fifth is Austrian, a sixth is Russian, etc. Although many intelligent men amongst them know that this racial difference is an optical illusion, yet they all confess their inability to stand firm before its uncanny, invisible power. The Reality is that all mankind are from one progeny and belong to one family, but although this is the Reality, it exercises no permanent influence upon the minds. ...

“So many wars have taken place! So many countries are devastated, so many cities are ruined; and yet people are not satisfied with human butchery, are not satisfied with carnage and bloodshed. Still the hearts are stiff and unfeeling! Still the souls are callous and cold, still the minds are dark and frigid, still the people are unsusceptible and unyielding, still they are in deep sleep! Oh! When will they be awakened? When will they become merciful? When will they practice the Golden Rule? This hatred and animosity destroys the basis of the structure of humanity, while love and amity are conducive to the well-being and prosperity of mankind. [V:11:165]

“Today the people are thrown into the utmost consternation! How many fathers were lamenting and groaning last night, and how many mothers have been crying and weeping in this town and ‘Akká! They are thrown into such a panic, they are so alarmed that no description can give an adequate picture! Why this tyranny? Who has obliged them to perpetuate these acts of savagery! The kings and the rulers, the politicians and the statesmen live in the utmost ease in their palaces and send these innocent men and peasants who have never seen each other, into the battlefield to tear each other to pieces with shells and cannon balls. The armies are the pawns to be played with on the chess-board of their fiendish ambitions! How cruel is this! How pitiless is this! How brutal is this! How ferocious is this! These so-called leaders of humanity are not willing to let even one hair fall from their heads. They are cowards and are sulking in darkness. Why do they send these thousands and thousands of men to the field of carnage, to be mowed down by each other like the grass!

“If a number of imaginary or real difficulties have arisen between Austria and Serbia, if they are really disinterested and are anxious to keep the balance of the Powers and not disturb the Peace of Europe, why do they not go before the Court of Arbitration? The impartial members of that Court of Arbitral Justice will look into the nature of the claims of each party, and after mature investigation decide which one is in the right. Were they ready to refer all their differences to such a Court, this war would have been obviated. The Universal Court of Arbitration is the only body that shall resolve all the disagreements and contentions that arise between the nations of the world. Extraordinary exertion must be put forward by the civilized governments to organize such an influential, international organization, before which all their quarrels may be arbitrated. What better plan can be conceived by man? What harm is there in this? The rulers, the cabinet ministers and the administrations of each country will find the utmost comfort and ease enjoying the fruits of their labours. ...

“If we reflect carefully, we observe that since history has been written and the deeds of mankind recorded and preserved, no one can point out a single instance that Peace, Love and Amity have been ruinous and harmful in their results. They have filled the world with joy and radiance and happiness.

“More astonishing than all these matters is this: These warring nations believe that the object of the religion of God is war and strife! This is the most preposterous idea that any man could let enter into his mind! ... How negligent are the people! How thoughtless and inadvertent they are! It is as though there is not a single iota of love in the hearts of men, as though they have never heard the name of love, as though their hearts are the sepulchres of hatred and envy! Man is the *most ferocious animal*, yet does he accuse the wild beasts of the jungle of this quality! The ferocious beasts kill other beasts, but not one belonging to their own species. They kill for their own food and sustenance. For example, man says the wolf is ferocious!

O, poor wolf! O, wronged wolf! The wolf tears to pieces one sheep in order to keep its body alive. If it does not kill the sheep, it will die of hunger, because being a carnivorous animal, it cannot eat grass. But man, who considers himself lord of creation, will become the cause of the total annihilation of a million of his fellow-beings. The poor wolf is a very incompetent

tyro in comparison with this kind of man! Then he will boast 'I am a conqueror, I am a hero, I am a victor, I am a superior General, I am a Field Marshal, I am an Admiral!' Man! It is better for thee to hide thy head under the earth! Thou hast crim- [V:11:166] soned the ground with the blood of thy brothers! Thy hand is stained with their blood! Thou hast slaughtered and butchered God's own children! Thou hast destroyed the living temples of the Spirit! Thou hast trampled under thy feet the rights of men! Thou hast snuffed out the burning lamps of life and truth! It is strange, passing strange, that notwithstanding all these violations of Divine Law, thou art yet wantonly boasting and exalting thyself above all mankind."

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá finished speaking, the room was throbbing with the Spirit! There was a blind singer from Egypt, and he commenced chanting a number of sacred songs. When we left the holy Presence, the spell of his powerful word was still with us, and I believe it will continue to be with us as long as we live.

V:11, 27 September 1914 [V:11:166]

A message to the American people

From the San Francisco Chronicle, 4 October 1912.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, noted Persian teacher, arrives.

Apostle of Universal Peace and Brotherhood to deliver series of lectures.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Persian teacher and disciple of universal peace, the oneness of humanity, the oneness of God, universal love, the eradication of prejudice, arrived in San Francisco early yesterday morning. He has been in the United States six months, and though his arrival here had been arranged for and expected for several days by the local assembly of Bahá'ís, no one was at the railroad station to meet him. This was in accordance with the expressed wish of the venerable teacher. He had telegraphed that he desired to enter the city quietly. His train was eight hours late and he with his suite drove to the house at 1815 California Street, which has been prepared for his residence during his three weeks stay here.

Accompanying 'Abdu'l-Bahá were Dr Amín U. Faríd, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and Mírzá Maḥmúd of Persia, Mírzá 'Alí Akbar of Russia and M. Fugeta of Japan. They will act as interpreters to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the series of lectures he will deliver in San Francisco and the transbay cities.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's career is romantic. He went to the prison fortress of 'Akká, near Mount Carmel, in Palestine, with his father when twenty years of age. With no schooling, except the teaching of his noble father, he spent forty years in prison. Since his release four years ago he has travelled in Egypt, Continental Europe and England, pleading for the removal of prejudice and the establishment of universal peace.

At the house were a score of people, mostly women. One woman said she did not think 'Abdu'l-Bahá would see a reporter, as he was going to Oakland in the afternoon. But he did.

Is striking figure

'Abdu'l-Bahá is of middle stature, strongly built, and wears long, light-coloured robes. His forehead is high, broad and full, his nose slightly aquiline and his beard and moustache grey-white. His eyes are grey and blue, large, soft, penetrating. His grey hair rests on his shoulders.

"My greatest happiness this morning," said he, "is this: That I have come to such a modern and progressive city. Praise be to God, everything is beautiful and there seems to be much joy here."

After a few questions and answers he was shown a copy of the *Chronicle* containing the full accounts of war preparations in the Balkan states and Turkey. He inquired if actual hostilities had begun and then asked:

“Will the *Chronicle* take a message from me to the American people?” Answered in the affirmative, he dictated an appeal for universal peace.

An appeal for peace

“Praise be to God: The United States has in reality made extraordinary progress; day by day they are advancing toward the ultimate goal. The material virtues of the people are many; now they must think of the ideal virtues, so that the highest of the perfections of humanity may illumine the regions of America. Among the highest virtues is universal peace, the oneness of humanity. The chief ailment of humanity today is international strife; this militates against the advancement of the material and ideal virtues. [V:11:167]

“The continent of America is isolated so far as other countries are concerned; the government is not thinking of making conquests, of enlarging the circle of colonization. They are not thinking to contend with other nations so far as financial, commercial and political supremacy is concerned. They are not the rival of any other nation.

“Their utmost desire is this: That the continent of America be protected.

“They are engaged in the amelioration of internal conditions; they are not engaged in warfare with any nation. Therefore, they have the time and ability to raise the standard of universal peace and spread the doctrine of the oneness of God. May their influence spread and permeate to all parts of the world.

“Other peoples of the world have to contend with international difficulties. First, the nations are rivals with each other so far as commercial advantages are concerned. Second, they are thinking of the national self-aggrandizement. Third, they are thinking of planting new colonies. Therefore, it is difficult for them to step into this field, to uphold international peace, because they are contending, warlike, victory-loving people. They cannot be instrumental in promulgating international peace.

Praises American democracy

“But, praise be to God, the American Government is no warlike government; the American democracy is not founded upon warlike doctrines. Hence it becomes this democracy to uphold international peace and spread it throughout the world. Through the promulgation of this doctrine will be distributed the greatest blessings.

“It will eliminate the darkness of prejudice, the darkness of war, the darkness of rancour and hatred, the darkness of racial prejudice, the darkness of political prejudice. May this darkness be blotted out and the light become widespread, universal. May the oneness of humanity become primordial, supreme.

“His holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, fifty years ago spread broadcast His great Movement, proclaimed the benefits of international peace. This took place at a time when the thought was not in the minds of men, nor the words upon the tongues of the people. At the time He summoned people from all parts of the Orient. He addressed letters to the sovereigns of Europe, setting forth the results to accrue from the establishment of universal peace. He invited all to participate in a world's arbitral court of justice, to be composed of representatives of every government in the world, the delegates thereto to be chosen and ratified by the governments. Thereto would he referred disputes between nations for settlement. In case any government or nation should prove rebellious concerning any decision of the court, the other nations should coalesce to force it into obedience.

“My fervent hope and fond desire concerning the American people is that through their instrumentality the scope of this project will be enlarged and that earnest concerted action between the nations of the world will result therefrom.”

“This great Cause, which alone insures the happiness of the world, must receive support throughout the world.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá will remain in the city for two or three weeks. Many of the churches have invited him to fill their pulpits, and his first public appearance will be Sunday morning at 11 o’clock in the Unitarian Church at Franklin and Geary Streets. Sunday night he will deliver a sermon in the First Congregational Church in Oakland.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has been invited to deliver a talk at Stanford University by Dr David Starr Jordan, which he has accepted. Speaking of this yesterday, he said:

“The duty of educated men, especially university presidents of the nation is this: To teach in the universities and schools ideas concerning universal peace, so that the student may be so moulded that in after years he may help carry to fruition the most useful and human issue of mankind.”

V:11, 27 September 1914 [V:11:168]

Recent Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Through Áqá Mírzá Luţfu’lláh, London.

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Gamble.

Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved divine maid-servant!

The letter, dated 26 May of the present year, was received, but on account of the weakened condition of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the answer was delayed. Now, as through the help and favour of God, health is secured, I therefore write the answer, so that thou mayest perceive that thou art not forgotten. I ever remember thee and beg for thee from the Kingdom of Abhá everlasting help and bounty.

I hope thou art of those who are *firm in the Covenant* and that thou wilt call the people unto the Testament. The Blessed Beauty has established this Covenant so that all (the Bahá’ís) may know that whatsoever things proceed from the Pen of the Covenant (‘Abdu’l-Bahá) are based upon infinite wisdom. They should not hurry, for it (wisdom) will become apparent and evident later on.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has ever been a concealer of defects and still is a coverer of sins and will not attempt to publish the short-comings and the faults of any soul, but will rather keep them secret. Therefore, to some the situation seems ambiguous, for they are ignorant of the reality of the subject.

Should he (‘Abdu’l-Bahá) not overlook them and explain all the events then there would remain no doubt as to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s extreme kindness. How patient and long suffering he (‘Abdu’l-Bahá) is! If he ever utters a word or dictates something concerning a soul, it is a matter of warning which arises from kindness.

It is an act of kindness on the part of a physician when he explains the disease of his patient, for his explanation secures the recovery.

I swear by the God beside Whom there is no other God, were any one to amputate any of my limbs, I would pardon him before he had committed the crime; but I can never say that an invalid is robust and healthy, for I wish his recovery, and this is extreme kindness not enmity.

Therefore, if the believers of God wish to be kind to a soul, they should desire his well-being and try to advise him, so that the kind physician may prescribe a remedy and thus

secure his recovery.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated at Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 24 August 1914.

V:12, 16 October 1914 [V:12:178]

Supplication

Cover the sins of the weak ones with the hem of the garment of Thy Mercy! Change the indifference of the heedless ones into the essence of fidelity, wisdom and understanding! Grant the souls a loftier effort and arouse another (spiritual) tumult in the minds so that they may sing the melody of the Supreme Realm, seek for a Glory Everlasting, long for the delicacies of the New World, soar toward the Brightest Horizon, enter the congregation of the Almighty and become the recipients of the bestowals of the Kingdom! Thus will the dark world become luminous, the satanic field transformed into the courts of the Merciful, the mound of earth become the mound of Heaven and the terrestrial globe the Eternal Rose-garden. Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty, the Hearer, the Seer!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

[Extract from a Prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá]

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Ramleh, Egypt

V:12, 16 October 1914 [V:12:179]

**“If the power of love and peace become predominant,
their effects will be greater than the power of hate and war.”**

'Abdu'l-Bahá comments upon the war in Europe.

From the Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 6 August 1914.

Dear friends,

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass. ... For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places.” (Matt. 24:6–7)

The present conditions of the world are more or less the literal fulfilment of the above verses. A titanic spirit of unrest has overmastered the higher instincts of mankind and they are sharpening their arms for the destruction of each other. The history of the world does not show a more crucial and a more grave situation than this! We are face to face with the most tremendous struggle of the race. It is just beginning, and no one can safely predict the consummation of this tragic engagement of infuriated and maddened humanity. How these Westerners, who have made themselves famous for their finer sensibilities and refined and delicate feelings, can engage so cold-bloodedly in the business of the slaughtering of humanity, is beyond the imagination of the practical thinkers of this age!

Tonight 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered another quickening and stimulating address on the question of the present European war and the coalitions which are being formed for the humiliation and destruction of their so-called enemies. When all the friends and the large body of the Persian students found their way into his presence, and each person took his seat, he began to speak. His earnestness was deep-felt and every word moved and stirred the hearts:

“The gathering storm is most portentous! Mankind is gripped in the paroxysm of a fearful

alarm. They are in the throes of a deadly consternation. On their ashen faces are engraved the distorted pictures of the coming horrors. The kind shepherds have turned suddenly into ferocious wolves, tearing the sheep and the lambs into pieces. Mercy has hidden its face; Love has covered her countenance; Sympathy does not stretch forth its arms; Affection has flown away; Truth finds itself a stranger among a large company of hypocritical admirers and Peace does not envisage herself in the clear mirror of the pure hearts.

“About ten or fifteen days ago I had the pleasure of meeting the German Consul and discussing with him the ominous signs of the coming European war. He delivered himself of the opinion current among the statesmen, that a nation must go on increasing its annual military and naval expenditures if it desires to protect its growing commercial and national interests from the attack of its equally powerful and expanding neighbours or rivals; that the greater the military devices and paraphernalia, the more one is assured of the progress of the nation and its constantly developing resources. In that meeting there were present a number of German and other nationalities. Strange to say, on this question they all agreed with the Consul, and concurred in his opinion as though he had voiced their hidden and most cherished thoughts. I said: ‘If the power of Love and Peace become predominant and supreme, their effects will be greater than the power of hate and Mars, the god of war. In the world of existence [V:12:180] there is no power as efficacious and as penetrative as the Power of Love. Military Power coerces and compels men through unnatural resort to force and violation, but mankind yield happily and willingly to the Power of Love.

“The war expenses of each nation have increased greatly of late years. Although there has not been the physical clash and turmoil of actual war, yet in reality a financial and economic war has been going on incessantly and draining the resources of the people. For a goodly portion of what the poor labourers, farmers and artisans get with the sweat of their brows and the labour of their hands is taken from them under the name of taxes, and expended over military preparations. Hence war is uninterrupted. This exaction breeds discontent, class feeling and group consciousness against the established order;—everyone realizing that human society is out of gear. Now if they could employ this pugnacity, this hammer and tongs, this fists and heels spirit, this feverish haste in the accumulation of war materials, this waste of great thoughts over the perfection of military science,—I say if they could expend this exertion and effort, this endeavour and high-mindedness, in bringing about Love among mankind, in strengthening the ties of interdependence between nations and governments and in establishing fellowship and affinity between the races;—how much more efficacious it would have been! Instead of unsheathing the sword to shed each other’s blood, they should think of the perfection of each other’s civilizations, sciences, arts, commerce, progress and advancement. Is this not better? Is it not worthier for the noble station of man?”

“The German Consul and others would not think of accepting my ideas, and started to object to them.

“Then I said again: ‘What victory will you gain out of this war? What will be the outcome of this bloodshed? What will be the fruit of this onslaught? What will be the result of this aggression? From the beginning of history to the present time, what has been the profit that humanity has gathered from war? Nothing but ruin, devastation, the desecration of the holy rights of man, vandalism, carnage and the brutalization of the ideals deposited by God in the hearts of men. And if we read the spirit of modern history aright, we come to the conclusion that there is no war of conquest—the conqueror and the conquered find themselves in manifest loss at the end of the engagement. ... Consider what ideal victories! What brilliant triumphs! What spiritual traces! What heavenly successes have become manifest through the Power of Love! Therefore how much nobler and worthier would it be if the sages and thinkers of the world expended their physical, intellectual and moral forces in the promulgation of the Power of Love among mankind. This Power of Love is the means of

reciprocity and co-operation between nations! It is the cause of their everlasting Glory! It is conducive to the composure and security of the world of creation!

“I found my listeners still far from accepting my plea. They were silenced, but I knew it was a silence out of respect and not an acknowledgement and a confession that they were convinced. I found today that owing to the declaration of war in Europe, the Germans in this colony are very sad, and depressed, so much so that it is indescribable. They know that they are in danger; the danger of defeat of the Fatherland. Then, why should they hail war?

“Pursuing my conversation with the German Consul and others, I said: ‘In reality all the inhabitants of Europe owe their allegiance to one Religion, and that is the Religion of His Holiness Christ; they also belong to one racial stock, which is no other than Aryan, which parent stock migrated from Asia in ancient times and settled in the different parts of that uninhabited country. After the lapse of many generations, one community called itself Frank, another Saxon, another Norman, another Latin, etc. Later on, step by step, they fabricated the means of differences, and many misconceptions crept in which added day by day to the gravity of the situation. Furthermore, were we to ponder carefully, [V:12:181] we would realize that they are living on one continent—Europe. Hence if they claim that their misunderstanding is on account of religious differences, as they are overshadowed by the influence of one religion, it must not exist. If they state that their alienation comes from racial bias, because they are the descendants of one primal race, it must be brushed aside. If they assert that their strife is on patriotic grounds, inasmuch as they inhabit the one continent it must have no weight. Moreover, they are all *mankind*. They have grown from one *common trunk* and are the branches of one tree.

“When I was travelling in Europe, I observed every nation crying at the top of her voice: “O my Country! O my dear Country! O my beloved Country!” I said: Oh, my friends! What are all these clamours for? Why all these acclamations? Why all these uproars and outcries? Why all this hullabaloo? These countries over which you are so vociferous and at every moment show the signs of obstreperousness, are *One Country*, the *home of humanity*. Wherever man chooses to live, there is his home and his country. God has not divided this earth. It is one globe, one sphere. These boundaries that you have defined are the greatest illusions that man could ever conceive in his mind. They have no reality. It is similar to the division of one room into different sections, with so many hypothetical lines, calling this corner Germany, that corner France and another corner England. Of a truth, these suppositional lines have no outward existence. These assumed boundaries are canine divisions, for it is observed that a number of dogs divide among themselves the public square into various sections and if one dare to go beyond the limit set for it, and trespass on the rights of others, the rest will set up a dreadful howl and bark and go for it; notwithstanding that these imaginary lines have no real forms or shapes.

“Again, let us still go a little further and investigate and find out what is this “country” over which you so quarrel and scramble? A piece of land. If this is the case, very well then; it is self-evident that man lives above this earth only for a few days and then for all eternity he will go *under* it. It is his everlasting graveyard, his unchangeable cemetery. Is it worthy of man to fight over his own burying-ground? To shed the blood of his own brethren? To destroy the divine edifice—for man is the Edifice of God? Is it noble of him to commit all of these inhuman atrocities for the necropolis of dead bodies?”

“The object is this: These remarks were not relished by the Germans on that day, but I saw them today in an unhappy mood. They were visibly agitated and disturbed. But on the other hand they are manifesting great courage and patriotism. The young men have given up their work and are ready to start for Germany. There are more than fifty volunteers, and probably from this small colony nearly one hundred young men will leave for the scene of war. They

are doing this with perfect joy and without the least complaint. But today's news, that Russia, England and France are united together to crush Germany, has given them much food for thought.

“How cruel man is to send his brothers into the battle-field, so that they may cut each other to pieces! Just on the simple ground that thou art German, I am English and he is French! Although in reality they are all human and are living beneath the shade of one God. His Divine Bestowals, Favours and Bounties have encircled all of them. They are all the sheep of God and He as the Spiritual Shepherd is merciful to all.

“In short, the display of this barbaric passion is no other than the passion of nature. These men, like unto animals, are the prisoners of nature, subdued and overcome by nature. According to the requirement of nature, the animals are pugnacious and strive in the destruction of each other. In the world of nature there are aggression, bloodthirstiness, oppression, struggle for existence, rapacity. These qualities are the natural laws of nature. Just as these animals are captives of nature, similarly man is conquered, subjugated and humbled by nature. For example, anger gets the better of man, ferocity prevails upon him, [V:12:182] and he becomes the subject of the lower passions. What are all these? They are no other than the mandates of the world of nature.

“Only those persons who are in reality believers in God, who have witnessed the Signs of God, are attracted to the Kingdom of God and turned their faces toward God—they and they alone are *freed* from the bloody claws of nature. Whereas formerly they were the subjects of nature, now they become the rulers. Whereas before they were vanquished by nature, now they become its victors. In brief, while nature invites man to the baser propensities of ego and self, the Love of God attracts him to the worlds of sanctity and holiness, justice and generosity, mercy and humanity.”

...

Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 7 August 1914.

Dear friends,

... [V:12:183]

...

The ... Tablet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed to Rev. J. W. Van Kirk [Designer of the World Peace Flag, consisting of seven stripes representing the colours of the rainbow”] as follows:

“O thou respected truth seeker!

“Thy letter was received. It reflected the sentiment of the oneness of the world of humanity. The flag that thou hast forwarded was in reality the foreshadowing symbol of Universal Peace. Today all the nations of the world are animated with a warlike spirit and all the governments of the world are filling their military storehouses, inventing infernal machines and perfecting their man-killing engines; so that their martial powers may preponderate each other; especially the Continent of Europe has become an arsenal of combustible materials. It needs only one tiny spark to set that *hell* into a world-wide explosion. It will be then such a titanic conflagration that its lurid flames shall blazon all the horizons. Hence the ‘Anthem of Universal Peace’ [poem by Rev. Kirk on page 182] has still no charm in their ears. Their universally-accepted political axioms are that the greatness and prosperity of a nation depends on her military and naval powers. The more elaborate these preparations, the better protected and secured the well-being and happiness of that government and nation. The kings and rulers of the world are not yet ready to acknowledge that Universal Peace is conducive to the life of the world of humanity. In a similar strain the

nobles, the demagogues and those in authority find their glory and reputation in naval and military preparedness.

“Consequently it is impossible that ‘economic contentment’ be realized by the people of the world save through the transforming Power of Faith. For Faith is the solver of every problem. Therefore you must strive to strengthen the foundation of the Religion of God. Through the Power of the Religion of God every difficulty will be disentangled. The Power of the Religion of God will humble the kings and set at naught the crooked motives of those who are in supreme authority. Then endeavour ye, that the Power of True Religion which breathes the Spirit of Life into the dead body of the world of humanity, may be promulgated. This is the antidote for the poisoned body of the world and a quick-healing remedy for the rancorous disease of man. For this reason diffuse thou as much as thou art able the sweet Fragrance of the Holy Spirit, teach the people the Divine advice and exhortations and spread far and wide the heavenly Teachings”

Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 8 August 1914.

Dear friends,

... [V:12:186]

... I was weaving garlands of ideals with the fresh, sweet flowers of the spirit, and thinking of those far-off friends who are always near, when suddenly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered the garden, leading with his right hand a sweet little girl of five or six years, all dressed in white. He was talking with her in Turkish, and she was answering with much grace and dignity. “This is my guest!” he said, as he pointed to her while standing on the steps of the house “Come, Come! my dear friend! We will go in and have tea and sweets!” And the host and the guest disappeared in the deepening dusk of the night. In the half-darkness of the night, I heard ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s clear voice calling to his sister: “Khánum! Khánum! I have brought you a guest. What nice things have you for her? She is the guest of honour.”

Was not this an ideal picture? Even now while the whole world is in a great turmoil and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s heart and head are filled with pity and sympathy for the afflicted, he is still the simple, child-loving father, overflowing with tenderness, benignity, benevolence and affection.

This morning I was called into his presence, and after reading a few letters and dictating a number of Tablets, he spoke about the present war and the tremendous issues at stake. There are wild stories of battles fought on land and sea and victories won by the contending parties, but they lack veracity and accuracy; and this evening there was an interesting meeting, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá delivering a short talk, as follows:

“These dreadful events are as warnings on the part of God:—so that they may quicken the people and make them mindful. But the majority of mankind are like unto the children, who are being rocked in a cradle. The harder they are rocked to be awakened, the deeper they fall into sleep. East and West the affairs of the people are in utter confusion and the markets of the world are afflicted with lethargy. The wheels of international transactions are at a standstill. We shall wait and see what God has decreed to be the outcome of this universal upheaval. As for you, pray meanwhile in behalf of the people—so that the forces of Peace may gain ascendancy over the powers of war. They are now in great distress. From all sides they are surrounded with difficulties and hardships. Perchance, God willing, they may become mindful and aware, be released from negligence, abandon tyranny and oppression, treat each other with justice and fairness, and give up the dictates of selfishness and personal interest. Our hope is that they may be freed from the cruelty of passion and egoism; that these wicked powers may not overmaster them; that they may turn their faces toward God; that the hearts may become illumined; that the sphere of the minds be extended; that avarice and

covetousness may not remain; that trust in God and self-reliance may take possession of their beings that they may be satisfied with their own rights and that they may not rise in aggression to trample under their feet the rights of others. May all of the causes of war and conflict, hardships and sufferings, be entirely removed! ... In short, pray and supplicate at the Threshold of the Almighty in behalf of the heedless souls; for they know not what they are doing! May they become emancipated from the defects of their own nature! May they be imbued with the qualities of the heavenly angels! May they give up ferocity and be characterized with the attributes of the Merciful! May they ever live in accord with the good-pleasure of the Lord of mankind! May they become the guardians of the rights of the oppressed and downtrodden! May they be the real servants in the Palace of Universal Brotherhood!"

V:12, 16 October 1914 [V:12:184]

Recent tablet to the Persian Bahá'ís

HE IS GOD!

O ye friends of the heart and soul of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

The violators of the Covenant have raised a new cry and have written to Europe "That 'Abdu'l-Bahá has become exceedingly weak, that he is no longer able to perform any work, and that he is in great danger and before long he will say his farewell words. Now, this is our chance."

From this news suddenly through the blessing of the Blessed Perfection health was granted to me. Immediately I began to write Tablets so that the "Aiadi"¹ of the Cause of God would give the Glad-tidings to the friends that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is not weak. Through the help and assistance and the blessing and confirmation of the Blessed Beauty he is exceedingly healthy, and the proof of it is that day and night he is either writing or revealing (Tablets). Through my own will power all the symptoms disappeared. In short, now I am writing with exceeding joy and happiness.

The writings of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl—may my life be a sacrifice to him—I am sending to you in order that you will, all together, compile books from these writings and immediately print and circulate them.

I expect Divine confirmations for the "Aiadi" of the Cause of God. Upon them be the blessings of their benevolent Lord.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

V:13, 4 November 1914 [V:13:201]

Tablet for the American Bahá'ís

To the believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful in America. Upon them be
Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful!

From the Graces of His Holiness *Bahá'u'lláh* I beg for you firmness and steadfastness. Today whosoever is a herald of the Covenant is confirmed and assisted. In these days a number of souls, whose deeds are known in America as clear as the sun, have arisen in enmity against the Centre of the Covenant. Their's is the vain imagination that they can extinguish

¹ Ayádí (plural of yad) "aiadi" means "hands" and refers to four Bahá'ís in Tíhrán, Persia.

the Light of the Candle of the Covenant. Vain indeed is their thought. The Candle of the Covenant is like unto the Morning Star which *never sets*.

In short, after a journey through Europe and a visit to the Holy Land, their honour, Mr Remy and Mr Latimer, are now returning to America. *I send them*. I am hopeful that from the Bestowals of His Holiness, *Bahá'u'lláh*, they may become confirmed and assisted in the diffusion of the Fragrances of God.

Upon ye be *Bahá'u'l-Abhá!*

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The original is in the handwriting of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Mt. Carmel, 19 October 1914.

V:13, 4 November 1914 [V:13:202]

Visiting tablet for Frau Babette Ruoff

A visiting Tablet for the Maidservant of God, Frau Babette Ruoff

Upon her be *Bahá'u'l-Abhá!*

HE IS GOD!

O Almighty!

Endear thou this maidservant of Thy Threshold, Frau Ruoff, in the Kingdom of Thy Holiness, and submerge her in the Ocean of Sight. Overlook her shortcomings; confer upon her Thy Grace! Vouchsafe her Thy Purity in the Court of the Paradise of Abhá! Bestow upon her Eternal Life and suffer her to become the manifestor of infinite bestowals in the meeting of transfiguration. Verily Thou art the Generous! The Pardoner and the Compassionate.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 18 April 1914, home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Mt. Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

V:13, 4 November 1914 [V:13:202]

Tablet to Julia Staebler

Through Miss Alma Knobloch, to the maidservant of God, Fraulein Julia Staebler:

Upon her be *Bahá'u'l-Abhá!*

HE IS GOD!

O thou maidservant of God!

Thy letter was received. I am much occupied, therefore brevity is befitting. Be very grateful to Miss Alma Knobloch and Miss Anna Köstlin, for they became the cause of thy guidance.

Thy beloved mother ascended to the apex of the Kingdom. She is the associate and the companion of the spiritual ones. They witness this world and the inhabitants thereof, for the veil is rent asunder and the covering is taken away from before the insight. Beg of God for them the exaltation of spiritual degrees.

Praise be to God that, on the Day of the Declaration of His Holiness the Báb, you celebrated the Feast with the utmost beauty. The nineteen days' Feast has the utmost importance, that the beloved ones may gather in a meeting, be occupied with the utmost love and fellowship in mentioning the name of God, and speak about the glad tidings of God, deliver the proofs and evidences of the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, mention the praiseworthy deeds and the sacrifices endured by the Believers of God in Persia, talk about the severance and the attraction of the martyrs and remember the co-operation and the mutual assistance of the friends. Therefore

this nineteen days' Feast is most important.

The believers of God in Persia sacrifice their lives in the path of each other, the rich give to the poor, and the worthies protect and guard the weak ones.

Convey to all the friends the wonderful greeting of Abhá.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Dublin, N.H., 7 August 1912.

V:14, 23 November 1914 [V:14:209]

“The song of the Covenant”

The Divine Minstrel held the stringed instrument in His Hand, and precluded a melody and tune after the Persian note, and sang this Song with a loud voice, as follows:

This is the Ancient Covenant!

This is the One Who has the Cup in His Hand!

This is the One Who has brought failure in the market of the Joseph of the Merciful God!

This is the Testament of Accord!

This is a Covenant to hold to, and utterly detach one's self from aught else!

This is the cause of stopping the cries of contradiction (made by deniers) through the Divine Mercy!

This is the Pre-existent Covenant!

This is the weighty Mystery!

This is the Greatest Secret of the Countenance of Bahá—May my soul redeem His beloved ones!

'Abdu'l-Bahá

[Extract from Tablet]

V:14, 23 November 1914 [V:14:211]

Trumpet call to the East and West

Tablet from “The Centre of the Covenant”

To the believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful!

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

East and West.

HE IS GOD!

Glory be unto Thee, O God! for Thou hast opened the Doors of the Kingdom of Grandeur and Majesty before the faces of Thy beloved ones; overshadowed them with the wide-spreading Tree of Thy Mercifulness; stirred them into cheerfulness by the Breezes of Acceptance from the Garden of Thy Singleness and caused the downpour of pure Waters from the heaven of Thy Generosity, through which Thou didst cleanse the hearts of Thy friends.

Thou didst resuscitate the spirit of those who have arisen in Thy service with the Breaths of the Holy Spirit and reinforced them with the angels of Thy Sanctification and the unseen Cohorts from the Supreme Concourse. Verily, this was no other but a reinforcement from Thee and a fresh Confirmation on Thy part; in order that they might arise in the proclamation of Thy Word, the diffusion of Thy Fragrances, the perusal of Thy Verses, the promulgation of Thy Religion, the propagation of Thy Teachings, the universalization of Thy Grace and the strengthening of Thy Covenant. Verily, they have pitched on the apex of the world, the Tabernacle of Thy Oneness, whose cords are unbreakable, under whose shade nations and

peoples shall dwell and which is glorified with the Bestowal of Thy Effulgence.

O Lord! We are weak, fortify us with Thy Power; we are prisoners, shine upon us the Light of Thy Freedom!

O God! This captive has no other protector save Thee; this afflicted one has no other guardian except Thee, and this weak soul has no other support beside Thee!

O Lord! O Lord! Grant endurance and fortitude to these broken wings and brace and steel the nerves of these suppliant birds;—so that they may soar towards the apex of prosperity, wing their way through the immensity of success to the highest station of worthiness, stretch forth their pinions to reach the loftiest point in Thy Abhá Kingdom and the apogee of grandeur in Thy Supreme Concourse: thus their eyes may be brightened by beholding the lights and their ears be charmed by listening to the singing of the mysteries! [V:14:212]

O Lord! Assist them in the promotion of Thy Glad-tidings between the East of the world and the West thereof; inspire them to speak of Thy glorification in the congregations of fellowship and enliven them to impart the gospel of the appearance of Thy Kingdom in the zenith of the universe. Thus, through mutual attraction, hot tears might flow from their eyes, their hearts be drawn towards the refulgent Light of God, supplicating Thee, beseeching in Thy Presence, their breasts expanded by the signs of Thy Singleness and their visions clarified by perceiving the Standards of Thy Victory amongst Thy creatures.

O God! Suffer their joy to be in the glad-tiding of Thy Manifestation; their happiness in the shining forth of Thy Light; their serenity in the obtainment of Thy Favour, their health in the healing wonders of Thy Name; their life in the Breaths of the Spirit of Thy Holiness; the consolation of their hearts in the winning of Thy Bounty; their hope in the propagation of Thy Cause and their aspirations in the promotion of Thy Word.

Verily, Thou art the Confirmer, the Omnipotent, the Self-Subsistent, the Giver, the Mighty and the Most Beautiful, and verily Thou art powerful over all things.

O ye friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! It has been sometime since correspondence and letter-writing has been postponed, because this servant of the Threshold of the Almighty-‘Abdu’l-Bahá—has been travelling continually throughout the East and the West for the last four years, reminding the people of the appearance of the Manifestation of the Lord of Hosts;—so that the Occident might become illumined and the Orient perfumed. Therefore, in all the meetings and temples the cry of, “*Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!*” reached to the zenith of the Supreme Concourse and the voice of, “*O my Lord the Supreme!*” soared unremittingly towards the Court of His Highness the Almighty. In the temples of many a nation the Cause of the Possessor of Existence was taught and in the houses of the worship of many a religion meetings were held for announcing the Signs of the Clement Lord. In the Christian Churches the Spirit was breathed and in the Synagogues of the Jews the Gospel of the Appearance of the Lord of Hosts was proclaimed. In the Universities of Europe and America, such as the University of Oxford, England, and the Leland Stanford University in San Francisco, California, which are considered in the vanguard of educational institutions of the world, eloquent addresses were delivered. In the last mentioned university there were present one hundred and seventy-five professors and one thousand eight hundred students. Many speeches were given before the various Theosophical, Spiritualistic and Esperanto Societies, and a speech was delivered before the Open Forum in San Francisco, explaining the aim of Eastern and Western systems of philosophies. In all these churches, temples, synagogues, meetings and clubs, through the Favour and Bounty of the Blessed Perfection,¹ there was not found one soul who could utter a word of opposition and criticism. Every one listened most attentively to the explanation of teachings and proofs, and all expressed thanks and gratitude at the end of the [V:14:213]

¹ A title of Bahá’u’lláh.

meetings. This was only made possible through the grace and bestowal of Bahá'u'lláh. For under all circumstances the Sea of the Confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá was waving high and the cry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá ascended to the highest apex.

Undoubtedly you have read the contents of the American and European newspapers which are mirrors reflecting the public opinion of other nations. Verily, truth is that which is concurrently testified to by all wise men! The contents of these magazines and newspapers are the traces of the pen of the followers of Christ, the people of Moses, philosophers, professors and thinkers of the West. For example, amongst them might be mentioned, the *Palo Allan*, published in the town wherein the Leland Stanford University is founded, the newspapers of Oxford, *Christian Commonwealth*, *Century*, *Herald*, *Standard*, *Review of Reviews*, the Arabic newspapers of New York, etc., etc. The philosophers, professors and literary men have expressed their opinions concerning this Cause in these periodicals. This was again through the mercy and providence of the Blessed Perfection whose Absolute Will had ordained the promotion of the Cause of God in all parts of the world and who confirmed this servant of the Threshold in this service.

In short, although 'Abdu'l-Bahá considers himself as a drop; yet this drop is connected with the Most Great Sea. Although he looks upon himself as an atom, yet this atom is related to the world-illuminating sun. As it is said: "The Originator of all these voices is the King himself;" or in other words: "It is through His assistance."

Unquestionably this physical body and human energy would have been unable to stand this constant wear and tear, and were it not for the support of the angel of Providence even the bones of this servant would have mouldered away. But the aid and help of His Highness the Desired One was the Guardian and Protector of the weak and humble 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Through the many annoyances and inconveniences of the journey, physical exhaustion was produced in the nerves and the various indispositions caused poor health, but the Spirit was so energized that this great weakness and excessive feebleness disappeared in a short period of time, and ere long 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be occupied again with reading and writing.

However, back of this apparent silence and interruption of all correspondence for the time being, there was hidden another wisdom. It was this: That the believers of God might walk in the foot steps of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and raise such a melody and show forth such a firmness and steadfastness that the diffusion of the Fragrance of God might *continue* whether he does exist or not, nay, rather that all of them might roar like unto the sea and break forth into joyous songs of thanksgiving. Thus these souls who are anticipating the death or departure of this servant at the Divine Threshold might be afflicted with regret and remorse and realize that the exaltation of the Blessed Cause and the increasing majesty of the Word of God does not depend upon the existence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Praise be to God! How inscrutable are His ways! When His Holiness the Báb—may my life be a ransom to Him!—was martyred; the enemies vociferously cried out that this Cause was totally annihilated! [V:14:214]

Afterwards, they witnessed the result contrary to their expectations; for with the martyrdom of His Holiness the Báb, the Word of God was promulgated more widely. Then, changing their front, they expected the departure of the Blessed Perfection, dreaming vainly that after His ascension the Blessed Tree would be uprooted. Praise be to God, that through the Bounty and Bestowal of the Blessed Perfection they were stricken with self-condemnation and grief. In a similar manner, the pretenders and Covenant-breakers are waiting the decease and the passing away of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in various and divers manners; i.e., either that he may be cast to the bottom of the sea or be suspended high on a cross, either be banished to the remotest country, be imprisoned in the dark dungeon of a fortress or through manifold sickness and illness he may quit singing the Songs of Life and the Anthems of Light—that thus

after him they might obtain a field for the display of their nefarious activities and the promotion of their poisonous ideas.

Alas! Alas! Vain is their imaginings. Whether 'Abdu'l-Bahá does exist or not the Cause of God shall be protected and preserved from all these supposed dangers through the Power of the Kingdom of Abhá. Were the wheels of the Cause of God stopped in their onward progressive march through the setting of those two brilliant suns (the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh)? Or is it possible that through the death of this servant of the Threshold, the Cause of God will lose its influence? Alas! Alas! Ere long you shall see them (the náqidín¹) in manifest loss!

Soon after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, while they were weltering in the midst of rebellion and violation, I predicted that in a short space of time you would see the náqidín in evident deprivation! The present condition is an unmistakable assurance that that prediction has literally been fulfilled.

Therefore, rest ye assured that their present baseless surmises will be as barren and as fruitless as their past imaginings. Some have also asserted that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is on the eve of bidding his last farewell to this world, that his physical energies are being depleted and drained and that ere long these complications shall put an end to his life. *This is far from truth.* Although in the outward estimation of the violators and defective-minded the body is weak on account of the great ordeals in the Blessed Path, yet, praise be to God, through the Providence of the Blessed Perfection the spiritual forces are in the utmost rejuvenation and strength. Thanksgiving behoveth the Lord, that now, through the blessing and benediction of Bahá'u'lláh, even the physical energies are fully restored, divine joy obtained, the supreme glad-tidings are resplendent and ideal happiness overflowing. I hope that, in the future, letter-writing and correspondence may continue uninterruptedly.

O ye loyal friends of the Blessed Perfection! It is hoped that, through the wonderful bestowals of that Peerless Adored One, a new dynamic acclamation and stirring activity be realized amongst the divine believers so that they may obtain boundless rejoicing and exultation through the Melody of the Kingdom of Abhá which has moved the invisible world, and arise in the delivery of the Word of God;—so that the Holy Fragrance of God may transform the East and the West into the Paradise of Abhá, the Clouds of Grace change the surface of the earth into a delectable Rose-garden and [V:14:215] the Breeze of Compassion give fragrance and perfume to the plain and the meadow. This state is only made possible through teaching the Cause of God, explaining the Proofs of God, demonstrating the Religion of God with divine evidences and irrefutable arguments and guiding the inhabitants of the earth to the Fountain of Reality!

Consider, that the Apostles of Christ were few in number, but because they were filled to overflowing with His Graces, and the essence of His Advice and Commandments was circulating, like unto the spirit, through their veins and arteries, to such an extent that one could find nothing else throughout their beings save His Love, and they girded up the loins of endeavour to convey the Message. Now it has become manifest what a tremendous effect and result their services produced! We must also act accordingly and follow in their footsteps.

O ye divine believers! Today any soul who is a teacher of the Cause is confirmed. The teachers are in the front rank, are favoured at the Threshold of the Almighty and helped from the Kingdom of Abhá. The believers of God must exercise the utmost love, respect and consideration towards the teachers;—so that in whatever place they may enter, joy and happiness be obtained. But regarding the qualifications of the teachers, they are revealed in the Divine Tablets. They must adorn themselves with those attributes. I declare by God, beside whom there is no God, that if today a weak mosquito is characterized with the

¹ Covenant-breakers.

qualifications of the teachers and summons the people to the Divine Kingdom, it will become a soaring falcon of heaven and the ephemeral moth will be changed into an eagle of the apex of the Merciful; the drop will be transformed into a surging ocean and the atom will emit the brilliancy of the sun. From every part the cry of, “*Where are the teachers?*” is being raised, and from the Kingdom of Abhá, the voice of, “*Where are the attracted ones? Where are the severed ones? Where are the righteous ones? Where are the sanctified ones?*” reaches to the ear of intelligence. The inhabitants of the world have attained to a most astonishing capacity and are ready to hearken to this Call.

O ye friends of God! Show ye an effort, put ye forth an extraordinary exertion—so that this Candle may become the witness of every congregation, and this lay or strain be the Cause of happiness to every human soul.

Next spring whosoever has competency, or in other words, can provide sufficient and adequate travelling expenses for his coming and return, so that he can journey with the utmost joy and fragrance, if he asks for permission to visit the Holy Threshold, it will be granted. Now, the present conditions show the wisdom of withholding permission in the past, for during these days of general revolutions and disturbances, the pilgrims would have been obliged to suffer innumerable difficulties. Be ye admonished! O ye possessors of intelligence! Hence, it is plain that all which is written is based on a consummate wisdom.

Upon ye be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

Glory be unto Thee, O Thou whose Seas of Bestowals are waving and whose Breezes of Providence are wafting over all those who have arisen to [V:14:218] promote Thy Word amongst mankind and are hastening towards the city of self-sacrifice with a heart overflowing with love and fidelity and a tongue eloquent with the praise of Thy Abhá Beauty!

O Lord! Confirm whoever opens his mouth in the explanation of Thy Cause; arises in the diffusion of Thy Fragrances, from whose lips flows the irresistible torrents of evidence in the elucidation of Thy Religion; waves like unto the surging of the mighty ocean; sings like unto the singing of the golden-tongued nightingale in the Garden of Thy Knowledge, and roars like unto the roaring of the lion in the Forest of Thy Favour.

O Lord! Cause them to quaff from the goblet which is filled with the Wine of Thy Guidance, exhilarate them with the intoxication of Thy Elixir, suffer them to speak of Thy most incontrovertible proofs, inspire them with irrefragable¹ evidences and demonstrations and teach them the essences of wisdom and understanding.

Verily, thou art the Clement, Thou art the Confirmer, the Powerful, the Mighty and the Omnipotent, and verily there is no God beside the Lord of Grace and Mercy!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 22 September 1914. Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

V:14, 23 November 1914 [V:14:216]

Message to the Bahá’ís of the West

“Today, whoever is a herald of ‘The Covenant’, is the light of the regions!”

Mr George Latimer writes of visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To the *Star of the West*:

This present trip of nine months through Europe and culminating in our visit with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Holy Land has brought a new realization of the Cause to Mr Remey and myself. I feel we are entering upon a new era of progress,—one in which the Call of the Kingdom must

¹ Unable to be refuted or disproved; incontrovertible, incontestable, undeniable.

be raised in such a manner as to reach the entire world. The method by which this can be accomplished is through the unity and attraction of the friends. We have had the letter of the Teachings and now is the time to get the Spirit of the Divine Admonitions. It is this spirit—which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá radiates so bountifully—that the world of humanity is crying out for in its present crisis. In considering how to reach the people through writing and speaking ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “*You must be very moderate. Consider the taste of the public. This is the best policy. Moderation, moderation. You must speak and write in such a manner as not to offend anyone. The Lord addressed Moses and Aaron saying: ‘When you go to Pharaoh, speak in a moderate, sweet language.’*”

The keynote of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Message to the American friends is to be found in the following talks given to us during our stay in Haifa, and they bring out two essentials which are so necessary for today. One—the acquiring of the spirit of harmony and happiness of the Kingdom of Abhá; the other, the giving of that spirit to the world.

He gave the following talk on 9 October: “On this journey I hope that both of you will return to America with a new power, filled with the glad tidings of the Kingdom. Be ye full of joy to such an extent that in whatever meeting you enter those present may be permeated with a spirit of heavenly blessedness.”

On 18 October we were called into his presence about 6:30 in the evening and after a few remarks he spoke as follows: “There are many heralds in this world. Here is a herald who summons the people to the love and defence of his country, calling out at the top of his voice: ‘O my country, O my beloved country!’ There is a herald who blows the bugle of New Nationalism. Here is another herald who calls the people to politics, in order that he may wield great powers of state. There is another person who is a herald of literature and science. Here you find a soul who is the herald of the commercial interests and its expansion. And there is still another herald who sounds the trumpet of war and militarism. But praise be to God, that you are the heralds of the Kingdom of God. All these contending voices which are raised in the world today will ere long be silenced and hushed, but the call of the Kingdom of God will gain volume and impetus day by day. The popularity of these worldly heralds may last for a year or two, but the fame of the souls, who are the heralds of the Kingdom, is eternal for they are sounding the trumpet of celestial, Universal Peace. [V:14:217] Their voices will ring throughout the future centuries and will be immortal and age-abiding. *Thank ye God that ye are the heralds of the Kingdom of Abhá, the heralds of the Covenant of the Almighty.* All other voices will be repressed but this harmonic song of the Kingdom of Peace and Truth is eternal and everlasting.

“Now, I desire to send you back to the United States. I supplicate and beseech at the Threshold of the Kingdom of Abhá that you may go forth into the world with a heavenly power, with radiant hearts and with breaths imbued with the Fragrances of the Holy Spirit! May you be confirmed and assisted and may you raise such a melody and sing such a song as to stir and move the hearts of the American people. I anticipate to receive glad-news from you.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s farewell talk was given to us 19 October about four in the afternoon. We were ushered into his room where he was writing the Tablet to the American friends (see facsimile herewith¹). On being shown this Tablet after our return a Persian scholar immediately called our attention to the firmness of the hand-writing indicating the strength and health of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Never have I seen him in better physical health and spirits and he confirmed that impression in the following talk: “One of the things that ill-wishers circulated in London is that ‘I have grown old and weak and that my physical forces are on the wane,

¹ Facsimile on page 217.

consequently some people have gained ascendancy over my mind and caused me to issue these commands.'

"My power consists of the Bestowals of the Blessed Beauty. They are all spiritual Favours given to me by Bahá'u'lláh. From early morning until now I have been reading and writing and I am feeling exceedingly well. Young people like you can only work three or four hours without ceasing. When in America, although I had a nervous fever, yet I attended churches, meetings, conventions, speaking and crying out at the top of my voice. Never was I attacked with a spiritual weakness or inability. In Budapest I had a high fever and a severe cold. Notwithstanding this, from six in the morning until twelve at night, I was either speaking, calling on the people, addressing meetings or writing. At nine in the evening there was a meeting on the top floor of a high building in a remote part of the city. A heavy snow was falling. It was very cold weather. I had this cold and fever, but not- [V:14:218] withstanding this, I went, ascended 120 steps and addressed the people for about two hours.

"In short I am sending you away. I supplicate and entreat confirmation for you; I beg strength and power for you. I hope that the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá may encircle you and that you may become the means of the guidance of the people. With reinforced hearts, strong resolution and heavenly assistance may you loose your tongues, deliver eloquent speeches and promote the Word of God. You have undertaken much trouble in coming here. You must be very happy; you must be very rejoiced because you have come to this Sacred Spot and worshipped at the Holy Tomb of the Báb. For many days you have associated with me and I have enjoyed your visit, and I hope that good results will issue therefrom. *Today whosoever is a herald of the Covenant is the light of the Regions. In the Supreme Concourse the Heavenly Cohorts are arrayed, watching to see who will enter the arena of service of the Covenant, that they may rush forward to reinforce, to strengthen and to confer upon him triumph. In brief, be ye overflowing with joy; be ye overflowing with happiness for ye are the objects of the Favour of the Blessed Beauty. Be ye full of clamour and acclamation like unto a cup which is overflowing to the brim.*"

May the friends arise as never before to pass this cup of Divine joy to the thirsty, parched world.

Faithfully in the Spirit of the Covenant,
George Latimer

V:15, 12 December 1914 [V:15:225]

Supplication

Bring them together again, O Lord, by the power of Thy Covenant, and gather their dispersion by the might of Thy Promise, and unite their hearts by the dominion of Thy Love; and make them love each other so that they may sacrifice their spirits, expend their money, and scatter themselves for the love of one another. O Lord, cause to descend upon them quietness and tranquillity! Shower upon them the Clouds of Thy Mercy in great abundance, and make them to characterize themselves with the characteristics of the Spiritual! O Lord, make us firm in Thy noble command, and bestow upon us Thy Gifts through Thy Bounty, Grace and Munificence.

Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Merciful and Benevolent.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

V:15, 12 December 1914 [V:15:232]

Tablet to the Panama Pacific International Exposition

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Bahá'ís regarding their attendance at the Panama Pacific

From Tablet dated 14 April 1914

“The believers of God from now on must think about going to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (in San Francisco). Every one goes to the Exposition either for amusement, or recreation, or in the hope of obtaining commercial benefits. But you, who are the believers of God, enter the Exposition with the desire to summon the people to the divine Kingdom, and hope to receive the breaths of the Holy Spirit.”

V:15, 12 December 1914 [V:15:232]

With ‘Abdu’l-Bahá upon Mount Carmel

Charles Mason Remey

Before leaving Egypt for Syria, both the United States consular agent and Cook’s representative in Port Said tried to discourage Mr Latimer and me from going into Turkish country, for they knew that war was imminent. However, we had ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s instructions to come to Haifa by the most feasible route; so we left Egypt by the first steamer bound for the Syrian ports.

Upon our arrival in Haifa we found that the troubled condition of the land had not been exaggerated. The mobilization of the army had been on for some time. All the foreign post offices were closed; the banks were also shut; consequently business was almost at a standstill, and the mass of the people were under the spell of war panic.

In the midst of all the unrest and confusion we found ‘Abdu’l-Bahá serene, calm and peaceful. After sending to a place of safety in the [V:15:233] mountains the various Bahá’í families of Haifa and ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had gone up into the hills himself to see to their welfare, and it was upon his return to Haifa from this mission of service that we met him.

During the fourteen days we were with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá he spent most of his time on Mount Carmel. Upon a shelf half way up the mountain overlooking the bay of Haifa with ‘Akká in the distance, is the tomb of the Báb, and near this are several houses. In one of these lived a friend and in one room of his house ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed. In another building nearby some of the Bahá’ís lived. We lodged the nights in Haifa, but the days we spent upon the mountain near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Because of the condition of unrest in the country, there were but few people coming to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He spent much time alone in his room writing Tablets. We often saw him apparently lost in meditation, and we felt that he must have been sending his spirit out to the people in all parts who were suffering so intensely for that which he had to give.

All pilgrims will testify to the atmosphere of the spirit which rests upon Carmel, “The Mountain of God”. From the earliest times God’s revelators have stood upon her slopes proclaiming their messages to the world, and now from this same holy ground ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is demonstrating the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh and establishing the Abhá Peace in the heart of humanity.

During those fourteen days in that Holy Spot a real inner awakening came to us. It was a greater realization of the spirit of The New Day—the spirit of The Covenant of God—the spirit of Bahá’u’lláh which is radiating so fragrantly from His Branch, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

During our visit we had several personal interviews with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and many times we heard him give short, informal, general talks, but the greatest blessing which was ours seemed to come to us from within our hearts as we responded to the spirit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—that spirit—impossible to describe in words—the spirit in which he does all things, and which, coming from him, penetrates to the hearts of all who in soul contact with him, taking with it

joy, love, peace and the life of The Covenant.

Amid this shower of bounty I realized as never before that the Bahá'í Message can only be given effectively by coupling with the letter of The Truth the spirit of the Cause of God! It is this spirit of love and gentleness which penetrates the souls of those whom we meet, and when the souls are thus attracted, the message penetrates through the minds into the hearts of the people, and thus spiritual seeds are sown which in due time bring forth only its like. War brings forth war, and peace brings forth peace. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stands as the central exponent of The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh which is the Oneness of humanity and Peace.

The mission of all those who have received this light is to go forth to humanity carrying to the people of all classes, nations, races and religions the Bahá'í Message, in the spirit in which it has been revealed. Therefore let us all hasten to so purify our hearts that nothing may remain there save love and peace, so that we may lead the people to the source of Divine Bounty.

V:15, 12 December 1914 [V:15:233]

Extract from Tablet to Charles Mason Remey

“With the utmost resolution and constancy call the souls to the Kingdom of Abhá and invite them to the firmness and steadfastness in The Covenant and Testament. Read to them the translation of the *Tablet of The Branch* and speak with gentleness, moderation and loving-kindness, saying:

“We have no other aim save the protection of the Fortified Fortress of the Cause of God. We must guard this Fortified Fortress from the attack of the thoughtless ones. Hence we must all turn our faces to the appointed Centre in order that the Bahá'í Unity might be preserved; otherwise in one year the Bahá'ís would be divided into a thousand sects. We entertain no other object except the safety of the Cause of God.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá

V:16, 31 December 1914 [V:16:242]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, London.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O firm ones in the Covenant!

Your letter was received and its contents became known. A Tablet (lit. letter) was written to Tíhrán fifteen months ago and it was published and spread in all parts of Persia and now is in the hands of all (the friends). The exact text of that Tablet is this:

O servant of the Blessed Threshold!

Thou didst complain of the decline of trade. This year calamities, unfortunate decline and corruption have encompassed the world. Now the proof is apparent to all. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in churches (lit. synagogues) and meetings in many of the cities of Europe and America loudly proclaimed the Cause of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and called (people) to the Kingdom of Abhá. And he ('Abdu'l-Bahá) brought forth luminous proofs and stated clear conclusions and manifest arguments. There remained no excuse for any soul whatsoever, because most of the talks were published in newspapers and spread in the world. Notwithstanding this, still the people are captives in the sleep of negligence and are prisoners of nature and inattentive to Reality. Still the people desire material luxury to such a degree that Šúr-i-Isráfíl (i.e., the

trumpet of Isráfíl summoning mankind to resurrection) does not awaken them. Of course this negligence, unthankfulness and unmindfulness are the causes of regret, distress, war and dispute and produce devastation and misfortune. If the people of the world do not turn to the Greatest Name, great misery will follow. But for the sake of the believers it is my hope that traces of the favours of God may be apparent and their affairs become exceptional.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

This (above) Tablet was written fifteen months ago and the distressed happenings of today were mentioned in it. Notwithstanding this we pray with the utmost supplication and lamentation at the Threshold of God that He may purify and free the horizon of the world of humanity from this dark cloud.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá
Translated by Luṭfu'lláh S. Ḥakím, 23 November 1914, London, England.

V:16, 31 December 1914 [V:16:243]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

“No sane person can at this time deny the fact that war is the most dreadful calamity in the world of humanity”

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Beatrice Irwin, London.

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved daughter!

Thy letter was received and I have written for thy sake this Message. This article, in answer to thy question, is very important. Display ye the utmost effort in its publication.

After the declaration of the constitutional regime in Turkey in 1908, by the members of the Committee of the Union and Progress, this prisoner of forty years, travelled and journeyed for three years—from 1910 to 1913—throughout the countries of Europe and the vast continent of America. Notwithstanding advancement in age with its natural consequences, with a resonant voice I delivered detailed addresses before large conventions and in historical churches. I enumerated all those principles contained in the Tablets and Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh concerning War and Peace.

About fifty years ago, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed certain Teachings and raised the Song of Universal Peace. In numerous Tablets and sundry Epistles He foretold, in the most explicit language, the present cataclysmal events; stating that the world of humanity was facing the most portentous danger and asserting categorically that the realization of Universal War was unfortunately inevitable and unavoidable. For these combustible materials which were stored in the infernal arsenals of Europe would explode by contact with one spark. Among other things, “the Balkans will become a volcano and the map of Europe will be changed.” For these and similar reasons He (Bahá'u'lláh) invited the world of humanity to Universal Peace. He wrote a number of Epistles to the kings and rulers and in those epistles He explained the destructive evils of war and dwelt on the solid benefits and nobler influences of Universal Peace. War saps the foundation of humanity; killing is an unpardonable crime against God, for man is an edifice built by the Hand of the Almighty. Peace is life incarnate; war is death personified. Peace is the divine spirit; war is satanic suggestion. Peace is the light of the world; war is stygian darkness and Cimmerian¹ gloom. All the great prophets,

¹ Of or pertaining to the legendary Cimmerians fabled to live in perpetual darkness.

ancient philosophers and heavenly Books [V:16:244] have been the harbingers of Peace and monitors against war and discord. This is the Divine foundation; this is the Celestial outpouring; this is the basis of all religions of God.

In short, before all the meetings in the West I cried out: "O ye thinkers of the world! O ye philosophers of the Occident! O ye scholars and sages of the earth! A threatening black cloud o'er shadows, which ere long shall envelop the horizon of humanity; an impetuous tempest is ahead, which shall shatter to splinters the ships of the lives of mankind, and a turbulent, furious torrent shall soon drown the countries and nations of Europe. Awaken ye! Awaken ye! Become ye mindful! Become ye mindful! Thus in the spirit of co-operation we may all arise with the utmost magnanimity and through the Favour and Providence of God hold aloft the flag of the Oneness of Humanity, promote the essentials of Universal Peace and deliver the inhabitants of the world from this Most Great Danger!"

While travelling in Europe and America I met altruistic and sanctified souls who were my confidants and associates concerning the question of Universal Peace and who agreed with me and joined their voices with mine regarding the principle of the Oneness of the World of Humanity; but alas, they were very few! The leaders of public opinion and the great statesmen believed that the massing of huge armies and the annual increase of military forces insured peace and friendship among nations. At that time I explained that this theory was based on a false conception; for it is an inevitable certainty that these serried ranks and disciplined armies will be rushed one day into the heat of the battlefield and these inflammable materials will unquestionably be exploded and the explosion will be through one tiny spark; then a world conflagration will be witnessed, the lurid flames of which shall redden all the horizons. Because the sphere of their thoughts was contracted and their intellectual eyes blind they could not acknowledge the above explanation.

From the beginning of the Balkan Confederation a number of important personages inquired of me whether this Balkan war was the expected universal war, but it was answered, "It will terminate in universal war."

In brief, the point to make clear is this: His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh nearly fifty years ago warned the nations against the occurrence of this "Most Great Danger". Although the evils of war were evident and manifest to the sages and scholars, they are now made clear and plain to all the people. No sane person can at this time deny the fact that war is the most dreadful calamity in the world of humanity, that war destroys the divine foundation, that war is the cause of eternal death, that war is conducive to the destruction of populous, progressive cities, that war is the world-consuming fire, and that war is the most ruinous catastrophe and the most deplorable adversity.

The cries and lamentations are raised from every part to the Supreme Apex; the moanings and shriekings have thrown a mighty reverberation through the columns of the world; the civilized countries are being overthrown; eyes are shedding tears, hearing the weeping of the fatherless children; the hearts are burning and being consumed by uncontrollable sobbings and piercing wailings of helpless, wandering women; the spirits of hopeless mothers are torn by rayless [V:16:245] grief and endless sorrows and the nerve-racking sighs and the just complaints of fathers ascend to the Throne of the Almighty.

Ah me! The world of creation is totally deprived of its normal rest; the clash of arms and the sound of murderous guns and cannon are being heard like the roaring of thunder across the heavenly tract, and the explosive materials have changed the battlefields into yawning graveyards, burying for eternity the corpses of thousands upon thousands of youths—the flower of many countries who would have been evolving factors in the civilization of the future.

The results of this crime committed against humanity are worse than whatever I may say and can never be adequately described by pen or by tongue.

O ye governments of the world! Be ye pitiful toward mankind! O ye nations of the earth, behold ye the battlefields of slaughter and carnage; O ye sages of humanity, investigate sympathetically the conditions of the oppressed; O ye philosophers of the West, study profoundly the causes that led to this gigantic, unparalleled struggle; O ye wise leaders of the globe, reflect deeply so that ye may find an antidote for the suppression of this chronic, devastating disease; O ye individuals of humanity, find ye means for the stoppage of this wholesale murder and bloodshed. Now is the appointed time! Now is the opportune time! Arise yet show ye an effort, put ye forward an extraordinary power, and unfurl ye the Flag of Universal Peace and dam the irresistible fury of this raging torrent which is wreaking havoc and ruin everywhere!

Although this captive has been in the prison of despotism for forty years, yet he has never been so sad and stricken with regret and grief as in these days. My spirit is aflame and burning; my heart is broken, mournful, heavy and despondent; my eyes are weeping and my soul is on fire. Oh! I am so bowed down and sorrowful.

O people! Weep and cry, lament and bemoan your fate. Then hasten ye, hasten ye, perchance ye may become able to extinguish with the water of the new-born ideals of spiritual democracy and celestial freedom, this many-flamed, world-consuming fire, and through your heaven-inspired resolution you may usher in the Golden Era of International Solidarity and World Confederation.

O kind God! Harken to the cry of these helpless nations! O pure Lord, show Thy pity to these orphaned children! O incomparable Almighty, stop this destructive torrent! O Creator of the world and the inhabitants thereof, cause the extinction of this burning fire! O Listener to our cries, come to the rescue of the orphans! O Ideal Comforter, console the mothers whose hearts are torn and whose souls are filled with the blood of irremediable loss! O Clement and Merciful, grant the blessing of Thy grace to the weeping eyes and burning hearts of the fathers. Restore calmness to this surging tempest and change this world-encircling war into Peace and Conciliation.

Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent and the Powerful and, verily, Thou art the Seer and the Hearer!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 4 October 1914, 'Akká, Syria.

V:17, 19 January 1915 [V:17:257]

“O thou world of humanity! Awake!”

Today, if the soul—who is attracted with the Love of God and burning with the flame of enthusiasm—shall unloose his tongue and deliver his speech in the utmost state of attraction, it will undoubtedly produce the most wonderful effect upon the hearts. With a resonant voice, he must cry out:

O people! O people! The Sun of Reality has dawned from the horizon of the world, casting Effulgence upon the East and the West. ...

O thou world of humanity! Awake! Awake!

O thou negligent of the Kingdom of God! Revive! Revive!

O thou prisoner of nature! Liberate thyself! Liberate thyself!

O thou afflicted with antiquated dogmas! Get clear of superannuated imaginations! Free thyself of this inertia!

O thou deprived of heavenly bestowals! Acquire a share! Acquire a share!

O thou heedless of the Divine World! Be informed! Be informed!

Cry at the top of your voices similar utterances in those meetings before the concourse of humanity. The effect of your words will be conditioned upon the degree of your attraction and exultation. Then you will observe what an effect this will have.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Extract from Tablet in which the Panama-Pacific International Exposition is mentioned.

V:17, 19 January 1915 [V:17:263]

A brief history of the American development of the Bahá’í Movement

Thornton Chase

In the month of June 1894, a gentleman in Chicago desired to study Sanskrit, in order to further pursue his search into ancient religious teachings. While seeking an instructor he met a Syrian who had come to Chicago from Egypt a short time before, and who told him of the Bahá’í Movement.

As the statements of the life and teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, and his son, ‘Abbás Afandí, the “Greatest Branch”, otherwise known as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, accorded with the declarations of numerous sacred prophecies, and with the age-long expectations of mankind, it was deemed of value to investigate those claims as far as possible.

Other seekers for truth became attracted to the study of these matters, with the result that five accepted the teachings as true during the year 1894. In 1895 a number of earnest students became interested, classes were formed, and several became “believers”, and in 1896, the followers of the Bahá’í Cause in Chicago were numbered by hundreds.

A class of Truth Seekers was begun in Kenosha, Wis., another in Milwaukee, and individuals from New York, Cincinnati, Washington, and other points, came in touch with the Movement in Chicago, and carried information of it to their friends at home, so that in 1898 many students in eastern cities were eagerly seeking knowledge of God through this channel.

On 4 November 1900, there arrived in New York, Mírzá Asadu’lláh, a Persian teacher of authority from ‘Akká, in Palestine, and Hájí Ḥasan-i-Khurasání, a prominent merchant of Cairo, Egypt; with Mírzá Ḥusayn Rúḥí, and Mírzá Buzurg, as interpreters. They remained in New York, meeting and teaching large numbers of people, until 26 November, when they visited Johnstown, New York, for two days, and reached Chicago at 4 pm, Thanksgiving Day, 29 November, where they made their headquarters for a year and a half.

A little later came another Persian gentleman, Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl, a scholar and historian, famous in the Orient for his learning and sincerity, one who had given up a position of the highest honour in Persia, as president of the Royal College of Tīhrán, to embrace the Bahá’í Cause, which resulted in his imprisonment for three years in Persian dungeons. Two young Persians, Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán and Mírzá Amín’u’lláh also arrived to act as interpreters.

With these teachers came the first opportunity for a correct and intimate knowledge of the true Bahá’í teachings. The salient facts,—the mission of the Báb as the forerunner and proclaimer of the coming of “He Whom God Shall Manifest”, his life, and early martyrdom; the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh, the Manifestation, and Revealer of the Divine Word, the station and authority of ‘Abbás Afandí, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the Centre of the Covenant, the Interpreter and the Establisher of the Sacred Law; these were known and believed; but, as yet, there had been but little translation of their writings, and but a small portion of their beautiful and comprehensive teachings of religion and life was known until they were disclosed by these

visitors from the Centre of the Cause. The young interpreters, assisted by Mr Anton Haddád¹ of Syria, busied themselves in translating the Bahá'í Writings from Persian and Arabic into English, and a wonderful treasury of wisdom and knowledge was opened, which has been the delight and satisfaction of thousands of hungry souls in America.

The instructions given by Mírzá Asadu'lláh and Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl were thoroughly sane and practical, and so insisted on righteousness, right living—as the essential of religion, rather than psychic and occult experiments, that many persons, who had conceived views imbued with imaginations and superstitions, fell away from the Cause—but those who remained discovered such spiritual light, guidance, richness, and power in the teachings, that they were deeply confirmed in their belief, and clung to it as the most valuable instruction possible for man to obtain.

The classes and assemblies which had diminished in number, again began to grow, and to spread the knowledge of the Bahá'í Cause; until at the present time its adherents in the United States are numbered by thousands—there are believers in many cities and towns, from the Atlantic to the Pacific—all earnest and sincere in their faith, and in their acceptance of this modern revelation of Divine [V:17:265] Knowledge, and striving with their lives to carry out the Bahá'í teachings of love to God expressed in love to man.

There are assemblies of believers in Chicago and New York, in Boston and Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia, in Cleveland, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Kenosha, Minneapolis, Spokane, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and in many towns of lesser fame; in all of which this wonderful, religious, ethical, moral, and practical teaching of the age, is received and loved as the great solvent of religious, social, and economic problems, and the joy and beauty of life.

V:17, 19 January 1915 [V:17:265]

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

to the Bahá'ís regarding their attendance at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.

...

As regards the second trip of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to America, if the believers of God be enkindled and attracted to the superlative degree, perchance this object will again be obtained. Capacity and capability are the magnetic power.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, 12 March 1913.

V:18, 7 February 1915 [V:18:275]

New commands in the Bahá'í religion that are lacking in Christianity

Compiled from "The Brilliant Proof"

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl

What new command is there in the Bahá'í religion which is lacking in Christianity?

Although this question is an abstruse one which cannot be fully comprehended by a person unless he be well versed in the books of the two peoples, yet we will expound it clearly in such a way as to be easily understood by every soul, and we will explain the specific features of this great Movement and prove the necessity of this Most Holy Manifestation for the comfort and upbuilding of the world. Thus may disinterested persons attain insight and every just one arise in thanksgiving for this great bestowal of God, the All-Glorious.

It is evident to every perceiving soul that the world of humanity will attain perfection, and

¹ Antún Haddád.

that happiness and welfare, the desire of nations and goal of all hearts, will be insured when religious differences and sectarianism, the cause of alienation and estrangement of the people, are utterly removed from the world, and all estrangements and schisms, such as racial, patriotic and political divisions, etc., are dispelled from among men. Thus may men become brothers, loving and kind toward each other. These terrible wars, which are the greatest catastrophes of humanity and civilization, will disappear. The vast sums, the expenditure of which is undoubtedly the cause of impoverishing men and destroying the world, will no longer be devoted to destructive pursuits and infernal machinery. This question is so clear and lucid that the most deficient mind can pass judgement upon it. Nevertheless this condition has been confirmed by the Divine glad-tidings and established by heavenly prophecies. For the Holy Books contain explicit record that in the Great Day which has been exalted by various names, such as “the last day”, “the time of the end”, “the latter day”, “the day of the Lord”, etc., the Glorious Lord will descend and will unite all nations in the worship of the One God. He will so train all men in lofty and spiritual qualities that warfare and conflict will be uprooted, rancour and hatred will be replaced by sociability and peace, and implements of war be changed into farming and trading tools. This is a brief statement of the promises of the prophets concerning the “latter day”.

It is self-evident that all nations are awaiting and anticipating the advent of such a Day and the coming of such a great Cause; nay, they pray and supplicate God to hasten its arrival.

But the greatest obstacles among the nations are the signs and conditions which shall appear with this praiseworthy Manifestation and promised Day; for all the Manifestations of God and founders of religion who have formerly come have mentioned the signs of this great event in their respective books and emphasized and clearly recorded them in their utterances. But every prophet who appeared recorded the self-same signs mentioned by his predecessor and repeated the same words; yet without undertaking to explain the meaning of those signs and conditions or make his object therein known. For instance, consider how for a thousand years his holiness Moses and the Jewish prophets spoke and uttered glad-tidings to the people of the coming of the Lord of Hosts who would harmonize and unite all in the worship of One God. Among the signs of the day of His coming announced by them are:

First: The rolling up of the heavens.

Second: The sun will be darkened.

Third: The moons shall not give her light.

Fourth: The stars shall fall from heaven. [V:18:276]

Fifth: The dead shall arise from their tombs.

Sixth: Ferocious animals will make peace with grazing animals.

Seventh: They will share the same pasture and food.

Eighth: Children will play with poisonous serpents.

Ninth: The people of Israel, who in that day shall have become scattered and humiliated throughout all the nations of the East and West, will be again assembled together by the Lord of Hosts, who will establish them in their promised land and confer upon them eternal glory and everlasting dominion.

These are, in short, some of the prophecies which all the Jewish prophets announced to their people and recorded in their books. They did not state however that these promises were to be taken in a literal sense without symbolism and interpretation, or that the symbolic texts were subject to commentary.

Fifteen hundred years subsequent to the time of His Holiness Moses, the very same promises and signs were revealed by His Holiness Christ—upon whom be glory! Consider verses 29–31 of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew and the tenth and eleventh verses, of the third chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter the Apostle, so that you may witness the

mention of these promises and signs with the utmost clearness. Likewise His Holiness Christ and His disciples confined themselves to the mere mentioning of these signs, as was done by the Jewish Prophets, not undertaking to explain their meaning. Consequently the Christian doctors disagreed in their interpretation of these holy books. Some said that those promises were literal statements and not subject to interpretation and must therefore be fulfilled outwardly. Others among the commentators stated that those promises were symbolic and that they were words requiring interpretation in order that their real meaning might thereby become evident; i.e., that the “Seal of the Book” might be opened in the “latter day”. Six hundred years after His Holiness Christ, the “Seal of the Prophets” announced His mission and the very same promises were again revealed in the Qur’án. The same conditions and signs were identically repeated. But again the Qur’án made no reference to the meaning intended by those prophecies, nor did it state whether they were symbolic or subject to interpretation. Consequently, were a man to consider what has been stated he would most clearly find that the greatest obstacles against the unification of nations have been these very prophecies, glad-tidings, conditions and signs. For the various peoples have been prevented from uniting with each other because the meanings intended by those prophecies were not clear.

Although citing an illustration leads to prolixity,¹ yet we will do so for the purpose of enlightening and further elucidating the matter to the reader. For example, let us assume that a Christian missionary should say to a Jew: “Dear friend, why are you sleep- [V:18:277] ing and heedless? The promised Messiah, whose coming was foretold by all the prophets, has appeared.” Then imagine the Jew answering: “How splendid! How splendid! What beautiful glad-tidings and joyous news! We Jews have made all our wishes dependent upon the coming of the Messiah and daily supplicate by prayer for His advent! Now let us see this promised Messiah whom you declare to have appeared.” The Christian missionary answers: “The promised Messiah was that wronged youth, Jesus of Nazareth, who sacrificed His life for the liberation and salvation of the world.” The Jew would reply: “O esteemed teacher! clear signs are recorded in the Holy Books regarding the appearance of the Messiah, none of which came to pass. We Jews have not found our religion so easily that we can relinquish it carelessly. You consider yourself a teacher of the Holy Books. See then in the Heavenly Books the words that at the time of the coming of the promised Messiah the sun will be darkened, the moon will turn into blood, the new heaven and the new earth will become manifest, the stars will fall, the dead will arise. Where and when did these prophecies become fulfilled during the day of the Nazarene and who saw them? Furthermore, let me show you numerous passages wherein it has been clearly revealed that when the promised Messiah appears He will gather together all the Jews scattered throughout the world and He will save them from the great humiliation, execration and tyranny which they suffer. Then He will establish them in the Holy Land and confer upon them dominion and eternal glory. Now tell me when did Jesus of Nazareth accomplish such a thing? Nay, through his Manifestation the contrary came to pass, for we were established in the Holy Land but we have become scattered through his coming. We were esteemed; we have become humiliated. We were assembled; we became dispersed; we were blessed; we became afflicted with curses. All this was contrary to the promises given to the Jewish people. So to accept Jesus would be to deny those glorious prophets.”

In brief, at this point in the conversation the Christian missionary would fail to answer the Jew. For he, himself, does not understand the real meaning of these glad-tidings. How then could he explain them to the Jews and cause them to be convinced and assured? Therefore during this long period the missionaries of the Christian religion have attempted to discomfit and confound the Jews, yet without traversing the pathway of true knowledge and real proof. Instead of bringing them near the Gospels, they caused them to be annoyed and further removed.

¹ Prolix (of speech, writing, etc.)—long, tedious.

It is therefore recorded in church history that during this long period, that is, since the conversion of the great Constantine down to our time, both in the days of Charlemagne and during the crusades, they repeatedly attempted to force the Jews to accept Christianity, but in the end they failed. Now, had they known the meanings of these glad-tidings there would be no need of using force and compulsion.

Similar to this is the attitude of the Muslim toward the Christian. When the Muslim desires to prove the truth of the mission of the “Seal of the Prophets” to a Christian, he refers the Christian to the signs recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew. Then that Muslim not understanding the meanings thereof is forced to say that this Gospel in the hands of the Christians is not the original Gospel which descended with Jesus-upon whom be peace! As you readily see, the Muslims will clearly prove in word and writing that this Gospel has been interpolated by the Christian scholars and that it has been attributed to His Holiness Christ. In this case the Christian, to whom the reality of the Gospel is evident and manifest, and the love of this Holy Book firmly established in his heart, will be amazed at the incorrect answer of the Muslim. Instead of fellowship and friendship with the Muslim, the Christian becomes an enemy of the Islamic religion and an opponent of the Muslim people.

In short, one of the great obstacles to the unity of the nations is this difficulty which has been explained by the foregoing illustration. All these abstruse problems are involved and explained in the statement that because the Christian missionaries do not understand the real meanings of the books of religions which have appeared prior to the manifestation of His Holiness Christ—upon whom be peace!—therefore they cannot guide others to their own religion. This has become evident and manifest.

As to the religions which have appeared after His Holiness Christ, inasmuch as retrogression and reversal are opposed to natural motion and contrary to the progress and advancement which are evident and manifest in world movements, therefore the Christian cannot turn development backward and cause [V:18:278] other people to descend the ladder of progress in order to unite them to themselves. The great man Lord Curzon has partly understood this point when he writes: “The conversion of Asiatics to the Christian religion is without effect and result.”

Now that this subject has been clearly elucidated we will submit that the present state of progress in the world necessitates the Most Great Manifestation. While His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh resided in Baghdád the first book revealed by Him was *Kitáb-i-Íqán* which is the key to unlock the seals of the Heavenly Books. It comprehends the realities revealed in Holy Writ. By it the doors of the understanding of prophetic words were opened to the faces of the people of Abhá, the real meaning of the Divine Glad-tidings were revealed and the original purposes of such terms as were latent and unknown became manifested. These terms are: “Death”, “Life”, “Heaven”, “Earth”, “Sun”, “Moon,” “Stars”, “Resurrection”, etc. Thus the means of unity became facilitated and the hindrances to international misunderstandings were removed. The signs and emblems of accord and agreement among inimical and opposing people became manifest and apparent. For you observe that while now is but the commencement of the Bahá'í Religion, yet difficult questions and doctrines have become so clearly explained to and so easily accepted by various peoples that numerous souls among Zoroastrians, Jews, Nuşayrís, et al., who have never believed in His Holiness Christ nor would listen to a single verse of the Gospel, have now become acknowledged believers in Bahá'u'lláh through the effect of His blessed utterances. Moreover, they consider His Holiness Christ the Promised Lord and His heavenly Book the Divine Holy Word. They associate and consort with Christians in their feasts and gatherings with the utmost kindness and fellowship. ...

But let us return to the original question: “What has Bahá'u'lláh brought which is not found in the Christian religion?”

Although the great function of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in solving the intricacies of the Heavenly Books, facilitating the removal of differences from among nations and establishing unity and harmony among the sections of the human world is sufficient proof of the greatness and thoroughness of the Bahá'í religion, nevertheless we will now consider the laws and ordinances of this religion, explain their specific virtues, their benefits and good results:

First, a command which is particularly a feature of the Bahá'í religion and is not found in the other religion is *"abstaining from crediting verbal traditions"*. It is well known to men of learning that it was verbal tradition which divided the Jews into two great sects. Such traditions are the basis of the book of Talmud, and caused the division of that one nation. One of the two schisms called the Rabbinim looks upon the teachings of the Talmud as the law which needs to be followed and considers it the greatest means for the preservation and permanence of the Jewish people. But the other sect, Gharraim, looks upon the Talmud as sheer heresy and conducive to perdition. Thus these two sects cannot possibly be harmonized or cease mutual opposition.

Similarly in the Christian religion the main cause of schism and division were these verbal traditions which were termed "authoritative". Each one of the Christian churches, such as the Catholic, the Orthodox, the Jacobite, the Nestorian and others, considers it obligatory to follow these traditions inherited from and handed down by the fathers of the Church, as the very text of the Holy Book.

Thus when in any of the great Councils the question of the unification of the Christian people would be at issue, they would avail themselves of these inherited traditions, which were opposed to union and harmony. Likewise in the religion of Islám, claiming these verbal traditions which were related of the Founder of that religion, subsequent to his death, was the cause of the division and separation into various of the principal sects, such as the Sunnis, the *Shí'ih* and the Kharajite,¹ or into the secondary schools of Hanofite, Malakite, Shafite, Haubilite, etc.²

Each of these hold to a set of traditions considered as authentic by their own sect.

But Bahá'u'lláh closed to the people of the world this door which is the greatest means for sedition; for He has clearly announced that "in the religion of God all recorded matters are referable to the Book and all unrecorded matters are dependent upon the decision of the House of Justice." Thus all narrations, relations and verbal traditions have been discredited among the Bahá'í people and the *door of dissension, which is the greatest among the doors of hell, has been closed and locked.* [V:18:279]

Second: One of the laws and ordinances peculiar to the Bahá'í religion is *the law prohibiting the interpreting of the Word of God*. For interpretation of the Words and exposition of personal opinion has been one of the greatest means of dissension in the former religions, the cause of darkening of the horizon of faith and concealing the real meaning of the Book of God.

It is evident that learned men differ in their minds, and the natural gifts of sagacity and intelligence or the lack of understanding and comprehension vary in degrees among them. Thus when the door of interpretation and perverting of the Words from their outward meaning is opened, strange opinions and curious contradictory interpretations will result and different sects will arise among the one people and one religious community.

Consequently Bahá'u'lláh has explicitly commanded His followers to wholly abandon the door of interpretation and follow the Words revealed in the Tablets according to their outward meaning, so that the events which have transpired among the past nations should

¹ *Khárijíj*, pl. *khawárij*: a member of the al-*khárijíyat* (the kharijite sect), the first identifiable sect of Islám.

² Four orthodox (the *Ḥanafí*, the *Ḥanbalí*, the *Málikí* and the *Sháfi'í*) religious Sunní Islamic schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

not recur among the Bahá'í people, and the unwelcome happenings which appeared among the various sects due to difference in mentality and viewpoint should not become manifest in this new auspicious day, which is the day of the Glorious Lord.

Thus one of the explicit commands of this great Manifestation is the ordinance abrogating differences which separate men. It is because one of the occasions of dissension is difference of scholars with regard to the station of the Manifestation of the Cause. In former religions, even as testified by history, it has become evident that when in a question of this kind a difference has arisen between two of the doctors of religion, both parties were firm in their standpoints and held tenaciously to their sides, while the laity, according to their usage, would adhere some to one and some to the other, thus closing the doors to agreement and unity to such an extent that religious fraternity was changed into deep and bitter enmity, scientific dissension terminating in bloody strife and warfare. This is illustrated by differences which arose between Arius, the priest, and Alexander, the Bishop of Constantinople, regarding the Trinity; in the fourth century CE; also the Nestorian differences which took place in the fifth century between Nestorians, the Bishop of Constantinople, and the other bishops, which caused terrible wars and the shedding of precious blood. The effect of these sad dissensions has lasted until the present day. These are clear proofs and evidences for the point at issue.

Time does not allow us to make mention of the numerous sects and divisions of the Gnostics and others, of which the church historians have counted more than thirty, and incorporated them under the term: "Born of philosophy". All seekers of full accounts are referred to authoritative books on the subject, in order that they may clearly realize that all these divisions and sects came from the disagreements of the doctors as to the degree and station of His Holiness Christ, and their persistence in their respective opinions.

Third: The subject of *disagreement by the doctors as to the station of the Manifestation of God* has been one of those abstruse and difficult questions to solve which proved beyond the power of great minds and baffled a mighty king like Constantine the Great. For notwithstanding the assistance and co-operation of the great bishops of the East and West, he could not reconcile the various parties to the Aryan controversy. Nay, during this long time the power of local councils, the sword of European powers and the verdicts of Inquisitorial Boards failed to remove divisions and schisms caused by metaphysical discussions. But the removal of this indissoluble knot and incurable disease by the easiest of means has been announced in the holy Bahá'í literature, for Bahá'u'lláh in One of His holy Tablets has clearly revealed the following: "Since men differ in their degree of knowledge, if two persons should be found to possess different viewpoints as regards the degree and station of the Manifestation of God, both are acceptable before God, for, in accord with the blessed verse: 'Verily, we have created souls different in degrees'; God has created men different in understanding and diverse in manners. But if those having two points of view engage in conflict and strife while expressing their views, both of them are rejected. For, by knowing the Manifestation of God it is intended to unify the hearts, cultivate souls and to teach the truth of God, whereas conflict and strife of two persons with two different points of view would do harm to the Cause of God. Consequently both of them are referred to the fire." This was the purport of the blessed Tablet in brief. Accordingly in this Holy Cause no one has power to create disharmony, and because of [V:18:280] fear of falling, no one dares to persist in his own opinion at the expense of harmony.

Fourth: Among the specific laws clearly laid down in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is *the law prohibiting slavery*. No mention of this is made in other religions. As none of the former Heavenly Books has forbidden this traffic all the humanitarian instincts which actuated the Great Powers to abolish and destroy it could not withhold the common people from this abominable practice, which has cost the governments and nations great trouble and expense. For instance, the freeing of the slaves constitutes one of the important responsibilities of the

Egyptian government. This necessitates a heavy drain upon the state treasury. Furthermore, the trial and indictment of those guilty of this nefarious traffic brings great affliction and often ruin upon many noted families.

Fifth: Among the laws peculiar to this Great Cause is *the law making it "obligatory upon all to engage in allowable professions as a means of support, and obedience to this law is accepted as an act of worship."* Were a man of insight to consider this strong command, he would testify to the great benefit it contributes towards regulating the affairs of civilization and removing impediments and calamities from human society. For it is evident, in this present day, that innumerable souls designated as monks, anchorites, hermits, religious devotees, dignitaries and others, although sound in body and limb, abstain from occupation and trade, passing their time in indolence and idleness and living upon the proceeds of other men's labour. In reality such men are as atrophied limbs upon the body of humanity and a heavy burden to the men of industry and agriculture. When by a law of religion these innumerable souls abandon idleness and indolence and engage in useful occupations, one can well realize how much this will contribute to the common wealth and remove the difficulties of the body-politic.

Sixth: The law making the *education of children of both sexes compulsory*. This law is also one of the commands explicitly revealed in this most great Cause, and concerning which no mention is made in any of the other religions. For in the other religions the education of the masses is made dependent upon the law of the government. If in former times a government would fail to issue a decree providing for compulsory education, and this failure would result in the decadence of learning and knowledge, the nation would take no thought of it, nor would the people consider themselves and the government responsible. For no law concerning this subject has been revealed in the Heavenly Books. But when a law is laid down in the Heavenly Book of a nation, every individual member will consider himself bound to execute it, and no one will fail to heed that law, for they will not be dependent upon the government to carry it out.

Seventh: The command *prohibiting cursing and execration* and making it obligatory upon all to abstain from uttering that which may [V:18:281] offend men. For, as is evident in moral science, cursing, reviling and speaking in harsh words and offensive phrases is one of the greatest causes of alienating hearts, filling minds with rancour, creating hatred and animosity among the peoples and igniting the fire of calamitous warfare among men. Thus it is said by wise men: "Verily, war begins in words"; and the poet Firdawsí has said: "A mere word is the cause of warfare." Another verse illustrating this point at issue is, "The wound inflicted by the tongue is deeper than that inflicted by the sword." Were one to ponder over the differences and schisms already spoken of, which arose among the Christian peoples, creating different sects and schools, such as the Aryans, Nestorians, Gnostics, et al., kindling the fire of terrible battlefields and violent calamities, he would clearly find from the testimony of authentic history that the principal and initial cause of such divisions and disasters was the difference of opinion between two religious doctors, which would result in discussion and controversy. In order to overcome his opponent and demonstrate the correctness of his own view, or because of believing his own opinion correct, each would so persist in his attitude that it would finally lead to harshness towards the other. This harshness would gradually lead to insinuating remarks and annoying statements which in time would culminate in reviling, execrating, fighting and even bloodshed. Now the harmful outcome of these religious fights and their evil effect upon human society needs no mentioning here. For the calamities caused by these differences during the past ages are recorded in the historical books of every nation, and the hardships which have continued down to our time as the painful result of those dissensions are evident to men of understanding.

Perhaps some one may advance an objection saying that ordinances prohibiting anathema and execration are found in the other Heavenly Books, as, for instance, the commands of His

Holiness Christ, well-known as the Sermon on the Mount, wherein He most lucidly states, "Whosoever calleth another a fool is in danger of hell-fire." In the Qur'án it is stated: "Curse not those who claim (spiritual mission) without the permission of God, thus without knowledge cursing God as an enemy." The answer to this objection is evident to the people of insight, for such ordinances and prohibitions are considered as educational commands in the estimation of the learned and not as laws and enactments of religion. Consider this command of the Sermon on the Mount, wherein He states: "Whosoever is angry with his brother falsely is subject to the law." Again He says: "Store not for yourselves treasures"; and again: "Be not concerned with the morrow." Also: "Whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also"; and "Whosoever desireth thy garment give him also thy cloak." Then later on He says: "Whosoever asks of thee, give unto him, and whosoever would borrow of thee, prevent him not."

It is fully evident that the learned men and doctors of the Christian and Muslim religions have not considered these ordinances as imperative. Men of intelligence versed in law and jurisprudence have not deemed those who disobeyed these laws deserving of punishment and trial. Nay, as already mentioned, they have unanimously accounted them educational laws. Moreover some of those laws are such that the doctors have not considered those slighting them as transgressors or evildoers before God. For instance, "If anyone smites you upon the one cheek, turn to him the other", "He who begs of you, give to him", "He who seeks to borrow from you, do not refuse him." The above statement will clearly show why such commands and ordinances were not considered by the leaders of the Christian peoples as imperative and obligatory and why they could not remove cursing and execration from among the community.

But in the Bahá'í religion the commands prohibiting cursing, reviling, swearing and blasphemy have been revealed as imperative and obligatory laws. The responsibility attaching to the violators has been revealed in various Tablets. Emphatic commands have been issued in regard to the purity of pen and tongue, prohibiting the writing or speaking of that which will offend men. For example, although in various Tablets such as the *Ishráqát* and others, the law prohibiting cursing and execration has been explicitly laid down, nevertheless Bahá'u'lláh, during His latter days, in the blessed *Book of the Covenant* fortified and emphasized the above law by addressing the following command to the people of the world:

"O ye people of the world! I exhort ye towards that which is the cause of the elevation of your station! Hold fast to the fear of God and adhere to the hem of kindness! Verily I say unto you, the tongue is for the mention of good; defile it not with unseemly [V:18:282] words. Verily God has forgiven the past. Hereafter all must utter that which is seemly. Shun anathema, execration and that whereby man is perturbed. The station of man is great. Some time ago this lofty word was revealed from the treasury of the Pen of Abhá: *Today is a great, blessed Day! That which was latent in man is today revealed and become manifest. The station of man is great, should he adhere to veracity and truth and remain firm and steadfast in the Cause.*"

Every intelligent soul who reflects upon this utterance: "Verily, God has forgiven the past; hereafter all must utter that which is seemly", "Shun anathema, execration and that whereby man is perturbed", will clearly see how emphatic an ordinance has been given forth ratifying the prohibition of anathema and execration. Because according to the law current among the people of knowledge, the purport of this blessed utterance is an explicit prohibition concerning anathema and execration.

The intended purpose thereof is the unpardonable position of the one who violates this mighty command and decisive blessed ordinance.

In this case, to the people of insight it is evident, manifest and firmly established that the

prohibition as regards anathema and execration is an specialized ordinance and one of the particular commandments of this greatest Dispensation. Thus, through the favour of God the Most High, from the traces of the Supreme Pen, this unseemly action and the ordeals resulting therefrom may disappear from among the people of the world and the glad-tidings recorded in the third verse of the 22nd chapter of the Revelation of St. John concerning the events of the day of Manifestation—namely: “Hereafter there shall be no more cursing,” shall be realized.

Eighth: Prohibition of *the carrying of arms* except in time of necessity. This ordinance is not to be found in other religions, but in the Bahá’í religion it is considered as one of the imperative and essential commands. The great utility of this law is most evident and manifest. How many souls who were unable to control excessive anger have given vent to it by the use of arms ready at hand? If the murderer had not been armed, often after one hour the violence of his anger would have subsided and no crime would have resulted. These are the minor evil results of carrying arms. There are other greater evils continually manifested by people who carry arms, which are productive of great revolutions and excessive losses for the government and nations: The details of this are not in keeping with brevity and are conducive to prolongation, nevertheless the afflictions of the nations and ordeals of the people are evident to men of perception.

Ninth: The question relative to the necessity of *the creation of the House of Justice and institution of National Assemblies and Constitutional Governments*. This command is likewise specialized to this evident religion and is not mentioned in the others. For under other religions it is possible for despotic governments to be restored and founded, because the love of the permanence, establishment and endurance of religious ordinances and the fear of going contrary to them is so deeply rooted in human souls, by reason of the fear of God, that they would not pass away in a thousand years and would not be superseded except through the renewal of the religion and the reform of laws.

In short, these are some of the especial commands of the Bahá’í religion which the writer of these lines has submitted in accordance with this opportune occasion. The consideration of brevity has made it necessary to omit the mentioning of other special commandments in this Most Great Dispensation.

Among them are ethics and conditions requisite for a wife’s knowledge of her travelling or absent husband. Another concerns the prohibition of haughtiness and egoism. Another is a command as to purity of all things, with recommendation and encouragement to observe sanitary measures and cleanliness, and to shun utterly all that tends to filth and uncleanness. Among them is a command directing the agreement of nations in the abolition of warfare and battles, and the conservation of the conditions of security and peace. Many such commands exist, the words of amplification and detail of which are beyond the limits of this occasion. For justice to this most important subject would necessitate the compilation of a large volume and not a short article. But although the article may assume more lengthy proportion, I am forced, nevertheless, to remind the people of knowledge of one distinguishing feature of the many in the Bahá’í religion—perchance the radiant sight (insight) may attain to the great bestowal of this Most Supreme Cause, and the pure tongue may utter thanksgiving and praise to God, the Blessed, the Sublime! [V:18:283]

It is this: One of the abstruse problems of social philosophy is the prevention of monopoly and wealth control by certain individuals. This subject has been discussed by the philosophers of the world for many years. The wise men of Europe and America, especially the Socialists, in endeavouring to solve this abstruse problem, have entered into minute discussion and deep analyses. The governments of Europe and America have given the subject exhaustive attention; nevertheless they have not yet agreed upon any opinion and

have not reached a consensus of remedy for the solution of this seemingly insurmountable question.

But if a soul should ponder and reflect upon the Divine institution concerning the question of heritage and the *modus operandi* of the distribution of legacies among heirs according to the laws of this Dispensation, he will see that this all-important problem has been solved in the simplest manner. *The distribution of wealth* among the nations has been established according to the best method.

Inasmuch as the matter of death among mankind is an unavoidable event, if the distribution of the estate left by those who ascend to God should be effected according to this Divine recommendation, it will be impossible for wealth to be accumulated by the few or for any particular family to exercise a monopoly, leaving others deprived and afflicted by poverty and want. For the Mighty Lawgiver has dealt with this important affair in this manner: He has divided the heirs of the deceased into seven classes, including teachers, who are the spiritual fathers of enlightened individuals in the world of humanity. The heritage is divided according to the number 2,520, which is the lowest number comprising the integral fractions of nine. Under this division the seven classes eligible to legacies are as follows: First: Offspring. Second: Wives. Third: Fathers. Fourth: Mothers. Fifth: Brothers. Sixth: Sisters. Seventh: Teachers. The nearest relatives are arranged the closest. Each class receives its due according to the number sixty, which runs down through all. He has decreed that these seven classes mentioned will come equally into possession of their legitimate rights, each receiving his share from this division.

When the people of insight reflect upon that which has been recorded they will see that with this command in operation, wealth will never be monopolized by a limited few and no individual through sheer forceful skill will come into possession of another's wealth. Wealth will always be in circulation among all. All mankind will inherit from one another and all will be benefited by this capital. ...

Now, in regard to the question of features distinguishing this Great Cause from other laws and religions of the people of the world in all centuries and ages: If fair-minded and intelligent men of knowledge should ponder and reflect upon the judicious laws of the Lord of mankind, they will no doubt bear witness to the perfection of Divine Providence in the laws thus instituted. For instance, these three firm and irrefutable ordinances, namely, *first*: the question of heritage by which monopoly of wealth will be removed and the question of socialism solved; *second*: the question of universal peace and international agreements regarding disarmament and conserving expenditure now devoted to implements of war; *third*: the question of all being commanded to acquire a profession, art or trade whereby they may earn a living, thus lightening the burden of expense to those upon whom it falls, such as farmers, labourers, et al. This expense is created by the idlers and unemployed members of the human family.

These fair-minded and intelligent men will also testify that the readjustment of the world and the salvation of mankind from great dangers is conditioned upon following the commands of this Most Great Manifestation. Thus will they utter the blessed words: "Blessed is God, the Possessor of the Dominion and the Kingdom!"

To all people of insight it is evident that in this Most Great Cause all the means of comfort for the nation have been provided and a plan of readjustment of the affairs of the people of the world from all standpoints established.

V:19, 2 March 1915 [V:19:295]

Tablets to Daniel Jenkyn¹

Through his honour Mírzá ‘Alí-Akbar-i-Rafsanjání, to his honour Mr Daniel Jenkyn.

Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art confirmed by the Divine Spirit!

A thousand times bravo because thou didst forego the physical comfort and rest in order to proclaim the glad-tidings of the heavenly illumination. Thou didst gird up the loins of service and travelled to Holland to diffuse the Fragrances of God. Shouldst thou realize how blessed is this trip, unquestionably thou wouldst not rest for one moment, and uninterruptedly thou wouldst engage in the promotion of the Cause of the Almighty. Thou didst well to hasten from London to Holland.

With his heart and spirit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was thy guide and companion. Although in body he was far, yet in spirit he was near. I hope from the bestowals of the Lord of Hosts, His Holiness the Promised One, that this voyage may assume the importance of the voyage of Peter and Paul when the latter went to Antioch. Consider that important results that voyage had. Now the results of thy journey will be greater than that. Know thou this of a certainty. Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 19 November 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

Through Áqá Mírzá Luţfu’lláh Ḥakím, London, to Mr Daniel Jenkyn.

Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art attracted to the Truth!

Many of the philosophers of the world and the great men of different nations wished to attain the Truth, but they were deprived. Then praise thou God that thou hast reached to the essence of the Truth and thou hast heard the proclamation of the Kingdom and the teachings of the Lord of Hosts. Through this great favour thou hast prospered and become victorious.

I pray, on thy behalf, that thou mayest become the proclaimer of God in that city, that thou mayest awake the sleepers and warn the negligent; that thou mayest become lighted like a torch and bestow the light of guidance,

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

V:19, 2 March 1915 [V:19:296]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“Concerning the question whether all souls enjoy eternal life”

To his honour Mr Remey—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art rejoiced by the Divine Glad-tidings!

Verily I have received thy last letter, and thanked God that thou didst reach Paris protected

¹ Bahá’í from St. Ives, Cornwall, England. Died 31 December 1914.

and guarded by Him. Thank thou God that He assisted thee to behold the brilliant faces of the believers of God, and favoured thee to meet them in American countries; for verily, beholding those shining countenances is a divine gift. By it, the hearts are dilated, the souls are rejoiced, and the spirits are attracted toward the Supreme Concourse.

Do not lament over the departure of my dearly-beloved Breakwell.¹ For verily, he has ascended to the luminous Rose-Garden in the Abhá Kingdom, near the mercy of his Lord, the Almighty, and is crying out with the loudest voice, "O that my people knew how my Lord hath forgiven me, and made me one of those who have attained to the meeting of God!"

[For passage regarding Thomas Breakwell, see *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 187–9.]

Convey my greeting to the attracted maid-servant of God, Mrs Jackson and announce to her the bounty of God and tell her: "Do not haste, neither be thou restless. Soon, verily, all the problems shall be solved (literally: every knot shall be untied), and God shall unfold a spacious door, and the purpose shall be attained."

[For passage titled "Eternal life", refer to *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 387–8.]

Verily, I beseech God to make thee confirmed under all circumstances. Do not become despondent, neither be thou sad. Ere long, thy Lord shall make thee a sign of guidance among mankind.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 3 May 1906, Washington, D.C.

V:19, 2 March 1915 [V:19:297]

Letter from Mrs May Maxwell to Mr Charles Mason Remey

Montreal, Canada, 3 December 1913

Dear Bahá'í brother,

... Regarding Thomas Breakwell, you will remember the year and the month that he came to me in Paris when I was staying with Mrs Jackson. I do not remember the date but I remember all the facts.

Early in the spring my mother had written to 'Abdu'l-Bahá asking permission for me to leave Paris when she and my brother would be leaving to spend the summer in Brittany. A Tablet had come in reply in which this permission was refused and 'Abdu'l-Bahá said as far as it was possible, not to absent myself [V:19:298] from Paris at all. Then Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl wrote explaining the circumstances to him and asking for permission for me to leave. But the time came for my mother and brother to leave the city and the permission had not yet come. They closed the apartment and I went to stay with Mrs Jackson.

During that month I spent in Paris we had wonderful meetings, Mons. Dreyfus and others received the teachings at that time. I had known, the previous winter, a Mrs Milner who was a friend of Lillian James. She had gone to America and returned and on the steamer coming back she had met Thomas Breakwell. She had told him nothing of the teachings, but had spoken of me as a special friend in Paris, whom she wished to have him meet, and the day after they arrived in Paris, she brought him to my little apartment at Mrs Jackson's. I shall never forget opening the door and seeing him standing there. It was like looking at a veiled

¹ Thomas Breakwell was the first English Bahá'í. Refer to H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 74ff.

light. I saw at once his pure heart, his burning spirit, his thirsty soul, and over all was cast the veil which is over every soul until it is rent asunder by the power of God in this day. As I opened the door, Mrs Milner said "he was a stranger and she took him in," then when we were seated she told me that he was a young Englishman who had been living in the southern states of America and that he was a Theosophist. He stayed a short time. As he was leaving, he said that Mrs Milner had told him that I had received some teachings which had had a great effect on my life and although he was only going to be in Paris a few days, he would like to call to see me and hear what I could tell him. We made an appointment for the following morning and then he left. At the appointed hour next day he arrived, his eyes shining, his face illumined, his voice vibrating under the stress of great emotion. He looked at me very intently and then said: "I have come to you to help me. Yesterday after I left you, I walked alone down the boulevard and suddenly some great force nearly swept me off my feet. I stood still as though awaiting something and a voice announced to me distinctly 'Christ has come!'" Then he said, "What do you think this means?" Then I gave him the Message and teachings from the beginning and the veil that I had seen over him disappeared. He was like a blazing light. Such was his capacity, that he received the Message in all its fullness and all its strength and beauty within three days and on the third day he wrote his supplication to 'Abdu'l-Bahá which in its force and simplicity I have never seen equalled: "My Lord! I believe; forgive me. Thy servant, Thos. Breakwell."

That evening I went to the rue du Bac to get my mail and found a cablegram which had just arrived, saying, "You may leave Paris" Signed "'Abbás". When, the next day, my heart filled with gratitude, I joined my mother and brother beside the sea and told my mother all that had happened, she burst into tears and said, "You have a wonderful Master."

I could write you pages about the beloved Thomas Breakwell; of the fire of love burning in his heart when he returned from 'Akká, of his penetrating spiritual power in our midst, of the light of servitude and sacrifice which burned so brilliantly in his soul; but you know all this even better than I. I only want to add that his kindness and love to my mother during those days in Paris produced a great effect on her and that he was always a joy and a consolation to her during that period of her life before she understood the glory of this Cause. I have always felt that Thomas Breakwell was the first of the Paris believers to receive the confirmation of the Holy Spirit and the fire of the Love of God.

I am yours in servitude to the Centre of the Covenant!

May Maxwell

VI:6, 24 June 1915 [VI:6:43]

"The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause"

Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in answer to questions asked by Dr Edward C. Getsinger during a few brief meetings at Haifa, Syria, 26 January to 5 February 1915, and recorded by Dr Getsinger at the time.

No obstacle should be placed before any soul which might prevent it from finding the truth. Bahá'u'lláh revealed his directions, teachings, and laws, so that souls might know God, and not that any utterance might become an obstacle in their way.

Holding to the letter of the law is many times an indication of a desire for leadership. One who assumes to be the enforcer of the law shows an intellectual understanding of the Cause, but that spiritual guidance in them is not yet established.

The alphabet of things is for children, that they may in time use their reasoning powers. "Following the spirit" is a guidance by and through the heart, the prompter of the spirit. The Pharisees were extremely orthodox, holding strictly to the law. They were the cause of the

condemnation and ultimate crucifixion of Jesus.

Several times tablets have been written to some friends regarding a small detail in the work of the Cause, which they might attend to, such as reporting [VI:6:44] about Azalís, náqidín,¹ et al., and now we hear that such tablets are used as a proof of their authority over the friends in those regions. Although the books and writings of Abu'l-Faḍl are used in many countries as text books, never did he even give a sign that he was an authority on any subject, consequently the gifts of God ever increased upon him, since he bore all honours in humility, until he attained to the supreme nearness.

The ones in real authority are known by their humility and self-sacrifice and show no attitude of superiority over the friends.

Some time ago a tablet was written stating that none are appointed to any authority to do anything but to serve the Cause as true servants of the friends—and for this no tablet is necessary; such service when true and unselfish, requires no announcement, nor following, nor written document.

Let the servant be known by his deeds, by his life!

To be approved of God alone should be one's aim.

When God calls a soul to a high station, it is because that soul has capacity for that station as a gift of God, and because that soul has supplicated to be taken into His service. No envies, jealousies, calumnies, slanders, plots, nor schemes, will ever move God to remove a soul from its intended place, for by the grace of God, such actions on the part of the people are the test of the servant, testing his strength, forbearance, endurance and sincerity under adversity. At the same time those who show forth envies, jealousies, etc., toward a servant, are depriving themselves of their own stations, and not another of his, for they prove by their own acts that they are not only unworthy of being called to any station awaiting them, but also prove that they cannot withstand the very first test—that of rejoicing over the success of their neighbour, at which God rejoices. Only by such a sincere joy can the gift of God descend unto a pure heart.

Envy closes the door of Bounty, and jealousy prevents one from ever attaining to the Kingdom of Abhá.

No! Before God! No one can deprive another of his rightful station, that can only be lost by one's unwillingness or failure to do the will of God, or by seeking to use the Cause of God for one's own gratification or ambition.

No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God. By assisting in the success of another servant in the Cause does one in reality lay the foundation for one's own success and aspirations.

Ambitions are an abomination before the Lord.

How regrettable! Some even use the affairs of the Cause and its activities as a means of revenge on account of some personal spite, or fancied injury, interfering with the work of another, or seeking its failure. Such only destroy their own success, did they know the truth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá is the interpreter of the aims, intents, and purposes of the Words of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh) and is the interpreter of his own written words, and none can say that this or that is the intention conveyed therein, save 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create a division

¹ Covenant-breakers ("Nakazeen")—náqidín or náqidu'l-mitháq.

and discord is indeed one who errs.

Were not the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh one adaptable to the entire world and its diverse nations, it could not be a unique and universal Revelation, but its elasticity adapts itself to all conditions, and its spirit is one that moulds itself into every vehicle and need for the accomplishment of the divine plan of unity. [VI:6:45]

But when some follow merely the hard and fixed letter of the law, they deprive it (the Revelation) of its elastic quality—the spirit—and endeavour to convert it into a hard instrument of inflexible qualities.

In this day every one must be tested, as the time of the “chosen ones” to prove their worth is indeed very short. The day of attainment is drawing to a close for them. The “first fruits” must be ripened in spirit, mellowed in love, and consumed by their self-sacrifice and severance. None other are acceptable as first fruits, and all who fail to attain to the standard through the tests, are relegated to the “many who are called”.

The more one is severed from the world, from desires, from human affairs, and conditions, the more impervious does one become to the tests of God. Tests are a means by which a soul is measured as to its fitness, and proven out by its own acts. God knows its fitness beforehand, and also its unpreparedness, but man, with an ego, would not believe himself unfit unless proof were given him. Consequently his susceptibility to evil is proven to him when he falls into the tests, and the tests are continued until the soul realizes its own unfitness, then remorse and regret tend to root out the weakness.

The same test comes again in greater degree, until it is shown that a former weakness has become a strength, and the power to overcome evil has been established.

Blessed are they who are the means of making unity among the friends, and pity on those who *in the right or wrong* are the cause of discord. For instance: When one is in the right in a case in dispute, and his minority prevents him from establishing this rightful matter, instead of agitating the subject, if he will humbly submit to sacrifice his position for the sake of unity and peace, God will accept that sacrifice and ere long the rightful matter will be established without any further dispute, by the Divine assistance; whereas without such sacrifice and submissiveness great harm might ensue.

The friends must be prepared to efface themselves at all times. Seeking the approval of men is many times the cause of imperilling the approval of God.

The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause and mention the Name of God. We need not fear the enemies on the outside for such can be easily dealt with. But the enemies who call themselves friends and who persistently violate every fundamental law of love and unity, are difficult to be dealt with in this day, for the mercy of God is still great. But ere long this merciful door will be closed and such enemies will be attacked with a madness.

It has been a long time since letters have been received from the friends. Everything is first read by the censor, and all tablets likewise submitted to him, and as my mail alone would keep him very busy, we make no effort to trouble him. Tell Ahmad Yazdí not to send any more mail to me under any circumstances.

Indeed, I contemplate no journey, for who would look after the poor should I leave here to travel to America or elsewhere?

If you knew what great things would happen to the Cause after my departure, you would pray every day and night for my release and demise.

VI:7, 13 July 1915 [VI:7:51]

Bahá'í martyrdoms in Persia

Extracts from letters from Dr Susan I. Moody and Dr Arastú,¹ Tīhrán, Persia.

Áqá Shaykh 'Alí-Akbar-i-Qúchaní, a noted Bahá'í teacher, was murdered in Mashhad last April. The assassin shot him in the back and the body lay where it fell in the bazaars for some days. The animosity against the Bahá'ís had reached the point where none dared to move it for fear of a general slaughter. A photograph of fifty Bahá'ís was posted in the bazaars and they were boycotted in all the shops.

A few days ago news reached Tīhrán from Qúchaní that the wife of the martyr has died in childbed; the child also died. No midwife would attend her, nor would a Muslim prepare the bodies for burial. It was forbidden to bring them to the graveyard, so the grandmother washed the bodies and had them buried in, their own garden.

The original of the photograph sent herewith was given me by Shaykh 'Alí Akbar while he was sojourning in Tīhrán three years ago.

His martyrdom is foretold by the beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the tablet of which I am enclosing both Persian and English copies. Persistent effort is being made to bring the murderer to justice.

Susan I. Moody

... The wife of Áqá Shaykh 'Alí Akbar, the martyr, had three or four children, and she herself was very learned. Consider how much the enemies have added to their oppression and tyranny toward the Bahá'ís. All the Bahá'ís are scattered from Khurásán and are distressed and wandering. ... Also from Zavareh,² which is a city near Işfahán, a great number of the Bahá'ís have come to Tīhrán after all their property had been taken. ...

We have no remedy save to be patient and pray on behalf of the oppressors. May God awaken them!

Dr Arastú, through Mírzá Luţfu'lláh, London, England.

VI:7, 13 July 1915 [VI:7:51]

Tablet revealed for Shaykh 'Alí Akbar

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

O thou firm one in the Covenant!

Thy letter addressed to his honour Mírzá Ḥaydar 'Alí was noted and from its contents regret was experienced because our intention was to prepare the means of tranquillity; now it has produced difficulties and you are greatly troubled; but as these troubles are in the path of God it is in reality a favour and will have great results.

Since this is so, it is better that with the utmost cheerfulness and happiness you bid farewell to the friends (saying): I am going on a journey to teach that perchance I may be confirmed in servitude and perhaps the cup of martyrdom [VI:7:52] may overflow. As in this region the giving up of life is not attainable, therefore it is necessary to hasten to other parts.

¹ Dr Arastú Khán Ḥakím.

² Zavárih.

Then go to Ishqábád and a letter will be written to Ḥaḍrátí Afnán to prepare the necessities of the journey to send you to Iṣfahán because in Iṣfahán the people are crying aloud for teachers and I hope that you may attain to a great and distinguished service on this journey. From Iṣfahán you may hasten to Ábádih and Shíráz and from there to the shores of the Persian gulf and the journey may be ended at the blessed tomb.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mírzá Valí'u'lláh Khán-i-Varqá, 28 May 1915, Tihrán.

VI:8, 1 August 1915 [VI:8:62]

“The Will of the Creator is effected through the process of (voluntary) composition”

Scientific proof of the existence of God

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered Sunday, 9 February 1913, at 30 rue St. Didier, Paris.

[See also *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 412–5, for a similar Talk.]

Translated from notes in Persian by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Today some one asked a question regarding the existence of God.

What are the proofs through which one can establish the existence of God?

People are divided into two sections, one which is satisfied with the knowledge of the attributes of divinity, and the other which strives to establish the existence of divinity, and be informed of the fundamental principles of divine philosophy.

Therefore today I will speak to you of the proofs which establish scientifically the existence of God.

I will not quote to you the scriptural proofs from the Old and the New Testament or the Qur'án, for you are more or less familiar with those ideas. Consequently I will deal with this subject from an intellectual standpoint. As it is an abstruse subject I request you to give your utmost attention.

When we look upon all forms of phenomena we observe that they are the results of composition. For example, certain single atoms are brought together through the inherent law of elective affinity existing between these various particles, the result of which is the human being. A number of primordial atoms have gone into the make up of a plant, the result of which is the flower.

Again looking into the mineral kingdom we observe that this law of cohesion is working in the same manner in that kingdom, for we see that many atoms go into the composition of a piece of stone which through purification may reach to the state of a mirror. [VI:8:63]

In short, the existence, of life depends upon the composition and decomposition of phenomena. When the particles of a given composition are disintegrated this may be called non-existence, but the original simple atoms will go back to their primary elements and are ever existent.

For instance, the body of man being the resultant factor of the composition of these atoms, when this body becomes the subject of decomposition we call that death, but those atoms of which the body of man was composed, being simple and primordial, are indestructible. Consequently it is proved that the existence of phenomena depends upon composition and their mortality upon decomposition.

This is a scientific principle; science approves of it, because it is not a matter of belief. There is a great difference between theories upheld by belief, and facts which are

substantiated by science.

Beliefs are the susceptibilities of conscience, but scientific facts are the deductions of reason and inexorable logic.

Therefore it is logically proven that the existence of phenomena depends upon composition, and their destruction upon disintegration.

Now going back to our subject and the facts upheld by materialists. They state that inasmuch as it is proven and upheld by science that the life of phenomena depends upon composition and their destruction upon disintegration, then where comes in the need or necessity of a Creator—the self-subsistent Lord?

For we see with our own eyes that these infinite beings go through myriads of compositions and in every composition appearing under a certain form showing certain characteristic virtues, then we are independent of any divine maker.

This is the argument of the materialists. On the other hand those who are informed of divine philosophy answer in the following terms:

Composition is of three kinds:

1. Accidental composition.
2. Involuntary composition.
3. Voluntary composition.

There is no fourth kind of composition. Composition is restricted to these three categories.

If we say that composition is accidental, this is philosophically a false theory, because then we have to believe in an effect without a cause, and philosophically no effect is conceivable without a cause. We cannot think of an effect without some primal cause, and composition being an effect, there must naturally be a cause behind it.

As to the second composition, i.e., the involuntary composition. Involuntary composition means that each element has within it as an inherent function this power of composition. For example, certain elements have flowed towards each other, and as an inherent necessity of their being they are composed. That is, it is the imminent need of these elements to enter into composition.

For example, the inherent quality of fire is burning or heat. Heat is an original property of fire.

Humidity is the inherent nature of water. You cannot conceive of H₂O, which is the chemical form of water, without having humidity connected, for that is its inherent quality, inseparable and indivisible.

Now as long as it is the inherent necessity of these elements to be composed, there should not be any decomposition. While we observe that after each composite organism, there is a process of decomposition we learn that the composition of the organisms of life is neither accidental nor involuntary. Then what have we as a form of composition? It is the third, that is the voluntary composition. And that means that the infinite forms of organisms are composed through a superior will, the eternal will, the will of the living and self-subsistent Lord. [VI:8:64]

This is a rational proof, that the Will of the Creator is effected through the process of composition.

Ponder over this carefully. When you comprehend the significances of this subject you will then be able to convey it to others. The more you think over this the greater will be your comprehension.

Thank God that He has given you such a power through which you can comprehend these divine mysteries. Reflect deeply, ponder carefully, think minutely, and then the doors of knowledge shall be opened unto you.

VI:9, 20 August 1915 [VI:9:65]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be read by the friends of God in the East and the West

Translated 4 August 1908

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye people of the Kingdom of Abhá!

There are two influences tending toward prosperity and progress which emanate from the forefront of advancement of the world of humanity. They remind the negligent, awaken them that sleep, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, power of utterance to the mutes and life to the dead.

One is the influence of civilization—that development of the world of nature that concerns the material life of man. It promotes physical advancement and cultivates the social virtues. The laws and deductions of science, so indispensable to progress, are the product of the lofty thoughts of sound minds, the accumulated results of the efforts of ancient and modern scholars. The most effective power for the promotion and dissemination of this influence is just government.

The other is the divine influence, the holy and spiritual revelations, which insure eternal glory, everlasting happiness, the illumination of the world, the appearance of merciful phenomena in the world of humanity, and perpetual life. The fundamental basis thereof is the teachings and the precepts of the prophets, the dictates and attraction of the conscience, which belong to the realm of morality. Like unto the lamp they illuminate and brighten the depths and recesses of human realities. The effective power of this is the Word of God.

But the advancement of civilization, material perfections and human virtues will bear no fruit or result unless joined to the spiritual perfections; merciful qualities and sound morals, and the happiness of the human world, which is the original goal, will not be attained. For although through the advancement of civilization and the adornment and refinement of the material world, happiness is realized, and the sight of hopes fulfilled in perfect beauty wins the heart, yet, concomitantly, great dangers, severe ordeals and awful catastrophes are involved.

Now, when ye behold the order and regularity of countries, cities and villages, the attractive adornment, the delicacy of the blessings, the suitability of implements, the ease of transportation and travelling, the extension of knowledge of the facts of the world of nature, the great inventions and gigantic undertakings and the fine and artistic discoveries, ye shall say that civilization is the cause of happiness and the development of the human world.

Yet again, when ye glance over the inventions of infernal instruments of destruction, the creation of the forces of ruin, the discovery of fiery means which cut at the root of life, it becomes plainly evident that civilization is twin with savagery and a concomitant thereof, unless material civilization be aided by divine guidance, merciful appearance, heavenly thoughts, and become joined to the spiritual states, the perfections of the kingdom (of God) and the divine bounties.

Now consider how the most civilized and populous countries of the world have become

storehouses of infernal articles (guns, etc.), the dominions of the world a great barracks, the nations of the world armed hosts, and the kings thereof commanding generals of the battlefield. Thus hath the human world fallen into a great calamity!

Therefore this civilization and material development must be led by the Great Guidance; the mundane world must be made the place for the appearance of the bounties of the kingdom; material advancement must be made twin with merciful revelation. Thus may the human world appear as the representative of the (heavenly) assembly on the plane of existence, and the exposition of divine evidence may reveal itself in the greatest sweetness and loveliness. Thus may eternal happiness and glory find realization.

Praise be to God! For centuries and cycles the banner of civilization has been raised, the human world has day by day advanced and developed, the material world has flourished and outward perfections increased until now the world of human existence has attained great capacity for the spiritual teachings and the divine summons.

To illustrate: When a suckling babe has passed through the material grades and has attained physical growth and development, the body reaches the grade of maturity and attains capacity for the manifestation of ideal perfections and intellectual virtues. Then the signs of the endowment of perception, intelligence and knowledge, and the spiritual forces appear.

Likewise in the general world, when mankind accomplished physical development, travelled through the grades of civilization and attained the human wonders, virtues and endowments in their most consummate form, it attained capacity for the appearance and extension of the spiritual divine perfections and obtained worthiness for hearing the divine summons.

Then the ensign of the Kingdom was raised, spiritual virtues and perfections became manifest, the sun of reality arose, the light of the "Most Great Peace" dawned, the solidarity of the human world was realized. We hope that the radiation of these lights may day by day become intensified and these ideal virtues magnified. Thus may the great achievement of the human world become evident and manifest, and the beloved of the love of God may become with the utmost sweetness and beauty the representatives of the (heavenly) assemblage.

O ye friends of God! Know ye verily that the happiness of the world of humanity is dependent upon the unity and solidarity of mankind, and that material and spiritual progress both rest upon universal friendliness and love among human individuals.

Consider other living beings; that is to say the animals that graze, or fly, and those that are ferocious. The individual of every ferocious kind is separated from its kin and the members of the same species, and lives in loneli- [VI:9:67] ness. They exercise the utmost opposition and ferocity towards each other. When they chance to meet they immediately engage in contention and fighting, and use their claws and sharpen their teeth by ferocity, such as atrocious lions or bloodthirsty wolves. Thus do the ferocious animals that live solitary and fight for their living.

But as to the tame, domestic animals of good nature and pure temperaments, such as those that fly and those that graze, they associate with each other with the utmost love, and company by company they live together. They spend their time in the greatest happiness, joy and gladness. The thankful birds which are content with a few grains, practice the utmost joyousness towards one another and sing myriads of melodies upon the pleasant plains, mountains and valleys. Likewise the animals that graze, like the sheep, deer and rabbit; live in a state of greatest friendliness, and fellowship with happiness and unity in the pasturage of the green tablelands. But the dogs, wolves, tigers and the bloodthirsty hyenas and other ferocious animals shun each other and wander lonely after their prey. Even when the animals that graze and fly come to each other's nest or den, there is no opposition and estrangement

manifested, nay rather they treat one another with the utmost friendliness and affection. On the contrary, when a ferocious animal approaches the den of one of its kind, the two engage in contention. Even if one passes through the neighbourhood of the other, it is at once attacked and if possible destroyed.

Therefore it becomes evident that friendliness and love even in the animal kingdom are the result of good nature, pure temperament and gentle behaviour; while discord and estrangement characterize the ferocious brutes of the plains.

The almighty God has not created in man the claws and teeth of the lion; nay the human existence is made and fashioned after the best form and for the most consummate innate virtues. Therefore it behoves man in homage for this creation and gratitude for this bestowal that he should exercise friendship and love for his kind, nay more, he should treat all living beings with justice and equity.

Again consider that the comfort, joy, rest and happiness of mankind come from love and unity; that contentions and disputes are the greatest causes of distress, misery, tribulation and unhappiness. But a thousand times alas! that humanity is ignorant and negligent concerning these matters, and every day becomes metamorphosed into the character of a savage animal, one day a ferocious tiger, again a coiling and repulsive serpent.

The sublimity of man is derived from the qualities and virtues which characterize the angels of the supreme concourse. Therefore when good qualities and virtuous attributes appear in man, he is verily a heavenly personage, an angel of the kingdom, a divine reality, a merciful manifestation. And when he does contend and thirst for blood, he exceeds in ferocity the basest of brutes, for while the bloodthirsty wolf will devour one sheep in the night, in that time man will make away with a thousand victims.

For man has two aspects: one the sublimity of nature and intellectual qualities, and the other the base animality and imperfections of passion.

If you travel through the continents and countries of the world, you will see, on one side, the signs of ruin and destruction and, on the other, the signs and monuments of civilization and construction. As to the ruin and destruction, they are the signs of contention and discord, of war and battle. But order and construction are the results of the virtues of friendliness and concord.

If one travel in the central desert of Asia, he will observe how many cities as great and populous as Paris or London have been ruined. From the Cas- [VI:9:68] pian Sea to the River Oxus naught is to be seen save forlorn and deserted prairies and deserts. The Russian railway (the Trans-Caspian R. R.) takes two days and two nights to traverse the ruined cities and destroyed villages of that desert. There was a time when that land was very populous and in the highest state of civilization and development; science and knowledge were widespread, the arts and professions established, commerce and agriculture were in the utmost state of perfection, and civil government and politics well organized. Now, all this great region is the habitation of desolation and shelters only the nomadic Turkoman tribes and the wandering beasts of prey. The cities of that land, as Gorgan, Tassa, Abiavard and Shahrastan,¹ were once famous in the world for sciences, knowledge, professions, wonders, wealth, greatness, happiness and virtue. Now, no voice or murmur is to be heard in all that land save the roar of ferocious brutes, and naught to be seen save the wandering wolves.

This ruin and destruction was occasioned by the battles and murders of the wars between Írán (Persia) and Turkan,² which had become different in customs and religion. Their godless

¹ Astarábád (“city of mules”) city on south eastern Caspian Sea border of Írán. Since 1937 called Gúrgán (Gorgán). Abiward (east of Dargaz), Turkmenistan; and Shahrístán, Tajikistan.

² People of Turkey.

leaders made public property of the blood, the belongings and the privacy of each other. This is the exposition of one instance.

Then, when you travel through the world and observe it, you shall find all constructiveness and progressiveness to be signs of friendliness and love, and all destructiveness and ruin the results of hatred and enmity.

Notwithstanding this obvious fact the human world does not take warning nor wale up from its sleep of negligence. Men still engage in discord and contention; they organize armed forces and long to charge on the battlefield.

Again, consider organization and decomposition, existence and non-existence. Every being is composed of many different constituents, the existence of everything is the expression of organization. That is to say: when by divine genesis organization of certain elements occurs, a being is produced. All existent beings are after this fashion. But when a defect appears in that compound and decomposition sets in, the parts separate and that being disintegrates and becomes non-existent. Thus annihilation of [VI:9:70] things is an expression of their decomposition and disintegration. The affinity and organization of the elements makes possible the existence.

To sum up: the attraction and affinity of things are the cause of fructification and production, and estrangement and disunion among things the cause of death and annihilation. By attraction, and affinity all living beings such as plants, animals and men are realized. From disagreement and estrangement dissolution results and annihilation follows. Verily the life of the human world is that which is conducive to unity, attraction and concord of mankind.

When you pass a farm and observe a prosperous plantation with symmetry and beauty, full of plants and flowers with an organized community, ye see proof of the fact that the farm and garden are under the care and cultivation of a skilful farmer; but if ye see confusion and disorder, it is an evidence that the place is bereft of the care of the gardener and a wild and uncultivated plantation results.

Therefore it is evident that unity and concord are the result of the education of the real educator, while separation and dissension are evidence of savagery and the lack of the training of God.

If an opponent object, saying: The nations, peoples, tribes and sects of the world have different ethics, morals, conducts, tastes and temperaments and their thoughts and opinions vary, how then can real unity become realized or absolute accord among humanity be established?

We will say that difference (or disagreement) is of two kinds: One sort is the cause of annihilation and that is like the disagreement of warring nations and fighting tribes who destroy one another, ruin homes and cause comfort and peace to depart, exhibiting ferocity and blood-thirstiness. The other difference (or disagreement) is an expression of variety, that is itself perfection, and the means of manifesting the graces of the All-Glorious.

Look at the flowers of the gardens. Although members of different families, having various colours, different forms and shapes, yet because they absorb the self-same water and grow and thrive by the same breeze and are reared by the same heat and light of the one sun, this difference and variety produces greater beauty and grace and each appears more beautiful by contrast with the other.

When the complete proof, which is the effectiveness of the Word of God, obtains, this difference in nature's ethics, habits and thoughts results in the diversification and adornment of the human world. Moreover this difference and variety is inherent and innate in the parts and members of man, which afford the means for revealing perfections, and since these

members and parts (of the human organism) are under the control of the king of the spirit, the spirit interpenetrates the parts and governs even the veins and arteries. This difference and variety then is no barrier to oneness and love governed by the spirit. This diversity is indeed the greatest power of unity.

Should a garden have its trees with their branches, leaves, blossoms and fruit all of one kind, colour, shape and arrangement it would have no beauty and sweetness whatever. But if it possess various hues, different leaves, blossoms and fruits, each will intensify the decorative effect and beauty of the other. The garden will become perfect and excel in beauty, delicacy, freshness, sweetness and magnificence.

Likewise, the difference and variety [VI:9:71] of thoughts, opinions, morals and temperaments of the human world when under the guidance of the one power and the influence of the world of oneness, will shine forth with the utmost greatness, beauty, sublimity and perfection.

Today no power save the great power of the Word of God, which comprehends the realities of things, can gather together under the shade of the same tree, the minds and hearts of the world of humanity. It is the motive power of all things; it is the mover of souls and the controller and governor of the human world.

Praise be to God! Today the light of the Word of God shines upon all horizons. From every nation, tribe and denomination, souls are coming under the influence of the Word (of God) and have agreed and united with the utmost concord and harmony.

Many an assembly shall be organized whose members will be representatives of different nations, tribes and peoples. If one attend such a meeting, he will be surprised and will imagine that those present are of one birth and nation, one people with the same thoughts and opinions, when, as a matter of fact, one may be an American, another a European; one from Hindustan (India), another from Turkistán; one an Arab, another a Tajik; one Persian, another Greek. Notwithstanding this they consort together with joy and sing together in the utmost unity, harmony, love and solidarity in liberty and wisdom. This is through the effect of the Word of God.

If all the powers of the world should convene, they could not organize an assembly like unto these assemblies. Here with such remarkable love, attraction and zeal, different people unite in one assembly and raise their voices in unison in the centre of the world. They cause the abolishment of war and murder, and the realization (and establishment) of universal peace, and the friendliness and unity of the world of humanity. Can any power withstand the power of the Word of God? No, verily, the proof is clear and the evidence complete.

If a soul open the eye of equity, he will become amazed and surprised and will testify justly that all the nations and peoples of the world should be grateful and thankful to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. For these teachings make tame every ferocious animal, give speed to those that only move, transform human souls into angels of heaven and make the world of humanity the centre of the manifestation of mercy. All are compelled thereby to obey and be loyal to the government.

Today no kingdom in all the world is confident and at ease, for security and confidence have disappeared from humanity. Kings and subjects are alike in danger.

The sect today which obeys the government with perfect religious honesty, and practices the utmost integrity towards the nations is this oppressed sect. The proof thereof is the following: All the tribes in Persia and Turkistán are thinking of their own petty interests; if they obey the government it is either with the hope of favour or through fear of punishment. But the Bahá'ís are well-wishers of and obedient to the powers (or governments) and are

loving and kind to all the nations.

This obedience and adherence are enjoined as duties upon all by the Beauty of Abhá (Bahá'u'lláh) in clear texts. Therefore in compliance with the commandment of God they practise the utmost honesty and good-will toward the governments. If any man commit a wrong against the government he must hold himself responsible before God and consider himself a sinner deserving of punishment. Notwithstanding this it is amazing how some of the ministers of (political) affairs account all other sects well disposed, but the Bahá'ís ill disposed.

Praise be to God! (An expression of wonder when thus used.) In these late- [VI:9:72] ten days when a great general uprising and commotion took place in Tíhrán and other cities of Írán (Persia), it was clearly evidenced that not a single Bahá'í interfered in these affairs nor troubled the populace, and for this reason they were blamed and criticised by others, for they had obeyed the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) and interfered not at all in political matters nor disturbed any sect. They were occupied with their own affairs, trades and professions.

All the friends of God testify that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is entirely true to, and exhibits good-will toward the governments and nations of the world, especially, the two sublime governments of the East (Persia and Turkey), for these two countries were respectively the native land and habitation of his holiness, Bahá'u'lláh. In all the epistles and writings he has commended and praised these two kingdoms, and has asked aid for them from the threshold of oneness. The Beauty of Abhá—may my soul be a sacrifice for His beloved!—prayed in behalf of their majesties, the two sovereigns (the *Sháh* and the *Sultán*). Praise be to God! Notwithstanding these decisive arguments, each day an event occurs and difficulties appear. But we and the beloved of God must not grow lax in the least in our honesty and good-will, nay rather in the utmost devotion and trustworthiness remain steadfast in our sincerity and engage in philanthropic prayers.

O beloved of God! These days are the time for firmness and the period for steadfastness and constancy in the Cause of God. You must not look upon the personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for he will eventually bid ye farewell. Nay, ye must observe the Word of God. If the Word of God is in the ascendant, be happy, joyous and thankful, even if 'Abdu'l-Bahá be under a sword or beneath fetters and chains; for importance is in the holy temple of the Cause of God, and not in the physical mould of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The beloved of God must be confirmed with such a firmness that if every moment a hundred like 'Abdu'l-Bahá become the target of arrows, no change should occur in their decision or intention, no transformation in their zeal or attraction to God, and no abatement in their occupation in the service of the Cause of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá is the servant of the Word of the Blessed Beauty and the manifestation of absolute servitude in the threshold of the Lord. He has no other station, grade, class or power. This is my utmost hope, my abiding paradise, my Masjidu'l-Aqṣá¹ (Most Holy Sanctuary) and my Sadratu'l-Muntahá² (Divine Guidance).

The great Manifestation was fulfilled and consummated in the Blessed Beauty of Abhá (Bahá'u'lláh), and his holiness the Supreme (the great Báb) was the herald of the Blessed

¹ Masjidu'l-Aqṣá originally a Christian Church and afterwards turned into a Muslim Mosque by the Caliph Omar, attained great importance in the devotional estimation of the Muslim. "The Aqṣá Mosque, literally, the 'Most Distant' Mosque, is referred to in the Qur'án, and has become identified with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Notes no. 116, p. 216.)

² Sidr al-Muntahá (Pers. Sadratu'l-Muntahá) (the furthestmost Tree) symbolically, the Lotus tree in the Seventh Heaven (Paradise). The Divine Lotus-tree at the boundary, or the 'Lote-tree beyond which there is no passing', since, in ancient times, Arabs planted it to mark the end of a road, to serve as a guide. It usually refers to the Manifestations of God on earth.

Beauty—may my spirit be a sacrifice to them! Thus was it ended and for a thousand years all shall receive illumination from his lights and obtain (favour) from the sea of his favours.

O ye beloved of God! This is my wish for ye and counsel to ye. Blessed is he who is aided by God to comply with what is written on this leaf.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

VI:10, 8 September 1915 [VI:10:73]

Letters from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab to Bahá'ís in America

... [omitted] [VI:10:79]

Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 15 August 1915

[Louis G. Gregory, Washington, D.C.] ... His ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] desire is that all the believers characterize themselves with these [divine] attributes, adorn their temples with these garments, ornament their bodies with these decorations and illumine their homes with these glistening lamps. Then and not until then will they be considered as his sons and daughters. His real solicitude is for their spiritual welfare and happiness. Above everything else he wishes them to be joy-bringers to this sorrow-laden world. This is considered to be their greatest mission. They must cry at the top of their voices:

“Rejoice! Rejoice! O thou world of humanity! The tree of thy hope is near the time of fruition! [VI:10:80]

“Rejoice! Rejoice! The rivers of celestial ideals are flowing from the mountains of decree!

“Rejoice! Rejoice! The gales of love and peace have stirred deeply the sea of God's grace and pity!

“Rejoice! Rejoice! The music of reality has attracted the hearts of all the sincere ones!

“Rejoice! Rejoice! The trees of the gardens of truth are bedecked with the most luscious fruits.

“Rejoice! Rejoice! The Beloved of all nations will soon enter the assembly of the children of men with a radiant face!

“Rejoice! Rejoice! for the earth of capabilities is already begemmed [ornamented] with the sweet amaranths of love and the fragrant lilies of affection!”

In such wise the friends must work, for as the moral physicians of the world of humanity, their pharmacopoeia must be filled with all kinds of medicines; thus they may be able to treat every kind of illness and disease. Firmness and steadfastness is the condition whereby they may attain to this unparalleled station. They must close their eyes to the world and the things contained therein. Their work is in the realm of the spirit; their efforts are along the line of morality and the inculcation of ethical principles. They look at all times towards heaven and are enraptured with the beauty of the Beloved. They are not attached to anything. They pray at morn and eve for the misguided children of men and wish them naught but good and prosperity. The heaven of their minds is not darkened with the clouds of prejudices nor the chambers of their hearts bedimmed with the smoke of hostility. They are released from all such ties and are soaring in the atmosphere of sanctity.

I am writing you this letter from the lovely garden of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He is just walking amidst the beds of roses and talking with a number of friends on the corruptibility of nature and the sacredness of the Word of God. Like unto the sun, he shines upon the just and unjust. Every day we descend from the Pilgrim's House and spend several hours in the verdant garden and listen to the words of truth and wisdom. They are indeed life-giving and soul-uplifting. I wish you were present; but I am sure you can accomplish better and more efficient work where you are.

'Abdu'l-Bahá remembers you and sends you his greeting. He prays for all the friends at the Holy Threshold and the blessed tomb of the Báb.

Give my greeting to ... all the friends. We are all well and happy. I anticipate the time when I shall have the pleasure of seeing you face to face.

I am ever your sincere brother.

(Signed) Ahmad

VI:11, 27 September 1915 [VI:11:82]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mr Andrew Carnegie¹

To the noble personage, his excellency, Mr Andrew Carnegie,
May God assist him!

HE IS GOD!

O thou illustrious soul! O thou the great pillar of the palace of universal peace!

It is some time since I intended to correspond with thee, but there was no intermediary between us. Now that his excellency, Mr Topakyan,² has made this possible through his kindly suggestion, I write thee this epistle; for truly I say thou art the lover of humanity and one of the founders of universal peace.

Today the most great service to the kingdom of God is the promotion of the principle of the unification of mankind and the establishment of universal peace. A number of souls who were doctrinaires and unpractical thinkers worked for the realization of this most exalted aim and good cause, but they were doomed to failure, save that lofty personage who has been and is still promoting the matter of international arbitration and general conciliation through deeds, words, self-sacrifice and the generous donation of wealth and property. Rest thou assured that through the confirmations of the holy spirit thou wilt become confirmed and assisted in the accomplishment of this most resplendent service, and in this mortal world thou shalt lay the foundation of an immortal, everlasting edifice, and in the end thou wilt sit upon the throne of incorruptible glory in the kingdom of God.

All the leaders and statesmen of Europe are thinking on the plane of war and the annihilation of the mansion of humanity, but thou art thinking on the plane of peace and love and the strengthening and reinforcement of the basis of the superstructure of the human world. They are the heralds of death, thou art the harbinger of life. The foundations of their palaces are unstable and wavering and the turrets of their mansions are tottering and crumbling, but the basis of thy structure is firm and unmovable.

While I was journeying throughout America and Europe, I cried before all the meetings, conventions, and churches: "O ye noble friends! The world of humanity is facing in the future a most portentous danger and supreme calamity. The continent of Europe has become like unto a gunpowder magazine and arsenal, under which are hidden combustible materials of the most inflammatory nature. Its combustion will be dependent upon the sudden and unexpected enkindlement of one tiny spark which shall envelop the whole earth with a world-wide conflagration, causing the total collapse of European civilization [VI:11:83] through the furious, wild, raging, fiery tongues of war. Therefore, O ye well-wishers of the world of humanity, endeavour by day and by night so that these inflammable materials may not come in touch with the burning fires of racial antipathy and hatred!"

¹ "The discovery of the Master's letter to Andrew Carnegie is very interesting, in spite of the very poor translation of this Tablet, and he will be very pleased to receive a Photostat of the original, or at least a faithful copy of the text in Persian." (Shoghi Effendi, *Unfolding Destiny*, pp. 206-207. Letter dated 24 October 1947.)

² Hayozoun Hohannes Topakyan (born at Sazaria, Turkey, 1864-1926). In 1909 he was appointed Consul-General to New York by the Persian government.

Today the life of mankind and its attainment to everlasting glory depend on its display of effort and exertion in accord with the principles of his holiness Bahá'u'lláh; for his first and foremost teaching consists of the oneness of the world of humanity. He says: "We are all the sheep of God. His Highness, the Almighty, is the real Shepherd and kind to all the sheep. Why then should we be unkind toward each other?" Another of his most great institutes deals with the subject of universal peace, the establishment of which would be conducive to the well-being and progress and tranquillity of the commonwealth of man.

Other precepts of Bahá'u'lláh treat of the identity of the underlying foundations of the religions of God, the original oneness of the nations, the adoption and general practice of a universal auxiliary language and the inculcation of the ideal of cosmopolitanism and world-patriotism among the children of men; consequently in the future his teachings will act as a deterrent and preventive from the occurrence of the most great danger, i.e., universal war.

Today the most important object of the kingdom of God is the promulgation of the cause of universal peace and the principle of the oneness of the world of humanity. Whosoever arises in the accomplishment of this pre-eminent service the confirmations of the holy spirit will descend upon him.

Now all that has been predicted has come to pass, and the lurid flames of this war have emblazoned the horizon of the east and the west, causing a reverberating social earthquake through the columns of the earth. After this war the workers for the cause of universal peace will increase day by day, and the pacific party will array its force, displaying great activity with better advantage, and in the end gaining a permanent triumph and eternal victory over all the other parties. The realization of this matter is incontestable and irrefragable.

Therefore, ere long a vast and unlimited field will be opened before your view for the display of your powers and energies. You must promote this glorious intention with the heavenly power and the confirmation of the holy spirit. I am praying in thy behalf that thou mayest erect a pavilion and unfurl a flag in the world of peace, love, and eternal life.

I beg you to accept the consideration of my highest and deepest respect.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 1 May 1915. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

VI:11, 27 September 1915 [VI:11:83]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the Bahá'í Assembly of Portland, Oregon.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye denizens of the Kingdom!

Your letter was received and caused joy and gladness, for it was an evidence of firmness and steadfastness. praise be to God, ye have an assembly in the utmost joy and fragrance; the candle thereof being the blessings of his holiness Bahá'u'lláh, the spirit of that meeting is the confirmations of the supreme kingdom, and the sustenance of that gathering is celestial benediction. I hope that the life of that assembly shall be [VI:11:87] the breaths of the holy spirit, and in accordance with the heavenly teachings ye become regiments of universal peace, breaking asunder the armies of war and strife through the power and teachings of his holiness Bahá'u'lláh, and thus raise the standard of unity, of friendship and of love in the world of humanity.

The Americans are distinguished from the Europeans in this noble ideal, viz.: universal

peace, and it is proper that they glory before all nations. His honour Mr William Jennings Bryan, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, especially, has in reality stood by the promulgation of universal peace with the utmost effort; and because in this matter he is striving exactly in accordance with the teachings of his holiness Bahá'u'lláh, he is self-sacrificing. My hope is that he will become a candle of the Convention for Universal Peace and shine forth like unto the morning star from the horizon of the oneness of the world of humanity.

It may come to pass that some corrupted souls shall come to America working to bring about the wavering of your hearts; but ye must be firm like unto a mountain in faith and the Covenant, and be not shaken by the blowing of contrary winds.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated 14 October 1914, Mt. Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

VI:11, 27 September 1915 [VI:11:84]

Some Bahá'í teachings on peace and war

Extract from a Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 4 October 1914.

About fifty years ago, his holiness Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed certain teachings, and chanted the song of Universal Peace. In numerous tablets and epistles¹ he foretold in the most clear language the present cataclysm: stating that the world of humanity was facing the most portentous danger, and that the coming of universal war was unfortunately inevitable; for the combustible material stored in the infernal arsenals of Europe would some day explode through contact with a single spark. Amongst other things he foresaw that the Balkans would become a volcano, and the map of Europe would be changed. For these and similar reasons Bahá'u'lláh invited the kings and rulers of the world to lay down their arms and proclaim an era of universal peace.

...

VI:12, 16 October 1915 [VI:12:92]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet to American Bahá'ís

To the beloved of God in America—On them be glory and bounty!

The maid-servant of God, Lua, was a long time occupied in India in spreading the fragrances of the love of God. She is now ready to return to the regions of America. Show her every consideration. She is firm in the Covenant of love. In reality she worked vigorously during her sojourn in India, and she is worthy of love.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, 27 August 1915

¹ These epistles are contained in the *Súriy-i-Mulúk*, and have been described and analyzed in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Bahá'u'lláh wrote to the Pope, to Queen Victoria, to the Sháh of Persia, and Napoleon III, asking them for their co-operation in his efforts to make his ideas of fraternity and universal peace triumph. History does not tell us how all of them were received, but the prophecies therein have made them celebrated. Thus in 1868, he announced to Napoleon III, the approaching fall of his Empire, and to the Pope the loss of his temporal power.

Alláh-u-Abhá!¹

On the opposite page [VI:12:93] we take pleasure in reproducing a photographic copy of the original tablet written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent through Lua Getsinger to the Bahá’ís in America, the English translation of which is given above. Perhaps, some who read the simple statements in this tablet may wonder why it was written at all, inasmuch as the bearer is well known to all the Bahá’ís in America; yet to those who are informed of the spread of the Bahá’í Cause in the West, it is replete with meanings.

What we have in mind is this: It is the duty of Bahá’ís, of course, to receive all, whether from the East or the West in the spirit of friendship, but as a protection to the Cause, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has made it a rule that any one coming from the East, whether a Bahá’í or not, even if it be one of his own relatives, who does not bring a letter of permission written in his [‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s] own handwriting with his own signature—such an one must not be approached by the Bahá’ís, who must even shun him. [VI:12:93]

The following extracts from tablets and cablegrams sent by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Bahá’ís in America, explain this important matter:

Tablet revealed many years ago:

O ye beloved of God! Highway robbers are many and hypocrites are innumerable. The wolves clothe themselves with the shepherd’s garment and thieves show themselves in the form of watchmen. Hereafter, if any Persian or Oriental come to those parts, even though he be from the very city of ‘Akká, if ye find he does not possess a letter written by the hand and sealed by the seal of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, you must decidedly avoid him.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Cable

Cable from London to Wilhelmitte, New York, received 30 December 1912:

Receive no Persian, even my family, without autographic permission. Communicate to all friends. (Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Tablet to Charles Mason Remey

From a tablet to Charles Mason Remey, Washington, D.C., translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, London, England, 29 December 1912:

Awaken the friends, for ere long a test shall come. Perchance some persons, outwardly firm and inwardly wavering, shall come to those parts in order to weaken the faith of the friends in the Covenant of God. Let them be awake! Let them be mindful! As long as they see a trace of violation of the Covenant, they must hold aloof from the violator. Day and night let them strive so that the lights of the Kingdom of Abhá may encircle the globe, and the darkness of error may be entirely dispelled. (Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Cablegram

Cablegram received 3 February 1913, from Paris to Wilhelmitte, New York.

We have reached Paris. Greetings to all. Any Persian, be he my own [VI:12:94] son or daughter, if he comes to America without having a new permission written in my own handwriting or signature, do not meet him at all. Inform all cities. (Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Cablegram

Cablegram from Paris, 14 February 1913, to Parsons-Remey, Washington.

¹ Editor’s note.

I am servant of Bahá! His holiness Bahá'u'lláh is unique and peerless. All must turn to Bahá'u'lláh. This is the religion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Firmness in the Covenant means love and obedience to the command of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Announce this. (Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet to Mr Roy C. Wilhelm

Portion of a tablet to Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 25 March 1913, Paris, France. The original of this tablet is in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own handwriting.

Convey my longing greeting to all the believers of God throughout all the cities of America and announce to them on my behalf that if any person from amongst the Persian believers who may be well known as to his character, whether man or woman—although he may be my own son or daughter—comes to America and has not a *new* permission for his going to America written with my own handwriting and signed with my own signature, you must not give him any attention at all. Whosoever speaks with him is a violator of the Covenant! This question is most important. Undoubtedly you must show the utmost caution. There are some wolves in sheep's clothes who may claim to be shepherds. Whosoever from amongst the Persian believers arrives in America although he may be related to me,—that is,—even if he be my son-in-law or she be my daughter, first ask of him the letter giving him a *new* permission to come again to America. If he shows you any such letter, be most careful and attentive that it is my writing and my signature, that they may not be counterfeits. Then you cable to me and inquire about him. When the answer is received by you that it is correct then you meet him, otherwise do not associate with him. Announce the contents of this letter to all the believers and the maid-servants of the Merciful throughout America.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet to Mrs Harriet Cline

Excerpt from tablet to Mrs Harriet Cline, Los Angeles, California, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Paris, 29 March 1913:

Today firmness in the Covenant is the means of the promotion of the Word of God and conducive to the effect of the word of man. Any explanation which does not accord with the Covenant will have no effect whatever. Therefore, whosoever heralds the Covenant of God, unquestionably he is confirmed. This has been tried a thousand times: Any soul who violates the Covenant and Testament in the least degree, immediately he is cut off; even in this material world he will become afflicted with remorse and regret. (Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet to an American Bahá'í

From a tablet to an American Bahá'í, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Paris, 4 March 1913:

Whosoever claims that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has given to him a tablet or sent a cablegram he must prove it (by showing it). Do not accept the saying of anyone on mere statement. He must bring forth the unmistakable and valid [VI:12:95] evidence, signed by my own written signature and not the signature on a cablegram which cannot be substantiated. (Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Message to the American Bahá'ís

Message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his own handwriting, to the American Bahá'ís, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 18 September 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

Any Persian, whether Bahá'í, or belonging to the ancient religions of Persia—in short, any Persian—without carrying in his hand a letter either in my handwriting, or signed with my signature, the believers must not associate with him or speak to him, even if he is Shoghi Effendi or Rúhí Afandí (the two grandsons of 'Abdu'l-Bahá). The friends must demand of him before anything else, his credential letter, written in my handwriting, or signed with my signature.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Tablet to Mr Charles Mason Remey

Portion of a tablet to Mr Charles Mason Remey, translated in Ramleh, Egypt, 23 September 1913:

I have repeatedly written that any Persian—although he be my relative or Afnán—if he has no credential in his hand, the believers must not at all approach him, or associate with him, because all the enemies of the Cause in Persia—Yahyais, Nakazeen and Sufists¹—are turning their attention to America and will come in order to weaken the Cause of God. You must protect the Cause of God, and write to every one, and awaken all, that they must not meet any Persian who has not in his hand a credential in my handwriting and signature.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Tablet

In response to a letter detailing the circumstances attending the arrival in San Francisco of two Persians from India (via Honolulu), without credentials, of their appearance at a Bahá’í meeting, of their being advised to leave and return to their hotel, and of their being entertained subsequently in the home of a believer, the following tablet was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Ramleh, Egypt, 30 September 1913:

O thou who are attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá! Thy letter was received. Its details concerning those two persons (Persians) became known. You have acted most reasonably. Every Persian, or non-Persian, who comes from the East and has not in his hand a letter from me, although he may be one of my relatives, the believers must not receive him, neither should they let him enter into their meetings. For some wolves are coming from Persia to those parts in order to tear the sheep of God, and to scatter the seeds of corruption and to become the means of division—especially the followers of Mírzá Yaḥyá. To receive those souls would be like permitting a thief to enter a home, or like letting a wolf into a flock (of sheep). Unquestionably this is not permissible!

A man may receive his own enemy into his house and show him the utmost respect and consideration, but it is not allowable to receive a thief into his house, nor a traitor into his home, nor a wolf into the flock. This would be injustice. Although the heart of the wolf is displeased at this, yet the sheep of God must be protected. ...

Show ye the utmost kindness toward enemies, that is, *ignorant* enemies, but not toward traitorous and treacherous enemies. I hope that through the divine bounty and favour you may be guarded and protected.

Say to those two persons (Persians): “Because we have explicit instructions in regard to this matter we cannot disobey them. It would have been [VI:12:96] better for you to have gone first to ‘Akká, and, receiving permission and credentials, to have come to America from there. Then you would have experienced the utmost consideration. You must likewise obey this command. If you are sincere believers, act according to this clear injunction.”

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Tablet to Miss Juliet Thompson

Portion of a tablet to Miss Juliet Thompson, New York City, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 29 October 1913, Ramleh, Egypt:

Convey this message to each and all the believers in New York: Any person who comes to America from the East, whether Bahá’í or non-Bahá’í, although he may be one of my relatives,

¹ Yaḥyá’iyún, Náqidín and Súfiyyún.

such as Mírzá Jalál, Mírzá Muḥsin and Mírzá Hádí (the three sons-in-law of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá), who has not in his hand a letter of permission in my handwriting and signature, the believers of God must not at all approach him, but shun him and know that he is a wolf—he has come to scatter the flock; a thief—he has come to rob the house. ...

Tablet

From a tablet to the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, United States of America; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 19 April 1914. (These words are in the handwriting of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá):

If a Persian comes from the East to those parts—supposing the impossible: Although he may be my own son, or the only daughter of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—without having in his hand an epistle with my own hand and my own signature, to meet and hold conversation with him is forbidden. For whosoever goes to America without permission has no other aim save sedition and the violation of the Covenant.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Tablet to Mr Roy C. Wilhelm

Tablet to Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, New York City, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 2 August 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

The confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá shall descend uninterruptedly upon those souls who are firm in the Covenant. Thou hast well observed that every firm one is assisted and aided and every violator is degraded, humiliated and lost. It is very astonishing that people are not admonished. They have observed how Mírzá Muḥammad ‘Alí on account of the violation of the Covenant descended to the lowest degree of humiliation, and yet they do not become mindful. They have seen how others through disobedience to the Testament have fallen into a well of degradation, and yet they are not awakened. This Covenant is the Covenant of his holiness, Bahá’u’lláh. Now its importance is not known befittingly; but in the future it shall attain to such a degree of importance that if a king violates to the extent of one atom he shall be cut off immediately.

Consider that during the life of Christ—May my life be a sacrifice to him!—his cause had no importance whatsoever; nay, rather the people scoffed and ridiculed him, and according to the text of the Gospel they called him Beelzebub. Now you can see the importance which it had later. (Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

In the light of the foregoing, further comment on our part is unnecessary. “Peace be upon those who follow guidance.”

It is evident that those who are favoured with a written word of approval from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá should receive every consideration. Lua Getsinger has been thus favoured; “she is worthy of love”.—The Editors.

VI:13, 4 November 1915 [VI:13:101]

Messages from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Bahá’ís in Germany

Portion of letter from Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh dated Haifa, 30 July 1915, addressed to Miss Alma S. Knobloch, Stuttgart, Germany.

“I translated all the enclosed letters immediately and offered them to our beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He became very happy thereby. He loves all of you, dear friends. He often speaks highly of the character of his German children. He says: “They are pure, their nature is not stained by any disagreeable quality. They are readily confirmed by the hosts of the Kingdom. They are blessed in their activities in serving and helping the negligent and distressed. Their

success in the service of the kingdom of God is sure.’

“Dear sister, he praises them so often that I do not know which time to write. I have only to congratulate all for their nobility of character which attracts so many blessings from him.

“Also I pray that he may keep them always under his guarding staff, safe from the thieves of worldly desires, pride and negligence. I am sure he does this, and consequently they will always strive and shine brilliantly among other friends upon the horizon of the Cause.”

Message from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to the Bahá’ís of Germany, through Frau Consul Schwarz, translated by A. S. Bahádur, Mount Carmel, 25 July 1915:

“O dear friends!

“Praise be to God, we are all well and safe under the shelter of divine patronage and protection. We are in the utmost harmony; we pray night and day and beseech God’s mercy for all the people of the world, that He may not look at the capacity of His creatures (at what the people deserve), but may He deal with them through His mere Blessing and Grace, so that the means of comfort and joy may be attained; so that the hearts may become lamps for (His) lights, and the souls (people) may attain God’s pleasure. This is our utmost desire and longing. And you also pray that the ocean of bounties may rise in waves, and all the people may be- [VI:13:102] come immersed in the ocean of God’s forgiveness.

“God be praised! Strong love is produced between Germany and Islám. The Islamic world is in love with the Germanic world. The former loves exceedingly, the latter.

“What a good friendship is produced! We hope that this love and friendship will give rise to great results, that it will influence others (nations) also.

“By the grace of God, we are well and happy. We hope that you are happy too. Your postal cards were received. As they bear the glad-tidings of your good health, they became the cause of our delight and joy. May peace be upon you!”

VI:14, 23 November 1915 [VI:14:106]

The Covenant of God¹

George O. Latimer

In all the Holy Scriptures the “Covenant and Testament” of God has been given to man through the prophets and in order to clearly and fully comprehend the Bahá’í Revelation it is necessary to understand the meaning and purpose of this Covenant and Testament as it has existed in past ages as well as its importance in this present day. As the term implies, a “covenant” means a compact or an agreement and a “testament” is a document by which one disposes of his property after his death. In legal phraseology the term, covenant, is used in the sense of a mutual promise and necessarily implies that there are two parties to the agreement: the *promisor* and the *promisee*. The promisor agrees to fulfil certain conditions upon the performing of certain acts by the promisee.

Now the “Covenant of God” is a promise, with the Creator as the party of the first part and the people of the world as the party of the second, that “at the ‘end of the days’, God will establish His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.” In each successive cycle this Covenant or promise has been renewed with man by the Word of God speaking through His Manifestations, but each time it has been given in a different testamentary form. A testament requires two witnesses to make it valid, and the preceding and succeeding prophet in each dispensation have been these witnesses. For example, Moses promised the coming of Christ

¹ Compiled in Stuttgart, Germany, during August 1914. This manuscript was presented to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá personally by Mr Latimer while in ‘Akká in October of the same year. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave consent to its publication.—*The Editors*.

and Christ said that he fulfilled the prophecy of Moses, thus these two were the witnesses to God's Covenant, and in like manner, this has been the case in every age.

The subject is clearly explained in the following tablet from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"His holiness Abraham—On him be peace—made a covenant concerning his holiness Moses and gave the glad-tidings of his coming. His holiness Moses made a covenant concerning the 'promised one', i.e., his holiness Christ, and announced the good news of his Manifestation to the world. His holiness Christ made a covenant concerning the Paraclete and gave the tidings of his coming. His holiness the prophet Muḥammad made a covenant concerning his holiness the Báb, and the Báb was the one promised by Muḥammad—for Muḥammad gave the glad-tidings of his coming. The Báb made a covenant concerning Bahá'u'lláh and gave the glad-tidings of his coming, and Bahá'u'lláh was the one promised by his holiness the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a promised one who will become manifest after one thousand, or thousands of years. He likewise, with his Supreme Pen, entered into a *great covenant and testament* with all the Bahá'ís whereby they were all commanded to follow the Centre of the Covenant after his (Bahá'u'lláh's) departure, and turn not away, even to a hairsbreadth, from obeying him."

In reality, there has been but one Covenant. Each prophet has renewed this Covenant in a different manner and to distinguish the promise of one from that of the other, it is spoken of as the covenant of Abraham, the covenant of Moses, etc., and in this "latter day" it has been referred to by Jeremiah (31:31) as the "new covenant".

Thus God has entered into this Covenant with all His Manifestations and each in turn has given it to the world, but always in a new form according to the understanding of the people. The story of Adam and the Garden of Eden is an account of this Covenant. Again the Ark of Noah represents this Covenant. The "everlasting covenant" with Abraham that "his seed would inherit the earth" explains the promise, Moses fulfilled this Covenant on Mount Sinai. Christ referred to this Covenant when he spoke of Peter as the "rock" upon which the church was to be built. Again the account of Fama-Gadeer¹ (where Muḥammad told the people to turn to his successor, 'Alí) relates to this Covenant. The Book of *Bayán*, in which the Báb commanded his followers to turn to Bahá'u'lláh as the one "Whom God shall Manifest", is this same Covenant, and the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* (Book of the Covenant), written by Bahá'u'lláh, is the establishment of this same Covenant.

This Covenant is the source of order in the world. In the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The Covenant is an Orb which shines and gleams forth unto the universe. Verily, its lights will dispel darkness, its sea will cast out the froth of suspicion upon the shores of perdition. Verily, naught in the world can resist the power of the Kingdom. Should all mankind assemble, could they prevent the sun from giving its light, the winds from their blowing, the clouds from their showers, the mountains from their firmness or the stars from their beaming? No! by the Lord, the Clement. Everything (in the world) is subject to corruption, but the Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions."

Each one of the prophets testified to the renewal of this Covenant by the one who was to come after him and at the same time pointed to the final Covenant which would be a culmination of all the preceding ones and which would be the establishment of God's Kingdom in the hearts of mankind. In the *Old Testament* this Covenant has been symbolized by salt. Moses commanded that all offerings be seasoned with the "salt of the covenant of God". In Numbers 18:19, it is referred to as "a covenant of salt forever before the Lord." In Chronicles II, 13:5, it is stated that the Lord gave the kingdom of Israel over to David and his sons by "a

¹ Symbolically, the speech (fam) at the pool (ghadí) fed by the spring in Wadí Khumm. Muḥammad gave a speech (during which he designated 'Alí as the leader of the Muslim ummah) on 18th of Dhū'l-Hijjah AH 10 (CE 632) at Ghadí Khumm (22.739690, 39.137236), 4.5 km WNW of al-Juḥfah. Fam is "mouth" or "orifice".

covenant of salt". Again Christ says to his disciples (Matt. 5:13): "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" Salt has been used to characterize the spiritual power which gives life to humanity and if one is deprived of its savour by losing hold of the Covenant his spiritual sustenance is cut off.

Today, the symbol of the spiritual power of the Covenant is love. All through the biblical scriptures the wrath [VI:14:108] of God is called down upon those who violate the Covenant of God or loose hold thereof, but His protection is guaranteed to all who come under its divine power. In the present day, the Covenant has again been the means of illuminating mankind. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says: "The Covenant has such a sway that it astonishes the minds. In every region the sign of the power of the Covenant is apparent and manifest. For instance, in Persia the fire of revolution blazed in such wise that all communities, government and nation became afflicted with the most severe trials; but the power of the Covenant protected the Bahá'í friends to such a degree that in this turbulent storm no dust fell upon them, except in one locality, which became the cause of the spreading of the Religion of God and the diffusion of the Word of God. Now all the parties in Persia are wondering how the people of Bahá' were guarded and protected." (Extract from a Tablet.)

Thus in every age the people have been commanded to "remain firm in this Covenant", i.e., to perform their part of the agreement, for unless both parties carry out their side of the agreement, the Covenant becomes invalid and cannot be established. The way in which the people are to fulfil their side of this compact is to turn to God with open hearts and to follow His commandments and abide in His love. When they do this the confirmations of heaven will reach them; all their desires and longings will be fulfilled by the establishment of this very same Covenant.

Today, this Covenant is fulfilled by the Manifestation of the three Bahá'í teachers: the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The coming of the three to establish the Covenant in this day—one as the "Forerunner", one as the "Lord of Hosts", and one as the "Centre of the Covenant" was promised by God in the clearest of terms through the prophet Malachi (3:1): "Behold I will send my [1] messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; [2] and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; [3] even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." It is not meant however, that these three holy personages are to be considered as separate manifestors of the Word of God in this day, for the Word of God is [VI:14:109] ever given in its oneness and singleness, i.e., it is made manifest through only one channel or individual at a time.

The reality of their Manifestation is likened unto that of a tree: the Báb, known as the "First Point" of this Revelation, is the first off-shoot from the seed of the Tree; Bahá'u'lláh is the "Pre-existent Root" of the same Tree, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the "Greatest Branch" of that Tree. All parts of the Tree are nourished by the same osmosis (the Word of God), and each is dependent on the other for sustenance. In the botanical kingdom, the direct, upward growing branch of the tree is known as the main or greatest branch of the tree while all the other branches are considered as offshoots from this main branch. The seed of the tree is its manifestation, for it is the seed itself which appears in the form of branches, leaves and fruits. The fruit cannot be ripened and perfected save through the branch, and without the fruit the potentiality of the seed ceases to exist. The people of the world are the leaves of this tree and the leaves receive their nourishment through the branch. When the connection with the branch is severed they drop off from the tree and wither up. The purpose of the tree is to produce fruit and while the root may live for awhile without its branch, yet it is not able to complete its existence; therefore the root and the trunk are one and each is subservient to the other for the perfection of their manifestation. "The essential object is the Tree, the foundation is the Tree, and the Universal Reality is the Tree."

The perfection of this “Branch” has been foretold by God through Zechariah (3:7): “For, behold, I will bring forth my servant, the Branch”; and the promise was also given through Isaiah (11:1): “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse. [Bahá’u’lláh descended from Jesse, the son of Abraham—not Jesse, the father of David], and a Branch shall grow out of his root, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.” Again Isaiah said (4:2): “In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely.”

The branch is the centre of the tree’s existence; likewise in this world of creation there is a centre for everything and all the bounties of existence come from that centre. For example, everything in this physical world is dependent for its existence upon the centre of gravity which holds all the physical bodies together. If anything should detach itself for one instant from this centre of attraction it will immediately fall off into space, and so far as part of the life of this planet is concerned it will cease to exist. In our solar system the sun is the centre of illumination. All forms of genesis appear through its light and heat, without which there would be no growth and development; there would be no vegetable kingdom, no animal kingdom, and all life in the world would cease to exist. The earth, the moon and all the planets receive their illumination from this same sun, and if deprived of its rays they would be in eternal darkness. In the mineral kingdom the elements are held together by a centre known as chemical affinity, and likewise there is a centre for all life in the vegetable world. Again the human organism is a unit composed of various organs all dependent upon one centre—the heart—for life and sustenance. As long as all the different parts are in perfect connection with the heart, they co-ordinate and perform their separate functions in harmony and accord, and life will be manifest in its fullest perfection; but if the supply of life-giving blood is cut off from one of the members of the body, immediately that organ begins to disintegrate and die. In turn its death will cause the contamination of the other members, and eventually the entire body will become diseased, and death will be the result. In our commercial life there is a focusing point that controls affairs. The heart of the city is the business [VI:14:110] centre which regulates the life of the entire city. In a like manner there are co-ordinate units of centralization for the social, civic and political welfare of the community. In fact, everything in the material world demands a centralizing of forces for the well-being and progress of humanity.

Now, the material world is a counterpart or reflection of the spiritual world and as there is a centre of attraction for everything in the terrestrial globe—this being an universal law of nature—likewise, there must be a centre of attachment in the spiritual world. In every age the absence of this centre in the spiritual world has been the cause of the decline and departure of the spirit from religion. Differences and misunderstandings have crept in and falsehood has supplanted truth, creating new sects and thus destroying the very foundations of religion. Strife and contention makes division, and separation is the cause of death, for every creation is an organized unit, the members of which are held together by the centre of attraction.

Because in former times there was no distinct centre of the Covenant of God, after each renewal, decay set in and the Word of God became contaminated by man-made creeds and dogmas which in turn caused disagreement, opposition and bitter struggle throughout the centuries, down to the present time; and now this strife in the spiritual world, as well as in the physical world is at its height for the very reason that this Centre is *unknown*.

In former ages no distinct personage had been appointed to be the Centre which was to differentiate between truth and falsehood and thus eradicate all differences arising in the mind of man. Many have thought that Peter was made the expounder of the Book, when Christ said, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church”; but this was only an indication and confirmation of Peter’s faith, for the word “rock” was used as a symbol of faith,

and the Christian church was established through the faith of the people in Christ. Yet there were dissensions in the time of Christ because there was no Centre, and men began to interpret and explain his teachings in the way that most benefited themselves. The separation between Roman and Greek church was due to a small question of interpretation—whether a word meant “by” or “through”. Today the signs of man are far more evidence in the church, than the signs of Christ.

Therefore, in order to have accord and harmony in the spiritual world, and the establishment of God’s Kingdom of love and peace on earth, and the uniting of all peoples under the tent of oneness, a Centre is necessary, and *‘Abdu’l-Bahá has been appointed that Centre*. He is the Explainer of the Word and the Expounder of the Book of God revealed to the world in this day through Bahá’u’lláh. In the *Kitáb-i-‘Ahd* (Book of the Covenant) the *Tablet of the Branch*, and in numerous writings, Bahá’u’lláh clearly appoints ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Greatest Branch, as the one to whom all should turn for spiritual guidance and knowledge after his departure. He writes in his *Will and Testament*: “When the Ocean of My Presence hath disappeared and the Book of Origin is achieved to the end, turn your faces toward Him-Whom-God-hath-purposed, who hath branched from this Pre-Existent Root. The aim of this blessed verse hath been the Greatest Branch.” Again he commanded: “After My departure turn to the Branch for what ye do not understand”, and in a tablet to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed “O Thou My Greatest Branch”, he said, “Verily, We have ordained Thee the guardian of all the creatures, and a Protection to all those in the heavens and earths, and a Fortress to those who believe in God, the One, the Omniscient! I beg of God to protect them by Thee; to enrich them by Thee, to nourish them by Thee; and to reveal to Thee that which is the Dawning-point of riches to the people of Creation, and the Ocean of Generosity to [VI:14:111] those in the world, and the Rising-point of favour to all nations. Verily, He is the Powerful, the All-knowing, the Wise! I beg of Him to water the earth and all that is in it by Thee, that there may spring up from it the Flowers of Wisdom and Revelation and the Hyacinths of science and knowledge.” Also in another tablet: “Thou knowest, O my God that, verily I have chosen Him, only because Thou hast chosen Him; I have elected Him, only because Thou hast elected Him. Therefore assist Him by the Hosts of Thy Heaven and earth. Help Thou, O My God, whosoever may help Him! choose, whosoever may choose Him! strengthen whosoever may advance toward Him! and reject whosoever may deny Him and desire Him not!”

These are a few of the many utterances of Bahá’u’lláh referring to the appointment of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the Centre of His Covenant. This does not mean that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the “Promised One” of Bahá’u’lláh, for that One will not appear until after one thousand or thousands of years, but it means that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has been made the Standard differentiating falsehood from truth, and his explanations of the meanings of the texts and verses are the truth.

Therefore, again in this day, all the people are exhorted to firmness in God’s Covenant, and this is accomplished by turning to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for enlightenment and guidance in all affairs. He says: “Firmness in the Covenant means *obedience*, so that no one may say, ‘This is my opinion’; nay rather, he must obey that which proceeds from the Pen and Tongue of the Covenant. Any explanation which does not accord with the Covenant will have no effect whatsoever. Therefore, whosoever heralds the Covenant of God, unquestionably he is confirmed. Know this for a certainty that *today, the penetrative power in the arteries of the world of humanity, is the power of the Covenant. The body of the world will not be moved through any power except through the power of the Covenant*. There is no other power like unto this. This Spirit of the Covenant, is the real Centre of love and is reflecting its rays to all parts of the globe, which are resuscitating and regenerating man and illuminating the path to the Divine Kingdom.”

Through all His Prophets, God has urged the people to firmness and obedience so that His

Everlasting Covenant may be established: It is His universal law that all things which are not attached to their life-giving Centre, disintegrate and die, and in order to preserve the oneness of all humanity, He has made known that spiritual Centre which will unite all and establish His Kingdom in the hearts of men.

When the electric light bulb loses its connection with the power-house it becomes extinct and ceases to give forth light. The Centre of the Covenant is the Divine Magneto which is illuminating the world, dispelling the darkness of racial and religious hatred, and lighting up the way made dark by the superstitions and blind imitations of former ages. It is the Magnet which is attracting the hearts of men to God. This awakening is being accomplished by the *Servitude* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to mankind. His whole life has been one of sacrifice and service so that man might become mindful of God's wishes. After a life of imprisonment and trials and at an advanced age, he travelled throughout Europe and America, undergoing many hardships, in order to serve the people by rending asunder the veils of ignorance and disclosing the realities of all things, thus illuminating this dark world of materialism.

Assuredly, the words of Jesus (Matt. 23:11) to the multitude: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant", are being fulfilled today by 'Abdu'l-Bahá the "Servant of God". His greatest wish is: "To be a faithful servant and a sincere slave at the Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh. Whosoever entertains perfect love for me and is firm in the Covenant must know and believe that I am the Servant of the Threshold [VI:14:112] of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh). But the Centre of the Covenant is the Point toward which all the people of the world must turn their faces. He is the Interpreter of the Books and all the Bahá'ís are beneath his protection. Therefore, if any soul by himself, interprets the Books of God contrary to the clear text emanating from the pen of the Covenant, it is not acceptable and this will become the cause of differences amongst the believers of God" (From a recent Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá).

The fruit appears upon the branch and not upon the root of the tree, therefore the fruits of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings are being ripened and brought to fruition through 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He is ushering in the *new harvest* of Universal Peace and the Oneness of the World of Humanity—which means the cessation of fruitless strife and ruinous warfare. Thus the antagonism of faiths and religions and the racial and patriotic differences will be eradicated and for all there will be one religion, one faith, one race, one people and one home, and the din and clamour caused by warfare and discordant revelry will be changed to the beautiful and harmonious melodies of the kingdom of paradise.

These blessings are coming to man through his firmness in the Covenant. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said: "Today firmness in the Covenant is the means of the promotion of the Word of God and conducive to the effect of the word of man," for the fulfilment of this Covenant it is necessary for the believers of God to imitate the conduct and manner of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that is they must engage in teaching and spreading the Cause of God; their words must be like the flame of fire, burning away the veils of dogmas, passion and desire and they must be in the utmost state of humility and self-renunciation so that others may be mindful. In order to accomplish this fulfilment of the Covenant, one has only to follow out the following admonition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"Through the protection and help of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh), you must conduct and deport yourselves in such a manner that you may stand out among other souls distinguished by a brilliancy like unto the sun. If any one of you enters a city he must become the centre of attraction because of the *sincerity, faithfulness, honesty, fidelity, truthfulness, and loving-kindness* of his disposition and nature toward *all* the inhabitants of the world. That the people of the city may cry out. "This person is unquestionably a Bahá'í. For his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature and his disposition are of the attributes of the Bahá'ís." Until you do attain to this station, you have not fulfilled the Covenant and Testament

of God.”

VI:15, 12 December 1915 [VI:15:114]

The Call of God¹

George O. Latimer

The Bahá'í Message has been given to the world on the same basis as that of all the past religions, that is, the acknowledgement of a *single* divinity which is all-powerful, all-comprehending, all-encompassing. This divinity is an unknown essence, an infinite being known as God. “God, singly and alone, abideth in His own place, which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description and definition, height and depth. God alone should be realized as the one power which animates and dominates all things which are but manifestations of its energy.” [Bahá'u'lláh] All things owe their existence to God and are dependent upon Him for guidance and advancement. All existence testifies to a creator and every kingdom is in need of an educator.

For example, the barren soil when tilled produces abundant crops. By cultivation, fertilization and engrafting, trees which produced bitter fruits, yield sweet fruits. Without the training of the gardener the flowers become choked by weeds and cease to give forth their fragrance. By careful training the animal has become domesticated and is of great service to mankind, but if it is left untrained it remains a wild, often ferocious beast. Man also, if left without training, becomes bestial, in fact he becomes lower than the animal, for the greater number of animals protect their own kind, while men ... kill and eat one another; whereas if man be educated he becomes a heavenly being. If it were not for education, no facilities or wonderful industries in the world, sciences and arts would be known, and civilization would not exist.

Now man, the greatest of all God's handiwork, is in constant need of education. He is born into the world helpless and remains in this condition for a long time. His faculties are brought into use only by training. He does not speak until taught to do so. Later on he is sent to school and receives instruction in the arts, sciences and needs of humanity. In fact, his whole life from birth to death is one period of learning. As man has material faculties which need development, so he has within him spiritual faculties, latent powers given him by God, which must be awakened.

Thus man is in need of three kinds of education: material, human and spiritual. Material education perfects his physical body and is common to animals as well as men. Human education deals with his civilization and progress. It has to do with the social, economic and civic problems of life. It includes arts, sciences, inventions and all the activities which are essential to man as distinguished from the animal. Divine education consists in acquiring the divine [VI:15:115] perfections, the awakening of the latent spiritual powers within man. This is the *real education* and confers upon man the supreme goal of the world of humanity: “Let us make man in our image and after our likeness.”

Thus, it is evident that man needs an educator who must be perfect in all respects in order to impart this education to him. This teacher must aid man in the carrying out of physical matters and the establishment of a proper social and civil organization. He must train the mind, so that it will be able to grasp the reality and purpose of creation, to improve arts, trades and inventions and to master the difficult problems of science; and he must quicken the spiritual susceptibilities, so that he may be freed from self and become illumined with the heavenly attributes of God.

¹ Compiled in Stuttgart, Germany, during August 1914. This manuscript was presented to 'Abdu'l-Bahá personally by Mr Latimer while in 'Akká in October of the same year. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave consent to its publication.-*The Editors*.

It is clear that no human agency is able to fill this important mission, for since man is unable, in his short lifetime, to acquire perfection in any one of the branches of art, learning, literature or science, how much more impossible is it for him to bestow at the same time perfect material, human and divine education. Can there be a perfect civilization with an imperfect educator? Undoubtedly no one but God, the creator, is able to fulfil this great office. But as man is incapable of knowing God, because it is impossible for the finite mind to comprehend the infinite, this awakening must come through certain channels which are capable of man's comprehension.

These channels are certain men, chosen and prepared by God to express His word in speech and writing and to manifest it in their lives. These men are likened unto polished mirrors which reflect perfectly the rays of the sun, but which are not a part of that sun, and are known as *Manifestations* of God. "The root of all knowledge is the knowledge of God—Glory be to Him!—and this knowledge is impossible save through His Manifestation" [Bahá'u'lláh].

From time to time such a man appears, declares his mission to the world and establishes a civilization—termed dispensation—which lasts for centuries and which becomes the focal point around which the laws and lives of many generations revolve. This civilization which all the governments on the earth have been unable to found, one holy man establishes without any material aid or support. For example, Christ, singly and alone, established a cause and founded a union between many diverse communities, which all the kings of the earth had tried to establish and had failed. History cites many notable examples of this kind, among whom are Abraham, Moses, Muḥammad and Christ.

History also shows us that although each one of these educators of the world of humanity was of lowly and humble birth, without schooling or instruction, yet they were endowed with erudition, and the wisest philosophers have not displayed one-thousandth part of the influence manifested by these holy men. This power was not due to their human attainments but to the divine word which spoke through them. The divine words of these educators of humanity have certain characteristics which prove them to be from a higher source than man. It is their direct appeal to the hearts and lives of men, rather than an appeal to the intellects. The words of a great writer appeal only to the mind of a man, while the word of God, speaking through His Manifestations, appeals directly to his heart or soul. The soul is the lamp, while mind is the light which comes from the lamp. Therefore, in order to have illumination the lamp must first be lit. This word of God has ever enkindled the lamp of humanity. It has made a resistless advance against all earthly powers, overcoming ignorance and darkness, dispersing former conceptions and superstitions, and creating new ideals and higher morals. Its permanency has outlasted kingdoms, dynasties and philosophies. [VI:15:116]

Whenever one appears in the world, equipped with these qualifications, and by his words and deeds such a result follow, can we not safely acclaim him to be a true messenger of God and worthy of our greatest love and respect? Shall we remain in the darkness of doubt and denial, as in former ages, or shall we become illumined by acceptance and enlightenment?

"Look ye at the time of Christ; had the people realized that the holy spirit of God was speaking to them through his divine mouth they would not have waited three centuries before accepting him, and now is it meet for you that you are sleeping on the bed of idleness and neglect, while the *Father* foretold by Christ has come amongst us and, opened the greatest door of bounteous gifts and divine favours? Let us not be like those in past centuries who were deaf to his call and blind to his beauty; but let us try and open our eyes that we may see him, and open our ears that we may hear him, and cleanse our hearts that he may come and abide in our temples." [Abdu'l-Bahá]

It is a law of nature that stagnation is the cause of retrogression and death. Man must

always advance and for this purpose God has sent His Manifestations, from age to age, for the guidance and assistance of mankind. From the time of Adam and Enoch to that of Moses and Christ and down to the present day, such divine leaders have appeared, guiding man through the various highways and byways and leading him through the different stages of development from childhood to the present manhood of the race. Man has never been without such instructions. Each one of these teachers gave the same message: "The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man", but in the terminologies of the race and the exigencies of the time, and according to the capacity of the people to whom he came. Each of these messengers had a threefold mission. First, to fulfil the prophecies of the prophets who preceded him and heralded his coming. Second, to be the unique source of all divine knowledge and instruction during his dispensation. Third, to prepare the way for the coming of the great latter-day Messiah, who would establish God's kingdom of "Peace on earth as it is in heaven".

Christ did not establish this kingdom but heralded its coming. As a proof of this he said: "I came not to send peace, but a sword", and the Christian dispensation has been one of warfare and strife.

The Christian nations have perfected the deadliest instruments for the cruel [VI:15:117] and bloody destruction of mankind. One has only to look at the present condition existing in the world and ask himself if it is the divine will of God that nine nations of the world should be at war with one another thus destroying the greatest of all God's handiwork. The very foundations of our existence have been shaken by division and disharmony, strife and enmity, oppression and inequality. The conflict of thoughts and ideas is raging; one sees the persecution of the poor and hears the sighs of agony of the wretched. From all sides sound the discordant strains of the folly and heedlessness of those who have turned from God. The rights of men, nations and races have been lost in the whirlpool of greed, thoughtlessness and ambition; even the very right of existence is denied to some. This is indeed the time of calamity and separation of which Christ spoke (Mark 13:8). "For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom! and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows."

In the spiritual world there is a similar conflict. Theology is arrayed against science, creeds and dogmas deafen the ears of man, and forms and ceremonies blind his sight. In the United States alone there are one hundred and thirty-two Christian sects, each one professing to have the only true way of attaining the kingdom, thus disobeying the express commandments of all the divine messengers. In like manner in the eastern world there are antagonizing sects among the Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus, each claiming to be the pure religion of God.

But how can the glorious and heavenly kingdom of God be established amidst this mess without first laying the essential foundation of unity, peace and justice? Is it not time for a new guide to come and clear away the debris of ignorance and superstition and again make manifest the path of God?

Fortunately there is a ray of hope for the world is aquiver with the longing and expectation of the appearance of the new Sun of Truth, the new peacemaker. The Jews are expecting the coming of the Messiah; the Christians are looking for the second coming of Christ, and in the eastern world a similar anticipation is prevalent. The Muslims expect the coming of their promised one, the Imám Mihdí, the Buddhists hope for the coming of the fifth Buddha, the Zoroastrians are longing for Shah Bahrain, and the Hindus await the appearance of the tenth incarnation of truth, called Kalki, while the people of modern and advanced thought are expecting the coming of the Great Master who will right all the conditions of this decadent world.

In order to bring about this change and to cure all the ailments of mankind this Great

Master must fulfil certain conditions: “He must be the educator of the world of humanity; his teachings must be universal and confer illumination upon mankind; his knowledge must be innate and spontaneous, and not acquired; he must answer the questions of all the sages, solve all the difficult problems of humanity, and be able to withstand all the persecutions and sufferings heaped upon him; he must be a joy-bringer and the herald of the kingdom of happiness; his knowledge must be infinite and, his wisdom all-comprehensive; the penetration of his word and the potency of his influence must be so great as to humble even his worst enemies; sorrows and tribulations must not vex him. His courage and conviction must be God-like. Day by day he must become firmer and more zealous; he must be the establisher of universal civilization, the unifier of religions, the standard-bearer of universal peace, and the embodiment of all the highest and noblest virtues of the world of humanity.”¹ [VI:15:118]

When one sees that all of these conditions are fulfilled in one human temple, then he may safely turn to him for guidance and illumination.

The Bahá’í Revelation brings the fulfilment of all these hopes and conditions to the world. It is a renewal of religion to man. It brings the spring-time of a new life and ideals. In the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “The Bahá’í Movement is not an organization. You can never organize the Bahá’í Cause. *The Bahá’í Movement is the spirit of this age.* It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahá’í Cause is an *inclusive movement*: the teachings of all the religions and societies are found here; the Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, et al., find their highest aims in this Cause. Even the Socialists and philosophers find their theories fully developed in this Movement.”

This Movement had its beginning 23 May 1844, with the appearance of a young Persian, called the Báb (the Persian or Arabic word for door or gate) who, although unschooled and untrained, arose among the great doctors of Islám who were ruling the people in spiritual ignorance at that time, and proclaimed himself to be the forerunner of “Him whom God shall manifest.” He taught and prepared the people for this coming during a period of six years, at the end of which time he was martyred by the Muslim clergy, together with thousands of his followers. Nineteen years after this declaration, Mírzá Husseín ‘Alí of Núr, more widely known as Bahá’u’lláh (which means the Glory of God) announced to the world by means of letters to the rulers and crowned heads of all nations, that he was the promised one of all religions and the one whom God would manifest. He declared that the time was at hand for the “most great peace”, the cessation of strife and warfare and the unity and harmony of all the world. He renewed the word of every prophet as to the oneness and fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and taught the abolition of differences existing between religions. He suffered the most severe persecutions at the hands of the Muslim clergy and after the confiscation of his property he was banished with a number of followers, first to Baghdád in Asiatic Turkey, then to Adrianople and finally, in 1868, he was sent to the prison city of ‘Akká, which lies at the foot of Mount Carmel, the home of the prophets, in Syria. Here he remained until his death in 1892, but although in constant imprisonment and hardship he was able to spread his message to all parts of the world and leave his Cause firmly, established. After his departure, Bahá’u’lláh commanded his followers to turn to ‘Abbás Afandí, the Centre of God’s Covenant, for guidance. ‘Abbás Afandí, the eldest son of Bahá’u’lláh—who prefers to be called ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (the Servant of God)—went into exile with his father at the early age of nine years, remaining with him until the latter’s death, and sharing all his deprivations. In 1908 after fifty–six years of persecution, hardship and imprisonment, forty years of which were spent in the prison of ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was given

¹ From a talk given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a large delegation of Theosophists in Hotel Ritz, Budapest, 11 April 1913.

his freedom by the new Turkish Republic. Since that time he has been unceasingly at work spreading the glorious message of Bahá'u'lláh. He has come from the east to the west, visiting many countries of Europe, including England, France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and travelling extensively throughout America, awakening the people from their lethargic sleep on the bed of negligence with this call:

“Do you know in what day you are living? Do you realize in what dispensation you are alive? Have you not read in the holy Scriptures that at the consummation of the ages there shall appear a *day* which is the sun of all the past days?

“*This is the day in which the Lord of Hosts has come down from heaven on the clouds of glory! This is the day in [VI:15:119] which the inhabitants of all the world shall enter under the tent of the word of God. This is the day whose real sovereign is His Highness, The Almighty. This is the day when the east and the west shall embrace each other like unto two lovers. This is the day in which war and contention shall be forgotten. This is the day in which nations and governments will enter into an eternal bond of amity and conciliation. This century is the fulfilment of the Promised Century.*”

The East shall become illumined, the west perfumed and the children of men shall enter beneath the all-embracing canopy of the oneness of the world of humanity.

Indeed all the prophecies of the past have been fulfilled by this call, which has gone out to the world from the prison city of 'Akká. In speaking of this time, Hosea (2:15) said: “And I will give the valley of 'Akká for a door of hope.” Solomon (Eccl. 4:14) said: “For out of prison he cometh to reign.” Micah (7:12) spoke: “In that day, he shall come to thee from Assyria.” Isaiah (35:2), that: “Carmel and Sharon they shall see the glory of the Lord”; and Christ (Matt. 24): “For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even to the west, so shall the coming of the son of man be.” Again there are many utterances of the prophet Muḥammad regarding 'Akká. He said to one of his followers, Ibn Mas'úd: “The greatest of all sea-coasts in the sight of God is Ascalon,¹ but 'Akká is greater than Ascalon; the greatness of 'Akká to Ascalon and all other sea-coasts can be compared with the greatness of Muḥammad to all other prophets. Be mindful of what I say unto you concerning a city which lies between two mountains (Carmel and Lebanon) in Palestine in the midst of a plain which is called 'Akká.” To Ons, another follower, Muḥammad said: “I inform you about a city on the coast of the white sea (the Mediterranean) which is called 'Akká; anyone who remains there seven days, God will regard him as the associate of Elijah and God will redeem him from the gnashing of teeth in the day of resurrection.” Again, “Blessed is the one who has visited 'Akká and blessed is the one who has seen the visitor of 'Akká”, and many other similar utterances.

These three divine men (the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá) have not only fulfilled the spiritual prophecies of all the former religions, but they have manifested by their words and deeds all the true qualities and requisites necessary to the divine and perfect educator. The Báb, a young merchant, untrained and unschooled, was able, at the age of twenty-five, to confound the most erudite doctors of the religion of Islám. Alone, he was able to withstand all the great men of religion and state who arose to exterminate his life and teachings, and he produced a great change in the corrupt morals, thoughts and customs of Persia. At that time, when the persecution, pillage and massacre of the Báb's followers was at its height, Bahá'u'lláh arose to promulgate his teachings. Although a person of noble birth, he had never studied in any school nor associated with the learned men of religion, yet he manifested such knowledge and perfection that all the people of Persia marvelled at his wisdom while his enemies spoke of him as “the renowned Bahá'u'lláh” He was exiled our times and for fifty years he was exposed to the gravest dangers and persecutions, yet in that decadent and

¹ Ashkelon, Israel.

declined civilization of Persia, he advanced teachings and ideals that were unheard or unthought of even in our western civilization. He proclaimed: The oneness of the world of humanity; the investigation of truth so that no one should blindly follow the beliefs and superstitions of his forefathers; the oneness of God and the oneness of all religions; that the purpose of religion is the creation of unity, harmony and accord amongst men and if it fails in this, irreligion is better than religion; the agreement of religion and science, for that which is not in accord with [VI:15:120] science is superstition; the equal rights of man and woman; the abolition of religious, sectarian, sectional, denominational and patriotic prejudices—"Glory is not his who loves his country, but glory is his who loves his kind"; the non-interference of religion and politics; universal peace amongst nations, races and religions; a universal language; the pursuit of education and the necessity for every one to engage in some occupation, art or trade, for this will be accounted an act of worship before God; the solution of the economic problem of the world and the organization and establishment of Houses of Justice for the administration of the law and the means of philanthropic and social betterment; in fact, all the needs and demands of our present civilization have been provided for in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who without any opportunity for education, has never failed to answer convincingly the questions of the most learned philosophers, religionists and scientific men of the orient and the occident, and who by his life of servitude and sacrifice to humanity, has become the means of the realization of these teachings.

Can a just judgement, after reflection and consideration, deny the reality of these educators? Their Cause invites investigation and their message is for all ears. Every person whether spiritual or materialist can find his questions and difficulties solved by these educators. Does it behove us then to turn our eyes from these manifest signs and to shut our ears to the call of God? It is of the greatest importance, for our future as well as present welfare to investigate the purpose and teachings of these educators and to hearken to their divine call, which has been expressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as follows:

"The foundation of Divine Religion is love, affinity and concord. Praise God that this cycle is the period of illumination! Minds have made great progress; intelligences have been unfolded; the means of unity and agreement are brought about; communication between the races of men is rapidly established. Now is the time that all of us may embrace the law of peace and treat each other with honesty and straightforwardness. Let the religious prejudices be wiped away. Let the law of racial supremacy be discontinued. Let political expedencies be done away with. Let the love of country be superseded by the love of the world. Let us all deal with each other with infinite kindness. We are all the servants at the one Divine Threshold. We are all receiving the rays of truth from the same Sun of Reality. We must all believe in all of the prophets. We must all acknowledge the divine authority of all the heavenly books. We must wash our hearts free of all human prejudices. We must serve God. We must propagate the oneness of the realm of humanity. We must be the cause of the appearance of the perfections in the world of man. We must not be like the beasts of prey. We must not allow carnage and bloodshed. We must regard the blood of man as sacred. We must not shed the holy blood of man for the paltry earth. We must all agree upon one fundamental principle—that principle is the oneness of the kingdom of humanity.

"In this age, Bahá'u'lláh has breathed the Holy Spirit into the dead body of the world. Consequently every weak soul is strengthened by these fresh divine out breathings. Every poor man will become rich, every darkened soul will become illumined, every ignorant one will become wise, because the confirmations of the Holy Spirit are descending like unto torrents. *A new era of divine consciousness is upon us.* The world of humanity is going through a process of transformation. *A new race is being developed.* The thoughts of human brotherhood are permeating all regions. New ideals are stirring the depths of hearts and a

new spirit of universal consciousness is being profoundly felt by all men.”¹

VI:16, 31 December 1915 [VI:16:121]

“The principle of religion is to acknowledge what is revealed by God, and to obey the laws established in His Book.”—Bahá’u’lláh

The Word of God²

George O. Latimer

The greatest cause of the disharmony in the world today is the lack of religion; or rather the failure of mankind to understand the meaning of and the reason for religion. If this were not the case, why are nine civilized nations of the world at war with one another; why are seven great religions bitterly attacking each other; why is there unceasing strife between capital and labour and why are the pillars of our social, political and economic structure being shaken from their very foundation? Our body politic has ever been based, as history proves, upon the teachings of the messengers of God, and surely these divinely inspired men have not given a false doctrine to the world. What then is the cause of this present state of affairs, and are we not to blame for the existence of such a condition? Let us look into the matter with an open and unbiased mind and ascertain the real purpose of religion.

To quote from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “The first bestowal of God in the world of humanity is religion, because religion consists in divine teachings to men, and most assuredly divine teachings are preferable to all other sources of instruction. Religion confers upon man the life everlasting. Religion is a service to the world of morality. Religion guides humanity to the eternal happiness. Religion is the cause of the everlasting honour in the world of man. Religion has ever helped humanity towards progress.” By religion, *the fundamentals* of religion are meant, not the blind imitations, dogmas and creeds that have been added through man’s invention and which have ever been the cause of the destruction and retrogression of nations, nay even their degradation. Again history is our proof for these facts. These foundations of the religion of God are one and have been laid by the divine prophets through whom the word of God has spoken.

It is the purpose of this discourse to show that this word of God which has been the impetus to all advancement in civilization, is and ever has been fundamentally the same. “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God”; but man’s refusal to accept and understand this “word” has been the cause of his failure to comprehend the reality and the oneness of all religion. Bahá’u’lláh has written: “The Sun of Truth is the word of God, upon which depends the training of the people of thought. It is the spirit of reality and the water of life. All things owe their existence to it. Its man- [VI:16:122] ifestation is ever according to the capacity and colouring of the mirror through which it may reflect. For example: Its light when cast on the mirror of the wise, gives expression to wisdom; when reflected from the minds of artists it produces manifestations of new and beautiful arts; when it shines through the minds of students it reveals knowledge and unfolds mysteries. All things of the world arise through man and are manifest in him, through whom they find life and development; and man is dependent for his (spiritual) existence upon the sun of the word of God. All the good names and lofty qualities are of the word. The word is the fire of God, which glowing in the hearts of people, burns away all things that are not of God. The minds of the lovers are ever aflame with this fire.” And from the pen of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “The word of God is the storehouse of all good, all power, all wisdom. The illiterate fishers and savage Arabs were thereby enabled to solve such problems as were puzzles to eminent sages all through the ages.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, reported in *Star of the West*, Vol. XIII:1, pp. 6–7.

² Compiled in Stuttgart, Germany, during August 1914. This manuscript was presented to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá personally by Mr Latimer while in ‘Akká in October of the same year. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave consent to its publication.—*The Editors*.

It awakens within us that brilliant intuition which makes us independent of all tuition and endows us with an all-embracing power of spiritual understanding. Many a soul, in the ark of philosophy, after fruitless struggles, was drowned in the sea of conflicting theories of cause and effect, while those on board the craft of simplicity reached the shore of the universal cause by the help of favourable winds blowing from the point of divine knowledge. When man is associated with that transcendent power emanating from the word of God, the tree of his existence becomes so well rooted in the soil of assurance that it laughs at the violent hurricanes of scepticism which attempt its eradication. For this association of the part with the whole endows him with the whole, and this union of the particular with the *universal* makes him all-in-all."

In order to understand the light of this sun of truth one must free his mind from the superstitions of the past, and investigate the reality of the "word" with a fair unbiased mind. Reality is not multiple and by religion is meant the one law or word of God, ever from the same source, which has been the cause of the establishment of all divine institutions in the world. According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá this "word" of God has a twofold function and may be separated into two divisions. One deals with clay and water while the other deals with the heart and soul. The one has to do with the world of morality—the ethical sublimity of human nature; the other is concerned with the transactions of society and has to do with the material well-being of man.

The first aids him in his advancement toward the kingdom of God. It is true idealism. It has ever been the means of quickening man from a material being into a spiritual one. It is the cause of the "new birth" of which his holiness Christ spoke. This division has always been one and the same in all religions. It is the fundamental basis of all and is not subject to change or alteration. It has been renewed in each prophetic dispensation or cycle; and, in short, can be summed up by the "golden rule" which Christ gave (Matt. 7:12): "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them, for this is the law and the prophets"—which Muḥammad proclaimed: "Let none of you treat his brother in a way he himself would dislike to be treated."—and which again appears in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh: "O son of man! Wert thou to observe mercy, thou wouldst not regard thine own interest but the interest of mankind. Wert thou to observe justice, choose thou for others what thou chooseth for thyself." This is the spiritual, the essential, the eternal side of religion.

The second assists man in his relationship toward society. It aims at the highest state of material civilization and progress. It has advanced man from the depths of ignorance to a high stage of enlightenment. This division, however, has been subject to change and transformation according to the exigencies of time [VI:16:123] and the varying needs of mankind. Each succeeding prophet has abrogated the existing material law and substituted teachings applicable to the (then present) necessities of man. This, however, is the practical, the non-essential, the transitory side of religion.

Let us consider for a moment this second part of the Word of God with a keen sight, for it is the misunderstanding of the purpose of these teachings of God that has caused the establishment of many different faiths in the world. For example, in the time of Noah certain requirements demanded that sea-foods be allowed. In Abraham's dispensation camel's flesh was a food for man, but in Jacob's epoch it was unlawful. After Christ, four disciples, including Peter and Paul, permitted the eating of animal food forbidden by the Bible, "with the exception of those animals which had been strangled, or which were sacrificed to idols, and of blood." (Acts 15:20.) Later Paul permitted the eating of such animals.

During the time of Adam it was permissible for a man to marry his sister, and Abel, Cain and Seth took unto wife their own sister. In the Abrahamic cycle a certain expedient made it permissible for a man to marry his aunt, as Sarah was the sister of Abraham's mother; but

when Moses came and established the law of the Torah these material ordinances were abrogated and changed. Later Christ came and broke the Sabbath and forbade divorce. When Moses came to the world there were no houses of correction, no forms of punishment and because of the lawless condition of the people the law of God had to be strict and direct. Therefore Moses said that an eye was to be taken for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. He laid down ten commandments for dealing with the murderer. If a man robbed to the extent of one dollar, his hand was cut off. It is not permitted in our advanced civilization to carry out these commands. It is indeed impossible; even the law of capital punishment has become a mooted question. But when Jesus came he abrogated the law of Moses and substituted the law of love: If the right cheek was smitten, then turn the left also. Now in this day Bahá'u'lláh has said: "If you be slain for God's good pleasure, verily it is better for you than that ye should slay."

Again the tribes that Muḥammad came to were in the lowest stages of savagery and debasement. It was one of their customs to bury their own daughters alive. A man was permitted to take a thousand women as his property and nearly every husband had at least ten wives. It was a custom that when such a husband died his sons took possession of each other's mothers. If a son threw his mantle over his father's wife and said, "This woman is my lawful property," immediately she became his slave and chattel. In all fairness one may ask, was not Muḥammad's law curbing this barbaric state of affairs and making it unlawful for man to have more than four wives an advance over the existing condition? And now in our present day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá¹ has abrogated this law of Muḥammad by forbidding polygamy. In a word these seeming differences are merely alterations demanded by the growth and advancement of mankind. Time changes and when time changes, the laws must change. Therefore, it is impossible for us to compare the time of Moses to that of Christ because the condition of the world has greatly altered.

The existence of the world may be compared to the physical being or health of man, and the prophets of God to skilful physicians. It is impossible for the human body to remain in one state of health, and different diseases occur, which require different remedies. The Divine Wisdom requires that for every change of condition there will be a change of commands and when diseases change, there will be a change of treatment. For example, the patient may be in the throes of a raging fever and the doctor will administer a cooling remedy, [VI:16:126] in a few hours the state of the patient may be changed to one of chills. It is then that the skilled physician changes his remedy and applies a heating or vivifying tonic. The skill of the physician depends upon his ability to prescribe remedies that will cure the patient in every state of sickness. The ignorant patient may complain of the lack of skill on the part of the physician when he changes his treatment, saying to himself, "If the first drug was my cure, why did he change, and if it were not my cure why did he recommend it in the beginning?"—but the wise patient is ever submissive and the change of treatment only adds to his conviction and faith in the doctor. Some constitutions are weak while others are strong, but all need constant care and attention. The change of remedies according to the state of the patient's condition is a proof of the skill of the doctor.

Today the condition of the world is very grave and serious. Humanity is sick, socially, economically, [and] spiritually. [VI:16:127] It is attacked by the germs of despotism and oppression; the microbes of injustice and inequality have entered the system, the bacteria of deceit and hypocrisy are multiplying; the savagery of bloody war and relentless strife have gripped and distorted the body; the scourge of license and calumny has left its deep pit-marks; the disintegrating forces of patriotic, social and religious prejudices are attacking man from all sides. The air has become contaminated with blind dogmas, creeds and superstitions and man's sustenance is befouled by pride, lust and selfishness. Man is gasping for relief from

¹ It is more accurate to say 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Notes no. 89, p. 206) Bahá'u'lláh's statement (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 63, p. 41) to mean only one wife was permissible.

this disease of repulsion, discord, hatred and separation. The old teachings are insufficient for today, they cannot cure every disease and are not an ointment for every wound.

Now in this hour of extreme crisis the Divine Physician has again come in the person of Bahá'u'lláh and has given the allaying remedies of attraction, harmony, unity and love. He has prescribed antidotes, free from all toxins, which have the power to cure our spiritual as well as sociologic sickness. His medicine is the panacea for every disease in the world today. The divine healer, Christ, administered to the needs of his time but he did not give his full treatment for he said: "I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now." His treatment had to do with the individual, while the remedies of Bahá'u'lláh are for the community at large. He has diagnosed every sickness of the body of the world and prescribed remedies accordingly. His treatment is for the body politic and in administering it he says to the world of humanity: "The progress of man depends upon faithfulness, wisdom, chastity, intelligence and deeds. He is ever degraded by ignorance, lack of faith, untruth and selfishness. Verily, man is not called man until he be imbued with the attributes of the Merciful. He is not man because of wealth and adornment, learning and refinement. Blessed is he who is free from the names, seeking the shore of the sea of purity and loving the melody of the dove of virtue." In a similar way all the demands of our present stage of civilization are provided for and everything that has been a hindrance and a setback to improvement has been cast aside.

These material changes, however, are the non-essentials and have been aptly termed the accidentals of religion. 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes: "In this great cycle and wonderful dispensation, the majority of those non-essential commands which refer to the body are to be administered by the House of Justice, because this great cycle is of long duration, this great age is vast, continuous and eternal, and since changes and alterations are the characteristic and necessary demands of the world, therefore these material commands will be administered according to the exigencies of the time, but the *very foundation* of the law of God has never been nor will be altered. The same foundation, which is the basis of the law of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muḥammad and all the prophets, is again to be found in the teachings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

To sum up what has already been said, we find that the second part of the law or word of God consists of teachings which are concerned with the material welfare of man. It is composed of instructions relating to prayer, fasting, forms of worship, marriage and divorce, legal processes, the abolition of slavery and the method of treatment for criminals, etc. This part of the divine law is modified and altered according to the condition of mankind in each prophetic cycle. While on the other hand the first part of the law of God is never abrogated because it is spiritual and not material truth. It comprises faith, knowledge, rectitude, justice, piety, righteousness, trustworthiness, love of God, inward peace, purity, severance, humility, meekness, patience, constancy and all the heavenly attributes. It causes man to care for the wretched, to uplift the downtrodden, to give to the needy and to defend the oppressed. It makes man treat [VI:16:128] friend or foe alike and as a result one finds the wounded German and French soldiers lying side by side, each being nursed by the same kind hand. These divine qualities are the lofty attributes of God, they are unceasing and eternal. In every age this same spiritual law of God has been renewed. The necessity for the renewal is not that these teachings have entirely disappeared from the world, but that man has lost the spirit of them. And when the spirit has departed from the essential side of the word of God, then also the non-essential side becomes corrupt and in need of a change. The world is in this condition at the present time and again God has renewed his spiritual law and altered the material law through the divine instrumentation of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Shall we still keep on suffering or shall we turn to the divine physician and partake of his spiritual treatment? The divine healer, Bahá'u'lláh has offered the following remedy: "Ye are all fruits

of one tree and leaves of one branch. O ye discerning ones of the people: Verily the words which have descended from the heaven of the will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences and welcome all with the light of oneness. Be the cause of the comfort and the advancement of humanity. This handful of dust, the world, is one home: let it be in unity. Forsake pride, it is a cause of discord; follow that which tends to harmony. Consort with all the people with love and fragrance. Fellowship is the cause of unity and unity is the source of order in the world.”

All other remedies have failed. Shall we not give this treatment a fair trial?

VI:17, 19 January 1916 [VI:17:133]

Utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá upon the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár¹

I send you the glad tidings of the erection of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár (the Bahá’í Temple) in Ishqábád, with all joy and great happiness. The friends of God assembled together with rejoicing and conveyed the stones themselves, upon their backs, while attracted by the love of God and for the glory of God. Soon that great Temple will be completed and the voice of prayer and praise shall ascend to the Sublime Kingdom.

I was rejoiced through your endeavours in this glorious Cause, made with joy and good interest. I pray God to aid you in exalting His Word, and in establishing the Temple of Worship, through His grace and ancient mercy. Verily, ye are the first to arise for this glorious Cause in that vast region. Soon will ye see the spread of this enterprise in the world, and its resounding voice shall go through the ears of the people in all parts.

Exert your energy in accomplishing what ye have undertaken, so that this glorious Temple may be built, that the beloved of God may assemble therein and that they may pray and offer glory to God for guiding them to His Kingdom.

[Translated 30 May 1903]

The vision also signifies that a Mashriqu’l-Adhkár will soon be established in America. The cries of supplication and invocation will be raised to the Highest Kingdom therefrom and, verily, the people will enter into the Religion of God by troops, with great enthusiasm and attraction.

[Translated 9 June 1903] [VI:17:134]

The people shall hasten to worship in that heavenly temple, the fragrances of God will be elevated, the divine teachings will be established in the hearts like the establishment of the spirit in mankind; the people will then stand firm in the Cause of your Lord, the Merciful.

[Translated 2 July 1903]

The construction of Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in those regions is of the utmost importance; is conducive to the attainment of the good pleasure of the Almighty and the descent of the confirmation by the Exalted Lord.

[Translated 14 June 1907]

To have it (the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár) built is most important. Some material things have spiritual effect, and the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is a material thing that will have great effect upon the spirits of the people. Not only does the building of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár have an effect

¹ Those located elsewhere have been omitted.

upon those who build it, but upon the whole world. In the time of Christ the believers used a room under a house, where they held their meetings. Moses built the Tabernacle. Solomon built the first real Temple. In the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, services will be held every morning, and the Words of Bahá'u'lláh only are to be read. Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár means "Dawning Point of Mention" (Where God is mentioned).

[Table talk given in 'Akká January 1908]

But it is two or three years since a number of people are making efforts in Chicago, but this has not yet given result, and important persons are exerting themselves and applying for contributions to various quarters. Now, while the building of this Temple is not yet started or engaged in, if there be the founding of a second Temple undertaken, neither of the two would be accomplished and this failure would weaken the Cause of God.

[Translated 1908]

In reality, the radiant, pure hearts are the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár and from them the voice of supplication and invocation continually reaches the Supreme Concourse. I ask God to make the heart of every one of you a temple of the divine Temples and to let the lamp of the Great Guidance be lighted therein. And, when the hearts find such an attainment, they will certainly exert the utmost endeavour and energy in the building of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár. Thus may the outward express the inward and the form (or letter) indicate the meaning (or reality).

[Translated 21 May 1908]

His honour ... presented the map of the land of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár on the day of the declaration of His holiness the Supreme (the Báb). Great joy was obtained thereby and with the greatest care it was considered. It is indeed a delightful spot worthy of this edifice and building. However, it must be enlarged yet a little more, so that spacious ground around the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár may afford ample room for a rose garden.

Thank God! the people of God made such a sincere resolution and exerted such a great effort. It is hoped that all the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful, from all regions and directions, will assist the erection of this building, so that in a short time a wonderful edifice may arise in the name of God and prove the reason whereby the people may examine and investigate the Cause of God and seek the divine teachings.

The Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, though outwardly a material foundation, is possessed of spiritual effect and causes the union of hearts and the gathering of souls.

In the days of the Manifestation, any city, wherein a Temple was founded, afforded the means of promulgation (of the Cause) and the confirmation of the hearts and the confidence of souls, for in those dwellings the Name of God is ever mentioned and always commemorated. And, for the tranquillity and repose of the hearts, there is no other means save the commemoration of almighty God.

Praise be to God! The erection of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár has a great effect in all grades (or states). It was tested in the east and so, evidently and plainly, was it proved. Even when in a village a house was called the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, it possessed a different effect. How much more its building and organization!

Therefore, O ye friends and maid-servants of the Merciful! As long as ye can, endeavour with life and heart, so that the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár of Chicago may soon be built, organized and confirmed.

If all the friends in America, in all cities and hamlets, assist and by the means of a building commission help, this offering will prove most acceptable in the Kingdom of the Sun of the Horizons.

O God! O God! Verily, I implore Thee with throbbing heart and streaming tears to aid every one who endeavours for the erection of this edifice, in the building of a house, wherein Thy Name is mentioned every morn and eve.

O Lord,! Send down Thy benediction upon whosoever served this edifice and endeavoured in its uprising among the sects and religions, and confirm him in every good of mankind; open the doors of riches and wealth unto him and give in heritage the treasures of the Kingdom which perish not; make him the sign of giving among the people and reinforce him by the Sea of Generosity and Bounty, which is surging with the waves of grace and favour.

Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Merciful, the Bountiful!

[Translated 4 July 1908]

The believers of God in America, one and all, must unitedly make an effort, so that the Temple of God will be built in Chicago, then, afterwards, it will be built in other localities. ... [VI:17:136]

Regarding the building of the Temple in Chicago, both of you display the utmost effort, that is, effort in encouraging and inspiring the believers and the maidservants of God, so that they may assist in the matter with generosity and thus very soon this Temple will be erected. This matter is of great importance (utmost importance).

[In 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own handwriting] In Ishqábád, the believers of God made the erection of the Temple conducive to affinity and unity, so that it really became the cause of oneness of the Word.

Ye also make the erection of the Temple in America conducive to the unity and oneness of the believers, of the maidservants and servants of the Merciful, so that, in one thought, one aim, they engage themselves in the building of the Temple.

[Translated July 1908]

Some of the souls are not aware of the importance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. They think and say: The other nations have hundreds of thousands of temples, the Christians having as many as a million temples of the greatest structural importance. What result have they yielded, that now this one Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is said to cause the manifestation of signs and prove a source of light! One million churches have not yielded any fruit. What is the one Mashriqu'l-Adhkár going to do? Furthermore, today, the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is of paramount importance, but hereafter it shall not be so. This is the beginning of organization. It is like unto the first church founded in Christianity. It is an expression of the elevation of the Word of God. When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was erected in Ishqábád, its influence was felt in all the oriental countries. Whosoever heard of it commenced an investigation of the Cause. Now the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Ishqábád, like an evident banner waves in the world. And, if, in Chicago, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is established, even as in Ishqábád, then you will see what the recognition of the Cause will do. Particularly, the arrangement of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is such, that it will exert the greatest effect upon the civilized world, for it has many accessories. Among them are the following:

A school for orphans, a college for higher scientific education (or higher knowledge), a hospital, a home for cripples, a hospice.

When the Mashriq'l-Adhkár, with its accessories, is established in the world, aside from its religious or spiritual influence, it will have a tremendous effect upon civilization. Besides the religionists who will feel its influence, materialists will not be exempt therefrom. Moreover it contains divine wisdoms, spiritual effects upon the intellects and thoughts. Subsequent to its erection these will become evident.

[Table talk given in 'Akká, February 1909] [VI:17:137]

Among the most important affairs is the founding of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár, although weak minds may not grasp its importance: nay, perchance, they imagine this Mashriq'l-Adhkár to be a temple like other temples.

They may say to themselves: "Every nation has a hundred thousand gigantic temples; what result have they yielded, that now this one Mashriq'l-Adhkár (is said) to cause the manifestation of signs and prove a source of light?" But they are ignorant of the fact that the founding of this Mashriq'l-Adhkár is to be in the inception of the organization of the Kingdom.

Therefore, it is important and is an expression of the upraising of the evident Standard, which is waving in the centre of that continent, the results and effects of which will become manifest in the hearts and spirits. No soul will be aware of this mature wisdom save after trial.

When the Mashriq'l-Adhkár was founded in Ishqábád, its clamour affected all the cities of the orient and caused souls to awaken (to the call). Most of the souls who investigated and heard the explanation were attracted to the Kingdom of God.

Moreover, the accessories of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár are numerous. Among them are the school for orphans, the great college for the higher arts, hospital, home for the cripples, and hospice. The doors of these places are to be opened to all sects—no differentiations. When these accessories are completed, and, by God's help and aid, the departments fully systematized, it will be proved that the Mashriq'l-Adhkár is to human society a great bounty and a great blessing.

In brief, through the unlimited bounty of God, I am hopeful that the beloved ones of God in America may be aided and confirmed in founding this mighty and solid foundation and gradually annex thereto its accessories.

Now ye have convened in that centre (Chicago), from other cities of America. With sincere intentions and lofty endeavours have ye proposed to undertake this mighty affair. Know ye for a certainty that ye will be confirmed by the aids of the Holy Spirit and that ye will render the Kingdom of God a distinguished service, whereby ye will become dear in both realms and will shine forth as morning stars from the horizon of the Love of God.

This organization of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár will be a type for the coming centuries and will hold the station of the Mother, and thus, later, in other cities many Mashriq'l-Adhkárs will be its offspring.

O Lord! Make these holy souls dawning-points of lights and the manifestations of (Thy) signs. Make every one a leading corner stone in this great edifice, a pillar of its pillars.

O God! Although the friends are needy, yet Thou art the Helper, the Supporter, the Rewarder!

These souls have arisen to serve Thee well and have begun servitude. Confirm them and aid them. Encourage each by promises of Thy divine favours and make them of the elect.

Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful, the Able, the Giver, the Shining, the Hearer, the Seer!

[Extract from Tablet to Temple Unity Convention of 22-23 March 1909] [VI:17:138]

O ye friends of the east and the west!

One of the greatest foundations of the religion of God, the significance of the Word of God and the duty of the believers of God is mutual assistance and co-operation. For the world of humanity, nay, rather, all the infinite beings exist by this law of mutual action and helpfulness. Should this law of joint interchange of forces be removed from the arena of life, the existence would be entirely destroyed.

When we ponder deeply upon the connection and interdependence of beings, we clearly realize that the life of every being draws benefit and sustenance from all the other innumerable existences. This mutual helpfulness is realized either directly or through mediation, and if, for the twinkling of an eye, this confirmation and assistance does not descend upon the living being, that one will become non-existent, for all the existing things are linked together and draw help from each other. Therefore, the greatest foundation of the world of existence is this co-operation and mutuality.

Liken the world of existence to the temple of man. All the limbs and organs of the human body assist each other, [VI:17:139] therefore life continues. When, in this wonderful organism, there is a disconnection, life is changed into death and the parts of the body disintegrate. Likewise, among the parts of existence, there is a wonderful connection and interchange of forces, which is the cause of the life of the world and the continuation of these countless phenomena.

When one considers the living beings and the growing plants, he realizes that the animals and man sustain life by inhaling the emanations from the vegetable world, and this fiery element is called oxygen. The vegetable kingdom also draws life from the living creatures in the substance called carbon. In brief, the beings of sensation acquire life from the growing beings and, in turn, the growing things receive life from the sensitive creatures. Therefore, this interchange of forces and intercommunication is continual and uninterrupted.

From this illustration, one can see the base of life is this mutual aid and helpfulness; and the cause of destruction and non-existence would be the interruption of this mutual assistance.

The more the world aspires to civilization, the more this most important matter of co-operation and assistance becomes manifest. Therefore, in the world of humanity, one sees this matter of helpfulness attain to a high degree of efficiency; so much so, that the continuance of humanity entirely depends upon this interrelation. The believers of God must especially fortify the foundation of this reality among themselves, so that all may help each other under all circumstances, whether in the degree of truth and significances or in the stations of this world of matter and, especially, in founding public institutions which shall benefit all the people, and, still more, the founding of the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár, which is the greatest of the divine foundations.

Consequently, the friends of God, with the utmost magnanimity, sincerity of purpose and self-abnegation, must help for the building of this supreme foundation. Now, in the regions of America, the believers of God have resolved to build the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár and, while choosing the land in a most beautiful spot, they are occupied in gathering contributions. Although they will build this Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár with the utmost beauty and completeness, yet, for the sake of the communication between orient and occident, the increase of spiritual affection and love and the solidarity of the foundation of unity and concord, all the believers in the east must contribute according to their means, no matter how small the sum may be. God does not ask from any soul except according to his ability. This contribution must come from all cities and villages from all the believers of God. They should send all contributions to this

Holy Land, so that they may be forwarded from here to America through a confidential channel.

In brief, O ye friends of God, rest assured that in place of this contribution, your commerce, your agriculture and industries shall be blessed many times. Whosoever comes with one good act, God will give him tenfold. There is no doubt that the living Lord shall assist and confirm the generous soul.

O my Lord! O my Lord! Illumine the faces of Thy sincere and beloved ones. Assist them with the angels of Thy manifest victory; make them firm in Thy great path; open before them the doors of blessings through Thine ancient favour, for they give in Thy way whatever they have, protecting Thy religion, assured in Thy mentioning, sacrificing their souls for Thy love, giving what they have for Thy beauty, so that they may gain Thy good pleasure. O my Lord, destine for them inexhaustible compensation, never failing bounty and divine outpouring.

Verily, Thou art the Confirmer, the Assister, the Generous, the Giver, and the Merciful.

[Translated 24 August 1909] [VI:17:140]

I hope that all of them may become assisted in the service of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, so that this divine Institution may be raised in that country, and the melody of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár may awaken the sleepy ones.

[Translated 31 October 1909] [VI:17:143]

You have written that a sum of money is raised to be contributed toward the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Ask ye of God that the American believers may become assisted in the building of this great Temple.

[Translated 4 March 1911]

VI:18, 7 February 1916 [VI:18:153]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Ishqábád

Charles Mason Remey¹
Washington, D.C., 12 October 1908

To the House of Spirituality of Bahá'ís, Chicago, Ill.

Brothers in the service of Abhá:

As you have arisen for the construction of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America, and, as I have recently visited Ishqábád and seen there the great Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the east, of which we in the west have heard so much, I take it upon myself to write to you a description of this edifice, hoping to share with you the great blessing of meeting with the friends in those parts and of beholding this Temple which is a testimony of their sacrifice and unity.

As you know, Ishqábád is in Russian Turkistán, just north of the Elburz mountains, which separate the desert plain of western Turkistán, on the north, from Persia on the south. The city itself lies on the plain a short distance from the mountains, which here are quite rugged and rocky. The town is quite modern in aspect, being laid off with gardens and broad streets, which meet at right angles. Rows of trees along the sidewalks remind one of a western city, while the buildings and the waterways, which flank the streets and are fed with water coming from the nearby mountains, are strikingly oriental.

I could hardly believe that this city had sprung up almost entirely during the past half-century. It was but a huddle of mud huts, when Bahá'u'lláh first directed some of his followers to settle there. Now this is replaced by a large and prosperous city of buildings of brick and

¹ Article corrected in accordance with author's letter, *Star of the West*, VI:19, p. 164.

stone.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár stands in the centre of the city, surrounded by a large garden, which is bounded by four streets. It rises high above the surrounding buildings and trees, its dome being visible for miles, as the traveller approaches the city over the plain. The building in plan is a regular polygon of nine sides. One large doorway and portico, flanked by turrets, facing the direction of the Holy City [Akká], forms the principal motive of the facade, while the dome dominates the whole composition.

The walls of the Temple are of brick covered with a firm and hard stucco, [VI:18:154] which in that climate resists quite well the action of the elements, while the floors are concrete supported by iron or steel beams.

In plan the building is composed of three sections: the central rotunda, the aisle or ambulatory which surrounds it, and the loggia which surrounds the entire building.

The interior of the rotunda is five stories in height. The first or main floor story consists of nine arches, supported by piers, which separate the ambulatory from the rotunda proper. The second **story** consists of a similar treatment of arches and piers and balustrades, which separate the triforium gallery (which is directly above the ambulatory) from the well of the rotunda. The third story is decorated with nine flank arcades, between which is a shield upon which is inscribed, in Persian characters, "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá". The fourth story contains nine large windows, while the wall of the fifth story, which is not as high as the others, is pierced by eighteen bull's-eye windows.

Above, there is the dome which is hemispherical in shape. The rotunda from the floor to the top of the dome is elaborately decorated with fret work and other designs, all in relief. We were [VI:18:155] told that the ultimate aim was that colour and gilding should be added to this interior decoration.

The inner dome is of iron or steel and concrete, while the outer dome or roof is entirely of metal—the intention is that this shall be gilded.

The main portico of the temple is two stories in the clear, while the loggias, which surround the building, are on two floors, the lower being on the main floor level, while the upper one is on the level of the triforium gallery. This upper loggia is reached by two stair-cases, one to the right and one to the left of the main entrance, and the gallery is entered from the loggia.

On the main floor the principal entrance is through the large doorway, but there are also several inner doors, which connect the ambulatory with the loggia. An abundance of light is admitted through the windows in the upper part of the rotunda, as well as through the windows of the upper gallery and ambulatory, which open upon the loggias.

The Persian style of architecture has been used in treating the details and decorations of the buildings.

At present the stucco work is not quite completed. The interior of the rotunda is finished, but the decoration of the loggias and gallery and ambulatory is only done in part. However, the work is continuing and it will not be long before all will be complete.

From what I saw and heard in Ishqábád, I found that those believers who superintended the building of the Temple were competent business men and that, although they had undertaken a large enterprise, every possible economy was made, yet at the same time no expense seemed to be spared when necessary for the beauty and solidity of the building.

The layout of the garden is not yet complete. Nine avenues of approach lead to the Temple. The main avenue of the nine, leading to the entrance portico, will be entered from the street by a monumental gateway. Last July they were completing the plans for this principal

gateway of the grounds.

At the four corners of the garden are four buildings. One is a school. One is a house, where travelling Bahá'ís are entertained. One is to be used as a hospital, and the other is for workmen, storage, etc. Much of the property in the immediate vicinity of this enclosure belongs to Bahá'ís, so the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is the centre of the community materially, as well as spiritually.

That which impressed me more than all else, as I stood before this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, was the fact that the Bahá'ís of the east had all worked with one accord and had given freely toward its erection.

The Temple in America can be accomplished only as we give up self and unite in this service. The beloved in the east made their offerings and left them with all personal desires upon the altar of sacrifice. Now we in this country must do likewise. We need something more than money for the Temple. It must be built of the material of sacrifice and cemented together by the spirit of unity.

In the building of the Temple, every one must lay before God his material offering together with his ideas, desires and aspirations—give them to the Lord completely, and then, as we come together to construct the material building, we will find that we have ample means for the work in hand.

Each one of us has sufficient means, both material and spiritual, for the work which God has given us to perform. We need not trouble thinking that we may not have enough means, but we should seek to apply to the best advantage the means which God has given us.

Faithfully, your brother in the service of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
Charles Mason Remey

VI:18, 7 February 1916 [VI:18:156]

Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí, the great Afnán

Charles Mason Remey¹

1 January 1916

Mrs Corinne True, Chicago.

My dear friend,

You have asked me for some information regarding the life of the venerable Afnán, or the great Afnán, as he was sometimes called in the orient, under whose service of direction, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was built in Ishqábád, Russia.

Afnán, you know, is the term which has been applied to the blood relatives of the "First Point"—the Báb. Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí was the name of the Afnán of whom I write. In the orient, he is known also as Vakílu'd-Dawlih, the title bestowed upon him for public services rendered to his country, Persia.

Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí was first cousin of the Báb. He was the son of Ḥájí Siyyid Muḥammad, the brother of the Báb's mother. It was this same Ḥájí Siyyid Muḥammad, to whom Bahá'u'lláh revealed, while in Baghdád, the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* or Book of Certitude. So far as I have been able to ascertain, Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí was six or seven years younger than the Báb, and they were intimately associated in boyhood. The friends in 'Akká and Haifa have told interesting incidents of the youth of the Báb, as described by the Afnán, who recalled vividly the holy personality and spiritual charm of the "First Point."

¹ Article corrected in accordance with author's letter, *Star of the West*, VI:19, p. 164. Names of Persians are as given by H. M. Balyuzi.

After many years of service to the Cause in Persia., the Afnán was chosen by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to undertake the work of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in Ishqábád, where he lived for some years, held in great esteem by all who knew him. Under his direction, the plans for the building were made and the edifice constructed.

I am sending you some pictures which will be of interest to the friends. One shows Hájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí the centre of a multitude, including, as you will see by their uniforms, a number of Russian officials. He is in the act of placing the first stones of the foundation of the [VI:18:157] Mashriqu’l-Adhkár of Ishqábád. Note the decorations he wears. These were received from the Russian government in recognition of service rendered in offices to which he had been appointed. Another picture shows the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár under construction. I send you also a likeness of the Afnán himself with two sons, one upon either side.

In the early summer of 1908, I made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and ‘Akká. At that time it was not advisable for a westerner to go to the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, so I was entertained for two days in ‘Akká in the home of the Afnán. This was my first acquaintance with him. Again, in the late spring of 1910, when Howard Struven and I were with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we had several memorable visits with the venerable Afnán, who was then residing on Mount Carmel, in the German Colony, not far from the tomb of the Báb. I recall him as a most patriarchal figure with his long white beard, green turban and the flowing robes of the orient. Though the physical man showed his many years, his smile was radiantly brilliant, giving a glimpse into the chambers of the soul of the inner—the real spiritual man, which knows no age, for it lives eternally. [VI:18:158]

Here was Hájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí spending the evening of a long life of service near to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, on the hallowed slopes of the mountain of God—that spot frequented by the Holy Seers and Prophets of biblical days—that spot from which now, in these latter days, the spiritual religion of God is again being given to the world.

The service of the great Afnán in this world was completed in the summer of 1911, when he passed into the realms beyond, at the advanced age of eighty-five years.

While George Latimer and I were on Mount Carmel a year ago last October (1914), we took a walk one day over the mountain, in the direction of the sea, toward the cave of the Prophet Elijah. Below us, on the flat between the foot of the mountain and the shore, was the Bahá’í cemetery. From where we stood, we could look down into the small enclosure, in the centre of which is the simple tomb of Hájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí, the Afnán. Upon one side towered the mountain of God, with its sacred places, while upon the other side stretched the blue sweep of the “tideless sea”, stretching off to the north, where ‘Akká, the New Jerusalem, with its white walls and domes seemed to float like a dove upon the water. We were struck by the symbol of the dove. In the past the “dove of peace” has always been represented as soaring above the earth, but here, even while the great war raged, we seemed to see the dove calmly resting upon the earth’s surface, affording the refuge, in this age, of spiritual peace, protection and shelter!

Could the mortal Hájí Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí, the great Afnán, have a more fitting resting place than amid such holy surroundings?

Faithfully yours in the service of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár,
Charles Mason Remey

VI:19, 2 March 1916 [VI:19:165]

**“Blessing be upon the spirit who departed from the body
purified from the doubts and superstitions of the nations”**

But concerning that which thou hast asked about the spirit and its everlastingness after its

ascension, know that it will ascend at the time of its departure until it enters the presence of God in a form which, throughout all centuries, times, and throughout all circumstances and events of the world will remain unchanged. It will be everlasting as the perpetuity of the Kingdom of God, His Sovereignty, His Power and His Might, and from it will appear the traces of God, His Qualities, Providences and Favours—the Pen cannot move at the mentioning of this Station as it is in its Supremeness and Exaltation! The hand of the Divine Bounty will cause it to enter into a station that cannot be comprehended by expression, nor be explained by all the creatures of the existence.

Blessing be upon the spirit who departed from the body purified from the doubts and superstitions of the nations. Verily, it moves in the atmosphere of God's desire, and enters into the Supreme Paradise.

All the angels of the Supreme Paradise attend and surround it, and it will have fellowship with all the prophets of God and His saints, and speak with them and tell them what happened to it in the Cause of God, the Lord of the Universe. If anyone could realize what hath been assigned for it in the Kingdoms of God, the Lord of the Throne and the dust, he would immediately yearn with a great longing for the Unmoveable, Exalted, Holy and Abhá station!

Bahá'u'lláh

VII:1, 21 March 1916 [VII:1:1]

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

This period of time is the Promised Age, the assembling of the human race to the "Resurrection Day", and now is the great "Day of Judgement". Soon the whole world, as in spring-time, will change its garb. The turning and falling of the autumn leaves is past; the bleakness of the winter-time is over. The new year hath appeared and the spiritual [VII:1:2] spring-time is at hand. The black earth is becoming a verdant garden; the deserts and mountains are teeming with red flowers; from the borders of the wilderness the tall grasses are standing like advance guards before the cypress and jessamine trees; while the birds are singing among the rose branches like angels in the highest heavens, announcing the glad tidings of the approach of that spiritual spring, and the sweet music of their voices is causing the real essence of all things to move and quiver.

O my spiritual friend! Dost thou know from what airs emanate the notes sung by those birds? They are from the melodies of peace and reconciliation, of love and unity, of justice and security, of concord and harmony. In a short time this heavenly singing will intoxicate all humanity; the foundations of enmity shall be destroyed; unity and affection shall be witnessed in every assembly; and the lovers of the love of God at these great festivals shall behold their splendour.

Therefore, contemplate what a spirit of life God hath given that the body of the whole earth may attain life everlasting! The Paradise of Abhá will soon spread a pavilion from the Pole-star of the world, under whose shelter the beloved shall rejoice and the pure hearts shall repose in peace.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

VII:1, 21 March 1916 [VII:1:17]

The light of truth

Address delivered by Dr 'Alí-Qulí Khán before the Bahá'í Assembly of West Hoboken, N.J., 28 September 1902.

Truth is the foundation upon which the welfare of society, both temporal and spiritual, is dependent. To know the full scope of Truth secures man a passport with which to traverse

through the boundaries of the world and advance with sure step toward the realm of eternity. Truth seekers are assiduous students in the school of worldly experience. They see many ups and downs and experience manifold stumbling blocks and afflictions upon the highway of trials which lead man to the destination of perfection. Every day life puts unthought of problems and questions to man, which are beyond his power to solve. But when, through suffering and hardships, Truth is attained, it endows man with a key to every enigma of life, and traces unto him a plain way to every fairy mansion sequestered here and there throughout the vast desert of time.

Now that we know that the Truth is the only thing worth having, we must buy it at any price. The Truth should be found and known through the heart and not through any of the outward senses. It should be perceived through insight and not sight, for the sight sees imaginary things as realities, considers the mirage of the desert as running water and takes a shifting shadow for a substantial form. The outward senses rather mislead us than direct us to the Truth. When we look at things from the outward sense point of view, we are improvident and thus led to misjudge them. In such circumstances we take darkness for light, images reflected in the mirror for realities, and we fail to distinguish the Truth from falsehood. In other words, to seek after Truth through the instrumentality of outward senses, leads us to worship horizons—not the sun—and to judge by the appearance of the lamp and candle.

To illustrate this point, let us look back 1900 years ago when the whole world was in quest of Truth. In search of Truth all were exploring the dark recesses and nooks of the different sides of life through the help of the torch of outward senses, with the exception of a very few who sought after it and had for a guide the shining light of insight and inner perception. Then when the “Messianic Sun” dawned from the horizon of the “Man of Nazareth”, those few who sought after the Messiah through the help of insight found that world-illuminating light as clear as the sun in midday and were by no means prevented by the lowly lamp of Jesus in whom that Light had appeared. On the other hand, myriads of pseudo-seekers, who were escorted by the gorgeous equipage of Greek philosophy and mounted on the steeds [VII:1:4] of phenomenal science and speculation, were entirely veiled from the Truth, and the help of outward senses did no other than to cast them in the bottomless abyss of remorse and ignorance. The few, who sought only for the Light, attained to never-ending life, while the many who judged the Light by the outward appearance of the lamp, were submerged in the sea of everlasting death. The former became the goal of kings and queens, but the latter became the shame of nations, and their names remained in the world’s history as a subject of universal derision and disdain. Peter became the custodian of divine mysteries, while Caiaphas became a true symbol of human abomination.

Everything in the world, such as tree, ocean, light, man or beast, has a poor beginning. For instance, the beginning of a tree is a seed, that of the ocean a drop, that of sunlight the dim twilight, that of man the embryo, and that of beast, an insignificant speck of mere potentiality. Just as the twilight, the drop, the seed and the embryo have severally the potentiality of becoming a midday sun, an ocean, a stately tree and a perfect man, likewise, a discerning man sees and realizes a movement of nineteen hundred years duration in the lowly man of Nazareth, the extinction of polytheism and idolatry in the illiterate man of Arabia, and the establishment of the Universal Peace and general emancipation of mankind in Bahá’u’lláh, the noble man of Persia.

Philosophy and clear thinking teach that everything accidental and visible is an effect and is the outcome of a cause. The appearance and life of things begin with the existence of their causes. Though causes are ideas and pre-existent to the effects which are forms, yet the latter are inseparable from and contemporaneous with the former. For a further illustration of this fact, I quote the following from the words of Emerson, the literary and moral genius of

America.

“Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end pre-exists in the means and the fruit in the seed. The change which breaks up at short intervals the prosperity of men are advertisements of a nature whose law is growth.”

Also the same authority has said:

“Thought and form are equal in the order of time; but in the order of genesis, the thought is prior to the form.”

One day when in ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, speaking of the mentioned fact and explaining that the possibility of every effect is latent or deposited in its cause, gave the following illustration:

“A wise man when looking at an egg, sees in it the whole form of a bird; he sees the beak, the claws, the plumage, the wings and the eyes, as well as the song and melody of the bird; but a child or an unwise man sees nothing but the egg, even unable to go any further than the outward shell and appearance.”

Thus it was through the innate Light of Truth and divine power manifest in the “Lowly Nazarene”, that he said: “Verily, I have overcome the world,” while the multitude, who were blind to this fact judged Him from His outward humility and poverty and laughed at His words in derision. Woe unto man if he relies upon his outward senses and judges things according to their appearance!

The life of vegetation begins in the seed, and the seed bursts forth in early spring through the training of the vernal shower and gentle breezes. So is the case with the religious growth. It begins with the rise of a perfect man who represents that Invisible Sun of Truth in its fullness and perfection. The rise of such a man puts a period to the old cycles and opens the paragraph of a new dispensation. His rise is the spiritual spring-time, through the refreshing breezes of which the sterile desert of the chaotic world blossoms into new life and becomes the envy of the Kingdom. The [VII:1:5] breezes of the temporal spring-time are but an outcome of ethereal vibrations and fluctuations, while the breeze of this divine vernal season is the pure breath of the Holy Spirit which imparts everlasting life upon the dead souls of mankind. It is the rise of this perfect man which gives rise to ideal resurrection and calls forth the mouldering bones of dead humanity from the graves of inadvertence and superstition.

The rise of this man revolutionizes the old school of pride, self-exaltation and love for temporal leadership, and establishes the flourishing institution of meekness, self-abnegation and servitude upon the well-made foundation of love and truth. The rise of this man brings to light the falsity of so-called knowledge, and removes the covering from the face of misunderstood facts. All depend upon Him for “He is all in all”, and all spring forth from Him, for He is the source of Life. He is the “Alpha and the Omega”, the beginning and the end, the manifest and the hidden. For He is the manifestation of that Essence who was from the beginning before which there was no beginning, and will continue to be until the end beyond which there is no end. To know Him is to know God; to adore Him is to adore God; and to love Him is to love God. For He is the most perfect and clear mirror upon which the rays of the Invisible Sun are reflected and it is only through that Mirror that man can behold the radiance of that Sun and be benefited by its life-imparting heat. He is He, whether He claims servitude, divinity, prophethood, sonship, fatherhood or manhood. In whatever clothing He may appear, the prudent will recognize Him, and in whatever tongue He may speak, the spiritually minded will hear Him and will distinguish Him from importers.

Thirty-four hundred years ago, when the whole world was covered with the wintry frost of ignorance and idolatry, and the children of men were submerged in the sea of darkness and

imagination, the Supreme Ordainer saw fit to purify the mirror of the phenomenal existence from the dust of barbarity and deliver mankind from the prison of fabulous beliefs and abominations. He selected an ordinary man of the desert and made him the means for the execution of His work and honoured him with the robe of prophethood. The shepherd saw the fire of "Verily, I am God" in the burning bush on the Sinai of knowledge and was favoured with the rod of command. He was chosen from among the whole world to be the bearer of the divine Message and to enact the supreme Law for the guidance of a certain number of mankind. He was commanded to release the children of Israel from the tyranny of arrogant Pharaohs and to remove the yoke of slavery from their necks. That man of God, that Law Giver, that interlocutor of God, directed by the divine Light, betook himself to the city of darkness and delivered the Message of His Lord to him who was the most powerful king in the history of that age. He discomfited the hosts of the magi with the white hand of argument and swallowed the snakes of imagination with the serpent of Truth. A shepherd, destitute of any material influence, learning, affluence or hosts, suppressed the power of kings, silenced the men of sciences, and imparted the wealth of Law and Truth to the Pharaoh-ridden slaves, termed the Jews. He directed them to the Land of Promise, and established them in the covenanted country in fulfilment of the Words of God to the Patriarch.

When we follow the history of the Jews from the rise of Moses down to the day of Jesus, we are continually struck with amazement at the considerable change brought upon these slaves of Pharaoh and at the great events and occurrences which mark the Hebraic cycle. For the Word of God, through Moses, illumined that benighted people [VII:1:7] with the light of God-knowledge and honoured them with the title of "The Holy People". That unfortunate race, who were trampled under the feet of tyranny, became the envy of kings and gave rise to great chiefs and prophets. They locked up the fate of the world under the seal of symbols and set forth the events of the future world of religion and the appearance of the Final Reformer, in the language of prophecy. Every century of this long cycle was lighted with a prophetic lamp who admonished and warned them and awakened the spirit of expectation in their hearts for the coming of the Messiah. When again the divine Law fell a victim to the misinterpretation of man and the priestly influence found prominence over Truth and sanctity, the children of Israel became stripped of the Robe of Holiness and the mirror of their hearts was stained with the filth of pagan philosophy and Phoenician idolatry. Thus their unity changed into division, their harmony into discord, their justice into oppression, their chastity into wickedness, until finally they entitled them- [VII:1:8] selves to a long degradation, suffering, powerlessness and humility, which the time had laid in store for a near future, as a result of their error and inadvertence.

According to my honourable teacher, Mírzá Abu'l-Faql, when we carefully study the writings of the Jewish prophets, we will find that all of their prophecies point to two great events in connection with the children of Israel. The first are facts foretelling the degradation of the Jews, their scattering, their suppression, the desolation of their land and the conquering of the Holy City by the Gentiles. The second speaks of their salvation, emancipation, the restoration of their land, their gathering together from all parts of the world, and their re-establishment in their inherited country. So it was in fulfilment of the first of these prophecies that the Father of all good illumined the land of Palestine with the beauty of the Son. As the Jews did not find His appearance consistent with their own limited minds and dark imaginations, as they did not find Him the literal fulfiller of the signs and tokens given by their prophets concerning the coming of the Messiah, and as the eyes of their hearts were blinded to the Truth and its shining Light, so they ignored His mission, misunderstood His message, persecuted His blessed Being, and finally they crucified that glorious Person who had come to unite the children of men and teach them the Fatherhood of God. That loving Spirit had come to direct the Jews to everlasting glory and quicken them with the spirit of eternal life, but as

they refused to present themselves at the heavenly table of His bounty and satisfied themselves with the transient fruit of this world, therefore that divine Beauty chose the Gentiles to partake of that great Gift, and illumined the pagan Europe with the Light of Truth and God-worship. He extended the hand of divine confirmation over the children of Greece and delivered them from the pitfalls of mythology. He abolished their abominable practices and taught them how to work out their salvation and attain to everlasting prosperity. In His sermon on the mount, He instructed them that meekness and lowliness were the foundation of glory, and plainness and simplicity were the basis of Truth. He proved to them that philosophy was not the key to spirituality, and that unification and welfare cannot be secured by the intellectual power of man. While in His day the Greeks considered His teachings as foolishness, yet in their good time these became a framework of their institutions and served as life principles to more than one-half of the population of the globe. On the other hand, the Jews, depriving themselves of this great favour, fell into division and degradation and many a time their land was trampled under the feet of conquerors. They experienced calamity upon calamity, hardship upon hardship, and privation upon privation, until finally the Light of Truth appeared in the Lamp of Hijáz to illumine the pagan Arabs of the desert and direct them to the Light of real Truth.

Muḥammad arose and set fire to the harvest of Arabian superstitions. His iconoclastic practice broke the idols of ignorance and barbarity, and his monotheistic principle established the belief in the "Oneness of God". In a short period of time his religion prevailed in most of the eastern world and brought Chinese, Hindus, Fire-worshippers and pagans to the confession of the divine Unity. His appearance fulfilled the prophecies of old concerning the abomination of desolation in the Holy Land and the taking away of the daily sacrifice, for during the early decades of his manifestation, Omar, the Caliph and valiant conqueror, gained victory over Jerusalem and entirely expelled the Jews from the Land of Promise, which exile led to the eradication of the daily sacrifice from among the Jews.

VII:2, 9 April 1916 [VII:2:9]

The light of truth (*continued*)

According to my honourable teacher, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, the exponents of religion and prophecy have divided the cycles of the world into two long periods:

1. The dark night of the age of darkness.
2. The Day of Light, or the Shining Morn, the Latter Day, or the Time of the End.

According to the opinion universally agreed upon by all the religionists, and testified to by the prophecies of the founders of religions, the age of darkness began with history and ended in the fifth decade of the nineteenth century. The reason why the cycles of the world, which preceded the dawn of the Day of Light, were called "The dark night" lies in the lack of civilization and enlightenment and the barbarity which prevailed in those days. The world was darkened with the dust of discord, disharmony and injustice, and the gratification of carnal desires and racial pre-eminence was the highest summit toward which the footsteps of mankind were directed. Countries were so divided from each other that every nation considered the populous and civilized part of the world to be confined within the bounds and limits of its own land, and no man conceived the idea that other nations did really exist in other parts which were unknown to him, owing to the lack of communication and knowledge. Therefore, the Supreme Ordainer did not see fit to rule the disconnected chaotic world of humanity with one universal religion, for in those dark days the capacity of mankind was not developed enough to receive the Message of the kingdom of Abhá, and the eye of benighted humanity would be blinded and dazzled by the world-illuminating Sun which was ordained to dawn at the time of the end and bring about the first millennium of the Day of Light. He sent forth different prophets to the different parts of the planet to deliver the people of various

tastes, lands, nationalities and communities, the one message of Truth, and to raise a point of contact between man and his Maker.

The most ancient religion of the world, so far as the obscurity of the ancient history allows us to investigate, was Sabeanism, founded by Enoch, the seventh after Adam. This religion embodied the creed of the old Egypt, Roman paganism, Greek mythology, Chaldean star worship, Arabian heathen worship and idolatry, as well as the ancient religions of some of the other nations of the world. A remnant of this religious community is still extant in the south-western part of Persia, called the Sabis,¹ and another embodies the present Phetish² worship in Africa. [VII:2:10]

Afterwards, the Creator sent Confucius in China, the Buddhist and Brahmin prophets in India, Zoroaster in Persia, Moses in Egypt, Jesus in Palestine and Muḥammad in Arabia. Each of these Divine men, assisted by the Invisible Power, worked in the amelioration of the characters and morals of their respective nations. They enacted laws and ordinances upon which the welfare and prosperity of every community is founded and bequeathed to them a Divine Book containing direction and enlightenment. Each of these prophets severally gave signs and tokens concerning the Appearance of God in *the flesh*, and prepared his people to look for the coming of that Great Day, which, as the dawn of Divinity, is the end of the long cycle of darkness and the beginning of the glorious Day of Light. Just as the Jewish prophets prophesied that at the time of the end *men shall see God upon the earth*; just as the Gospels foreshadowed the appearance of the Father with the Son; just as Muḥammad promised the Islamic dispensation that they should see God and appointed the time of his appearance to be 1,260 years after his own rise, so, also, the Chinese and Indian prophets, as well as Zoroaster, made the same kind of prophecies and gave the exact date and the country in which that Glorious Light should appear.

In fulfilment of the prophecies, about sixty years ago, the Báb—the precursor of the Lord—appeared in Persia, fulfilling the mission of the Elias of the Jews; the John of the Christians; the Mihdí of the Muslims; and prepared the people for the descent of the heavenly table which he said would appear nine years after his own rise. He proved the validity of his mission through his wondrous work, and laid the foundation of the millennial cycle upon the mutilated bodies of thousands who died martyrs for his sake, and cemented them together with the congealed blood of his blessed heart which was shed in the path of his beloved one, in the seventh year of his ministry.

Then the Word of the Almighty became incarnate in the Temple of Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God; the heavenly Father appeared, the sun of the final salvation dawned, and the deliverer arose from the land of Persia to emancipate the children of man from the fetters of oppression, and to bring about the universal and practical unification of the world and nations, which task has been ever beyond the power of any man of learning, affluence, influence and temporal authority. Although the blessed person of Bahá'u'lláh was, from the beginning, subject to fetters and oppression and exiled from city to city, owing to the hatred and jealousy of the antagonistic fanatical clergy of Persia, yet he occupied all of his blessed days in enacting laws and ordinances for the reformation of the world, and opened the seal of the prophecies of old, which were ordained to be unlocked and unfolded to mankind at the time of the end, through the supreme pen of the glorious Lord.

Day by day the penetration of his Word increased and his followers grew in number until finally the people of tyranny determined to exile him to the desolate land of 'Akká, located within a few miles of Mt. Carmel which was prophesied by the prophets to be the footstool upon which the Lord shall stand at the time of the end. Thus the prophecies of old were

¹ aş-Şábi'a: the Sabeans.

² Fetish.

fulfilled and the Holy Land became the land of the Lord, toward which all mankind shall look for light and guidance. The Father came to gather his children together from all parts of the world and to remove racial differences and religious fanaticism which had for long periods marred the prosperity of mankind and had darkened the mirror of brotherhood with the dust of clerical narrowness and national prejudice. This human development ceased to be controlled by human action, and God, *himself*,¹ came to appoint the criterion through which truth and righteousness are distinguished from falsehood and inadvertence. He revealed the message of God to all the crowned heads of the world and reminded them of the appearance of the King of the divine kingdom to whom kings and subjects should equally bear allegiance, and from whom all races should seek light and guidance.

Thus, in a short space of time, his great cause was spread throughout the world and thousands out of all nations and religious communities acknowledged his Word and saw the beauty of their Lord in the temple of man. His life-imparting breath diffused the breeze of regeneration throughout the graveyards of humanity and resurrected the spiritually dead from the tombs of heedlessness and desire. When his blessed person desired to return to his invisible kingdom and to ascend to the heaven of the unseen realm, he bade farewell to the court of phenomena and in the year 1892 he repaired to the supreme horizon. Before his departure, he wrote his blessed book of his covenant with his own hand and sealed it with his own seal, in which book he entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, including his own household and “branches”, that after his ascension, they should unanimously bear allegiance to and obey his eldest son, the Greatest Branch, the Mystery of God, the Centre of the Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Thus, in fulfilment of the prophecies, the beauty of the son appeared in the temple of servitude to teach humanity how to serve the beauty of Bahá, and how, through meekness and humility, to attain to his good pleasure. He stood firm under all kinds of trials and tribulations, and notwithstanding myriads of arrows of oppression are flying toward his blessed person, from all sides and directions, he is constantly teaching humanity to love their fellow creatures and to co-operate in raising the banner of Universal Peace, even at the risk of their lives and property. He is the exponent of the Words of Bahá’u’lláh; he is the preacher of the sermon of love; he is the lover of mankind; he is the one who was appointed to direct the whole world to the fountain head of peace and harmony.

When we carefully investigate the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, we will find that the subject matter of his scriptures is the unification of mankind and the removal of religious prejudices. In one of the tablets he has said: “O people of the world, the pavilion of unity is raised, do not gaze upon each other with the eye of foreignness! Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch.” Likewise, “Let him not glory who loves his own country but let him glory who loves the whole world.” He has likewise demonstrated that the essential parts of the religion of God are faith and obedience; that these two are inseparable; faith without obedience, or obedience without faith is not sufficient to work out man’s salvation. Love is the mother of faith. Faith signifies obedience to the commands of God and compliance with His laws and ordinances and is conducive to a pure life, which is the only and greatest fruit that can be gathered from the garden of faith.

Man should prove his faith through deeds and actions, not through words and claims. If the edifice of faith could be secured upon mere words, every living creature would be accounted of the faithful; even those who fought against the hosts of God and shed the blood of His prophets professed faith by word of mouth. Faith is the tree, and the fruit thereof is good deeds and actions and pure living. Faith without deeds is a tree without fruit, which is not worth mentioning. In this connection it is said by the pen of Bahá: “In this dispensation the

¹ Mark XII:1-9.

conquering hosts are good qualities and deeds, and the leader of this army is the fear of God. This is a commander and possessor of all things.” Likewise, in the *Tablet of the World*, [VII:2:15] He has said, the gist of which is the following: “Say, O friends: The tent of the Cause of God is great and it will soon overshadow all the nations of the world. The day is yours, and a thousand tablets are your evidence. Arise to assist the Cause, and gird up the loins of endeavour and conquer the hearts and souls of men with the sword of good deeds. The assister of the Cause is good deeds and their meaning is good morals.” Likewise, “Blessed are those who are adorned with the garment of good deeds.”

So in this day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is teaching the same lesson. His everyday life proves that his only aim is the unification of the world, and his only purpose is to emancipate all mankind from bondage and link them together with the chain of brotherhood. His favourite teaching to young and old, high and low, is the severance from all else save God, and the reliance upon Him which is the only source of goodness, the axis around whom mercy and bounty revolve. His greatest hope is to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Father, and to be a tar- [VII:2:16] get for thousands of arrows in love for humanity. Through his endeavour the Word of Bahá’u’lláh is spread broadcast in the world and the voice of the Lord’s Manifestation has reached all nations and communities. The words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá impart the spirit of life and develop the barren soil of hearts into a delectable paradise of faith and knowledge.

O my brothers, sisters and spiritual friends: The day is yours. Avail yourselves of the opportunity and exert yourselves to spread the spirit of love and peace among your fellow creatures, and assist the Cause of your Lord with the hosts of harmony. A Glorious Sun is shining and the vernal shower is pouring. The breeze of God is wafting by and the Ocean of Divine Bounty is rolling. The Ark of Deliverance is sailing upon the Sea of Truth and thousands are reaching the cheerful haven of assurance. This is a day which was longed for by the holy souls and chosen ones in former cycles, and thousands of kings and queens died in expectation of its appearance. The same Word which became incarnate thirty-five hundred years ago and quickened the mouldering bones of the Jews with the spirit of eternal life, is again in this day manifest in the temple of man, ready to fill the men of capacity with the bounty of regeneration. The same Sun which appeared nineteen hundred years ago from the horizon of the Man of Nazareth and made an humble fisherman the custodian of the Unseen Treasury, is again shining and illuminating the whole world with the light of salvation.

In order to thank God for His great bounty, we must co-operate night and day in union and harmony to raise the tent of this Truth among mankind and to plant the banner of Universal Peace upon the summit of the contingent world. We must cast every enmity and discord into the pit of oblivion and purify our hearts and souls from the least trace of hatred or animosity. We must see only good in our fellow men, and withstand the hosts of denial with the sword of indifference and kindness. We must beg of God to endow us with a discerning sight, so that we may see and appreciate the greatness of this day, and thank Him for having mentioned our names in His Book. We must pray night and day to endure unto the end and be protected from the shock of tests and trials. Prayer is the wing whereby the soul of man soars upward to the heaven of nearness. I beg of God to overshadow this great country and its inhabitants under the tent of His mercy, and to protect them from all that is contrary to His good pleasure. I beg of God to assist them through the angels of His supreme kingdom and enable them to transmit the light of the beauty of Bahá to all parts of the world.

O God! O God! Suffer us to live in perfect peace and harmony, to turn our hearts and souls unto the face of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and to enjoy his presence in the kingdom.

Grant that we may serve our fellow men and remove discord and religious fanaticism from among nations. We are humble; confirm us with the power of Thy Spirit. We are weak; strengthen us through Thy might, and protect us against that which is contrary to Thy good

pleasure. Quicken us with the spirit of regeneration and deliver us from the pitfall of superstition.

Verily, Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful, the Beneficent, the Source of Great Bounty.
Verily, Thou art the Clement, the Merciful!

We rely upon Thy beneficence, and trust in 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

Blessed are those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The servant of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,

(Signed) 'Alí-Qulí Khán

Read before the Bahá'í Assembly of West Hoboken, N.J., 28 September 1902.

VII:2, 9 April 1916 [VII:2:14]

**“If all souls' thoughts were entirely given to holy thoughts of God,
what would become of the world from a commercial standpoint?”**

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's answer to the above question

Love, faith and being filled with the will of God are not contradictory to the temporal affairs that man has to attend to (that is, we can be filled with the love of God and at the same time look after our worldly life and pursuits which are necessary to guarantee our social welfare and prosperity, etc.), though in the beginning it is difficult for us to realize this state in ourselves, yet this can become feasible and practical, if we obey the laws and ordinances of God. For instance, consider David: While he was attentive and watchful over his temporal affairs and worldly dominion to such an extent that he looked after each one of his soldiers, computed their number, arranged their sustenance and means of living, and while he was so alert in arranging administrative affairs that he was not at all heedless of the neighbouring kings and their thoughts—even through outward means—even in such wise that through warfare and battles he strengthened that weak kingdom of the Jews and glorified his people before the eyes of the great kings of Egypt and Assyria—nevertheless, could it be thought that he was meanwhile separated from the love of God? Or could it be said he was so carried away by temporal occupations and cares as to make him heedless of the commemoration of God? And could we and you, as some people, bring ourselves to believe that David did sin?

Likewise, consider His Holiness Abraham: He was a man who led a nomadic life, and possessed large herds and flocks in the desert, and he gained his living by rearing sheep and cattle. He was so watchful and attentive in the administration of the affairs pertaining to temporal pursuits that nothing escaped his notice. Although when single and alone, he migrated from the Ur of the Chaldeans, he exercised the utmost care in his worldly affairs, and thus became accounted among the highest men of affluence in Syrian lands; and notwithstanding he contributed personal watchfulness and attention over every single sheep in case of sickness, yet he was not for a single moment heedless of the commemoration of God; so much so, that among all the inhabitants of the world, at that time, he alone was chosen by God as His friend.

Consequently, we and you must likewise exert ourselves, in order to reach such a point in the love of God that the world and its occupations, no matter [VII:2:15] how involving they may be, may not prevent us from the praise of God, nor make us heedless of His commemoration.

Muḥammad, the Prophet, has said: “Man in this world must be so attentive to his worldly affairs and temporal necessary pursuits, that it may seem as though he thinks he is going to live forever in this world, and he must, at the same time, be so submerged in the love of God and occupied with the thoughts of the hereafter, that it may seem as though he is going to die

and leave this earth at the very moment.”

Moreover, one of the great elements in the laws of every religion, deals with the rules concerning the orderly arrangement and preservation of human society. One of their solid commands is this: That man should be engaged in a trade or profession, and should by this means be a cause of tranquillity and peace to others. Bahá'u'lláh has so emphatically laid down rules concerning the orderly management of mercantile pursuits and professions that he has accounted occupation in such professions as an act of worship on the part of a believer (i.e., according to Bahá'u'lláh, to be engaged in an honourable art, trade or profession, by which ourselves and humanity can be benefited, is an act of worship).

O my dear sister: Endeavour that man may reach such a point that nothing of this world can prevent him from the love of God, to such an extent that if he goes to sleep, he may have God in his thoughts; if he engages in trade or temporal occupation, he may do it for the purpose of benefiting his fellowmen; and if he walks, he may walk to perform that which is best for the people of the world, and that the more he increases in spirituality, the more he may learn about the well-management of his affairs. Man must love the world and all the people therein for the sake of its Maker. Even as the Persian poet sung six hundred years ago:

“In this world I am rejoiced over the One
Through whom the world is rejoiced;
I am in love with all the people of the world,
For all the world belongs to Him.”

For a believer, even his worldly and professional pursuit is an act of worship; for an unbeliever, even his activity in the acts of worship is no other than entire occupation with the world and worldly things. This you have realized in the church, and in the spirit in which many in the church performed their acts of worship.

VII:3, 28 April 1916 [VII:3:17]

Explanation of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream

Lesson given by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, Sunday, 6 October 1901, Chicago.

Interpreted by Dr 'Alí-Qulí Khán

Taken stenographically by Miss Gertrude Bulkema

[King James version inserted for quotations]

The Holy Scriptures, including the Old and the New Testament, bear and contain prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord in the latter days. Some of these books contain prophecies that show the exact date of the appearance of the latter days while some others simply give signs and tokens of that glorious day.

Among the books of the Old Testament, only the book of Daniel contains dates of the Manifestation (of Bahá'u'lláh) in this great day, and of the books of the New Testament, only the book of Revelation contains the date of the coming of this great day; while the other scriptural records, containing prophecies and writings, refer to that event and the coming of the Lord. One of the prophecies refers to the coming of the great day and gives signs of its coming, not dates; and by reading this prophecy, all can judge for themselves that it refers to the day of the coming of the Lord of Hosts in the latter days.

Now I will read that prophecy to you (Isaiah 25:6-7): “And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.”

This is a prophecy of things that were to happen in the mountain of God, that all the nations of the earth including the Jews, Zoroastrians, Muslims, et al, should come together on that holy

mountain to partake of food, both spiritual and material; and we find this prophecy was not fulfilled in the day of Jesus nor in another day. However, it is only in this day of Bahá'u'lláh, since His departure, that all the nations of the earth have come to 'Akká and Haifa, and have partaken of this food, both materially and spiritually. By the mountain mentioned in this verse is meant Mt. Carmel, which fact is unanimously agreed upon by the learned doctors and others among the Christians, Jews and all the other nations who believe in the Scriptures. The cities of Haifa and 'Akká are at the foot of Mt. Carmel. Since the exile of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá to 'Akká, Haifa and Mt. Carmel, all different nations of the earth have partaken of spiritual life and spiritual food on that mountain which has no other meaning than that of the blessings and teachings showered upon them by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. By the seventh verse: "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all [VII:3:18] people, and the veil that is spread over all nations," is meant that by the words of Bahá'u'lláh attracting the hearts of the different nations to the Great Cause, they will become united and the veils and coverings of religious divergences will be rent asunder.

In the eighth verse, of the same chapter, it says: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."

By this is meant that he, in His day, will swallow up death, and through the power of his teachings and through the power of His Word will save the people from darkness and ignorance, and thus they will be spiritually saved from unbelief, doubt and suspicions. By saying, "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth"—the people referred to in this verse are the Jews. The Jews were rejected by all nations because of their disbelief and their denial of Jesus Christ in His day; they were humiliated, their kingdom was taken out of their hands, and they fell into a condition of despair; but God promised them that he would bring them together again and would wipe away all the tears from their faces. They will believe in the Word of God, and thus their hearts will be comforted and consoled by the new teachings of God, and they will no longer be humiliated as they were before this great day. The humiliation of the Jews was caused by the fact that they rejected Jesus Christ and that they did not believe in him; but in this great day, when they believe in the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, and through his Words they believe in Jesus Christ, then the shame will be taken away from them. This prophecy concerning the Jews is already fulfilled, even though we are still in the first century of the rise of this Dispensation, inasmuch as up to the present day thousands of the Jews have believed in the Manifestation of God, and by so doing they also believe in Jesus Christ and in the other prophets, and are teaching the Truth of God.

Ninth verse: "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Inasmuch as the Jews are awaiting the coming of the Messiah, of the Lord, in order to be saved from the humiliation into which they fell because of their denial of Jesus Christ, now we find those of them, who have believed in God, declaring that the Lord has come and that they are saved.

The same kind of prophecies are given in the books of the other prophets in the Old Testament, but they do not give the date of the coming of the Lord. The only one in the Old Testament who points to the exact appearance of the Lord is Daniel, while the others prophecy concerning the signs of the appearance of the day of the Lord, and by all of these prophecies is meant the coming of the Lord in the latter days. These prophecies cannot refer to the coming of Jesus Christ inasmuch as with his coming the Jews were not saved. The prophecies in the book of Daniel, which we are going to interpret now, clearly point to the

date when the Lord should appear. The book of Daniel is based on an historical point of view, especially the second chapter concerning the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the interpretation made by Daniel that clearly indicates the coming of the Lord in the latter days. The first chapter of Daniel has no prophecies. (Here Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl gave a summary of this chapter.)

Now, the second chapter refers to the dream and the other prophecies. The second chapter begins with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. When he awoke, he sent for the wise men to interpret the dream for him. In that day Babylon was the centre of the east- [VII:3:19] ern civilization and the largest city in the world. It contained many schools where learned men and educated doctors were teaching all classes of people. When the learned men came to interpret his dream, they wanted Nebuchadnezzar to explain his dream first. However, he said. "No, I am not going to explain the dream." etc. The Chaldeans answered, "This is something that is beyond the power of the people of the world and beyond the power of the angels, and it is only God Who knows how to tell the dream and the interpretation thereof. If you want to have the dream interpreted explain it to us so we may know how to interpret it." This answer made by the learned men, made the king angry and he commanded that all the wise men in Babylon be destroyed, saying, "I have spent much money to educate these people, and now they cannot interpret my dream. What is the use of spending money and educating them?"

The king's guard went forth to bring all the learned men to slay them. Among them was Daniel and three of his friends who were brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Although the Jewish tribes were holy and chaste people in that day, the divine spirit was only manifest in Daniel. The people who are the Manifestations of the Spirit or the Word of God are grand and glorious. Since Daniel manifested the Great Spirit in that day, he was, therefore, a glorious man to look upon so the king's guard did not want him to be slain. The guard went to Daniel to know what should be done. Daniel asked the king's guard why the king wanted to slay all the learned men. Then Daniel said, "Go forth to the king and say that I will interpret this dream for him." As the king's guard, himself was in favour of the learned men and did not want so many great people to be slain, he went to the king and told him that there was a man among the captive Jews who said he would interpret the dream for him.

Then the king said they should not kill the learned men, but wait until tomorrow. The king's guard then went to Daniel and said that the king wanted him to explain the dream.

When Daniel and his friends were saved from this imminent danger they went home, and he said, "Let us pray this evening and not sleep; let us beg of God to enlighten me." He prayed that night and after he went to sleep he had a dream in which God explained to him everything concerning the dream. God had manifest Himself to Daniel and told him about the dream and its interpretation.

The next morning he went with the king's guard into the presence of the king, and after chanting praises and thanks to the king, he began to explain the dream. He said: "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. "This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and

strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee [silver breast], and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong [VII:3:22] as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

This was the dream of the king, and the king hearing Daniel, fell down and worshipped him. Then he said, "I will give you the interpretation of the dream."

In all the writings and the prophecies, both in Revelation and Daniel, by "kingdom" is meant the appearance of a religion of God. A worldly government and a worldly kingdom, according to the terminology of Revelation and Daniel, is represented by a "beast". For [VII:3:23] instance, Daniel says: "I saw a lion in a dream." By "lion" is intended a government, and by "sheep" was intended the old Persian government. In this dream Daniel explains to the king that from the days of that king until the day of the appearance of the kingdom of God, four great kingdoms will appear on the earth, i.e., four great worldly religions. Since the day when the king saw this dream and Daniel interpreted it to him, until the dawn of Bahá'u'lláh, four great kingdoms appeared, both in Chaldea and in Syria, and by these four governments is meant four religions.

According to history, from the day of Daniel until the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, four kingdoms appeared in Chaldea and Syria, in those eastern lands. The religion held by the people in the time of Nebuchadnezzar was the Sabean religion and that religion prevailed throughout the world among all nations except the Chinese and the Hindus. This religion was prevalent in the world until the day when Chaldea was subdued by Kirsh,¹ the king of Persia. Then this religion was crushed by the appearance of the Christian religion which grew through the instrumentality of Roman emperors. Then the kings of Persia came forth and waged war with the Roman emperors and then they subdued them and took possession of their lands and Syria and the Holy Land. Even Chaldea was subdued by the Persian kings, even this land where Nebuchadnezzar had his dream, was subdued by the Persian kings, and then the kings of Persia, who were always at war with the Roman emperors brought the religion of Zoroaster and made it a prevalent religion in those parts for four hundred years. After four hundred years, the Zoroastrian religion was destroyed by the appearance of Islám, the rise of Muḥammad, when the Zoroastrians were subdued by the Islamic armies. Islám was such a violent religion that it destroyed and ruined most of the countries. This religion was afterwards divided into two religions, the Sunnis of Turkey, and the Shiites of Persia, but both of them were Muslim. The religion of Muḥammad was divided into two divisions—and then the kingdom of God appeared in this day. This heavenly stone, this stone that was cut without

¹ Cyrus II of Persia (Kúrúsh), commonly known as Cyrus the Great.

hands, first destroyed the toes made of clay, which refers to the religion of the Shi'ites.

Now I have told you about the dream and have given you the history of the kings who ruled on the lands of Chaldea and Syria. Now we will read the words of Daniel, beginning with the thirty-seventh verse of the second chapter of Daniel, interpreting the dream of the king. The thirty-eighth verse reads: "And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou [art] this head of gold."

It is said in this verse that all the fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the field were given in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, while he was only the king over Chaldea and he did not take possession of Europe and Africa. By this is meant the religion that was prevailing in the day of Daniel—the Sabeian religion. It refers to his religion and not to his material kingdom. Enoch was the institutor of Sabeianism, and from the time of Enoch until the time of Moses, all the people were under this religion. Their religion was first founded on unity and in the worship of God, but by and by they began to think that by worshipping and praying to the stars they would attain to glories. They used to bring images of the stars and hang them in their churches and worship them, This religion was also prevalent in Europe and also had large temples built in the name of Venus and the stars. Then Christianity crushed out this religion. [VII:3:24] Its destruction in the eastern part of the world and in Persia was made by the appearance of the religion of Zoroaster. There are only about five thousand families of this religion still living in the western part of Persia. Some of the people of Africa are also believers in Sabeianism. The ruling of Nebuchadnezzar in verse 38 refers not to his material government, inasmuch as his material government was not a prevalent government throughout all the world as is understood by this verse, but by this is meant his religion which was the prevalent religion of the world in that day.

Then the thirty-ninth verse: The second religion was Christianity. Although Christianity was pure and exactly like gold, which was seen by the king in his dream, its number did not subdue the number of those who were believing in the Sabeian religion; therefore Christianity is interpreted by silver. Christianity was pure, glorious and grand, but the number of people who believed in Christianity in those days was less than the number who believed in Sabeianism, and although Christianity subdued Chaldea, soon after it was removed from that part of the country. In this thirty-ninth verse we read: "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth."

By brass is meant the condition of the religion of Zoroaster; although it was inferior to Christianity, it still a prevalent religion, next to Christianity in those days. If you want to know the extensive country over which the Zoroastrian religion was ruling, you should take up the history of Darius and Cyrus. This will give you an idea of the prevalence of Zoroastrianism in those days.

Verse forty: "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise."

By the fourth kingdom is meant the religion of Muḥammad, inasmuch as it was so strong as to bruise Zoroastrianism and Sabeianism, and this religion also turned Christians out of those lands. As it is said in the verse, so the religion of Islám, by conquering a country, would crush and break it down.

Then read the forty-first verse. The fourth religion shall be divided, which is Islám, and these two divisions of the religion of Islám were Sunnís and the Shí'íhs. One of them continued to be firm and strong as iron. By this is meant the Sunní branch in Turkey, which

used to be strong until the dawn of this great Dispensation. But part of the fourth religion was of clay and was broken. This refers to the Persians, where the Shiite religion is prevalent, which was brought low. If you study the history of the world will find that for six hundred years until the present time, which was the duration of constitution of Turkey, the Sunní religion has been a prevalent religion, while the Shiite branch of Persia has always been in abasement and desolation. Although you will find that the Shí'íhs and the Sunnís belong to the same religion are extended from the same root, still they do not mix, just as iron never mixes with clay. As a proof of this you will find that enmity has always existed between the Shiites and the Sunnís. They have never inter-married; they never communicate with each other; they never even eat with each other, they will not mix.

Read the forty-fourth verse. This refers to the appearance of this great Dispensation, the great Bahá'í religion, during the time of these two communities, the Shiites and the Sunnís. The religion of Bahá'u'lláh appeared during the time of these two nations. This religion will remove the differences, disunity and disharmony from among the world. Read verse forty-five. The stone was Bahá'u'lláh which came from the heaven of the Glory of God.

VII:3, 28 April 1916 [VII:3:20]

An interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá

From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*
Mt. Carmel, Haifa, Syria, 30 June 1914

Dear Friends,

Mr Hans Springer of Stuttgart, who is twenty-three years old and is a globe trotter, called on 'Abdu'l-Bahá this morning. He makes all his tour afoot, and has already covered a distance of 35,000 km. He is an Esperantist, and as he puts on the dress of the inhabitants of the country through which he travels, he was today an Arabian gentleman., but his blue eyes, white skin and brown van dyke beard heralded from afar off his European origin. He spoke German, Italian and Esperanto but I could not speak with him in any of these languages. Finding that he understood a little French, we struck on that. At first glance 'Abdu'l-Bahá liked him. I will record herein his conversation with Mr Springer, in its natural form of dialogue.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Thou art welcome. Where didst thou come from?"

Hans Springer: "I come now from Jerusalem. From Egypt I walked to Gaza and Jaffa. On the way fifteen Arabian Bedouins surrounded me and carried away my belongings, even my shoes. When I reached Jerusalem I was assisted by a number of Germans."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "What is the object of thy world tour?"

Springer: "First to spread the knowledge of Esperanto because I believe it will help to unify mankind. Second, to see the world, to meet men of various nationalities and learn their manners and customs."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "With what means dost thou travel?"

Springer: "The sale of these postal cards containing my picture on one side and the benefits of the knowledge of Esperanto on the other, is the sole source of my revenue. My needs are very few in number. I seldom eat meat. I eat vegetables, bread and nuts."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Dost thou travel always on the surface of the earth? Would it not be excellent if thou couldst take a trip toward heaven?"

Springer: "Heaven? I have never heard of anyone going to heaven. This is impossible."
[VII:3:21]

'Abdu'l-Bahá (smiling): "Why impossible? Did not Elijah go to heaven, and did not Christ ascend to heaven after his crucifixion and burial?"

Springer (puzzled): "I am neither Elijah nor Christ. I have not two wings to fly with. It seems to me there must needs be a pair of wings."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Everything is possible. Christ says: 'Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Thou canst have the pair of wings. One is the love of God and the other is renunciation of aught else save him."

Springer: "Then you do not mean this phenomenal heaven?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "I mean the heaven from which Christ descended and to which he ascended—the heaven of the divine will, the heaven of spirituality."

Springer: "How can one ascend to that heaven? Is it not most difficult?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "It is no more difficult than touring the world on foot. When the spirit of the teachings of Christ takes possession of the heart and suffers man to become a servant of the world of humanity, then it will be very easy for him to ascend to heaven."

Springer: "But in this age the Christians have forgotten the commandments of Christ."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "What hast thou to do with others? Live, thou according to the teachings of Christ."

Springer: "You are right. I will do my best."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Whom dost thou think Christ was?"

Springer: "I believe he was a great philosopher."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Oh, no! He was much greater than a philosopher. He was the Word of God, the Spirit of God."

Springer: "Whew! There are many scholars in Europe who do not believe that there was ever such a person as Christ. On the other hand there is an increasing host of people whose faith in Christianity is shaken because the ministers of the Gospel do not live in accord with the behests of their Master. They have become worldlings wrapped up in traditions and dogmas. When I was in Jerusalem, I observed that the Christians have divided the Church of the Resurrection into many sections, like a bazaar, and they are always engaged in acrimonious controversies and factional fights, while they claim Christ brought peace and salvation. Where can one find peace, and how can one be saved? Through their religious hatred for each other they have shut the door of salvation."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "What thou sayest is true. But we are not looking at the present conditions. Let us look at the glorious life of Christ and those sanctified souls who came after him. Did they not embody in their deeds the ideals of their words? There have appeared many philosophers in the world, but they are all forgotten. But because Christ was the Spirit and the Word of God, he and his disciples through him, became the fountains of the water of life. Now I hope that like unto them thou wilt be the means of the illumination of the world of humanity and serve God."

Springer: "Serve God? There is no one in this world who can serve God, because we are not able to see Him. He is above our human ken. In my mind the only way we can serve Him is to serve mankind and try to alleviate the sorrows and sufferings of the people."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Christ served God and his apostles served God. Their service was to humanity, which was a reflection of their service to God."

Springer: "What are you doing?"

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “I am serving God. I am the servant of God. I give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the power of speech to the mute, and knowledge to the ignorant. I raise the dead, deliver those who are in darkness and guide them into the realm of light. I make the poor rich, and the weak powerful. I satisfy the hungry ones with the Bread of Life and allay the thirst of the thirsty ones [VII:3:22] with the pure Water of Immortality. This is my work.”

Springer: “When I was in Stuttgart I attended an Esperanto meeting addressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Does ‘Abbás Afandí know him? He is a wise man and is in great sympathy with the Esperanto language. He has many followers in Stuttgart. His religion is called Bahá’í.” (The translator here informed Hans Springer that he is speaking with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; that he is in his presence. Immediately he became more respectful and expressed great joy and happiness.)

Springer: “Is it possible that I am in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?”

(Taking in his hand the last book of tablets to correct, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá became silent. After a few minutes, conversation started again.)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Even a bird can fly around the world. It is not a difficult accomplishment. Therefore, become thou a royal bird of the kingdom, and like unto an angel soar toward the heavenly worlds. I can assure thee that the experiences will be more than marvellous.”

Springer: “I hope to get a pair of strong wings to accomplish this difficult task.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “I pray that when thou goest to Nazareth, the place of Christ’s nativity, the Spirit of God may descend upon thee and wings of light be granted thee, so that thou mayst soar in the immensity of God’s space and behold the wonders of His creation.”

Springer: “I will also pray for this.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Where dost thou go from here?”

Springer: “From here I shall leave tomorrow on foot for Nazareth, then Tiberias, Beirut, Damascus, Constantinople, Caucasus and then entering Persia from the north, I will go out from the south via the Persian Gulf. Then to India, Japan, China, Australia, Hawaiian Islands and the United States. ...”

In short, this was the outline of the talk; meanwhile, Khusraw brought for him coffee, tea and cake. Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked someone to bring him a dish of pistachios, which in turn he shelled and gave the meats to him. The time of parting drawing nigh, he placed in the palm of his hand an English pound, and wished him much success in his long undertaking. The cake and pistachios were also put in a paper and given to him for his lunch.

In the afternoon, two Arabs called on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, staying with him for half an hour. Then he dictated a number of tablets for the believers in Bákú. It was moonlight when he returned from his walk. “How beautiful this moonlight night,” he said to us, as he entered the house.

VII:4, 17 May 1916 [VII:4:25]

Tablet to India

From ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Mr Bannerjee, the founder of the Devalaya Society in Calcutta, India.

O thou wooer of Reality!

His Highness the Merciful One hath caused the appearance of the splendour of love and affinity in the world of humanity, so that the individuals of mankind might be perfectly united and the rays of unity be revealed amongst the children of man. Hence he sent forth the holy Manifestations, inspired their hearts with the contexts of the heavenly books and instituted divine religions, in order that these sanctified, personages, these revealed books, these religions of God might become the means of unity and accord, love and good fellowship in the

human world.

Should we study the divine religions with the perception of truth, we would then conclude that their underlying principle is the One Reality. All the religions of God are the reality. Reality does not accept multiplicity and division. But alas! that the fundamental reality is laid aside and forgotten and a catalogue of creeds, dogmas and rites have taken its place which are the basis of difference, the cause of hatred and prejudice and the establishment of the religion of God is totally forgotten and quite neglected.

When this impenetrable gloom—that is, the gloom of the traditions of forefathers and ancestors—surrounded the world and the pristine, primal light of the divine religions was changed into the darkness of the ideas of men, then the true morn dawned and the Sun of Reality (Bahá'u'lláh) arose from the horizon of Persia, reflecting in the mirror of the world of humanity the effulgence of the heavenly unity. Thus he destroyed the foundations of the structure of blind dogmas, and man-made creeds and rituals which are the results of ignorant prejudices. It is owing to this fact that this light is spreading with the greatest rapidity in all the countries of the world. The influence of these divine teachings in the heart of the world is like the influence of the spirit over the bodies.

Consequently, through the breaths of this divine spirit, the followers of the different religions in Persia have rent asunder the veil of superstitions, are freed from the effect of unenlightened doctrines and have attained to the Beloved of Reality. These antagonistic faiths are united with the bond of perfect love and amity. For this reason great meetings are organized, in which are represented Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Turks, Arabs, Pársís, Persians, Kurds, English, French and Americans, who associate and mingle with each other as brothers. Like the sheep of God they are grazing in the meadow of truth under the pro- [VII:4:26] tecting staff of the heavenly Shepherd.

Shouldst thou reflect with the insight of reality, thou wilt observe that these antiquated and superannuated dogmas have ever been the cause of massacre and carnage amongst the nations and peoples.

As this cycle is the cycle of sciences, there must needs be *new* teachings, a *new* revelation is required and a *new* life is wanted. The minds and hearts refute the veracity of ancient opinions. *New* ideals are called for and *new* principles are urgently demanded which may fill the requirements of this age, be as the spirit of this century and as the light of this period.

Search, labour, investigate, work and show extraordinary effort, so that the centre of the light of Reality, like unto the witness of love, may become revealed in the assemblages of mankind. Arise thou with such heavenly power and such divine confirmation as to move and stir that great continent of India.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 7 July 1914

VII:4, 17 May 1916 [VII:4:26]

Extracts from Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

Dear friends: We have an old Bahá'í by the name of "El Yahou".¹ His former religion had been Jewish, and his devotion to the beloved is unquestioned. The other day he went to the house wherein 'Abdu'l-Bahá lives and started to weep and cry near the door. The members of the blessed family heard the crying and weeping of the man and informed 'Abdu'l-Bahá of it. He called him in and consoled him, and told him that in this day no one must cry for any

¹ Hebrew יהוה; Arabic Ilyás, Alyás; English Elijah.

reason, nay rather we must be very happy and contented with our lot, and know of a certainty that the Lord of Hosts is with us, ready to restore our health and alleviate our burden. We must not let anything disturb the balance of our minds. Under all circumstances we must control our feeling, and curb our inclinations. We must fulfil our duty, attain to the highest station of perfection, and close our eyes to all imperfections. Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took pen and paper and wrote for him the following holy tablet:

“O thou my kind friend! It is my hope that through the bestowals of the Blessed Perfection thou mayest ever become assisted and confirmed, happy and joyous; that thou mayest not cry and lament, nay rather thou mayest sing and chant. It is said that the son of the glorious Friend had a wonderful melody and a sweet voice. The Psalms of David are famous and not lamentation and mourning or crying by day and night. Therefore be thou happy and let the songs and anthems of joy be on thy lips.”

Our El Yahu was back in the possession of a new happiness, a new inspiration, a new serenity. We all felt his joyful vibrations and watched delightedly his calm face. Then he drew his book of poetry from his pocket and sang a stirring Bahá’í song with the energy and zest of a youthful singer.

1 October 1913

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“The greatest proof of Bahá’u’lláh—may my life be a ransom to him—insists in the fact that he was always manifest and evident under all conditions and circumstances. He was never concealed nor was he disguised for one day. In Persia, in Baghdád, in Constantinople, in Adrianople and in the most great prison, Bahá’u’lláh ever withstood the persecutions of the enemies and kept his own ground in the face of all the world. He never attempted to [VII:4:27] protect or shield himself for one second. Before all nations and all religions he proclaimed his cause and declared his teachings. The foes were resisting the spread of the cause with the greatest hostility and his blessed breast was the target for an hundred thousand arrows. It is revealed in the Visiting Tablet: ‘Verily I bear testimony that the eye of creation has not witnessed a wronged one like unto thee. Once thou wert surrounded by the armies of hardships, again thou wert under chains and fetters and then thou wert beneath the sword of the enemies.’ Continually he was threatened with the darts and javelins of the adversaries. He cried out: ‘We have burned away the veil and the shroud and are enkindled with the fire of love. Like the candle we are set aglow and like the beloved we are ever present in the gathering of the lovers.’ It is well-nigh beyond belief that notwithstanding all these dangers, Bahá’u’lláh was protected. The condition was like that of a deer: although surrounded by a hundred thousand hounds, attacking it from every side, yet protected by an invisible power.”

7 March 1914

Words spoken by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to some pilgrims who had, just returned from a trip to the place of sacrifice of Elijah:

“The altar of sacrifice is the living heart of man, and not a few pieces of dead stones. The fire that came down from heaven was no other than the fire of the love of God descending from the heaven of the divine will; the bullocks are human and carnal desires and appetites which are entirely burned away by this ideal fire, leaving the spiritual altar cleansed and pure, and then celestial qualifications and attributes will take the place of former blameworthy qualities. The killing of the priests of Baal means that the enemies of truth were so filled with wrath against the triumph of the cause of righteousness that they perished by their own defeat.”

“... The Bible and the Gospel are most honoured in the estimation of all the Bahá'ís. One of the spiritual utterances of his holiness Christ in his sermon on the mount is to me preferable to all the writings of the philosophers. It is the religious duty of every Bahá'í to read and comprehend the meanings of the Old and New Testaments.”

“... Whosoever desires to know the history of this cause and its tenet, must come to us and not go to those who are prejudiced and biased. For if the seeker for information goes to the latter people he will surely deprive himself of the real facts.”

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to two young college men from the orient as they started west to “promote the glad tidings of the kingdom of good-will and peace”:

“You are the angels of the kingdom of Abhá; guide the people. You are the rays of the Sun of Reality; bestow upon them light. You are the trees of the orchard of God; produce loving fruits. You are the water of eternal life; allay the thirst of mankind. You are the guides of the royal path of the kingdom; lead the wandering ones back to the fold. On this trip, through the assistance and providence of God, you must perform miracles. Your speeches must be delivered with the utmost spirituality. ... Speak in public meetings. God will support you. Deliver talks on universal love, the greatness of the cause of Bahá'u'lláh, the penetration of the Word of God, and the general principles of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. I hope you will fill the minds with the tumult and acclamation of the kingdom, set aglow the hearts with the fire of reality and spread far and wide the good news of the King of eternal life ...”

19 July 1914

VII:4, 17 May 1916 [VII:4:29]

In memoriam

Mrs Lua Moore Getsinger

Cablegram from Cairo, Egypt brings sad news. It states that, “Lua Getsinger died of heart failure May first and was buried at Cairo.”

Mrs Getsinger was one of the first persons in America, who realized that a Great Light was shining again from the horizon of the Holy Land. And for many years she has been a brilliant voice to proclaim the Glad Tidings.

She was married to Dr Getsinger in 1896 and they were members of the first party from America who visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká. Dr Getsinger tells of how, on this memorable visit, 'Abdu'l-Bahá seeing, with his spiritual vision, Lua Getsinger's capacity, stepped up to her and put something in her mouth. A little later he said to her: “I have given you the power to speak and loosened your tongue. 'Lua' in Persian means 'Flag' and you must be my flag and wave it in the East and the West.” Then the glorious servant of God gave an exhortation, as Dr Getsinger says: “into which he put such spiritual force and emphasis that it seemed as though the very walls trembled and we were hardly able to stand on our feet. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was declaring that the millennium had come and the Kingdom of God was to be established on earth. He wanted Lua thus to proclaim it everywhere in a loud voice.”

This was the first of many visits she made to the home of light at 'Akká. Long and carefully did 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his great loving kindness tell her how to teach the Most Great Cause. She travelled far and wide in her teaching. She was often ill. In referring to one of these illnesses her husband tells how 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: “I told the angel of death to stay away.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá entrusted to her many missions of trust and responsibility. For instance,

when “Muẓaffarī’d-Dín Sháh, of Persia, visited Paris, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent her with a petition asking the Sháh to stop the martyrdoms of Bahá’ís in his kingdom, which he promised to do.” Her last great mission was to India.

To further quote Dr Getsinger: “When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá desired further to acquaint the Maharajah of Jalowar¹ with the Bahá’í teachings he sent Lua from Bombay to this enlightened personage who received her most graciously. He had invited ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to breakfast with him in London and is a staunch friend of the Bahá’í cause. The Maharajah continued to exchange letters with Lua. “In all these journeys,” as her husband says, “she never spared herself. Time and time again I have seen her in a state of utter exhaustion yet she would pull herself together by sheer will power in order to keep her appointments. To this perhaps many friends can testify who have had occasion to entertain her during the past ten years. She knew but little rest for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said: ‘Day and night thou must engage in spreading the message. Nothing else will avail thee.’ She never lost sight of her Master’s business. When once a complaint was made of Lua to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá he turned to the person who had made it and with a benign smile, said: ‘But she loves her Lord.’ She was generous to a fault, depriving herself often that others might have. She had a rare vitalizing power in serving others. She spoke with ease and brilliance and feared no one in debate. Her gift from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made her confident and victorious.”

She returned from her mission to India in January 1915, spent seven months with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s family at Haifa and there sailed in trying times on an American warship to Cairo. But much of the [VII:4:30] time in Cairo she was ill with that illness that at last permitted her to ascend into the “city of light”.

Thus passed a brilliant maid-servant of God from the service of the earth world to that of the unseen Kingdom.

The Editors.

Mrs Fannie Dunn

On 9 March 1916, Mrs Fannie Dunn, wife of Hyde Dunn, passed on.

With the passing of Mrs Dunn the San Francisco Assembly registered its first “In Memoriam”—an occasion of quickened human sadness, but a season of great spiritual illumination.

In Bahá’í experience the San Francisco Assembly has indeed had its days of beginning, days of feebleness, when in very truth but two or three would gather together. But, whether in those days or these of greater fullness, none has woven more closely the bonds of love and steadfastness than Hyde Dunn. Of him, it was conceded that he was kind and served with love.

To his good wife, the object of his yearning and devotion, for a long time the “tales of the past” were the words of leading; for her, the *Hidden Words* were still a sealed book.

The sign of love is patience.

Then came the days of the end: The pilgrimage in “the valley of the shadow” was long, painful, overburdened. Bahá’í arms upheld the stricken one; Bahá’í love whispered “Be strong!”

Praise be to God, as the journey shortened, the Light became clearer, brighter, purer, and in the finality the dominance of the Spirit heralded a triumph which despoiled death of its prowess and the grave of its victory!

¹ Jhalawar is a city in the Indian state of Rajasthan.

The end was glorious: It was Bahá'í. To the Assembly, this consecration of the first fruits was a wonderful teaching, a conviction that "freedom from the riches of self" is the wealth that transforms "My Calamity into My Providence", whereby the Children of the Spirit become "the Stars of My Omnipresence forever".

"Herein there is no death, no trouble, no burden."

Bahá'í Assembly,
San Francisco, 18 April 1916.

VII:5, 5 June 1916 [VII:5:33]

"Two people are equivalent in strength of character to the whole world"

Extracts from a talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Los Angeles, Saturday evening, 19 October 1912

Do not look at your small number. Plurality of numbers is not of importance. It is rather the bounty of God that is essential—it is the confirmation of the heavenly kingdom. Consider past times. How often it has happened that a limited meeting, a small number, has finally widened its circle and grown in proportion, until it included all nations and religions.

Therefore, the hearts must be looked at, not the pluralities. If a limited number of souls are possessed of hearts which are pure and tender, that limited number is equivalent in strength of character to the whole population of the earth.

Consider how, after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—fifty days thereafter—a limited number of disciples gathered together on the Mount of Transfiguration, not far from Jaffa. The number of these was eleven. They gathered there with hearts pure, with intentions sincere, with spirits exhilarated. In the utmost of sincerity, without any care, without any intention of self-desire did they gather together, this limited number, and there held a meeting upon the Mount. Because of the purity of the hearts of those souls, because of the trustworthiness of those souls, because of the reliance of those souls, because of the attraction of the hearts of those souls, the world was illumined, Christianity was advanced, the Roman empire became Christianized; the Assyrians were converted,—also the Chaldeans. In other words, the illumination of his holiness Christ illumined all regions. All these were the blessed results of that meeting of eleven souls on the mountain. They held that meeting in the utmost of purity and sincerity, in the utmost of faith and assurance; in the utmost of attraction and zeal was that meeting held. And these colossal results were attained, these wondrous lights were expressed, this heavenly affair was promulgated.

Therefore do not look at your limited number, that you are not capable of having a meeting the same as other people. Remember that importance is not attached to numbers. Importance concerns faith, concerns assurance, concerns veracity, concerns firmness, concerns attainment to the Kingdom of Abhá, concerns self-sacrifice in the path of the Kingdom. If you attain to this, though there be but two people, *remember that two people are equivalent in strength of character to the whole world.*

Therefore, I pray, asking for your confirmation and assistance, that the aid and uplift of Bahá'u'lláh may reach you, the hosts of the Kingdom of Abhá may reinforce you, that the powerful angels of God may assist you. Be assured of the victory; rest assured that you will be [VII:5:34] confirmed. That which is of essential importance is your unity and agreement. You must be in the utmost state of unity and agreement. You must love one another; you must be self-sacrificing for one another. If you observe any short-comings on the part of any, as much as you can, be forgiving and do not be harsh. Even if you wish to admonish, let your admonition be in symbols; do not express it explicitly lest any heart should be saddened. Remember that in the world of existence there is nothing so bad as injuring a heart, for the heart of a man is the place of the descent of the Merciful and man must not at all disquiet or

harm the place of the Merciful. Man must ever strive to make the hearts grateful, to rejoice the spirits, to render the thoughts radiant, to be the cause of the comfort and ease of others. This is the station of the Bahá'ís and this is the utmost desire of those who are divine.

Now, the friends of God in Persia have reached such a stage that each is willing to sacrifice his life for the others, each one accounting himself the servant of the others. How many of the nobles are occupied with the service of the poor. How many of the dear ones are most humble and submissive in the presence of the lowly! What is this for? It is for the love of God. It is for sincerity. It is for faith. It is for certainty.

All the people of the world look at us to see how we act; what our characteristics are; what our attributes are; what our mode of procedure is. They all look toward us, and we must act in such wise that we may not be the cause of the degradation of the Cause of God. Nay, rather, that we may be the cause of the glory of God and if we do not do so, how can we behold his face in his kingdom? What shall be our apology? Did Bahá'u'lláh not teach us by his deeds? Did he not teach us through self-sacrifice? Did he not teach us through his ordeals and difficulties? Is it meet that we should forget them?

Thank God that he has suffered you to attain this great bestowal. Let us thank God that he has suffered us to be sheltered beneath the Tree of Life. Let us thank God that he has accepted us in his kingdom. Let us offer thanks to God that he has specialized us for the favour which was the utmost aim of the holy saints. Let us thank God that, notwithstanding the lack of capacity, he bestows every favour upon us, every grace is showered upon us, and every bounty is revealed to us. He prepared for us the good of both worlds; he prepared for us eternal honour; he gave unto us the life everlasting; he chose us out of all the nations of the world and he caused us to attain to that which is the sublimity of the human world. Praise God for such an attainment as this! Thank God that such a guidance is yours! And strive with life to hold aloft the banner of the great guidance, to be the cause of the illumination of the east and west, the cause of unity of all nations, that you may be the means of manifesting the spiritual attributes, that you may become imbued with the qualities of the faithful, that you may be distinguished in all virtues, that you may be set aglow with the fire of love of God and attracted by the love of God.

VII:5, 5 June 1916 [VII:5:34]

Power of the Cause

“There is a power in this Cause, a mysterious power, far, far, far away from the ken of men and angels. That invisible power is the cause of all these outward activities. It moves the hearts. It rends the mountains. It administers the complicated affairs of the Cause. It inspires the friends. It dashes into a thousand pieces all the forces of opposition. It creates new spiritual worlds. This is a mystery of the Kingdom of Abhá.”—‘Abdu’l-Bahá

VII:5, 5 June 1916 [VII:5:36]

A call to heroic teaching

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

He is Abhá!

O ye who are turned to the Supreme Appearance!

Day and night, morn and eve, at sunrise and at sunset we are remembering, with all our hearts and souls, the friends of the Merciful One, asking God's help and confirmation that the believers of the pure territory, the Holy Land, may become excellent in all conditions of morality, characteristics, behaviour, manners, conduct and actions, that they may appear with ecstasy, enthusiasm, love, consciousness, assurance, steadfastness, firmness, concord and

harmony, with bright faces and splendid beauty in the community of the world.

O ye friends of God! Today is the day of union and this age is the age of harmony in the world of existence. “Verily, God loveth those who are working in his path in groups, for they are a solid foundation.” Consider ye that he says “in groups”, united and bound together, supporting one another. “To work”, mentioned in this holy verse, does not mean, in this greatest age, to perform it with swords, spears, shafts and arrows, but rather with sincere intentions, good designs, useful advices, divine moralities, beautiful actions, spiritual qualities, educating the public, guiding the souls of mankind, diffusing spiritual fragrances, explaining divine illustrations, showing convincing proofs and doing charitable deeds. When the holy souls, through the angelic power, will arise to show forth these celestial characteristics, establishing a band of harmony, each of these souls shall be regarded as one thousand persons and the waves of this greatest ocean shall be considered as the army of the hosts of the Supreme Concourse.

What a great blessing it is that when the torrents, streams, currents, tides and drops are all gathered in one place, they will form a great ocean and the real harmony shall overcome and reign in such a manner that all the rules, laws, distinctions and differences of the imaginations of these souls shall disappear and vanish like little drops and shall be submerged in the ocean of spiritual unity. By the Ancient Beauty, in this case and condition, the blessings of the [VII:5:37] great ocean will overflow and canals shall become as spacious as an endless ocean and each drop shall become as a boundless sea!

O ye friends of God! Strive to attain to this high and sublime station and show forth such a brightness in these days, that its radiance may appear from the eternal horizons. This is the real foundation of the Cause of God; this is the essence of the divine doctrine; this is the cause of the revelation of the heavenly scriptures; this is the means of the appearance of the Sun of the divine world; this is the way of the establishment of God upon the bodily throne.

O ye friends of God! Notice that his holiness the Báb—May the souls of all the creatures be a ransom to him!—for this very eminent intention, exposed his holy breast to the arrows of all casualties. So, as the principal design of the Blessed Perfection—May the souls of the people of the Supreme Concourse be a ransom to him!—was the same great intention, therefore his holiness the Báb made his blessed breast the target for thousands of bullets from the people of enmity and rancour in this path, and was martyred with great oppression. The pure blood of thousands of divine and holy souls was shed and poured in this path, and how many blessed bodies of the sincere friends of the divine God were hanged on the scaffold!

The Blessed Beauty of Abhá—may the divine souls of the existence be a ransom to his friends!—endured personally, all kinds of calamities and bore the most violent ordeals. There remained no torture which did not come to his holy body and no suffering which did not descend upon his pure spirit. How many nights he could not take rest, under the chains and heaviness of fetters, and how many days he gave himself not a minute’s repose because of the burden of fetters and chains!

From Níyávarán to Tīhrán that pure spirit, who was brought up on a bed of down, was forced to run, with bare head and bare feet, under chains and fetters, and, in a dark and narrow subterranean prison, he was put with murderers, thieves, criminals and malefactors; at every moment a new torture was inflicted upon him and at every moment his martyrdom was expected by all.

After a long time, he was sent from the city of his residence to foreign countries. For many years, in Baghdád, at every moment a new arrow was darted toward his holy breast, and at every instant a sword was bent on his pure body. At no instant was there any hope for safety and security, and the enemies, with utmost dexterity, were attacking the blessed soul from all

sides, and he alone, personally, resisted them all.

After all these hardships and calamities, he was sent from Baghdád in Asia. to Europe, and in that terrible exile, great affliction, vehement torture and constant attack, the plots, calumniations, enmity, rancour and hatred of the people of the Bayán were added to those which came from the people of the Qur'án. The pen is unable to explain it all, but surely you have heard and learned about it.

After twenty-four years in the greatest prison, 'Akká, his life was ended in great trouble and hardship.

In short, all the time of the sojourn of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh)—May the souls of all existence be a ransom to his forbearance!—in this mortal world, he was either restrained with chains or kept under hanging swords, enduring the most painful afflictions. At last, in this greatest prison, his holy [VII:5:38] body was extremely weakened from the intense sufferings and his beautiful person became as weak as a web from this continual hardship. His main purpose in bearing this heavy burden and all these troubles, which gave forth their waves like an ocean, accepting the chains and fetters and showing forth the greatest forbearance, was for the sake of harmony, concord and union among all the people of the world and for the establishment of the signs of the real unity among all nations, until the essential Unity (of God) might (at last) appear in the existing realities, and the light of the saying: “Thou seest no difference among the creatures of God” might shine forth upon the whole world.

O friends of God! Now is the time of movement and striving—then try and endeavour! As the Blessed Perfection—May my soul be a ransom to the dust under the feet of his friends!—was constantly in the field of martyrdom, we, also, must endeavour to pour out our lives, and to hear, with our spiritual ears, the divine advices and exhortations, leaving our limited beings, and forsaking the vain ideas of differences of the physical world, in order to serve this eminent purpose and this principal design, which has been planted by the hand of divine favour; and not veil, with the dark clouds of self-interest and superstition, the light emanating from the Kingdom of Abhá, nor become as barring dikes to the waves of the supreme ocean, nor to prevent the diffusion of the fragrances of the garden of the glorious beauty, nor stop the inundation of the rains of the divine grace in this day, nor to hinder the rays of the Sun of Reality.

This is what God has commanded in his scriptures, books and holy tablets, declaring his commandments to his sincere servants.

Upon ye be the mercy and the blessings of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

VII:5, 5 June 1916 [VII:5:38]

The truly blessed

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab* to Miss Harriet Magee, May 1913.

Blessed is he who is charitable, for he shall inherit eternal life.

Blessed is he who overlooks the faults of others, for he shall enjoy divine beatitude.

Blessed is he who associates with all with joy and fragrance, for he has obeyed the commands of Bahá'u'lláh.

Blessed is he who loves mankind, for he has heeded the advice of Bahá'u'lláh.

Blessed is he who is kind to his enemies, for he has walked in the footsteps of Christ.

Blessed is he who proclaims the doctrine of spiritual brotherhood, for he shall be the child of light.

Blessed is he whose heart is tender and compassionate, for he will throw stones at no one. Blessed is he who will speak evil of no one, for he hath attained to the good pleasure of the Lord.

Blessed is he who will not uncover the sins of others, for he will become favoured at the threshold of the Almighty. [VII:5:39]

Blessed is he who hath a forgiving nature, for he will win the spiritual graces of God.

Blessed is he who diffuses only the sweet fragrance of the flowers of friendship and mutual association, for he will obtain a goodly portion of the bounties of the Merciful.

Blessed is he who teaches union and concord, for he will shine like unto a star in heaven.

Blessed is he who practices loving-kindness and co-operation, for he will be encircled with celestial benedictions.

Blessed is he who comforts the downtrodden, for he will be the friend of God.

VII:6, 24 June 1916 [VII:6:41]

The way to universal peace

Extracts from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, May 1914

“What is the greatest need of the VI world of humanity?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered:

“Today, in the world of humanity, the most important matter is the question of universal peace. The realization of this principle is the crying need of the time. People have become restive and discontented. The political world of every civilized nation has become a vast arena for the exhibition of militarism and the display of martial spirit. The minds of the statesmen and cabinet ministers, of every government, are chiefly occupied with the question of war, and the council chambers are resounding with the call to war. Self-interest is at the bottom of every war. Greed, commerce, exploitation, the pushing further of the boundaries of the kingdom, colonization, the preservation of the treaty rights, the safeguarding of the lives and interests of the citizens, are a few of the many pretexts for going to war. And it has been proven by experience that the results of war are ruinous, both to the conquerors and the conquered. Countries are laid waste, public property trampled under foot, commerce is paralyzed, fields crimsoned with the innocent blood and the progress of the world retarded. How can a person rectify a wrong by committing a greater wrong, shedding the blood of his brothers? The major part of the revenue of every country is expended upon military preparations—infernal engines, the filling of arsenals with powder and shot, the construction of rapid firing guns, the building of fortifications and soldiers’ barracks and the annual maintenance of the army and navy. From the peasants upward every class of society is heavily taxed to feed this insatiable monster of war. The poor people have wrested from them all that they make with the sweat of their brows and the labour of their hands.

“In reality war is continuous. The moral effect of the expenditures of these colossal sums of money upon military purposes is just as deteriorating as the actual war and its train of dreadful carnage and horrors. The ideal and moral forces of the contending parties become barbaric and bestial, the spiritual powers are stunted and the laws of divine civilization are disregarded. Such a financial drain ossifies the veins and muscles of the body politic, and congeals the delicate sensibilities of the spirit.

“There is not the least doubt that the nation or government which puts forward an extraordinary effort in the promotion of universal peace will be encircled with divine confirmations, and will be the object of honour and respect amongst all the inhabitants of the earth. Such an action will be conducive to the prosperity and well being of mankind. Concerning this question of universal peace, fifty years ago his holiness Bahá’u’lláh wrote to all the sovereigns and monarchs of the world explaining in detail the benefits of peace and the evils, of

bloodshed. Amongst other things he hath said: Originally mankind was one family, united and Compact; later on the members of [VII:6:42] this happy family were divided and subdivided through ignorance and prejudice. Now the time has come again for their final unification. Universal peace will bring this long wished for consummation.

Once the parliament of man is established and its constituent parts organized, the governments of the world having entered into a covenant of eternal friendship will have no need of keeping large standing armies and navies. A few battalions to preserve internal order and an international police to keep the highways of the seas clear will be all that is necessary. Then these huge sums will be diverted to other more useful channels, pauperism will disappear, knowledge will increase, the victories of peace will be sung by poets and bards, knowledge will improve the conditions and mankind will be rocked in the cradle of felicity and bliss. Then, whether a government is constitutional or republic, hereditary monarchy or democratic, the rulers will devote their time to the prosperity of their nations, the legislation of just and sane laws and the fostering of closer and more amicable relations with their neighbours; thus the world of humanity may become a mirror in which are reflected the virtues and attributes of the kingdom of God."

"What is your opinion concerning disarmament?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "By a general agreement all the governments of the world must disarm simultaneously and at the same time. It will not do if one lays down arms and the others refuse to do so. The nations of the world must concur with each other concerning this supremely important subject, that they may abandon together these deadly weapons of human slaughter. As long as one power increases her military and naval budget, another power will be forced into the crazed competition through her natural and supposed interests. For example, Germany has increasingly added to a vast sum for the maintenance of her army. This alarms the French statesmen and volatile patriots, and affects the calm and steady nerves of the English across the channel. Immediately there will be rumours of war, talk of German aggression, German ambition. The yellow journals write searing editorials, jingoism becomes the topic of the capitals, the air is filled with suspicions. Someone will see, for the purposes of expediency, a German dirigible flying over French fortifications or English forts making observations. A hue and a cry will be raised from every quarter of the country and thus there will be a corresponding increase in the estimates of the Minister of War for the defence of our homes and our hearths, our women and our sweethearts from the attack of strangers. The same argument is resorted to when the French nation adds one or two years to her military conscription and the English imperialists emphasize in public meetings the doctrine of the double standard power. Now as long as Germany continues in her own military perfection the French will walk in her footsteps trying at every turn to increase their own war ammunitions in order to be prepared for any national crisis or sudden attack. Hence it seems the only solution lies in the fact of universal disarmament on the part of all the nations.

"When we speak of universal peace we mean that all the governments must change their fleets of battleships and dreadnaughts to a mighty fleet of merchant marine, plying the oceans of the world, uniting the distant shores and interweaving the commercial, intellectual and moral forces of mankind. But should England alone transform the character of her warships she will be at the mercy of her enemies and will remain powerless and defenceless. The British Isles will be unquestionably threatened by a powerful invading, well disciplined host. Hence, aside from any national prowess, the English people are pushed into this weltering whirlpool of military and naval expenditures and are strug- [VII:6:43] gling to keep their heads above the seething water all around them which, unless calmed down, will drown all of them, irrespective of any nationality.

“Once a person met his friend in the street and after the exchange of courtesies gave him a hard blow in the face. ‘Why dost thou do this?’ ‘Hast thou not read in the Gospel wherein Christ says: ‘Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also?’ Now according to this admonition let me smite thee on thy left cheek also.’ The man submitted to the second blow quite willingly and they parted. Next day they met each other again and the man received two more blows on his cheeks without any evident murmur. They met the third day and he was going to inflict upon him the same blows. ‘Wait a minute, my friend. I am not the only person in the world to live according to the teachings of Christ. Thou also art one. I have obeyed him two days and the next two days will be my turn.’ With these words he smote the man on his cheek and asked him to turn the other side also.

“Now the question of disarmament must be put into practice by all the nations and not only by one or two. Consequently the advocates of peace must strive day and night so that the individuals of every country may become peace loving, public opinion may gain a strong and permanent footing, and day by day the army of international peace be increased, complete disarmament be realized and the flag of universal conciliation be waving on the summit of the mountains of the earth.”

“How can Universal Peace be realized?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered: “The ideals of peace must be nurtured and spread amongst the inhabitants of the world; they must be instructed in the school of peace, so that they may fully comprehend the benefits of peace and the evils of war. First: the financiers and bankers must desist from lending money to any government that contemplates waging an unjust war upon an innocent nation. Second: the presidents and managers of the railroad and steamship companies must refrain from transporting war munitions, infernal engines and guns and cannons and powder from one country into another. Third: the soldiers must petition through their representatives, the ministers of war, the politicians, the congressmen and the generals to put forth in a clear, intelligible language the reasons and the causes which have brought them to the brink of such a national calamity. The soldiers must demand this as one of their prerogatives. ‘Demonstrate to us,’ they must say, ‘that this is a just war and we will then enter the battlefield; otherwise we will not take one step. O ye kings and rulers, politicians and war mongers; ye who spend your lives in most exquisite palaces of Italian architecture; ye who sleep in airy, well ventilated apartments; ye who decorate your reception and dining halls with lovely pictures, sculptures, hangings and frescoes; ye who walk in perfect Elysiums, wreathed in orange and myrtle groves, the air redolent with delicious perfumes and vocal with the sweet songs of a thousand birds, the earth like a luxuriant carpet of emerald grass, bright flowers dotting the meadows and trees clothed in verdure; ye who are dressed in costly silk and finely woven textures; ye who lie down on soft feathery couches; ye who partake of the most delicious and savoury dishes; ye who enjoy the utmost ease and comfort in your wondrous mansions; ye who attend rare musical concerts whenever you feel a little disconcerted and sad; ye who adorn your large halls with green festoons and cut flowers, fresh garlands, and verdant wreaths, illuminating them with thousands of electric lights, while the exquisite fragrance of the flowers, the soft, ravishing music, the fairy like illumination lend enchantment; ye who are in such environments while holding the ladies in your arms dance to the tune of lively music: Come forth from your hiding places, enter into the battlefield if you like to attack each other and tear each other to pieces if you desire to air your so called contentions! This discord and feud are between you; why do you make the, innocent people a party to it? If fighting and bloodshed are good things then lead them into the fray by your presence!’

“In short, every means which produces war must be checked and the causes which prevent the occurrence of war be advanced, so that physical conflict may become an impossibility. On the other hand every country must be properly delimited, its exact frontiers marked, its national

integrity secured, its permanent independence protected, and its vital interests honoured by the family of nations. These services ought to be rendered by an imperial, international commission. In this manner all causes of friction and differences will be removed. And in case there should arise some disputes between them they may arbitrate before the parliament of man, the representatives of which will be chosen from amongst the wisest and most judicious men of all the nations of the world."

(Alhammeh,¹ Lake Tiberias, Syria, 11–12 May 1914.)

While in London in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was asked:

"By what process will this peace on earth be established? Will it come at once after a universal declaration of the truth?"

"No, it will come about gradually," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. "A plant that grows too quickly lasts but a short time. You are my family," and he looked about with a smile, "my new children! If a family lives in unison, great results are obtained. Widen the circle; when a city lives in intimate accord greater results will follow, and a continent that is fully united will likewise unite all other continents. Then will be the time of the greatest results, for all the inhabitants of the earth belong to one native land."

VII:7, 13 July 1916 [VII:7:57]

The main sessions of the Convention

A Digest from the Minutes, Monday 1 May²

The Chairman: Perhaps you have noticed the beautiful shining gift on the table, (pointing to a large copper chest). Perhaps you do not know just what the intention is, but I am going to ask six of the friends, one after another, to go to that table and read, each, an inscription which you will find engraved upon that beautiful box. ...

Mrs Parmerton (reading the second inscription): *"O Concourse of Creation! O People! Construct homes (or houses) in the most beautiful fashion possible in every city, in every land, in the name of the Lord of Religions. Adorn them with that which beseemeth them, not with pictures or paintings. Then commemorate the Lord, the Merciful, the Clement, in spirit and fragrance. Verily, by his mention, by this commemoration, the breasts shall be dilated, the eyes illuminated, the hearts gladdened, and thus shall you pray the orient of praises in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. (i.e., the dawning point of praises)*

"Teach your children what hath been revealed through the Supreme Pen. Instruct them in what hath descended from the heaven of greatness and power. Let them memorize the tablets of the Merciful and chant them with the most melodious voices in the glorious building, in the Temple of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. The prayers of the Lord shall be chanted in a manner to attract the hearts and souls. Blessed is he who listens unto the River of Life." (Bahá'u'lláh)

Mrs Claudia Stuart Coles (reading the third inscription): "O God! O God! Verily I implore thee with throbbing heart and streaming tears to aid every one who endeavors for the erection of this edifice in the building of a house wherein thy name is mentioned every morn and eve. O Lord, send down thy benediction upon whosoever served this edifice and endeavored in its uprising among the sects and religions and confirm him in every good of mankind; open the doors of riches and wealth unto him and give in heritage the treasures of the kingdom which perish not; make him the sign of giving among the people and reinforce him by the sea of generosity and bounty which is surging with the waves of the greatest of favor. Verily Thou are the Generous, the Merciful, the Bountiful." ('Abdu'l-Bahá)

¹ al-Ḥammah, former Palestinian village 12 km SE Tiberias, now Hamat Gader, Israel.

² Extracts.

Mr Charles H. Greenleaf (reading the fourth inscription): *“Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple shall be erected in America.*

“I entreat God to assist the confirmed [VII:7:58] believers in accomplishing this great service and with entire zeal to rear this mighty structure, which shall be renowned throughout the world. The support of God will be with those believers in that district, that they may be successful in their undertaking. For the cause is great because this is the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in that country, and from it the praise of God shall ascend to the kingdom of mystery and the tumult of his exaltation and greeting from the whole world shall be heard.

“Whosoever arises for the service of this building shall be assisted with great power from his supreme kingdom and upon him spiritual and heavenly blessings shall descend which shall fill his heart with wonderful consolation and enlighten his eyes by beholding the glorious and eternal God.

“O God, my aim, my hope! With heart full of longing and breast full of yearning, we beg of thee and we supplicate at the threshold of thy might to raise the foundation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chicago, in the most speedy manner. Make its basis firm and its structure enduring, suffer its pillars to remain unshakable and make its columns of the steel and iron of firmness. Glorify its servants, beautify the characters, and make the worshippers beloved, suffer the nightingales to sing 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá' and warble the praises of our Lord, the most Supreme. Make its men the standards unfolded on the mountains of the world and its women the sanctified angels of the tabernacle of the world.” ('Abdu'l-Bahá)

Dr D'Evelyn (reading the fifth inscription): *“O Lord, make these holy souls the dawning points of the lights and manifestations of (thy) signs. Make every one a leading cornerstone in this great edifice, a pillar of its pillars. O God, although the friends are needy, yet thou art the Helper, the Supporter, the Rewarder. These souls have arisen to serve thee well and have begun servitude. Confirm them and aid them, encourage them by promises of thy divine favors, and make them of the elect. Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful, the Able, the Giver, the Shining, the Hearer, the Seer.”* ('Abdu'l-Bahá)

Mr Remey (reading the final inscription): *“Some material things have spiritual effect and the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is a material thing that will have [VII:7:60] great effect upon the spirits of the people.*

“The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, though outwardly a material foundation, is possessed of spiritual effect and causes the union of hearts and the gathering of the souls.” ('Abdu'l-Bahá)

Dr D'Evelyn: When he was in America a small group of people gathered around 'Abdu'l-Bahá and asked: “What are we to do? We want to go out and teach.” 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: *“The gardener must first have tools before he can cultivate the soil. The first tool that you require is severance; the second is knowledge; then the love of God, and then eloquence.”* By using all these tools, he said, they would become successful gardeners.

'Abdu'l-Bahá also told us the banner of Bahá'u'lláh will be extended to all kingdoms, and the knowledge of God will illumine all climes, and the words of God will reach the hearing of the great American people. Be confident and have no doubt about it, he said; “ ... rest assured and day and night be ye striving that ye may be the people to spread these lights, for if ye are not the people, God will raise up a people who shall unfurl the banner of Bahá'u'lláh, who shall carry this gospel of light and peace into the city of the hearts and make one all the people of humanity.” ('Abdu'l-Bahá) [VII:7:61]

Mr Ober: When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in America, a friend, a very lovely soul, said to him, “My Master, I wish to give a great gift and I wish to assist in some material way.” 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to the interpreter: *“Why does she not build the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár?”* The interpreter said, “Will

you permit me to tell her this?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "No, she must know it in her own heart." Then he added, "If 'Abdu'l-Bahá was to build this temple it would be built at once. But I have left the entire matter in the hands of the Executive Board."

The session, Tuesday 2 May [VII:7:64]

Mrs Claudia Coles: When I looked this morning, in my bag of tablets, with a big desire to give something to somebody I found these words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá uttered in Europe in 1912, a message to every soul upon the earth: "*Come ye together. Concentrate your spiritual forces. Arise with much fervour and enthusiasm. Show ye a united effort. Let a new attraction take possession of your hearts. Let a new spirit sweep over your temples, so that the fire of the love of God which is enkindled in your [VII:7:65] holy of holies may flame forth and set up a spiritual conflagration in the whole of the world. You must not rest day or night until you have breathed into this body a new spirit and ignited a light in this lamp.*"

...

Mrs Fraser-Chamberlain: Green Acre has always been an open Forum for the free presentation of universal ideas. May it never be narrowed to any one cult or sect. We as Bahá'ís must help to make it more and more universal and spiritually free until it finds the liberty of the sons of God.

Let me read you some of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words concerning Green Acre:

"In Green Acre you must concentrate your forces around the all-important fact—the investigation of reality. Expend all your thoughts on this, that the union of opinions and expressions may be obtained.

"If the circle of the activities of Green Acre be expanded so that each year the leaders of every religion and thought may associate with each other with perfect love and amity there will be good results.

"Personal ambitions must be thrown to the winds and all the available will-power directed toward the realization of the universal objects. If you outline such a practical, universal, all-inclusive programme and then invite me I will come again to Green Acre."

VII:9, 20 August 1916 [VII:9:77]

'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks on divine politics and other topics

Some Questions Answered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Summer Home of a United States Government Official, 4 June 1912.

(Translated by Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, 15 June 1916)

We hope that in this gathering we shall partake of the heavenly table. We are pleased with this assembly because it has been united through love. Undoubtedly, the heavenly table is present in every meeting that is gathered through love. In the Gospel it is mentioned that the heavenly table descended upon Peter. Among the people of the Orient it is known that it descended upon his holiness Christ. Also, it is mentioned that the divine table descended upon her holiness Mary. Unquestionably, the heavenly table descended upon both Christ and Mary. The heavenly table concerns heaven, the spiritual table concerns the spirit, and the table of mind concerns the mind. That table which descended upon his holiness Christ and upon Mary was the love of God. From it the human spirit is made alive. It is the sustenance of the hearts. The effects of the physical food are temporal, but the effects of the heavenly food are eternal. Physical food is the life of the body, but in spiritual food is the life of the spirit."

Someone asked: "What will become of the soul of man after death? 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "The body goes under the earth. Thence it came and thither it goes. Everything that you see returns to its own place. As the human body comes from dust, to dust it returns. But the human spirit comes from God and to Him does it return. ..."

One of those who was present said that it was reported in the papers that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had bought a house at Montclair (N.J.), and intended to live there. 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "They are right in their report, but they did not understand what kind of a home it is. All the world is my country and I am living everywhere. Wherever such souls as you are found, there is my country. Hearts are the real country. Man must live in the hearts and not on the earth. This earth belongs to no one. It will pass away from the hands of all. It is an imagination. But the hearts are the real country."

Praise be to God, you are happy. Here is a paradise. The views are beautiful. It is a superb spot. It has great spirituality. In this place the human soul finds spiritual vibrations. Great happiness is manifest. You have chosen a delightful place."

A woman asked if such a solitary place was also good for children, or if it would be better for them to have company of their age. 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered "It is very good for children. It is good for their eyes, thoughts, minds, etc. But sometimes it is necessary for them to be with other well brought up children. Consider when a child becomes two years old, it likes to associate with other children. Consider [VII:9:78] the birds how they gather and fly together. Do you remember when you were a child how pleased you were with the children who were of your age and how happy you were?"

"His holiness Bahá'u'lláh liked such natural scenery. He said: 'The city is the world of the bodies but the mountains and the country are the world of the souls.' Yet all of his life he was a prisoner and fell under great calamities. You must be very grateful to Columbus who discovered such a great country. It is exceedingly astonishing that though he was the discoverer, yet it became known by the name of America. Indeed this country should be called Columbia, which is true and just. Every existing being of the nether world, although it is useful, has still its harmful side. But the thing to be considered is, which is the greater, its usefulness or harmfulness? For example, although by the discovery of Columbus the world seemingly suffered weariness and hardships,—for instance, if Columbus did not discover America the Titanic would not have been built and, so many souls drowned—yet these evils in comparison with the benefits are as nothing. Therefore, the usefulness of other things must be considered. In this day the things which are all good are those which pertain to the spirit. They are all good and for the good of all. From them no harm ever comes, for they are light and there is no harm in light."

Someone asked what 'Abdu'l-Bahá thought of New York City. 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "Its houses are somewhat close to each other. They are like cages. They are like bee-hives. But here all is good. When we rode in the carriage and came to this summer resort it was as though we came out of a hell into paradise.

"Today after our arrival we went to the waterfalls. On returning we were caught by rain and we got somewhat wet; we ran to a house nearby. In the tablets of his holiness Bahá'u'lláh, it is written that once his holiness Christ was in the desert. It was a dark night and it began to rain in torrents. He went to a cave but he saw ferocious animals therein. He stopped outside and the rain poured upon his head fearfully. He said: 'O God, to the birds thou hast given a nest, to the wild animals a cave, and to the sheep a valley, but for the Son of Man thou hast not

created a place wherein he can shelter himself from the rain. O Father, thou seest that the earth is my bed, grass is my food, and the stars are my lamps by night.' Then he said: 'Who is richer than I? Thou hast bestowed upon me a bounty which was not given to the kings, princes, philosophers, and the rich. Who is more wealthy than I?'"

"In the writings of Bahá'u'lláh there are events which were not mentioned in the Gospels. These traditions are from the life of Christ. They show the genius and sublimity of Christ. I would like to tell you another story. It is said that one day Christ arrived in a village where the government made a law that the inhabitants must not allow strangers to enter their homes. This was because in those regions robbery was increasing. His Holiness went to the house of an old woman. When she saw his beauty and majesty she was ashamed to refuse to receive him, and did not want to reject him. So she admitted him with the utmost respect. Then when she looked at him and realized by his manners the greatness of his Holiness, she stepped forward and kissed his hand. And she said to him 'I have only one son and nobody else. He was wise, perfect, and we were living very happily. Now, for some time he has been worried; he is mourning; he fills our home with sorrow and sadness; he is working daily, but at night he comes home worried; he does not sleep, [VII:9:79] and whenever I ask him what the matter is, he does not answer.'

His Holiness said to her: 'Send him to me.'"

Her son came in the evening. The mother said: 'O my son, this is a great personage, and, if you have any trouble, tell him about it.' Then the son went and sat down in the holy presence.

Jesus said: "Tell me what art thou suffering from."

The son: "I am not suffering."

Jesus: "Do not speak a lie. Thou hast an incurable malady. Tell it to me. I am trustworthy. I do not tell the secrets of anyone. I keep them. Have confidence. Tell it to me. I will not reveal your secret."

The son: "My sickness has no remedy. "

Jesus: "Tell me about it; I will remedy it."

The son: "Because it has no remedy it cannot be cured."

Jesus: "Tell it to me. I have the remedy."

The son: "For any kind of disease?"

Jesus: "Yes, for any kind of disease."

The son: "I am ashamed to tell you. I am mortified to tell you."

Jesus: "Thou art my son."

The son, thinking for a moment, said: "I cannot mention it with my tongue. It seems to me that I will be impolite if I do."

Jesus: "I will forgive thee."

The son: "I am in love with the daughter of the king who is in a city nearby. My work is the selling of thorns. What can I say more than this?"

Jesus: "Have confidence. God willing I shall send thee what thou wishest." Briefly, his Holiness arranged it for him so that he might marry the young woman. On the night of the wedding, just as he entered her room, which was full of ornaments and splendour, something came to his mind and he said to himself, this person (Jesus) has brought to consummation so great a matter for me. Why did he not do it for himself? Inasmuch as he performed such good

fortune for me, he could have performed the same thing for himself. Yet with such ideal powers he wanders in the desert; he eats grass; he sleeps on the earth; he sits in the dark; he is in the utmost poverty. When this thought came to him he said to the young woman: "Remain thou here. I have a little business to attend to; I go and will return." He went out into the night in pursuit of his Holiness. Finally he found him and said: "O, my Lord. Thou hast not treated me fairly."

Jesus: "Why?"

Son: "Thou hast obtained for me that which thou desired not for thyself. Undoubtedly thou hast something which is greater than this. And if this were the acceptable thing thou wouldst have chosen it for thyself. It is evident thou hast something which is greater than this. Therefore thou art not just. Thou hast given me that which thou desirest not for thyself."

Jesus: "Thou art right. Hast thou the capacity and the preparation for it?"

Son: "I hope so."

Jesus: "Canst thou leave everything?"

Son: "Yes."

Jesus: "It is the divine guidance which is greater than all things. If thou art able, come."

He followed him. Then his Holiness went to his disciples and said: "I have found, in this village, a hidden treasure. Now I have saved it. This is my treasure. I have taken him out of the earth and I give him to you."

One of those who were present said that he was sorry he could not speak the Persian language.

'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "Praise be to [VII:9:81] God, this veil does not exist in the world of spirit. The hearts speak with each other. There was once organized in Persia a society whose chief characteristic was that they spoke without the tongue, and with the slightest sign could communicate many important matters. This society progressed to such a degree that with the motion of a finger abstruse matters could be understood. The government feared that they might organize a society against the government and since none could understand their purpose they might work great mischief. Therefore they suppressed them.

"I wish to tell you a story about this society. Anyone who desired to join it had to stand at the door. Then they consulted with each other by signs and gave their opinions without speaking. Once a person with an awful looking visage stood at the door. The president looked at his face and saw what an awful looking figure he had. There was a cup on the table containing water. The president poured in some water until it was full to the brim. This was the sign of rejection. It meant that there was no room among them for that person. But the man was intelligent. He took a tiny piece of a flower leaf and with the utmost deference entered the room and put it on the surface of the water in the cup. He laid it so carefully that the water in the cup did not move. All were delighted. He meant that he did not need a big place, that he was like a flower leaf which does not need a place. They clapped their hands and accepted him. All their conversation was with signs; they progressed very much and by this method intelligence and memory became keen and their power in reading the face increased. Often they spoke to each other with their eyes. With the utmost clearness they conversed with each other by the motions of their eyes." ...

Someone asked about the future of America. 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered that "In the future all the countries of America such as Mexico and Canada, and even South America will join the

Union.”

Some one asked about the great universal war among the nations. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “It must come, but America will not be involved. This war will be in Europe. You have taken a corner for yourselves. You do not interfere with others’ business. You are not thinking of taking the European countries, and there is no one who is greedy to take your land. You are safe because the Atlantic ocean is a very strong, natural fort.”

Someone asked regarding the forms of government, such as the republican, the constitutional, etc. [VII:9:82]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered: “Europe and other countries will be compelled to apply the same order that you have. In all Europe great changes will take place. Their states will be independent, ruled by local governments. Indeed it is not just that a country should be ruled by one central government, because no matter how just and good the members of that centre may be, they are not fully acquainted with the necessary details of other localities and cities, and they do not strive for an equal progress in all the regions of the country. For example: Now all the Germans serve Berlin; all the French serve Paris; all the English kingdoms and colonies adorn London. But your government has a good political order.”

Someone asked about the economic question.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered: “America cannot be compared with Europe. The problems of America in comparison to those of Europe are as nothing. One of the problems of Europe is to maintain a great army. All the French and German nations are soldiers. But you are free from this great calamity. You must thank God for saving you. In the interior of America there is protection and safety. The first banner of peace will rise here. Know for a certainty that this will come to pass. For man knows the result from the beginning. The result will be that the peace which you have here among your people will, from here, be spread to other regions.”

Someone else asked regarding election and whether the country should be ruled by the people or by the wise ones among the people.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered: “It is evident that it is better if the people elect the noble ones among them, and then these elect the president of the republic. That is to say, the president should be the elect of the elect, because the public in general are not as well informed as they should be in regard to political affairs. The common people follow fame. In reality, whatever affair the wise people desire to execute, the common people agree to. The affairs should be in the hands of the wise and not of the common people. But the wise people must be in the utmost faithfulness and sincerity of purpose; they must serve all the people, and protect and safeguard their welfare. Consider, if you put the general affairs into the hands of the common people they will be ruined. If you put all the work into the hands of the labourer the house will not be built. A wise architect is needed. The work is done by the architect, but the common labourer suffers the hardships. The general draws the map of war, but the common people do the fighting. We cannot give them the map. Is it possible to leave a regiment in the hands of a soldier? But if we want to be victorious and conquerors, a wise, experienced person must be made commander.”

Someone asked in regard to the question of capital and labour.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “The solution of this problem is one of the fundamental principles of his holiness Bahá’u’lláh. But it must be solved with justice and not with force. If this problem is

not solved lovingly it will result in war. Perfect communism and equality are an impossibility because they would upset the affairs and the order of the world. But there is a fair method which will not leave the poor in such need, nor the rich in such wealth. The poor and the rich, according to their degrees, can live happily, with ease and tranquillity. The first person in the world who had this idea was the king of Sparta. He sacrificed his kingdom for this work. He lived before Alexander the Great was born. This thought came to his mind, that he could render a service which would be higher than all services and become the cause of happiness to many. Thus he divided the people of Sparta [VII:9:83] into three divisions. One division consisted of the ancient inhabitants, and they were the farmers. Another division consisted of the industrial people; another were the Greeks, who were originally from Phoenicia. The name of this king was Lycurgus, He desired real equality among these three divisions, and in this manner established a just government. He said that the ancient people, who were the farmers, were free from any obligation except that they had to pay one-tenth of their products and no more. The people of industry and commerce had to pay yearly taxes and nothing else. The third class, who were the nobles and descendants of the rulers, whose occupations were in politics, war and the defence of the country, had all the land of Sparta. He measured the whole land and divided it equally among them. For example, there were nine thousand of them. He divided all the land in nine thousand equal parts and gave one part to each one of them. He gave one-tenth of the product of each piece of land to the one who owned it. He also made other laws and ordinances for the citizens. When he found that he had accomplished what he wanted, he said: 'I am going to Syria, but I am afraid that after I go away you will change my laws. Therefore, take an oath that you will not make any change before my return.' They took an oath in the temple and assured him that they would never make any change and that they would maintain these laws always until the return of the king. But the king left the temple, travelled and, never returned. He gave up his kingdom in order that these laws might be preserved. This equality of distribution, in a short time, became the cause of discord, because one of the men had five children, another three children, and another two children. Differences accrued and the whole thing was upset. Therefore the matter of equality is an impossibility.

"But here is the real solution. The rich should be merciful to the poor, but with their free-will, not with force. Should it be with force it would be useless. It should be according to law and not by violence, so that through a general law everyone might know his duty. For example, a rich person has a large income and a poor person a small income. To put it in a more explicit way: a rich person has ten thousand kilos of products, and a poor person has ten kilos. Now is it fair to tax them equally? Nay, rather, the poor person in this case must be exempt from taxes. If the poor person gives one-tenth of his income and the rich person one-tenth of his income, it will be unjust. Thus in this way a law should be made that the poor person who has only ten kilos and needs them all for his necessary food, be exempt from paying taxes. But if the rich person, who has ten thousand kilos, pays one-tenth or two-tenths taxes on his products, it will not be a hardship to him. For example, if he gives two thousand kilos, he will still have eight thousand kilos. If a person has fifty thousand kilos, even though he gives ten thousand kilos, he will still have forty thousand kilos. Therefore, laws must be made in this way. These laws must do away with the present system of wages and earnings. If today the owners of factories increase the wages of their employees, after a month or a year, they will again cry and strike and ask for more increase. This work has no end.

"Now I want to tell you about the law of God. According to the divine law no wages should be given to the employee. Nay, rather, indeed they are partners in every work. For example, the farmers plant near a village. They get products from their cultivation. They take one-tenth from the rich and the poor according to their income. A general store may be built in that village for all incomes and products to be brought therein. Then it will be considered

who is rich and who is poor. The farmers whose incomes are sufficient only for their food and ex- [VII:9:84] penses must be free from paying taxes. All products and incomes gathered and collected must be put in the general store. If there is a helpless one in that village his daily needs must be given to him. On the other hand, a rich person who needs only fifty kilos of products and still has five hundred thousand kilos, after all his expenses are paid, should be taxed two-tenths and at the end of the year whatever remains in the store should be distributed for the general expenses.

“The question of socialization is very important. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united and organize an assembly, the members of which should be elected from the parliaments and the nobles of the nations. These must plan, with utmost wisdom and power, so that neither the capitalists suffer from enormous losses, nor the labourers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law, then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be strongly preserved. Also the rights of the capitalists are to be protected. When such a general plan is adopted by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it. Otherwise, the work will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place. One of the several causes of a universal European war will be this question. For instance, the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their employees, and give a fairly certain percentage of their products to their workingmen, in order that the employees may receive, beside their wages, some of the general income of the factory, so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

“No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely. Also, every factory that has ten thousand shares, will give two thousand shares of these ten thousand to its employees, and will write them in their names, so that they may have them, and the rest will belong to the capitalists. Then at the end of the month or year, whatever they may earn after the expenses and wages are paid, according to the number of shares, should be divided among both. In reality, so far, great injustice has befallen the common people. Laws must be made because it is impossible for the labourers to be satisfied with the present system. They will strike every month and every year. Finally, the capitalists will lose. In the ancient times a strike occurred among the Turkish soldiers. They said to the government: ‘Our wages are very small and they should be increased.’ The government was forced to give them their demands. Shortly afterwards they struck again. Finally all the incomes went to the pockets of the soldiers, to the extent that they killed the king, saying: ‘Why didst thou not increase the income, so that we might have received more?’

“It is impossible for a country to live easily without laws. To solve this problem strong laws must be made, so that all the governments of the world be the protectors thereof.

“The essence of this matter is that strikes are conducive to destruction, but laws are the cause of life. Laws must be framed. Demands should be according to the laws, and not with strikes, force and harshness. Tonight you have spoken of politics, but we are not accustomed to talk on politics. We speak about the world of spirit. We speak of the wealth of the kingdom, not of the wealth of the nether world. Politics are obligatory matters, but eternal happiness cannot be obtained by force. Happiness and force are impossible. What is meant by happiness? It means that the people should live according to the most perfect virtues of the world of humanity, and the power of the divine kingdom. This is one story and that is another story.”

VII:9, 20 August 1916 [VII:9:80]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá on spiritual happiness

It is natural that a passenger on board the steamer and sailing the great ocean may now

witness the tumultuous waves of a wild storm and in the freedom and joyousness of his heart ride on the white crest of the iridescent and pearly foam, watching a world of surging waves battling against the sky, and again behold the sea tranquil, its surface like a mirror, reflecting therein the blue dome of heaven. These experiences are the natural requirements of one's journey. They have always been conducive to the enrichment of human nature. But on the other hand, if the tranquillity become permanent and the traveller deprived of the wonderful sight of the waves, the sea not being stirred by the blowing of winds, this state is undesirable, for it is indicative of the fact that one's journey has come to an end.

Today my joy and happiness consists in the firmness and steadfastness of the believers of God, the attraction of the hearts with the fragrances of God, the detachment of the people from the inordinate desires of passion and self and their complete dependence on and communication with the kingdom of God.

There is no doubt that we do not find real joy and happiness through the songs of the singers, the music of the musicians and the flowers of the rose garden, nay rather our delight and exhilaration consists in the anthems of unity and the chorus of harmony raised from the assemblages of the friends of God, singing in the heavenly rose garden, their voices reaching to the ears of the people of the world and creating a divine attitude of beatitude and ecstasy.
..."

A portion of a tablet received from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, dated 20 March 1916, by Mr Horace Holley.

"In the morning," writes Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, "I was busy reading an article in an American newspaper concerning the society organized in Cleveland to 'make happiness epidemic'. 'Abdu'l-Bahá came out of his room and walked in the garden for a few minutes. I went out of the room [VII:9:81] and joined him. When I told him of the organization of such a society in America he laughed heartily and said: 'It is very good—the world needs more happiness and illumination. The star of happiness is in every heart: we must remove the clouds so that it may twinkle radiantly. Happiness is an eternal condition. When it is once established, man will ascend to the supreme heights of bliss. A truly happy man will not be subject to the shifting eventualities of time. Like unto an eternal king he will sit upon the throne of fixed realities. He will be impervious to outward changing of circumstances and through his deeds and actions, impart happiness to others. A Bahá'í must be happy, for the blessings of God are bestowed upon him.'"

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 7 January 1914.

VII:10, 8 September 1916 [VII:10:92]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Syria, 21 June 1916

Miss Gertrude Buikema and Mr Albert R. Windust

Miss Gertrude Buikema and Mr Albert R. Windust, Chicago, care J. H. Hannen, Washington, D.C.

...

To Mr Windust, Miss Buikema.

O ye two servants of the Kingdom of God!

Praise be to God, that your services are accepted in the divine threshold and your songs impart joy and happiness to the ears of the dwellers of the Kingdom.

Persia praises your articles and is praying to God that the ways may be opened and correspondence between Persia and America find the utmost expression and facility, so that your melodies and anthems may become conducive to the exhilaration and cheerfulness of the meetings of the spiritual ones. What wonderful and joy imparting songs are raised from the pages of the *Star of the West*! Truly, I say, they are the means of the happiness of many hearts.

Endeavour ye, as far as possible, to publish such valuable, interesting and instructive articles as to give joy and fra- [VII:10:93] grance to the friends in all parts of the world.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Mrs Corinne True

Haifa, Syria, 10 July 1916.

To Mrs Corinne True, Chicago.

Care of Mr Joseph H. Hannen, Washington, D.C.

O thou my daughter of the Kingdom!

Praise be to God, that thou art assisted and confirmed in the service of the Mashriq'l-Adhkár and art spending thy effort in the erection of this edifice. The construction of this great building is the first divine foundation of the people of Unity in America and it will be like unto [a] Mother unto the temples of God. All the temples which will be built in the future are born from this great Temple.

God says in the great Qur'án: "The building of the Mosques of God is carried along by those souls who believe in God and in the day of judgement." In other words: The construction of the divine mosques is undertaken by the believing, pure and blessed soul. It is my hope that thou mayest become assisted in building this edifice and become conducive to the firmness of the people in the Covenant and Testament.

Endeavour thou as much as thou canst so that the members of thy household become believers in the Unity of God and declare: "Verily, God is single!" become attracted to the Kingdom of God and the promoters of the divine teachings.

Convey my respected greeting to thy daughters.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

Dr Dîyá' Baghdádí and Zynat Khánum¹

To Dr Dîyá' Baghdádí and Zynat Khánum, (Mrs Dîyá' M. Baghdádí,) Chicago.

O ye two doves of the nest of the Love of God!

Although it is a long time that no news has reached us from you, yet we are continually thinking of you. You must at least send us a monthly post card giving us in brief the news of your health and safety and the spirituality of the friends of God. For this will become conducive to the happiness of the hearts. Praise be to God, that under the shade of divine Providence we are safe and enjoy good health, expressing our thanks at the threshold of the Al- [VII:10:94] mighty. In the great Book, the divine Qur'án, God says: "If ye offer praise unto me, I will increase my favours unto you." Therefore we have unloosened our tongues in continual thanksgiving, supplicating confirmation and assistance from the spirituality of his

¹ Zínat Khánum (Zínat Baghdádí).

holiness Muḥammad-Muṣṭafá, the Messenger of God—upon him be praise. We are likewise praying for your success and prosperity. The mother of thy respected wife, her brothers and sister are all well and in good health.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Haifa, Syria, 22 June 1916

Mr Joseph H. Hannen

To Mr Joseph H. Hannen, Washington, D.C.

Upon him be greeting and praise!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Praise be to God, that the friends of God in Washington are occupied in the service of the Kingdom and are displaying perfect firmness and steadfastness in the faith. The meetings which are being organized are in reality the reflections of the Supreme Concourse. The sweet breezes which are wafting toward us from America and the perfumed air which reaches our nostrils from that far off region are most fragrant; therefore they impart joy and happiness to all the hearts.

Convey to his honour Doctor ... my longing greeting and say to him: I have not forgotten his kindness, and it is my hope that, in accord with the divine teachings, he may become the ensign and the flag of the oneness of the world of humanity.

Announce to the maid-servant of God, thy respected wife, my wonderful, glorious greeting.

Upon thee be greeting and praise.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, at Haifa, Syria, 10 April 1916.

Mr Charles Mason Remey

To his honour Mr Charles Mason Remey, Washington, D.C.

Upon him be greeting and praise!

O thou herald of Reality!

Thou hast written that thou art spending the winter with thy parents, but thou dost not know thy duty for the spring and summer. The best way is this, in company with his honour Mr George Latimer travel thou throughout America and the Hawaiian Islands and summon thou the people to the Kingdom of God. The doors of investigation are open and the people of reality are running to and fro. In these days great capacity is witnessed in America and the population is ready to listen to the divine teachings. Synthesize and compose ye in a simple and effective manner the heavenly principles and present them to the listeners in meetings and gatherings. Through the ideal glad-tidings and the lordly suggestions breathe ye a new spirit into the hearts of the friends of God and encourage and incite them in the promotion of the word of God. Convey to all the friends my longing greeting, especially his honour Mr George Latimer.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, at Haifa, Syria, 14 April 1916. [VII:10:95]

Mrs J. P. Addison

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs J. P. Addison, Portland, Oregon.

Upon her be greeting and praise! O thou respected maid-servant!

The letter that thou hast written to his honour Sohrab was perused. Praise be to God, that it contained the good news of the health and safety of the friends of the Almighty. It was also a proof of their firmness and steadfastness in religion and faith. Thank ye God that ye presented yourselves in the divine International Congress in California and were engaged in the service of the word of God. Consider ye the power and the influence of the celestial teachings that the President of the Exposition expressed his gratitude and thankfulness for your services to the world of humanity. Truly I say the believers of God in that Congress became assisted in the accomplishment of most great services. The photograph of the Congress was also received and imparted great happiness. The persons who delivered speeches at its sessions, such as Dr F. W. D'Evelyn, Mr Hooper Harris, Mr Charles Mason Remey, Mr Howard MacNutt, Mr William H. Randall, Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, Mr Howard C. Ives, Mr William H. Hoar, Mr Joseph H. Hannen, Mr Albert R. Windust, Mr Alfred E. Lunt, Mr Albert H. Hall, Mr Edwin T. Cooper, Mr Harlan F. Ober, Mr J. A. Britton, Mrs Mary Hanford Ford, Mr William C. Ralston and Mírzá Khán were assisted with divine confirmations and inspired with the powers of the Holy Spirit. The results and spiritual influences of those talks are endless and eternal. They will become apparent in the future.

Likewise the meetings which were held in the city of Portland and the persons who spoke to the various audiences were supremely assisted by the angels of the Supreme Concourse. They scattered pure seeds in that virgin western soil. Truly, I say, Mr Remey and Mr Latimer are displaying the utmost effort in the diffusion of the fragrances of God. I supplicate and entreat toward the Kingdom of God and beg for each and all heavenly confirmation and assistance.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab at Haifa, Syria, 18 March 1916.

VII:10, 8 September 1916 [VII:10:95]

The importance of teaching

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 31 October 1913.

Mírzá 'Alí Akbar, the friend of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the friend of the friends, left the "headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief for an active engagement at the front." 'Abdu'l-Bahá took him into the rose garden this morning, and while walking among the flower beds spoke to him these words of kindness and love:

"Thou hast been with me for a long time, and I have grown to love thee very much. When I love people I do not tell them to their faces. You know how much I love Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar 'Alí, but I have seldom told them to their faces. I am sending thee away. Thou art not alone. The hosts of the Supreme Concourse are with thee. They will assist thee and reinforce thee under all conditions. Doctors tell me [VII:10:96] I must completely rest (and he turned his wondrous eyes straight to him). I don't listen to them. When I hear good news from the believers, then my health is improved. Now, if thou longest to see me in good condition, go away and serve the Cause and teach the souls. The news of the spiritual conquest will make me well. Wherever thou goest announce my wonderful Bahá'í greeting to the teachers of the Cause, and tell them on my behalf:

"The responsibility for the steady progress of the cause depends upon you. You are the physicians of the sick body of the world of humanity. You must not stay anywhere for a long time. Travel from land to land like the apostles of Christ, and carry with you the glad tidings of the Kingdom of Abhá to the remotest corners of the earth. Why are ye silent? Shout! Why are ye sitting? Move! Why are ye quiet? Stir! This is not the day of rest and comfort. Travel ye constantly, and spread far and wide the teachings of God. Like unto the stars arise ye every

day from a new horizon. Like unto the nightingale, sing every day from a different rose bush. Like unto the breeze, waft every morning from a new garden. Do not stay a long time anywhere. Let the world profit by your lessons and learn from your example. My health consists in the progress of the Cause, and the progress of the Cause depends upon the energy and wisdom of the teachers.”

Later, he said: “The friends of God must devote all their time to teaching the Cause, and spreading the rays of the Sun of Truth. You see how dark the world is; they must illumine it. How materialistic are the people; they must spiritualize them. How negligent they are; they must make them aware.”

I bring this letter to a close by giving you the translation of a Tablet revealed the other night to a believer in Persia, showing again how important is teaching the Cause in these days:

O thou who art chosen by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the diffusion of the fragrances of God!

Thy letter was received. Praise be to God, that in Moraghe¹ thou hast become confirmed and assisted. Today no praiseworthy action can be compared with teaching the Cause of the forgiving Lord. For this is the seed sowing time. Every real farmer engages his time, at this season, in seed sowing. But the heedless ones during the seed sowing period think of the time of harvest. Harvesting is one of the departments of agriculture, but not in the time of seed sowing. The crop is the result of farming, but not at the time of irrigation. Now—praise be to God!—that thou hast occupied all thy time in seed sowing, unquestionably thou shalt become assisted and aided. Travel thou in all the cities of Azarbayjan² and guide the souls to the fountain of light. And when thou findest time, journey through Caucasia and guide the people to the religion of God. All the countries have attained to the greatest capacity, but very little teaching is done

In another Tablet, to the Assembly of Teaching in Hamadán, he says:

O ye blessed souls!

Many assemblies are formed and organized in this world, but the name of this assembly is the hope of the people of heart. It is indicative of teaching, and from the Kingdom of Abhá is honoured with the eloquent Farmán.

“Assembly” means the diffusion of the fragrances of God. “Assembly” means humility and friendliness toward the believers of God. “Assembly” means the promotion of the word of God. “Assembly” means to be sanctified and holy from all else save God. Such is the spiritual assembly. Such is the divine meeting. Such is the Lordly congregation. The ultimate desire of ‘Abdu’l- [VII:10:97] Bahá is the organization of such assemblies, and he is their servant. For this servitude is the crown of eternal sovereignty, and this thralldom is freedom in both worlds.

Therefore, O friends, strive with heart and soul, so that you may become a life member and an eternal organ of the Heavenly Assembly, and the meeting of the Kingdom of Abhá! ...

VII:10, 8 September 1916 [VII:10:97]

Portion of Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Persian Bahá’ís

After my return from America and Europe, owing to the difficulties of the long voyage and the innumerable inconveniences of the journey, a reaction set in and I became sick. Now, through the favour and bounty of the Blessed Perfection, I am feeling better; therefore I am engaged in writing to thee this letter, so that thou mayest realize the friends of God are never

¹ Marágha is an ancient city and capital of Maragheh County, East Azerbaijan Province, Iran.

² Ádharbayján or Ádhirbayján.

forgotten under any circumstances. Now is the time that the believers of God may imitate the conduct and the manner of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Day and night they must engage in teaching the Cause of God, but they must be imbued with the same spiritual state that 'Abdu'l-Bahá manifested while travelling in America. When the teacher delivers an address, first of all his own words must have a supreme and powerful effect over himself, so that every one in turn may be affected. His utterance must be like unto the flame of fire, burning away the veils of dogmas, passion and desire. Moreover, he must be in the utmost state of humility and evanescence, that others may be mindful. He must have attained the station of renunciation and annihilation. Then, and not until then, will he teach the people with the melody of the Supreme Concurrence.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 27 July 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

VII:10, 8 September 1916 [VII:10:97]

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on teaching

Extracts from His Utterances

O thou seeker of the Kingdom of God, if thou wishest thy speech and utterance to take effect in hardened hearts, be thou severed from all attachment to this world and turn unto the Kingdom of God. Enkindle the fire of the love of God in thy heart with such intensity that thou mayest become a flame of fire and a luminous lamp of guidance. At that time thy speech and utterance will take effect within the hearts through the confirmations of the Holy Spirit.

I wish you to become detached from the entire world of existence, to turn to the Kingdom of Abhá with a pure heart, with a pure breath to teach the people.

The daughters of the Kingdom should not have a desire.

Verily the Holy Spirit breathes in this day into the hearts which are moving, breathing, pure and attracted by the love of God.

The penetration of the word of man depends upon the heat of the fire of the love of God. The more the splendours of [VII:10:98] the love of God become manifest in the heart, the greater will be the penetration of the word.

I declare by the bounty of the Blessed Perfection, that nothing will produce results save intense sincerity! Nothing will be productive of fruit save complete advancement toward God! Everything is condemned save severance, and every idea is fruitless and unacceptable save supplication, communion, prayer and obedience. We must entirely collect our scattered thoughts, purify and sanctify the house of our existence from every attachment, and make the palace of our hearts the nest and shelter of the dove of holiness. Then, and not till then, will the significance of confirmation and assistance become evident and known, the power of the Kingdom become apparent, and the hosts of the Supreme Concurrence run swiftly into the arena of heavenly conquest, to gain victory over the east and west of the hearts, and make the north and south of the spirits of men the flowery regions of the love of God.

We must entirely focus our thoughts upon the diffusion of the divine light and the building of the heavenly foundation.

O God, make all my ideals and thoughts one ideal and one thought and suffer me to attain to an eternal, unchangeable condition in thy service!

I ask of God, and I supplicate and entreat at the threshold of Oneness, that thy utmost desire may become realized. The desire of the sanctified souls is always sacrifice in the path of God, attraction to the merciful fragrances, the vivification of the souls, the proclamation of the universal peace, the establishment of the oneness of humanity and the enkindlement of the fire of the love of God in the souls of men. It is my hope that the desire of the friends of God be as such, so that they may be released from the influences of the ephemeral world, shine in the kingdom of eternity, be exhilarated by the wine of the love of God, and, like unto the tempestuous sea, rage and roar with the ardour of the love of God. I desire this station for thee.

Today the greatness of the believers of God depends upon delivering the Cause of God, diffusing the fragrances of God, self-sacrifice in the love of Bahá'u'lláh, and attainment to attraction, love, knowledge and wisdom. This door is open before the face of everyone and this arena is spacious for the skill of all. Everyone must think of this alone, and know that success and prosperity depend upon it.

Whenever the heart finds attraction, the spirit seeks ecstasy and exultation and turns itself toward the Kingdom, the confirmation of the Holy Spirit will descend. Thou wilt be taught and encouraged; thy tongue will be loosened, uttering clear and decisive explanations. Therefore, when one has attained to spiritual success and prosperity, material advantage will not be of much importance. Consequently, if thou art desiring to become assisted in the service, detach thyself from the world, and become thou attracted to the merciful fragrances. Seek his (God's) remembrance day and night, discover his path and announce his mystery. Then thou wilt find thyself in such a condition that thy breath will become effective in every soul.

I now assure thee, O servant of God, that if thy mind becomes empty and pure of every mention and thought and thy heart attracted wholly to the Kingdom of God, forgetting all else besides God and becoming communicative with the Spirit of God, then the Holy Spirit will assist thee with a power which will enable thee to penetrate all things, and a dazzling spark which enlightens all sides, a brilliant flame in the [VII:10:99] zenith of the heavens will teach thee that which you do not know of the facts of the universe and of the divine doctrine. Every soul who ariseth today to guide others to the path of safety and imbue in them the spirit of life, the Holy Spirit will inspire that soul with evidences, proofs and facts and the lights will shine upon it, from the Kingdom of God.

Rest assured ... the breaths of the Holy Spirit will aid you provided no doubts obtain in your heart. Know this for a certainty.¹

To be engaged in diffusing the fragrance of God (leaching the Truth) in one hour of time, is better than the dominion of the world and all therein; for the latter is mortal and temporary, while the former is permanent and endless.

Thou hast written what shouldst thou do and what prayer shouldst thou offer in order to

¹ Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Kinney-Beede-Thompson Notes, 8 July 1909.—According to *Star of the West*, VIII:8, p. 103.

become informed of the mysteries of God: Pray thou with an attracted heart and supplicate with a spirit stirred by the glad tidings of God. Then the doors of the kingdom of mysteries shall be opened before thy face, and thou shalt comprehend the realities of all things.

I desire every Bahá'í to be severed and detached. If he passes between two mountains of gold, he must not look to either side. These souls who have entered under the shade of the Blessed Perfection must show such independence as to astonish the people of the world. If men come to them with money and supplicate to them to accept it, they must reject it.

He who is filled with the love of the Glory (of God) and forgets all things, the Holy Spirit will be heard from his lips and the spirit of life will fill his heart, the light of the sign will shine forth from his face, the words will issue from his mouth in strands of pearls, and all sickness and disease will be healed by the laying on of his hands.

How may we move and transform the hearts?

Teach as if offering a gift to a king, humbly and submissively, not with the force of insistence—imperatively, strenuously—but with gentleness and sweetness, submitting the arguments and truths to the heart and intellect of the hearer. Be as the servant of God, and therefore the servant of the hearer, taking care at all times to adapt the offered food to the condition and station of the listener, giving milk to babes and meat to those who have grown stronger. This food is to be offered for the sake of God only, not for the love of the hearer nor for the benefit of oneself but simply because God wishes his Manifestation to become known and to be loved by those who come to know him.

If one teaches one whom he loves because of his love, then he will not teach him whom he loves not and this is not of God. If one teaches in order to derive the promised benefit himself, this, too, is not of God. If he teaches because of God's will, that God may become known and for that reason only, he will receive knowledge and wisdom and his words will have effect and will take root in the souls of those who are in the right condition to receive them, for they will have been made more powerful by the Holy Spirit. In such a case the benefit to the teacher in growth is as ninety parts compared to the ten parts of gain received by the hearer; for the teacher becomes like a tree bearing fruit through the power of God.

A compilation

VII:10, 8 September 1916 [VII:10:100]

Quotation

The Cause of the creation of all contingent beings has been love, as it is mentioned in the famous tradition: "I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known. Therefore I created the creation in order to be known." Thus all must gather on the (shores) of the river of the love of God in such wise that there should not blow any wind of discord among the friends and companions. All should look to love, and conduct (the life) in the utmost of unity so that there should not be seen any difference among them (the friends), and they should share with one another loss and gain, hard time and welfare, and accidents. We hope, God willing, that the breeze of unity will waft from the city of the Lord of the servants, and all be clothed with the raiment of unity, love and resignation.

Bahá'u'lláh

Translated by Bozorgzadeh¹ E. Kahn.
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 23 May 1916

¹ Buzurjzáda (Ar.) or Buzurgzáda (Pers.).

VII:11, 27 September 1916 [VII:11:104]

“Let not these golden days slip by without results”

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*,
Ramleh, Egypt, 29 October 1913

Dear friends,

Mrs Stannard left this morning for Cairo, to prepare herself for the trip to India. Before her departure ‘Abdu’l-Bahá called her into his presence and spoke to her as follows:

“Consecrate all thy time to the service of the Kingdom of God and the propagation of its principles. Let thy one supreme concern be the promotion of the word of God. Thou wilt ever be surrounded by the invisible angels of confirmations and they will always come to thy assistance. Whenever thou dost enter a meeting, raise thy voice and say:

“O ye believers of God! This day is the day of your attraction! This day is the day in which you must diffuse the fragrance of God! This day is the day that you must unfurl the banner of the kingdom of Abhá! This day is the day of peace and concord! This day is the day of the proclamation of the Oneness of the world of humanity! This day is the day of forgiveness and leniency! This day is the day of truth and righteousness! This day is the day of conciliation and beatitude! This day is the day of awakening and enkindlement!

“Waste not your precious time in fault-finding and backbiting. Polish the surface of the mirrors of your hearts from the dross of human frailties. If you live according to the standard of other communities, then what difference does there exist between you and them? Bahá’u’lláh has summoned you to such a lofty summit that the very thought thereof is too dazzling a prospect! He has not chosen you to be satisfied with water and clay!

“Thou must live in such a spiritual condition that thy very presence in the meetings may transform the audience into the congregations of the elect and set aglow in the hearts the fire of the love of God. Exalt thy ambition. Universalize thy ideals. Spread thy wings of compassion over all the regions of the [VII:11:105] globe. If some people come to thee alone complaining against each other, don’t listen to them, don’t let them breathe the faults of others in thy presence. Tell them: ‘I have not come here to engage my time with these things. I am not a judge. I have come to summon the people to the Kingdom of Abhá, to call you to unity and accord, to raise the dead, make mindful those who are unaware, awaken those who are asleep, breathe new life into the mouldering bones and sound the trumpet of resurrection. Friends, it is high time for you to throw away these tales, these barren stories. God is not pleased with them, humanity is not pleased with them. Your time is too costly to be expended on these trifling events. You are made in the image and likeness of God. Your birthright is more valuable than all the treasures of the empires. Arise with heart and soul and let not these golden days slip by without results. This day is the day of the splendours of the Sun of Reality. This day is the day of the Lord of the Kingdom. This day is the day of the fulfilment of glorious promises. This day is the day of joy and fragrance. These petty backbitings and jealousies make one lose all the traces of spirituality, excommunicate a person from the divine company of the worthy ones, submerge one in the sea of phantasms, suffer one to become cold and pessimistic and throw him headlong into the death of despair and haunting hopelessness.’

“You must not listen to anyone speaking about another, because no sooner do you listen than you must listen to someone else and thus the circle will be enlarged endlessly. Therefore, O friends! Let us come together, forget all our self-thoughts and be in one accord, and cry at the top of our voices ‘Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!’”

Later someone spoke of recent news from the Persian Gulf and how one of the Bahá’ís has

been persecuted. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"Happy is his condition, for in this latter part of his life he has become the object of sufferings in the path of God! May we all attain to this great gift!"

In the afternoon 'Abdu'l-Bahá started off for a walk. Having reached the telegraph office at the Bacos station,¹ he ascended the few steps of the modest building and sat on the chair which was offered him by the chief operator. 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to come often to talk with him, or in other words, to "elbow with men and mix with them", right in the market place. How wonderful it seems to me, his power of adaptability to all people, under most peculiar circumstances! How he brings himself to the intellectual or moral level of the listener and how he enjoys the free and unimpeded association of men! Here was 'Abdu'l-Bahá sitting in a small telegraph office of Ramleh, talking heartily in Arabic with an operator and how he listened to him. First he spoke about the brother of the Khedive, and how he met him in America and France, praising his progressive ideas and intelligence. Then he said:

"When I was in America I was most busy. Often I addressed three meetings a day, and gave innumerable interviews from early morning till midnight. In Europe I spread certain divine teachings which will insure security to the human world, and taught them that the foundation of the religions of God is one and the same. Now I have returned to Egypt in order to rest from the effects of this arduous journey; but while I am here correspondence is uninterrupted with all parts of the West. All the newspapers and magazines published my addresses and the western world is ringing with this call. I have done this, not because I expected the praise of men. Far from it! How foolish are some people who may think that we have accepted all these hardships and undergone forty years of imprisonment by Sultán 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, in order to receive the commendations of men! How [VII:11:106] thoughtless they are! Neither their adulation or blame shall reach me. I have done my work! I have sown my seeds, and leave it to the power of God to cause their growth! You wait a few years longer and you will then hear the notes of this melodious music!

"Once upon a time there was a poor fellah (farmer) who cultivated a patch of ground with cotton. His neighbouring farmers were all rich landlords and Pashas and so they prevented in a high handed manner this poor fellah from receiving his just share of water wherewith to irrigate his parched farm. He appealed several times to their fair sense of justice but they laughed him out of their presence. Finally, realizing that his cotton would dry and his labours fail, he went one midnight and changed the current of the stream toward his own farm and irrigated it most thoroughly. When in the morning the landlords saw what their daring neighbour had done, they sent for him and rebuked him severely. Not being satisfied with this, they bastinadoed him very hard. While he was undergoing this cruel punishment he cried out: 'O ye men! I have already irrigated my farm; this will do you no good. I have saved the destruction of my crop by the drought! Why do you inflict upon me such a useless torture? The earth is watered.'

"In a similar manner we have done our work; the censure and criticism of all mankind will not undo it. It is said that late at night a man was passing a house. He saw a man digging patiently and laboriously and quietly at the wall. 'What art thou doing?' he asked. 'Oh, I am digging away the foundation' the man in the dark answered. 'For what purpose?' 'To rob the house.' 'But no one hears the noise of thy hammer, how is that?' 'There is yet time; tomorrow they will hear it. Its noise shall fill the whole town.' Now, before long the people of the Orient will be awakened and hear the great tones of the new music of God!"

Bidding the delighted operator goodbye, he arose from his seat and returned homeward.

Mrs von Lilienthal and Mrs Beede called on 'Abdu'l-Bahá and had many spiritual questions

¹ The Bákús tram station (31.234878, 29.965569) in the Bákús suburb of Alexandria.

to ask. One question was about the fishes and the five loaves.

“The five loaves,” he explained, “are the five different kinds of teaching with which Christ satisfied a hungry multitude and the twelve baskets left over were the disciples.”

When the interview came to an end, he said:

“My hope is that in this dark world you may become like brilliant torches, illumining the gloomy path of the wandering travellers.”

(Signed) Ahmad Sohrab

VII:11, 27 September 1916 [VII:11:106]

Let there be peace

Talk by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá given in Paris, France, 23 November 1911, during the war between Italy and Tripoli.

They say that a train fell in the Seine river and twenty-five persons were drowned. Today on account of this tragedy there will be a detailed discussion in parliament. They have arrested the manager of the railroad. Great disputes will take place—fierce disturbances! I was very much astonished that for twenty-five persons who fell in the river and drowned, such a strange tumult appeared in the parliament; but for Tripoli, where thousands are being killed in a day, they never say a word. Undoubtedly, so far at least, five thousand persons have been killed. It never occurs to the parliament that these [VII:11:107] persons are human. It is as if they were stones. What is the reason that the parliament is in this way disturbed over twenty-five persons and never speaks of the five thousand? The twenty-five are human and the five thousand are human. All are descendants of Adam. The reason is that the five thousand are not of the French nation. It does not matter if *they* are cut in pieces. Behold, what injustice, what senselessness, what ignorance! Although these helpless ones in Tripoli have father, mother, son, daughter and wife, they cut them into shreds. What harm have they done? I read in the paper that even in Italy the cry and the wailing of the people is rising. The weeping and wailing of both the Arab and Italian women are rising. The eyes of the mothers are filled with tears; the hearts of the fathers are drowned in blood; the weeping and crying of the children reach to the summit of heaven. Behold, how bloodthirsty are human beings! Behold, how deceitful is man, how heedless of God! If, instead of using knives, swords, bullets, guns, men should rejoice, be glad, feast and associate with one another in harmony and love; if, in the state of tranquillity, they should become intoxicated with the wine of happiness, if they should become friends and companions and embrace each other, would it not be better? Which is better: to be like thankful birds and fly together, or to be as bloodthirsty wolves and attack, and devour one another and shed each the other’s blood?

Why should man be so heedless? It is because he does not know God. If men knew God they would love one another: if they had spiritual susceptibilities they would have unfurled the banner of the great peace and if they had listened to the exhortations of the prophets unquestionably they would have established justice. Therefore, pray, implore and supplicate God to guide them, give them mercy, give them reasoning minds and give them spiritual susceptibilities. Perchance these helpless human beings may live in peace. The wise man weeps day and night over the condition of mankind. He cries and sighs that perchance the heedless ones may be awakened, the blind may see, the dead become alive and the oppressors grant justice. I will pray. You must also pray.

Translated by Dr Dīyá’ Baghdádí, 19 June 1916, Chicago, Illinois.

VII:11, 27 September 1916 [VII:11:107]

“Love is the foundation of everything”

Notes of Miss Ethel J. Rosenberg, London, England, taken in ‘Akká, January 1909.

I asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá what could be done to increase our numbers and make the work more effective.

He said the one essential, the only thing to do was that the members of the little groups should love each other very much and be devoted friends. The more they loved each other, the more the meetings would attract and draw others, and the more they loved, the more their influence would be felt. He said we must consider all people—not only believers—to be good. He hoped every one would be good.

He added, “I say this for you in English. I do not often do that; but I say also in English, that you may understand how much I mean it, that love is the foundation of everything and that all must be good.”

While looking from the window, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “We hear the murmur of the sea always continuing. It never ceases. Were it to cease, the world would [VII:11:108] be dead, stagnant, lifeless. But the waves of the mind of man are far greater than those of the sea; they also are ceaseless. They never stop for one instant. This movement is good. If these waves of the mind are few, the man is dull and quiet. What pearls and jewels are contained in the depths of the sea! But the pearls and jewels hidden in the mind of man are the knowledge, virtues, capabilities, etc. These pearls can grow and increase in lustre forever, but the pearls of the sea remain always the same. These waves from our minds go forth and create movement and thought in other minds. From one strong thought of love what great results may be produced!”

A question sent by a Bahá’í: “What is the meaning of Christ’s eating the fish and honey after his resurrection?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered: “All these things, the fish, the honeycomb, etc., are symbols and were meant to be understood spiritually, just as the resurrection itself was a spiritual resurrection. But because the people who received these teachings from the first teachers were ignorant, they understood them literally.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “We know that the body or form has nothing to do with spirit or spiritual conditions. When the spirit is disconnected from or leaves the body, that is no reason for thinking it can be re-absorbed or joined with the whole of spirit, as the drops of water are absorbed or lost in the sea. The earth is one unit, yet how many beings and separate parts it contains! The body of man is one unit, yet it has an infinite number of separate and individual parts that compose it—such as eyes, fingers, etc.; so, in like manner, spirit is one, but consisting of many differentiated parts.”

During a former visit to ‘Akká, when conditions for the prisoners were most severe, Miss Rosenberg was deeply distressed and asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá why he, who was so perfect, should have to endure such sufferings.

He answered: “How could they (God’s teachers) teach and guide others in the way if they themselves did not undergo every species of suffering to which other human beings are subjected?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

“If any troubles or vicissitudes come into your lives—if your heart is depressed on account of health, livelihood or vocation, let not these things affect you. These things should not cause unhappiness. Heavenly food has he prepared for you; everlasting glory has he bestowed upon you. Therefore these Glad Tidings should cause you to soar in the atmosphere of joy forever and ever. You must render thanks unto God forever so that the confirmations of God may encircle you all.”

VII:12, 16 October 1916 [VII:12:115]

“Sacrifice of life is of two kinds”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Extracts from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to us about the lives of several Persian Bahá’ís who have made all sacrifices and yet they think they have done nothing.

“Such souls are the jewels of existence,” he said.

Looking up at the star Venus, which was shining in the horizon like a blazing torch, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Do you see that brilliant star? I declare ... that it is my fondest hope to see each one of the believers of God shining like unto this star. I wish for them this illumination; I desire for them this luminosity, so that they may rejoice the hearts and spiritualize the souls. But alas! How often they let the cloud of the ego darken the horizon and thus prevent the stars of their divine verities from shining.” Here he stopped and looked again earnestly at the brilliant orb, and said: “It shines clearest at the early dawn. So, at this dawn of the Sun of Reality the stars of our lives must glisten and gleam in the darkness of the world.”

Truly I say unto thee, every maidservant who arises in this day in the mystery of sacrifice in the path of God will become one of the stars of guidance in the supreme horizon; all in the heaven, and earth will be illumined by her face; the angels of the Supreme Concourse will speak in her praise and she will be [VII:12:116] encompassed with the favours of the Kingdom of Abhá.

As long as one has not taken a portion of the mystery of sacrifice, it is impossible for him to attain to the Kingdom of God. So long as you do not have the cup free from every sort of liquor is it possible for you to put good and pure water therein?

Sacrifice of life is of two kinds. To be killed for the Cause is not so difficult as to live for it in absolute obedience to the commands of God. To attain to the condition of Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl who cares for nothing in this world save to write something for the Cause that will be of benefit, or like Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí who cares not for money, clothes, or even food, but only to teach someone something about the Kingdom,—is real attainment to the plain of sacrifice! And without attaining this condition all effort is without any final result. One who cares for love, for husband, wife or children more than for the Cause of God has not attained.

VII:13, 4 November 1916 [VII:13:117]

The three realities

Address by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at “The White Lodge,” Wimbledon,
England, Friday evening, 3 January 1913.

How beautiful it is to organize such lovely gatherings that are not based upon the pursuit of the material principles of life! Such gatherings belong to the study and the investigation of

spiritual facts. ... The spiritual power has gathered us together. Our aim is to discover the realities of phenomena. ...

[The bulk of this talk is to be found in *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 51–53, under the heading “The microcosm and the macrocosm”.] [VII:13:124]

... This fact is self-evident and manifest.

Those people who have harkened to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Jews—such people have discarded their past rancour and are associating with the utmost love and unity. Take my example and see with what degree of love I am associating with you tonight, loving you with all my heart and soul. In the same way all those people are living together, with the utmost accord and unity, to such an extent that they are ready to sacrifice their possessions and lives for each other; and to such an extent has the transformation been wrought that they are ever self-sacrificing for each other. Were you to enter into any (Bahá'í) gathering in the Orient, it would be very hard for you to discover who is a Christian and who is a Jew, or who is a Zoroastrian, for they are just like so many flames which have become one big flame. (Applause) All these different faiths are merging into one great faith.

Reprinted from *The Path*, February 1913.

VII:13, 4 November 1916 [VII:13:121]

Recent Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Haifa, Syria, 7 March 1916.

Received by Helen S. Goodall and Ella G. Cooper,

8 August 1916.

To the friends of God, men, women and children in the photograph of the First International Bahá'í Congress, San Francisco, California—Upon them be greeting and praise!

O you real friends and lovers of the Kingdom of God!

In these days the scroll of the photograph of the blessed faces of those pure souls, which was taken during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, was received.

Praise be to God, that the faces are radiant, indicating the sanctification of the hearts. All those who have looked at the photograph have obtained immediate joy—outflowing, and inexhaustible.

I beg infinite grace from the Kingdom of God for each one of those friends who were present in that gathering, wishing for them heavenly powers so that the members of that congress may irradiate the white rays of the Sun of Reality to all parts and illumine the cities, counties, towns and villages of the United States.

The magnet whereby to attract these favours and bounties, is firmness and steadfastness.

Upon you be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

VII:13, 4 November 1916 [VII:13:122]

“I never ask anyone to send me money”

A talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mr Remy and Mr Latimer at Haifa, 15 October 1914.

When you return to America say to all the believers in my behalf that whenever a person comes to that country, no matter to what nationality he may belong, and tries to collect money in my name, know that it has no connection with me. I am free from it. Whosoever asks for money for me, does so of his own volition. There are some people who desire to collect

money under all kinds of pretexts. I desire to impress upon your minds that I have nothing to do with such affairs. I never ask anyone to send me money.

Whosoever loves money does not love God and whosoever loves God does not love money.

On the other hand, if some of the believers voluntarily desire to help and assist one another or some philanthropic institutions, whose objects are for the public welfare and progress, it is very good and praiseworthy. I do not desire that anyone shall ask money in my name for any affair. The souls must be detached from the world. Those souls who are attached to this world and its wealth are deprived of spiritual advancement.

The believers must live such an independent life that if one comes and begs them to accept money, they should refuse him. As long as the souls are not severed, how do they expect to journey along the ideal path?

On the eve of my departure from New York, I told a number of believers that his holiness Christ has stated that "when you leave a city, shake its dust from off your feet." So far, very few people have lived according to this behest, but it is my will to live accordingly. Before coming to America, the believers of God, through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, offered for my travelling expenses \$16,000 but I did not accept one cent. Man must live in the utmost sanctity and purity and he must ever think to assist others and not beg assistance from them.

In short, may you ever be confirmed and assisted. May you ever be illumined; may you ever be the means of the guidance of the people; may you ever breathe the breath of life in the hearts; may you be the signs of mercy to all mankind; may you be the shining lamps of severance and detachment in this dark world.

VII:14, 23 November 1916 [VII:14:127]

"This Movement is stupendous and of paramount importance"

Tablet Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant.

HE IS GOD!

O God! O God! Thou dost behold me, how my forehead is laid upon the dust of humility and submission and how my face is covered in the ground of the threshold of thy singleness. O thou my Lord, the Unconstrained! Thou seest me lowly and contrite, supplicating, entreating and imploring toward the Kingdom of thy light by day and by night, that thou encircle us with the eye of thy providence and the glances of the outlook of thy mercifulness.

O Lord! Forgive our sins, pardon our shortcomings and deal with us through thy grace and generosity under all circumstances. O our Lord! We are sinners, but thou art the merciful forgiver. We are transgressors, but thou art the clement pardoner. Absolve our iniquities, remove our sorrows, destine for us through thy bestowal severance from the world, occupation with thy mentioning, enkindlement with the fire of thy love, perpetual contemplation of thy signs, the knowledge of thy words, meditation over thy verses and the attraction of thy lights.

O Lord! O Lord! These are thy servants; they have turned their faces toward thy countenance and they have resolved their joy and happiness in thy favour and bounty. Strengthen their backs in thy obedience. Reinforce their lives in thy adoration. Perfume their hearts with the fragrances of thy holiness. Ordain for them presence in the paradise of thy meeting. Suffer them to become such servants as peruse the verses of unity in the assemblages held in thy name; that attract the rays of singleness from the lamp of thy bestowal; as those drawn towards thy beauty, humble before thy glory; who have abandoned aught else save thee and are relying upon thy protection and preservation; as those rendered meek by the sway of thy Word, made submissive before thy beloved ones; as those diffusing thy fragrances, disclosing thy mysteries, informing people with thy teachings and suffering

mankind to become rejoiced through thy glad-tidings. Verily, thou art powerful over that which thou wilt and thou feedest whomsoever thou desirest with thy hand. The world and the Kingdom belong to thee and thou art the mighty, the omnipotent and the beloved!

O ye believers of God! O ye dear friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

The goblet of the Covenant is overflowing and the outpouring of the bestowal of the Luminary of Effulgence is manifest and apparent in the regions from behind the invisible world, like unto the radiant moon. The twilight of the Moon of Guidance is scattered and the grace of the Orb of the Beauty of Abhá is continuous and renowned. The fame of the grandeur of the Most Great Name hath reached the East and the West and the call of the Cause of the [VII:14:130] Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh) hath encircled the North and the South. The fragrances of sanctity are being wafted and the breeze of life is passing by. The Word of God is upheld and the everlasting glory is revealed. The lamp of divine unity is ignited and the flame of clemency is glowing. From every direction the call of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!" is raised and in the Orient and in the Occident the teachings of God have struck wonder to the heart of every thinker. Pamphlets and periodicals are being published and circulated in America, Europe and Africa. A section of the press is engaged in praise and eulogy, and another section of the press is awakening the interest of the nations by exclaiming: "This Movement is stupendous and of paramount importance." [VII:14:131] Some people express wonder and astonishment; others complain bitterly on account of their intense prejudices. One of the nations says: "After the departure of his holiness Christ only a limited number of people were his disciples; notwithstanding this his fame became world-conquering and his song reached the sphere of ether." But, the Blessed Perfection—May my life be a ransom to his believers!—on the eve of his ascension, hundreds and thousands were associating together under the shade of the flag of his majesty. From this illustration you can draw the conclusion that a mighty resurrection will be witnessed in the not-far distant future. One of the greatest apostles of his holiness the Spirit was the great Peter; but, notwithstanding this, before Christ's crucifixion he became agitated and was harassed with fear; while thousands of souls, singing, dancing and clapping their hands, have given up their lives and hastened toward the city of martyrdom, for the sake and in the path of the Most Great Name—May my identity be a sacrifice to his friends!

In short, the affairs of the Cause revolve around just such a centre of self-abnegation. How self-evident it is that the believers of God must clothe themselves in these days with the attributes of self-sacrifice, consecrate their time to the teaching of the heedless ones, diffuse the sweet aroma of the teachings, re-enkindle the white flame and make apparent the splendour of the Merciful.

O ye friends of God! Is it befitting that we rest for one moment after the departure of the Beauty of the Clement, or seek the organization of committees, or exhale one breath of comfort, or taste the honey of fleeting pleasure, or lay our heads on the cushions of repose, or pursue the luxury and affluence of the world of creation? No! I declare by God! This is not the condition of loyalty nor the state of faithfulness and appreciation.

Therefore, O ye friends! With heart and soul yearn for the service of the divine threshold and like unto the righteous ones become ye the guardians of the court of the merciful. Servitude at the holy threshold means the spread of the fragrances, the explanation of signs and verses, thralldom at the hall of unity and attachment to the palace of mercifulness. Consider with what severance, attraction and enkindlement the apostles of his holiness the Spirit—May my life be a ransom to him!—arose in the promulgation of the Word of God after his crucifixion. We hope from the bestowal of the True One that we may likewise walk in the footsteps of those pure ones and hasten unhesitatingly and rejoicingly toward the arena of love and sacrifice. This is the inexhaustible outpouring. This is the grace of His Highness the forgiving Lord.

In these days the progress of the divine principles are impeded in some parts and retarded in others, and this has become conducive to the sorrow and grief of the Supreme Concourse, because the dwellers of the Kingdom of Abhá are expecting to see each one of us fulfilling the conditions of loyalty and for the sake of the love of the Most Great Name suffer every form of persecution. A number of the merciful friends forsook their material tranquillity and composure and travelled from city to city, nay, rather, village to village, in order to diffuse the fragrances of God. These souls, endowed with such pure spirits, became the objects of the commendation of the Supreme Concourse—May my life be a ransom to them!—for they became confirmed with this most exalted grace. They spent their days amidst the greatest difficulties and hardships, and employed their time in the guidance of the negligent ones.

O ye friends! This is not the time of rest and tranquillity! This is not the season of silence and stillness. The nightingale of the rose-garden of uprightness must display its wonderful melodies and trills. The bird of guid- [VII:14:132] ance must exhibit its eloquent speech. The light and the heat are the concomitant results of the lamp. The brilliancy of the stars must be everlasting. The existence of the ocean connotes the waves. The birds must soar toward the apex. The pearls are inseparable from their lustre and sweet fragrance must qualify the blossoms of the rose-garden of knowledge. It is hoped that through the favour of the living, Self-subsistent, we may become assisted in a befitting manner.

O ye believers of God! Divine teachings are conducive to eternal life, the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity, the means of peace and conciliation, love and salvation, the basis of fellowship, uprightness and friendship in the world of creation and the instrument of unity and accord, solidarity and inter-dependence amongst the individuals of the body politic. Consequently you must lay the foundation of this structure in this mortal world; thus you may confer upon it infinite and abundant life and become the source of the enlightenment of the world of existence. It is incumbent upon you to consort with all the nations and people of the world with the utmost love, kindness and show affection, justice, assistance, consideration and courtesy to all the different communities and sects. Become ye a remedy to every pain, a balsam of healing and recovery to every wound, to every weak one become ye a support and aid and succour every poor one. Become ye to the fearful ones the impregnable cave of safety and to the agitated ones a sure asylum. ... In this great cycle it is more acceptable and beloved to close one's eyes to all the limitations. The friends may become the manifestors of the qualities of the Merciful and Clement and arise in the service of all humanity; nay, rather they must be most kind toward the animals; for verily His mercy hath encompassed all things.

O ye believers of God! This is the time of self-abnegation and renunciation and the era of servitude and loyalty. The utmost height of this servant is the station of Servitude to His Highness the Almighty. If he becomes accepted at the threshold of servitude how glorious will be this most great gift. Otherwise he will be deprived of the mercy of God. Therefore the utmost hope and aspiration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is to open his wings in this space, to run toward this field, obtain infinite exhilaration from this wine, be intoxicated with this cup and acquire the longing of heart and spirit. Every other mention save this unchangeable, beloved name ('Abdu'l-Bahá) will become the cause of grief and sorrow and the source of the greatest regret and illimitable remorse. I request from the friends of God that day and night they may supplicate and implore at the divine Kingdom so that my servitude might become accepted in the threshold of Bahá'u'lláh.

O ye believers of God! If you wish the joy, happiness and the composure of the spirit and the peace of the conscience of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, strengthen the bonds of union and harmony amongst yourselves so that all of you may become the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the flowers of one garden, the links of one cuirass, soaring in the atmosphere and breaking forth into one glad song. This is the cause of my everlasting joy! This is the motive

of the repose of my mind and heart in the eternal world! ... Today there is no greater service than union and accord amongst the believers. This is the imperative need! This is the happy consummation. This is the most great attainment and the manifest bestowal for those who are sheltered beneath the shade of the Blessed Tree!

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab; copied from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, dated 9 January 1914.

VII:14, 23 November 1916 [VII:14:128]

Latest word from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

In a letter dated 25 October 1916, to Dr ‘Alí-Qulí Khán, recently received, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab advises Khán that the beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has addressed three Tablets to Khán, one in his own name, one to Khánum, his wife, and one to the American Bahá’ís, concerning him, his family and household, and his relatives.

The last of the three Tablets has just been received by Khán, through Mr Joseph H. Hannen, of Washington, D.C., in a letter from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addresses himself to the American believers as follows:

“To the Believers of God in America!—Upon them be greeting and praise!

“O ye believers of God!

“It is a long time that his honour ‘Alí-Qulí Khán is engaged in the service of the Cause of God; therefore I love him. Regarding the niece and the relatives of Khán who are in America, their aim is likewise good, and the believers of God must exercise toward them the utmost kindness. For these souls are strangers, and hospitality must be shown towards strangers. Should you hear contrary and conflicting stories concerning them, do not accept those stories. I beg of God that that family—that is Khán, and the relatives of Khán—may be happy in that strange country, and that the believers may show them kindness and consideration.

“Man is worthy of honour and merits respect, especially a stranger. The friends of God must become the cause of the consolation of every stranger—unless he is a corrupt and wicked person. They must be the means of joy for every sorrowful one, a protective shelter for every fearful one, and a true friend and sympathizer to every friendless one. This is the reward and compensation of every human being. I hope you may become assisted therein. Upon ye be greeting and praise.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

VII:15, 12 December 1916 [VII:15:133]

The social teachings of the Bahá’í Movement

A compilation by George O. Latimer

[More recent quotations are used when located]

“Certain regulations are revealed which insure the welfare and well-being of all humanity. Just as the rich man enjoys his rest and his pleasures surrounded by luxuries, the poor man must likewise have a home, be provided with sustenance, and not be in want. ...

“Until this is effected happiness is impossible. All are equal in the estimation of God; their rights are *one* and there is no distinction for any soul; all are protected beneath the justice of God.”—‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The solution of our economic problems has long been considered a matter for the minds of

philosophers and theoretical thinkers—a matter apart from religion. But social and economic questions are as much a part of religion as are prayer and worship, for true religion is the cause of the advancement of civilization and progress in the world and “the nobility and glory of man consists in the fact that, amidst the beings, he is the dawning place of righteousness. Can any greater blessing be imagined by man than the consciousness that by divine assistance the means of comfort, peace and prosperity of the human race are in his hands? How noble and excellent is man if he only attain to that state for which he was designed. And how mean and contemptible if he close his eyes to the public weal and spend his precious capacities on personal and selfish ends. The greatest happiness lies in the happiness of others. He who urges the matchless steed of endeavour on the race course of justice and civilization alone is capable of comprehending the wonderful signs of the natural and spiritual world.”¹

Civilization in its most general idea, is an improved condition of man resulting from his relation to the social order rather than the expression of his individual independence, and has a twofold aspect. One, a natural and material civilization which serves the physical world and the other a divine and heavenly civilization which renders service to the world of morality. One is founded by the philosophers and scientists of the world, the other is established by the Prophets of God. Material civilization may again be subdivided into those affairs which have no direct relation to life, producing luxury, indolence and effeminacy, and those affairs which contribute toward the maintenance of livelihood and to the happiness, welfare and comfort of mankind.

“In the world of nature the greatest dominant note is the struggle for existence—the result of which is the survival of the fittest. The law of the survival of the fittest is the origin of all difficulties. It is the cause of war and strife, hatred and animosity, between human beings. In the world of nature there is tyranny, egoism, aggression, overbearance, usurpation of the rights of others and other blameworthy attributes which are the defects of the animal world. [VII:15:134] Therefore so long as the requirements of the natural world play paramount part among the children of men, success and prosperity are impossible; for the success and prosperity of the human world depend upon the qualities and virtues with which the reality of humanity is adorned while the exigencies of the natural world work against the realization of this object.” Thus material civilization alone does not insure the safety and progress of mankind, but brings into existence the greatest instruments for human fratricide and destruction of property, and animalistic propensities reach their height under its influence.

Divine civilization, on the other hand, assists man in acquiring heavenly virtues, thus freeing him from oppression, cruelty, and greed brought about by the exploitation of his fellow-man for his own gain. “Divine civilization is a symposium of the perfections of the world of humanity. Divine civilization is the improvement of the ethical life of a nation. Divine civilization is the discovery of the reality of phenomena. Divine civilization is the spiritual philosophy. Divine civilization is the knowledge of God with rational and intellectual evidences.” “Consequently consider what a difference and distinction is there between the material civilization and the divine civilization! The natural civilization prevents men from doing harm and wrong through force and punishment, and thus withholds them from committing crimes. But the divine civilization so trains men that the human individuals avoid sins without having any fear from (material) punishment; and the very sin itself becomes unto them as the severest punishment. And with the utmost zeal and fervour they will engage in acquiring human virtues, gaining that by which mankind will be uplifted and that which will enlighten the human world.”

Thus divine civilization is in the same relation to material civilization as the light is to the lamp. Natural civilization is the body which is in need of the spirit of heavenly guidance for its

¹ All quotations unless otherwise specified are from the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

life and advancement. Therefore the real and true civilization exists only when the material and spiritual combine to reach their highest development, A good man without any development along material lines does not represent true civilization; while on the other hand, the man who has developed only his material side, with no regard for the spiritual does not stand for real civilization. Man must first understand that “the outward trappings of civilization, without inward moral advancement, may be likened unto confused dreams which cannot be interpreted; and sensual enjoyment, apart from spiritual perfection, is like unto the mirage which he that is athirst believes to be water.” (M.F., p. 126) The Bahá’í teaching awakens within him the realization of his duty to society by sowing such seeds of (divine) truth in his heart as these:

“The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.”¹

“Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.”²

“Deeds reveal the station of the man.”

“Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.”³

“Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My [VII:15:135] place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.”⁴

Thus the first and fundamental, and most difficult step toward the establishment of the new social synthesis, is a change of heart in man.

And to effect this change in conscience the Bahá’ís are today striving with all the power of their spiritual enthusiasm and wisdom. The result is already a multitude of men and women in many lands, and of many races who have been reborn of the spirit and united by the fire of the love of God into a world-wide spiritual brotherhood.

But the Bahá’ís are also presenting to the world certain great principles of social reconstruction. Part of these principles are general and fundamental; some are very specific—a clean cut programme of social laws for a new social order.

These principles include: The oneness of all humanity, a universal language, universal peace, education, the House of Justice, specific laws.

The oneness of all humanity

The world is perishing through lack of the spiritual realization of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Therefore Bahá’u’lláh addressed the world as follows: “Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.”⁵ With the full realization of this one principle the shackles of capitalism, industrialism, and militarism will be broken down and mutual helpfulness and co-operation, the cornerstones of economic freedom, will be laid. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Today the world of humanity is in need of international unity and

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 54.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 80.

³ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 49.

⁴ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 59.

⁵ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 454.

conciliation. To establish these great fundamental principles a propelling power is needed. It is self-evident that the unity of the human world and the Most Great Peace cannot be accomplished through material means. They cannot be established through political power, for the political interests of nations are various and the policies of peoples are divergent and conflicting. They cannot be founded through racial or patriotic power, for these are human powers, selfish and weak. The very nature of racial differences and patriotic prejudices prevents the realization of this unity and agreement. Therefore, it is evidenced that the promotion of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity, which is the essence of the teachings of all the Manifestations of God, is impossible except through the divine power and breaths of the Holy Spirit.”¹

There was a time in the history of the world when the family tie was the greatest unit. Out of this grew the common interest of the community, and later as the circle widened the people became united as a nation. Thus the keynote of the last century was nationalism; but now a new and higher ideal has been given to the world by Bahá’u’lláh—internationalism or humanitarianism. “Let not man glory in this that he loveth his country, let him rather glory in this that he loveth his kind.”² All problems are world problems and a solution must needs be based upon this fundamental truth, the oneness of all mankind.

A universal language

For the establishment of this principle, a common auxiliary language is of paramount importance as it will facilitate the intercourse of all peoples and bring about an understanding and interchange of their ideas. Upon this matter ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said in Paris that “An international Congress should be formed, consisting of delegates from every nation in the world, Eastern as well as Western. This Congress should form a language that could be acquired by all, and every country would thereby reap great benefit.

“Until such a language is in use, the world will continue to feel the vast need of this means of intercourse. Difference [VII:15:136] of speech is one of the most fruitful causes of dislike and distrust that exists between nations, which are kept apart by their inability to understand each other’s language more than by any other reason.

“If everybody could speak one language, how much more easy would it be to serve humanity!”³

Universal peace

“Every century holds the solution of one predominating problem. Although there may be many problems, yet one of the innumerable problems will loom large and become the most important of all. In the past century, the most important question that occupied the mind of man was the establishment of political freedom and this aim was more or less broadcast. But in this luminous century the greatest bestowal of the world of humanity is Universal Peace, which must be founded, so that the realm of creation may obtain composure, the East and the West, which include in their arms the five continents of the globe, may embrace each other, mankind may rest beneath the tent of oneness of the world of humanity, and the flag of universal peace may wave over all the regions. As long as this sentiment has not become the light of the assemblages of the world of humanity, eternal prosperity will not be obtained and estrangement will not be changed into good-fellowship. Like unto a spirit, this ideal must run and circulate through the veins and arteries of the body of the world.”

Today the commercial and financial relations of the various countries of the world are so

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 11–12. Talk in New York City given on 14 April 1912.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 127–128.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 156.

closely interwoven that the slightest rumour of war affects the markets and upsets the equilibrium of business everywhere. This relationship is such, that when two nations go to war, the result is inevitable—both the victor and the vanquished are losers. “The two combatants are like unto two ships which collide with each other. One may sink to the bottom of the sea, but the other will also carry away its injuries and bruises.” In fact international ties are so delicate that not only the combatants suffer but all the nations are affected. What a shock business received in the United States during the Boer War when England withdrew two hundred and fifty merchant ships from active trade to assist in military operations! No one denies the devastating and paralyzing shock to the trade, commerce and industry of the entire world resulting from the present war, yet man, suffering from the results, does not attempt to remove the causes. He is blinded by the illusion of racial, patriotic, political and religious prejudices, and by his greed for the control of the economic surplus—produced at the expense of the masses—even though he bears a burden of taxation for military purposes which deprives him of the means of proper livelihood. Truly man today knows no peace for, “in reality war is continuous. The moral effect of the expenditures of these colossal sums of money for military purposes is just as deteriorating as the actual war and its train of dreadful carnage and horrors.” “Such a financial drain ossifies the veins and muscles of the body politic and congeals the delicate sensibilities of the spirit.”

“Today the true duty of a powerful king is to establish a universal peace; for verily it signifies the freedom of all the people of the world. Some persons who are ignorant of the world of true humanity and its high ambitions for the general good, reckon such a glorious condition of life to be very difficult, nay rather impossible to compass. But it is not so, far from it.”

Alas, however, “the kings and rulers of the world are not yet ready to acknowledge that universal peace is conducive to the life of the world of humanity. In a similar strain the nobles, the demagogues, and those in authority find their glory and reputation in naval and military preparedness. Consequently it is impossible that ‘*economic contentment*’ be realized by the people of the world [VII:15:137] save through the transforming power of faith. For faith is the solvent for every problem.”

For the establishment of universal peace, we need an International Board of Arbitration, composed of representatives from all the nations of the earth. This Board would decide upon questions of boundaries, of national honour and property, the size of armaments for each government, and all questions of an international and justiciable¹ nature, having the backing of the *united powers* to make its rulings effective. Together they would furnish an international police force. Most of the battleships should be turned into a mighty merchant marine. “If so great a remedy would be applied to the sick body of the world, it would certainly be the means of continually and permanently healing its illness by the conciliation of universal moderation. Reflect that, under such conditions of life, no Government would need to prepare and accumulate war materials, or would need to pay heed to the invention of new weapons of defence for the vexation and hurt of mankind. On the contrary they would require only a few soldiers, as a means of assuring the safety of the state and punishing the wicked and rebellious and preventing the growth of civil sedition. Not more than these few would be needed. In the first place, therefore, the servants of God—that is to say, all the inhabitants of a state—would be freed from bearing the burden of the tremendous expense of an army; in the second, the many persons who now devote their lives to the invention of fresh instruments of war would no longer waste their time on such work, which but encourages ferocity and bloodthirstiness, and is repugnant to the universal ideal of humanity. On the contrary, they would then employ their natural gifts in the cause of the general well-being and would

¹ Liable to legal consideration.

contribute towards the peace and salvation of mankind. All the rulers of the world will then be settled on peaceful thrones amid the glory of a perfect civilization, and all the nations and peoples will rest in the cradle of peace and comfort.”

Education

“The most important of all matters in question, and that with which it is most specially necessary to deal effectively, is the promotion of education. And no freedom or salvation could be imagined in the case of any nation which had not progressed in this greatest and most important point; just as the greatest cause of degradation and decadency of every nation is bigotry and ignorance.” “Another characteristic of progress consists in the earnest and sincere development of public education, in the teaching of all the useful sciences and in encouraging the people to adopt the modern inventions, in extending the spheres of arts and commerce, and endeavouring to induce them to adopt the methods by which the country may be enriched.”

“If necessary, make this (education) even compulsory, for not until the veins and tendons of the nation stir with life, will any study and adoption of improvements be of any avail, because the nation is like unto the body, zeal and resolution are like unto the soul, so that the soulless body cannot move.”

“In the scheme of human life, the teacher and his system of teaching plays the most important role, carrying with it the heaviest responsibilities and most subtle influence. A teacher is like unto a gardener. Just as a gardener sows the seeds and watches carefully over their sprouting, looks after their growth and progression—so also a teacher must watch over the education of the children and inculcate in their young lives the highest ideals of truth and justice.”

Bahá'u'lláh writes (in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*): “The first obligation of all the Bahá'ís is to strive by all means to bring up and instruct their children, male or female. The girls are like the boys; there is no difference. Ignorance in both [VII:15:138] is censured, and in both stupidity is hateful. In reality, looked at with the eye of truth, the education and instruction of the girls is more useful than that of the boys; for in time these girls will become mothers and will have children. The first educator of the child, is she not the mother? Children are like green and tender branches; as they are cultivated, they grow and increase. If the cultivation is right, they grow straight, and if it is wrong they grow crookedly, and until the end of their lives they advance upon the same path. It is thus proved that if girls without education or instruction become mothers, it is they who are the cause of this loss, the ignorance, the stupidity, the want of education of many children. Strive then with all your souls to train and educate all children, above all your daughters. On this point no excuses can be accepted.” “In the divine book of this cycle, instruction and education are not optional, they are obligatory. He who educates his child or any other's children, it is as though he educated one of my children.”

‘Abdu'l-Bahá has declared: “If women received the same educational advantages as those of men, the result would demonstrate the equality of capacity of both for scholarship.

“In some respects woman is superior to man. She is more tender-hearted, more receptive, her intuition is more intense.

“It is not to be denied that in various directions woman at present is more backward than man, also that this temporary inferiority is due to the lack of educational opportunity. In the necessity of life, woman is more instinct with power than man, for to her he owes his very existence.

“If the mother is educated then her children will be well taught. When the mother is wise, then will the children be led into the path of wisdom. If the mother be religious she will show

her children how they should love God. If the mother is moral she guides her little ones into the ways of uprightness.

“It is clear therefore that the future generation depends on the mothers of today. Is not this a vital responsibility for the woman? Does she not require every possible advantage to equip her for such a task?

“Therefore, surely, God is not pleased that so important an instrument as woman should suffer from want of training in order to attain the perfections desirable and necessary for her great life’s work! Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven.”¹

“The publication of high thoughts is the dynamic power in the arteries of life; it is the very soul of the world. Thoughts are a boundless sea, and the effects and varying conditions of existence are as the separate forms and individual limits of the waves; not until the sea boils up will the waves rise and scatter their pearls of knowledge on the shore of life.”²

“It is most clear and manifest that the national affairs will never revolve around their proper axis until the whole people have received instruction, and public thought has been directed to a single end.”

The House of Justice

“Two things are most urgently necessary to the political realm:

1. The Legislative Power
2. The Executive Power

The centre of the executive power is the government, and the legislative power lies in the hands of thoughtful and wise men. On the other hand, if these strong pillars and firm foundations are not complete and comprehensive, how can it be supposed that there will be safety and salvation for the nation? But as, in these latter days, such excellency is rare, the government and the whole body of the nation are in sore need of just and discerning directions. Thus it is of the utmost importance to establish an assembly of learned men, who, being proficient in the different sciences and capable of dealing with all the present and future requirements will settle the questions in accordance with forbearance and firmness.”

After pointing out the necessity for the establishment of “Councils” and “Deliberative Assemblies” as the solid basis of politics, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lays down certain rules that will make these organizations permanent. “First, the [VII:15:139] elected members must be righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible. Second, they must be fully cognizant, in every particular, of the laws of God, informed as to the highest principles of law, versed in the rules which govern the management of internal affairs and the conduct of foreign relations, skilled in the useful arts of civilization, and content with their lawful emoluments.”³

As to the election of such men he says: “In the present writer’s view it would be preferable if the election of non-permanent members of consultative assemblies in sovereign states should be dependent on the will and choice of the people. For elected representatives will on this account be somewhat inclined to exercise justice, lest their reputation suffer and they fall into disfavour with the public.”⁴

These Councils are called Houses of Justice and every community, village, town, city, and nation will be under the control of one of these bodies. From all the different National Houses

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 161–162.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 109–110.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 17.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 24.

of Justice members will be chosen to compose a Universal House of Justice, to have charge of the international problems.

“All the civic affairs and the legislation of material laws for the increasing needs of the enlightened humanity belong to the House of Justice. This, the House of Justice, will be not only a body for the legislation of laws according to the spirit and requirement of the time, but a board of arbitration for the settlement of all disputes arising between peoples. When the Universal House of Justice is organized the members will do their utmost for the realization of greater cordiality and comity¹ amongst the nations. The laws of Bahá'u'lláh are the unchangeable, organic laws of the Universal House of Justice. They are the very foundation upon which the structure of additional legislation is built.” “As regards the places for the convening of such a general body, it will be decided by the members. The Universal House of Justice has only the legislative function; the executive power belongs to the administrative department of government. At first, National Houses of Justice will be established in every country, and they will elect in turn members to the Universal House of Justice. Again I repeat, the House of Justice, whether National or Universal, has only legislative power, and not executive power. For example, in Europe and America the Parliament or Congress enact laws, while the Government executes these laws. The House of Justice cannot fulfil two functions at the same time—legislative and executive.”

The chief concern of the government is the establishment of equal justice and equal opportunity amongst its citizens. Therefore the members of the House of Justice must close the door to political pirates and their bribery, abolish their personal hatreds and crown themselves with wisdom, piety, truthfulness, capability, benevolence and zeal and such attributes that will prevent oppression, injustice and mismanagement of affairs. As they are to be under the inspiration and protection of God, they must hearken to his call.

“Oh, friends of God, be living examples of justice! So that by the Mercy of God, the world may see in your actions that you manifest the attributes of justice and mercy.

“Justice is not limited, it is a universal quality. Its operation must be carried out in all classes, from the highest to the lowest. Justice must be sacred, and the rights of all the people must be considered. Desire for others only that which you desire for yourselves. Then shall we rejoice in the Sun of Justice, which shines from the Horizon of God.

“Each man has been placed in a post of honour, which he must not desert. A humble workman who commits an injustice is as much to blame as a renowned tyrant. Thus we all have our choice between justice and injustice.

“I hope that each one of you will become just, and direct your thoughts towards the unity of mankind; that you will never harm your neighbours nor speak ill of any one; that you will respect the rights [VII:15:145] of all men, and be more concerned for the interests of others than for your own.”²

Specific laws

The spiritual principle in the establishment of the Bahá'í regulations and economic laws is the exaltation of work. “It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation—such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God. ... Waste not your hours in idleness and sloth, but occupy yourselves with what will profit you and others. ... The most despised of men in the sight of God are they who sit and beg.”³

¹ Comity: an association of nations etc. for mutual benefit, or the mutual recognition by nations of the laws and customs of others.

² Last quotation is replaced by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 159–160.

³ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 32, p. 30.

“When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship;”¹

Thus the acquisition of wealth is not a sin, provided it is not accumulated at the expense and deprivation of another, for, “riches earned by personal effort with divine assistance, in various trades, agriculture and the arts, and rightly administered, are justly deserving of praise, forasmuch as if a wise and discerning man acquires them, they become a ready means of benefit to the state.” Poverty must be eliminated and the surplus wealth devoted to the establishment of schools and colleges, in the propagation of science and for the public benefit, but man is warned by Bahá’u’lláh: “Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.”²

The prevention of monopoly in the control of wealth is one of the most vital questions of social philosophy and the distribution of the vast fortunes has been theorized upon from many angles. The method presented by Bahá’u’lláh is both direct and simple. It is based on the distribution of estates into the following seven divisions:

1. Children
2. Husband or wife
3. Fathers
4. Mothers
5. Brothers
6. Sisters
7. Teachers

If anyone dies without heirs, the House of Justice has the right to the legacy in order to spend it for the good of the commonwealth.

If one dies without any heirs excepting children, two-thirds goes to them and one-third to the House of Justice. If there is no one to inherit the property and there are other relatives such as nephews or nieces, two-thirds goes to them; otherwise the two-thirds will go to the uncles and aunts (fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters) and after them to their sons and daughters; and the other one-third to the House of Justice. If one dies while his father is still alive, and he has children, the children will inherit what was allotted to their father. In the case of children who are under years or incapable of managing their affairs, their legacy should be put into the hands of a trustee or the “House of Partnership” to be invested until their maturity, the trustee receiving part of the acquired profits as his compensation, after deducting the portion for God’s work, debts of the deceased if any, and funeral expenses—with honour and deference.

Thus a very clear method is given for preventing of the handing down of vast fortunes in one family from generation to generation, the evils of which are very manifest, and the results of which will be the abolition of monopoly and more equal distribution. Attention may be called to the fact that teachers, always underpaid, are especially provided for in this arrangement.

Closely allied to this question is the [VII:15:146] problem of the maintenance of the commonwealth, for the House of Justice would not receive sufficient revenue from the inheritance tax alone to carry on the duties and responsibilities of the state. In the reorganization of affairs ‘Abdu’l-Bahá begins with the land, He says: “The question of economics must commence with the farmer and then be extended to the other classes inasmuch as the number of farmers is greater than all other classes, many many times greater. Therefore, it is fitting that the economic problem be first solved with the farmer, for the

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 26.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 55.

farmer is the first active agent in the body politic. In brief, from among the wise men in every village a board should be organized and the affairs of that village should be under the control of that board.”

“... Likewise a general storehouse should be founded with the appointment of a secretary. At the time of the harvest, with the approval of the members of that board, a determined percentage of the entire harvest should be appropriated for the storehouse.

“The storehouse is to have seven revenues: Tithes, taxes on animals, wealth without inheritors, all things found whose owners cannot be discovered, a third of all treasures (money) found in the earth, a third of the mines, and voluntary contributions.

“On the other hand, there are seven expenditures:

1. General running expenses of the institution—salaries etc., and the administration of public safety, including the department of hygiene.
2. Tithes to the general government (State).
3. Taxes on animals for the State.
4. Support of an orphanage.
5. Support of cripples and the incurable.
6. Support of educational institutions.
7. Supplying any deficiency for the expenses of the poor.

“The first revenue is the tithe. For example, if the income of a farmer is five hundred dollars and his necessary expenses are five hundred dollars, no tithes will be collected from him. Another’s expenses being five hundred and his income one thousand dollars, one tenth will be taken from him, for he hath more than his needs; if he giveth one tenth his livelihood will not be disturbed.”¹

And so on in an increasing ratio according to the difference between the income and necessary expenditure, for man will have everything that he needs for his welfare and a large surplus besides. On the other hand, a person, owing to illness, poor crops and through no fault of his own, may be unable to earn a sufficient income to meet his necessary expenses for the year, then what he lacks for the necessary maintenance of himself and family will be supplied by the general storehouse. After certain amounts have been set aside for each of these seven expenditures, then any surplus will be transferred to the general treasury of the nation for general expenses.

The result of this (system) will be that each individual member of the body politic will live most comfortably and happily under obligation to no one. Nevertheless, there will be preservation of degree because in the world of humanity there must needs be degrees. The body politic may well be likened to an army. In this army there must be a general, there must be a sergeant, there must be a marshal, there must be the infantry; but all must enjoy the greatest comfort and welfare.”²

“Likewise, a city is in need of a mayor, judge, merchants, bankers, tradesmen and farmers. Undoubtedly these degrees should be [VII:15:147] preserved, otherwise the public order will be disturbed.”³

Another specific law is the prohibition of slavery. Up to the present time the governments have been engaged with the establishment of political freedom and the liberation of the chattel slave, but now a new and greater problem confronts the world, industrial

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *Lights of Guidance*, Nos 1858–9, pp. 548–549.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 41.

³ This is a recognition of the difference in degree of human capacities but the vital point is that to everyone is granted an equal opportunity for the development of his own ability.

emancipation. When in San Francisco in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to the American people:

“Between 1860 and 1865 you did a wonderful thing; you knocked the shackles from chattel slavery; but today you must do a much more wonderful thing: you must destroy industrial slavery.”

Under our present system the public is safeguarded through the force of laws based upon retaliation and correction, generally inadequate, but when the divine civilization is established man will be so trained and enlightened that he will shun crimes and evil deeds without any fear of material punishment. He will consider the very crime itself to be the greatest retribution and punishment. Until man is advanced to this condition, inasmuch as crime is due chiefly to ignorance, it will be the duty of the community to execute penal laws through its right of defence and self-protection, not through the spirit of revenge which breeds hatred and animosity. It is therefore incumbent upon man to be a dutiful, law abiding citizen of his country.

“The solution of economic questions, for instance, will not be accomplished by array of labour against capital and capital against labour in strife and conflict, but by the voluntary attitude of sacrifice on both sides. Then a real and lasting justness of conditions will be brought about. If a capitalist is forced to give up a portion of his income and possessions there will be no love in his heart, no permanent benefit in his action. But if it be given in the spirit of God, everything will be accomplished. As it is now the forces of labour strike and the capitalists retaliate. If the latter should voluntarily add to the scale of wages, love is evident and the greatest good results. Briefly: among the Bahá'ís there are no extortionate, mercenary and unjust practices, no rebellious demands, no revolutionary uprisings against existing governments.”

The question of wages, which is the cause of nearly all industrial warfare at the present time, is so solved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that: “It will not be possible in the future for men to amass great fortunes by the labour of others. The rich will willingly divide. They will come to this gradually, naturally, by their own volition. It will never be accomplished by war and bloodshed. The ruling power or government cannot treat the rich unjustly. To force them to divide their wealth would be unjust. In the future, proportionately about three-quarters of the profits will go to the workmen and one-quarter to the owner.”

The evolution of the body politic cannot take place overnight but just as the new life of the physical world requires the spring winds, the April showers and the heat of the sun in order to grow and develop, so “in like manner, when the sincere purposes and the justice of the sovereign, the knowledge and perfect political efficiency of the ministers of state and the ambition and enthusiasm of the people are all realized at the same time, then indeed, the millennium of progress and human perfection, the consummation of the glory and the prosperity of state and nation will be accomplished.”

Work and worship go hand in hand and the Bahá'í Temple of worship, known as the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, an Arabic expression meaning the “Dawning Point of Mention (of God)”, holds an unique [VII:15:148] position, for it combines both the material and the spiritual. “The arrangement of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is such that it will exert the greatest influence upon the civilized world on account of its many accessories. Among them are the following: School for Orphans, College for Higher Scientific Education, Hospital, Home for the Cripples, and Hospice. When the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, with its accessories, is founded in the world, aside from the religious and spiritual influence, it will have a tremendous effect upon civilization.” The doors of these institutions will be open to all nations and religions.

'Abdu'l-Bahá recognizes the fact that in order to establish a better economic and social condition certain laws and regulations are necessary for the best welfare of humanity, but he

goes on to say: “While thousands are considering these questions, we have more essential purposes. The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá’í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized. The Bahá’ís will bring about this improvement and betterment but not through sedition and appeal to physical force—*not through warfare, but welfare*.¹ Hearts must be so cemented together, love must become so dominant that the rich shall most willingly extend assistance to the poor and take steps to establish these economic adjustments permanently. ...

“Strive, therefore, to create love in the hearts in order that they may become glowing and radiant. When that love is shining, it will permeate other hearts even as this electric light illumines its surroundings. When the love of God is established, everything else will be realized. This is the true foundation of all economics. Reflect upon it. Endeavour to become the cause of the attraction of souls rather than to enforce minds. Manifest true economics to the people. Show what love is, what kindness is, what true severance is and generosity.”²

“The disease which afflicts the body politic is lack of love and absence of altruism. In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that, unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love and accord may develop within them, there can be no healing, no agreement among mankind. Love and unity are the needs of the body politic today. Without these there can be no progress or prosperity attained. Therefore, the friends of God must adhere to the power which will create this love and unity in the hearts of the sons of men. Science cannot cure the illness of the body politic. Science cannot create amity and fellowship in human hearts. Neither can patriotism nor racial allegiance effect a remedy. It must be accomplished solely through the divine bounties and spiritual bestowals which have descended from God in this day for that purpose.”³

In conclusion since the Bahá’í Movement is essentially spiritual, attention is called to the significant fact that “these precepts were given more than half a century ago—at that moment no one spoke of universal peace—nor of any of these principles, but Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed them to all the sovereigns of the world. ... They are the spirit of this age, the light of this age; they are the well-being of this age.” The Bahá’í Movement has breathed a new spirit into the dead body of the world of humanity and a new universal and divine consciousness has been presented to mankind for investigation.

VII:15, 12 December 1916 [VII:15:140]

The teaching campaign-selections from the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Extract from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 February 1914

As this Bahá’í Cause is in the nascent stage and its basic doctrines are universal, uniformity of rules and forms are not only impossible but undesirable.

A Bahá’í teacher is a Constructionist. He avails himself of the unimpaired materials in the past religions, reinforces the faith of the inquirer by simply holding before his path a greater and brighter light.

He has come not to destroy but to build. The inquirer will discard the superannuated and unnecessary rituals of his former religion along the road of his search.

The teacher holds aloft the flambeau of truth, and little by little the darkness vanishes. The teacher before attempting to take hold of the search light of Truth must learn two lessons: First, the art of manipulation, and second, the inflexibility of the will.

¹ Italics added.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 238–239.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 171.

Just as the searchlight revolves around its axis on its high tower, sending forth into dark space a continuous stream of white, piercing light, so also the teacher must learn how to manipulate the searchlight of Truth—so as to scatter *not only the forces of spiritual darkness, but mental, intellectual, social, physical, and economic* darkness as well.

A teacher is a physician. A physician does not give the same kind of medicine [VII:15:141] to every patient. What is good for one may cause the death of another. What alleviates one kind of sickness may aggravate the other.

The pharmacopoeia of a Bahá'í teacher must be well supplied. If he sticks to *one kind* of prescription I do not say he shall fail, but he will *not* accomplish universal results.

He must be fairly well informed with the Scriptures, the history of the Cause, and its principles, the underlying spirit of the age, and the longings of the hearts for vaster and more spacious fields of noble labour and elevating thoughts.

There is an Oriental saying: “There are as many roads to God as the number of His creatures!”

A teacher must know these roads and strive to put himself in sympathetic touch with the weary pilgrims who are struggling along each road, and little by little teach them that what they call a road is not a road but an unbeaten hard trail leading to jungles and deserts and precipices. *When they are prepared*, he might *then cry* at the top of his voice: “O men! The Highway of the Lord of Hosts hath appeared. The Broad Boulevard of the Kingdom of God is paved. Lo! Behold!”

There are many people who have left their trails and are walking along this Celestial Path.

Do you not see them? Are you not learning by their example? Open your eyes! Look! Look! How many companies of people composed of ever so many nationalities are thronging the Golden Way of the Kingdom!

They are marching on and on, and with every step they take they come nearer to the goal. Their path is strewn with the lilies of love, and the hyacinths of affection. In their white hands are the harps and lyres of divine music, and on their lips the songs of thanksgiving and anthems of glorification. Listen! Listen! Now they are singing in soft, harmonious murmur and anon raise their voices, flushed and inspired with rejoicing and happiness. Is it not better for thee, my brother, my sister, to leave thine own narrow trail over which is grown thorns of dogmas and under-brushes of creed and walk on this broad, brilliantly lighted Path of the Kingdom? Here thou wilt enjoy the companionship of spiritually minded men and women who have given up everything to serve their God and the world of humanity. This golden hour is slipping by; this divine opportunity is passing away. Avail thyself of it!

VII:15, 12 December 1916 [VII:15:141]

Necessity of education—training of the children

[Quotations readily available elsewhere have been omitted] [VII:15:142]

Talk by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá given in Stuttgart, Germany, 28 April 1913

“Among the children many blessed souls will arise, if they be trained according to the Bahá'í Teaching.

“If a plant is carefully nurtured by a gardener, it will become good and produce better fruit. These children must be given a good training from their *earliest* childhood. They must be given a systematic training which will further their development, in order that they may receive greater insight, so that their spiritual receptivity be broadened. Beginning in childhood they must receive instruction. They cannot be taught through books. Many elementary sciences must be made clear to them in the nursery; they must learn them in play,

in amusement.

“Most ideas must be taught them through speech, not by book-learning. One child must question the other concerning those things and the other child must give the answer. In this way they will make great progress. For example, mathematical problems must also be taught in the form of questions and answers. One of the children asks a question and the other must give the answer. Later the children will of their own accord speak with each other concerning these same subjects. The children who are at the head of their class must receive premiums. They must be encouraged, and when one of them shows good advancement, for their further development they must be praised and encouraged therein.

“Even so in God-like affairs. Verbal questions must be asked and the answers must be given verbally. They must discuss (these affairs) with each other in this manner.”

Excerpt from the notes of Mrs Sara Herron, taken at ‘Akká in 1900

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Bahá’u’lláh said the children are of two kinds—the mature and the immature. The mature are the children of believers, and the immature of the unbelievers. Some attain to the highest station because they are so well prepared that they can enter the highest station without earthly preparation. When we see a child wise beyond his years, it is a sign of this preparation, so we cannot question the justice of this. All are created in the same station by the Justice of God, but if some of these have become prophets and some teachers, this is from the favours and bounty of God.”

From the notes of Miss E. J. Rosenberg, London, at Haifa, February and March 1901

“We must be guided entirely by the intelligence and development of the child, as to how soon we should begin to teach it.

“A woman reaches her maturity at the age of twenty, and must then certainly receive the full teaching.

“Many a child of ten is sufficiently developed and advanced to receive some teaching, and some are ready for it at the age of eight or nine.

“The great thing that is necessary to teach children is to be characterized with [VII:15:143] the attributes of God, and to be good. Their hearts and minds must be prepared to receive the truth as soon as they are old enough to be taught anything—but children should not be taught facts and details which they may not speak of openly to their fellows and companions.

“But they must on *no account allow their children to drink wine or alcoholic drinks*. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke of the Druses who never drank wine or smoked, and in consequence of this, many diseases were quite unknown to them.”

Excerpt from *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 16 June 1914

“Think of God, and let thy thought be of God, and let thy brother be trained according to the highest moral standard. In the tenderest years of their youth the pure hearts of boys and girls must be illumined with the light of love of God. Then when they grow up, most astonishing results will be produced, because the maps of their whole lives would be drawn with the hand of the spiritual Educator. A Bahá’í child must be trained according to the moral precepts of Bahá’u’lláh, he must be taught daily of the love of God: the history of the Movement must be read to him, the love of humanity must be inculcated into every fibre of his being and the universal principles be explained to him in as easy a manner as possible to be devised. Then the power of great faith will take possession of his heart. But if these supreme precautions are not taken in the earliest stages of the child’s growth, it will be most difficult to curb later on his growing manifold appetites. For then he will live according to the requirements of the world of nature and uncontrolled self. Once the lower and sensual habits of nature take hold

of him, it will be very hard to reform him by any human agencies. Hence children must be brought under the control of the love of God and spiritual influence from their earliest youth. The lower appetites of nature are like kings over men, one must defeat their forces, otherwise he will be defeated by them.”

Excerpt from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 2 September 1913

As though preordained, the subject of his (‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s) informal talk was on education, and the duty of the mothers toward their children, a most appropriate message to go out to the world of motherhood:

“The fathers, and especially the mothers, must always think how they can best educate their children, not how to fondle and embrace them and thus spoil them. By every means at their disposal they must inculcate into their growing bodies, souls, minds and spirits, the principles of sincerity, love, trustfulness, obedience, true democracy, and kindness toward all the races, thus hereafter the world of civilization may flow in one mighty current and the children of the next generation may make secure the foundations of human solidarity and goodwill. From the tenderest childhood the children must be taught by their mothers the love of God and the love of humanity—not the love of the humanity of Asia, or the humanity of Europe, or the humanity of America, but the humanity of humankind.

“There are some mothers who have a strange, inexplicable love for their children. One may call it the inversion of love, or, as we call it in Persia, ‘Bearish love’. This kind of love does more injury to the child than good. When I was in ‘Akká, during the life of the Blessed Perfection, he entrusted the son of one of the believers to a German carpenter. After a month, his mother went to Bahá’u’lláh and lamented and bemoaned, saying: ‘I want my son, because he is unhappy with this carpenter, for he curses his religion.’ Bahá’u’lláh told her, ‘Go to Áqá (the Master) and act according to whatever he [VII:15:144] says.’ She came to me, and after hearing her side of the story I said to her: ‘The Germans never curse any one; they are not accustomed to it.’ She went away, and after another month she came again to Bahá’u’lláh with another complaint, that this carpenter had forced her son to carry on his back a load of wheat. Again I told her that if he had done so it was for discipline. I satisfied her, but she was murmuring inwardly. A few months rolled by and she returned with another set of complaints, frankly confessing that she did not want her son to be away from her, that he was the apple of her eye.

“Realizing how selfish her love was for her son, I told her at last that I would not take him away, that he must stay with the carpenter for eight years until his apprenticeship was over. Well, she yielded to the inexorable situation. After eight years of study he left his master, and his mother was very proud of him, everywhere praising his industry because his work was demanded on every hand. In short, the mothers must not think of themselves, but of the progress of their children, because upon the children of today—whether boys or girls—depends the moulding of the civilization of tomorrow.”

Excerpt from *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 18 October 1914

“The children must receive divine and material education at the same time, and be protected from temptations and vices. How wonderful will it be if the teachers are faithful, attracted and assured, educated and refined Bahá’ís, well-grounded in the science of pedagogy and familiar with child psychology; thus they may train the children with the fragrances of God. In the scheme of human life the teacher and his system of teaching plays the most important role, carrying with it the heaviest responsibilities and most subtle influence. A teacher is like unto a gardener. Just as a gardener sows the seeds and watches carefully over their sprouting, looks after their growth and progression—so also a teacher must watch over the education of the children and inculcate in their young lives the highest ideals of truth and

justice.”

Excerpt from Diary Letter of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 12 November 1913

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is discussing the necessity of banishing superstitions and explaining how the apparent “lethargy” in the Muslim world is not because the religion of the Arabian prophet was or is false, but it is because the Muslims have forgotten the pure democratic principles of the first age of Islám, and have taken hold of spurious ceremonies and false premises, and are spending their time in the study of dead theology and worthless metaphysics. It is written in the Qur’án: “There is no virtue in this, whether thou mayest turn thy face (at the time of prayer) toward the East or the West; but the virtue lies in this, that thou mayest adorn thyself with righteousness and practise philanthropy.” Take the example of the theological students of the University of Al-Azhar.¹ They spend all their lives in that institution with no visible results. When a young man enters a western college he comes out after a few years, either an engineer, or an electrician, architect, physician, or any of the many technical and practical professions. But those students of al-Azhar waste their wonderful lives and are a heavy burden on the shoulders of the state. This is a crime, an unpardonable crime. Then, turning to a Bahá’í who has two of his children in a French school, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“Give to your children a manual profession, something whereby they may be able to support themselves and others. Let polite literature take care of itself. Teach them a technical art or profession.”

VII:16, 31 December 1916 [VII:16:149]

The Divine Art of Living²

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon.³

Chapter I

“Welcome to the Kingdom of God”

Grace and welcome unto you. I wish you not the temporal strength of the passing body, but the eternal strength of the immortal soul. Some (persons) can be compared unto prepared lamps, only waiting the Spirit’s breath to illumine them; while others are still unprepared. There is some wood that is inflamed at once; there is a damp, wet wood that has to be warmed before the flame can penetrate the heart. Again there is wood as hard as stone and verily, in vain the heat and flame caress it. Some earth must be tilled before the seed can be planted. Some plants absorb water in the earth and others remain dry. Open your hearts that they may be filled; open your souls that the divine light may shine therein. Strive, strive to receive the Spirit of Truth. Truth awaits your call.

Some (persons) with serious ills go [VII:16:150] from celebrated doctor to celebrated doctor, but they all fail to cure for the power is with the Divine. So it is with your soul. Your heart is pure and the Spirit can enter therein. Cut yourself from the world. Pray in the Greatest Name, then the breeze of truth, the flood of light will enter your searching soul. There is nothing else to be sought on earth or in the universe.

Yes, remain here. Your room will have no worldly comforts, but will be filled with the love of God. During a terrible storm Christ wandered on the mountain seeking shelter; a den of wild beasts was all he found and that was the beloved Son of God. All the world was his, but no worldly riches.

¹ Cairo, Egypt.

² This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

³ Extracts readily available elsewhere have been omitted.

The Spirit will come to you with increased force, for your being must become as a temple in which the truth of God can dwell.

Welcome to the Kingdom of God. Even if every moment you thanked God a thousand times for the grace of being born in this, the most marvellous century and for the great favour of being allowed to reach the Promised Land, even that would not be sufficient thanks.

Your faith comes like rain; the first drops are far between, but soon it will pour in torrents. Your faith is also like a seed that will bear its fruit. In a tree we judge of its life and vigour by the way it grows; so it is with man. The knowledge of God rises in the heart like the sun; it mounts, mounts, always casting an immortal light.

You must be reborn by the Spirit. A child in the matrix has eyes and ears but only learns their use when it is born. A man cannot comprehend the Spirit before he has put aside earthly things.

All the centuries are the bringing forth of the twentieth. The deepest wish of many great men was to live in the latter day. ... In past times people esteemed themselves blessed to live in the same time as one of the saints. How much greater is your privilege! To the people then a candle was given, while to you the sun.

The Spirit resembles a rivulet when the earth fills the soul. Put away the terrestrial and the mighty torrent of living water will rush through your freed body.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Miss ... 14-19 October 1900, on the occasion of her visit to 'Akká.

Although the life of the creature is called life, in reality, compared to the life of the children (of the Kingdom) it is not life; on the contrary it is death.

For instance, a mineral substance contains life, but this life compared to the life of the vegetable is death; in like manner the life of the vegetable compared to the life of an animal is death; in like manner the life of human beings compared to the life of the children of the Kingdom is death. As his majesty Christ said: "Let the dead bury their dead, because he who is born of the flesh is flesh and he who is born of the spirit is spirit."

Therefore, it is evident that life (in its true sense) is the life of the spirit and that life is the love of God, divine inspiration, spiritual joys and glad tidings of God. Seek, O servant of God, this life until day and night you remain in limitless joy.

An early Tablet

The life of man will at last end in this world. We must all take out of this life some fruit. The tree of one's existence must bear some fruit. If a tree has no fruit you must cut it down and burn it; it would be useless for other purposes.

Question: "'Abdu'l-Bahá, what is the fruit of the human tree?'"

"It is the love of God; it is the love of humankind; it is to wish good for all the people of the earth; it is service to humanity; it is truthfulness and honesty; it is virtues and good morals; it is devo- [VII:16:151] tion to God; it is the education of souls; such are the fruits of the human tree. Otherwise it is only wood—nothing else."

Kinney-Beebe-Thompson: Notes of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, June-July 1909.

The heart must of necessity be spiritual. A tree *must* be fruitful; it may be very tall, very verdant, but yield no fruits. The fruits of the tree of the human life are the love of God, magnetic, spiritual susceptibilities, heavenly illumination, the knowledge of God;

praiseworthy attributes, good morals and conduct. A person whose tree of life produces such fruits is a Bahá'í; otherwise he is of the earth earthy, self-occupied, and following the dictates of his own desires, and is man only by name. As his holiness Christ says: "Ye shall know the tree by its fruits."

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 1 June 1914.

If the fruit of the existence of man is not servitude at the threshold of the Almighty I declare by the living, self-subsistent God that life is death, existence is non-existence, non-being is better than being, pleasure is pain, joy is sorrow, immortality is mortality. In this court we must be humble and meek, active and progressive, wide-awake and thoughtful, true and sincere, noble and good, straightforward and zealous. This is the outcome of life! This is the result of ceaseless endeavour! This is the prize to be won! This is the illumination of the world of humanity! This is the eternal life! This is the sublimity of human nature. This is the heavenly glory! This is the radiant crown of the Kingdom of Abhá!

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 18 June 1914.

The world is mortal. In one instant it will pass away; but the principle of ease and tranquillity is the soul which is in the eternal world. Real life is the life of the spirit, while the body has to die when its light has come to an end. Therefore, of what importance is it?

Extract from Tablet to Mrs Dealey, revealed 14 July 1911.

Know thou, verily; God hath preferred the insight to the sight; because the sight sees the material things, while the insight apprehends the spiritual. The former witnesses the earthly world, while the latter sees the world of the Kingdom. The former's judgement is temporary, while the latter's vision is everlasting.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, Vol. III, pp. 604-5.

It was my aim that after thy return to ... thou shouldst hoist the ensign of the great guidance, that like the morning star thou shouldst glisten with the light of the great bestowal and that thou shouldst shout so as to awaken them that are asleep and set aglow all who are in lethargy. *This is work!*

Otherwise the foundation of man is entirely shaky and without immortality. The numbered days of life will come to an end, the bright days will at last become cloudy and at the last breath man, [VII:16:152] with limitless regrets, will hasten to the other world.

It is my aim that thou mayst advance to such an extent in the perfections in the realm of man, in the divine manifestations and the susceptibilities of the conscience as to become an angel of heaven and a manifestation of the favours of the Merciful.

Extract from Tablet to an American believer; translated 17 July 1910.

O my servants! The Ancient Beauty¹ commands: Hasten to the shadow of immortality, nearness and mercy from the shadow of desire, remoteness and heedlessness. Be ye resigned like unto the earth, so that the fragrant, sacred, multi-coloured myrtles of my knowledge may grow in the soil of existence. Be ye ablaze like unto fire, so that ye may consume thick veils and quicken and immortalize the cold and veiled bodies through the heat of divine love. Be ye

¹ A name for God.

pure like unto air so that ye may enter the sacred abode of my friendship.

O servants! If ye be informed of the wonders of my generosity and grace which I have deposited in yourselves ye will certainly be cut from all directions and seeking to know your own selves, which is identical with knowing myself, will find yourselves independent of all save me and will see the ocean of my providence and the deeps of my beneficence in yourselves, with your outward and inward eye, as manifest and clear as the sun shining from the name of Abhá.¹ Do not waste this most wonderful, most holy station, through the promptings of fancy and desire and through the falsehoods of superstition and blindness. Ye are like unto a bird which, with all joy and fragrance soars with the utmost security in the cheerful air of the Praised One. Then in the (imaginary) hope of grains it inclines toward the mud and water of the earth and, with all eagerness, besmears itself with dust and mire. Then, when it attempts to re-ascend it finds itself unable and a captive, forasmuch as wings besmeared with water and clay are not capable of flight. At that time that bird of the exalted heaven finds itself a dweller in the mortal earth!

Now, O servants, do not besmear your wings with the mire of heedlessness and imagination and the earth of animosity and rancour so that ye be deprived and prevented from soaring in the sacred heaven of knowledge.

O servants! If ye are possessed of sight, enter the city of seeing. If ye are the people of hearing, step into the land of hearing. And if ye are the possessors of hearts, choose an abode in the fortress of the assured ones so that in these dark days ye may not be veiled from witnessing the lights of the beauty of Abhá. ...

O servants! Inscribe the exhortations of the Spirit with the pen of resignation and the ink of submission and assurance upon the tablet of your heart and turn in every instant lest ye may neglect a single letter thereof, and advance toward the True One with all exertion, turning away from all else save him. For this is the root of the leaf of command grown upon the divine tree.

This world is a show without reality and is a non-existence adorned in the form of existence. Do not attach your hearts thereto. Do not sever yourselves from your Creator and be not of those who are heedless.

Truly I say, the world is like unto a mirage which has the shadow of water. Those who are athirst make abundant efforts in its search but when reaching it remain deprived and portionless. Or, it is like unto the image of a loved one which is destitute of life and soul; when the lover reaches it he finds it of no worth and value and finds no gain save great pain and despondency.

Words of Bahá'u'lláh, in a Tablet called '*Tablet of Ahmad*'. [VII:16:153]

Asked, "What is true greatness in man?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered:

"His spiritual attributes. No one can destroy his spiritual qualities; they are from God."

Ten Days in the Light of 'Akká, p. 13. [VII:16:154]

Praise be to God that his holiness Bahá'u'lláh, has spread before us the heavenly table upon which one finds every kind of food. There is the food of faith and assurance; the sustenance of divine virtues; the bread of the love of God; the meat of the glad-tidings of the kingdom of Abhá; the victuals of severance and detachment; the viands of enkindlement and attraction; the nutriment of sanctity and holiness; the dish of attraction with the fragrances of God; the

¹ A name for God.

sustenance of the breaths of the Holy Spirit; the food of eternal life; the nourishment of teaching the cause of God and promulgating the religion of God. In short, one finds on this divine table all kinds of spiritual food which constitutes the real Supper of the Lord.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 17 October 1914.

The world and its objects are transitory. Phenomena undergo change and transformation but God and his servants remain unalterable and not subject to transmutation. We must attach our hearts to Him if we desire to be eternally happy.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 9 April 1914.

A material man lets himself be worried and harassed by little things but a spiritual man is always calm and serene under all circumstances.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 10 July 1914.

If a person is confirmed in the accomplishment of the services of the Kingdom, his worldly conditions are of secondary importance. The greatest bestowal that it is possible for a soul to attain in this world is this: that he may spend his life, his forces, his possessions, his body, his heart and his spirit in the path of the service of the Blessed (Glory of God) and that towards the last of his life he may drink the cup of martyrdom. This is indeed the most blessed state, the loftiest pinnacle of perfection!

Is there a greater or more harrowing regret in the world than to spend one's physical energies in the awful road of lust, sinful passions, inordinate desires and the frivolities of the age! No! I declare by God! O how pitiful to watch the last flicker of hope dying out of such a life! Because when the last curtain falls on such a dissipated life he finds to his utter remorse his nerves racked, his resources drained, his fortune wrecked, his hopes unfulfilled, his opportunities lost, his visions unaccomplished, his energies wasted and the light of his spirit extinguished! What were the results of these deeds? What was the sum total of these thoughts? What was the outcome of this sawing of wild oats? Where is the man with his youthful ambitions? In what heap of mud and water did he throw the brilliant gems of his ideals? What has he done with his God-given intelligence? He has indeed lived a fruitless life, surrounded himself with the suggestions of passions and the gratification of selfish appetites. His life is brought to a tragic close, enveloped with regrets, remorse! Verily this is the most evident loss!

But, on the other hand, how glorious is the life of a person when toward the last days of his earthly existence he is able to contemplate with great satisfaction that, praise be to God, through the assistance of the Almighty, he has been fortunate and given his belongings, his life, his spirit, his body and all his faculties in the path of the love of God, accepting all manner of persecutions, revilings and afflictions with serenity of [VII:16:155] consciousness and standing firm in the Cause till his very last breath.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 20 February 1914.

While we were living in Baghdád one of the most honourable men in Persia came there. He called on Bahá'u'lláh and as he used to come and see us often I became attached to him. I grew to love him very much and as he was not a believer I spoke to him about the Cause. I used to tell him:

“My friend, the aim of this life is not the acquirement of wealth, honour and glory, not the display of the animal attributes such as eating, sleeping and chasing worldly pleasures. Such

aimless and insipid pursuits do not befit man who is endowed with divine effulgence and radiant longings. The object of this life is the attainment of the spirit, the manifestation of the fear of God, the attainment of the knowledge of God, the acquisition of the love of God, the attaining [of] the good pleasure of the Lord of mankind. If man characterizes himself with these God-like attributes he will become freed from all ties of this mortal world, the light of God will shine in his heart, he will hear the voice of the heavenly angels, he will be surrounded by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, he will become an irradiating centre of the perfect names and qualities of the Merciful and a light through which the darkness of the world of humanity is dispelled! "

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 19 February 1914.

When a man is thirsty he drinks water. When he is hungry he eats food. But if a man be not thirsty, water gives him no pleasure and if his hunger be already satisfied, food is distasteful to him.

This is not so with spiritual enjoyments. Spiritual enjoyments bring always joy. The love of God brings endless happiness. These are joys in themselves and not alleviations. The life of animals is more simple than that of man. Animals have all their needs supplied for them. All the grasses of the meadows are free to them. The birds build their nests in the branching trees and the palaces of kings are not so beautiful. If earthly needs are all then the animals are better supplied than man. But man has another food, the heavenly manna of the knowledge of God. All the divine prophets and Manifestations appeared in the world that this heavenly manna, might be given to man. This is the food which fosters spiritual growth and strength and causes pure illumination in the souls of men. They become filled with the breaths of the Holy Spirit. They increase in the knowledge of God and in those virtues which belong to the world of humanity. They attain to the very image and likeness of God.

What greater joy is there than this? When they invoke God's favour at the divine threshold their minds become open, they enter into spiritual pleasures and make discoveries. By this they enjoy ecstasies of the Spirit and see the world illumined. They are filled with insight. They become fully attuned to the bounties of God and see them face to face, acquiring in themselves the virtues of the Manifestations.¹ Thus it is that man shall attain to the utmost hopes of the holy ones and the saints.

If man could not attain to this illumination and these bounties the mineral world would be better than he for it is not deficient in anything. When man is deprived of the illumination of God he feels a lack and a shortcoming on his part. [VII:16:161]

God created in us a divine holy spirit,—the human spirit with its intellectual powers which are above the powers of nature. By this he enjoys the ecstasies of the spirit and sees the world illumined. The tree and the stone have not this power; they have no mind or soul; therefore they are excused. We are not excused. This power gives man effectual control over nature. He is enabled to discover reality and bring invisible things into the courts of the visible. Thus he is enabled to render effective the will of God and give it material station. This is what is meant by his holiness Bahá'u'lláh when he said, "Verily we have created thee rich, why have ye made yourselves poor?" And Jesus Christ, when he said, "The Father is in me and I in you." It was this power which through Bahá'u'lláh said, "Noble have I created you, why do ye degrade yourselves?" This power distinguishes you above all other creatures, why do you devote it only to your material conditions? This is that which should be used for the acquisition and manifestation of the bounties of God, that ye may establish the kingdom of

¹ That is great, world prophets. "Manifestation" when spelled with a capital "M" signifies in these pages a divinely perfect master who manifests the attributes of God as a pure polished mirror reflects the sun.

God among men and attain to happiness in both worlds, the visible and the invisible.

Address given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, at Green Acre, 20 August 1912.

Asked, “How could a man who does not know God feel it a punishment to be without that knowledge?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered:

“No man can be happy without God, though he may not know why he is miserable.”

Extract from Notes of Aline Shane Devin, October 1900.

The soul of man must be happy, no matter where he is. One must attain to that condition of inward beatitude and peace, then outward circumstances will not alter his spiritual calmness and joyousness. No one can imagine a worse place than the barracks of ‘Akká.¹ The [VII:16:162] climate was bad, the water was no better. The surroundings were filthy and dirty, the treatment of the officials was unbearable and we were looked upon as the enemies of religion and corruptors of morals. The government had given an order that during our stay in ‘Akká no one must talk with us and we must not talk with each other. Having arrived in ‘Akká they found there were not enough rooms in the barracks to imprison us separately so they put us all in two rooms with no furniture at all. The court of the barrack had a most gloomy aspect. There were three or four fig trees over the branches of which several ominous owls screeched all night. Everyone got sick and there were neither provisions nor medicine. At the entrance of the barrack there was an undertaker’s room. It was a horrible room. Yet I lived there two years with the utmost happiness. Up to that period I had not had time to read the Qur’án from first to last but then I had ample time and used to read this holy book with fervour and enthusiasm. Going over the incidents and events of the lives of former prophets and finding how parallel they were with that of Bahá’u’lláh, I was consoled and encouraged. I would read for instance the following verse: “How thoughtless are the people! Whenever a prophet is sent to them they either ridicule him or persecute him.” And then I would read this verse, “Verily, our host is victorious over them.”

I was very happy all the time because I was a free man. Shut off in that room my spirit travelled throughout the immensity of space. At night I went on the roof and communed with the countless stars. What a divine feast! What a heavenly procession! What a spiritual freedom! What beatific bliss! What celestial sovereignty!

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 3 July 1913. [VII:16:163]

Know thou that there are two kinds of happiness—spiritual and material.

As to material happiness, it never exists; nay, it is but imagination, an image reflected in mirrors, a spectre and shadow. Consider the nature of material happiness. It is something which but slightly removes one’s afflictions; yet the people imagine it to be joy, delight, exultation and blessing. All the material blessings, including food, drink, etc., tend only to allay thirst, hunger and fatigue. They bestow no delight on the mind nor pleasure on the soul; nay, they furnish only the bodily wants. So this kind of happiness has no real existence.

As to spiritual happiness, this is the true basis of the life of man because life is created for happiness, not for sorrow; for pleasure, not for grief. Happiness is life; sorrow is death. Spiritual happiness is life eternal. This is a light which is not followed by darkness. This is an honour which is not followed by shame. This is a life that is not followed by death. This is an existence that is not followed by annihilation. This great blessing and precious gift is obtained

¹ The prison in Israel to which Bahá’u’lláh and his family and some other Bahá’ís were sent in 1868.

by man only through the guidance of God.

Spiritual happiness is light, while sorrow is darkness.

This happiness is glad-tidings, while sorrow is disappointment.

This happiness is the Kingdom while sorrow is the earthly world.

This happiness is life, while sorrow is non-existence.

This happiness is the fundamental basis from which man is created, worlds are originated, the contingent beings have existence and the world of God appears like unto the appearance of the sun at mid-day.

This happiness is but the love of God.

This happiness is but the eternal might the brilliant traces of which are shining forth, unto the temples of unity.

Were it not for this happiness the world of existence would not have been created.

Extract from an early Tablet to a Bahá'í in Paris.

VII:16, 31 December 1916 [VII:16:158]

Tablet to a believer in St. Louis

'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a few years ago:

"Thy letter was received. Thou hast written that in these days the establishment of the meeting has become impossible in that city. Be thou not unhappy. A day shall come when innumerable meetings in the utmost grandeur shall be established in that city. The cause of God shall be raised and the breath of the Holy Spirit shall impart eternal life. Be thou not sad. This indifference is temporary. Ere long the fires of the love of God shall raise a flame in that city and the splendours of the sun of truth shall cast intense rays and the melody of the Kingdom shall be heard."

VII:16, 31 December 1916 [VII:16:160]

Tablet to Mr Alfred Lunt, Boston, Mass.

To his honour, Mr Alfred Lunt—Upon him be greeting and praise!

O thou my friend of the Kingdom!

Praise be to God, that the city of Boston is stirred into cheerfulness and the believers of God and the maidservants of the Merciful in the utmost firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant and Testament are engaged in the diffusion of the fragrances of God, that the divine favours and bestowals are continually descending upon the assembly of that city, for they have attained to capacity, and capacity like unto a magnet attracts the heavenly graces unto men. Ever do I supplicate at the threshold of the Lord of Hosts and beg for the friends infinite confirmations. It is my hope that supplications toward the Kingdom of God may be answered.

According to what is heard the convention of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was going to be held in Boston. The believers of Boston must consider this as one of the greatest divine bounties and strive with all their strength so that all the delegates coming to the convention from the different cities of America may become attracted, thankful and grateful and spend a few days with the utmost joy and happiness; thus the convention in a behoving manner may become assisted in the promotion of the teachings of God, the hearts may become like unto the clear mirrors, the rays of the Sun of Reality shine therein, the melody of thanksgiving and glorification to the Lord of Hosts may ascend to the Supreme Concourse, the sleepy ones become awakened and the dead ones alive. Convey to each and all the friends longing

greeting on my behalf.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

[Contained in a letter from Ahmad Sohrab, 12 October 1916, Haifa, Syria.]

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:165]

Recent Tablets from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Mrs Georgia Ralston

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Georgia Ralston.

O thou spiritual daughter of the Kingdom!

The letter that thou hast written to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab was perused. It imparted exceeding joy, joy to the heart, for it contained very good news, that, praise be to God, the friends of God, notwithstanding the interruption of the means of correspondence, are in the state of the utmost joy and fragrance. This must indeed be the condition of those souls who have entered the Kingdom. They must not be discouraged by any obstacles, nay, rather, they must, day by day, increase their attraction and enkindlement, for confirmations are descending upon them from the heavenly Spirit. You must be firm and steadfast to such a degree that not only the interruption of the means of communication, but should ‘Abdu’l-Bahá hasten from this world to another world and soar from this mortal prison to the immortal rose-garden, none of you must be shaken or disturbed; nay, rather, moment after moment the strength of heart be augmented and firmness and steadfastness be increased. For when the lamp of the love of God is ignited in the heart, its flame must become purer and whiter day by day—thus from head to foot he may become a torch of flaming fire. When his holiness the Báb and his holiness Bahá’u’lláh ascended to the Supreme Concourse, the intensity of the fire of the service of the friends of God became an hundred fold and in the assemblages of humanity they shone out with the utmost sanctity and purity. I hope you will likewise attain to such a station.

Convey longing greetings, on my [VII:17:166] behalf, to each and all the friends. Should we enjoy life after this war, we shall correspond with all the believers. Upon thee be greeting and praise!

[Tablet contained in letter from Ahmad, 9 October 1916, Haifa, Syria, to Mrs Georgia Ralston, New York City.]

Miss A. Boylan

My dear Bahá’í sister,

To the maid-servant of God, Miss A. Boylan—Upon her be greeting and praise!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Although it is a long time that I have not written a letter to that steadfast one in the Testament, still thou art ever before the sight and never forgotten. Now and then letters are being received from those friends that, praise be to God, they are engaged in service and are holding in their hands the candle of guidance, dispelling the darkness of superstitions and doubts. Convey to the dear daughter, Mrs Krug, my respectful greeting. Some time ago I wrote her a brief note. It is hoped that her illumined meeting is still continued and the maid-servants of the Merciful gather in that assembly and are occupied in the commemoration of His Highness, the Almighty, are engaged in the establishment of unity and concord. Those days that meetings were held in her home and I used to present myself there and talk with the friends of God shall never be forgotten.

Upon thee and upon her be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

[Tablet contained in letter from Ahmad, 11 October 1916, Haifa, Syria, to Miss A. Boylan, New York City.] [VII:17:167]

Dr Pauline Barton-Peeke

To the maid-servant of God, Doctor Pauline Barton-Peeke.—Upon her be greetings and praise!

O thou the inheritor of the great, respected Mrs Peeke!

Although that beloved maidservant of God ascended from this mortal world to the world of immortality, praise be to God, she left thee behind as a token of herself. All the dwellers of the Kingdom and myself are pleased with thy services to the Kingdom of God. Truly I say the believers of God and thyself are displaying every effort in the promotion of the teachings of God in Cleveland. The evidence demonstrating this fact is that you have not forgotten us, nay rather with the utmost exertion and endeavour you are engaged in the service of Truth. Thank ye God that ye are confirmed therein. Ere long ye shall observe most important results and ye will behold the doors of the everlasting glory open before your faces. I am ever expecting to receive good news from you and the Cleveland believers, and in your behalf I supplicate and entreat toward the Kingdom of God, that every one of you may become ignited with the fire of the love of God and bestow the light of guidance upon that region and continent.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

[Tablet contained in letter from Ahmad, 12 October 1916, Haifa, Syria, to Dr Pauline Barton-Peeke, Cleveland, Ohio.]

Mr and Mrs Harlan F. Ober

Haifa, Syria, 11 July 1916.

To Mr and Mrs Harlan F. Ober.

O ye two firm ones in the Covenant!

Although we are living in the Holy Land and you are dwelling in the United States, yet the spiritual relations and the communication of the hearts are firm and steadfast because the unity of the Divine Essence has bonded us together. In this material world we are cemented together and, God willing, in the Universe of God, the world of the Kingdom, we will be the associates and intimates of each other. Truly I say Mr Ober rendered a great service to the Kingdom of God and undertook a long and arduous trip to India, and during our stay in America, Mrs Ober served with heart and soul. Both of them are encircled with the Divine Favours and are firm and steadfast in the lordly Covenant.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

Original received by Mr Joseph H. Hannen, Washington, D.C., 25 September 1916.

Mr Fred Mortensen

To Mr Fred Mortensen, Minneapolis, Minnesota.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá.

O thou illumined youth!

Thy letter was received. Its perusal produced the utmost joy; for its contents indicated

faith and its significances were proofs of firmness in the Covenant. That trip of thine from Minneapolis to Green Acre will never be forgotten.¹ Its mention will be recorded eternally in books and works of history. Therefore, be thou happy that, praise be to God, thou hast an illumined heart, a living spirit and art vivified with a merciful breath. Convey my greeting, longing and respect to the Editor of *Labor Review* and say: "This paper of yours in the future ages will become superior to all the newspapers of the world, because you have published in its columns the proclamation of the kingdom of Abhá. I hope thou wilt become assisted to promote the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Then thou wilt observe that this paper has become a luminous star and the cause of the illumination of the hearts of humanity."

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 12 September 1913, Ramleh, Egypt.

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:168]

"We are ourselves the means of our degradation and exaltation"

Extract from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 23 January 1914

A young man by the name of Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh, who has been here (Haifa) for a month, was about to leave this afternoon for Aleppo, so 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed him, saying:

"Now that thou hast decided to live in Aleppo, thou must act, speak and conduct thyself with such holiness, sanctity, purity and chastity as to attract to the Cause everyone who comes in contact with thee, that everyone may testify that here lives in our midst an upright and virtuous man, that he has turned his face toward God, that he is spiritual, celestial and divine. A person through his own actions and deeds makes himself loved or disliked by the people; or through his own unselfish conduct and behaviour, refined morality and selfless intention, trustworthiness and rectitude he suffers himself to become favoured and beloved at the threshold of God.

There is a young man of Jewish origin in the college of Beirut by the name of Mírzá Ḥabíbu'lláh Khudábakhsh, who has fulfilled these requirements. Formerly he was not known, but now everyone knows him through his sanctity, purity of life, sincerity of aim and the beauty of his holiness, and he is favoured and near the court of the Almighty, and loved and respected by all. From whomsoever you inquire of him the utmost satisfaction and pleasure is expressed concerning him.

Therefore, it is now proven that we are ourselves the means of our degradation and exaltation; that people are attracted to us or repelled by us according to the attributes and deeds emanating from us. In short, I hope that thou mayst live in such wise in Aleppo that all the inhabitants may exclaim: "'This man is not a Bahá'í in a nominal way, but in a real manner; he is a Bahá'í in deed and not in words alone.' For this reason his holiness Bahá'u'lláh hath said: 'My sorrow is not occasioned by my enemies, but by those souls who attribute themselves to me but whose deeds and actions are conducive to the degradation of the Cause.'"

While 'Abdu'l-Bahá was walking in the rose-garden he passed by Ḥájí Mullá Abú-Ṭálib, the very old man with stooped shoulders and long beard. He [VII:17:169] looked at him, then at others, and smiled.

"Ḥájí Mullá Abú-Ṭálib is my friend," he said. "He looked just as old forty years ago when he came to this blessed spot for the first time. Now he has come never to leave. Are you well and

¹ Refers to his riding on the bumpers between railway baggage cars and on freight trains from Minneapolis, Minn., to Green Acre, Maine, in order to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

happy? How can you descend and ascend the mountain every day?"

Then he came very near to him and looked at his thin and probably soiled overcoat.

"Hast thou not received thy new overcoat? I have brought one for thee, I will send it up for thee. Man must keep his clothes always clean and spotless."

He answered: "I am not particular about my outward clothes, but the robe of the virtue of God is necessary for us." Immediately 'Abdu'l-Bahá's face lighted up:

"Thou art right, the believers of God must ever strive to clothe their spiritual bodies with the garment of the virtue of God, the robe of the fear of God, and the vesture of the love of God. These robes will never become threadbare. They will never be out of fashion. Their market values do not fluctuate. They are always negotiable and ever on demand. They are the means of the adornment of the temple of man and woman.

"But the outward raiment must be also clean and immaculate, so that the outer may be a, faint expression of the inner. Cleanliness is one of the fundamental laws of this religion."

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:171]

"Hast thou love"

Extract from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 9 June 1914

"When our American visitors left the house a Christian minister called on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. ... Then the minister asked about the mission of Christ. Without pause 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued, "His holiness Christ came for the promulgation of the law of love; all the prophets were sent, all the books were revealed, so that the law of love might be promoted. But a few self-seeking people subverted the original aims of the religion of God, changed its pure current and made it an instrument of hatred and rancour and quarrel and sedition. Why should we hate the members of other religions? Why should we not love each other? Why should we be tattlers and busy-bodies and gossip-mongers? Why are we not looking at our own shortcomings? Why do we not let people alone? Why do we not search after our own faults? 'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? O, how wilt thou say to the brother, let me pull the mote out of thine eye and behold, a beam is in thine own eye! Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam that is in thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.' Let us have love and more love, a love that melts all opposition, a love that conquers all foes, a love that sweeps away all barriers, a love that aboundeth in charity, large-heartedness, tolerance, and noble-striving, a love that triumphs over all obstacles, a boundless, resistless, sweeping love. Ah me! Each one must be a sign of love, a sea of love, a centre of love, a sun of love, a star of love, a haven of love, a pearl of love, a palace of love, a mountain of love, a world of love, a universe of love. Hast thou love? Then thy power is irresistible. Hast thou sympathy? Then all the stars will sing thy praise!"

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:171]

"Earth should be a Paradise"

Part of an Address delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a gathering of Socialists in Coronation Hall, St. Lawrence Street, Montreal, Canada. From the *Montreal Star* (Daily), September 1912.

"Earth should be a Paradise," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

"There are certain species of life that seemingly can live solitary and alone. Certain trees, certain animals and even herds wander far from their kind. But man is necessarily ever in need of co-operation and mutual help.

"In reality all mankind represents one family. God desires that each individual member of

the body politic should live in the utmost well-being and comfort.

“If all do not so enjoy life there is a lack of symmetry in the body politic. ‘Let us look after ourselves,’ the selfish say, ‘Let others die; so long as I am comfortable, all is going well!’ Such a callous attitude is due to a lack of control and a lack of working law!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then outlined a scheme which had been formulated by Bahá’u’lláh, the great Bahá’í Prophet, for ensuring the economic happiness of the people. In this scheme farmers were first to be dealt with for the agricultural industry is the most important and the most useful in the national life. It provides that every village community have a general storehouse to which a number of revenues would come. This income from the communal fund would [VII:17:172] include tithes, a certain percentage from the number of animals and one-third from mines and minerals.

Should anyone die without an heir, all his wealth would revert to the general storehouse and any treasure trove that was picked up would become public property.

The scheme further advocates that tithes be collected from the farmers on a graded scale. If a man’s (necessary) expenditure equalled his income he would pay nothing. If one had an expenditure of one thousand dollars and an income of two thousand, he would pay one-tenth; from one having an income of ten thousand dollars and expense of one thousand, two-tenths would be exacted. If one had an income of twenty thousand and his expense were two thousand, the taxes would amount to one-fourth. If the income were two hundred thousand dollars and the expense ten thousand, then the community would exact one-half.

From this general storehouse the less fortunate members of the commonwealth would draw to secure their share of the common welfare.

There would be no poverty in the community. Orphans, cripples, the poor, the blind, the deaf, the aged, the helpless, would be looked after. The people themselves would elect trustees for the administration of the public trust.

Whatever surplus there might be after all were provided for would go to the national exchequer. For the big cities such a scheme would be carried out on a much more extended scale.

“Under this system,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “every member of the community would live in comfort, without fear, and without being under obligations to anyone.

“Degrees or grades would not be abolished. These would be necessary, as in an army it is necessary to have marshals, generals, colonels, sergeants and foot-soldiers. But notwithstanding grades, all would have the right to share in the general well-being.

“The earth can be made a Paradise. Let all the servants of God ever strive that such a great happiness may accrue to the world of humanity.”

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:172]

The heavenly tables

To three pilgrims to ‘Akká, 5 September 1901, at supper, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“We should remember these meetings when we return to our homes. When we go to Paris, London and America we must remember these nights and these gatherings and must show the same spirit of love that is manifested here.

“The meal is divided into two parts, material and spiritual. We hope that this is both. The tables mentioned in the Bible are the spiritual tables. The effect of the material table lasts for twelve hours but that which is divine is everlasting and eternal.

“For example,—‘Revelation’ is one of the heavenly tables. As an illustration, think of the knowledge revealed two thousand year ago; we feel the effect of it now and that effect will remain forever.

“Some of the heavenly tables are the divine teachings and their power and effect will be everlasting. Another of the godly tables is His love, which is the cause of Eternal Life. Others of these tables are unity and harmony amongst the believers, like as we are gathered here tonight, the effect of which will remain forever and ever.”

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:173]

Divine teachings

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reprinted from *The International Psychic Gazette*, July 1914.

There are two general and principal classes of divine teachings. One is spiritual, and pertains to the moralities. This is the fundamental basis of the divine law, unchangeable and unalterable, which has been reiterated and renewed in the cycle of every prophet. Its commands refer to justice, truthfulness, compassion, faith, love of God, self-devotion, self-sacrifice, steadfastness, including all divine and merciful attributes. This is the unchanging and unmoving law of God.

The second class of divine teachings is material and deals with behaviour, such as divorce, the commandments, the way of worshipping. All these conditions have changed in the cycle of every prophet. The character of divine sovereignty has no change or transformation, but the organization and administration change continually. This is why Jesus Christ said: “I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.” At the same time there are conditions that are changeable.

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:173]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Bahá’ís of Germany

Extract from a letter by ‘Azízu’lláh to Mrs Alice Schwarz, dated 30 June 1916.

Three days ago when we were all in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s holy presence, I delivered to him the translations of your letters, as well as those of Mr Herrigel and Miss Knobloch. He read them with a ringing loud voice and closed with a happy facial expression making a few remarks about the dear father (Consul Schwarz) and praising him highly.

After a few minutes of rest he said:

“The religion of God has now been proclaimed in Germany. When the divine seed takes root in the soil, they will automatically spread and other roots appear and extend into the depth of the hearts.

“Now the cause of Almighty God has taken root in Germany and its roots are going to radiate like trees in full bloom. In the same manner that pernicious and destructive types of men have a contagious, influence, so the spiritual and divine type exerts an influence that is of a far-reaching and permeating nature.

“It is well known, that when once a blessed soul of any nation steps into the religion of God, it is capable of saving the whole community from the darkness of the world, from materialism and animalism. He brings to them divine qualities and frees them from indifference towards God, from prejudices which are founded on ignorance, from animal instincts, and from the attachment to the material world and the surrender of self to it—by attachment to the material world, I do not mean social intercourse and economic relations upon which the progress of the world depends, but I mean the ascendancy of the lower life over the higher ideals of human society. Now, God be praised, shining and divine realities have penetrated

into Germany.”

After uttering these words, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave us permission to leave saying: “Now you are to enjoy yourselves upon this mountain of the Lord (Mt. Carmel) on which the Prophets of God used to dwell or often lingered while on earth—rest and recreate after the arduous tasks and exhaustion of the year’s study.”

For Germany: To the friends of God—Upon them be greeting and praise!

O ye true friends and ye who are firm in the love of God!

Although it has been a long time since I have written you a letter of any kind, the heart and soul were nevertheless in [VII:17:174] constant communication, and I supplicated to the Kingdom of Abhá that you might be protected and preserved.

Although the unrests of the world are limitless and boundless, my hope is nevertheless that they may end and the dark clouds disappear from the horizon of the universe and that the sun of peace and unity may shine above all horizons.

We must under no circumstances be prevented from praying and the mentioning of God. We must always be enraptured with the fire of the love of God, be attracted by His Knowledge and be heralds of His Words, so that His invisible confirmations like unto the breeze of dawn, become the cause of spiritual life.

Pray then, that the universe may become a new universe and this dark world a world of light.

Convey my greatest love and affection, greetings and praise to all the friends.

Upon ye all be greetings and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Revealed to Mrs Alice Schwarz, Stuttgart; translated by Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh Khán S. Bahádur, 6 July 1916.

VII:17, 19 January 1917 [VII:17:175]

The earth and the heavenly civilization¹

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Bishop Birch of New York City, at the Hotel Ansonia:

“Praise be to God, that stupendous material developments are obtained in this country; but material civilization alone does not safeguard the progress of a nation, because through material civilization dynamite, Krupp guns, projectiles and Mauser rifles are invented: thus the infernal instruments of human fratricide are multiplied and constantly perfected. Therefore, natural civilization fosters both good and evil.

“All the wolfish bloodshed, all this feverish multiplication of military armaments are the results of material civilization.

“When material civilization joins hands with spiritual civilization, then it will be perfect. In former times a wooden box may have protected your possessions from the thief, but now the safes with their complicated keys and combinations do not daunt the robber.

“Consequently, just as ‘good’ is advancing through material civilization, ‘evil’ takes the same pace, unless the earthly civilization become the handmaid of heavenly civilization. Natural civilization is like unto the body of man. If the body is animated by the spirit it is alive; otherwise it is a vile corpse which in the long run will become putrid and decayed.”

¹ This interview took place six days after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s arrival in the United States, 1912.

The Bishop expressed his pleasure and [VII:17:176] delight to hear the above words of light. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered:

“I am likewise very grateful to you. Praise be to God, that your churches are free from prejudices. They are not so creed-bound as not to be able to breathe. Many Christian churches in Europe are yet extremely dogmatic. But I have already spoken in churches belonging to your denomination. The congregations consisted of most intelligent people. This is a great distinction. Hence I love you with all my heart and soul. My chief aim is to remove the present misunderstanding between the nations of the East and West, so that we may express cordial love toward each other and promote the essentials of the heavenly civilization. I hope that such a confirmation may be vouchsafed us, so that we may become united.”

The Bishop said: “Up to this time no one has come from the East to the West with such power, such lucid teachings and such an exalted aim. Therefore I am very grateful to you and most pleased to have met you.”

VII:18, 7 February 1917 [VII:18:177]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mary M. Rabb.

[Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted]

[Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16]

Chapter II

Some characteristics of divine souls

Walk, while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not.

He that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light believe in the light that ye may become sons of light. (John 12:35–36.)

I beg of God that the divine light that is spoken of in John, in the twelfth chapter, may shed its rays upon thee forever, so that thou mayst always be in light. The life of man in this world is short and will soon draw to an end; consequently one must appreciate every moment of his life, exerting himself in that which is conducive to eternal glory.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, Vol. I, p. 106.

The sun is in the utmost effulgence but the surface turned toward it must be a mirror. The clearer it is the more light shall be reflected therein.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas; Vol. I, p. 207.

Spirituality is the possession of a good, a pure heart. When the heart is pure the Spirit enters and our growth is natural and assured. Every one is better informed of the condition of his own soul than of the soul of others. Our responsibility to God increases with our years.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 18.

When the spirit is confirmed and assisted by the confirmation of the Holy Spirit then it will show its effect in every condition of the world of existence.

An early Tablet; translator not given. Signed: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

Unless man maketh spiritual progress in the world of spirit, intellect and heart he cannot gather universal results from material advancements.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, Vol. III, p. 565.

The spiritual life is symbolized by [VII:18:178] simplicity and contemplation combined with usefulness and well-guided activity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 March 1914.

Question: What can I do to become the real servant of God?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Live* thou in accord with the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. Do not only read them. There is a vast difference between the soul who merely reads the words of Bahá’u’lláh and the one who tries to live them. Read thou the *Hidden Words*. Ponder over their meanings and embody the behests into thy life. All that I might say is only one drop of that illimitable sea. My duty is to explain, to elucidate, to interpret the writings of Bahá’u’lláh. For example: we must investigate the reality; we must show real love to the world of humanity; we must work for the establishment of universal peace; we must sacrifice our lives in the guidance of mankind; we must be kind to all the creatures of God; we must raise the call of the Kingdom; we must characterize ourselves with spiritual characteristics; we must show forth in our words and deeds the attributes of the holy ones.

I declare by him beside whom there is nought else, if we live in accord with one of the teachings we will become radiant like unto this lamp. If we confess verbally that Bahá’u’lláh’s principles are the cause of eternal salvation and the means of nearness unto the throne of God and yet do not live according to their instructions we are not Bahá’ís. Therefore day and night we must pray for each other, so that we be assisted to express in our lives the universal spirit of Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 1 June 1914.

The following is an excerpt from a conversation between ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and an Esperantist globe-trotter, who was unconscious of the identity of the person he was addressing:

Globe-trotter: ‘Serve God!’ There is no one in this world who can serve God, because we are not able to see him. He is above our human ken. In my mind the only way we can serve him is to serve mankind, and try to alleviate the sorrows and sufferings of the people.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Christ served God and his apostles served God. Their service was to humanity and was a reflection of their service to God.

Globe-trotter: In this age the Christians have forgotten the commandments of Christ.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: What hast thou to do with others? Live thou according to the teachings of Christ.

The cause of God is like unto a college. The believers are like unto the students. The college is founded for the sake of the acquirements of science, arts and literature. If the sciences are not therein and the scholars are not educated the object of the college is not achieved. The students must show the results of their study in their department and deeds; otherwise they have wasted their lives. Now the friends must so live and conduct themselves as to bring greater glory and results to the religion of God. To them the cause of God must be

a dynamic force transforming the lives of men and not a question of meetings, committees, futile discussions, unnecessary debates and political wire-pulling.

What is the sum-total and upshot of farming, ploughing, sowing the seeds [VII:18:179] and irrigating? Is there any other thought behind all these labours save the gathering of crops? If the sheaves are only green and verdant but having no grains of wheat or barley the result is not achieved. The aim has been not the luxuriant verdancy of the field but the richness of the harvest. I hope the believers will do their utmost to crown their lives with abundant harvest.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 6 May 1914.

Question: How can one understand the object of his life?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: There are two kinds of understanding; objective and subjective. To illustrate: thou seest this glass, or this water and thou dost comprehend in an objective manner their constituent parts. On the other hand, thou canst not see love, intellect, hate, anger, sorrow, but thou dost recognize them in a subjective way through their signs and manifestations. The first is material, the second is spiritual. The first is outward, the second is intuitive. I hope that thou mayst make great advancement in the second kind of understanding. Turn thy face toward God, and say:

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit! Purify my heart! Illumine my powers! I lay all my affairs in thy hand. Thou art my guide and my refuge. I will not be sorrowful and grieved any more. I will be a happy and joyful being. O God! I will worry no more. I will not let trouble harass me any longer. I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life. Thou art kinder to me than myself. I dedicate myself to thee, O Lord!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 9 May 1914.

Life, life—let us have more life! Let us have the life of the spirit, a life which is a collective centre of the beneficial forces, a life of sympathy, of practical co-operation, of celestial brotherhood. Let our life be an emanation of the kingdom of Christ. He came into this world to minister and not to be ministered unto. His greatest commandment was, “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publican so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect!”

The Bahá’ís must fulfil to the letter the requirements of these holy principles. Every one of them must become the embodiment of these lofty ideals. The thoughts of preference must be banished from the minds. In the sight of the Heavenly Father all are equal. The religion of God is for the equalization of rights and not for the gradation of classes and the distribution of privileges. The religion of God is the leveller of all social inequalities and the destroyer of sacerdotal distinctions. In the court of the Almighty there are no offices or positions. Brotherhood? Yes. Humanity? Yes. Spiritual fellowship? Yes. Self-sacrifice? Yes. Extinction of self? Yes. Class? No. Preference? No. Titles? No. Spiritual superiority? No. Special privileges? No.

In the religion of Bahá’u’lláh all are servants and maid-servants, brothers and sisters. As soon as one feels a little better, a little superior to the rest he is in a dangerous position, and unless he casts away the seed of such an evil [VII:18:180] thought he is not a fit instrument for

the service of the Kingdom. The religions of the past have fallen into decay on account of self-seeking leaders who in the course of time appropriated all the rights and powers unto themselves and looked down contemptuously upon the rest of their co-religionists as ignorant and deprived of the knowledge of God.

The Bahá'ís must be always on the alert, so that they may not fall into this pit. They must keep the religion of God pure and uncontaminated, a haven of rest for the despondent souls, a safe harbour for the shipwrecked, a divine antidote for the ailing ones, a torch of light for those who are groping in the darkness, and a spiritual democracy for the down-trodden and the outcast.

Service, social, moral, intellectual service must be the sole aim of a soul. He must be sincere and heartfelt in his profession, otherwise he will not succeed and his simulation will soon be found out by his co-religionists. Every Bahá'í must be a loyal servant of the world of humanity. Bahá'ís must clothe themselves with the robe of service, sit around the table of service, eat the food of service, drink the elixir of service, talk the problems of service, hold communication with the King of service, walk in the path of service, crown their heads with the diadem of service, be intoxicated with the wine of service, and quaff the salubrious water from the fountain of service.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 23 May 1914.

All things were created for man and man for God. Man is distinguished from all other creations. Man, who is in part animal, possesses all the virtues of the mineral, because he has a body; he possesses the added faculty of the vegetable, growth; he has the virtue of the animal kingdom, sensation; and above all, he possesses reflective and mental power, by which he understands the reality of things. Perceiving and reflecting upon visible things, he realizes the reality of unknown things. When a man gazes at the earth he sees it as if it were level, but by his perception he finds that it is a globe. This power of perception can never be found in the animal kingdom. But man by this power can prove that the sun is a centre and that the globe and other bodies revolve around it. This power of judgement, possessed only by man, proves his excellence; for the virtues and faculties of other things and substances are created by man, and, above all, he is given virtues with which the other kingdoms are not endowed. Everything is for man.

We speak now in examples, as Christ spoke in parables. The world is like a tree; the mineral kingdom is like the root; the vegetable kingdom is like the branches; the animal kingdom is like the blossoms; and man is like unto the fruit of that tree. The tree is but for its fruit. If the gardener did not expect fruit he would never plant trees. In the same way everything is for man.

There are two sides to man. One is divine, the other worldly; one is luminous, the other dark; one is angelic, the other diabolic. Man is equal to the animals in all sensuous conditions, for all animal characteristics exist in him. Likewise, divine and satanic qualities are contained in man; knowledge and ignorance; guidance and error; truth and falsehood; generosity and avarice; inclination towards God and tendency towards Satan; chastity and purity; corruption and vileness; valour and timidity; economy and avidity; good and evil: all are contained in man.

If the angelic side becomes more powerful and the divine power and brightness surround man, then the second birth takes place and eternal life is found at this point. Man becomes the noblest [VII:18:181] among creatures. On the other hand, if sensuous qualities surround and if terrestrial darkness and sensuous passions predominate; if they meet in man only the worldly feelings, if they find him a captive of evil qualities and fallen into everlasting death, then such

a man is the basest and most abject among all creatures. In such a man divine power does not exist. An animal is not considered unjust and evil because of its cruelty and injustice, for it is not endowed, as is man, with divine qualities. But if man falls into the same evil condition it is evident that he has permitted his ungodly attributes to overcome the divine qualities with which he was endowed. This shows the baseness and meanness that exist in human nature.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Table Talks with Abdul-Baha*, pp. 10–13.

The nobility and glory of man consist in the fact that, amidst the beings, he is the dawning-place of righteousness. Can any greater blessing be imagined by man than the consciousness that by divine assistance the means of comfort, peace and prosperity of the human race are in his hands?

No, there is no greater or more complete pleasure or happiness than this. How long then shall we seek our own selfish desires, on the wings of egoism? Senses and inner faculties have been bestowed upon us that we may use them for the good of mankind and that we may become distinguished from the lower nature of man by the solidity and justness of our judgement and that we may continually engage ourselves in well-doing (pp. 9–10).

How noble and excellent is man, if he only attain to that state for which he was designed. And how mean and contemptible, if he close his eyes to the public weal, and spend his precious capacities on personal and selfish ends. The greatest happiness lies in the happiness of others (p. 11).

He who remaineth idle and indifferent and continueth in his egoism, indulging constantly his carnal appetites descendeth to the lowest abyss of degradation and ignorance, lower is he than the most dangerous of savage beasts. For it is written, “These indeed are worse than brutes; and meaner than cattle in the sight of God are the deaf and dumb who will not understand” (p. 11).

They have not yet understood that the greatest glory of man, the universal happiness of the world, consists in the joy of soul, high ambition, good intentions, virtue and chastity (p. 44).

Unhappily they imagine that greatness and glory follow on the accumulation of worldly riches and similar vanities. Now clearly consider! If a man gives a thought he will see that the omnipotent God has distinguished him from amongst his creatures by the dress of honour, of virtue and intelligence. ... Man has become the spring of divine wonders and the centre of the mysteries of the heavenly Kingdom.

Now why should he pollute this pure mantle with the stain of selfish desires and exchange this eternal honour for the lowest depths of baseness? “Dost thou think thy body a small thing, while in thee is enfolded the great universe?” (pp. 44–46).

By the details which we have already explained we have endeavoured to show that the glory, happiness, honour and peace of man do not consist in personal wealth but on the contrary in sublimity of soul, nobility of resolution, extension of education and in the solution of the problem of life. ... “Verily in the souls of man lieth their only glory” (p. 52).

There is a great difference between an authentic man and an imitator of one. [VII:18:182] The former is David himself, the latter is merely the tone of his voice. Knowledge and wisdom, purity and faithfulness and freedom of soul have not been and are not judged by outward appearances and dress (p. 122).

Man should be a constant source of well-being and contentment and a ready help to prosperity for multitudes of people (p. 54).

We ask, what deeds in the world could be greater than working in the public interests? Can

any higher career be imagined than this, that a man should devote himself to the cause of the education, progress, glory and prosperity of the servants of God? It is the greatest of pious deeds that the blessed souls should take them that are powerless by the hands and deliver them from ignorance, degradation and poverty and, filled with sincere purpose for the sake of God, should gird up the loins of their ambition in the service of all people, forgetting their own worldly advantage and striving for the common good. As it is written: "And prefer others over thyself, even though there be poverty amongst them; the best of men are those who do good to their fellows, and the worst are those who do harm to them" (p. 214).

It is plain and evident that the greatest glory of humanity consists in obeying the omnipotent God, and man's nobility and honour depend upon his following the injunctions and prohibitions of the Lord, the Single One (p. 154).

It is quite plain and obvious that the life of this mortal world like the breezes at daybreak is not enduring but passes away. Blessed therefore is the great one who, walking in the path of God's will shall leave behind him a praiseworthy fame and happy remembrance. "When the pure soul is about to pass away, what matter whether it dies on a throne or on the surface of dust" (p. 148).

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Secret of Divine Civilization*.

As to the seven qualifications of the divinely enlightened soul of which thou hast asked an explanation, it is as follows:

Knowledge. Man must attain the knowledge of God.

Faith. [VII:18:183]

Steadfastness.

Truthfulness. Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of the world of humanity. Without truthfulness progress and success in all of the worlds of God are impossible for a soul. When this holy attribute is established in man all the other divine qualities will also become realized.

Uprightness. And this is one of the greatest divine attainments.

Fidelity. This is also a beautiful trait of the heavenly man.

Evanescence or humility. That is to say, man must become evanescent in God. Man must forget his own selfish conditions that he may thus arise to the station of sacrifice.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, Vol. II, p. 459.

The believers must be firmly founded in the principles of morality and honesty.

First, in truthfulness. No one should ever tell a lie.

Second, in honesty in all transactions.

Third, forbearance is necessary.

Fourth, the believers must observe the utmost kindness so that all may consider themselves servants of each other and be truthful and honest to all mankind. If they live up to these commandments the confirmations of the Spirit will surely reach them. The Spirit will descend and they will surely make progress.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Flowers from the Rose Garden of Acca, p. 2.*

From now on you must strive to beautify the moral aspect of your lives. Advise each other with the utmost consideration; watch daily your words and deeds. Thus from the very beginning you may characterize yourselves with divine ideals. The divine ideals are humility, submissiveness, annihilation of self, perfect evanescence, charity and loving kindness. You must die to self and live in God. You must be exceedingly compassionate to each other and to all the people of the world. Love and serve mankind just for the sake of God and not for anything else. The foundation of your love toward humanity must be spiritual faith and divine assurance. Again: you must be most careful that, God forbid, not one single word contrary to truth issue from your mouths. One falsehood throws man from the highest station of honour to the lowest abyss of disgrace. Always guard yourselves against this enemy, so that all you state may correspond with reality. Forever supplicate and entreat at the court of Majesty and beg confirmation and assistance. Make ye an effort that you may win the good pleasure of Bahá'u'lláh. All the natural and supernatural advancements in the human world revolve around this one problem. If you attain to this supreme goal all the elements of the world of creation will be ready to serve you at your bidding, i.e., they will find their highest attainment in you and through you or, in other words, you will become the fruits of the world of existence. ... The evolution of the perfect man is a fruit of creation, just as the evolution of the trunk, branches, leaves and blossoms of the tree is the fruit thereof. Exalt your thoughts. Reflect over all your affairs. Magnify your endeavours. Enlarge the circle of your ideals. Open the wings of spiritual wisdom. Let your hope be the accomplishment of most great deeds the results of which may immortalize your names. All that the people are holding fast to are as the mirage and will not last.

Extract from Address of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to students of Beirut College. From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 15 April 1914.

When a person's life is purely moral, when his daily actions are propelled by ethical forces he will influence tremendously the lives of those who come in touch with him. The insincere man learns from him the lessons of sincerity, the faithless becomes faithful, the ignorant, wise, and the cowardly, courageous.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 February 1914.

All these wishes are well worthy of asking, especially the rescue from self-love. This is a strange trait and the means of the destruction of many important souls in the world. If man be imbued with all the good qualities, but be selfish, all the other virtues will fade or pass away, and eventually he will grow worse.

I hope the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful will be entirely freed from selfishness. Should this become their nature they will indeed become manifestations of great bounties and the doors of divine grace will open.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From a Tablet to an American believer; 30 November 1904.

Dissatisfaction with one's self is a sign of progress. The soul who is satisfied with himself is the manifestation of Satan and the person who is not contented with himself is the manifestation of the Clement One. If a person has one thousand good qualities he must not look at them; nay rather, he must strive to find out his own defects and imperfections. For example, a person having a palatial residence furnished with the most expensive furniture and decorated [VII:18:185] with the most exquisite arts, unquestionably will forget all these adornments as soon as he finds out there is a crack in the wall or ceiling and without loss of time will set to repair it. On the other hand absolute perfection is unattainable by man.

However much a man may advance yet he is imperfect, because there is always a point ahead of him. No sooner does he look up toward that point than he becomes dissatisfied with his own condition and aspires to attain to that. Christ desired to teach us this thing in a concrete manner when someone said, "O thou good Master!" He answered, "Why dost thou call me good? There is one good, and that is God!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 1 June 1914.

Praising one's self is the sign of selfishness. Commanding others is not the passport to the realm of spiritual progress. Here is a man who speaks very few words but he is working all the time and attending to all his duties. There is another man who sits down, talks continually, and boasts of his past achievements.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 8 July 1914.

There are some people who make this short span of life miserable to themselves and others because they harbour envy in their hearts. Envy is the most despicable quality in man. Some people are so filled with it that they cannot bear to see any of their friends receive greater privileges and higher promotions in life than themselves. Like poison envy kills all their nobler sentiments. Envy lowers the station of man and makes him a supreme egoist, and self-centred. If man extricates himself from the claws of this ignoble monster he has defeated the powers of Satan. Then he will attain tranquillity and peace of mind. Man must become evanescent and self-denying. Then all the difficulties and hardships of the world will not touch him. He will become like unto a sea, although on its surface the tempest is raging and the mountainous waves rising, in its depth there is complete calmness.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 October 1913.

To be approved of God alone should be one's aim.

And has thou realized thy own shortcomings? One must always search for his own shortcomings so that he may repent at the threshold of Oneness and become protected and guarded; otherwise, pride and haughtiness will take possession of one's heart and this will cause deprivation of the bounties of the Court of Singleness.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From tablet translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 1 November 1909. [VII:18:186]

If a man commit a transgression he has been unjust to himself, and soon he will find that he is in manifest regret and remorse.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 16 August 1914.

The thin eyelid prevents the eye from seeing and what is curtained therein. Then think of the result when the curtain of greed covers the sight of the heart. Say, O people! The darkness of greed and envy obscures the light of the soul as the cloud prevents the penetration of the sun's rays.

Extract from Words of Bahá'u'lláh: *The Primal Word*.

A cheerful countenance lends consolation to the beholder.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 16 February 1914.

A thankful person is thankful under all circumstances. A complaining soul complains even if he lives in paradise. ... If we are not thankful who then can be thankful? Are we not encircled with the bounties of God? Are we not enveloped with the bestowals of the Blessed Perfection? Has he not lighted a luminous lamp in our home? ... Consider how each one of us is surrounded by his favours! How much divine grace descends upon us! How often our hearts respond to his call! ... If we are not pleased then who is there to be pleased?

Verbal thanksgiving is fruitless. Thanksgiving is rendered in two effective ways. First, through the realization of spiritual susceptibilities which illumine the courts of the hearts with the bright stars of happiness and rejoice the heart by the glad-tidings of the Merciful. Second, through deeds, i.e., living in accord with the good pleasure of the Lord: adorning our being with his heavenly attributes and trying to alleviate the suffering and misery of mankind.

If a man does not do these things, even though he praises God and offers him a hundred thousand thanksgivings every second there will be for that man not the slightest result; it will be but words without light. Consequently, we must be very happy, very glad, very much pleased, very contented, very joyful, [VII:18:187] because we are submerged in the ocean of the bestowals of Bahá'u'lláh. ... A thoughtful man enjoys the gifts and the blessings of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 14 February 1914.

Consider thy composure, for composure of thought will become the cause of one's confirmation in the service. If thou hast not composure of mind in Chicago, undoubtedly thou wouldst be more confirmed in service in New York; but, if thy mind is at peace in Chicago, it is better to stay there for perchance difficulties may arise in New York and then thou wouldst not have composure of mind. Thou must first think of thy tranquillity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From a tablet to a Chicago believer; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Be thou composed in all conditions.

Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, Vol. II, p. 300.

Live and act thou in the present as far as possible for thee, according to the divine instructions.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From a tablet to a Portland believer; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 20 July 1907.

Be not disappointed in thyself; trust thou in the favour and bounty of his highness, the Almighty.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From a tablet to a Portland believer; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 17 July 1908.

Afflictions and troubles are due to the state of not being content with what God has ordained for you. If one submits himself to God he is happy.

A man asked another: "In what station are you?" He answered: "In the utmost happiness." "Where does this happiness come from?" He answered: "Because all the existing things move according to my wish; therefore I do not find anything contrary to my desire; thus I have no sorrow. There is no doubt that all the beings move by the will of God, and I have given up my

own will, desiring the will of God. Thus my will becomes the will of God, for there is nothing of myself. All are moving by His will, yet they are moving by my will. In this case, I am very happy.”

When man surrenders himself everything will move according to his wish.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Kinney-Beede-Thompson Notes; taken at ‘Akká, 6 July 1909.

Man, as an individual unit of human society must not base his deeds according to the law of retaliation. He must forgive, just as God forgives the sins and transgressions of his servants.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 June 1914.

Man must be a mine of piety and sympathy. He must associate with all mankind with joy and fragrance. He must not turn away his face from any soul. He must raise the fallen and cheer the hopeless. He must treat with kindness both the friend and the stranger.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 July 1914.

O ye friends of God! Show ye an endeavour that all the nations and communities of the world even the enemies put their trust, assurance and hope in you; that if a person falls into error for a hundred thousand times he may yet turn his face to you hopeful that you will forgive his sins; for he must not become hopeless, neither grieved nor [VII:18:188] despondent! This is the conduct and the manner of the people of Bahá! You should conform your conduct with the advices of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a tablet to New York Assembly of Bahá’ís; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 9 May 1909.

May they attain to such heights of altruism as to be ready to sacrifice their lives for each other! This is the life of the world of humanity! This is in accord with the good-pleasure of the Blessed Perfection!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 12 October 1914.

A man must ever think of the protection of others and not of himself.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 12 October 1914.

Man must always associate with those from whom he can get light or be with those to whom he can give light. He must either receive or give instructions; otherwise, being with people without these two intentions, is spending one’s time for nothing and by so doing he is neither gaining nor causing people to gain.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Kinney-Beede-Thompson Notes; taken at ‘Akká, 5 July 1909.

O thou maid-servant! Have great magnanimity so that thou mayest be favoured in the threshold of the Almighty. Have lofty aspirations so that thou mayest attain in the kingdom of God to eternal life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From tablet translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 17 June 1914.

It is possible to so adjust one’s self to the practice of nobility that its atmosphere surrounds

and colours all our acts. When these acts are habitually and conscientiously adjusted to noble standards with no thought of the words that might herald them then nobility becomes the accent of life. At such a degree of evolution one scarcely needs to try to be good any longer; all our deeds are the distinctive expression of nobility.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From notes of Mrs Mary Hanford Ford; taken in Paris, France, 1911.

Today the real king is the soul who serves all, and dear is he who exhibits humility toward all humanity. The humbler and lowlier a person shall be the nearer to and more acceptable at the threshold of God is he.

The Beauty of Abhá, Bahá’u’lláh, said that the one nearest the threshold of God is he who serves all and who considers himself evanescent and non-existent; who forgets himself utterly, turns to God alone and for the sake of God serves all mankind.

From Address given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Washington, D.C., 12 May 1912.

Work for the sake of God and for the improvement of humanity, without any expectation of praise and reward. The present (is always) unimportant, but we must make our present so filled with mighty and altruistic deeds as to assume (continued on page 195)

VII:19, 2 March 1917 [VII:19:189]

Survival and salvation

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, February 1914.

Thou has asked concerning the spirit and its immortality after its departure. Know thou that at the time of its translation it ascends and ascends until it reaches the presence of God, clothed in a temple (body) which will not become subject to the changes wrought by ages and cycles, nor by the contingencies of the world, nor the emanations thereof. It will continue to exist through the eternity of the Kingdom of God—its sovereignty, its dominion, its potency. From it will appear the signs of God and his qualities, the providence of God and his bestowal. Verily the pen is unable to move in a befitting manner in explaining this truth—its exaltation and loftiness. The hand of mercy shall cause it to enter into men’s minds, though it cannot be grasped through any explanation, nor be described by those means which are available in the world.

Blessed is the spirit which abandons the body, previously sanctified and freed from the doubts of the nations. Verily, it moves in the atmosphere of the will of its Lord, and it enters into the supreme paradise. It is welcomed by the angels of the Most High. It associates with the prophets of God, and his chosen ones, and it converses with them, and relates to them those events which have happened to it in the path of God, the Lord of both worlds.

Were one to become informed of that which is pre-ordained for the spirit in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne and the earth, he would become immediately enkindled with the fire of yearning for this impregnable, exalted, holy, and most glorious state of being.

The prophets and the messengers have come in order to guide mankind to the straight path of the true one. Their aim has been no other than the education of the people, so that at the time of death they may depart to the supreme friend, with perfect sanctification, purification and severance. I declare that the prophets are causative of the improvements and the progress of the nations. They are the leaven of existence and the greatest means for the appearance of sciences and arts in this world.

As to the question concerning the soul, know thou, verily, that “soul” is a term applied to numerous realities, according to the exigencies of the following relations in regard to

development in the world of existence:

- 1) In the mineral kingdom, soul is called “latent force”, silently working for the disintegration of the substance of the mineral.
- 2) In the vegetable kingdom it is called “virtue augmentative”, or the power of growth, which attracts and absorbs the delicate materials of inorganic substance found in the mineral kingdom of matter, and transforms them into the condition of growth. Thus the inorganic [VII:19:190] substance found in the mineral kingdom becomes growing vegetable life through the effect of the word of God. This vegetable soul, i.e. “virtue augmentative”, or power of growth, is a quality which is produced by the admixture of elements, and appears in accidental organisms, of which contingency is an essential attribute.
- 3) In the animal kingdom it is called “sense perceptions” (or instinct). This soul term, as applied to the animal kingdom, is also a natural quality resulting from the mixture of the elements, and it appears from their mingling and combination, for it is a quality which results from the composition of bodies (organisms), and is dispersed at their decomposition. From this we are to understand that the animal soul is not endowed with the capacity of attaining immortality, as the life force is dispersed at the decomposition of the animal tissues.

All these things up to this point are a contingent reality, and are not a divine reality. But a contingent reality, which is perpetuated by the fullness of existence, will then suffer no corruption, and will thus become a divine reality, for the accidental reality is only distinguished from the existent reality by its subjection to corruption. For transformation is an essential necessity to every contingent reality, and this is what the mature wisdom has deemed advisable.

- 4) In the human, worldly soul signifies the “rational being, or mind”. This has a potential existence before its appearance in human life. It is like unto the existence of a tree within the seed. The existence of the tree within the seed is potential; but when the seed is sown and watered, the signs thereof, its roots and branches, and all of its different qualities, appear. Likewise, the “rational soul” has a potential existence before its appearance in the human body, and through the mixture of elements and a wonderful combination, according to the natural order, law, conception, and birth, it appears with its identity.

Be it known that to know the reality or essence of the soul of man is impossible, for, in order to know a thing, one must comprehend it, and since a thing cannot comprehend itself, to know one’s self in substance or essence is impossible. As the comprehender cannot be comprehended, man cannot know himself in reality or essence. In order to obtain knowledge of any reality, or soul of man, the student must study the manifestations, qualities, names and characteristics of man. This much can be stated, that the reality of man is a pure and unknown essence constituting a depository, emanating from the Light of the Ancient Entity—God. This essence or soul of man, because of its innate purity, and its connection with the unseen Ancient Entity, is old as regards time, but new as regards individuality. This connection is similar to that of the ray of the sun—the effect to the primal cause. Otherwise, the thing that is generated, or the creature, has no connection with or relation to its Generator or its Creator.

Since the pure essence, whose identity is unknown, possesses the virtues of the worlds of matter and of the Kingdom, it has two sides—first, the material and physical; second, the mental and spiritual—which are attributes not found as qualities of matter. It is the same reality which is given different names, according to the different conditions wherein it becomes manifest. Because of its attachment to matter and the phenomenal world, when it governs the physical functions of the body, it is called the human soul. When it manifests

itself as the thinker, the comprehender, it is called the mind. And when it soars into the atmosphere of God, and travels in the spiritual world, it becomes designated as spirit.

There are two sides to man. One is divine, the other worldly; one is luminous, the other dark; one is angelic, the other diabolic; man is equal to the animals in all sensuous conditions, for all animal characteristics exist in him. Likewise, divine and satanic qualities are contained in man; knowledge and ignorance; guidance and error; truth and falsehood; generosity and avarice; valour and timidity; inclination towards God and tendency towards Satan. Chastity and purity; corruption and vileness; economy and avidity; good and evil; all are contained in man.

- 5) If the angelic side becomes more powerful, and the divine power and brightness surround man, then the second birth takes place, and eternal life is found at this point. Man becomes then the noblest among creatures. On the other hand, if sensuous qualities surround, and if terrestrial darkness and sensuous passions predominate, if they meet in man only the worldly feelings, if they find him a captive of evil qualities and fallen into everlasting death, then such a man is the basest and most abject among all creatures. In such a man, divine power does not exist. An animal is not considered unjust and evil because of its cruelty and injustice, for it is not endowed, as is man, with divine qualities; but if man falls into the same evil condition, it is evident that he has permitted his ungodly attributes to overcome the divine qualities with which he was endowed. This shows the baseness and meanness that exist in human nature.

VII:19, 2 March 1917 [VII:19:192]

Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá on immortal life

"His spirit flew from this world"

To the maid-servant of God, Miss MacCutcheon—Upon her be greeting and praise!

Thy letter was received. On account of the death of thy father and brother the utmost sorrow and regret was produced. How unfortunate it is that that young man was killed instantly by the sudden shock! But his spirit flew from this world into the world beyond and the spirit of thy father soared toward the heavenly realm. Be thou not sad or unhappy for these two heavenly birds flew toward the rose-garden of eternity and attained to the infinite immensity of the Kingdom. Although those two lamps were extinguished in the earthly glass yet they became the enkindled lamps in the everlasting lamp of the Kingdom. At this moment they are in the utmost state of joy and happiness and so they shall be throughout all eternity. Consequently do thou not grieve nor be thou dispirited.

Convey my longing greeting to all the friends of God.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

"She is not counted amongst the dead"

To Mrs A. E. Magee—May her soul be happy!

O thou afflicted one!

In this great catastrophe¹ the eyes are weeping and the hearts are burning, because that incomparable plant was growing and developing with infinite joy and fragrance in the garden of the love of God. She was stirred into cheerfulness by the wafting of the breeze of providence; day by day she was progressing, and she was at all times the cause of the consolation of the hearts of the friends. I will never forget her, for she was one of the most important personages. But it was destined that she might become free from this material

¹ Refers to the death of her daughter, Harriet Magee.

world, the world of physical sufferings and tribulations, and hasten toward the heavenly universe, so that through the showers of the cloud of grace she may obtain the utmost freshness and infinite delicacy and yield luscious fruits. Consequently be thou not unhappy, nor be thou grieved, for she is not counted amongst the dead. Nay rather she was dead, she became alive; she was evanescent, she became eternal; she was earthly, she became heavenly; she lived in the material world, she became wholly spiritual. Like unto a bird she was a prisoner and captive in the cage of this body. This cage was broken; that bird winged its way heavenward, and in the celestial rose-garden she became the associate and companion of other divine birds. Thou shalt find her in that rose-garden with the utmost joy and fragrance.

Convey on my behalf the utmost kindness and love to Mr and Mrs Inglis. I beg of God that in this affliction he may bestow upon them patience and consolation, and that they may educate their dear son in accord with their highest and purest standard.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

VII:19, 2 March 1917 [VII:19:193]

In memoriam

Mrs Lua Moore Getsinger

Further word comes from Cairo of the last days of the brave maid-servant of the kingdom, Mrs Lua Getsinger. Mrs Getsinger went to Cairo last autumn, hoping to leave soon for America, and carry 'Abdu'l-Bahá's message of light to the friends in the West. The friends in Cairo loved her devotedly and opened their homes to her. For a number of months she was at the home of Mírzá Taqí Işfahán, "'Abdu'l-Bahá's faithful steward in Cairo", where she suffered a long illness through the winter. He and his wife cared for their American sister most tenderly. "Before and after this illness," Miss Eleanor Hiscox writes, though she never recovered her strength, Lua Getsinger went about with heroic will "giving the Bahá'í teachings, her work being chiefly among the young men, as they are the only ones among the Egyptians who know English. All listened to her eagerly, and all were wonderfully uplifted and blessed by her inspiring words. The lives of some were completely transformed by her influence. Such was the power of the words of Bahá'u'lláh upon her lips."

"In the early spring she went to Shubra, a suburb of Cairo, to the house of another Bahá'í, who greatly desired that she should remain there for a while for the sake of her Bahá'í influence upon his wife and her family, formerly Christian. And she spent her time in giving them all lessons in English, of which they had some knowledge. They all loved her devotedly and treated her as their own sister. It was there her last days were passed. One night (it was the 2 May) she awoke with, a severe pain in her heart. She called the family, who telephoned for a doctor. But before his arrival she passed into the other world after uttering three times, 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá'.

"The grief and sorrow of all the Bahá'ís was very great, for all loved her as a devoted sister. One of the choicest sites was selected for her tomb. No expense was spared by the Bahá'í friends for their devoted sister, beloved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the last acts which could be done for her. How they all loved her! How they still weep when they speak of her!

"Here our sister Lua lies buried in the same city with Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl. The prophetic words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá have come to pass, for Bahá'í pilgrims and friends already visit her grave with offerings of love and devotion."

In the last days of illness she hovered between the will to serve on earth and the longing to

fly away into the glorious [VII:19:194] freedom of “the immensity of the kingdom.” On 12 April she wrote to Miss Hiscox: “Little by little I am seeing all the reasons why many things are as they are and the lessons I have to learn thereby. I am sure until the last day of our lives we will be learning lessons, for this world is a *school*, from which we graduate only when we leave it. I shall be so glad when the last day comes, and the school is forever (so far as I am concerned) dismissed. His will, not mine, be done!”

The lessons of the earth-world she learned beautifully in those last days of illness and trial. As Miss Hiscox says, her suffering “had a purifying influence upon her and seemed to burn away all the dross and to leave her pure gold. She had only love and forgiveness for all.” She saw that every experience had been for the best. Like an angel ready to enter the kingdom of light, she turned her face, “a few days before her departure,” to the picture of the Centre of the Covenant, which hung on the wall, and said, with tears in her eyes but with manifest firmness: “All I want to do is his will and to be severed from ought else save God.”

VII:19, 2 March 1917 [VII:19:195]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

significant weight and momentous importance in the future.²

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 13 May 1914.

Will is the centre or focus of human understanding. We must will to know God, just as we must will in order to possess the life He has given us. The human will must be subdued and trained into the will of God. It is a great power to have a strong will, but a greater power to give that will to God. The will is what we do, the understanding is what we know. Will and understanding must be one in the cause of God. Intention brings attainment.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 30.

In the world of humanity “good intentions” is the greatest means of personal development. If a person has [VII:19:196] “good intention” he will succeed in all of his undertakings.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 8 April 1914.

The *worst* human quality and the *most great sin*, is back-biting, and most especially when it emanates from the tongues of the believers of God. If some means were devised so that the doors of back-biting could be shut eternally and each one of the believers of God unsealed his tongue in the praise of the other, then the teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh would have been spread, the hearts illuminated, the spirit glorified, and the human world would have attained to everlasting felicity.

I hope that the believers of God will shun back-biting completely (gossip-making and fault-finding), each one praising the other cordially, and believe that back-biting is the cause of the divine wrath, to such an extent that if a person back-bites to the extent of *one word* he may become dishonoured amongst the people; because the most hateful characteristic of man is fault-finding. One must expose the praise-worthy qualities of the souls and not their evil attributes. The friends must overlook their shortcomings and faults and speak only of their virtues and not their faults.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a tablet in *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 11 August 1913.

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

² Continued from page 188.

In our physical selves we are like the animals; yet in some ways the animals are even higher than men; they are more restful and composed; more trustful and reliant upon the bounty of God, more in the flow of his will. The birds of Mount Carmel are his creatures. They can fly to the highest branches of the trees and build their nests. From the mountaintops the birds can enjoy the beautiful view of the sea and mountain by their power of sight. All this beauty exists for us as well. The love of God, the beauty of God is everywhere and exists for man if he will but rise to spiritual heights, open his spiritual vision and behold it. Is the king free as the bird is free to fly upward? The king's head is often heavy with anxiety and the things of this world which hold him down. The true pleasure and happiness depend upon the spiritual perception and enjoyment. The powers of mind are the bounties of God given to man to lead him toward spiritual happiness. The highest grace in man is to love God. Love of God, knowledge of God is the greatest, the only real happiness, because it is nearness to God. This is the kingdom of God. To love God is to know Him. To know him is to enter his kingdom, and to be near him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 38.

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VIII:1, 21 March 1917 [VIII:1:3]

The economic teaching of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Mary Hanford Ford

The reader of this article may wonder at the importance attributed to the teachings and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and a word of explanation in regard to his position in the world may not be inopportune. He is the leader of the Bahá'í movement, a great centre of progressive thought, which had its origin in the illumined message of 'Alí Muḥammad, later called the Báb, given to the Persian people in 1844. The Báb was martyred by the Persian government in 1850, as he was considered a dangerous heretic from the Muslim point of view, and Islám is a state religion. As is natural in such cases, any deviation from the established faith becomes in a way treasonable in the conception of the government. Before this tragic event took place, however, the Báb, had fully proclaimed his mission and prophecies. Foreseeing his own end, he told the people that he himself was but the herald of the new day, which would centre in the remarkable Revelator to follow him, who would be the Messenger of God for this period, and whom he always spoke of under the title of the Glory of God, or Bahá'u'lláh. He declared that Bahá'u'lláh would bring peace and unity to mankind, and revive the true knowledge of God in all the world.

The essentials of human progress were included and insisted upon in the message of the Báb; and Bahá'u'lláh, who followed him, has written eloquent pages outlining the tendencies of future civilization. The Bahá'í movement which for many years has been a growing power in the Orient, in spite of the cruel persecution of governments, has at length penetrated the western world, and shows clearly that the ethical ideals of our most advanced western economics were generated and came to expression years ago, in the minds of these illumined eastern teachers.

According to the teaching of these supreme educators, messengers of God have been coming to the world from the beginning of creation, and their province is to refresh the soul of

man as it grows cold to the love of God, and restore its sensitiveness to the breath of the holy spirit. Thus Moses came, Zoroaster, Muḥammad, Christ came, and today the inspiring and ever necessary message has been given once more by the trinity of Persian teachers, who bring a universal teaching, through which all the races of mankind will be enlightened.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the son of Bahá’u’lláh. He was imprisoned when only nine years old, at the time when his father was seized with his entire family and his immense property confiscated, simply because he had openly become a follower of the Báb, and a believer in the Oneness of God and humanity.

The Bahá’í conception is that three persons are always combined in the annunciation of a divine message. As Christ was heralded by John the Baptist, and followed by Peter, Moses was presaged by his herald, and followed by [VIII:1:4] Joshua; the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are the trinity of today, though the station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is more nearly allied to that of the centre than in any previous case. He is called the Centre of the Covenant renewed today between God and man, as it was renewed in the days of Christ and his predecessors. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s title means the Servant of God, and naturally he can have no successor in the movement.

The intensely humanitarian feeling of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is amply shown in his life, and his economic teaching manifests a singularly accurate acquaintance with the sociological conditions of the western world. He is well aware of the fact that measures of charitable relief are only palliations rendered necessary by existing misfortune and by no means to be considered more than methods of temporary relief. Nevertheless the charity, and the spirit of instant service in the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are most inspiring.

His childhood and his youth were passed in moving from one oriental prison to another, until at last he lived in ‘Akká, the prison town of the Sulṭán, as a prisoner on parole, controlling his own household, under the surveillance of the Turkish police. In this way he became familiar with all aspects of oriental poverty, and permitted himself the privilege of relieving it. In ‘Akká as a prisoner he could do nothing against existing abuses except palliate their results, but this he did constantly.

Every Friday morning the poor of ‘Akká gathered in the courtyard of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s house, and he went among them personally. He knew them all by name, he knew just which one needed a coat or a warm shawl, he sent a physician or healed those who were ill. Those whom he succoured were never among his own followers, for the believer in the revelation of Bahá’u’lláh does not beg. They were Muslims, sectaries of the creed which had persecuted him, deprived his father of property, liberty and station, and martyred the Báb, but they loved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as their benefactor, and did not bother their heads about his religion.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had a donkey upon which he was accustomed to ride about the town daily upon his philanthropic missions. An American woman who was his guest at one time was terribly annoyed at the nightly braying of this creature, which she declared prevented her from sleeping, but when she discovered that it was the donkey upon which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited the sick, its braying suddenly assumed a musical character, and no longer disturbed her. Often when the family of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was about to sit down to dinner at night, the report would come of some unfortunate who was starving, and who had been overlooked in the visits of the day. Then quickly the hot appetizing meal would be bundled into a basket, and rushed away to the suffering family, while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would smile and say, “It does not matter for us, we had dinner last night, we shall have dinner tomorrow!”

Often he sent his bed to a feverish invalid whom he discovered, because it required thirty-six hours at least to procure a bed from Haifa, the nearest point of supply, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be perfectly comfortable wrapped in a blanket, and lying upon the floor of his room, or

the roof of the house, while he would not have been able to sleep at all, conscious of a bedless invalid, feverish and pain racked. He could not endure the sight of suffering which he was able to relieve.

When he reached the Occident, however, 'Abdu'l-Bahá faced a condition which troubled him greatly, because it was beyond his power to assuage the misery he saw constantly about him. Housed luxuriously at Cadogan Gardens, London, he knew that within a stone's throw of him were people who had never had enough to eat—and in New York there was exactly the same situation. These things made him exceedingly sad and he said: "The time will come in the near future when humanity will become [VIII:1:5] so much more sensitive than at present that the man of great wealth will not enjoy his luxury, in comparison with the deplorable poverty about him. He will be forced, for his own happiness, to expend his wealth to procure better conditions for the community in which he lives."

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá first arrived in England he was the guest of a friend in a village not far from London. The evident poverty around him in this wealthy country distressed him greatly. He would walk out in the town, garbed in his white turban and long Persian coat, and all eyes were centred upon this strange visitor, who, the people had been told, was "a holy man from the East". Naturally the children were attracted to him, followed him, pulled at his coat, or his hand, and were immediately taken into his arms and caressed. This delighted them, of course, and children are never afraid of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but what pleased and amazed them still more was that when they were put down they found in their little hands a shilling or sixpence from the capacious pockets of "the holy man's" long coat. Such bits of silver were a rarity in their experience, and they ran home with joy to tell the tale of the generous stranger from the Orient, possessed apparently of an endless store of shining sixpences.

The children crowded after him and so many sixpences were dispensed that the friend who entertained 'Abdu'l-Bahá became alarmed, and talked the matter over with Miss Robarts, who was also a guest in the house. "It is a shame!" they said indignantly. "He comes to us accepting nothing, and is giving to our people all the time! It must not go on!"

That day 'Abdu'l-Bahá had bestowed many sixpences, and people had come from the neighbouring villages, bringing their children to receive the blessing from "the holy man,"—and of course the sixpences! About nine o'clock in the evening the ladies, decided that no one else must see 'Abdu'l-Bahá that night. But as they waited outside the cottage, a man came up the path, carrying one baby, and with others clinging to him. When he asked for "the holy man", however, he was told severely that he could not be seen, he was very tired and had gone to bed. The man sighed, as he said, "Oh, I have walked six miles from far away to see him. I am so sorry!"

The hostess responded severely, feeling that the desire for sixpences had prompted the journey perhaps more than religious enthusiasm, and the man sighed more deeply than ever, and was turning away, when suddenly 'Abdu'l-Bahá came around the corner of the house. The way in which he embraced the man and all the babies was so wonderful, that the hearts of the too careful friends melted within them, and when he at last sent away the unbidden guests, comforted, their hearts full of joy, their hands bursting with sixpences, the two friends looked at one another and said: "How wrong we were! We will never again try to manage 'Abdu'l-Bahá!"

Perhaps the most beautiful encounters with the poor he had in the Occident were at the Salvation Army headquarters in London, and the Bowery Mission in New York. Here he consoled the men for their poverty, saying: "Do not consider your poverty a degradation. The greatest of men have always been poor, the poets, and philosophers and benefactors of the race. Christ had no where to lay his head. The Messengers of God are ever overwhelmed by poverty and persecution. Moses was an outcast, and Muḥammad a wanderer and an exile.

Bahá'u'lláh suffered the utmost poverty and oppression, and I have known nothing but poverty and prison walls.”

In London he gave the men a sum for a New Year's dinner which should duplicate the Christmas feast, and at the Bowery Mission he shook hands with each man at the close of the evening and gave him a quarter. A year afterward nearly every one of those men had kept his quarter because as one of them said:

“That was a heavenly man, and his [VIII:1:6] quarter was not like other quarters, it will bring me luck!”

One result of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's charity was the example of personal contact which it established. He said: “If the rich should see for themselves the evil conditions which exist, they would become eager to alter them. It is necessary in relieving poverty to come into direct touch with its pain. Then the world will determine to abolish it.”

He said also, “The spending of money for the help of another brings a great blessing, but the mere dispatch of a check the loss of which one never feels is nothing.”

Perhaps the tender heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was never more fully manifested than in the incident which occurred in California. His hostess in San Francisco had arranged an interview with the Mayor of Berkeley. There was to be a grand reception, and many dignitaries and University people were to be present. As the appointed hour for departure approached the hostess went upstairs to warn 'Abdu'l-Bahá that the time was near. He smiled and waved her away, saying “Very soon! Very soon!”

She left him with some impatience, for there was no evidence of preparation for the trip. After some time she went up again, for the automobile was honking at the door, and it looked as if the Mayor of Berkeley would be kept waiting. But she met only a smile, and “Very soon! Very soon!” from the important guest. At last her patience was quite exhausted for she knew that they could not possibly arrive at the reception in time. Suddenly there was a ring at the door bell. Immediately 'Abdu'l-Bahá's step was on the stair, and when the door opened he was beside the maid, pulling over the threshold a dusty and dishevelled man whom no one had ever heard of, but whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá embraced like a long lost friend.

The man lived fifteen miles from San Francisco. He had read of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the newspapers. He felt that he must see him at any cost, but he had not five cents for street car fare. So he started to walk to San Francisco, and if 'Abdu'l-Bahá had set forth promptly to fill his engagement with the Mayor of Berkeley he would have missed this seeker after truth. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá had felt his approach, and would not leave for his appointment until he saw this friend of the spirit seated at his hostess' table, so well panoplied with sandwiches and tea that it was fully evident his outer man would be refreshed.

Then he said: “Now I must go, but when you have finished, wait for me in my room upstairs, until I return, and then we will have a great talk.”

It is with this fund of deep sympathy and a profound comprehension that 'Abdu'l-Bahá approaches the modern economic problem, but he does not regard it from any sentimental point of view. The new time is coming he declares, and it will manifest itself along two lines—a change in the human heart, and new laws enacted in every country. We cannot introduce the divine civilization by legislation alone, he says, there must be a change in the human heart before this is possible.

The lines along which the better government is coming have been clearly indicated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When he was in New York in 1912 someone was talking to him about the United States, and he said:

“You did a wonderful thing in this country in 1865 when you abolished chattel slavery, but

you must do a much more wonderful thing now, you must abolish industrial slavery!”¹

Only a few people understood in 1912 that the curse of industrial slavery existed among us, but the events which followed this dynamic utterance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made it plainly manifest. Is there not a wireless which carries the suggestion of a powerful mind to many hearts, and commands results? It is certainly most interesting to observe how closely the economic tendencies which have developed in the United States since 1912 have carried out the possibili- [VIII:1:7] ties indicated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as denoting the future evolution of the country and the age.

In 1913 Congress appointed an Industrial Commission to investigate industrial conditions in the states, and best of all made Frank Walsh its chairman. There could hardly have been a better selection, for Frank Walsh is a criminal lawyer of wide fame and independent means, noted for his capacity to draw the truth from the most refractory witness, absolutely proof against graft, or that insidious and menacing respect for position and wealth, which so frequently prevents the escape of truth from its prison.

So the Commission went, from place to place, unveiling the abuses of every locality, and two of the immediate results of its testimony are the federal laws for the prevention of Child Labour, and the Workmen’s Compensation Act, neither of them perfect, but both a long step in the right direction.

Meanwhile every thinking American now knows that industrial slavery exists among us, and that it behoves us to remove it. The startling enactment of the Adamson Law is another pregnant move along the same line. Whatever may be the immediate result, great consequences must flow from it, for very soon no employer in this country will be able to enforce labour for more than eight hours a day, and this is only the beginning of change. The invention of labour-saving machinery which has been going on for many years would have had naturally the consequence of shortening the hours of labour, if the machines had not been in the hands of the capitalist class, who wished to use them only for increasing their own profits, and they must attain their natural aim of increasing the leisure of the world, so that all may have time for culture, for thought, to know God, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in speaking of the changes that are coming into our economic life, said the solution of the struggle between labour and capital will be found in co-operation and profit sharing. The workers in any institution will presently be regarded as partners, and they will receive their proper share of the profits of the business. Whether in a factory or a mercantile enterprise the same rule will be applied.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, said in 1912 at Dublin, New Hampshire, in discussing economic questions: “Now I want to tell you about the law of God. According to the divine law, no wages should be given to the employee. Nay, rather indeed they are partners in every work. ...

“The question of socialization is very important. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united and organize an assembly, the members of which should be elected from the parliaments and nobles of the nations. These must plan with utmost wisdom and power, so that neither the capitalists suffer from enormous losses, nor the labourers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law, then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be strongly preserved. Also the rights of the capitalists are to be protected. When such a general law is adopted, by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it. Otherwise the work will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place. One of the several causes of a universal European war will be this question. For instance the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their

¹ VII:15, p. 147.

incomes with their employees, and give a fairly certain percentage of their products to their workingmen, in order that the employees may receive, beside their wages, some of the general income of the factory, so that the employee may strive with his soul in his work.”¹

As organizations for the supreme enrichment of the few, the trusts, he said, must go; but the principle of organiza- [VIII:1:11] tion will remain for the benefit of all. The employees must benefit from them as well as the managers.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has also said some remarkable things along the line of income and inheritance taxation. He said, for instance, while in this country: “In future a manufacturer will not be allowed to leave all his property to his own family. A law will be made something like this,— that he must leave one-quarter only of his property to his family, and the other three-quarters must go to the factory workers who have created his wealth.”

Indications of the realization of these predictions are already evident along many lines. A new feeling is manifesting itself in the commercial life of our country. Many of the great department stores which furnished formerly the most vivid illustrations of money mania, are now showing the new spirit. For instance, the fine establishment of Filene’s in Boston has for years carried on a profit-sharing plan with its employees, which has worked admirably for the enrichment of the concern, and has created an excellent feeling both among employees and customers. Moreover, the influence of the heads of this establishment has gone far and wide, and always in the same direction. The principle of the house has been that the endeavour of an institution must not be first of all to make money, but first to give good service to the public and fair treatment to employees. Filene’s is the pioneer enterprise in realizing such principles and has given them wide publicity. Meanwhile the idea is bearing fruit everywhere and one sees its expression in the trade journals and in advertising. In former days we looked to our poets and preachers for the enunciation of noble sentiments and inspiring ideals, but now we find these not only on the stage, but in the advertising columns of our daily papers. For instance, here is an expression of feeling from Henry P. Williams who is the head of an advertising firm in Chicago:

“The man of real progress is always mentally, just a little ahead of where he is *now*. The idealist, the man of real imagination, seizes upon the present fact, [VIII:1:12] and transforms it mentally into what it may be in the future, and projects it before him. Such a man is the really practical man.

“So long as the host saw God in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, they went forward with confidence; they followed an ideal. It was only when they lost the imaginative vision, when the cloud and the fire, being seen every day and every night became mere meteorological phenomena, that the host began to wander aimlessly.

“Blessed is the man to whom the ideal is always real; to whom the ‘pillar of fire’ of the sunset is always a sacred mystery of beauty; to whom the stars are forever an awe-inspiring revelation; to whom the business he happens to be in the making of clothes, of shoes, or machines, or the selling of any merchandise in a fair way—is a continuous enthusiasm; to whom the prosaic business duties of each day offer a recurring opportunity for the advancing of the interests of good business, and thereby the interests of good people.”

This sentiment printed upon a card hangs upon the wall in the big store of Willard Ashton in Rockford, Illinois, and expresses the spirit of the institution, which is one of the many now endeavouring in our country to spiritualize capital, or capitalize spirit, realizing that in this day the two opposite ends of creation must be brought together.

There is a school for saleswomen in Boston, conducted by Mrs Prince, which has had an

¹ *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 43.

admirable influence. This lady wishing to improve the condition of saleswomen, and believing that education, skill and intelligence would do this better than anything else, opened her school, and has had such remarkable success that her graduates are in all the leading department stores of the country, and their presence seems to carry everywhere a new atmosphere of intelligence and the necessity for justice and kindness, which are the foundation for real brotherhood.

The famous establishment of Altman's in New York is one where these principles have been evident for many years, and when Mr Altman died recently he left a large portion of his fortune to be divided among his employees and as a fund for the future conduct of the store. The action of Henry Ford in declaring that his employees must share in the prosperity of his establishment has had enormous influence upon the public mind, and he has extended his generosity of late by equalizing the pay of men and women in his factory. Edison has done the same thing more quietly and for a long time has shared his profits with his employees. Both instances illustrate the statement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that in the coming time men of wealth cannot enjoy their own luxury unless they use their means to improve the condition of others.

On the Pacific coast the fruit growers and farmers have formed co-operative alliances in business which have already broken the power of the commission men, whose intensely competitive practices threatened to drive the entire Pacific coast into bankruptcy. The fruit growers are now able to sell their product independently, and while the consumer pays no more than formerly, the producer is able to live in comfort. An interesting fact in connection with the growth of the "exchanges" is that there seems to be no temptation towards graft or dishonesty in this form of business. As all transactions are for mutual benefit, no one seeks to defraud another for his own enrichment. Nor do the men try to "corner" the market to increase the price. Wall Street practices are naturally banished from these associations where the desire is to benefit the many and not the few.

In California 70 per cent of the fruit growers have formed these co-operative exchanges and last year Governor Johnson appointed Mr Weinstock, who had become famous through his organization of the raisin-growers' exchange, Supervisor of markets for California, which meant in reality, as the Californians [VIII:1:13] understood it, supervisor of co-operative progress, and his appointment was hailed with great delight. Recently President Wilson, through the Department of Agriculture sent a committee of three to the north-west to assist the farmers of that section in forming co-operative exchanges like those of California.

In these enterprises the working people do not yet share the profits. The associations have been made to break the grasping power of the middle man, and people have not yet wakened to the broader ethical aspects of the case. But the rights of the harvester must be recognized in the near future, because it is the day when the worker is coming into his own, and fortunately the harvester is at present one of the best paid workers in the United States, and cannot complain of a badly ventilated factory.

While in this country in 1912 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave a remarkable talk before the socialist club of Montreal, in which he outlined the economic development of the coming time, and suggested a form of the income tax entirely new. He gave as an illustration of the way in which the plan would work, an agricultural community.

In the beginning he said, "In reality all mankind represents one family, God desires that each individual member of the body politic should live in the utmost well-being and comfort. If all do not enjoy life there is a lack of symmetry in the body politic."

He then outlined a scheme by which the utmost justice could be brought into the communal life. He said the products of the community should be stored in a storehouse, that each man's share should be noted and when the property was sold, each should receive his proportion,

and the tax he should pay to the community would be estimated from his share in the property.

At the time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke, no such thing as a community storehouse had been heard of in this country, but during the past two years its reality has been rapidly developing in North Dakota. The farmers in that section have been almost driven into bankruptcy by the exactions of the banks and the grain dealers. The farmer had no elevator in which to store his grain, and the banks would lend no money until the grain was harvested. Moreover he could get no accommodation except at a rate of from 12 to 14 per cent, and even then with ruinous restrictions. So he was obliged to look on while the middle man came along and bought his grain at starvation prices, to the producer, stored it in his elevator, and then immediately borrowed money on it at the bank, with which he went forth to buy more grain at starvation prices.

When the situation became unendurable the North Dakota farmers rose up in more than protest. They formed a "Federal Association" which included the entire state. They had already endeavoured in vain to elect legislators, either democratic or republican, who would pass a law enabling them to build state elevators. So this year they broke the machines of both parties, sent their own men to the legislature, and are to build state elevators for the grain of North Dakota. Naturally in the process of this communal action, the country has developed a communal feeling quite unprecedented, and certain to lead to unusual progress in the future. Meanwhile the Rural Credits law has passed, assuring them easier money, and relieving them from the exactions of the banks. The Rural Credits Law is by no means perfect. It surrounds the issuing of money to the farmer with too many restrictions and is not yet freed from the over suspicion of the banking system. But it is a step forward and brings relief where it is much needed. Undoubtedly, in the future, its restrictions will be removed, and it will enable the needy one to obtain help without such a superfluity of red tape.

However, North Dakota is to have elevators, and the first step toward the remarkable plan suggested by 'Abdu'l-Bahá has thus been taken. For his plan as to [VIII:1:14] the income tax is unique, as has been said, and unlike any other that has been thought of. Most conservative people object to an income tax, and the most progressive yet attempted is to make the tax an increasing one, in proportion to the income taxed. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says the tax must be levied in proportion to the excess of the income over the needs of the person taxed. If a man has an income of two thousand dollars, and expenses of two thousand dollars, he shall not be taxed at all, but if he has an income of ten thousand dollars, and expenses of two thousand or five thousand, he shall be taxed on the amount left over from his expenses. Thus if a man has an income of twenty thousand dollars, and expenses of only five, he could pay a large tax; if an income of fifty thousand dollars, and expenses of ten a still larger one.

This suggestion of taxation seems to imply a growing simplicity of life, and sincerity of heart, which do not exist today, because many a man would increase his expenses to decrease his tax, from the point of view of our time, and indulgence is so intensified by opportunity, that expenses often keep pace fully with increased income. In his illustration, however, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is placing before us a condition in which communal equality and communal fair dealing have already been established, and the most surprising feature of his income tax is yet to come.

In ordinary economic planning the increased income tax is simply intended to enrich the community, and reduce excessive wealth, but in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's scheme it is an elastic measure, benefiting rich and poor alike, because it takes from the citizen possessed of a surplus, to relieve the one suffering from a deficiency. Thus while the man with a surplus pays a large percentage into the treasury, the man whose expenses are greater than his income can draw from the common fund the sum lacking for the comfort or education of his

family. If a man has expenses of two thousand a year, and his income has been cut down to one, he draws the necessary surplus from the common fund, until his affairs are adjusted, and he in his turn has a surplus.

The conservative will immediately cry out against such a measure, as one encouraging mendicancy, but we must remember that this adjustment only applies to the ideal community of the future, from which both suspicion and mendicancy have been banished. The steps toward the establishment of such a commonwealth have already been taken, and may be completed in a surprisingly short time. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that in future the accumulation of immense private fortunes will cease, because man’s power of spiritual vision will increase so noticeably that he will be conscious of existence after death. He will realize that the present life opens the door to the coming one, and he will not be willing to expend all his energy in the attainment of wealth or fame, which have nothing to do with eternity, which on the contrary would act as a hindrance to the advancement of the soul in its onward career. He will prefer to use his energies for the benefit of society of which he is a member, after he has provided for his own needs, and he will lose the desire to centralize splendid power in himself. He will prefer to establish qualities which will remain his in the other life, rather than accumulate merely material advantages which he must leave behind him when he goes yonder. A great pugilist, or a successful financier may be enormously honoured by his contemporaries, but he may not find himself too well supplied with capital in the other realm when he reaches it.

When man realizes that the continuation of life means the endless development of talent and opportunity, he will know that what he begins here, he will have the certainty of completing farther along in his career, and he will therefore look at existence from a vastly different point of view.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says the trouble with our [VIII:1:15] economics heretofore has been twofold. Its system and application have been purely material, instead of material and spiritual, they have been purely masculine, instead of masculine and feminine. We need the feminine influence in the world housekeeping, says the great educator. When he met the suffragists of London in 1912, he expressed his opinion in regard to equal rights, and then asked Mrs Pethick Lawrence to say what she thought was wrong with the world. She replied that in her opinion humanity had been trying to fly with one wing, when in reality it needed two for perfect flight. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied, “What would you think if I said that humanity not only needs another wing, but the wing that has been lacking is the stronger, and with its aid humanity will take a wider flight than it has ever achieved before?” Then he went on to tell the beautiful story of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, and her attainments, showing that the supreme woman is not only capable of leadership and government, but that she possesses a faithful love, a power of self-sacrifice, in which she remains completely feminine, no matter what public functions her life may compass.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, had completed his tour of the western world, in 1912, he returned to London, and the editor of the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* thought it would be intensely interesting to have the opinion of the “greatest prisoner” in regard to western civilization, so different in every respect from that of the Orient. He therefore asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to write this article, and the result was a most luminous expression as to the meaning of civilization and the faults evident in that of the West.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá says: “All that one observes in the Western Hemisphere are the appearances of the material world, and not of the divine world.

“As there are many defects in the world of nature, the lights of divine civilization are hidden, and nature has become the ruler over all things.

“In the world of nature the greatest dominant note is the struggle for existence—the result

of which is the survival of the fittest. The law of the survival of the fittest is the origin of all difficulties. It is the cause of war and strife, hatred and animosity between human beings.

“In the world of nature there is tyranny, egoism, aggression, overbearance, usurpation of the rights of others, and other blameworthy attributes which are the defects of the animal world. Therefore so long as the requirements of the natural world play paramount part among the children of men, success and prosperity are impossible. For the success of the human world depends upon the qualities and virtues with which the reality of humanity is adorned; while the exigencies of the natural world work against the realization of this object.

“Nature is warlike, nature is bloodthirsty, nature is tyrannical, nature is unaware of His Highness the Almighty. That is why these cruel qualities are natural to the animal world.

“Therefore His Highness the Lord of mankind, having great love and mercy, has caused the appearance of the prophets, and the revelations of the holy books, so that through divine education the world of humanity may be released from the corruption of nature and the darkness of ignorance; be confirmed with ideal virtues, the susceptibilities of consciousness, and the spiritual attributes, and become the dawning place of merciful emotions. This is divine civilization. Today in the world of humanity material civilization is like unto a lamp of the utmost transparency, but this lamp—a thousand times alas—is deprived of light. This light is divine civilization, which is instituted by the holy divine Manifestations.

“This century is the century of light. This century is the century of the appearance of reality. This century is the century of universal progress.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá goes on to tell us how we can incorporate the divine laws into [VIII:1:16] the government of the world so as to create an ideal civilization, and he says we are to do this through the study of reality, the promotion of universal fellowship, the inculcation of divine love through the power of religion, the abandonment of religious, racial, patriotic and political prejudices, and in all those pathways leading to perfection which he points out so clearly and beautifully.

In ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s teaching, we cannot separate religion from life—as soon as that is done religion becomes a theology. True religion is the foundation of perfect government, but this religion is the feeling of the heart, not an established hierarchy.

Speaking of the enjoyment of the animal world in this remarkable essay, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá goes on: “Such then is the happiness of the animal world. But the happiness of the human world comes from the virtues of the world of humanity, which enjoyment the animals know not of. That comes from the extension of the range of vision, the excellences of the world of humanity; the love of God, the knowledge of God, equality between the people, justice and equity and ideal communication between hearts.”

While in the United States in 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá foretold the outbreak of the great war in 1914, and said it would be followed by the formation of a world council, to which all countries would send delegates, with power to settle international difficulties, which would result in a permanent peace. He said the twentieth century is the century of federation and that all the world would become united in a bond so close that war would be impossible, governments and laws would be changed everywhere for the betterment of humanity, poverty would be eliminated, and justice would reign in human affairs more completely than had ever been possible in previous times.

He seemed to have perfect faith in the ability of the United States to maintain peace in the period of the terrible war which was imminent, and said it was her destiny to be “the peacemaker of the world”, and that she would be the first of the great nations to establish ideal social conditions. He revealed a number of most beautiful prayers for this

commonwealth, of which the following is one:

“O God, let this American Democracy become glorious in spiritual degrees, even as it has aspired to material degrees,—and render this great government victorious, confirm this revered nation to hoist the standard of the oneness of humanity, promulgate the Most Great Peace, to become thereby most glorious and praiseworthy among all the nations of the world.”

The conclusion of the article in the *Asiatic Quarterly* contains a glorious promise for the future of humanity, which gives us hope that in the coming time we shall be able to incorporate, into our material civilization, those elements which will make it representative of the divine teaching we have received and of that love which will fully drive out injustice:

“In this age his holiness Bahá'u'lláh has breathed the holy spirit into the dead body of the world; consequently every weak soul is strengthened by these fresh divine out-breathings—every poor man will become rich, every darkened soul will become illumined, every ignorant one will become wise, because the confirmations of the holy spirit are descending like torrents. A new era of divine consciousness is upon us. The world of humanity is going through a process of transformation. A new race is being developed. The thoughts of human brotherhood are permeating all regions. New ideals are stirring the depths of hearts and a new spirit of universal consciousness is being profoundly felt by all men.”

Mary Hanford Ford.

VIII:1, 21 March 1917 [VIII:1:9]

“Now, is the beginning of a cycle of reality”

O ye children of the Kingdom!

It is New Year;¹ that is to say, the rounding of the cycle of the year. A year is the expression of a cycle (of the sun); but now is the beginning of a cycle of Reality, a New Cycle, a New Age, a New Century, a New Time and a New Year. Therefore it is very blessed.

I wish this blessing to appear and become manifest in the faces and characteristics of the believers, so that they, too, may become a new people, and having found new life and been baptized with fire and spirit, may make the world a new world, to the end that the old ideas depart and new thoughts come; old garments be cast aside and new garments put on; ancient politics whose foundation is war be discarded and modern politics founded on peace raise the standards of victory; the new star shine and gleam and the new sun illumine and radiate; new flowers bloom; the new bounty descend; the new tree give forth new fruit; the new voice become raised and this new sound reach the ears, that the new will follow the new, and all the old furnishings and adornments be cast aside and new decorations put in their places.

I desire for you that you will have this great assistance and partake of this great bounty, and that in spirit and heart you will strive and endeavour until the world of war become the world of peace; the world of darkness the world of light; satanic conduct be turned into heavenly behaviour; the ruined places become built up; the sword be turned into the olive branch; the flash of hatred become the flame of the love of God and the noise of the gun the voice of the kingdom: the soldiers of death the soldiers of life; all the nations of the world one nation; all races as one race; and all national anthems harmonized into one melody.

Then this material realm will be paradise, the earth heaven and the world of Satan become the world of angels.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

¹ 20 or 21 March: the first day of the Bahá'í year, known as the Festival of Naw-Rúz.

This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous. The world will become even as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity between the sons of men, and the drawing together of all races and all classes.—‘Abdu’l-Bahá

VIII:2, 9 April 1917 [VIII:2:17]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon²

Chapter III

Some practical applications of the spiritual life

Man must live in contentment with the conditions of his time. He must not make himself the slave of any habit. He must eat a piece of stale bread with the same relish and enjoyment as the most sumptuous dinner. Contentment is real wealth. If one develops within himself the quality of contentment he will become independent. Contentment is the creator of happiness. When one is contented he does not care either for riches or poverty. He lives above the influence of them and is indifferent to them. When we were in Baghdád often with one pound of meat we served dinner to fifteen or twenty people. We cooked with it Persian stew and filled the pot with water so everyone could have a bowl of thin soup. Notwithstanding this we were all very happy and thought that ours was the most delicious dinner.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 October 1913.

How complex is the life of the present age and how much more complex we are making it daily! The needs of humanity seem never to come to an end. The more men accumulate the more they want. There is only one way of freedom and that is by shutting one’s eyes and heart to all these things which distract the mind. The Arab of the desert teaches us a great lesson in the simple life. Living as he does in the waste Sahara he lacks all the means of life except a crude tent, a rug or mat, a caldron, a sword hanging to the inside pole of the tent and a javelin tied to the outside pole. This is all his furniture. Then, if he is wealthy he has a mare, or a horse, a few camels and maybe adjoining his tent a palm grove. It never occurs to his mind that there is anything else in this world. He is happy and has no worries. His food consists of a bowl of milk and a few dates and he may well wonder at the city man, how he can digest all the different kind of dishes with their flavours and spices. His [VIII:2:18] thought is peaceful and serene, contrary to the city people who are always haunted by the nightmare of livelihood.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 21 September 1913.

Economy is the foundation of human prosperity. The spendthrift is always in trouble. Prodigality on the part of any person is an unpardonable sin. The fewer the habits, the better for the man. It is a divine virtue to be satisfied with very few things. Contentment is the antidote for all the social diseases. We must live an independent life. We must never live on others like a parasitic plant. Every person must have a profession, whether it be literary or manual, and must live a clean, manly, honest life, an example of purity to be imitated by others. Contentment is the master-key to all success. If the members of my family starve I will not ask money from the people. It is more kingly to be satisfied with a crust of stale bread

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

² Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted. Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16; and Chapter II appeared in issues VII:18 & 19.

than to enjoy a good dinner composed of many delicious dishes the money for which comes out of the pockets of others.

... A Bahá'í must be satisfied. There was a time that I lived on five cents a day and I was then much happier than I am now. The Persian Bahá'ís often live in the utmost poverty and want, yet they never complain nor ask for money from any one. Begging they consider to be below their spiritual station. A man who is the beneficiary of the treasury of the Kingdom is not poor. There have been some rich Bahá'ís in Persia whose properties were entirely confiscated. Being thus reduced to utter destitution they went out cheerfully to work and in their turn spent all they made for the maintenance of the poorer Bahá'í families. Love, yea, love must be demonstrated through deeds. Love has never been a passive verb, a figure of speech; it has always been an active verb, an ideal reality. The sign of true faith is the service of the believers of God and service must always manifest itself in loving deeds and actions. ...

A small business with a steady income is better than the wild, helter-skelter speculations of the financiers.

The mind of a contented person is always peaceful and his heart is at rest. He is like a monarch ruling over the whole world. How happily such a man helps himself to his frugal meals. How joyfully he takes his walks and how peacefully he sleeps!

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 August 1914.

At the table on board the *Cedric* 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about simple diet—how much better it is for one's constitution to eat but one or two courses. One of the American Bahá'ís asked him whether he would not prescribe a simple regime of diet for the believers, upon his arrival in America. He laughed heartily and said: "We do not interfere with their material food, but we shall give them a simple diet of spiritual food. This is our work."

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 20 July 1913.

The life of the Arabs in the interior is most simple. Their principal food consists of the milk of the camel and a few dates. These Arabs do not like the atmosphere of the city. They revel in the expansiveness of the desert. The other day a few of the Bedouin women taunted our women because they are living in the town, while the Bedouin women were happy to breathe the fresh air of the desert. When, years ago, I travelled from 'Akká to Tiberias, in our caravan there was a beautiful Bedouin woman riding on a camel. She was listless and thoughtful. In the same caravan there was a young Christian who was struck with the beauty of this Arab girl and her dark eyes. After some futile attempts he succeeded in establish- [VIII:2:19] ing himself in her favour. As I was near I could hear their conversation. He was telling her:

"Thou art so beautiful! Why dost thou not come to the city"

"Why?"

"O, thou wilt be married to a rich man!"

"What will he do for me?"

"He will build for thee a lovely house, thou wilt be served as a queen; servants and maids will wait on thee; thou wilt walk through green gardens, thou wilt sleep on soft beds instead of sand; thy husband will buy for thee many precious jewels with which thou wilt decorate thy body; he will surround thee with wonderful objects the like of which thou hast never seen even in thy dreams!"

The girl straightened herself on her camel and looked at the youth with pity and contempt in her whole demeanour.

“I have my beloved desert, vast, broad, and immeasurable,” she said. “What do I want with your cave-like, cage-like and box-like houses. There the air is stuffy. Here the whole expanse of the Sahara is our avenues and boulevards. *Here* is my home—the palace of immensity, the residence of God’s own children. Fie upon your town and your civilization and your snobbish manners! I hate them! I cannot bear to look at them! They are all cheap tricks sanctioned by your so-called society. You come abroad to display your crafty etiquette of mock modesty and respectability, while in reality you are physically and morally corrupt, afflicted with loathsome diseases. Away from me! Let me stay where I am! My home is the Sahara, my couch is the soft sand, my decorations are God’s virtues, my lamps by night the moon and stars.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 May 1914.

Wealth becomes the cause of heedlessness to many souls with the exception of those who are believers in God and read the verses of God. For this reason his holiness Christ hath said: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” But blessed is the rich man whose wealth and opulence do not prevent him from turning his face toward God and whose heart is not attached to his possessions. Such a rich man is the light of the world.

Today Baron Rothschild came to Haifa. He is one of the wealthiest men of Europe. He is much interested in the Jewish colonization of Palestine and is devoting much of his time and attention to this problem. Now he has gone to Tiberias. He is busy all the time. He could not stay longer than one hour.

All the people are toiling and labouring to attain to the station of a rich man. Life to many rich men is nothing but a heavy burden. They are “wood carriers”. Instead of a blessing wealth becomes a great calamity to them. The supervision of their colossal fortunes and their proper financial administration becomes the sole object of their lives. Day and night, asleep and awake, they think and work to make *their* piles larger and that of others smaller till finally they become mere money machines devoid of any other feeling or of higher emotions, wild-eyed, always hungering for more. Greed and selfishness become the dominant influences of their lives. Grab, grab, grab; right and left they grab at everything. In the mad rush and struggle for more lucre, for more worldly goods they walk over the bodies of the toilers and the children. They become the embodiment of heartlessness and cruelty. Pride and haughtiness lord it over them and they become mere tools in the hands of sordid, fiendish passion.

Wealth has a tempting and drawing quality. It bewilders the sight of its charmed victims with showy appearances and draws them on and on to the edge of yawning chasms. It makes a person self-centred, self-occupied, forgetful of God and of holy things.

On the other hand there are souls who [VIII:2:20] are the essence of existence; in their estimation wealth offers no attractions. If the doors of the heavenly blessings are opened before their faces, if they become the possessors of the riches of all the world, if the mountains of the earth turn into diamonds, if the oceans of the globe change into gold ... their spiritual independence will undergo no change or alteration, their faith in God will increase, their mindfulness will augment, the heat of the fire of their love for true democracy and the education of mankind will burn away all barriers of ostentation and pride. Their intense passion for God will wax greater day by day. Such rich men are in reality the light-bearing stars of the heaven of mankind, because they have been tried and tested and have come out of the crucible as pure gold ... unalloyed and unadulterated. With all the wealth of the world at their feet they are yet mindful of God and humanity, they spend their acquired riches for the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance and employ their treasures for the alleviation of the

misery of the children of God. The light of such rich men will never grow dim and the tree of their generosity will grow in size and stature, producing fruits in all seasons. Their every deed will be as an example for succeeding generations.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 February 1914.

Be not grieved on account of poverty for true wealth is surging and inundating like unto the ocean.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“When I was in Paris one of the believers brought me a soft cushion and urged me to put it under my head. I became accustomed to it and as there is none in this hotel my neck has pained me all these nights. To be the slave of custom is the worst habit. I will have none of it! When I was young I often had a brick or a piece of rock as my pillow, and I slept soundly,”

Ḥájí Niaz¹ said that he had a soft cushion with him and asked to be allowed to go out and bring it. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered:

“No, no! I must get accustomed to my natural ways. This would not do. One must never accustom himself to any [VIII:2:21] thing the absence of which may disturb his comfort.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 July 1913.

I cannot understand why people insist on the fact that one cannot give up a thing once he is accustomed to it. One can do it very easily if he makes up his mind fully, resolving to quit it forever. It is all a matter of character and determination.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 August 1914.

He (‘Abdu’l-Bahá.) eulogized unreservedly the untiring activity and zeal of Ismá‘íl Áqá (the gardener).

“Devotion to and love for one’s vocation accomplishes miracles,” he said.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 11 July 1914.

Man must be tireless in his effort. Once his effort is directed in the proper channel if he does not succeed today he will succeed tomorrow. Effort in itself is one of the noblest traits of human character. Devotion to one’s calling, effort in its speedy execution, simplicity of spirit and steadfastness through all the ups and downs, these are the hallmarks of success. A person characterized with these attributes will gather the fruits of his labours and will win the happiness of the kingdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 8 July 1914.

This morning I (Mirza Sohrab) called on him (‘Abdu’l-Bahá) early and he spoke to me about the concentration of one’s powers. “Water flowing from one spring has more force and energy than if the same water is divided between eight springs,” he said. “Try always to concentrate your activities into one channel and let that one be the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh. Then you shall see how the confirmations of God will descend.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 13 December 1912.

¹ Niyáz (also Niyáz).

Praise be to God that you have come into this desert and exalted the name of God. The nomads are utterly destitute of the knowledge of God. They live an animalistic life and all their thoughts are centred upon their cows, goats and crops. When they come together they speak of nothing else save these things. They know nothing else. Nominally they are Muslims, but they are unaware of the ideals of Muḥammad. ... I am most pleased with you and am satisfied with your conduct. I hope that you may become assisted and confirmed in the good pleasure of the Lord. ... May your spiritual perception become keener, your attention to God more complete and your spirituality an example for others. When you are ploughing the ground or sowing the seeds or reaping the harvest let all your thoughts and subconscious thinking be of God. Your hands and feet will be working but your heart must be attached to the Almighty. The body of man is created for this world but his heart is made for the habitation of the Holy Spirit.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 May 1914.

Cleanliness and sanctity in all conditions are characteristics of pure beings and necessities of free souls.

The primary perfection consists in cleanliness and sanctity and in purity from every defect. When man in all conditions is pure and immaculate he will become a centre for the reflection of the manifest light. In all man’s actions and conduct there must first be purity, then beauty and independence. The channel must be cleansed before it can be filled with sweet water. The pure nostrils in- [VIII:2:23] hale the perfumes of the rose garden of bounty, the pure heart becomes the mirror of the beauty of truth. This is why in the heavenly books the divine counsels and commands have been compared to water. So, in the Qur’án it is said: “And we have caused a pure water to descend from heaven”; and in the Gospel, “Except a man has received the baptism of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Then it is evident that the divine teachings are the heavenly grace and the showers of the mercy of God which purify the hearts of men.

The meaning is in all conditions cleanliness and sanctity, purity and delicacy exalt humanity and make the contingent beings progress.

Even when applied to physical things delicacy causes the attainment of spirituality as it is established in the Holy Scriptures.

External cleanliness although it is but a physical thing has great influence upon spirituality. For example, although sound is but the vibration of the air which affects the tympanum of the ear and although vibrations of the air are but an accident among the accidents which depend upon the air, deeply consider how the marvellous notes of a charming song influence the spirits! A wonderful song gives wings to the spirit and fills the heart with exaltation.

I return to the subject that the fact of having a pure and spotless body likewise exercises an influence upon the spirit of man. Now see how much purity is approved in the court of God that it should be especially mentioned in the holy books of the prophets! So the holy books forbid the eating of any unclean things or the use of anything which is not pure. Certain prohibitions are absolute and imperative for all; he who commits that which is forbidden is detested by God and is excluded from the number of the elect. This applies to the things forbidden by an absolute prohibition, the perpetration of which is a grave sin; they are so vile that even to mention them is shameful. There are other forbidden things which do not cause an immediate evil and whose pernicious effect is only gradually produced. They are also abhorred, blamed and rejected by God but their prohibition is not recorded in an absolute way though cleanliness and sanctity, spotlessness and purity, the preservation of health and

independence are required by these interdictions.

One of these last prohibitions is the smoking of tobacco which is unclean, malodorous, disagreeable and vulgar and of which the gradual harmfulness is universally recognized. All clever physicians have judged and have also shown by experiment that one of the constituents of tobacco is a mortal poison and that smokers are exposed to different indispositions and maladies.

I wish to say that, in the sight of God, the smoking of tobacco is a thing which is blamed and condemned, very unclean and the result is by degrees injurious. Besides it is a cause of expense and of loss of time and it is a harmful habit. So, for those who are firm in the Covenant it is a thing discountenanced by the reason and by tradition, the renouncement of which giveth gradual repose and tranquillity, [VIII:2:24] permitteth one to have stainless hands and a clean mouth and hair which is not pervaded by a bad odour. ...

As to the question of opium, disgusting and execrating, I resign myself to God for its punishment. The formal text of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* forbids and reproves it and, according to reason, its use leads to madness. Experience has shown that he who gives himself up to it is completely excluded from the world of humanity. ... Happy is he who never mentions the word opium! ...

O friends of God, experience has shown how much the renouncing of tobacco, wine and opium gives health, strength and intellectual enjoyment, penetration of judgement and physical vigour. There exists today a tribe, the Druses, which refrains and abstains from tobacco, alcohol and opium and it completely excels all others in power, in bravery, in health, beauty and grace. A single one of these men can withstand ten men of other tribes and this has been universally proved. That is to say, generally, the individuals of this tribe are superior to the individuals of the other tribes.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, pp. 581–585.

Profitless discussions fatigue and weary a person. People who call on me almost every day carry on a stream of profitless, unspiritual talk and I must listen to them with patience. We are commanded to associate with all the people. Today three persons called and they talked for one hour without any definite result.

Man’s speech is the revealer of his heart. In whatever world the heart travels, man’s conversation will revolve [VIII:2:25] around that centre. From his words you can understand in what world he is travelling, whether he is looking upward toward the realm of light or downward to the nether world, whether he is mindful or unaware, whether he is awake or asleep, whether he is alive or dead. For this reason his holiness ‘Alí says: “Man is hidden behind his tongue. Out of the abundance of his heart does man speak.”

There are persons with whom you associate and converse whose utterances are life-imparting, joy-giving. The withered and faded are refreshed, the joyless become happy, the extinct become enkindled and the lifeless are quickened with the breaths of the Holy Spirit. The one drowned in the sea of hesitation and doubt is saved by the life-boat of certainty and assurance; the one attached to this material world becomes severed and the one steeped in blameworthy deeds is adorned with praiseworthy attributes. On the other hand there are some persons whose very respiration extinguishes the light of faith; whose conversation weakens firmness and steadfastness in the Cause of God; whose company diverts one’s attention from the kingdom of Abhá.

The souls who are rejoiced with the glad tidings of God, attracted to the fragrances of holiness, severed from aught else save God, who are commemorating the name of God are

withdrawn from the world of darkness their thought permeated through and through with spiritual vibrations and their messages consisting of divine advices and exhortations; such souls are the manifestors of God's mercy, the educators of nations and the vivifiers of the world of humanity. They are guardian angels, the cause of human progress and the spiritual guides of the wandering children of men. Glory be unto them!

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 July 1914.

If a person reads *The Hidden Words*, *The Ishráqát*, *Tajalliyát*, *The Glad Tidings*, *The Words of Wisdom* and *The Tarázát* and lives in accord with one of these divine advices he shall reach to the station of perfection, he will become the centre of merciful susceptibilities, the dawning-place of human virtues and the rays of the kingdom will become manifest from his face and character.

O ye friends of God! These advices and exhortations of the Blessed Perfection are revealed from the Supreme Pen in order to be considered as *guides for actions* and *not to be read only*. There are many people who read these tablets, praise their contents—but they do not *live* according to one of these words.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from tablet to the Boston Assembly of Bahá'ís; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 13 July 1914.

Trustworthiness is the most brilliant jewel in the diadem which crowns man's heavenly attributes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 9 December 1912.

The best capital and the most profitable business is honesty in all things. Do thou continue to be honest in thy dealings for one month. Thou wilt see in the end that thou art honoured and respected by all thy customers, and not considering thy spiritual welfare, thy material prosperity will be secured.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 October 1914.

Question: "Does the Bahá'í prohibition of gambling and lotteries forbid games of every description?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "No, some games are innocent, and if pursued for pastime there is no harm. But there is danger that pastime may degenerate into waste of time. Waste of time is not ac- [VIII:2:26] ceptable in the Cause of God. But recreation which may improve the bodily powers, as exercise, is desirable."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *A Heavenly Vista*, p. 9.

Endeavour and make an effort that certain souls may be trained, of whom his holiness Christ said: "Ye shall know the tree by its fruits." That is to say, every soul is known by (his) conduct, manners, words and deeds. Therefore, we must strive with life and heart that, day by day, our deeds may be better, our conduct more beautiful and our forbearance greater. That is, to cultivate love for all the world, to attain beatific character.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 306.

Ask thou of God that thou mayest attain to the age of maturity so that thou mayest

recognize the beauty and ugliness of deeds and actions.

Bahá'u'lláh from the Tablet to the Sultán of Turkey.

Chastity and purity of life are the two divine standards of the spiritual and moral law. The greater the aim of man the nobler his purpose. A man must ever be thoughtful of others and be polite and courteous toward his fellow-beings. This will win for him the good pleasure of the Lord and the satisfaction of the general public. One's sitting and rising, speech and conversation, social intercourse and communication should be based upon a firm foundation and be conducive to the glory of the world of humanity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 4 September 1913.

Moderation is necessary in all affairs. Man must take a lesson from divine actions and deeds for God suffers a tree to grow a long time before it attains to perfection. He is able to make a tree grow to fruition in an instant, but wisdom requires a gradual development.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from tablet to an American believer; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 18 May 1914. [VIII:2:27]

Be not grieved or sorrowful that no great wealth or property has been bestowed upon you. Look at the birds! The first thing in the morning they are thirsty and hungry. They go to the spring and a few drops quench their thirst; then they pick up a few seeds and are perfectly satisfied and sit upon the branches and sing the praises of God. I hope you, too, will be satisfied.

Christ says that we are like the birds. The birds have habits; one is that they are satisfied with a few grains. They have neither property nor possessions, and they are most of the time on the branches of the trees singing their beautiful melodies. Now you should be satisfied with a few worldly things and spend most of the time in spreading the truths of the Word of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Flowers from the Rose-Garden of Acca*, p. 29.

The length and shortness of life is not considered important. Whether man lives a few years or a hundred years, the purpose of his life is to achieve some definite results. If the tree of his life does not yield those luscious fruits, the purpose of his existence has not been accomplished even if he has lived many, many years. But if he has lived only a few years and the tree of his life has attained to fruition, he has obtained spiritual success. Consequently the duration of life is a conditional matter subject to the will of God. For example, this stone has existed 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 years but it has not advanced beyond the mineral kingdom. It has not achieved its final result. Again a merchant goes to his office every day in the year; he plans commercial enterprises, undertakes vast schemes, organizes large companies but at the end of the year he has not gained any profit. On the other hand another merchant through one stroke of good luck gains large profits in one day. Now the former merchant, although he worked harder all through the year, did not achieve any success, while the latter although he worked only one day yet the outcome of his activity was prosperous.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 11 October 1914. [VIII:2:28]

The religion of God reforms the moral side of the life of mankind. It is the spreader of the virtues of the world of humanity. It is the founder of divine perfections in the hearts of men. It is nearness to God. It is the cause of attraction and enkindlement with the fire of the love of

God. It is conducive to the illumination of human consciousness.

All the prophets are sent by God for the guidance of the people, for the enlightenment of the minds of the inhabitants of the earth and for the promotion of the Word of Truth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 12 March 1914.

VIII:3, 28 April 1917 [VIII:3:37]

“China is the country of the future”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 3 April 1917.

China, China, China, China-ward the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh must march! Where is that holy, sanctified Bahá’í to become the teacher of China! China has most great capability. The Chinese people are most simple-hearted and truth-seeking. The Bahá’í teacher of the Chinese people must first be imbued with their spirit, know their sacred literature, study their national customs and speak to them from their own standpoint, and their own terminologies. He must entertain no thought of his own, but ever think of their spiritual welfare. In China one can teach many souls and train and educate divine personages, each one of whom may become a bright candle of the world of humanity. Truly, I say they are free from any deceit and hypocrisies and are prompted with ideal motives.

Had I been feeling well, I would have taken a journey to China myself! China is the country of the future. I hope the right kind of teacher will be inspired to go to that vast empire to lay the foundation of the Kingdom of God, to promote the principles of divine civilization, to unfurl the banner of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh and to invite the people to the banquet of the Lord!

For the last twenty years I have repeatedly emphasized the matter of spreading the Cause of God. In every city there must be organized assemblies of teaching-classes to teach the young how to teach the Cause and prepare them for this most important service.

Every Bahá’í must acquire the lessons of teaching. This will yield results. No other service is as important as this. This service of the promotion of the revelation of Bahá’u’lláh is the most confirmed service. Every time one service holds the most supreme importance.

There is one season to harrow the ground, another season to scatter the seeds, still another season to irrigate the fields and still another to harvest the crop. We must attend to these various kinds of activities in their proper seasons in order to become successful. Now is the time of seed-sowing, but it seems to me some of the believers are thinking about crop-getting. This will give them no results. Whosoever is thinking of any other thing, is wasting his time.

The promotion of the principles of Bahá’u’lláh is the most dominant issue before the believers of God.

VIII:4, 17 May 1917 [VIII:4:41]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon²

Chapter IV Prayer

There is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer.

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

² Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted. Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16; Chapter II appeared in issues VII:18 & 19; and Chapter III appeared in issue VIII:2.

Man must live in a state of prayer. The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication. Prayer is conversation with God. The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is none other than conversation with God. It creates spirituality, creates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets new attractions of the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence. The highest attribute given to his holiness Moses is the following verse: “God carried along a conversation with Moses.”

What is prayer? It is conversation with God. While man prays he sees himself in the presence, of God. If he concentrates his attention he will surely at the time of prayer realize that he is conversing with God. Often at night I do not sleep, and the thoughts of this world weigh heavily on my mind. I toss uneasily in my bed. Then in the darkness of the night I get up and pray—converse with God. It is most sweet and uplifting.

Prayer and supplication are so effective that they inspire one’s heart for the whole day with high ideals and supreme sanctity and calmness. One’s heart must be sensitive to the music of prayer. He must feel the effect of prayer. He must not be like an organ from which softest notes stream forth without having consciousness of sensation in itself.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 15 March 1914.

Prayer and supplication are two wings whereby man soars toward the heavenly mansion of the True One. However, verbal repetition of prayer does not suffice. One must live in a continual attitude of prayer. When man is spiritually free his mind becomes the altar of prayer and his heart the sanctuary of prayer. Then the meaning of [VIII:4:42] the verse, “We will lift up from before his eyes the veil”, will become fulfilled in him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 18 June 1914.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said we should speak in the language of heaven—in the language of the spirit—for there is a language of the spirit and heart. It is as different from our language as our own language is different from that of the animals, who express themselves only by cries and sounds.

When we pray to God a feeling fills our hearts. This is the language of the spirit which speaks to God.

When in prayer we are freed from all outward things and turn to God, then it is as if in our hearts we heard the voice of God. Without words we speak, we communicate, we converse with God and hear the answer. It is said that Moses in the wilderness heard the voice of God. But that wilderness, that holy land was his own heart. All of us when we attain to a true spiritual condition can hear the voice of God speaking to us in that wilderness. We must strive to attain to that condition by being separated from all things and from the people of the world and by turning to God alone. It will take some effort on the part of man to attain to that condition but he must work for it, strive for it. We can attain to it by thinking and caring less for material things and more for the spiritual. The further we go from the one, the nearer we are to the other—the choice is ours!

Our spiritual perception, our inward sight must be opened so that we can see the signs and traces of God’s spirit in everything. Everything can reflect to us the light of the spirit.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá; extract from a talk given to Miss Laura Barney.

When asked if prayer was necessary since presumably God knows the wishes of all our hearts ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“If one friend feels love for another he will wish to say so. Though he knows that the friend is aware that he loves him, he will still wish to say so. If there is anyone that you love do you not seek an opportunity to speak with him, to speak lovingly with him, to bring him gifts, to write him letters? If you do not feel such a desire it would be that you did not love your friend. God knows the wishes of all hearts. But the impulse to pray is a natural one springing from man’s love to God.

“If there be no love, if there be no pleasure or spiritual enjoyment in prayer, do not pray. Prayer should spring from love, from the desire of the person to commune with God. Just as the lover never ceases from wishing to communicate with the beloved so does the lover of God always wish for constant communication with the Deity.

“Prayer need not be in words, but in thought and attitude. But if this love and this desire are lacking it is useless to try to force them. Words without love mean nothing. If a person talks to you as an unpleasant duty with no love or pleasure in his meeting with you, do you wish to converse with him? Efforts should first be made to make attachment to God.”

When asked how this attachment is to be made, how the love of God is to be obtained, since there are many people in the world who admit the existence of a Deity but without any emotion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“Knowledge is love. Study, listen to exhortations, think, try to understand the wisdom and greatness of God. ... The soil must be fertilized before the seed be sown.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from an article in *The Fortnightly Review*, June 1911, by Miss E. S. Stevens.

Man becomes like a stone unless he continually supplicates to God. The [VIII:4:43] heart of man is like a mirror which is covered with dust and to cleanse it one must continually pray to God that it may become clean. The act of supplication is the polish which erases all worldly desires. The delight of supplicating and entreating before God cuts one’s heart from the world. When the taste of man is nourished by honey he never likes to taste any other sweetmeat. Therefore, prayer is a key by which the doors of the kingdom are opened. There are many subjects which are difficult for man to solve. But during prayer and supplication they are unveiled and there is nothing that man cannot find out. Muḥammad said: “Prayer is a ladder by which every one can ascend to heaven.” If one’s heart is cut from the world his prayer is the ascension to heaven.

In the highest prayer men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear him or hell or hope for bounty or heaven. Thus the souls in whose hearts the fire of love is enkindled are attracted by supplication. True supplication to God must therefore be actuated by love to God only. ... When a man falls in love with a human being it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficult is it to keep from mentioning the name of God when one has come to love him. One can pray for the dead and by so doing their spiritual condition will become better. The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God. When one is confirmed his heart becomes rejoiced through the commemoration of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from notes of Miss Alma Albertson and other pilgrims, November and December 1900.

O thou daughter of the Kingdom! Know thou that supplication and prayer is the Water of Life. It is the cause of the vivification of existence and brings glad tidings and joy to the soul.

Show thou attention to this matter as far as thou canst and summon others to prayer and supplication.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from tablet to an American believer; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 14 December 1906.

Question: "What is prayer, attitude or word?"

Answer: "Prayer is both attitude and word, it depends upon the soul-condition. It is like a song, both words and music make the song. Sometimes the melody will move us, sometimes the words."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 15.

The prayerful attitude is attained by two means. Just as a man who is going to deliver a lecture prepares therefor and his preparation consists of certain meditations and notations, so the preparation for the prayerful attitude is detaching one's mind from all other thoughts save the thought of God at the time of prayer and then praying when the prayerful attitude shall be attained.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *A Heavenly Feast*, p. 19.

Supplication to God at morn and eve is conducive to the joy of hearts, and prayer causes spirituality and fragrance. Thou shouldst necessarily continue therein. (p. 186.)

Neglect not praying and communing in the gloomy midnights and morn and eve and offer glory unto thy Lord, the Supreme. (p. 413.)

Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in his vineyard, and, with a heart full of love, to be in constant servitude unto him. (p. 98.)

Draw nigh unto God and persevere in communion with thy Lord so that the [VIII:4:44] fire of God's love may glow more luminously in the heart, its heat grow stronger and give warmth to that region and its sound reach the Supreme Concourse. (p. 639.)

Supplicate unto him and beseech in the middle of the night and at early morn just as a needy and captive one beseeches. It is incumbent upon thee to turn unto the kingdom of God and to pray, supplicate and invoke during all times. This is the means by which thy soul shall ascend upward to the apex of the gift of God. (p. 695.)

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*.

As to thy question, "Why pray? What is the wisdom thereof, for God has established everything and executes all affairs after the best order and he ordains everything according to a becoming measure and puts things in their places with the greatest propriety and perfection—therefore what is the wisdom in beseeching and supplicating and in stating one's wants and seeking help?" Know thou, verily, it is becoming of a weak one to supplicate to the strong One and it behoveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the glorious, bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to him and seeks bounty from his ocean this supplication is by itself a light to his heart, an illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exaltation to his being. [VIII:4:45]

Therefore, during thy supplications to God and thy reciting "Thy name is my healing" consider how thine heart is cheered, thy soul delighted by the spirit of the love of God and thy mind attracted to the kingdom of God! By these attractions one's ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is widened the water increaseth and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the

wisdom of stating one's wants.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from Tablet to an American believer; translated by Dr 'Alí-Qulí Khán, October 1908.

Man is eternally in a state of communion and prayer with the source of all good. The highest and most elevating state is the state of prayer. Prayer is communion with God. ... Its efficacy is conditional upon the freedom of the heart from extraneous suggestions and mundane thoughts. The worshipper must pray with a detached spirit, unconditional surrender of the will, concentrated attention and a magnetic spiritual passion. His innermost being must be stirred with the ethereal breeze of holiness. If the mirror of his life is polished from the dross of all desires the heavenly pictures and star-like images of the kingdom of God will become fully reflected therein. Then he will be given power to translate these celestial forms into his own daily life and the lives of many thousands.

Automatic, formalistic prayers which do not touch the core of the heart are of no avail. How sweet, how delicious, how satisfying, how spiritual is prayer in the middle of the night! While all the eyes are closed the eyes of the worshipper are wide open. While all the ears are stopped the ears of the suppliant are attuned to the subtle music of God. While the majority of the people are fast asleep the adorer of the Ideal Beloved is wakeful. All around him there is a rare and delicate silence, deep, airy, ethereal silence, calm, magical and subtle—and there is the worshipper, communing with nature and the author of nature.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 3 September 1914.

Question: "How do saints become saints?"

Answer: "Through prayer, supplication, purification of the heart and good wishes."

'Abdu'l-Bahá—answers to some questions asked by some American pilgrims to 'Akká, spring of 1907. Mírzá Munír, translator. [VIII:4:46]

Christ said, "Go into thy chamber and shut the door, and pray to thy Father which is in heaven." Why did he say this? It is with the tongue that man expresses his feelings to another man. But with the language of the heart man prays to God. Though God is within the heart of man, is ever present in every place, yet man lifts up his eyes to heaven and prays as if God were there, seated upon a throne. Surely this is pure superstition! Why should he utter the words, "O heavenly Father?" Why should it be necessary for him to repeat prayers aloud and with the tongue? One reason for this is that if the heart alone is speaking the mind can be more easily disturbed. But repeating the words so that the tongue and heart act together enables the mind to become concentrated. Then the whole man is surrounded by the spirit of prayer and the act is more perfect.

Another reason is that by the outward signs of entering into his room and praying the attention of others is attracted and they begin to ask, "Why does he do this" and are aroused to enquire about the truth.

Man may say, "I can pray to God whenever I wish, when the feelings of my heart are drawn to God; when I am in the wilderness, when I am in the city, or wherever I may be. Why should I go where others are gathered upon a special day, at a certain hour, to unite my prayers with theirs when I may not be in a frame of mind for praying" To think in this way is useless imagination for where many are gathered together their force is greater. Separate soldiers fighting alone and individually have not the force of a united army. If all the soldiers in this spiritual war gather together then their united spiritual feelings help each other and their

prayers become more acceptable.

A wise schoolmaster may send his scholars out to play or to practise gymnastics for an hour so that their minds and bodies may be refreshed and during the hour of the lesson they may learn it better. If the teacher proves that his pupils are advancing no onlooker has a right to object to his system or to question his wisdom and say, "Why does he waste the boys' time?" If a wise father plays with his children who has a right to say it is not good for them? He calls them to come to him as the hen calls her chicks, he knows that they are little and must be coaxed along, coaxed along, because they are young and tiny. [VIII:4:47]

For the time of Moses the law of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" was ordained. It is very hard to see the wisdom of this, but the people then were in the wilderness and needed teaching. Different teachings were needed for different people. If you give the same teachings to all some might be retarded by them instead of helped. Christ taught some things to his disciples which he commanded them not to tell the Pharisees. It is not for the soldier to question the general's orders. If he knows him to be the real general he must carry out and obey his orders exactly. If the general orders that a certain place must be taken and held the soldiers might say, "Why risk so much by leaving this secure and safe position for a point which is the aim and target of the enemy?" But the general knows that this is the important point which must be held at all costs. The true doctor, the true teacher, the real captain must be obeyed.

If every man knew what was best for his health, if every man could teach himself, if every soldier knew how to fight by himself, if every passenger could sail the ship, what need would there be for the doctor, for the teacher, for the general or for the captain? As he has not this wisdom he must first ascertain their truth and then follow their directions. Until he does this he cannot advance.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from notes of Mrs L. A. C. Dreyfus-Barney.

One of our friends was sitting silent. 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked her to speak. "I would rather pray quietly in thy presence," she said.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Mayst thou ever be in a prayerful attitude. In all the worlds of existence there is nothing more important than prayer. Prayer confers spirituality upon the heart."

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 October 1913.

Thou hast asked what shouldst thou do and what prayer shouldst thou offer in order to become informed of the mysteries of God. Pray thou with an *attracted* heart and supplicate thou with a spirit stirred by the glad tidings of God. Then the doors of the kingdom of mysteries shall be opened before thy face and thou shalt comprehend the realities of all things.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 July 1913.

Asked if we are not able through love and faith to make those who have departed from this life hear of the Cause who had not heard of it while here, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied:

"Yes, surely sincere prayer always has its effect and it has a great influence in the other world. We are never cut off from those who are there. The real and genuine influence is not in this world but in that other."

'Abdu'l-Bahá from notes of Mrs Mary Hanford Ford, Paris, France, October 1911.

Supplication and prayer on behalf of others will surely be effective. When hearts are united, when faces are turned towards the kingdom of Abhá, surely enlightenment will be the result.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from Tablet to Seattle Assembly of Bahá’ís; translated in Haifa, Syria, 14 August 1914.

In answer to the question, “Why should one pray through Christ as the Christians do, or through another manifestation of God and why should we not pray to God direct?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“If we wish to pray we must have some object upon which to concentrate. If we turn to God we must direct our hearts to a certain centre. If man worships God otherwise than through his Manifestation he must first form a conception of God and that conception is [VIII:4:48] created by his own mind. As the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite so God is not to be comprehended in this fashion. That which man conceives with his own mind he comprehends. That which he can comprehend is not God. That conception of God which a man has is but a phantasm, an image, an imagination, an illusion. There is no connection between such a conception and the Supreme Being.

“If a man wishes to know God he must find him in the perfect mirror; Christ or Bahá’u’lláh. In either of these mirrors he will see reflected the Sun of Divinity.

“As we know the physical sun by its splendour, by its light and heat so we know God, by the spiritual sun, when he shines forth from the temple of Manifestation by his attributes of perfection, by the beauty of his qualities and by the splendour of his light. The Manifestations of God are the focal centres of the world. ...

“The epitome of all worship is the worship of the attributes of Christ, not his personality.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a talk given to Mr Percy Woodcock, ‘Akká, Syria, 1909.

Turn thy face sincerely toward God; be severed from all save God; be ablaze with the fire of the love of God; be purified and sanctified, and beseech and supplicate unto God. Verily, he responds unto those who invoke him, is near unto those who pray unto him. And he is thy companion in every loneliness, and befriends every exile.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from a Tablet to American believer; translated by Dr ‘Alí-Qulí Khán, Boston, February 1908.

Regarding thy question about the morning prayer. Both meanings are included in the word dawn—the natural dawn, and the dawn of the kingdom. When a soul rises in the morning from sleep before everything else he must commemorate the name of God in order that he may obtain spirituality and illumination.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from a Tablet to an American believer; translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 5 March 1914, Mt. Carmel, Haifa.

O God and assister of all! ... Verily, thou art the hearer of prayers, and verily, thou art powerful in all things!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The heavens of thy mercy and the oceans of thy bounty are so vast that thou hast never

disappointed those who begged of thee nor refused those who willed to come to thee!

Bahá'u'lláh

VIII:5, 5 June 1917 [VIII:5:49]

“Teach the Cause! This is a matter that succeeds most miraculously”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to pilgrims.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 30 January 1914.

Now that you are returning to your respective homes you must be like unto ignited candles and set aglow the hearts of all the believers; now like unto a company of tuneful birds you must sing every melody. I have done my part, I have sung my songs and have played almost every tune. Now it is your turn. For awhile I must sit silent, ever straining my ears to hear your anthems of praise. I love to listen to your spiritual symphonies and divine harmonies, ever flying upward and filling the world with the soothing music of peace and consolation. God willing, you will fulfil my eager expectations. O! I am sure you will not disappoint me. The confirmations of the Kingdom shall descend upon you, and the Supreme reinforcement shall surround you. Rest ye assured; let your hearts abide in peace. I ever expect to receive cheering news from you. May you become the cause of the happiness of the hearts of the believers. May all the friends become glad, rejoiced and grateful through meeting you and write me that these pilgrims who passed through our cities were enkindled, attracted, eloquent and willing to serve their fellowmen!

In short, God willing, may every one of you, as you leave this Holy Land, become a herald of the Cause, a harbinger of the establishment of the Kingdom.

May each one of you shine upon each city through which you pass as a radiant star. This is the Day wherein whomsoever arises to spread the Cause of God, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse will assist him. Today the magnet of spiritual confirmation is teaching the Cause. Although the threshold of the Blessed Perfection was my heart, my spirit and the happiness of my soul, yet, notwithstanding this, I left everything and travelled around the world proclaiming at the top of my voice the glad tidings of the Kingdom of Abhá. No affair today is as confirmed as that of the promulgation of the principles of this Cause. As much as they can the believers of God must occupy their time in conveying the Message. ...

Teach the Cause; this is a matter that succeeds, succeeds most miraculously. Praise be to God! You are beneath the protection of the Blessed Perfection, you are environed by his bestowals. What favour do you wish greater than this? When a number of souls are beneath the protecting wings of an important personage they consider themselves very fortunate; now, praise be to God, you are beneath the protection and preservation of the Blessed Perfection. Therefore, how great must be your happiness! As you go out of this room dedicate your lives to teaching the [VIII:5:50] Cause; gird up the loins of endeavour and put forward extraordinary energy.

When a Cause is confirmed it is evident and manifest from its signs. For example, we say this earth is confirmed. Why? Because, as a result of the downpour of rain and the shining of the sun it is covered with green plants and flowers.

Again I say, teach the Cause! Do not tarry! Fill the goblet of every seeker with the wine of the love of God! ...

VIII:5, 5 June 1917 [VIII:5:50]

Green Acre in 1917

Since last year’s Pentecostal outpouring on the quiet hills by the Piscataqua, “The River of Light”, the friends of Green Acre have been counting the days until they might return thereto

in the summer of 1917.

During the past year Miss Sarah Farmer, the founder of Green Acre, has ascended into the Supreme Concourse. A beautiful Bahá'í service was held at her home in South Eliot, on the occasion of her passing. Her saintly and luminous spirit will rest over the conferences this summer even more gloriously than during last August for now she is free from the prison-house of the body.

May the new and mighty wave of spiritual power which has this past year swept the Bahá'í world rise and burst into such splendour at Green Acre this summer that it may illumine the entire continent.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has taken great joy in Green Acre and made radiant predictions for its future. Among his first words upon his return to the city of 'Akká in Palestine from his world journey through Europe and America were these concerning Green Acre.

"There is a place in America," he said one evening when the friends had assembled to meet him, "called Green Acre. It is customary during the months of summer for people of different creeds and religions to gather there and the leaders of various movements and thoughts to deliver lectures and addresses. Thus they have combined most effectively education and recreation. The significance and usefulness of this unique place lie in the fact that it offers a free and unrestricted platform to the citizens of every nation and the adherents of every religion. Thus every subject is discussed with that full liberty of conscience which is enjoyed in the United States.

"The founder of these conferences wherein every nationality and religion is worthily represented, is Sarah J. Farmer. To her is due all praise and commendation for having thus initiated this wonderful plan which must be carried out to its logical conclusion—a universal platform for all mankind, irrespective of race, religion or nationality.

"As the name, Green Acre, is similar to that of 'Akká, when I arrived there I was made very happy. I spent one week in that green and delightful 'Akká. They had a large meeting every evening at which many people gathered, and I spoke to them on spiritual subjects. I met there many cultured and educated people. It is a most beautiful country place. Its water is pure, its air salubrious and its atmosphere is spiritual. There are many pine woods; and under a cluster of fine old trees people gather to hear lectures. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, when in Green Acre, used to give some of his addresses under these pines, so they are known as the 'Persian pines'. I went there one afternoon; many people had gathered, and I spoke on the Bahá'í teachings."

While sojourning in Paris, on his return from America en route to Palestine, 'Abdu'l-Bahá pictured to some friends interested in Green Acre, the ultimate ideals on which as a sure foundation its future should be built.

"In Green Acre you must concentrate your forces around the one all important [VIII:5:51] fact—the investigation of reality. Expend all your thoughts on this—that the union of opinions and expressions may be obtained

"If the circle of the activities of Green Acre be expanded so that each year the leaders of every religion and thought may associate with each other with perfect love and amity there will be good results.

"The aim of those souls who deliver addresses or who take part in the discussions must be the investigation of reality and not the presentation of dogmas and unprofitable, antiquated theories. The chief objects of Green Acre conferences must be the furtherance of universal peace, investigation of reality, brotherhood, tolerance, sympathy to all mankind, the cultivation of a better understanding between the nations of the world, the elimination of dogmas and superficialities, the illumination of the hearts with the light of truth, mutual

assistance and co-operation, social service, the study of the fundamental principles of all the religions and their comparative co-ordination. Green Acre must carry away this palm of victory

“Personal ambition must be thrown to the winds and all the available will-power directed towards the realization of the universal objects. If you outline such a practical, universal, all-inclusive programme and then invite me I will come again to Green Acre. Lay such a foundation that the influence of the confederation of religions and sects may permeate to all parts of the world from Green Acre; and Green Acre for the future ages and cycles may become the standard bearer of the oneness of the world of humanity. I will pray for the fulfilment of this truth.”

Early last winter the following tablet was received by a believer regarding the service of Green Acre, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s latest word about the “Green Acca” of America:

“O thou maid-servant of God! Thy letter was received. Thy desire to serve Green Acre is in reality a very important matter. This name (Green Acre) must appear with all its significant meaning, that is Green Acre must become the reflection of the plain of ‘Akká, and attain to the utmost verdancy, greenness and artistic beauty. Its charms and wonder lie in this, that it may become the centre of the Bahá’ís and the cry of ‘Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá’ be raised from all its direction. I hope that all thy aspirations may become fully realized. Upon thee be greeting and praise.”

VIII:5, 5 June 1917 [VIII:5:51]

“Plant thou a tree which may yield sweet fruits throughout all eternity”

A recent Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Maria P. Wilson, Malden, Massachusetts

O thou my respected hostess!

The days that I was a guest in thy home are ever before my sight. They then include happy days, for they passed away in joy.

Truly, I say, with all thy power thou didst serve us and displayed towards us the utmost kindness. This service appeared through the sincerity of thine intention, thy love for humanity, and thy praiseworthy morals. At present, also, thou art engaged day and night in the service of the Kingdom of God, and art occupied in the promotion of heavenly teachings. Plant thou a tree which may yield sweet fruits throughout all eternity. Scatter thou such pure seeds which may produce various crops in the future ages and cycles. This is made possible through self-sacrifice in the path of God, and complete evanescence in the love of God—so that no trace of self, ego and desires be left behind; thus thou mayest consecrate thyself wholly and entirely to the heavenly Beloved.

Convey on my behalf to each and all the friends—men and women—my loving and yearning greetings.

Upon thee be greeting and praise.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Haifa, Syria, 22 October 1916.

VIII:6, 24 June 1917 [VIII:6:57]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon²

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

² Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted. Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16; Chapter II appeared in issues VII:18 & 19; Chapter III appeared in issue VIII:2; and Chapter IV appeared in issue VIII:4.

Chapter V

Faith, Severance, Sacrifice

I say unto you that anyone who will [VIII:6:58] arise in the Cause of God, at this time shall be filled with the Spirit of God. And God will send his hosts from heaven to help you and nothing shall be impossible to you if you have faith. And now I give you, a commandment which shall be for a covenant, ... that ye have faith; that your faith be steadfast as a rock which no storms can move, which nothing can disturb, and that it endure through all things even to the end. ... Be not shaken in your faith. ... As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the balance; this is the balance; this is the balance!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from *An Early Pilgrimage* by Mrs May Maxwell.

The foundation of praiseworthy virtues is faith. The greater the faith of man the more illumined his life. Faith is a miracle; it has a wonder-working power. Its spiritual influence refines the character, suffers man to become humble and meek, places in his heart the fear of God, prompts him to devote his time to humanitarian deeds, spiritualizes his nature, exalts his ideals and enkindles his lamp. The greater the faith of man the more numerous will be his philanthropic actions. Faith is like unto the trees, deeds are like unto the fruits. Faith is like unto the lamp, deeds are like unto the light.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Address in *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 2 March 1914.

Question: What is real faith?

Answer: Faith outwardly means to believe in the message a Manifestation brings to the world and accept the fulfilment in him of that which the prophets have announced. But in reality faith embodies three degrees: to confess with the tongue; to believe in the heart; to show forth in our actions. These three things are essential to true faith. The important requirement is the love of God in the heart. For instance, we say a lamp gives light. In reality the oil which burns produces the illumination, but the lamp and the chimney are necessary before the light can express, itself. The love of God is the light. The tongue is the chimney or the medium by which that love finds expression. It also protects the light. Likewise the members of the body reflect the inner light by their actions. So the tongue confesses in speech and the parts of the body confess in their actions the love of God within the soul of a true believer. Thus it was that Peter confessed Christ by his tongue and his actions. When the tongue and actions reflect the love of God the real qualities of man are revealed. Christ said “You will know them by their fruits”; that is, by their deeds. If a believer shows forth divine qualities we know that true faith is in his heart. If we do not find evidence of these qualities, if he is selfish or wicked, he has not the true kind of faith. Faith is mentioned in the Scriptures as the “second birth” or “everlasting life”. In this day true belief is the Spirit of God. Many claim to possess true faith, but it is rare, and when it exists it cannot be destroyed.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 59.

By our actions we reveal what is growing in the heart. Actions are mirrors of the soul ...

Faith is not so much what we believe as what we carry out.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, pp. 11–12.

Man must prove whatsoever he speaketh by deeds and actions. If he claims faith he must live and do according to the teachings of the Kingdom of Abhá.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a Tablet to two Chicago believers. [VIII:6:59]

Faith is the magnet which draws the confirmation of the Merciful One. Service is the magnet which attracts the heavenly strength.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 62.

Although a person of good deeds is acceptable at the threshold of the Almighty, yet it is first *to know* and then *to do*. Although a blind man produces a most wonderful and exquisite art, yet he is deprived of seeing it. See how most animals labour for man, draw loads and facilitate travel; yet as they are ignorant they do not receive any reward for this toil and labour. The cloud rains; roses and hyacinths grow, the plains and meadows, the gardens and trees become green and blossom, yet they do not realize the results and outcome of their activities. Therefore, they are not praised and commended, ... This lamp is lighted, but as it has not a conscious knowledge of itself no one has become glad because of it.

Moreover, a soul of excellent deeds and good manners will undoubtedly advance, no matter from what horizon he beholds the light radiating. Herein lies the difference. By faith is meant first, conscious knowledge; second, the practice of good deeds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 549.

Praise be to God, you are firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament. Firmness and steadfastness are the greatest conditions of faith and assurance. As long as the tree does not send its root to the bowels of the earth it will not become secure and established, neither will it grow and develop into full stature. But if it is not firmly rooted it will be broken by the blowing of one strong wind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 July 1914.

There is no wonder in confessing the appearance of the Kingdom of God, but true wonder consists in good deeds, obedience to the commands and teachings of the True Lord, and firmness in this path, even when the storm is at its height.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet to American believer; received 5 January 1904.

One of the requirements of faithfulness is that thou mayest sacrifice thyself and in the divine path, close thine eye to every pleasure and strive with all thy soul that thou mayest disappear and be [VIII:6:60] lost, like unto a drop, in the ocean of the love of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 552.

The Manifestation of God is a perfect example of real obedience. Like him we must sacrifice everything, every plan, every longing and ideal must be given up completely to the will of God. We must look to God for all we desire, all we wish to attain. The will of God must work out its purpose in us. Our human will must be laid down in sacrifice and love. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has given everything in sacrifice and obedience to the will of God. ... All our soul-powers, our outward self, our inward self must be consecrated to God in service and sacrifice. Even life must be given if necessary. If we have not reached this station of nothingness we have not attained to real obedience to the will of God. A pupil must submit entirely to the will of the teacher. This is true sacrifice, true obedience.

Real obedience and real sacrifice are identical, they are absolute readiness to follow and

perform whatever you are called upon to do in the Cause of God. When you really love God you will be willing to sacrifice everything and submit yourself entirely to His will. Consecrate yourself wholly to Him. His will is everything. His service is paramount.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 48.

As to the fact that man must entirely forget himself. By this is meant that he should arise in the mystery of sacrifice; and that is the disappearance of mortal sentiments and the extinction of blameable morals which constitute the temporal gloom, and not that the physical health should be changed into weakness and debility.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 244.

Asceticism is not necessary. A soul grows by the exercise of human virtues and the observance of human morals and by divine favour. The extreme asceticism of the saints was superstition. The monasticism of the Christian church was mistaken. St. Paul was responsible for much of this because in one of his epistles he praises those who do not marry and prophesied that sects would arise which would not marry. St. Paul disapproved of marriage. But God did not give us good gifts that we should reject them. He created all these blessings that His servants may bless Him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from an article in *Fortnightly Review*, June 1911, by Miss E. S. Stevens.

In this day or dispensation asceticism is of the spiritual type, for spiritual asceticism is right and is productive of results. On the one hand a man may attain virtues by the inherent force of his nature; on the other hand these virtues may be due to the weakness of his nature. For instance, an infant is detached from the World. That severance or detachment is due to its weakness. But a wise man having passed to the stage of maturity will likewise be detached from the world and care nothing for the world. Severance at that stage is indicative of inherent strength of character. A withered arm is incapable of stoning or striking anybody. That harmlessness is not due to virtue, it is due to imperfection. But if a person whose arm and hand are well and whole shall not strike, then it is a symptom of strength and virtue. A man who is a mute and dumb cannot lie, but that lack of lying is an indication of his weakness, not of his perfection. But he whose tongue speaketh and yet lieth not is verily mighty. ... A dead man is harmless, no harm can come from him, but that is not eulogy. But if he be alive and harmless that is eulogizing him. Now we come to the subject.

By enduring ascetic hardships the [VIII:6:61] powers of nature will undergo dissolution which will result in great weakness whereby one is made incapable of doing anything. He will not show any temper. He will not do any evil. He will not cause a riot; he is quiet. He is wronged; he is like a lamb. But this is due to weakness. But he who has attained spiritual asceticism acquires these attributes by strength of character. When a man by nature, that is to say, by some imperfection of nature, is incapable of committing uncommendable acts, that is nothing in his favour. But if he by sheer force of will and spiritual training attains to a state of character which prevents him from doing such things, this is a great credit to him. The insane man is entirely detached from all bonds and ties; he is absolutely free from all attachments. But this is not a commendation to him. But when the disciples of Christ, who were in a normal state of mind and body let go of everything in life, that is indeed commendable. Physical asceticism will in the course of time cause absolute atrophy of the parts, resulting in the greatest weakness. There will be no love of transgression, no attachment to this life, no covetousness, no aggressiveness, but all this is due to great weakness of powers. But spiritual asceticism will help one to attain to such blossoming of powers as will enable him to make up

his mind against the things that are not to be and will encourage him in the things to be. In this dispensation there is no physical or material asceticism. The spiritual are ascetics, and this asceticism is expressed by training souls and educating humanity in morals and in the acquisition of the qualities of the Kingdom.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Akka Lights*; Notes of Mr and Mrs Joseph H. Hannen, February 1909.

“Fasting is a symbol. Fasting signifies abstinence from lust. Physical fasting is a symbol of that abstinence, and is a reminder; that is, just as a person abstains from physical appetites, he is to abstain from self-appetites and self-desires. But mere abstention from food has no effect on the spirit. It is a mere symbol, a reminder. Otherwise, it is of no importance. Fasting for this purpose does not mean entire abstinence from food. The golden rule as to food is, do not take too much or too little. Moderation is necessary. There is a sect in India who practise extreme abstinence, and gradually reduce their food until they exist on almost nothing. But their intelligence suffers. A man is not fit to do service for God in brains or body if he is weakened by lack of food. He cannot see clearly.”

When told of American experiments whereby the mind was supposed to benefit personally by abstinence, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “It is imagination. ... To sum up, God knows better than all. He has given us an appetite; therefore we should eat. If the body be deprived of that which is necessary for it the mind suffers. God asks of us according to our capacity. If a man who has only sufficient strength to carry fifty kilos be burdened with a hundred kilos he will fall. Moderation and common sense must be used.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from an article by Miss E. S. Stevens in the *Fortnightly Review*, June 1911.

Well done! Well done! Thou hast desired the evanescence of thy will in the will of God. ... (p. 267.)

The reality of man is like unto a sea, and the Holy Power is like unto brilliant pearls. Not until the sea moveth in waves doth it throw a shell of pearls upon the shore. Therefore if thou wishest to become heavenly cut thy attention from the earth, that is, cease to attach thy heart unto this world and seek attachment to the Kingdom and turn unto God. And when thou doest this thou wilt become the mercy of God and a gift of the Almighty. (p. 326.)

Man must become evanescent in God, [VIII:6:63] must forget his own selfish conditions in order that he may rise to the station of sacrifice. This station should be attained to such a degree that if he sleeps it should not be for pleasure but to rest the body in order to work better, to speak better, to explain more beautifully, to serve the servants of God and to prove His truths. When he remains awake he should seek to be attentive, serve the Cause of God and sacrifice his own stations for those of God. When he attains to this station the confirmations of the Holy Spirit will surely reach him and man with this power can withstand all who inhabit the earth. (p. 460.)

No one will obtain this great favour save he who cuts himself from this world, being attracted by the love of God; who is dead to the desires and appetites of self, sincere to God in all things and meek, humble, imploring, pleading and lowly before God. (p. 5.)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*.

By being severed from the world I do not mean holding in contempt the things of the world, for civilization and education are the means of progress. I mean that one must not attach his heart to the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Table Talks with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 23.

We must not be attached to anything in the world. It is not worth one thought. We must not desire for those we love that they should be captivated by the attachments of this world. Nay, rather, we should desire for them eternal things, the things of the Kingdom. We [VIII:6:64] should seek to free ourselves from all attachments. The things of this world are like the waves of the sea. It is impossible that they should endure. In comparison, the things of the Kingdom are like rocks, firm and enduring.

If one is attached to the demands of the human body he will never be at rest, for the body is constantly demanding change. This tree growing before the window, it is impossible that it should not die, no matter how it is tended and how well it is watered. How foolish to spend one's time and energy on that which cannot endure. If one is turned toward heavenly things he will become like a rock. But if his heart be attached to anything in this world it will become subject to change. Attachments are like ropes which drag us to the earth when we try to fly. To be detached is to be free, is to be flying in a new ether, is to be light, is to be joyous—and a Bahá'í should be joyous. He should attain to such a station of joy that the world will enquire as to his secret. If he be entirely detached and emptied of self he will be enabled to start in a cold heart a great fire.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Quoted from a letter written by Miss Juliet Thompson by Mrs Isabel Fraser, Ramleh, 24 September 1913.

The mystery of sacrifice is a most great subject and is inexhaustible. Briefly it is as follows: The moth is a sacrifice to the candle. The spring of water is a sacrifice to the thirsty one. The sincere lover is a sacrifice to the loved one and the longing one is a sacrifice to the beloved. One must wholly forget himself, must become a wanderer (in the Abode of the Beloved). He must seek the good pleasure of the True One, desire the face of the True One, and walk in the path of the True One; he must become intoxicated with His cup, resigned in His hand and close his eyes to life and living in order that he may shine like unto the light of truth from the horizon of Eternity. This is the first station of sacrifice.

The second station of sacrifice is as follows: Man must become severed from the human world; be delivered from the darkness of this world; the illumination of mercifulness must shine and radiate in him, the nether world become as non-existent and the Kingdom become manifest. He must become like iron thrown within the furnace of fire. The qualities of iron such as blackness, coldness and solidity which belong to the earth disappear and vanish while the characteristics of fire such as redness, glowing and heat which belong to the Kingdom become apparent and visible. Therefore, iron hath sacrificed its qualities and grades to the fire, acquiring the virtues of that element.

Likewise, when souls are released from the fetters of the world, the imperfections of mankind and animalistic darkness and have stepped into the realm of detachment, have partaken from the out-pouring of the Placeless and have acquired lordly perfection, they are the "ransomed ones" of the Sun of Truth, who are hastening to the altar of heart and soul.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 354. [VIII:6:65]

The greatest sacrifice is to forget one's self entirely, to sacrifice everything, as did Christ.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Daily Lessons Received at Acca*, p. 21. (Read all of this chapter.)

Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away, drop by drop, in order to give forth its flame of light.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from *An Early Pilgrimage* by Mrs May Maxwell.

I wish for the happiness and prosperity of the believers even in this material world, but they must not be attracted by it or attached to it. Extreme wealth or utter poverty should be equal to them.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Table Talks with Abdul-Baha Abbas*, p. 10.

Concentrate the soul upon God so that it may become as a fountain pouring out the Water of Life to a thirsty world. Live up to the principles of sacrifice. The world will then become as nothing and be without power to attract you away from God. Sacrifice your will to the will of God. The Kingdom is attained by the one who forgets self. Everything becomes yours by renunciation of everything.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 12. [VIII:6:66]

All the days of his (Abu'l-Faḍl's) life were spent in the service of the Cause of God. His will and desire were devoted to the promotion of the Cause of God, to the promotion of the message of the Kingdom. He did not think of worldly comfort and tranquillity. He never tried to protect his life. He was not at all attached to the ephemeral objects of this contingent world. All his thoughts, ideals, conceptions and aims were centred upon the service of the world of the Merciful. Praise be to God, that his intellectual and spiritual life was very fruitful. All his books contain indubitable proofs and evidences concerning this impregnable, blessed Cause. Sanctified and holy, divine and spiritual, he ascended from this mortal world to the realm of light.

The disinterested actions and free-hearted deeds of a person proclaim with the sound of a trumpet his loyalty and sincerity in the Cause. He is in no need of self-justification. He lives above and beyond the criticism of petty and dwarfed assailers of his integrity and purity of motives. Their censure does not touch him. The innate nobility of his soul is not tarnished, the glories of his work are not beclouded. The river of his spiritual ideality, creative power and imaginative faculty is not dried up. The sea of his sympathy and increasing hopefulness and direct activity in the Cause is not calmed down. With a deep insight, holy vision and fresh inspiration he will cause the complete retreat of all his old enemies. With zest, unfailing courage and undisturbed spirit he will apply himself to new victories in channels of service, broader fields of labour, higher planes of triumph and the solution of vaster and more intricate problems by the magic wand of his determination. Thus he changes every stumbling block placed in his path to dishearten him from further progress into a stepping stone, advances with confident steps, ever rising higher, never looking backward but always forward, setting aside imperturbably all the seeming difficulties and finally planting his feet on the summit of the mountain of success, beatitude and undiminished glory. Such a man was Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl. On such an unshakeable rock every person must lay the foundation of the palace of his life, so that the howling of the winds, the fury of the storms and the onslaught of the wild elements may not in the least shake it. The life of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was God-controlled and God-propelled. Not for one second did he set his own will above the will of God. He effaced self and lived eternally in God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 8 February 1914.

How humble and meek he (Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl) was! We tried our best to persuade him to keep a servant, but he would always gently decline. He desired to serve the believers personally. Whenever the believers and the non-believers called on him, although he was

sick, weak and in fever, yet he would get up and prepare tea and serve his callers with his own hand. All his anxieties revolved around this supreme object to make people satisfied and happy at any cost.

During all the days of his life I never heard from him the use of the word “I”—“I said so”, or “I wrote so and so”. He would say: “This servant requested them”, or “This servant begged the believers”. He never made a display of his knowledge, nor wished to impress upon the mind of any person that he knew such and such information. He was evanescent and lived in the station of nothingness. He was self-sacrificing at the Holy Threshold. No one inhaled from him the odour of superiority.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 22 January 1914. [VIII:6:67]

The guidance of God is that which will always guide people in the right way. All human beings are earthly; their hearts are connected with this [VIII:6:68] world. Day and night their thoughts and occupations are earthly; all belong to this world. They think about the honours of this world, or about the riches and wealth of this world, or of name and fame in this world. Their days and nights pass in this way. The guidance of God makes it evident and plain when the way of the Kingdom, the divine path, is opened, that this is the road of the Kingdom.

It is not sufficient only to distinguish the way of the Kingdom, only to discover the heavenly way: you must travel upon it until the end is reached. For example, that a man discovers the way to America is not sufficient. He must travel in it that he may reach that country. If he remains for years discovering more about the way yet does not travel by it, he will never arrive. It is not sufficient for a child to know where the school is; he must study in it that he may gain knowledge. Faith is not merely to know which is the school and to recognize the teacher; one must acquire knowledge in this school. If one does not gain knowledge it is useless to know of the school.

This is what Christ said: “Ye shall know the tree by its fruits.” If you see one who is truthful, who really believes and is just, who is attracted to the Kingdom, and whose will is annihilated. in the way of God, then you will know he is a tree of the Kingdom, if he shows forth all these qualities. If you see one whose heart is attached to this world and in whom there is no truthfulness or detachment or turning to God, one who is not occupied in praising and speaking of God, or in attraction to the love of God, then you will know he is a tree of darkness. For true belief is not only to acknowledge the oneness of God: by belief we mean that the reality of a man will be characterized by divine characteristics. If his reality is dark, he will become enlightened; if he is heedless, he will become conscious; if he is sleeping, he will be awakened; if he is earthly, he will become heavenly; if he is satanic, he will become divine. This is the meaning of true belief.

Therefore I say that man must travel in the way of God. Day by day he must endeavour to become better, his belief must increase and become firmer, his good qualities and his turning to God must be greater, the fire of his love must flame more brightly; then day by day he will make progress, for to stop advancing is the means of going back. The bird when he flies soars ever higher and higher, for as soon as he stops flying he will come down. Every day, in the morning when arising you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong, and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

Do not let the desires of the self-find a place within you; for it is certain that when you

reach the highest station of spirituality one worldly desire can cause your downfall. The spirit is like a bird; when it flies in the air it is always mounting. But the self is like the hunter who is thinking all the time how to catch the bird. As when a bird is in the air the hunter aims at it and brings it down, so is it with the human desires in the soul. You will see that by one arrow, one shot, it will be brought low. This arrow is the connection with this world, the occupations of this world, the desires of this world, the honours of this world.

In many ways the hunter will stop the spirit from ascending. That is why you must ask and implore and entreat: "O God, protect me from myself!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from pamphlet entitled *True Belief*.

VIII:7, 13 July 1917 [VIII:7:69]

Religion and science in the light of the Bahá'í Revelation

J. E. Esslemont, M.B.

One of the fundamental teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that true science and true religion must always be in harmony. Truth is one and wherever conflict appears it is due not to truth but to error. Between so-called science and so-called religion there has been conflict all down the ages, but looking back on these conflicts in the light of fuller truth we can trace them every time to ignorance, prejudice, vanity, greed, narrow-mindedness, intolerance, obstinacy, vested interests or something of the kind,—something foreign to the true spirit of both science and religion for the spirit of both is one.

As Huxley tells us, "The great deeds of philosophers have been less the fruit of their intellect than the direction of that intellect by an eminently religious tone of mind. Truth has yielded herself rather to their patience, their love, their single-heartedness and self-denial than to their logical acumen." Boole, the mathematician, assures us that "geometric induction is essentially a process of prayer—an appeal from the finite mind to the Infinite for light on finite concerns." The great prophets of religion and science have never denounced one another. They have always reverently received the torch of inspiration from their predecessors in the prophetic series, and lighted the way for their successors. It is the unworthy followers of these great world-teachers—worshippers of the letter but not of the spirit of their teaching—who have always been the persecutors of the later prophets and the bitterest opponents of progress.

They have studied the light of the particular revelation which they hold sacred, and have defined its properties and peculiarities as seen by their limited vision, with the utmost care and precision. That is for them the one true light. If God in His infinite bounty sends fuller light from another quarter, and the torch of inspiration burns brighter than before from a new torch-holder, instead of welcoming the new light and worshipping with renewed gratitude the Father of all lights, they are angry and alarmed. This new light does not correspond with their definitions. It has not the orthodox colour and does not shine from the orthodox place, therefore it must at all costs be extinguished lest it lead men astray into the paths of heresy! Many enemies of the prophets are of this type—blind leaders of the blind, who oppose new and fuller truth in the supposed interests of what they believe to be *the* truth. Others are of baser sort and are either moved by selfish interests to fight against truth, or else block the path of progress by reason of spiritual deadness and inertia. The appearance of a prophet is always a testing time for mankind—a day of judgement, in which the sheep are separated from the goats, those who worship the living reality of truth from those who worship only the material garments in which it is clothed. Alas! how few there have always been who were ready to welcome truth in a new garment—to welcome the spiritual light when it shone from a new torch!

The great prophets of religion have always been, at their coming, despised [VIII:7:70] and

rejected of men. Both they and their early followers have given their backs to the smiters and sacrificed their possessions and their lives in the path of God. Even in our own times this has been so. Since 1844 some twenty thousand of the Bábís and Bahá'ís in Persia have suffered cruel deaths for their faith, and many more have borne imprisonment, poverty, exile and degradation. This latest of the great religions has been baptized in blood more than its predecessors, and martyrdoms have continued down to the present year.

With the prophets of science the same thing has happened. Giordano Bruno was burned as a heretic in CE 1600 for teaching, amongst other things, that the earth moved around the sun. A few years later the veteran philosopher Galileo had to abjure the same doctrine on his knees, in order to escape the same fate. In later times Darwin, and the pioneers of modern geology were vehemently denounced for daring to dispute the teaching of Holy Writ that the world was made in six days, and in the year 4004 BCE! The opposition to new scientific truth has not all come from the church, however. The orthodox in science have been just as hostile to progress as the orthodox in religion. Columbus was laughed to scorn by the so-called scientists of his day who proved to their own satisfaction that if ships did succeed in getting down to the Antipodes over the side of the globe, it would be absolutely impossible for them to get up again! Galvani, the pioneer of electrical science, was scoffed at by his learned colleagues and called the "frogs' dancing master". Harvey, who discovered the circulation of the blood, was ridiculed and persecuted by his professional brethren on account of his heresy and driven from his lecture chair. When Stephenson invented his locomotive engine, European mathematicians of the time, instead of opening their eyes and studying the facts, went on for years proving from their preconceived ideas that an engine on smooth rails could never pull a load, as the wheels would simply slip round and the train get no "forarder".

To examples like these one might add indefinitely, both from ancient and modern history, and even from our own times. Dr Zamenhof, the inventor of Esperanto, (who has just passed away), had to battle for his wonderful international language against the same sort of ridicule, contempt and stupid opposition which greeted Columbus, Galvani, and Stephenson. Even Esperanto which was given to the world less than thirty years ago has had its martyrs. In the last half century or so, however, a change has come over the spirit of the times, a New Light of Truth has arisen which has already made the controversies of last century seem strangely out of date.

Where are now the boastful materialists and dogmatic atheists who, only a few short years ago were threatening to drive religion out of the world? And where the preachers who so confidently consigned those who did not accept their dogmas to the fires of hell and the tortures of the damned? Echoes of their clamour we may still hear, but their day is done and their doctrines are discredited. We can see now that the doctrines around which their controversies waxed most bitter were neither true science nor true religion. What scientist in the light of modern psychical research, could still maintain that "brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile"—or that decay of the body is necessarily accompanied by decay of the soul?

We now see that thought to be really free must soar to the realms of psychical and spiritual phenomena and not be confined to the material only. We realize that what we now know about nature is but as a drop in the ocean compared with what remains to be discovered. We therefore freely admit the possibility of miracles, not indeed in the sense of the breaking of nature's laws, but as manifestations of the operation of subtle forces which are still unknown to us, as electricity and X-rays to our ancestors. [VIII:7:71] On the other hand who among our leading religious teachers would still declare that it is necessary to salvation to believe that the world was made in six days, or that the description of the plagues of Egypt as given in the book of Exodus is literally true, or that the sun stood still in the heavens (i.e., that the earth stopped its rotation) to let Joshua pursue his enemies? Such beliefs may still be repeated in

form, but who, even among the clergy, accepts them in their literal sense and without reservation? Their hold on people's hearts and minds has gone or is fast going.

The religious world owes a debt of gratitude to the men of science who helped to tear such worn-out creeds and dogmas to tatters and allowed the truth to step forth free. But the scientific world owes an even heavier debt to the real saints and mystics who, through good report and ill, held to the vital truths of spiritual experience and demonstrated to an incredulous world that the life is more than meat and the unseen greater than the seen. These scientists and saints were like the mountain peaks which caught the first rays of the rising sun and reflected them to the lower world, but now the sun has risen and its rays are illuminating the world.

In the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh we have a glorious revelation of truth which satisfies both heart and mind, in which religion and science are at one. Before going further let us first hear what the Bahá'í teachings say about the way in which we must seek the truth:

The search for truth

Man must cut himself free from all prejudice and from the result of his own imagination so that he may search for truth unhindered. He must accept nothing as final which he has received simply on the authority of parents or ancestors or teachers. He must aim at seeing all things with his own eyes, understanding them with his own mind. If he accepts any creed or doctrine which is either opposed to his reason or beyond his comprehension, he is putting into practice superstition and not true faith. Teachers are necessary, of course, but they must be educators, not crammers. The real educator draws out the innate powers of his pupils so that they can grasp things for themselves, and does not aim simply at packing their memories with ready made information and rules. The good pupil is he who while accepting his teacher as an indispensable guide and help, yet tests every step of his progress by the light of his own reason and intuition—in other words, by the Inner Light of the Divine Spirit in his own mind and heart. That Inner Light must be his final authority. "Turn thy sight unto thyself that thou mayest find Me standing within thee powerful, mighty and supreme." In this spirit of search let us now examine the main features of the teaching and see whether it affords a satisfactory basis for the reconciliation of reason and faith.

True agnosticism

The Bahá'í teaching is at one with science and philosophy in declaring the essential nature of God to be entirely beyond human comprehension. As emphatically as Huxley and Spencer teach that the nature of the Great First Cause is unknowable, does Bahá'u'lláh teach that "God comprehends all; He cannot be comprehended." To knowledge of the Divine Essence "the way is barred; seeking is forbidden." How can the finite comprehend the Infinite? How can a drop contain the ocean or a mote dancing in the sunbeam embrace the universe? Yet in each drop of water are hidden oceans of meaning and in each mote is concealed a whole universe of significances, reaching far beyond the ken of the most learned scientist. The chemist and physicist, pursuing their researches into the nature of matter, have passed from masses to molecules, from molecules to atoms, from atoms to electrons and ether, but at every step the difficulties of the search increase till the most profound intellect can pene- [VIII:7:72] trate no further, and can but bow in silent awe before the Great First Cause which remains ever shrouded in inscrutable mystery.

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies.
I hold you here, root and all in my hand,
Little flower; but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,

I should know what God and man is.”
(Tennyson)

If the flower in the crannied wall, if even a single atom of matter, presents mysteries which the most profound intellect cannot solve, how is it possible for man to comprehend the universe? How dare he pretend to define or describe the Infinite Cause of all things? All theological speculations about the nature of God’s Essence are thus swept aside as foolish and futile.

Knowledge of God

But if the Essence is unknowable, the manifestations of its bounty are everywhere apparent. If the First Cause cannot be conceived, its effects appeal to our every faculty. A cat cannot comprehend the sun or fathom the mysteries of its daily appearance and disappearance, its composition, or its career through celestial space, but she can bask in its beams and appreciate their warmth. Her eyes are a miracle of organization which enable her to guide her movements by means of the sun’s rays reflected from every visible object in her environment. At every step she skilfully uses these rays, although she may never dream that they have any connection with the sun. There may be cats who have never seen the sun and have no idea of its existence, yet at every moment their lives depend on it, and they know very well how to take advantage in a thousand ways of the beneficent effects of this unknown cause. So it is with our relation to God. At every moment we are absolutely dependent on Him, whether we know it or not. He has, however, given us the power to know Him through His works. All things are from Him, and just as knowledge of a painter’s pictures gives to the connoisseur a true knowledge of the artist, so knowledge of the universe in any of its aspects—knowledge of nature or of human nature, of things visible or of things invisible—is knowledge of God’s handiwork, and gives to the seeker for Divine Truth a real knowledge of His glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge.” (Psalm 19:1)

The Divine Manifestations

All things manifest the bounty of God with greater or less clearness, as all material objects exposed to the sun reflect its light in greater or less degree. A heap of soot reflects a little, a stone reflects more, a piece of chalk more still, but in none of these reflections can we trace the form and colour of the glorious orb. A perfect mirror however reflects the sun’s very form and colour, so that looking into it is like looking at the sun itself. So is it with the way in which things speak to us of God. The stone can tell us something of the divine attributes, the flower can tell us more, the animal with its marvellous senses, instincts and powers of movement, more still. In the lowest of our fellow-men we can trace wonderful faculties which tell of a wonderful Creator. In the poet, the saint, the genius, we find a higher revelation still, but the great prophets and founders of religions, like Moses, Christ, Muḥammad and Bahá’u’lláh are the perfect mirrors by which the love and wisdom of God are reflected to the rest of mankind. Other men’s mirrors have been dulled by the stains and accretions of selfishness and prejudice, but these were pure and without blemish—wholly devoted to the will of God. Thus they became the greatest educators of mankind. The divine teachings and the power of the Holy Spirit proceeding through them have been and are the [VIII:7:73] cause of the progress of humanity, for God helps men through other men (embodied or disembodied). Each man who is higher in the ascent of life is the means of helping those below him, and those who are highest of all are the helpers of all mankind. It is as if all men were connected together by elastic cords. If a man rises a little above the general level of his fellows, the cords tighten. His former companions tend to drag him back, but with a precisely equal force he draws them upwards. The higher he gets the more he feels the weight of the whole world pulling him back, and the more dependent he is on the divine support, which reaches him through the few

who are still above him. Highest of all are the great Prophets and Saviours, the Divine “Manifestations”—those Perfect Men who were each, in their day, without peer or companion, and bore the burden of the whole world, supported by God alone. “The burden of our sins was upon him” was true of each of them. Each was the “Way, the Truth and the Life” to his followers. Each was the unobstructed channel of God’s bounty to every heart that would receive it.

The love that flows from the “Manifestation” is God’s love. The wisdom is God’s wisdom, the spirit is God’s spirit. He is indeed divine—God manifest in a human temple; but God is One, and the same One God conferred the gift of His Holy Spirit through all the “Manifestations”, not indeed according to His power to give, but according to the people’s power to receive. The messages differed, because the peoples for whom they were given were at different stages of development, but the differences were only in the externals, the forms and ceremonies, the rules and punishments, not in the inner spiritual realities of love to God and love to man which have been the heart and soul of all the great religions.

Creation

Bahá’u’lláh teaches that the universe is without beginning in time. It is a perpetual emanation from the Great First Cause. The Creator always had His creation and always will have. This is in harmony with the teachings of science regarding the conservation of matter and energy. Worlds and systems may come and go, but the universe remains. All things that undergo composition, in time undergo decomposition, but the component elements remain. The creation of a world, a daisy or a human body is not “making something out of nothing”, it is but a bringing together of elements which before were scattered, a making visible of something which before was hidden. By and by the elements will again be scattered, the form will disappear, but nothing is really lost or annihilated, ever new combinations and forms arise from the ruins of the old. Bahá’u’lláh has no quarrel with the scientists who claim, not six thousand, but millions and billions of years for the history of the earth’s creation. The evolution theory does not deny Creative Power. It only tries to describe the method of its manifestation, and the wonderful story of the material universe which the astronomer, the geologist, the physicist and the biologist are gradually unfolding to our gaze is, rightly appreciated, far more capable of evoking the deepest reverence and worship, than the crude and bald account of creation given in the Hebrew Scriptures. The old account in the book of Genesis had however the advantage of indicating by a few bold strokes of symbolism, the essential spiritual meanings of the story, as a master painter may by a few strokes of the brush convey expressions which the mere plodder with the most laborious accuracy of detail may utterly fail to express. If the material detail blinds us to the spiritual meaning then we should be better without it, but if we have once firmly grasped the essential meaning of the whole scheme, then knowledge of the detail will give our conception a wonderful added richness and [VIII:7:74] splendour and make it a magnificent picture instead of a mere sketch plan. Of course, even the most magnificent picture which the trained imagination can frame is in itself but the rudest and crudest of sketches compared with the wonderful universe it attempts to portray.

The descent of man

Neither does Bahá’u’lláh quarrel with the biologist who finds for the body of man, a history reaching back in the development of the species, through millions of years—a history which, starting from a very simple, apparently insignificant form, gradually develops in the course of untold generations, becoming more and more complex, and better and better organized until the man of the present day is reached. Each individual human body develops through such a series of stages from a tiny round speck of jelly-like protoplasm to the fully developed man. If this is true of the individual, as nobody denies, why should we consider it derogatory to

human dignity to admit a similar development for the species? This is a very different thing from claiming (as Darwin is popularly although quite erroneously supposed to have claimed) that man is descended from the monkey. The human embryo may at one time resemble a fish with gill-slits and tail, but it is not a fish. It is a human embryo. So the human species may at various stages of its long development have resembled to the outward eye various species of lower animals, but it was still the human species, possessing the mysterious latent power of developing into man as we know him today, nay more, of developing in the future, we trust, into something far higher still.

Body and soul

The materialist idea that “mind is a function of matter” is no longer tenable in the light of psychical research. A large body of scientific evidence has gradually been accumulating which in the opinion of impartial but highly critical investigators is amply sufficient to establish beyond all question the fact of a life after death—of the continued life and activity of the conscious “soul” after the dissolution of the material body. As F. W. H. Myers says in his *Human Personality*: “Observation, experiment, inference, have led many enquirers, of whom I am one, to a belief in direct or telepathic intercommunication, not only between the minds of men still on earth, but between minds or spirits still on earth and spirits departed. Such a discovery opens the door also to revelation. ... We have shown that amid much deception and self-deception, fraud and illusion, veritable manifestations do reach us from beyond the grave.”

The Bahá'í teachings with regard to body and soul, and the life after death, are quite in harmony with the results of psychical research. They teach that death is but a new birth—the escape from the prison of the body into a larger life. They teach that soul can affect soul independently of spoken or written communication, and that this influence is independent of the body and can take place whether the soul is embodied or disembodied. They advocate the use of prayers for the “dead” and teach that mutual communion and help are still possible between the “living” and the so-called “dead”. They speak much of the “Supreme Concourse” of holy souls, whose assistance is available for every human being who is advancing in the path of God. The relation of the soul to the body they picture as like that of a musician to his instrument. If the instrument is broken and out of tune, the musician will no longer be able to produce beautiful music from it, although he may be as capable as ever. So when the body is diseased and out of order, the soul can no longer adequately manifest through it on the material plane, and to the eye which sees only the body it might appear as if the whole man had decayed, instead of only the material instrument. [VIII:7:75]

Heaven and hell

The Bahá'ís regard the descriptions of heaven and hell given in some of the older religious writings as symbolic, like the Biblical story of the Creation, and not literally true. According to them, heaven is the state of perfection and hell that of imperfection, heaven is harmony with God's will and with one's fellows, and hell is the want of such harmony, heaven is the condition of spiritual life, and hell that of spiritual death. A man may be either in heaven or in hell while still in the body. The joys of heaven are spiritual joys, and the pains of hell consist in the deprivation of these joys. There is no worse hell in the after-death life than the hell in which many of the people around us are living. Those who have not been “born again”, whose spiritual life has not awakened, are dead while they live, and although their souls continue to exist after the death of the body, their condition compared with that of those who rejoice in the love of God is as death. Even for those who have died in ignorance and sin, however, there is still hope, because the bounty of God is infinite. For these also we should pray, for our prayers can bear them help from the Source of all help.

The Bahá'ís believe in progress in the after-life as well as in the present. The divine worlds

are infinite, and the possibilities of progress in knowledge, love and good-will are without limit. This progress depends on God's infinite bounty, and that bounty is available for all who seek it. The only condition is that we must seek it. "Love Me that I may love thee, for if thou lovest Me not, My love can never reach thee." As long as we are content with the animal and material side of life and prefer self to God, so long are we spiritually dead. It is only when we turn to God and say with all our hearts, "Not my will but Thine be done," that we become spiritually alive and enter the heaven of the blessed.

With such a view as this, surely no true lover of science could quarrel. F. W. H. Myers says in the work previously quoted which summarizes much of the work of the Psychical Research Society: "By discovery and by revelation certain theses have been provisionally established with regard to such departed souls as we have been able to encounter. First and chiefly I at least see ground to believe that their state is one of endless evolution in wisdom and in love. Their loves of earth persist, and most of all those highest loves which find their outlet in adoration and worship. ... Evil to them seems less a terrible than a slavish thing. It is embodied in no mighty potentate; rather it forms an isolating madness from which higher spirits strive to free the distorted soul. There needs no chastisement of fire; self-knowledge is man's punishment and his reward; self-knowledge and the nearness or the aloofness of companion souls. For in that world love is actually self-preservation; the communion of saints not only adorns but constitutes the life everlasting. Nay, from the laws of telepathy it follows that that communion is valid to us here and now. Even now the love of souls departed makes answer to our invocations. Even now our loving memory—love is itself a prayer—supports and strengthens those delivered spirits upon their upward way."

The nature of evil

According to the Bahá'í philosophy it follows from the doctrine of the unity of God that there can be no such thing as positive evil. There can only be One Infinite. If there were any other power in the universe outside of or opposed to the One, then the One would not be Infinite. In the realm of created things however, there is variety—variety of light and shade, of colour, of consistence, of taste, of smell. Among human beings there is variety of physical strength, of health, of intelligence, of courage, of every possible faculty and attribute. [VIII:7:83] With regard to every one of these qualities however the differences among different people are differences of degree, not of essence. Just as darkness is but the absence or lesser degree of light, so evil is but the absence or lesser degree of good—the undeveloped state. A bad man is a man with the higher side of his nature still undeveloped. If we are selfish, the evil is not in our love of self—all love, even self-love, is good, is divine. The evil is that we have such a poor, inadequate, misguided love of self and such a lack of love for others and for God. We look upon ourselves as only a superior sort of animal and foolishly pamper our lower nature as we might pamper a pet dog—with worse results in our own case than in that of the dog. We may be brilliantly intellectual with regard to material things but we are blind to the things of the spirit and lacking in the higher and nobler part of life. Evil is always lack of life. If the lower side of man's nature is disproportionately developed, the remedy is not less life for that side, but *more* life for the higher side, so that the balance may be restored. "I am come," said Christ, "that ye may have life and that ye may have it more abundantly." That is what we all need—life, more life, the life that is life indeed!

The Bahá'í teaching of unity

"Ye are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, flowers of one garden, sons and daughters of one Father whose name is Love." That is one of the most characteristic sayings of Bahá'u'lláh, and another is like it: "Glory is not his who loves his (own) country, but glory is his who loves his kind." Unity—unity of mankind, and of all created beings in God—is the main theme of his teaching. Men must cast away all prejudices of race, religion, nation, class

and sect, and realize that they are all “leaves of one tree”. As the leaf cannot reach its best development unless the whole tree is healthy, so neither can we attain the highest life of which we are capable until the whole of humanity does so too. One man cannot be truly rich, so long as his brothers are poor, nor can he be perfectly healthy so long as his brothers are sick. We are all members of one body, and the spirit that animates that body is God’s Spirit.

Each individual life is but a fragment of the whole and cannot live apart from the whole any more than a single muscle-cell or brain-cell from the human body could live apart from the rest of the body. Just as each cell of the body must live not for itself, but in the service of the whole man and in obedience to his will, so each individual man must live not for himself, but in the service of humanity and in obedience to God’s will. Only so can humanity be healthy. Only so can each man truly prosper. Never must self-interest, or family interest, or church interest, or national interest or any limited interest whatever take precedence of our supreme duties to mankind and to God. God first! If our attitude to Him be right then we shall serve aright ourselves, our families, our church, our nation, our kind. Devotion to God—severance from everything that would interfere with our devotion to Him—that is the one great secret of successful living. All the evil and misery in the world come from one cause—forsaking the path of God’s will and saying, “My will not Thine be done.”

Bahá’u’lláh has given us a new and wonderful revelation of God’s will. If men and nations will but obey His commands, the world will be a paradise in- [VIII:7:84] deed! Now for the first time in the history of the world have the mechanical difficulties in the way of the unity of mankind been overcome by railway trains and steamships, tunnels and aeroplanes, post office and printing press, telegraph and telephone. Now for the first time in the world (at any rate since the Tower of Babel!) has a solution for the language difficulty been found, and now for the first time in the world, as it seems to me, has a complete and adequate plan for the reconciliation of the conflicting interests of mankind been given to the world. Bahá’u’lláh has raised the Standard of Peace and Unity and called on all mankind to gather under its ample folds: “O people of the earth! Make not the religion of God a cause for variance among you. Verily it was revealed for the purpose of unifying the whole world. Blessed is he who loves the world simply for the sake of his generous Lord.” “These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the Most Great Peace shall come, and all nations shall be as one kindred and one family.”

Here again the harmony between true religion and science is evident. With every advance in science the oneness of the universe and the interdependence of its parts has become more clearly evident. The astronomer’s domain is inseparably bound up with the physicist’s, the physicist’s with the chemist’s, the chemist’s with the biologist’s, the biologist’s with the psychologist’s, and so on. Every new discovery in one field of research throws new light on other fields. Just as physical science has shown that every particle of matter in the universe attracts and influences every other particle, no matter how minute or how distant, so psychical science is finding that every soul in the universe affects and influences every other soul. Prince Kropotkin, in his book on *Mutual Aid*, shows most clearly that even among the lower animals mutual aid is absolutely necessary to continued life, while in the case of man, the progress of civilization depends on the increasing, substitution of mutual aid for mutual enmity. “Each for all and all for each” is the only principle on which a community can prosper.

Conclusion

All the signs of the times indicate that we are at the dawn of a new era in the history of mankind. Hitherto the young eagle of humanity has clung to the old eyrie in the solid rock of selfishness and materialism. Its attempts to use its wings have been timid and tentative. It has had restless longings for something still unattained. More and more it has been chafing in the confinement of the old dogmas and orthodoxies. But now the era of confinement is at an

end, and it can launch on the wings of faith and reason into the higher realms of spiritual love and truth. It will no longer be earth-bound as it was before its wings had grown, but will soar at will to the regions of wide outlook and glorious freedom.

One thing is necessary, however, if its flight is to be sure and steady. Its wings must not only be strong, but they must act in perfect harmony and co-ordination. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says: “It cannot fly with one wing alone. If it tries to fly with the wing of religion alone it will land in the slough of superstition, and if it tries to fly with the wing of science alone it will end in the dreary bog of materialism.” Perfect harmony between religion and science is the *sine qua non*¹ of the higher life for humanity. When that is achieved, and every child is trained not only in the study of the sciences and arts, but equally in love to all mankind and in radiant acquiescence to the will of God as revealed in the progress of evolution and the teachings of the prophets, and through the Inner Light in our own hearts, then and not till then, shall the Kingdom of God have come on earth and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Then and not till then shall the Most Great Peace have fully come.

VIII:8, 1 August 1917 [VIII:8:85]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)²

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon³

Chapter VI

The Power of the Holy Spirit

... [VIII:8:97]

There is a wonderful power and strength which belongs to the human spirit, but it must receive confirmation from the Holy Spirit. ... If it is aided by the bounty of the Holy Spirit, it will show great power, it will discover realities, it will be informed of the mysteries. Direct all the attention to the Holy Spirit, and call the attention of every soul to it. Then you will see wonderful signs.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá [VIII:8:98]

The light is of four kinds: First, the light of the sun. ... Second, the light of the eye. ... Third, the light of the intellect. ... Fourth, the light of guidance. This last is the supreme Light, the conscious reality which comprehends mysteries.

“Can this last ever be cognizable through the special senses, as the eye?” was asked.

“By the insight,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Heavenly Vista*, p. 25.

Truth (the highest truth) is unattainable except through the favour of the Holy Spirit.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The (Holy) Spirit is encompassing and surrounding all. It is holy. It is sanctified from attachment to a special place. It is present everywhere and at every time. It exists in all places, yet is placeless.

¹ An indispensable condition or qualification.

² This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

³ Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted. Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16; Chapter II appeared in issues VII:18 & 19; Chapter III appeared in issue VIII:2; Chapter IV appeared in issue VIII:4; and Chapter V appeared in issue VIII:6.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from a message to “Body of Friends” in 1910.

The Holy Spirit (in its completeness) is given only to the prophets; the people can possess but the rays of the Holy Spirit.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá [VIII:8:100]

The most important thing is that which comes through the Spirit—the breath of the Holy Spirit. The soul through the Spirit can realize the Kingdom. The soul can recognize and feel the love of God. Distance cannot prevent the receiving of spiritual bounties. Hills and mountains cannot check that. Why? Because there are no chains and bonds for the Spirit. The sun is very far, in the highest position,—there is a great distance between the earth and sun, yet remoteness and distance cannot prevent its rays from shining.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from Kinney-Beede-Thompson Notes, ‘Akká, 30 June 1909.

Verily the poems of Bishop Kan and John Newton are exalted, but it were possible to abridge them all to this: “O God quicken me with the breaths of the Holy Spirit.” For that which contains the fulfilment of all human inspiration, for that which we supplicate in words is the breath of the Holy Spirit. Verily, it changeth the earthly man into a heavenly one, the materialist into a spiritual being, the unenlightened into a reflection of the divine, and the satanic man into a godly person. It maketh the blind to see and quickeneth the dead.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá from a Tablet to Y. Dáwúd, London, 1912. [VIII:8:101]

The Holy Spirit is the only power which will ultimately unite and harmonize the races and nations of the world. The Cause of God is the only panacea which will heal for all time to come the social, economic and political diseases of mankind. The revelation of Bahá’u’lláh is the tree which will send its outstretched branches to all the countries and under its cool shade all the religious sects will gather there to fraternize and associate with one another. The world is full of ideas but they are either fleeting or profitless or impractical or limited in their influence or confined within a narrow scope. The beaming shafts of the light of cosmic ideals must pierce through the hearts of men and the power of the Holy Spirit is necessary to carry into execution these noble thoughts of the age. Human power is limited in its influence. It can unite two persons, or two tribes, or two communities, or at the utmost two nations. At the same time it confesses that this unity is temporal and may be abrogated by the whim of either of the high contracting parties.

But the divine power unites nations and peoples and cements them together in the bond of brotherhood and peace for ages and cycles. His Holiness Christ was one person, without any worldly assistance and help, but through the effect of the Holy Spirit he was enabled to unite many nations and religions under the standard of Christianity. Likewise Muḥammad unified the wild, savage tribes of Arabs and made them the conquerors of Asia. Consequently there must needs be divine power for the accomplishment of this universal aim. Human power fails in this undertaking.

The words of those souls who are the essences of severance, who are in the utmost sanctity and purity will have an effect upon the hearts of men the result of which will be unity and good-fellowship. Save through this, ideal communication will not be made possible between the children of men. They may achieve a temporal union for a few years. Men may so compound the various ingredients as to be promiscuously mixed together. But there must needs be the solvent so that they may become perfectly blended and united. In the human

world that solvent is the power of the Holy Spirit which will thoroughly mix and blend the different constituents and elements representing the various nationalities, religions and sects. I hope the believers of God will unfurl the "World Peace Flag" because their aim is altruistic and they are helped by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit. Through the power of God it is possible for one Bahá'í to guide one whole nation. Such spiritual victories are dependent upon the breaths and bestowals of the Holy Spirit.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 15 July 1914.

Spiritual education consists in the inculcation of the ideals of divine morality and promotes high thoughts. This spiritual education is made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. As long as the breaths of the Holy Spirit do not display any influence, spiritual education is not obtained; whereas if a soul is inspired by the Holy Spirit he will be enabled to educate a nation.

Consider the records of bygone philosophers; the utmost that they could do was to educate themselves. The circle of their influence was very limited. All that they could do was to instruct a few pupils. Of such a type was the influence of Plato and Aristotle. These philosophers were only able to train a limited number of people. But those souls who are assisted by the breath of the Holy Spirit can educate a nation. The prophets of God were neither philosophers nor celebrated for their genius. Outwardly, they belong to the common people, but as they were encircled with the all-comprehending power of the Holy Spirit they were thus enabled to impart a general education to all men. For instance, His Holiness Christ and His Holiness Muḥammad were not among [VIII:8:102] the thinkers of the age neither were they counted great geniuses; but through the power of the Holy Spirit they were able to confer universal instruction upon many nations.

They illumined the world of morality. They laid the foundation of a spiritual sovereignty which is everlasting. It is the same with those souls who have entered the tabernacle of the Cause of God. Although not important in appearance, yet everyone is confirmed in stimulating the cause of general moral instruction. Therefore it has become evident that real spiritual universal education cannot be realized save through the breath of the Holy Spirit. Man must not look at his own capabilities, but think of the power of the Holy Spirit.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, April 1913.

This power is not verbal. It must be actual, demonstrative, dynamic. This power has gone out of the body of Islám. The Islamic world cannot grasp the political principles of modern times and is devoid of spiritual potency. If they desire tremendous progress in as short a time as possible they must obtain spiritual potency, thus reforming and changing all the various branches of the institutional life. The western nations for the last five centuries have steadily been going forward and, with superhuman energy pushing further and further the frontiers of ignorance and illiteracy, they have attained to their present unassailable position. Now if the Islamic people start on this path with the same determination and constancy it will take them at least five centuries before they could reach the up-to-date level of western civilization. This is of course a slow process and, as I told you they must attain to celestial power. Then you will observe their magical advancement.

'Abdu'l-Bahá from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 October 1913.

The captive of the Holy Spirit is exempt from every captivity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Verily, thy Lord will assist and inspire thee with the breath of the Holy Spirit and will cause thee to utter the [VIII:8:103] proofs and principles of thy Lord with great penetration and confidence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Excerpt from a Tablet, translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Ramleh, 1913.

When you breathe forth the breath of the Holy Spirit from your hearts into the world, commerce and politics will take care of themselves in perfect harmony. All arts and sciences will become revealed and the knowledge of God will be manifested. It is not your work but that of the Holy Spirit which you breathe forth through the Word. This is a fundamental truth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Waite-Harrison Notes, ‘Akká, 12 October 1909.

Pay not attention to things material but reach after the Spirit. Fix your eyes on the Sun of Truth for his light floods the whole earth. Let the sun give you of his strength then the clouds of prejudice will not hide his light from your eyes, then will the sun be without clouds for you. May we share in the divine bounties of the Kingdom. May the world be for you no obstacle hiding the Sun of Truth from your sight, as the human body of Christ hid his divinity from the people of his day.

May you receive the clear vision of the Holy Spirit so that your hearts may be illumined and see the Sun of Truth shining through all material clouds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Notes of Mrs Mary Hanford Ford, Paris, 27 October 1911.

The spiritual food is the principal food, ... the effect of the spiritual food is eternal. The material food, that is, the food for the body, is simply water and bread, but the food for the intellect is knowledge and the food for the spirit is the significances of the heavenly words and the bounties of the Holy Spirit.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Kinney-Beede-Thompson Notes, ‘Akká, 6 July 1909.

The teachings of Bahá’u’lláh are the breaths of the Holy Spirit which create men anew.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

And now, if you act in accordance with the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, you may rest assured that you will be aided and confirmed. You will be rendered victorious in all that you undertake, and all the inhabitants of the earth will be unable to withstand you. You are conquerors, because the power of the Holy Spirit assisteth you. Above and beyond all physical and phenomenal forces, the Holy Spirit itself shall aid you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From address, Washington, D.C., 10 May 1912.—Revised.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit changes the small acorn into an overshadowing tree and the showers of the heavenly clouds of mercy transform the black soil into a delectable rose-garden.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá [VIII:8:104]

In the work of the Kingdom of God one should not consider capacity or ability; the

confirmation of the Spirit will descend, because the weakest souls through the confirmation of the Holy Spirit become the most powerful. Some souls who are outwardly ignorant through this gift become learned men. The weakest souls become the strongest. Many times a woman has surpassed a thousand men, or, rather, through this help can withstand all the people of the world.

His Holiness Moses was apparently a shepherd but through the divine power he overcame Pharaoh and his armies: Likewise the disciples were the weakest souls but through the breath of the Holy Spirit and the assistance of the Kingdom of God they became the strongest ones. The thought which I wish to convey to you is this, you should not look at your capacity or ability, nay, rather rely upon the confirmation of the Holy Spirit,—do not doubt. (After a long pause) Be confident and sure. It will help you.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Flowers from the Rose-Garden of Acca*, p. 21.

Upon calling ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s attention to some French warships in the harbour of Alexandria, he said:

“I desire that you may see the divine ships. These ships are the blessed sails who are traversing the sea of divine mercy; their propellers are the powers of spiritual love and their captains are the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. No ship is ever wrecked in this sea; its waves are life-giving. Each one of the friends of God is like unto an ark of salvation. Each ark saves many souls from the storms of troubles. The signs and traces of these sails are never-ending and eternal. The future centuries and cycles are like the sea on the surface of which these arks glide blissfully toward their spiritual destination.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 October 1913.

VIII:8, 1 August 1917 [VIII:8:88]

Recent tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

To Miss Jean Masson, Chicago.

O thou respected one, a herald of the Kingdom of God!

The article that thou hast written¹ concerning the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* contained eloquent paragraphs and wonderful and subtle significances. At the time of writing the power of attraction was manifest and apparent and the real Teacher was instructing and inspiring. Consequently, it was composed in the utmost fluency and eloquence.

Today, whosoever turns his face toward the Lord of the Kingdom and, with sincere intention, taking the pen in his hand, engages his time in writing, there is no doubt that the Holy Spirit shall confirm him and the power of the Kingdom of God shall instruct him.

Therefore, rest thou assured in the divine graces and occupy thy time with the utmost power and seriousness in writing and composition, in talking and explanation.

Consider, how in former ages a number of women became confirmed and assisted in the demonstration of faith and assurance and how in this mortal world they left behind immortal names.

In the world of existence there are no greater women than the queens of empires. Materially they have reached the highest station of womanhood and gained great riches, infinite power and glory. Notwithstanding all these advantages, when they die and go under the earth, they disappear and become non-existent. They leave behind no name, no trace, no fruit and no sign. But the maid-servants of God who are outwardly in the utmost poverty and

¹ Refers to article reproduced on pp. 89–96.

imprisoned by the people of oppression, humiliated and scoffed at by the outsiders, ere long they will crown their heads with the diadem of the everlasting glory and [VIII:8:89] will be established upon the eternal throne of majesty. Their signs are eternal and their fame universal. This is the glory of the Kingdom! This is the heavenly bestowal! This is the divine outpouring!

Now, praise be to God! that thou didst quaff from the goblet of the love of God, became intoxicated with the wine of the knowledge of God, unloosed thy tongue in the glorification of the Lord of the Kingdom, and became assisted and confirmed with the power of the Supreme.

Therefore, thank thou God, that thou hast become one of the chosen ones and attained to the station of the favoured ones.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Home of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Akká, Syria, 27 February 1917.)

VIII:8, 1 August 1917 [VIII:8:89]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and the Bahá'í Movement

Jean Masson

(From *The Lake Shore News*, Thursday, 19 October 1916.)

The citizens of Wilmette are very well aware of the fact that, in the fall of 1917, will be laid, near the southern border of the town, the corner stone of a Temple of Worship, which may seem, to the uninformed, very mysterious, very occult and, consequently, altogether undesirable. To the citizens of Wilmette this event will be hardly less momentous than to the followers themselves of the great Bahá'í Movement.

The Bahá'í Temple will be the initial building of a great institution—the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Another mysterious term, that surely has no place in America, least of all in the inoffensive town of Wilmette!

Now, about this institution and the movement, from which it emanates, there is nothing mysterious, nothing occult, [and] nothing condemnatory.

The Bahá'í Movement is the most practical religious movement in the world today. It is the effort to bring again into expression in human life and service the essential teachings of the Christ. That this reversion to Christian principles is vital to the continuance of the human race, no one today will presume to deny, with the terrible European war and its vast toll of carnage and hatred and crimes unspeakable forever present in his consciousness. The Bahá'í Movement makes for the abolition of the human prejudices that induce division and hatred and injustice among men.

Sometimes I have been asked why we Bahá'ís don't use intelligible English to express what we are trying to do and be, what we are trying to build.

The reason is very manifest. We have no English words succinctly expressive of these oriental terms. And the English translation is cumbersome, indirect and inadequate.

Bahá'í is the Arabic for glory or splendour. A Bahá'í, therefore, is a follower of the light. And he glories in the name, because it is significant. It is a proclamation to the world of his connection with the great founder of the movement, Bahá'u'lláh.

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, another Arabic term, signifies "the dawning place of the mentionings of God". And this dawning place will be not only a place of prayer and the worship of God, but a place from which shall go forth actual and selfless service to humanity, a reflection of service to God.

The sign erected upon the site of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár by the Bahá'í Assembly of Chicago embodies, in general terms, the purpose of the institution:

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

“These grounds are the site of an edifice to be erected as an ‘evident stand- [VIII:8:90] ard’ in America of the oneness of humanity.

“Its doors will be open to all nations, races and religions.

“Its charities will be dispensed without regard to race or colour. ‘Prejudice toward none—Love for all’.

“Here, for the first time in history, religion and science will become harmonious, each the handmaid of the other, both showering their spiritual gifts on all humanity.

“Until the erection of this great edifice, all are welcome to this beautiful spot, and in its enjoyment we ask you to keep it pure and sacred.”

Today we are concerned, more than ever before, with the meaning of this Bahá'í Institution; more than ever before with the meaning of the Bahá'í Movement; with its relation to the world, and to world affairs.

The time is ripe for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár—the symbol of the universal principles and truth uttered by Bahá'u'lláh—to begin to take impressive and visible form. It is time for the world to know that in its midst is a powerful, universal movement, whose adherents are found in every country in the world, who believe in intensive and practical Christianity; who believe with a magnificent faith in the great principles that form the substructure of the Bahá'í Movement.

We can no longer be provincial, isolated or insular. It is the day of the universal. It is the day of inter-human consciousness; of the coming together of all peoples into a universal brotherhood. And our religion must partake of the same universal quality. We must be ready to say, “Brother, I greet you in the name of your prophet and my prophet, in the name of our God.” And so—the Bahá'í Movement.

The site in Wilmette was chosen for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, because it was the most beautiful to be found available in Chicago or its immediate environs. A symbol of the highest spiritual ideals, of the noblest religious thought of all ages, to be expressed in superlative architectural beauty, should have a beautiful setting. And the Bahá'ís of America chose well, when they purchased the land in Wilmette at the juncture of the drainage canal and Lake Michigan.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will not be built in a day, even after the laying of the corner stone, in 1917, of the central house of worship. The building of the Temple, without any of the accessories, is concentrating the attention of Bahá'ís today.

The Bahá'í Temple will be a structure of great beauty and magnificence. Many designs have already been submitted by American architects, any one of which would be celebrated far and wide for impressiveness of conception. A board of architects, however, will complete the final design for the edifice.

But, whatever the design accepted, it will embody various basic principles, symbolic of the universal tenets of the Bahá'í Movement. It will have nine sides and nine entrances, through which all the religions of the world may enter and unite in the worship of God. Where they have been separated in the past, by prejudice and mutual unfriendliness, here, in the Bahá'í house of worship will they be harmoniously united.

Throughout the structure and the ornamentation will be expressed this same dynamic

thought of world unity. A massive dome, suggestive of this same unity of religions and peoples, will surmount the Temple. Picturesque and beautiful gardens will surround it. Bahá'ís believe in the externalization, in the utmost of beauty and joy and happiness, of the great spiritual truth which they are charged to deliver to the world.

As I have said, the erection of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is not a matter of a day's work. So tremendous a thought of religious unity and universal service, as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár embodies, cannot be hastily or impermanently externalized. [VIII:8:91]

The erection of the Temple completed, the accessory buildings will then claim the attention of Bahá'ís. These buildings will harmonize architecturally with the house of worship. And, in the years to come, when the last stone of the last building shall be laid, nowhere in the world will be found a group of buildings so beautiful, so imposing, so full of inspiration for humanity, as the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of America.

Not only will the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár usher in a new spiritual day for man; it will usher in a new architectural day, a new scientific day, a new day of universal human service.

Again and again I have been asked the purpose of so many buildings. I have been asked if this is a colonization scheme, if Bahá'ís mean to establish a community life at the southern extremity of Wilmette. To the last question I have replied emphatically, "No!" The world is the home of Bahá'ís. They can never be nucleated or secluded. In the Temple of Worship they will find spiritual refreshment, which they will carry out with them into the world and express in work and selfless service.

The accessory buildings will be devoted to the study and propagation of the highest scientific truths. Here will be taught that basic principle of the Bahá'í Revelation, that religion and science must harmonize. Art and music will find here, in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, their most perfect expression. Philanthropic service to the world, to the poor, to the unfortunate will proceed from the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár through its various accessories.

Bahá'ís believe that the time will come, whether in our generation or not, when the Kingdom of God will be actually established on earth, when right living and a complete understanding of spiritual and scientific law by a unified humanity will preclude the possibility of any poor or unfortunate. Sociologic, industrial conditions will be regulated with justice to all mankind. There will be no more oppression, no more exploitation of the weak for the aggrandizement of the strong.

Surely, when such beatific conditions prevail among us, the Kingdom of God shall have been established. And "the founding of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is to be in the inception of the organization of the Kingdom" ('Abdu'l-Bahá).

This is the faith not only of the Bahá'ís of America, but it is the faith of millions of Bahá'ís throughout the world.

A great institution for the spiritual, religious, scientific education of humanity—the expression of a universal movement for the realization among men of brotherhood, of the unification of religions, must be the exalted conception of a master spiritual genius, a master seer.

And, as such, Bahá'u'lláh is recognized today by scholars, by those that sit in high places, by the poor and the lowly. His genius makes a universal appeal to humanity. And to his genius the world is indebted for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

The story has often been told of his heroic life, of his sufferings, of his banishment and imprisonment for the utterance of the great truths that were his by virtue of his spiritual genius. And we of the immediate day remember well the visit to America, in 1912, of his distinguished eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, after his release from the prison of 'Akká by the

establishment of the Turkish Constitution and the declaration of the Committee of Union and Progress.

It is a story that never palls, for history records no such life of supreme heroism as that manifested by Bahá'u'lláh and his followers.

No superficial, insignificant movement is it that will make its first momentous expression, in the western hemisphere, through the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Wilmette. It is founded on the blood of thirty thousand martyrs. It is founded on lives of complete sacrifice and self-[VIII:8:92] lessness. It is founded on the stupendous faith and love, in the midst of a world of hatred, of three of the most remarkable characters of all time—the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Here are the bare historical facts: On the 23 May 1844, a young Persian merchant proclaimed the coming of a great world teacher. Himself he called the Báb, the Arabic for door or gate—the herald of the great one. Immediately he set to work to prepare Persia spiritually for his recognition. But a sceptical Muslim world scoffed at the declaration of the young Persian merchant, persecuted him, imprisoned him and finally, in 1850, martyred him for his faith.

From the same country, in 1852, arose Bahá'u'lláh, who gathered the followers of the Báb together, who proclaimed not the coming of a world teacher, but universal principles for the guidance of the world, and the elevation of mankind into lofty realms of spiritual and religious thought.

In the middle of the last century the world had not yet been united by any of the means of intercommunication with which today we are so familiar. Nations and races and religions were separated by what seemed insurmountable barriers. And yet here, in the darkness of a dark Muslim land, was a man who taught the oneness of the world of humanity, the oneness of religion, the harmony of religion and science, universal peace, universal education, and the equality of men and women. He urged the creation of a universal language, the independent investigation of truth. He taught that prejudice of all kinds must be forgotten, racial antipathy, and religious antagonism.

And, strange as it may seem to us of the twentieth century, he declared the incumbency of establishing a universal tribunal for the arbitration of international differences.

He, Bahá'u'lláh, seemed to possess a vision so universal and penetrating as to embrace within its range the whole world, and centuries and ages and cycles of time.

Men say of him now that he was far ahead of his time. The world has just begun to think in universal terms, to talk of the universal principles which he proclaimed almost seventy years ago.

And for this priority of vision, for the declaration of his great principles for the conduct of the world, Bahá'u'lláh with his followers was persecuted and banished, first to Baghdád, then to Constantinople, then to Adrianople, and in the summer of 1868, with seventy of his followers, to the penal colony of 'Akká, in Syria, on the Mediterranean coast.

The imprisonment in 'Akká is known as the “most great imprisonment”, so prolonged it was and so terrible.

For twenty-four years here he was confined. And during all this time, as from the first day of his proclamation to the world, he gave continuous utterance to what we know today as the Bahá'í Revelation—religious, scientific, ethical, economic treatises; text books for the conduct of individuals and the guidance of nations, and for spiritual illumination—in itself a complete encyclopaedia of knowledge.

From the prison of 'Akká, before the Franco-Prussian war, Bahá'u'lláh sent epistles to the crowned heads of Europe and to the President of the United States, calling them to universal peace and brotherhood.

That they did not heed the call, we have conclusive evidence today, when the desirability of universal peace was never so urgent, so overwhelming.

On the 28 May 1892, after forty years of exile and imprisonment, Bahá'u'lláh passed away, an exile still and a prisoner—his message given, his work done.

A marvellous record of endurance and faith, unparalleled in history, save by the endurance and faith of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the central figure today of the Bahá'í Movement.

By the death of Bahá'u'lláh, through his last will and testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahá [VIII:8:93] became the great Bahá'í leader. It is his mission to interpret the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, to lay the foundation of a permanent civilization, that shall be undisturbed by the horrific cataclysms of hate and carnage that tear asunder today the social and religious structure of the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "the servant of God", as his name implies, was eight years old, when, in 1852, the first Bahá'í exile occurred. And from that date he shared the vicissitudes, the persecution, the exile, and the imprisonment meted out to his illustrious father. And, because of his spiritual perception and understanding of the Revelation, because of his worthiness to be the successor of Bahá'u'lláh, it was entrusted to him to continue the great work—the work of calling men and nations to unity and peace and brotherly love.

It was in 1908, sixteen years after the death of Bahá'u'lláh, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was released from the prison of 'Akká. He was sixty-four years old. The marks and the ravages of exile and imprisonment were upon him. And yet he went forth to deliver to the world the message of Bahá'u'lláh. He went to Europe, he came to America, proclaiming the basic principles of that message, calling the statesmen and diplomats of the world, the people of the world to universal peace.

Four years ago, on 1 May 1912, he visited the site of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Wilmette. He commended the beauty of the location and addressed the Bahá'ís gathered around him upon the great importance to the world of this first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the occident.

"Thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, which means the dawning point of praise for all religionists,—will be built in the world," he said. "In the orient and in the occident of the world will they be built. But this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, being the, first one in the occident, has great importance."

Elsewhere he has said of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár:

"The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Chicago is of the greatest importance. This is a Bahá'í Temple, a supreme house of worship, a place of spiritual gathering and the manifestation of divine mysteries.

"This organization of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be a type for the coming centuries and will hold the station of the Mother, and thus, later, in other cities many Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs will be its offspring.

"When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, with its accessories, is established in the world, aside from its religious or spiritual influence, it will have a tremendous effect upon civilization."

I wish it were within the possibilities of space to quote at length from the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Such wealth of literature and knowledge cannot be compressed to the requirements of a short newspaper article. But the few quotations here produced may convey to the reader somewhat of the inspiration back of the Bahá'í Movement.

The first words of Bahá'u'lláh brought to America were words spoken by him in 1890 to Professor Edward Granville Browne of Cambridge University, who had succeeded in gaining access to the great prisoner:

"We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment. That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religions should cease and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the Most Great Peace shall come. Do not you in Europe need this also? Is this not what Christ foretold? Yet do [VIII:8:94] we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind. These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family.

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

The words that follow, with all their oriental imagery, can hardly be conceived today as words whose utterance would throw a man into prison or keep him there, if already confined. They are the words of Bahá'u'lláh.

"Be thou a giver; when thou art wealthy, and grateful, when thou art poor. [VIII:8:95]

"Be thou trustworthy, when thou art entrusted. Face the comers with a welcome smile.

"Be thou a treasure to the poor, an adviser to the rich.

"Be an answerer to the seeker, a fulfiller of promise and faithful in all things.

"Be thou silent when amid the crowds, and let thy judgement be just.

"Be submissive to thy fellowman.

"Be a light in darkness.

"Be thou a comfort to the sorrowful, and a sea to the thirsty.

"Be thou a shelter to the distressed, and a help, an assistant and a support to the oppressed.

"Be pious in all thy actions.

"Be a home to the stranger, a healer to the sick, a stronghold to him who calls for aid, a sight to the blind, and a path to him who is led astray.

"Be thou the beauty of the face of truth, an ornament to the temple of faithfulness, a throne to the house of character, a spirit to the body of the world, a banner to the hosts of justice, and a lamp to the horizon of goodness.

"Be thou a shadow to the fertile soil, a life-boat to the sea of knowledge, a star in the heaven of generosity, a crown to the head of wisdom, a brilliancy to the forehead of the world, and a fruit to the tree of obedience.

"I ask God to protect thee from the fare of hatred and the chill of enmity, for He is the near, the Answerer."

This is the service enjoined upon every Bahá'í to render to the world. It is Christian service in its essence, in its purity, in its sublimity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has been asked innumerable questions concerning the problems confronting humanity today. A few of his answers are here reproduced.

As to the Bahá'í Movement:

"The Bahá'í Movement is not an organization. You can never organize the Bahá'í Cause. The Bahá'í Movement is the spirit of this age. It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahá'í Cause is an inclusive movement; the teachings of all the religions and societies are found here; the Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, etc., find their highest aims in this Cause—the; Socialists and philosophers find their theories fully developed in this Movement."

"The objective aims of this Cause are the oneness of the world of humanity; universal peace; universal love; international co-operation, reciprocity; the promotion of the principle of human consanguinity and solidarity, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, first in the hearts of men and then upon earth."

"Today, in the world of humanity, the most important matter is the question of universal peace. The realization of this principle is the crying need of the time."

"By a general agreement all the governments of the world must disarm simultaneously. It will not do if one lays down its arms and the other refuses to do so: The nations of the world must concur with one another concerning this supremely important subject, thus they may abandon together the deadly weapons of human slaughter."

"The call to arbitration, to peace, to love and to loyalty is the call of Bahá'u'lláh. His standard has floated for fifty years, summoning all of whatever race and creed."

"Where Love dwells, there is light! Where animosity dwells, there is darkness!"

"Let your effort be to find harmony. Let brotherhood be felt among you, and carry ye its quickening power throughout the world."

Questions that have been asked with greater concern, perhaps, of Bahá'ís, than any other questions, are:

"What relation does the Bahá'í Movement bear to Christianity?"

"What place does Christ hold in the Bahá'í Religion?"

These questions are best answered in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: [VIII:8:96]

"Bahá'u'lláh, established Christ in the East. He has praised Christ, honoured Christ, exalted Him, called Him 'the Word of God, the Spirit of God', raised the name of Christ to supreme summits of glorification. Throughout the orient Bahá'ís have illumined the lamp of Christ and spread His mention."

"The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is the same as the Cause of Christ. It is the same temple and the same foundation. Both of these are the spiritual springs and the seasons of the soul-refreshing awakening and the cause of the renovation of the life of mankind."

"The spring of this year is the same as the spring of last year. The origin and end are the same. The sun of today is the sun of yesterday."

"In the coming of Christ the divine teachings were given in accordance with the infancy of the human race. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh have the same basic principles, but are according to the stage of the maturity of the world and the requirements of this illumined age."

Back of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, whose walls will soon begin to rise in Wilmette, is a great historic world movement. The day has gone by to regard it lightly or superficially or superciliously. Great souls have come to re-assert the constructive teachings of the Christ, in terms applicable to the complex requirements of the age.

The world needs them—the teachers and the teachings. Christians are murdering Christians today. Christians are guilty today of instituting not universal peace, but universal

war to destroy millions of other Christians. And we have before us the appalling spectacle of the spoliation, the annihilation of unoffending peoples and nations by followers of the Christ. And civilization is doomed, unless we have the re-creative word spoken that shall penetrate the great aching heart of the world and lead it out of immeasurable darkness into the immeasurable light of a new and glorious day.

Bahá'ís believe that word has again been spoken. And Bahá'ís believe that city, in which the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the occident is erected, is a city of brilliant destiny. They believe that before it lies a great transcendent future. They believe that it shall influence civilization for all time to come.

Let us approach then the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár with a spirit of humility, of prayer and thanksgiving. It was greatly conceived. Let it be greatly honoured.

VIII:9, 20 August 1917 [VIII:9:112]

Conduct of the Assembly and duties of its committee of consultation

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, from the *Diary of Mírzá Maḥmúd*.¹ Translated by Dr D'iyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago.

... [VIII:9:114]

At the home of Mrs Corinne True, 1 November 1912:

The Spiritual Committee of Consultation asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá as to the duties of the Committee. He answered:

“The first duty of the members is to effect their own unity and harmony, in order to obtain good results. If there be no unity, or the Committee becomes the cause of disharmony, undoubtedly, it is better that it does not exist. If the Committee of Consultation or the general assembly becomes the cause of unhappiness, it must be abandoned. How pleased I was with the friends in California. They said: ‘We do not want a Committee of Consultation lest we fall into the thought of leadership and superiority and become the cause of dissension. But, now, praise be to God, we are serving according to our capacity and have no thought or aim, except the spreading of the fragrances of God.’

“Therefore, when the unity of the members of the Committee is established, their second duty is to read the verses and communes, to be in a state of commemoration and mindfulness, that they may see each other as if in the presence of God.

“The third duty of the Committee is consultation and meditation regarding the teaching of the Cause of God in all regions and climes. They must arise for this great purpose with all their power; they must declare and hasten the necessary steps for teaching the Cause of God.

“Their fourth duty is to meditate and consult for the helping of the poor and the weak and the protection of the sick.

“Their fifth duty is to correct and manage the affairs of the friends and attend to other matters concerning the Cause.”

VIII:9, 20 August 1917 [VIII:9:114]

The symbolic meaning of walking on the sea

'Abdu'l-Bahá, from the notes of Miss E. Rosenberg, 1901.

In this story (the “miracle” of Jesus walking on the water) of our Lord Jesus, the Sea of

¹ Translated and published in 1998 as *Maḥmúd's Diary: The diary of Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání chronicling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's journey to America*.

Tiberius represents the ocean of creation,—the two shores represent earthly truth and spiritual truth. The boat or ark stands for arguments and reasons by which men acquire knowledge and in this boat Jesus' disciples were tossed on the waves of the ocean of creation. The shore which Jesus left in order to come to them, walking on the water, represents earthly knowledge. The haven or shore to which he guided them represents spiritual knowledge.

There are three ways of apprehending truth: 1. The earthly way,—by means of the five senses; 2. The way of argument and reasoning—and all philosophers have taught that it is possible to reach the knowledge of all truth by this method; 3. The spiritual way, by which man receives knowledge from the inner light or inspiration. The ancient philosophers and indeed the philosophers of all times have taught that the first method, that is by means of the five senses,—was the one certain way of knowing truth. ... For instance, people in the desert often see a most beautiful mirage of trees and water, but the nearer you approach to this phantom, the more it fades away, and you begin to perceive its unreality. All this proves that the evidence of the senses alone is not to be relied on for conceiving the truth.

The ancient philosophers have also taught that by the intellect (the second method of argument and reasoning) accurate and absolute knowledge of everything can be obtained. ... But it is evident that we cannot rely on this second method of obtaining knowledge to insure absolute accuracy. Successive philosophers are always contradicting each other, and propounding diverse [VIII:9:115] theories. If absolute knowledge were to be obtained by this means, the wisest philosophers would agree in saying the same things.

There is yet a third method of acquiring knowledge, by revelation, or the inspired books; but the difficulty in this case is that every person's interpretation of the book is coloured by his own individuality. In the time of Jesus Christ, the Jews were prevented from accepting him by clinging to the literal interpretation of their book. ...

As we have before said in the account of this miracle, the disciples of Jesus attempted to sail over the sea of creation in the ark of argument and reasoning, finding great difficulty and danger in proving the truth by so doing. But when Christ, the Light of the world, who knew all things by the light of inner spiritual illumination, came to them in their boat, walking by his knowledge over the ocean of existence, and having no need of the ark of argument, then immediately they were at their desired haven.

VIII:9, 20 August 1917 [VIII:9:118]

Addresses delivered at the Bahá'í Congress¹

The oneness of humanity

Outline of talk by Mr Horace Holley at Boston.

We live today in an organized, developed society, among the accumulated resources of the past. The youthful mind, feeling its own solitary weakness in the presence of so much authority and power, tends to discredit its own resources and its own power, and early becomes susceptible to the all-pervading influences of materialism. For, in the broad view of things, materialism is simply the preponderance of external influence over the innate quality of the individual spiritual life. The ordinary mind, therefore, learns to develop its imitative, memorizing qualities at the expense of its creative, independent attributes. It locates authority in institutions, and traditional customs and beliefs rather than in spiritual impulse. In all activities, however, the creative work is done by minds which use accumulated knowledge, tradition, and custom as fuel to their own vision. Without such minds in art, science, politics and philosophy—to say nothing of religion—the world would rapidly become stagnant, the slave of material doctrines. The vision of the few keeps alive the faith that the

¹ 17 June 1917, Boston.

ultimate authority is really invested in the individual soul, for every new advance, every improvement, comes from some soul's independent activity. The spirit creates all things, and without spiritual activity thoughts decay.

Thus when we deal with the sources of things, even those things not commonly called religious, we perceive that society is essentially a manifestation of states of mind. Though most minds are early benumbed into the belief that they are the results and not the causes of society, materialism actually creates nothing, it merely has the power to perpetuate error and lack of faith.

Since we have come to a condition of affairs where the influence of minds upon one another is the all-determining factor in life, almost totally replacing the influence of the natural environment which determined life in earlier times, nothing is more important today than a general realization of the truth that society, in the long run, reflects mental states. We still manifest the mental states established under primitive conditions, still hold to the physical law of self-preservation and rivalry learned in the jungle, though the great war, as well as unrest and disturbance throughout society, show clearly enough that the physical law is no longer a guide but a betrayal. In other words, we stand half way between two civilizations—that in which nature determines thought, and that in which thought looks for guidance from the world of consciousness. In the world of consciousness we have a reality as universal, and far more powerful than nature, we have the Divine Manifestation, the Prophet who exemplifies not merely the Will but also the Reality of God.

Revelation is the proper environment of man's spiritual self. Revelation is the mother nature of the soul. It is the universe into which all men must be born anew to live complete, free lives. The religious teaching of love has been negative by man's fear of his fellow—the Bahá'í teaching of Unity casts out this fear by showing the interdependence in which all now live. Love or Christianity, is like a ship which has been drawn up on the sands of spiritual [VIII:9:119] ignorance. Unity, or the Bahá'í Movement, is the sea in which that ship can now be launched.

Long ago it was said that the proper study of mankind is man. Man, however, exemplifies all degrees of existence from the lowest animal up. To study man in general is to find abundant proofs for every opinion about life. The proper study of mankind is really *Man*—the Revelator, the Mirror in which our true attributes can be beheld.

Religion must be the cause of unity in the human world

From talk by Mr Howard MacNutt at Boston.

This is the Cycle of Definition; not only have the meanings of the prophecies, terms and symbols of the heavenly books become manifest, but now is the time of clear vision, real perception and accurate observation. A few years ago, standing in the Lick observatory upon the summit of Mt. Hamilton in California, looking out into the starry abysses, an astronomer said to me, "Tonight definition is perfect; all the constellations are visible." In this day of inner perception and spiritual vision, standing in the lofty height of the Universal Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh, we behold the divine Manifestations as one in the heaven of the Will of God, each constellation clear, distinct and shining in its own time and place, but all co-ordinated in the oneness of an infinite perfection.

Bahá'u'lláh is the object-glass of our spiritual telescope; 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the lens or eye-piece through whom when rightly focused we view not his personality, but the light of the Abhá splendour streaming through him.

Religion then is the revealed will of God by the light of which the conscious eye of man is quickened into intuitive recognition of the divine plan and Covenant. The natal hunger of human consciousness proves this knowledge must be revealed. Therefore the Word is made

flesh only in the human kingdom.

Religion has been considered as codes of philosophical explanation and theological interpretation. In reality these have been satanic fancies. The very antithesis of true religion, are therefore the cause of disunion and hatred. Still the fact of the Word proclaims "Religion must be the cause of unity in the human world."

Each Manifestation has sounded the true diapason¹ harmony of the inner and outer spheres. Mankind wanders away from the pitch, becomes dissonant, then another Manifestation sounds the original chord, summoning the world again to the true harmony.

This is the cycle of spiritual democracy. We are in the evolutionary times of transition from autocracy to democracy; from theocracy to individual responsibility of service and greater measure of judgement. It is the cycle of universal problems and universal solutions. The various systems of religious belief were not intended to unite before this day of God. Rivers mingle in their outlet with the ocean, but not in their courses. The barriers or watersheds are the concealed ordinances and ceremonials.

The materials for the divine temple of unity are now assembled. They cannot build themselves together into the plan of the Architect. The Architect himself does not build the structure. There must be a master builder who combines the materials in obedience to the Architect's intention. This master-builder is the Centre of the Covenant through whom a creative cosmic constructive power is now manifesting itself. At the point of boiling, every atom of water is in intense agitation; then a new element, steam, appears. We are at the climax of ebullition.²

Once I saw thousands of fishes stranded in pools upon the beach. They could not reach the ocean nor reach one another. I tried to help them, but not until the great ocean tide itself came in [VIII:9:120] were they blended with it and brought together in salvation and unity. This unity of man in the revealed will of God, is the bounty of God descending upon those who now see the sign of the Son of Man in the heaven of religion, coming with his angels and servants to quicken conscious perception of the heavenly Covenant and its Centre, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The equality of men and women

Resume of address by Mr Louis G. Gregory at Boston.

The Day of God is the day of freedom for all the varied elements of humanity. It accords with divine justice that each and all may develop their powers without hindrance from their fellows. Hand in hand with the oneness of humanity is the other principle, the equality of men and women.

Humanity "cannot exist half-slave and half-free". Women must be free in order that men may be free. Considering the physical, mental and spiritual effects: thralldom rests as heavily upon the oppressor as upon the oppressed.

Are women inferior to men on the physical plane? This proposition cannot be scientifically proved. Instances are multiplied where women perform the tasks usually assigned to men with good results. In this great cycle the latent powers of women become more and more patent. It becomes apparent that any relative weakness on the part of women can be corrected by proper exercise and training. In the lower kingdoms, the female is often more active and powerful than the male. With the opportunities now afforded to women for physical culture, men who boast of physical prowess may look to their laurels.

¹ Complete harmony or agreement; the entire range of a musical instrument or voice; or the entire range of some activity, emotion, etc.

² A boiling or bubbling up; effervescence; or a sudden outburst, as of some emotion.

Are the sexes intellectually equal? Although in past ages women who arose to places of commanding influence were rare and exceptional, yet a number of such cases can be cited to prove their inherent powers. In politics they have successfully, ruled nations, inspiring their subjects to growth and freedom. Their contributions to literature, art and science have won fame and even in war time they have been forces to be reckoned with. Their right to vote grows in public favour throughout the world. Here again any seeming inequality of the sexes yields to those opportunities for education which the new cycle brings.

On the spiritual plane the attainments of women cannot be questioned. The thing speaks for itself. In nearly all religions women are in the majority and be it said to their eternal honour, they do not exercise over men the tyranny of a majority. How noble is that modesty, how spiritual is that trait, by which they so often efface themselves and vote men into office!

Many great women have arisen in the world. Among the very greatest was Qurratu'l-'Ayn, who was a follower of the Báb and one of the nineteen Letters of the Living. Beautiful, witty, learned, she became, through divine power, a brilliant star of reality. She spread the light of God and wrought a marvel toward the emancipation of women. She sacrificed life and more than life, in the path of God. Traces of her glorious service may now be found in all parts of the world.

The greatest attribute of God is His justice. The Most Great Peace will be permanent because its basis is divine justice. The equality of men and women is a light of reality. The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have in oneness proclaimed this principle. The thing is done which ought to be done. The light shines, though the darkness doth not understand. In the Kingdom of Abhá, no differences are recognized. The purest heart is most acceptable to God, whether man or woman.

VIII:10, 8 September 1917 [VIII:10:121]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon²

Chapter VII

Love

Unity is love. It cannot be established without love. Therefore try, as far as possible, to be filled with love. Love is perpetual life, the most perfect vitality. Consider how love has gathered us together from the East and the West! If there were no love between us our friendship would have been concluded with salutations, such as "Good morning" and "Good evening." Love draws us in friendship to the people of every race and religion. He is a Bahá'í, of the people of Bahá, from whom we breathe the fragrance of this love again. ... The highest love is independent of any personal advantages which we may draw from the love of the friend. If you love truly, your love for your friend will continue, even if he treats you ill. A man who really loves God, will love Him whether he be ill, or sad, or unfortunate. He does not love God because He has created him—his life may be full of disassociations and miseries. He does not love God because He has given him health or wealth, because these may disappear at any moment. He does not love Him because He has given him the strength of youth, because old age will surely come upon him. The reason for his love is not because he is grateful for certain mercies and benefits. No!

The lover of God desires and adores Him because He is perfection and because of His

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

² Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted. Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16; Chapter II appeared in issues VII:18 & 19; Chapter III appeared in issue VIII:2; Chapter IV appeared in issue VIII:4; Chapter V appeared in issue VIII:6; and Chapter VI appeared in issue VIII:8.

perfections. Love should be the very essence of love, and not dependent on outward manifestations.

A moth loves the light, though his wings are burnt. Though his wings are singed, he throws himself against the flame. He does not love the light because it has conferred some benefit upon him. Therefore he hovers round the light, though he sacrifices his wings.

This is the highest degree of love. Without this abandonment, this ecstasy, love is imperfect.

The lover of God loves Him for Himself, not for his own sake.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Quoted from *Fortnightly Review*; June 1911. [VIII:10:122]

Although the body-politic is one family, yet because of the lack of symmetry some members are comfortable and some are in the utmost misery; some members are satisfied and some are hungry; some are clothed with the most costly garments while some families are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family has not that reciprocity and symmetry needed. This household is not well arranged. ... Is it possible for a member of a family to be subjected to the utmost of misery and abject poverty, and for the rest of the family to be comfortable? It is impossible, unless the rest of the family be without feeling, having become spiritually atrophied, inhospitable, unkind. ...

The purport is this, that as we are all inhabitants of the same earth, in reality we are one family, and each one of us is a member of that family. Therefore we must all live in the utmost of happiness and comfort under a just rule and regulation in accordance with the laws of God, because this life is fleeting, and if man looks after himself only, he is no better than the animal, for the animal alone is to that degree egotistic. On the contrary man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order that others may be happy. ... This is characteristic of man, this is becoming to man. ... Such a man is the honour of the world of humanity; such a man is the glory of the world of mankind; such a man is he who wins eternal bliss; such a man is nearer the threshold of God; such a man is the very manifestation of eternal happiness.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Address given at Montreal, Canada, 3 September 1912. [VIII:10:123]

O thou daughter of the Kingdom! The Lord of the Kingdom and the Sun of Truth hath sent forth a splendour and effulgence upon the world and the universe. All the contingent things found life and existence from the rays of that effulgence, entered and became manifest in the arena of being. Therefore all the objective phenomena are as surfaces of mirrors upon which the Sun of Truth hath cast the rays of the outpouring of bounty. All these surfaces (different stages of life) are mirrors reflecting the rays of the Sun of Truth. The outpouring is the One outpouring and the effulgence is the One effulgence. These complex and diversified mirrors are different from one another. Some of them are in a state of the utmost purity and clearness, reflecting the rays of the Sun of Truth, and the effulgence of the Luminary is manifest and visible in them. On the other hand there are mirrors full of dust and therefore dark; consequently, they are deprived and bereft of any radiation.

The believers of God are the translucent mirrors who, with the utmost purity and clearness, are reflecting the rays of the Orb of religions. Other communities are being darkened and bedimmed like unto stone and adamant. This condition is especially true of the people of hostility, animosity, oppression and tyranny, and the fanatical ones, who, on account of the accumulation of dust (prejudice) have become like unto the black stone, into which the rays of the sun do not penetrate and from which no light radiates.

Now we must not consider nor recognize these mirrors, which are deprived of every gift, as

strangers and foreigners, neither should we speak of nor know them as enemies or savages; nay rather, must we recognize them as the members of our body, showing them love and affection; not as strangers, but as associates; not as foreigners, but as friends. One must become engaged in their training and education, sympathize with and show pity to them and lead them into the heavenly characteristics, in order that the accumulated dust may disappear from the surfaces of those mirrors and the shining rays of the Sun of Truth radiate from them.

O thou daughter of the Kingdom! Be ye not a stranger to anyone, even if he be the lowest of savages on the face of the earth and knows nothing of God, or even if he be an enemy. Desire ye his association, aspire ye for his freedom and long ye for his perfection, in order that hatred and dissension, animosity and oppression, cruelty and tyranny, brutality and falsehood, pride and transgression may be removed from among mankind, the universe become the Paradise of Abhá, the world be transformed into the Kingdom of Heaven, the human race become angels and the individuals of the world of humanity become the manifestors of the favours of the glorious Lord. This is the perfection of the human world. This is the divine guidance of the Almighty.

O thou daughter of the Kingdom! Display ye the utmost charity toward the poor, the orphans and the helpless ones of all communities and nations, and have ye for them exceeding consideration. Serve ye them like unto the real servants. Know ye them as excellent persons and count yourselves day and night the thralls of mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá [VIII:10:125]

O thou who art attracted by the fragrances of God! Know thou assuredly that:

Love is the mystery of divine revelation; [VIII:10:126]

Love is the effulgent manifestation;

Love is the spiritual fulfilment;

Love is the light of the Kingdom;

Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit inspired into the human spirit;

Love is the cause of the Manifestation of the Truth (God) in the phenomenal world;

Love is the necessary tie proceeding from the realities of things through divine creation;

Love is the means of the most great happiness in both the material and spiritual worlds;

Love is a light of guidance in the dark night;

Love is the bond between the Creator and the creature in the inner world;

Love is the cause of development to every enlightened man;

Love is the greatest law in this vast universe of God;

Love is the one law which causes and controls order among the existing atoms;

Love is the universal magnetic power between the planets and the stars shining in the lofty firmament;

Love is the cause of unfoldment, to a searching mind, of the secrets deposited in the universe by the Infinite;

Love is the spirit of life in the bountiful body of the world;

Love is the cause of the civilization of nations in this mortal world;

Love is the highest honour to every righteous nation.

The people who are confirmed therein are indeed glorified by the Supreme Concourse, the angels of heaven and the dwellers in the Kingdom of Abhá. But, if the hearts of the people become void of the divine grace—the love of God—they wander in the desert of ignorance, descend to the depths of ruin and fall to the abyss of despair where there is no refuge. They are like insects living on the lowest plane.

This is the path of Bahá.

This is the religion of Bahá.
This is the law of Bahá.
He who has not this has no portion with Bahá.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, p. 325.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said there are five kinds of love:

First: The love of His own perfections which caused God to create that His beauty might be made manifest and appreciated.

Second: The love between sanctified souls for the attributes of the divine which they see reflected in one another.

Third: God’s love to man individually that is gained according to the measure in which a man turns to God.

Fourth: Man’s love for God, the Creator. This is the cause of his life, progress and happiness.

Fifth: The love of self, which if directed to the ego will deprive man of all true development, but if the love of self is a realization that one is a creature of God and must therefore attain to the station appointed for him, this love will be an uplifting one.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *A Brief Account of My Visit to Acca*, Chicago, 1905, p. 38. [VIII:10:127]

Among the human race, the bonds of, and means for, love are numerous, for man cannot live without it; nay rather, human life is dependent upon friendship and affection. Both the material and intrinsic development of man are conditional upon amity and love and the greatest honour and pleasure in the human world is love; but the ways and means are different. Sometimes the cause of love is simply relationship and kinship: and sometimes it is a racial bond, patriotism, political affairs, etc. But, through all these various bonds and means it is impossible to obtain a real and pure love: it is rather superficial and temporary. Such love may easily be changed into enmity and rancour, for it is affected by the slightest manifestation of hostility; whereas a true and ideal love is faith and assurance. Those who believe in God and are confident in His word shall enter the Kingdom, and the essential oneness appear from among them to such an extent that all become the drops of one ocean, the rays of one sun, the fishes of one sea, the trees of one garden, the birds of one orchard, the candles of one assembly and the stars of the same heaven. Such love is real; there is no interruption for this connection, nor any separation for this union. This foundation shall never be destroyed, for it is eternal. Hence it is established that the love which exists among the beloved of God is everlasting for it is a divine bounty, a godly appearance, a melody of the Kingdom and a heavenly cohesion. In the Qur’án it is said: “They love Him and He loves them”—i.e., the bounty of love is one of the divine bounties which comes to man from God, just as the sun sends its rays to the mirrors and thereby the mirrors are illumined: this effulgence and splendour are from the bounty of the sun. Therefore, this love which is among the beloved is a divine bounty, a godly splendour, an eternal manifestation and the power of divinity: it is perpetual.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Baha’i News*, No. 8, p. 5.

That which is most delicious in the world of existence is love. The air of itself is not delicious, neither is water, nor in short, all the elements; but when coupled with love they are most delicious. Love is the best condiment. When love exists in the heart the slightest gesture proves welcome. When love exists in the heart, even if it be a blow it is delicious.

For instance: the food on this table is nothing, indeed very simple; yet because it is prompted by love it is delicious.

The Lord's Supper of Christ was indeed a very common thing, but because there was excessive love among the individual members who convened there, that table surpassed the royal tables and it was established as the Lord's Supper. Even now, at this time, it is known as such. This was due to the love which existed between Jesus Christ and the disciples.

... The protestant missionaries were amazed at our love, and they were greatly disturbed and grieved exceedingly over it. They wonder what has cemented the Americans and Persians! ... They do not know that the factor is the love of God and that it has united us.

The disciples of Christ represented many different nations and climes. One was a Hebrew; another a Syrian and another a Roman. How God, through His love, cemented their hearts! Even so it is now! It is the love of God which has connected us, so that in the utmost love do we assemble and are gathered together here.

The means for friendliness are multitudinous.

There is the family bond which is the cause of love. There is the patriotic [VIII:10:134] bond which is a basis for love. There is the racial cause which is a source of love. There is the political one which is the cause of love and unity. Partnership in business is one sort of connection.

But there is no bond like the love of God, for the love of God is the bond eternal, and outside of it there are only temporary ones.

The love of God is that peculiar bond which is not subject to corruption; whereas, other bonds, other loves, are subject to instantaneous corruptive changes. For the least cause such another love might be changed into hate. It owes its origin to a cause; when the cause is removed, the effect will, likewise disappear.

But the love of God is not dependent upon material causes. For example, our assemblage here is absolutely free from any of the petty causes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *A Heavenly Feast*, p. 30.

There are two kinds of love, one universal and one individual. You must love humanity in order to uplift and help humanity. Even if they kill you, you must love them. Individual love cannot be forced and you are not called upon to love everybody personally, but if they are in your lives see to it that they are [the] means of your development and that you are [the] means of their development through your universal love for them.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Unity Through Love*, p. 26.

Question: "How can one love another whose personality is unpleasant"

Answer: "We are creatures of the same God. We must therefore love all as children of God even though they are doing us harm. Christ loved his persecutors. It is possible for us to attain to that love. God manifested his love by creating, man in His own image. Man must manifest his love by developing himself and others more and more in the image of God. The true fruit of man is, therefore, love. The purpose of a tree is to produce fruit. Man is like a tree; his fruit should be love."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Unity Through Love*, p. 27. [VIII:10:135]

... The object of the dawn of the Morn of Guidance and the effulgence of the Sun of Reality

have been no other than the inculcation of the utmost love among the children of men and perfect good-fellowship between the individuals of mankind. Therefore, in the beginning the foundation of this love and unity must be laid among the believers of God, and then permeate through the nations of the world. Therefore as much as you can be ye kind towards one another, and likewise to others.

The first melody of the Kingdom is the song of the love of God, and the love of God is realized in the universal love of all humanity.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 20 August 1914.

The world is black; the divine bestowal is radiant. This blackness must [VIII:10:136] be changed into light, and this narrow, dark sphere must be transformed into a vast, illimitable universe of illumination. The body of the world is like a corpse; it must be resuscitated: It is withered; it must be made fresh and blooming. It is extinct; it must be enkindled. It is the arena for the expression of animosity; it must be made the dawning-place of love and good-fellowship. It is the place of origin for the emanation of contention; we must make it the axis around which revolves unity. It is the expression of the baser qualities which lead to eternal disgrace; we must make it the rising-point of the refulgent rays of the everlasting glory. The strangers must be instructed in the lesson of neighbourliness; and the heedless made aware; the enemies must be loved, and the hateful ones be shown kindness. We must become flaming torches and the burning fire of God. We must move this world and illumine this dark globe. All this depends upon the effort of the friends and the sacrifice of the beloved ones.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 August 1913.

This is one of the wonders of this age, that an oriental and an occidental can meet each other on a common ground. Although there exists among them no racial, no patriotic, or political relations, yet they love each other as though they belonged to the same race. This is spiritual relationship. Often two brothers, reared in the same family, are antagonistic toward each other, but you two who are remote from each other, are in reality as brother and sister. Happy are you because you have drunk from this spiritual fountain and attained to the reality of existence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 6 August 1913.

... The test of the truth (of God) lies in the influence the conception has on our lives. If it makes us kind and loving in our relationship with our fellowman, we know it is a true one. In other words it must produce in our hearts a love of God which must be transmitted into love for man.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Notes of Aline Shane Devin, ‘Akká, about 1900.

VIII:11, 27 September 1917 [VIII:11:137]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon

chapter vii (continued)

Love [VIII:11:138]

If you desire to love God, love thy fellow-men. In them you can see the image and likeness of God. If you are eager to serve God, serve mankind. Renounce the self in the Self of God.

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

When the aerial mariner steers his airship skyward, little by little the disharmony and incongruity of the world of matter are lost, and before his astonished vision he sees widespread the wonderful panorama of God's creation. Likewise when the student of the path of Reality has attained to the loftiest summit of divine love, he will not look upon the ugliness and misery of mankind; he will not observe any differences; he will not see any racial and patriotic differences; but he will look upon humanity with the glorified vision of a seer and a prophet. Let us all strive that we may attain to this highest pinnacle of ideal and spiritual life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Question: "How shall I overcome seeing the faults of others—recognizing the wrong in others?"

Answer: "I will tell you. Whenever you recognize the fault of another, think of yourself: What are my imperfections?—and try to remove them. Do this whenever you are tried through the words or deeds of others. Thus you will grow, become more perfect. You will overcome self, you will not even have time to think of the faults of others. Man is blind, yet he sees far. That is puzzling. We are in Paris and we see the faults of the believers in America and in Stuttgart, but, we are so blind that we cannot see the nose (touching his nose) on our own face. While we are blind we have a far-sighted vision to America, to Germany. You must carry the glad-tidings of the Kingdom wherever you go, and make the people happy, awake them into greater activity—make them active."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Notes of private interview, Paris, 1913. [VIII:11:139]

Holding out in his hand, a piece of very thin paper before his eyes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "See what a slight thing will shut off our physical sight; so will a slight indiscretion, a cross word, an adverse criticism shut off the delicate spiritual sight."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From notes of Mrs Mary Hanford Ford, Paris, 1911.

Question: "How can we love our enemies; it is so hard?"

Answer: "There are two kinds of love: one is direct love which proceeds from a person to another person; the other is indirect love—that is to love an object for another's sake. Now we must love our enemies for God's sake and because He has created them; we must love them and not for their own personality. For instance, if your beloved sends you a rose, you appreciate it, kiss it and it is valuable to you. This love is not regarding the personality of the thing itself, but for the sake of the one who has sent it to you. We must love the house for its owner's sake."

'Abdu'l-Bahá

... Treat ye the sinners, the tyrants and the blood-thirsty enemies as the faithful friends and the confidants of the heart. In truth ye must become the embodiment of benevolence and the expression of grace. Do not look upon the "worth" and "merit" of the people. In former ages and cycles, the command of love and non-resistance had been revealed. But there was a pretext among the people,—“merit” and “de-merit”. They would say this person is contumacious¹ and a hypocrite and that person is blood-thirsty and cruel. And if any one practised forgiveness that forgiveness was coupled with blame and reproach. But in this dispensation, all these pretexts are dispelled and real love and kindness with all the soul and

¹ Contumacious: insubordinate; stubbornly or willfully disobedient, especially to a court.

heart to all the nations of the earth is the absolute law. ...

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablet translated 5 February 1907 by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. [VIII:11:140]

When the Arabs observed Muḥammad’s charity toward the orphans and unprotected, his extreme simplicity and democratic attitude toward all mankind, they used to say: “He is in love with his Maker.” One of the sayings of the Prophet (Muḥammad) is: “Do you love your Creator? Love your fellow beings first.” In another place he says: “That man who is most considerate of his kind is the favourite of God.” In another place he says: “How do you think God will know you when you are in His presence? By your love of your children, of your kin, of your neighbours, of your fellow-creatures.” ...

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 2 October 1913.

We were commanded by Bahá’u’lláh to assist all the communities without the exclusion of any one. We do not consider their deeds and actions. We never lose sight of the fact that mankind are the children of God and their wants must be relieved without distinction of race or religion.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 27 January 1914.

In every dispensation the command of friendship and the law of love have been revealed, but it has been circumscribed within the circle of the believing friends and not with contrary enemies. Praise be to God, that in this wonderful cycle the laws of God are not confined within any limitations, neither must they be exercised toward a special community to the exclusion of another. He hath commanded all the friends to show love, friendship, amity and kindness to all the people of the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 July 1913. [VIII:11:141]

No brotherhood appears in the world as lasting save that of the spiritual type. Only that brotherhood is permanent and eternal, for it is a spiritual brotherhood through the breath of the Holy Spirit. It is absolutely indissoluble; permanently will it remain intact, and in all the worlds of God will it be everlasting. It is a brotherhood not based upon thoughts, but one that has emanated from the love of God. It is not founded for the attainment of physical or material interests. This spiritual brotherhood has no other purpose than nearness to the Threshold of God. It is not for defensive purposes but for the illumination of the human heart.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Address given in Montreal, Canada, 4 September 1912.

Material friendship is not permanent; for every kind of love which is not [VIII:11:142] purely for the sake of God is ended in hatred. Amity which is not for the sake of the Lord changeth into enmity. But the divine friends are the faithful ones; they are the consolation of the heart and the peace of my spirit. They are spirit embodied, love personified, sincerity incarnated, loyal friends and staunch lovers. Therefore they are the cause of the happiness of the heart and soul.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 July 1913.

Did you know what I was smiling for? There was a person inside who called me. When I entered he said:

“Two years ago I came to you and stated that you were the chief of all the infidels. Now I

want to tell you that you are not an arch-infidel.”

Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá laughed and said:

“In either case he has not understood, he is just revealing the state of his own consciousness. We must be kind to such people.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 21 December 1913.

Now the believers of God must live in accord with these divine teachings. They must become kind fathers to the children of humanity, affectionate brothers to the youths of mankind and soul-sacrificing children toward those laden with age. The aim is this: you must be in the utmost state of joy and fragrance, love and kindness toward all, even toward the enemies. Meet the persecutions and adversity with the utmost faithfulness. Whenever animosity appears deal with it with forbearance. Make your breasts the targets for the arrows and spears of opposition. Brave the ridicule, the blame and the rebuke with perfect love so that all the nations may observe the power of the Most Great Name, and all the people may acknowledge the potency of the Blessed Perfection, showing how he hath destroyed the foundation of strangeness, hath guided the inhabitants of the world to unity and love, hath illumined the realm of man and hath transformed this terrestrial globe into the delectable paradise. These people are like children, negligent and mindless. One must train these children with the utmost love and carry them in the arms of grace with infinite tenderness, in order that they may taste the spiritual love of the Merciful One, that they may shine like the candles and cause the disappearance of the darkness of the world. Thus they may behold clearly and manifestly with what glorious crown and brilliant diadem the Most Great Name, the Blessed Perfection,—May my life be a sacrifice to him!—hath adorned the heads of his believers; what graces he hath poured upon the hearts of his friends; what love he hath brought into the world of humanity and what friendship he hath caused to appear among the children of men.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a Tablet in *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 July 1913.

Thy letter was received. ... From its words I heard a sweet melody and that melody was the psalm of the love of God. Although in the world of existence the outpourings of the Almighty are infinite, yet the greatest divine outpouring is the love of God. This is the dominant, transcendental power which rises above all the natural susceptibilities of the world of humanity. Man, like the animal, is captive of the world of nature and the laws of nature exercise full control over his nature. He cannot even be compared to the beasts of [VIII:11:143] prey. For example, one of the forces of nature is ferocity. A ferocious, blood-thirsty man goes beyond the ferocious animals. If an animal tears another animal it is only for its daily food, but man destroys a hundred thousand lives in one day. Hence it becomes evident that the power of nature is the unbridled and ungovernable ruler over man. What is written concerning the “ego is always inclined to do evil” is no other than the fermentation of the passionate desires in the breast of man and the complete, unchecked sway of the carnal and natural forces over him. Therefore, man cannot win victory over these physical forces save through the “power of the love of God”. The fire of the love of God is like unto the lightning which strikes upon the head of nature, emasculating it of its virility and leaving it fallen on the ground—a lifeless body. Consequently the greatest power in the world of existence is the love of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 August 1914.

... It is related that an aged and decrepit man became the guest of his holiness Abraham. He

exercised toward his guest the utmost hospitality and courtesy. When dinner was served, his holiness Abraham uttered the name of God, and then started eating. On the other hand, the guest uttered the name of an idol and began to eat. His holiness was grieved, arose in wrath and rebuked his guest most severely. But even as he did so, God's revelation descended upon him. "O Abraham! For a hundred years this man has been an idol-worshipper and I have been patient with him; I have nurtured him; I have protected him. I have taken good care of him; I have trained him; I have showered on him many bounties and I have been kind and loving to him; but thou wert not able to endure his society for one night! And I, an hundred years!" His holiness Abraham was deeply touched by this address and begged his aged guest to pardon him.

A story told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá who said that it appeared in the *Masnavi*.¹ From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 4 July 1913.

It is very strange that when a face is not illumined with the light of the love of God it is dark. When you look into it the traces of the divine glad tidings are not manifest, but when the lights of God shine upon it, it becomes bright and enlightened, as it is said, "In their faces you shall see the verdancy of paradise, and in their countenances is the sign of worship."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 3 September 1913.

The Bahá'ís in Baghdád are not rich, but they are firm and strong believers. They keep the Nineteen Day feast. One morning they sent to one of the believers the word that the feast would be held that night in his house. He searched his pockets and there was no money. What should he do? He had only a watch which he had purchased for ten dollars. He took it out of his waist pocket and sent it to the bazaar to be sold at auction. Incidentally one of the Bahá'ís passing by recognized the watch. He stopped and saw that it was going to be sold for two dollars. He raised the price half a dollar and bought it. He put it into his pocket and went home quietly. When the night came, he went to the meeting and after the refreshments were served, he went to the host and taking the watch out of his pocket offered it to him as a present. The host was very much surprised, but delighted.

Words of Mírzá Jalál, the son-in-law of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 30 August 1913.

The duty of the believers of God is to be servants to one another and attend [VIII:11:144] to one another's wants. I am the servant of the friends of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 August 1913.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said the story of Mary and the ointment has a deep spiritual significance. The bottle which contained perfumed oil (ointment) represents the heart of Mary. The ointment is the love of God which filled her heart, and all this love she poured forth at the feet of Jesus. Then Judas said, "Why did she lavish all this love upon Jesus, who did not need it so much as the poor? Why did she not pour some of this great love and care upon them?" Then Jesus said that she did well to give him all her love.

That is what we ought to do. We must give all our heart's love to God, then for His sake and through our love for Him, we shall love all others. By "the poor" in this sense, is meant those who needed love. Bahá'u'lláh said. "The poor among you are My trust." Therefore we must always cherish the poor for his sake.

¹ Mathnaví.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Notes of Miss Rosenberg, ‘Akká, 1901.

As long as ye can, strive to set aglow the hearts with love; be attracted to one another and be members of one body. Every soul of the beloved ones must honour the others, and withhold not his possessions and life from them, and by all means he must endeavour to make the others joyous and happy. But the others (the recipients of such love) must also be disinterested and life-sacrificing. Thus may this sunrise flood the horizons, this melody gladden and make happy all the people, this divine remedy become the panacea for every disease, this spirit of reality become the cause of life for every soul.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Another commandment give I unto you! That ye love one another as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land, but on one condition; that their hearts be filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony, like one soul in different bodies, *like one soul in different bodies*. If they fail in this condition, the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this: Look at one another with the eye of perfection. Look at me, follow me, be as I am. Take no thought for yourselves or your lives,—whether ye eat, or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye have friends or foes. For all of these things ye must not care at all. Look at me and be as I am. Ye must die to yourselves and to the world; so shall ye be born again and enter the kingdom of heaven. Behold a candle, how it gives its light. It weeps its life away, drop by drop, in order to give forth its flame of light.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From *An Early Pilgrimage*.

VIII:11, 27 September 1917 [VIII:11:141]

A prayer for the confirmation of the American Government

Revealed about the year 1900.

O God—O thou who art the confirmer of every just power and equitable empire in eternal glory, everlasting power, continuance, steadfastness, firmness and greatness!—strengthen, by the abundance of thy mercy, every government which acts rightly towards its subjects and every dominion that protects the poor and weak by its flag.

I ask thee, by the abundance of thy holiness and that of thy bounty, to assist this just government which hath stretched out the ropes of its tent to far and wide countries; the justice of which hath manifested its proofs throughout the well inhabited, cultivated and flourishing regions belonging to such government.

O God, strengthen its soldiers and flag, give authority and influence to its word and utterance, protect its territories and dominions, guard its reputation, make its renown widely spread, divulge its traces and exalt its flag by thy conquering power and wonderful might in the kingdom of creation.

Thou are the confirmer of whomsoever thou willest.

Verily, thou art the powerful and the almighty!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

VIII:13, 4 November 1917 [VIII:13:157]

“This is the One whose meeting will be longed for by all those who dwell in the everlasting spiritual world, and who have taken a station for themselves in the tents of Abhá!”—From Súriy-i-Haykal.

The hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh¹

Bahá'u'lláh was born in Ṭihrán, Persia, on 12 November CE 1817.

The dawning of a great light

A compilation of incidents from the life of Bahá'u'lláh.

Glad tidings of the Kingdom of Abhá! We announce to you glad tidings of great joy! Similar words were spoken almost two thousand years ago.

Reflect and be not of the heedless. This is the great day of God. This is the day of universal peace, of universal brotherhood, of a universal language and of the union of all religions. This is the day wherein the prophecies of the [VIII:13:158] Holy Books of every tongue have been or are being fulfilled. This is the cycle of Bahá'u'lláh.

We announce to you Bahá'u'lláh, "He whom God shall manifest", the one who has broken the seals of both the creational and collective books.

Words of the editor of a Minneapolis newspaper, as corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Diary of Mírzá Sohrab, 29 July 1913.

Bahá'u'lláh (whose given name was Ḥusayn 'Alí), was the son of Mírzá 'Abbás, renowned as Mírzá Buzurg of Núr. The Núrís are one of the well-known families of Mázindarán. During the reigns of Qájár, the present Persian dynasty, the members of this family have usually occupied the highest positions in the state, such as Prime Minister, Minister, Secretary and other civil and military dignities: Even at the present day most of them are in the Government.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl: *The Bahá'í Proofs*, p. 51.

Bahá'u'lláh, when he was six years old, had a dream in which he saw himself swimming in a mighty ocean which was so great that he marvelled. His hair, which was long, was floating out on the waves and soon he discovered that to each separate hair a fish was attached by its mouth, that is, the fish was holding the hair in its mouth. There were large fish, small fish, white fish, black fish, in fact all kinds of fishes.

The impression he received was so vivid that he was awakened. When he told his father in the morning the father decided to have the meaning if possible. Being, as you know, a Grand Vazír, he applied to the Sháh, asking permission to have the dream interpreted by the court interpreter of dreams. This was granted him. When the interpreter had heard the dream he stood amazed. He said, "This is a most wonderful dream, but I do not see how it can come true. The ocean symbolizes the world; the fish are the people of the world who are to gain knowledge from this boy—knowledge of God. You must protect and keep him, for he will be very great, but it is not possible that he can fulfil entirely such a wonderful dream. How can the entire world receive knowledge of God from this boy? However, this is what I see in this dream. Protect him. Keep and guard him. He will be very great and will teach great and learned people as well as others."

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife given by Mrs H. E. Hoagg in a letter from Haifa, Syria, 1914.

When I was a child and had not yet reached the age of maturity one of my brothers intended to marry in Ṭihrán and according to the custom of that country for seven days and nights they were engaged in feasting and banqueting. The program for the last day of the entertainment for the guests was the play of Sulṭán Salím. The ministers, the grandees and officials of the city were there in a great throng, and I was sitting in one of the galleries of the

¹ Items available in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* have been omitted.

building, observing the scenes. They raised a great tent in the middle of the court. Representations of human forms only a few inches in height would come out of the tent and cry: "The king is coming, arrange the seats in order." Then other figures came out, sweeping the ground while a number were sprinkling the streets with water. Then another figure was presented who was supposed to be the herald bidding the people be ready for review before His Majesty, the Sultán.

Then the ministers came, with hat and shawl, according to the Persian custom. Others were present with clubs while a number of others were garbed as chamberlains, aides-de-camp, farráshs and executioners with instruments of punishment. All these lined up according to their station and class. At last the king appeared with sovereign power and [VIII:13:159] shining diadem upon his head and with splendour and glory walked slowly and majestically, and with perfect calmness, tranquillity and composure seated himself upon the throne. At that moment the noise of the guns and the music of the national anthem was raised and the smoke surrounded the tent and king. When the air was cleared it was seen that the king was on his throne and the ministers, the magistrates and secretaries had taken their places according to their rank. Immediately a thief, captured by the police, was brought before the king and a royal order was issued to behead him. Then the chief of the executioners took the captive and decapitated him and a red fluid which was like blood was seen by all the spectators. While the Sultán was consulting with some of his ministers the news was brought in that a certain person had become a rebel. The Sultán issued orders that several regiments of soldiers and artillerymen be sent to the scene to quell the disturbance. After a few minutes the thunderous noise of guns and artillery was heard behind the tent and we were told they were engaged in battle. I became astonished and bewildered at these affairs. Then the review ended and the curtain descended.

After twenty minutes a man came out from behind the tent with a box under his arm. I asked him, "What is this box? Where are the king and all the men?" He answered that all these great things and manifest objects, such as kings, princes and ministers, glory, majesty, power and sovereignty which we beheld were enclosed in this box.

I declare by the Lord who has created all things through his Word that from that day all the conditions of this world and its greatness have been like that play before my eyes. It has not nor will ever have the weight of a mustard seed. I wondered greatly that the people should glorify themselves in these affairs. Notwithstanding this, the people of insight will discern with the eye of certainty the end of the glory of every great one before beholding it.

Bahá'u'lláh in a letter to the Sultán of Turkey. [VIII:13:160]

The Báb had proclaimed the dawn of the great light and the new cycle of reality on 23 May 1844. That same night 'Abbás Afandí ('Abdu'l-Bahá) was born. Bahá'u'lláh for eight years summoned the people of Persia to the new movement. He travelled to and fro: "He arose with mighty resolution, and engaged with the utmost constancy in systematizing the principles and consolidating the ethical canons" of the new spiritual society. "He displayed in assemblies, meetings, conferences, inns, mosques and colleges a mighty power of utterance and exposition. Whoever beheld his open brow or heard his vivid addresses perceived him with the eye of actual vision to be a patent demonstration of the new life and a pervading influence."

A great number both of rich and poor and many prominent doctors of theology were "filled with amazement and astonishment at the seething and waving of the ocean of his utterance" and were so attracted by the Holy Spirit shining through his spiritual persuasions that "they washed their hands of heart and life" and when the persecutions came "laid down their lives under the sword dancing (with joy)."

Notes by compiler; quotations from *A Traveller's Narrative*, translated by Prof. E. G. Browne, Cambridge, England. [VIII:13:161]

The Blessed Beauty of Abhá (Bahá'u'lláh)—may the divine souls of the existence be a ransom to his friends!—endured personally, all kinds of calamities and bore the most violent ordeals. There remained no torture which did not come to his holy body, and no suffering which did not descend upon his pure spirit. How many nights he could not take rest under the chains and heaviness of fetters and how many days he gave himself not a minute's repose because of the burden of fetters and chains!

From Niyávarán to Tīhrán that pure spirit, who was brought up on a bed of down, was forced to run, with bare head and bare feet, under chains and fetters, and, in a dark and narrow subterranean prison, he was placed with murderers, thieves, criminals, malefactors; at every moment a new torture was inflicted upon him and at every moment his martyrdom was expected by all.

After a long time, he was sent from the city of his residence to foreign countries. For many years in Baghdád at every moment a new arrow was darted toward his holy breast, and at every instant a sword was bent on his pure body. At no instant was there any hope for safety and security, and the enemies, with utmost dexterity, were attacking the blessed soul from all sides, and he, alone, personally resisted them all.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh spent many days in the utmost poverty. During the term of his imprisonment in Tīhrán, his daily ration was one loaf of bread only. According to the opinion of some people it is impossible to imagine greater poverty than this!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mírzá Sohrab*, 26 March 1914.

Bahá'u'lláh (writing in later years) in one of his poems: "The mark of the chain is yet visible on my neck and the impress of the fetters can be seen around my ankles!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mírzá Sohrab*, 1 March 1914.

When Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned and chains were around his neck, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then eight years old, was with some of the believers in another place. The people finally captured him also. The boys of this place gathered together and began to beat him; about two or three hundred children surrounded him. They beat him severely on the head, cursed him and otherwise persecuted him.

From Notes of Mrs I. D. Brittingham, taken at Haifa, in 1901.

Another incident: "We found 'Abbás Afandí ('Abdu'l-Bahá) surrounded by a band of boys who had undertaken personally to molest him. He was standing in their midst as straight as an arrow—a little fellow, the youngest and smallest of the group—firmly but quietly *commanding* them not to lay their hands upon him, which, strange to say, they seemed unable to do."

Words of the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Abbas Afandí, His Life and Teachings*, p. 14. [VIII:13:162]

When I was a small boy in Tīhrán, I remember whenever two of the believers of God desired to meet each other they could not do it during the day time, so a time was set for the

evening, between sunset and midnight. They were so persecuted that if they met each other in the bazaar, they would not show any sign of recognition. The meetings were held at midnight. One of the believers acted as a guard and watched the street so that they might not be seen by any strangers. The guard looked continually to the left and right, in order not to be detected by the night police. At that time, all the inhabitants of Persia thought that the fire of the cause was entirely extinguished, that all traces of internal growth were effaced. Every one who was known as a Bahá'í was arrested, thrown into prison, and then killed and their possessions pillaged and their houses destroyed. ...

In reality those were days of self-sacrifice, days of great tests, days of matchless heroism, days of spirituality, days of complete severance, days of attraction and enkindlement, days of divine bliss and beatitude. The material conditions were made subservient to the spiritual laws. The believers were filled with the Spirit. Although they walked on the surface of the earth, yet they were living in the Supreme Concourse. It is impossible to find souls more attracted, more severed, more self-sacrificing than they were!

When Bahá'u'lláh was thrown into the dungeon, there were many other believers arrested and imprisoned at the same time. They were arranged in two rows, one opposite the other. Their feet were shackled, their hands manacled, their necks chained. The prison being an underground room, it was so pitch dark that they could not see each other's face. The Blessed Perfection was in the right row and in order to keep up their spirits, he taught them two verses, each line to be chanted in turn by the two rows during the evenings. Their loud, clear voices, singing in unison, pierced through the impenetrable darkness of the jail and ascended to the very throne of the Almighty. The first row would sing: "He is my Guardian and the Guardian of all creatures!" and the opposite row would cry out: "Sufficient unto us is God, and to this we bear witness!" There was such exultation and serene happiness in the awful darkness of the jail that it was illumined with the Light of the Kingdom of Abhá.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mírzá Sohrab*, 22 June 1914.

In every dispensation a number of sanctified souls have become manifest who were self-sacrificing, severed from all else save God, forbearing sufferings and tribulations, accepting hardships and persecutions, welcoming tortures and death for the sake of truth. But in none of the past dispensations have there been such heroic and sublime instances of devotion and martyrdom as in this Bahá'í Cause! At the time when all the inhabitants of Tíhrán had arisen against this Cause and the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh) was arrested and thrown into prison, I was a very young child. The jail wherein Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned was a dark and gloomy cell underground, and had no aperture, no window save a small door. When the door was unlocked one had to descend many rickety steps before reaching the gloomy, stuffy ground floor. The name of the jailer was Áqá Buzurg, and he was an inhabitant of the city of Qazvín. As in the past he had received many favours, bounties and kindnesses from the beloved hands of Bahá'u'lláh, he came one day to our house and took me with him to see my father. Descending half the stairs of the cell, I peered through the darkness to try and see someone. Everything was pitch darkness. Suddenly I heard the wonderful, resonant voice of the Blessed Perfection: "Take this child away! Do not let him come in!" Obeying the words of Bahá'u'lláh, [VIII:13:163] the jailer took me out and said: "Sit down here and be patient. About noon the prisoners are taken out, and then you can see your father!" I sat there. A little after twelve o'clock they brought the prisoners out and among them I saw the Blessed Perfection. A thick heavy chain called *Qará-Guwar*,¹ the heaviest and thickest chain of the time, was placed about his holy feet, the end of which dragged along the ground. His neck was also chained

¹ Qará-Gawhar ("Black pearl or gem"), the name given to a 51 kg chain, one of two dreadful chains (the other was Salásil) placed on Bahá'u'lláh in the Black Pit of Tíhrán.

with heavy fetters and his hands manacled. Mírzá Maḥmúd—a most wonderful Bahá'í—was the fellow-prisoner of Bahá'u'lláh. They were chained together. A common, ordinary felt hat, the top of which was worn out and the fringe torn and soiled, was on his blessed head. I cannot describe to you the pain and anguish that attacked and tortured me by this sight of the Manifestation!

[The compiler wishes to state just here that anguish personified, the vibrations of which pierced every listener as a two-edged sword, marked 'Abdu'l-Bahá's address as he told of this same event, while he was in San Francisco. Never shall it be forgotten by those who were blessed by listening to his voice, even if it was such a saddened occasion.]

In short, the fiendish cruelties of the authorities reached to such a height as to divide a large number of the believers among the various classes of the inhabitants of Ṭihrán, so that these people might martyr them according to their own devilish desires. For example, a believer was given to the government clerks, another to the policemen, another to the infantry, another to the ulamás, another to the dervishes, another to the butchers—one to the members of each craft and profession—so that all of them might lend a hand in shedding the blood of these innocent Bahá'ís. For instance, a believer was given to the cavalry. These ferocious beasts took him to Sabzih-Maydán and about one thousand of them riding on their horses, with drawn swords attacked him from all sides. The body was actually cut into a thousand small pieces, and yet they did not give up. The sight of blood maddened them, and turned them into wild, dancing savages, thirsting for more blood. Finally the executioner called out to them: “O ye madmen! Stop! It is enough! Nothing is left of the body. I must take these small shreds and pieces and bury them. Do not add more to the horrors of my task!” At this juncture a restaurant keeper arrived on the scene and asked the executioner to let him have the remains of the “accursed Bahá'í”, because he would burn them in his stove and by this act gain his entrance into Paradise. ... Those were the days of miraculous deeds, matchless heroism, unsurpassable firmness and divine courage. Each one of the believers while walking upon the earth, was at the same time soaring toward the Supreme Concourse. They were the angels of the Kingdom of Abhá and the spiritual heroes of the arena of unparalleled sacrifice.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 22 February 1914.

When Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned in Ṭihrán, the Russian ambassador went about twenty times to the Sháh to plead in his behalf, saying: “This man has no fault. He is faultless. Why do you imprison him!” The Sháh answered that Bahá'u'lláh must be punished because he had ordered an attack on his life. The Ambassador said: “That is not a reasonable supposition, for if he had ordered such an attempt he would have ordered a bullet put in the gun instead of merely powder and small shot.” The Sháh acknowledged this reasoning, but was determined to hold Bahá'u'lláh responsible so as to have a pretext for keeping him in prison.

Again and again the Russian ambassador went to talk with the Sháh about the matter, and at last the Sháh confessed that he was afraid of the influence of Bahá'u'lláh, and that if he should set [VIII:13:164] him free, it would create a great tumult among the people.

The Ambassador answered: “If then, you fear him so much, why keep him in Ṭihrán; would it not be better to exile him to Baghdád?” This was accordingly done.

Daily Lessons Received at Acca, January 1908, p. 58.

When the Blessed Perfection and his family were exiled from Persia, all along our way from Ṭihrán to Baghdád we did not find a believer, only a handful of despondent friends were in Baghdád. All the people firmly believed that with the exile of Bahá'u'lláh the fire of this Cause

would become extinct. Were they not wrong in their reckonings? How many houses were pillaged! How many people were exiled! How many were thrown into prison! How many thousands were killed! And yet they did not succeed in their fiendish work of extermination! For this Cause is constantly reinforced by the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse, and no army, no matter how invulnerable, can defeat the phalanxes of the Kingdom!

About thirty years ago, no one heard the name of the Bahá'í Cause in 'Ishqábád; but now the dome of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, like a radiant jewel, glitters under the rays of the sun! ... Praise be to God that it has become evident and known to all that the Bahá'ís are free from any intrigues and seditions. They confer life and not death! ... The people of Persia looked on the Bahá'ís as the enemies of their religion, possessions and life, and consequently they considered one of the holiest duties the extermination of this sect. Well do I remember when still a child and in Tīhrán, one day I entered the Mosque and saw a fanatical Mullá haranguing the crowd: "O people! If you love God, kill the Bábís; if you wish the descent of the blessings of the Almighty, kill the Bábís, and if you want to protect your hearts and possessions, your wives and families, kill the Bábís!" So ingrained was the enmity of the Muslims against this wronged community. ... On the other hand, Bahá'u'lláh compelled the Bábís to non-resistance and taught them day and night to adorn themselves with the qualities of holiness and sanctity, and commanded them to be meek and holy. He said: "It is better for you to be killed than to kill!" He exhorted them to be faithful, to be kind toward all the nations, to deal sincerely with all the people, to characterize themselves with mercy, benevolence, clemency and charity and to exert themselves at all times to serve the world of humanity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 February 1914.

Exiled in Baghdád

No one can ever imagine even faintly how we were surrounded from all sides by test and trials in the nascent stage of the Cause. When we were exiled from Persia, outwardly the means of happiness were completely lacking; we did not have even our daily necessities. Notwithstanding all this whenever I think of this time my heart is filled with exultation.

For eleven years we lived in Baghdád. The heat of that place was very intense, yet we were most happy, because we were assisted in serving at the Holy Threshold. One cannot experience a greater amount of heat than in Baghdád; at that time the summers were unbearable. We were strangers and penniless, yet our joy was supreme. The trip from Tīhrán to Baghdád and the days spent in Baghdád in the presence of the Blessed Perfection are very vivid in my memory [VIII:13:165] and shall never be forgotten. Those days were overflowing with joy and fragrance.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Mírzá Yahyá or Şubḥ-i-Azal, the younger half-brother, whom Bahá'u'lláh in his love had taught most tenderly, became ambitious for prominence in the wonderful movement the Báb had started. He was encouraged by a temporary leadership which the Báb had entrusted to him. He lacked courage, however, and when the persecutions broke out fled in disguise to Baghdád, where he began to oppose the pure and glorious Bahá'u'lláh and claimed that he himself was the great teacher whom the Báb had foretold, "Him whom God should manifest." Other followers of the Báb also made similar claims. With these claims they evidently stirred up quite a commotion and Bahá'u'lláh, always a man of peace, withdrew for two years into the mountains and let them do the teaching. But the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which are quoted a few paragraphs below, show how powerless these claimants were to quicken the spirits and purify the lives of those to whom Bahá'u'lláh had brought the very water of life. When their failure to produce in their hearers the fruits of righteousness was apparent Bahá'u'lláh

returned that through the radiance of his spirit he might bring them back from death into life.

Later when Bahá'u'lláh felt compelled to proclaim that God had called him to be the teacher of world-unity whom the Báb had announced, he enclosed in the envelope with his own proclamation a letter of Şubḥ-i-Azal's. These he sent without a word of comment and let the readers judge from the comparative spiritual power of the two letters which had the sanction of God's Holy Spirit.

Almost everyone accepted Bahá'u'lláh. Şubḥ-i-Azal thus defeated descended to intrigues and for many years carried on intrigues against his glorious brother. Some writers in the West failing to probe the disguise of Şubḥ-i-Azal's pretended goodness have tried to justify him. But the great higher critic, Prof. T. K. Cheyne, has proved beyond the shadow of a question the futility and emptiness of all Şubḥ-i-Azal's claims. A few years ago Şubḥ-i-Azal's own son seeing how Bahá'u'lláh had now proved his greatness and divine power by bringing multitudes of those divergent races and sects into a new life of brotherhood and love became a devoted follower of Bahá'u'lláh.

Note by compiler.

During the first years of our stay in Baghdád, Bahá'u'lláh suddenly departed for the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih. At that time we did not know his whereabouts at all and so it happened that there was no one to teach the Cause or muster the scattered Bahá'í forces. The fire of search was almost extinguished and the interest of the public waned. There was no one to assuage the fear of the few or attract the hearts of the many. The voice of divine authority was hushed and the thunders and lightnings of spiritual revelations did not roll and flash across the heavenly track. Mírzá Yaḥyá, who claimed to be the vicegerent of the Báb, always fearing his own shadow, was concealing himself in a thousand hiding-places. Completely disguised and under the assumed name of Ḥájí 'Alí, he travelled like a dervish between Baghdád and Basra. In order to hide his identity from the public he had hung on a string a few red and yellow Arabian slippers, which he sold to the people while walking through the streets and bazaars.

At this juncture, two young men from Mílán¹ came to Baghdád. They were enkindled believers and they brought cheer and happiness to our despondent and sorrowing hearts. It was then a long time that we had had no news from the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh). The fire of spirituality and activity was put out of every soul. The hearts were be- [VIII:13:166] wildered and the spirits drooped. No amount of exertion whatever could in the least stir to courage or self-sacrifice the spirits of the few remaining, fearful Bahá'ís. At that time I was very young.

These two new believers from Mílán came and knocked at the door. I went and opened it. I observed that they were two young men from Mílán. Their faces were luminous, their eyes radiant. They were shining like unto two suns. I asked them to come in. ... After awhile they asked about the Cause. I told them that the Cause was extinct, there was no Cause. They asked about Mírzá Yaḥyá. I told them he was concealed and no one knew his whereabouts. They asked about Bahá'u'lláh. I told them I did not know where he was. As soon as they heard this sad news they looked at each other and began to weep and weep. For nearly one hour they sat on the floor and wept bitter tears of regret and disappointment. I tried to console them but I could not succeed: My own heart was sad when I realized the chaotic condition of the Cause and the absence of any life. Then they arose from their seats; without any remarks they left the house. They did not leave any address and I never heard from them afterwards.

¹ A village 23 km SW Tabríz, in Ádhirbayján.

How different it is now! The banner of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is waving over all the regions. The power of the Most Great Name is felt by all the nations of the world. The glad tidings of the Kingdom are proclaimed to all the religions of the world. The potency of the Holy Spirit is moving the hearts of men, and the fearless teachers of the Cause are spreading the Gospel of salvation both in the East and in the West.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 3 February 1914.

Bahá'u'lláh departed to Sar-Galú alone. Nobody knew just where he was, even we were not informed. Two years he passed at Sar-Galú. Some of the time he passed in the mountains, some of the time in grottoes, and some of the time in the city of Sar-Galú. Although solitary and alone, nobody knowing him, yet all through Kurdistán he became well known. It was said, "This unknown person is a most remarkable person, is exceedingly learned, is possessed of a tremendous power, and has a colossal force." All Kurdistán was magnetized by his love. But Bahá'u'lláh was passing his time in poverty and even his robes and clothes were those of the poor; his food was that of the indigent. The signs of severance were manifest upon him as the sun at mid-day, and he was absolutely careless regarding his life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Once I was in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. He was reading some of the writings of the Master ('Abdu'l-Bahá). After reading every line he would praise it and express the highest commendation saying: "We have never taught the Master, yet he writes with such deep penetration and inspiration; but we are daily teaching his brothers, and they are copying the holy tablets all the time, but they cannot write correctly one letter."

Words of Hájí Muḥammad, one of the early Oriental Bahá'ís: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 November 1913.

Although he ('Abdu'l-Bahá) had not studied in any school, yet, from his youth, fountains of knowledge flowed in his fluent explanations. The first trace which emanated from his holy being in the world of knowledge was the treatise he wrote in his early youth at Baghdád. This was a commentary upon the holy tradition: "I was an invisible Treasury; as I loved to be known therefore I created men to know Me." He wrote this commentary in answer to the request of one of the Pashas. The author (Abu'l-Faḍl) was present at a meeting when someone asked Hájí Siyyid Javád [VIII:13:167] -i-Ṭabáṭabá'í of Karbilá concerning the life of Bahá'u'lláh. The great Siyyid answered: "That holy being must be a shining light whose great son hath written such a treatise during his childhood."

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl: *The Bahá'í Proofs*, p. 49-50.

During these years 'Abbás Afandí was accustomed to frequent the mosques and argue with the doctors and learned men. They were astonished at his knowledge and acumen and he came to be known as the youthful sage. They would ask him, "Who is your teacher, where do you learn the things which you say?" His reply was that his father had taught him. Although he had never been a day in school, he was as proficient in all that was taught as well-educated young men, which was the cause of much remark among those who knew.

In appearance my brother was at this time a remarkably fine-looking youth. He was noted as one of the handsomest young men in Baghdád.

Sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Quoted from *Abbas Effendi* by Myron H. Phelps.

Once when I lived in Baghdád I was invited to the home of a poor thorn-picker. In Baghdád the heat is even more intense than in Syria and it was a very hot day. But I walked twelve miles to the thorn-picker's hut. Then his wife made a little cake out of some meal for me, and burnt it in cooking it. Still that was the best reception I ever attended.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Miss Juliet Thompson*.

When we were living in Baghdád according to the custom of that country we slept on the roof during the summer months. I always commenced sleeping on the roof one month earlier than anyone else and stayed one month and a half longer at the end of the season. The members of the family always insisted that I should come down because it was getting too cold; but I did not listen to them. I loved the perfect quietness, the mystic silence, the awe-inspiring, heavenly scene! Long after midnight I would get up, commune with God in spirit and watch the stars circling in their majestic spheres. There was such spirituality in that Eastern silence that whenever I think of it I feel myself transported to those divine nights of concentration and contemplation!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 March 1914.

I was asleep upon my couch; the breaths of my Lord, the Merciful, passed over me and awakened me from my sleep and commanded me to proclaim between earth and heaven. This was not on my part but on His part, and to this bear witness the denizens of the realms of His power and His Kingdom and the dwellers of the cities of His glory and Himself the Truth.

The gales of the All-knowing, the All-glorious passed by me and taught me the knowledge of what hath been. ... I have not studied these sciences which men possess nor have I entered the colleges.

This (Bahá'u'lláh) is a leaf which the breezes of the will of thy Lord the Mighty, the Extolled have stirred. Can it be still when the rushing winds blow? ... Verily, I was not save as one dead in the presence of His command, the hand of thy Lord, the Merciful, turning me.

Thou knowest, O God, that in every action, I desire nothing save Thy affairs, and that in every utterance I seek naught but Thy celebration; neither doth my pen move except I desire therein Thy good pleasure and the setting forth of what Thou hast enjoined upon me by Thy authority. [VIII:13:168]

Thou seest me, O God, confounded in Thine earth. If I tell what Thou hast enjoined on me, Thy creatures turn against me; if I forsake what Thou hast enjoined on me for Thy part, I should be far removed from the gardens of nearness to Thee. (Wherefore) I advance toward Thy good pleasure, turning aside from what the souls of Thy servants desire, accepting what is with Thee and forsaking what would remove me afar off from the retreats or nearness to Thee and the heights of Thy glory. For Thy love I flinch not from aught and [VIII:13:169] for Thy good pleasure I fear not all the afflictions of the world. This is but through Thy strength and Thy might, Thy grace and Thy favour, not because I am deserving thereof.

From a letter to the Sháh of Persia. Bahá'u'lláh's account of God's call ringing in his inmost consciousness bidding him arise and announce himself the one whom the Báb had foretold.

During this time (the time of the Báb's banishment and imprisonment) Bahá'u'lláh was constantly engaged in the promulgation of the Cause of God; but without proclaiming himself or making known his station. Some, but few, among his friends, the early disciples, discovered that he was the one of whom the Báb spoke—"He whom God shall manifest." Although Bahá'u'lláh was of royal lineage, and not of the scholastic or learned, the people naturally

looking for this Promised One among the divines, yet his marvellous discourses astonished the wise and learned and they who were pure in heart saw in him the fulfilment of their hopes.¹

Bahá'u'lláh well prepared the people for the coming of the great event, namely, his declaration, which took place in the Garden of the Riḍván,—outside the city of Baghdád. During twelve days he made his mission known to his disciples, and inasmuch as this great event occurred in the Garden of the Riḍván the greatest of Bahá'í feasts is called after that garden in commemorating the twelve days.

Flowers from the Rose Garden of Acca, p. 26.

In Baghdád I was a child nine years old. There and then he (Bahá'u'lláh) announced to me the Word, and I believed him. As soon as he proclaimed to me the Word I threw myself at his holy feet and implored and supplicated him to accept this one drop of blood as a sacrifice in his pathway.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 13 January 1914.

This is a blessed day (the ninth day of the Riḍván), a happy and joyous day. The beauty, the holiness and the significance of these days are not known now. This is the time of gladness, bliss and ecstasy for the believers of God because we have lived during the days of the Blessed Perfection and have experienced the great joy of these days. Their celebration by us is always shaded with a recollection, but for those who have not seen Bahá'u'lláh with their physical eyes these days will be celebrated with a genuine rejoicing and a most thorough preparation. The beauty, the sheer joy, the exhilaration of the golden Riḍván days are now brought back to my memory and in reviewing them I find each day a perfect gem of spiritual rapture.

During the nights of those days we could not sleep because we fancied in our minds the unparalleled joy of meeting Bahá'u'lláh in the morning, standing in his presence, receiving his graces, and listening to his words. It was on the ninth day that the Blessed Perfection leaving Baghdád stayed in the Garden of Najíb Páshá² before starting for Constantinople. It is impossible to describe with words the beatific vibrations with which we were surrounded in those days. Although to all outward appearances the Blessed Perfection was in exile, yet he moved with such power and manifested such majesty! The list of visitors calling on him during these ten days looks rather like the roll call of an army. Those who had never seen him while he lived in Baghdád called. All the leaders of the [VIII:13:170] community, the officers of the army, and of the government paid a visit. Even the Governor, Najíb Páshá, called and Bahá'u'lláh did not return these rather important calls. Were one to reflect for a moment he would realize that such great events have never occurred in the history of the past dispensations!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 30 April 1914.

Life in the Most Great Prison

The government of Persia said: "As long as Bahá'u'lláh is in Persia the country will not be at peace. When Bahá'u'lláh is exiled from Persia the country will then find peace. He shall no longer be connected with this country; all communications with him shall be suspended." So the Sháh of Persia endeavoured until he succeeded in expelling the Blessed Perfection to

¹ Bahá'u'lláh announced himself twice in Baghdád, once to a few in 1853, then to all his friends in 1863, in the garden of the Riḍván.

² Najíbíyyih Garden (Najíb, not Hajib as in *Star of the West*).

Constantinople, and from Constantinople to Roumelia.¹ Communication with him had to be in secret, but still the Cause spread, and they said: "Day by day his lamp becomes brighter, his potency becomes greater. The cause of this spreading is due to the populous cities to which he is sent. Therefore it is better to send him to a penal colony where he may be considered as a suspect, that the people may know he is in the prison of murderers and highway robbers; and in a bad climate he and his followers may perish." Therefore the King of Persia, Násirí'd-Dín, Sháh, endeavoured until he succeeded in having him transported to the prison of 'Akká.

But the banishment of Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Perfection, instead of resulting in the extermination of the Cause in the country proved just the contrary; the Cause was spread more rapidly; the fame became more widely circulated; the teachings of the Blessed Perfection became more widely promulgated in Persia. Through the power of God he was able to hoist his banner. If at first it was a lamp, it became a flame. If it was a star, it became a mighty sun. The fame of the Cause of the Blessed Perfection went as far as the East and the West.

He paid no attention to the ministers and viziers. The Governor-in-Chief of 'Akká craved to be honoured by admission to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. For five years this one man, called Dīyá' Páshá, asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá if he would supplicate the Manifestation to permit him to make this visit, but the Manifestation never granted it. All the people of 'Akká know this. The Blessed Perfection was imprisoned, yet he had that power to refuse anything or to do anything he wished.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Whosoever reads the Book of Haykal (*Súriy-i-Haykal*) can observe the tremendous and colossal power of Bahá'u'lláh. He addressed the kings from the prison, each individually, summoning all to the oneness of humanity, and the most great peace, arraigning some, and predicting what would happen in their kingdoms, and these predictions have come to pass!

Some of the kings exhibited pride, one was the Ottoman king, 'Abdu'l-'Azíz Khán. When Bahá'u'lláh was a prisoner in his kingdom, he addressed him very critically, and literally did it come to pass.

Another was the French emperor. The Emperor of France did not send any reply, then a second epistle was sent to him. It was addressed to Napoleon the Third, saying, "I wrote you an epistle before, and I summoned you to a cause, but you heeded it not. You proclaimed once that you were a defender of the oppressed, but it becomes evident that you are not; rather, you magnify your own selfish desires and passions. [VIII:13:171] You advocate your own interests, and this pride of yours is supported by your empire and sovereignty. Because of your arrogance, God will shortly destroy your sovereignty and a revolution shall be set up in that kingdom, and the reins of government shall be taken from your hands, and in the utmost of debasement and degradation will you be cast, and now surely I see you in degradation. Soon it shall be manifested! The river Rhine will be the place of your humiliation and mourning, and the women will bemoan the loss of their sons." Such was the arraignment which was sent. It has been published and sent abroad.

Similar addresses were directed to other kings. And this he accomplished within a prison which was beyond human endurance, and all that he wrote or declared came to pass. It became evident and manifest, no one could hinder it. Some have not yet come to pass; they will occur later.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: From address given in Washington, D.C., 10 May 1912.

¹ Rúmilyá, now the Balkans.

In spite of all difficulties Bahá'u'lláh was ever in an exalted state; his face shone continually. He had the presence of a king. One cannot imagine anyone with more majesty. One would have said that he was enjoying the greatest comfort. He drew his strength from divine powers, which always triumph. Minds were exalted on beholding him, and Bahá'u'lláh never hid himself. He spoke courageously before all. "He is incomparable," declared the people, "but he is setting himself against Islám. Such an one is an honour to humanity," they said, "but a detriment to our religion; therefore we must declare ourselves against him!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

It was in all probability the second month of the summer when one early morning the steamer anchored off the shore of Haifa. Altogether we were seventy-seven persons. After sunrise we landed at Haifa, and hardly three or four hours had passed before a large sailing boat was brought into commission by the authorities, in which they were going to carry us back to 'Akká. The baggage was taken on board, and immediately afterward all of us were taken off. It was about 4 pm when we reached 'Akká.

As we entered the place we found the inhabitants of 'Akká, without exception, sickly looking people of sallow, yellow complexion, a good many unable to walk and hence strewn on the narrow streets. Even the soldiers and officers, who possessed privileges, looked ill. In fact, a number of the soldiers, that is, those who were ordered to guard us, were very sick and I began treating them at once.

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

That night we were kept by the soldiers who guarded us entirely without food. Two sentries were placed at the door and we were forbidden to go to the market to buy anything. The mothers not having eaten, had no milk for their babies; the young children were famishing and the bodily sufferings of all of us were very great. But we were so happy in spite of all our miseries, and khánum (the speaker) especially laughed so much that the Blessed Perfection sent a messenger to us to say, "Do not laugh so much, or the soldiers will say, 'Listen to those foolish people enjoying themselves and laughing with nothing to eat.'"

The day following the governor sent us some rice, but it was very bad rice, unwashed, and full of stones. The children were very happy when they saw food, and crowded around the tables. But when it was cooked, it was so black and dirty it made them sick, and they could not eat it. Then the Manifestation came to us and said, "Do not cry; I have made some food for you." He gave each of the children one sugar-plum. When they had eaten these they all went to sleep, quite peacefully and contentedly.

The weather was extremely hot, the water was bad, the prison ration coarse black bread, so that in those days many of us felt sick, and it was not long afterward when everyone became ill, except 'Abdu'l-Bahá and another believer, Áqá Rizá Shírází, and these two nursed us through.

Ḍiyá'íyyih Khánum, daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

When we arrived in 'Akká it was found there were not enough rooms in the barracks to imprison us separately, so they put us all in two rooms with no furniture at all. The court of the barracks had a most gloomy aspect. There were three or four fig trees on the branches of which several ominous owls screeched all night. Everyone got sick, and there were neither provisions nor medicine. At the entrance of the barracks there was a morgue. It was a

horrible looking room, yet I lived there two years in the utmost happiness. Up to that period I had not had time to read the Qur'án from first to last, but then I had ample time and used to read this Holy Book with fervour and enthusiasm.

Going over the incidents and events of the lives of former Prophets, and finding how parallel they were with ours, I was consoled and encouraged. I would read for instance, the following verse:

“How thoughtless are the people! Whenever a Prophet is sent to them, they either ridicule him or persecute him.” And then I would read this verse: “Verily, Our Host is victorious over them.” I was very happy all the time, because I was a free man. Shut off in that room, my spirit travelled throughout the immensity of space.

The soul of man must be happy no matter where he is. One must attain to that condition of inward beatitude and peace—then outward circumstances will not alter his spiritual calmness and joyousness. No one can imagine a worse place than the barracks of 'Akká. The surroundings were filthy and dirty, the treatment of the officials was unbearable, and we were looked upon as the enemies of religion and corruptors of morals. The government had given an order that during our stay in 'Akká, no one must talk with us and we must not talk with each other.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

When the Purest Branch (Bahá'u'lláh's youngest son) fell from the roof and was killed, the believers were not allowed to bury him, but four soldiers came and took away the body, and the holy family did not know for two years whether it had been thrown into the sea or what the soldiers had done with it. Naturally his mother was terribly sad and grieved at his death under such sad circumstances, and this sorrow made her so ill that it caused a disease of the heart, so that for a long time she was not able to walk about, but was obliged to sit on the bed.

However, when the Blessed Perfection said to her, “For my sake has this come upon him, and he has borne for me a sorrow and a trouble that was coming to me,” from that day no one ever saw the mother weeping and she was always quite happy and cheerful. This was be [VIII:13:173] cause of her faith and the strength of her spirit.

Ḍíyá'íyyih Khánum, daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Notes of Miss E. J. Rosenberg, Haifa, February–March 1901.

In the first month two of us died, and we had no money to pay for the funeral expenses, so we sold the one remaining rug. This money was also pocketed by the officials, and the two bodies thrown together in a hole outside of the town.

In the beginning, no one was allowed to leave the barracks without being accompanied by two or four guards. But after six months or a year, when they saw that not a soul ever tried to escape they gave us greater freedom and the friends could go out in the bazaar to buy things, either followed by one soldier or none.

Sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 July 1914.

Since that date consider how conditions have changed, and how every one of those who oppressed this party of exiles and endeavoured with might and main to suppress the spread of this light has become lost in the abyss of despair and oblivion.

They are gone and we are still here, whereas, from the standpoint of the world and human reason, it should have been reversed. Everybody imagined that under the existing

circumstances all this would end shortly and naught would be left of the Bahá'ís. Is not this an evidence of divine protection and providence? We have longed for death in the path of God; we have been ready to welcome the cup of sacrifice and were thirsty for the chalice of martyrdom. The Lord willed that we stay and serve Him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahai Bulletin*—an early Bahá'í publication, p. 10.

When two years had passed a regiment of soldiers was assigned to ‘Akká. Of course there was no other place for them to live except the barracks. Therefore they had no other alternative but to turn us out. All the time there was an inn in ‘Akká which was inhabited by different people. This inn became the hospice for the pilgrims in after years.

I went to the inn-keeper and said: “As our number is large and there are several families in our party I desire to rent the inn as a whole, and if possible the present inmates may vacate and go elsewhere.” He gave his consent to my suggestion. When after a few days I came back to draw up the papers and sign the documents I saw one of the rooms was still inhabited. “Who is this?” I asked. “He is the German consul,” he answered. “He must leave the premises,” I said, “otherwise I will not rent the place. It is impossible for an outsider to live here.” The inn-keeper looked at me with ridicule and contempt. “Ha! Ha!” he laughed, “and they say you are a prisoner! Bah! You talk to me as though you were my lord and master. What do you think, Mr Prisoner—do you expect to get an exclusive palace in this prison town? Not much! Not much! This man is a German consul; I cannot drive him out.”

Finally the German consul left of his own accord and requested to come only two hours a day to attend to his official duties, to which proposition we assented cheerfully.

Then we began to repair the rooms. One of the rooms was left unrepaired, because our small fund was exhausted. The rooms then were assigned to various families and friends, and I chose the last one for myself. This room was so damp that moss had grown on the walls and ceiling, and when it rained there were several cracks in the ceiling which gave free and welcome entrance to the rain.

The floor consisted of humid earth, a breeder of fleas. I had a piece of mat and a long Persian fur coat. It was my seat by day and my coverlet by night. ‘When I covered myself with it an army [VIII:13:174] of fleas hiding in the ambush of the fur attacked me and tried their best to defeat me, but I defeated them by turning the coat and covering myself with the other side. For one hour I slept, then the wily, indomitable fleas found their way again to the inner side. Every night I had recourse to this manoeuvring eight or ten times. Notwithstanding this I was far happier and more joyful at that time than now, sleeping on this fine bed!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 17 July 1913.

When we were imprisoned in the military barracks of ‘Akká there was a small primitive bath in which the Blessed Perfection took an occasional bath. When the time arrived for our departure from the barracks we rented a very small house in the town. It was a two-story house having two rooms on the lower and four rooms on the upper floor, but they were small indeed.

On the other hand, our party consisted of many people, and we wondered how all these souls could be accommodated in this small house. Finally thirteen of us agreed to live in one room. We lived and slept and worked in this one small room. We lived in this house for well-nigh twenty years. It so happened that although the house was small yet it contained some sort of a bath, and so the Blessed Perfection could use it as often as he wished.

At the end of twenty years we rented a much larger house, but it had no bath. We went to

Bahá'u'lláh and asked permission to build one. The more I begged the stronger was his refusal. I said: "With only fifty pounds a little comfortable bath can be built." But he did not give his consent. Finally a month passed and I was quite worried. At last I went to an Arab friend and borrowed from him two-hundred and fifty pounds at two per cent.

This money I took to a merchant who was in former times a grain dealer, but now out of work. I said to him: "We will enter into a partnership, I to furnish the capital, you the labour. With this fund you will deal four months in grain. After paying off all the expenses of rent, etc., and receiving your monthly salary, we will divide the net profit; one-third for you and two-thirds for me." We entered into this agreement and engaged in business. After four months we cleared our accounts. I paid the debt with its two per cent, the merchant received his one-third of the net profit, all the other expenses were defrayed, and eighty pounds left in the balance for me. With that sum then, I built a bath in the house which is kept intact to the present day.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 August 1913.

The house of Bahá'u'lláh (in 'Akká) was, in the beginning, two houses. At first the Blessed Perfection lived in one of them; after some years the other, fronting on the sea, was added to the first; and as they were built side by side, the partition was taken away. Thus from the older house, Bahá'u'lláh moved into the newer one, which has a most sublime, uninterrupted view of the sea, and took the room the veranda of which I see from my window. It is said that often in the mornings, and almost always in the afternoons, the Blessed Perfection used to walk on the veranda; the believers and pilgrims, knowing the custom, would come and walk in the neighbourhood and if he desired to see any of them he would beckon to them with his blessed hands. It is now the room in the older house that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is living in. Both houses are large, and although their architecture is not modern yet they are the best houses in 'Akká with regard to position, outward appearance and inside accommodations.

Mirza Sohrab: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 9 December 1913. [VIII:13:175]

For nine consecutive years the Blessed Perfection did not put his feet outside the gate of 'Akká. He was either imprisoned in the barracks or closely watched and guarded in the house. The day of his departure from the town to the plain of 'Akká was considered the most important in the Bahá'í cause. A prisoner he was, and according to the strict, royal farmán of 'Abdu'l-'Azíz he was to be jailed in a cell alone, not even one of us was to be allowed to see or to talk to him, and to leave the town of 'Akká was a matter strictly forbidden. In brief, he was to be a life prisoner, with these deadly restrictions.

One day, while he was walking in the house, in the course of his conversation he said, "It is nine years since my eyes have beheld one blade of grass." He loved the green pastures, verdant plains, blossoming trees and flowering spots; especially the prairie of 'Akká which was wonderfully green and carpeted with wild flowers during the months of spring. For this reason he often remarked: "The city is the world of bodies, the country is the world of spirits!" Hearing these statements from the blessed lips of Bahá'u'lláh one day I took with me Núrí Bey, Hakki Bey and Maḥmúd Afandí Túpchí—all three political prisoners and walked straight out of the gate into the plain of 'Akká. The strange part of this strange proceeding was that while the guards were stationed on both sides of the gate they did not as much as lift one finger to prevent us from going out, which was of course the most natural thing for them to do. On and on we walked, revelling in our new-found freedom, till we reached the present palace of Bahá'u'lláh (Bahjí). Here they had just laid out an orchard wherein they had planted new apricot and peach trees. The wind blowing through the branches stirred our hearts with a quick and new vibration. It was a most ideal scene. That day we walked and walked around

the green country and then I returned to town. Several days passed after this event, and then I gave a feast to the officials of the town under the pines near Bahjí. This broke the bonds of incarceration, and from that time I was allowed to go out and walk as my inclination led me.

There lived in 'Akká a man by the name of Muḥammad Páshá Şafwat, who was most inimical to the Cause. He had built a palace five or six miles outside the town. Many days I searched for a suitable house to rent for the Blessed Perfection, but I could find nothing else but the palace of this man. After much delay and postponement, through the confirmation of God I succeeded in renting this palace from him at £25 a year provided I might be allowed to repair the mansion with the rent of the first five years. Having papered and furnished all the rooms I ordered the carpenters to make for me a carriage with a cover which was done in due time. Having prepared everything and attended to every detail I went to the Blessed Perfection and said: "A good mansion is made ready for you outside of 'Akká. It is wonderfully situated and very charming. From one side the lovely mountains and undulating valleys are seen; from another side there are large orange and mandarin orchards; the oranges, like unto red lanterns, shine and glow through the green boughs; from another side, verdant gardens and prairies full of narcissus and tulips are seen; the Mediterranean glistens in the distance; a stream of cool water flows in the centre; in brief, it is an ideal place. I supplicate you to leave the town and live there."

The Blessed Perfection answered: "I am a prisoner. The prisoners are not allowed to go beyond the town of 'Akká." I repeated my praises of the place and begged him to come out. But to no avail. Again he refused my request. I did not want to go on with this insistence so I chose silence and left the Blessed Perfection's presence. [VIII:13:176]

I thought a good deal over this matter, trying to find a solution to this problem. Finally I decided to send for the Muftí, who loved Bahá'u'lláh and enjoyed freedom of conversation in his presence. When he arrived I told him something had come which none of us was able to cope with save him. He asked me what it was. I said: "We are all anxious that the Blessed Perfection should go out of town. I have begged him twice, the believers have also entreated, but all have been refused. This is thy work. After sunset go thou to the house, knock at the door, and if they ask thee what thou dost want, say, 'I have come to meet Bahá'u'lláh.' Thou must not leave his presence without his promise to go out."

As soon as he was given permission to enter the presence he went directly to him and threw himself at his holy feet, took hold of his blessed hands, and bluntly said: "My Lord, why dost thou not go out. The country is charming, the weather is delightful, the pastures are green, the water is cool and the palace is made ready." The Blessed Perfection said to him: "Mufti! I am a prisoner!" "O," he said, "You are not a prisoner. You are free. Everything depends upon your own will." Again Bahá'u'lláh objected, but the Muftí did not let his hands go and insisted and insisted till the much-expected promise was given. Coming out of the house the Muftí came to me and imparted to me the glad news. I was overjoyed, so much so that I kissed his lips many times. On the next day when I stood in the presence of the Blessed Perfection he smiled and said: "What a tenacious man you sent to me!" I said: "Now you have given your promise to the Muftí that you will go out, the carriage is ready at the door. ..." I rode with him through the streets of 'Akká and beyond the gate. Then I alighted from the carriage and walked to the palace of Mazra'ih.¹ The Blessed Perfection was most pleased with the place.

It was about the middle of February, and in that month and in March the whole country was bedecked with flowers. The plain of 'Akká was dancing with joy and the mountain, the

¹ Mazra'a, Pers. mazra'ih, Ar. pl. mazári': field under cultivation; farm; plantation; country estate. A town 6 km north of 'Akká and about 0.5 km from the sea. House (built by Muḥammad Páshá Şafwat) of Bahá'u'lláh is just north of this village (32.987227, 35.099427).

valleys and gardens were intoxicated with the wine of happiness and were crying out, "O rapture! O bliss!" Those heavenly months and years were spent in the utmost rejoicing until it was found that the place was too small to accommodate the growing needs of the holy family. Then there was another palace belonging to 'Abbúd and his family. This was the palace of Bahjí. 'Abbúd and his children were sick and went into town. I wanted to rent this palace from him; he wished to present it to me and insisted upon it. Finally I rented it from him at £150 a year, and Bahá'u'lláh and the members of the holy family moved into it. From that time on he lived in Bahjí and 'Akká, alternately, till the day of his departure dawned upon us and threw us into the depths of despair and sorrow.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 23 March 1914.

Prof. Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, England, whose speciality was Persian Literature and History, heard of the great spiritual awakening which was sweeping through Persia among a people that as he said "slumber in a sleep like unto that of death."

At last he was so much interested that he obtained a year's leave of absence and went to study at first-hand this remarkable spiritual renaissance. He visited "the fountain head" of the movement in 'Akká. He records his impression of Bahá'u'lláh as follows:

"Of the culminating event of this my journey some few words at least must be said. During the morning of the day after my installation at Bahjí one of Bahá'u'lláh's younger sons entered the room where I was sitting and beckoned to me to follow him. I did so, and was [VIII:13:177] conducted through passages and rooms at which I scarcely had time to glance to a spacious hall, paved, so far as I remember (for my mind was occupied with other thoughts) with a mosaic of marble. Before a curtain suspended from the wall of this great antechamber my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going, and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called 'táj' by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), 'round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I shall never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!"

Prof. E. G. Browne: Quoted from *A Traveller's Narrative*.

During the life of Bahá'u'lláh there lived in 'Akká an honourable gentleman from Europe. He had heard much about the praise of the Ridván and expressed the wish to see the place. Permission being granted, he came there one day with his family. I prepared tea for them and showed them the utmost hospitality. When they were going to leave in the evening, the gentleman left on the table a purse containing twelve pounds. Realizing what he had done, I ran back to him and forced the money into his hands. He urged me to accept it and I persisted in my refusal. Seeing how useless was his insistence, he took it back, alighted from his carriage, took off his hat and shook my hands. However, he went straight to the Blessed Perfection and said: "I wished to give a small present to your gardener, but he would not

accept it; it seemed it was too little for him.” When next I went to see him the Blessed Perfection addressed me: “Abdu’l-Kázim! I have heard that thou didst not accept the present offered to thee by the European gentleman. Why didst thou not accept it?” “I? Never will I accept anything from anyone while I am serving the Lord of mankind.” “Wilt thou accept something from me?” “Yes, with the greatest honour!” Then he showed me a small purse of Cashmere shawl and raising it up, he said: “This contains only one pound, but it is from me. Thou canst not realize how happy thou hast made me because thou didst manifest the wealth of the spirit. Those who are in my service must be independent of all else save me.”

‘Abdu’l-Kázim, the gardener of the Riḍván: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 4 January 1914.

There are many kinds of roses, but this kind is the most fragrant. The extract of rose is taken from this. The Blessed Perfection always loved this species of roses. Large bowls containing the same decorated the table of his room all the time. The fragrance of this rose has a greatly refining effect upon the human constitution. Bahá’u’lláh liked perfumes very much, and he always used the attar of roses.

The physical susceptibilities of the Blessed Perfection were very great. His [VIII:13:178] sense of smell was very keen indeed, and also his eyesight, and up to the end of his life he read the finest type without the aid of glasses.

The holy divine Manifestations are even superior and distinguished in their physical powers from the rest of mankind! For example, even when the Blessed Perfection was not feeling well, his pulse would beat regularly like the pulse of a young man twenty years old. For the last three years of his life he hardly ate anything. The servants brought the tray before him; he would look at the various dishes, eat a few mouthfuls, and then it was immediately removed; yet the pulse was normal. At that time there was a Greek doctor who regularly called on the family whenever any of us was not feeling well. One day he was allowed to stand in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. He looked into his face and his eyes, and asked permission to feel his pulse. After due examination, the doctor expressed his astonishment, and said that he had never seen a constitution so highly sensitive as that of Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 March 1914.

The greatest proof of the Blessed Perfection—may my life be a ransom to him!—consists in the fact that he was always manifest and evident under all conditions and circumstances. He was never concealed nor was he disguised for one day. In Persia, in Baghdád, in Constantinople, in Adrianople, and in the most great prison (‘Akká), Bahá’u’lláh ever withstood the persecutions of the enemies and kept his own ground in the face of all the world. He never attempted to protect or shield himself for one second. Before all nations and all religions he proclaimed his Cause and declared his teachings. The foes were resisting the spread of the Cause with the greatest hostility and his blessed breast was the target for an hundred thousand arrows.

Continually he was threatened with the darts and javelins of the adversaries. He cried out, “We have burned away the veil and the shroud and are enkindled with the fire of love. Like unto the candle we are set aglow and like unto the Beloved we are ever present in the gatherings of the lovers.” It is well-nigh beyond belief that notwithstanding all these dangers the Blessed Perfection was protected. The condition was like that of a deer; although surrounded by a hundred thousand hounds attacking it from every side yet it is protected by an invisible power.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 7 March 1914.

In an Arabic poem, the Blessed Perfection said about the calamities and allegations heaped upon him: "In every moment they inflict upon me the wound of polytheism and at every second they aim at me the dart of infidelity. O Thou Divine Spirit! Descend and behold how my humiliation is greater than Thy glory."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 21 June 1914.

All this diffusion of the fragrances of the Cause of God, throughout the Orient and the Occident, is mainly due to the successive exiles and imprisonments of the Blessed Perfection. If these events had not transpired the holy Cause would not have left the frontier of Persia, the prophecies of the prophets concerning the raising of the voice of the Lord of Hosts from the mountains and hills of the Holy Land would not have been fulfilled and the tent of the Lord of Lords would not have been pitched on its plains and meadows!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 May 1914.

Indeed God's ways are most mysterious and unsearchable. What outward [VIII:13:179] relation exists between Shíráz, Ṭíhrán, Baghdád, Constantinople, Adrianople, 'Akká and Haifa? Yet God worked patiently step by step through these various cities according to his own definite eternal plan, so that the prophecies and predictions as foretold by the prophets might be fulfilled. The golden thread of promise runs through the Bible, and it was so destined that God in his own good time would cause its appearance. Not even a single word will be left meaningless or unfulfilled.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 14 February 1914.

From the beginning of the Cause or more definitely from the time that the Blessed Perfection was exiled from Ṭíhrán all the events in this movement, although their outward appearances for the time being were fraught with pain and sorrow, yet they were based upon the consummate wisdom of God.

On the eve of the departure from Persia the believers were in tears. It is evident that after those dreadful persecutions, sufferings, trials and martyrdoms it was most difficult for them to bear this last blow. They thought the voice would be hushed, the truth would die, the light would become extinct and the truth defeated. However, the spiritual wisdom of such an event became apparent afterwards. Eleven years' sojourn in Baghdád widened immensely the circle of influence of the Cause and carried its fame to the four corners of the earth.

Having received the farmán of exile from Baghdád to Constantinople, when the friends heard this dire news they were deeply grieved. Through the intensity of anguish they were weeping uncontrollably. The wisdom of this event became likewise manifest later.

When the two despotic governments decided to exile us from Adrianople to 'Akká there was such a manifestation of sorrow and anxiety that neither word nor pen can describe it adequately. The floodgate of unutterable grief was set loose. Thus you observe the ship of this Cause has weathered fearful storms, the like of which it is impossible for you to imagine. Now it has become apparent how these events constitute the unparalleled victories of the Cause although at the time of their happening many people thought they were crushing defeats.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 May 1914.

All the time of the sojourn of the Blessed Perfection—may the souls of all existence be a ransom to his forbearance!—in this mortal world, he was enduring the most painful

afflictions. At last, in this greatest prison, his holy body was extremely weakened from the intense sufferings and his beautiful person became as weak as a web from these continual hardships. His main purpose in bearing this heavy burden and all these troubles which gave forth their waves like an ocean, in accepting chains and fetters and showing forth the greatest forbearance, was for the sake of harmony, concord and union among all the people of the world and for the establishment of the signs of the real unity among all nations, until the essential Unity (of God) might appear in the end in the existing realities, and the light of the saying: "Thou seest no difference among the creatures of God" might shine forth upon the whole world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet revealed about 1904 or 1905 for the Persian believers.

Bahá'u'lláh departed to the everlasting world and ascended to the Supreme Horizon, 28 May 1892. On the day of his departure the inhabitants of Haifa, 'Akká and neighbouring places, assembled in the presence of his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the "Greatest Branch", and interred his remains, [VIII:13:180] with extraordinary respect, close to the mansion of Bahjí, which is situated a short distance from 'Akká.

Abu'l-Fadl: *The Bahá'í Proofs*, p. 69.)

O ye friends of God and assistants of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

When the Sun of Truth was concealed behind the cloud of glory, the orb of the universe disappeared from the dawning-place of the visible and shone forth in the invisible world, and conferred successive bounties upon the contingent world, then from the unseen realms, the bats began to move, opened their wings and flew around. They supposed they could interrupt the glorious bounties of that beautiful face, quench the shining rays of the Sun of Truth; extinguish the ignited fire and destroy the praiseworthy light; for they imagined that on account of the departure of His Highness the desired One, the divine foundations would be demolished and the blessed tree uprooted. Evil was that which they imagined and thou findest them in this day in manifest loss.

For, according to what was heard, the enemies in some of the lands, upon receiving the news of the most great disaster, held banquets. They rejoiced and made merry, celebrated festivals, burned incense, served sweets and flowers, lit many a candle, mixed honey and wine, played lutes and harps, spent that evening in cheerfulness and gladness until dawn, and sought delight and pleasure. But (they were) heedless that the bounty of that Sun has no end, the torrent of that rain is free from interruption, the radiance of that blessed Orb is continual, and that the dominion of the "Merciful One (who) is established upon the Throne" is permanent. Nay, rather, the human temple, like unto a cloud, prevents (people) from beholding the rays of the Sun. Therefore, it is said in the Gospel that when His Highness the Promised One comes, he shall be mounted on a cloud; but when that noble cloud is concealed, then shall the disk of the sun become manifest and transmit intense rays throughout all regions.

Consequently, after the lapse of but a short time arose a tumult throughout the regions and the pillars of the world trembled. The East became full of cries of joy and the West full of clamour. The most luminous Sun of the beauty of Truth shone forth with, the utmost ardour from the invisible zodiac, upon all regions. The veil of covering and concealment was removed and the fire of the love of God became ablaze within the hearts. The beloved of God were enkindled as candles and became well known among men like unto enraptured lovers. From every quarter a song and melody was heard and the call of "O our Lord, we have heard Thy voice" was raised in all regions. The Word of God was promoted and the fragrances of

God diffused. The fame of the True One was universally spread. The call of “Am I not (your Lord)” reached the ears of the far and near. The Cause of the religion of God became loftier. All the nations became impressed, and the enemies of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) were disappointed and in loss.

When they considered that the departure of His Highness the Desired One—may my life be a sacrifice to his beloved!—led to the exaltation of his blessed Cause, and the flame of the ignited fire increased and every assured believer stepped forward, therefore the shining of the brilliant light proved a manifest loss to the denying people. Moreover, the grace of His Highness the Almighty adorned the imperial throne of Persia with the accession of an equitable king and through the power of the Merciful One that perfect sovereign became compassionate toward this oppressed community. This was also a confirmation from His Highness the Powerful Lord.

From Tablet by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl and Ishti’ál ibn-i-Kalántar.¹ Translated 4 June 1903, Washington, D.C.

VIII:14, 23 November 1917 [VIII:14:183]

The Centre of the Covenant, the Greatest Branch: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

In order to preserve the unity of the Cause and to spread the religion of God, Bahá’u’lláh has established this Covenant and Testament. Were it not for the power of the Covenant you would have witnessed the dispersion of the believers and the total disappearance of the Cause of God. When I say the Covenant, I mean the power and authority of Bahá’u’lláh given to me.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, to Miss Magee, Paris, 10 May 1913. [VIII:14:184]

Tablets Revealed by His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh confirming the Centre of His Covenant

In His Name who shines from the horizon of might!

Verily the Tongue of the Ancient gives glad tidings to those who are in the world concerning the appearance of the Greatest Name, and who takes His Covenant among the nations. Verily he is myself; the shining-place of my identity; the east of my Cause; the heaven of my bounty; the sea of my will; the lamp of my guidance; the path of my justice; the standard of my laws.

The one who has turned to him hath turned to my face and is illumined through the lights of my Beauty; has acknowledged my oneness and confessed my singleness.

The one who has denied him has been deprived of the salsabíl of my love, of the kawthar of my favour, the cup of my mercy, and of the wine through which the sincere ones have been attracted and the monotheists have taken flight in the air of my kindness, which no one hath known except the One whom I have taught the thing that has been revealed in my Hidden Tablet.

Translated by Mírzá Valí’u’lláh Khán Varqá, Ṭíhrán, Persia, 11 December 1918. Photographs of the original manuscript of this Tablet have been received in America.

He is The Most Great, the Abhá!

This is The Branch that hath extended from the bower of thy oneness and from the tree of thy unity. Thou beholdest him, O my God, gazing unto thee and holding fast to the rope of thy providence. Preserve him in the neighbourhood of thy mercy!

¹ *nom-de-plume* for Dr Ali-Kuli Khan (‘Alí-Qulí Khán)

Thou knowest, O my God, that verily, I have chosen him only because thou hast chosen him; I have elected him, only because thou hast elected him. Therefore, assist him by the hosts of thy heaven and earth. Help thou, O my God, whosoever may help him; choose whosoever may choose him. Strengthen whosoever may advance toward him; and reject whosoever may deny him and desire him not!

O my Lord! Thou beholdest my pen moving and my limbs trembling in this moment of revelation. I beg of thee by my craving in thy love, and my yearning for the declaration of thy command, to ordain for him and his lovers that which thou hast ordained for thy messengers and the trusted ones of thy revelation.

Verily, thou art the Powerful, the Mighty!

O thou my Greatest Branch!

Thy letter was surely presented before this oppressed one, and I heard that which thou hast communed with God, the Lord of the worlds.

Verily, we have ordained thee the guardian of all the creatures, and a protection to all those in the heavens and earths, and a fortress to those who believe in God, the One, the Omniscient!

I beg of God to protect them by thee, to enrich them by thee; to nourish them by thee; and to reveal to thee that which is the dawning-point of riches to the people of creation, and the ocean of generosity to those in the world, and the rising-point of favour to all nations. Verily, he is the Powerful, the All-knowing and the Wise!

I beg of him to water the earth and all that is in it by thee, that there may spring up from it the flowers of wisdom and revelation and the hyacinths of science and knowledge. Verily, he is the friend to those who love him, and an assistant to those who commune with him.

There is no God but Him, the Mighty, and the Magnified!

Tablet sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá when he was in Beirut, Syria.

_____ [VIII:14:185]

O thou my Greatest Branch!

Bahá be upon thee, and upon whomsoever may serve thee; and woe unto those who contradict thee; blessed are those who love thee; and fire unto those who are thine enemies!

Praise be unto him who honoured the land of Beirut, with the feet of him around whom all the names revolve. Therefore, all the (created) atoms have announced good tidings unto all the contingent beings, that the sun of the Beauty of the Greatest and Majestic Branch of God, the most weighty and well-made Mystery of God, hath arisen, dawned, appeared, gleamed and shone forth from the door of the prison ('Akká) and its horizon, and advanced to the former place (Beirut). Therefore, the prison land is darkened, while the former is rejoiced.

Exalted! Exalted! is our Lord God, the creator of all things and the maker of heaven, by whose power the gate of the prison is opened, the opening of which fulfilled that which was formerly revealed in the tablets.

Verily he is the powerful to do that which he pleases; the kingdom of emanation is within his grasp. He is the Powerful, the Knowing, the Wise!

Blessed is the land which is honoured with his footsteps! Blessed is the eye which is illuminated by his Beauty; the ear which is favoured with hearing his voice; the heart which has tasted the sweetness of his love; the breast which is dilated by commemorating him; the pen which moves in praising him; and the tablet which bears his signs! I beg of God, the Exalted, the Most High, to cause us to attain his visit ere long.

Verily, He is the Hearer, the Powerful, the Answerer!

Tablet sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá when he was in Beirut, Syria.

But the One (from among his sons) who will appear among them with innate knowledge, God will cause the verses of His power to flow from his tongue, and he is the One to whom God has assigned His Cause. Verily there is no God but Him, in whom is the creation and the command, and verily we are all performing His commands.

I beg of God to incline them to his obedience, and to nourish them with that whereby their mind is satisfied, and the minds of those who are facing the direction of God at every instant, and to overlook their oppression, and to ordain them of those who will inherit the heaven of paradise from before God, the Mighty, the Protector, the Self-subsistent!

Bahá'u'lláh: Extract from Tablet revealed for Hájí Khalíl. *Prayers, Tablets, Instructions and Miscellany* gathered by American visitors, during the summer of 1900. [VIII:14:186]

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning the Covenant and His Station therein

But if any soul asks concerning the station of this servant the answer is—'Abdu'l-Bahá. If he inquires after the meaning of The Branch, the answer is—'Abdu'l-Bahá. If he desires to know the significance of the verse regarding The Branch, the answer is—'Abdu'l-Bahá. If he insists upon the explanation of the meaning of "The Branch extended from the Ancient Root", the answer is—'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet revealed for Persian believers and throughout the world.

I am, however, contented with what is inflicted upon me in thy path. Would that thy servants could be satisfied therewith, and that it would have sufficed them to do all these things unto myself. No! by thy Might! this shall never satisfy them. Nay, they will attack the countenance which thou hast raised (to be) in thy place, and whom thou hast established to be on the throne of thy sovereignty; whom thou hast concealed under the tents of thy glory, and under the canopy of thy sublimity, whom thou hast branched from the ocean of thy singleness and enkindled with the fire of thine eternity, whom thou hast elevated to the station which is never comprehended by anyone, and is never known by any soul, whom thou hast appointed a fortress unto thy servants, and a light unto the countries, whom thou hast ordained the people to have recourse unto as they have recourse unto thee, and to be submissive under his hands as their submission unto thee. Notwithstanding all this, they contradicted him.

Bahá'u'lláh: Extract from Tablet.

Verily, know that the Letter (Tablet) of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his address is a hidden mystery and concealed fact; no one is informed of its greatness and importance at these times. But in course of time and in future centuries it will dawn forth; the fragrances thereof will be diffused and the greatness, the importance thereof will be known. The truth I say unto thee, that each leaflet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be a wide-spread book, nay, rather a glistening gem on the glorious crown. Know thou its value and hold great its station!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Extract from Booklet: 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The herald who proclaimed the written names is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who announces the names of those who deserve salvation and are firm in the Covenant of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, p. 681.

This covenant is the Covenant of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. Now its importance is not known befittingly; but in the future it shall attain to such a degree of importance that if a king violates to the extent of one atom he shall be cut off immediately.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet to American believer; translated 2 August 1913. [VIII:14:188]

Every movement in this world has a centre. For example, the power of gravitation has a centre; and although there are many luminous centres of lights, yet there is a most great centre, and that is the sun. Now, that you are independent of all the smaller centres, you must turn your face toward the Great Orb. For example, this electric bulb is a centre of light, but it only illumines the room; but the sun shines upon all the created phenomena without any distinction.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 30 October 1913. [VIII:14:189]

If a soul shall utter a word without the sanction of the Covenant, he is not firm. Bahá'u'lláh appointed a Covenant to ward off dissensions: so that no one can have his own opinion,—so that the Centre can be referred to. There were dissensions in the time of Christ because there was no Centre. This is the reality of the question. Whatever the Centre of the Covenant says is correct. No one shall speak a word of himself. Bahá'u'lláh has called down the vengeance of God upon anyone who violates the Covenant. Beware! Beware! Lest ye be shaken: Remain firm even if the people of heaven try to shake you. Firmness in the Covenant is not mere words. The command is explicit.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The point to which all eyes should turn is One. All eyes must turn their attention to the Centre of the Covenant while the presence of the Covenant is among us. No other soul should have any existence. All others save the Centre of the Covenant are equal.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

(Excerpts from some instructions given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to several friends in America, July 1912. These excerpts received his personal signature.)

These great days are swiftly passing and once gone can never be recalled, so while the rays of the Sun of Truth are still shining and the Centre of the Covenant of God is manifest, let us go forth to work, for after awhile the night will come and the way to the vineyard will not then be so easy to find.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *A Heavenly Vista*, p. 32.

VIII:14, 23 November 1917 [VIII:14:192]

**“Be most careful about matters of politics.
Do not mention it. Our Cause is not political.”**

...

... it is well for the Bahá'ís to make clear to themselves, the distinctive characteristics of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh—as interpreted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá—and take cognizance of the fact that although he came to establish a new era in the world, he never interfered in political matters and was at all times obedient to the government, commanding His followers in every country to behave toward the government with faithfulness, trustfulness and truthfulness. (refer to

Star of the West, VIII:9, p. 113.)

It is also very important that the Bahá'ís give close attention to the most great characteristic of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh namely, His teaching concerning the Centre of the Covenant which is a specific teaching not given by any of the prophets of the past. By giving the teaching concerning the Centre of the Covenant, He made provision against all kinds of differences, so that no man should be able to create a new sect. To guard against that state, He entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, indicating the Person or Interpreter of His teaching so that no one should be able to say that he explains a certain teaching in a certain way, and thus create a sect revolving around his individual understanding of a part of the teachings.

... [VIII:14:193]

...

That all may clearly understand the purpose or policy of the *Star of the West*, we give herewith 'Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions to the editors¹ when he was in this country:

"Very welcome! Most welcome!

"Your services are acceptable. You have laboured much. These labours are productive of great results. They are the cause of the good pleasure of God and will be the magnet for the favours or blessings of God. Therefore, be thankful because of your attainment to services.

"Your greatest aim and effort must be directed to the service of the Kingdom of God.

"The greatest service to the Kingdom of God is kindness to the servants of God.

"The greatest kindness to the friends of God, to the servants of God, is guidance or guiding them.

"Strive in your efforts, in your management, to become orderly, for this newspaper is now a link between the East and the West.

"Have no word in that publication which can be of displeasure to anyone.

"Attribute nothing to anyone.

"Let there be no displeasing statement; no debasing element regarding or concerning religions.

"Be most careful about matters of politics. Do not mention it. Our Cause is not political."

We are happy to present herewith two remarkable tablets revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the friends of God in Persia, translated by Dr Ḍíyá' M. Baghdádí, having been received in Chicago a few days before the Centennial Celebration of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh and read on that memorable occasion.

The tablet addressed to Jináb-i-Amín speaks of the good health of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It also records the name of the messenger who carried them from Syria to Persia, Ḥájí Ramaḍán.

The tablet in the form of a Commune, is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's view-point regarding the war, and we respectfully suggest to all that it be read to those who desire to know the Bahá'í attitude toward this world conflagration.

Both tablets are the latest word from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

¹ Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoken to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Dr Ḍíyá' M. Baghdádí, Miss Gertrude Buikema and Mr Albert R. Windust in his room at the Hotel Plaza, Chicago, 1 May 1912.

Tablet to Jináb-i-Amín

O Jináb-i-Amín!

HE IS GOD!

Although the doors are closed, the ways and the roads are severed and the means of communication are lost, yet the ideal ties and inner communications still exist. Though the mirror and the lights are far apart, yet the uniting force of the rays and the outpouring of reflections are strong and continuous.

The friends of God must move and conduct themselves with the utmost uprightness and power, so that all that are in the world of existence may become amazed at their firmness and steadfastness, their dignity and might.

This servant day and night is thinking of the friends in the utmost joy and fragrance, supplicating to His Holiness, The Merciful, for unlimited confirmations, so that every drop may become like unto the ocean, full of waves, and every atom expand in the rays of the sun. This is not much to ask of the favour of God.

Convey the utmost longing to every one of the friends. Praise be to God! [VIII:14:194] through the assistance and the bounty of His Holiness, the Single, we are in perfect health on Mount Carmel, at the home of his honour, Áqá 'Abbás Qulí. On account of the severance of communication, to inquire about the friends and convey news of the safety here, his honour, Hájí Ramaḍán is sent, because no one else is able to travel this road in these days.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet to the Persian Bahá'ís

Commune to be read by the friends of God in Persia.

HE IS GOD!

Thou seest me, O my God, on this lofty mountain; the sublime and supreme threshold; the shelter of every great one and the refuge of all the glorious and noble.

Verily, the youths whose hearts were burning with the fire of the love of God in the past ages have taken shelter therein—the meeting place of the prophets, the refuge of his holiness Elijah, the shelter of Isaiah, The spirit of God, Jesus, the Christ—upon Him be greeting and praise!—passed over it, and in the Supreme Threshold, pressed by the feet of the Lord of Hosts.

O Lord, this is a mountain to which Thou hast given the name Carmel in the Torah. And thou hast attributed it to Thyself in the innermost heart of the tablets and scriptures.

O Lord, verily, I invoke Thee in this Supreme Threshold, under the wing of the gloomy nights; pray to Thee with throbbing heart and flowing tears, imploring Thee, supplicating between Thy hands and cry, O my Lord, verily, the fire of battles is raging in the valleys, hills and streams, and the fire of war is burning even under the seas and high in the air, in destruction and devastation. The earth is enveloped by its own fires and the seas are encompassed by its storms, thunderbolts and floods.

O Lord, the souls are stifling, the death rattle is in their throats, the earth quakes and has become so small that even the birds are frightened in their nests and the animals terrified in their lairs and caves.

We hear only the sighs of the maidens and the cries of the orphans, the moaning of the mothers, the tears of the fathers because of false reports. We see only tears flowing from every bereaved mother and the heart of every father, bereft of sons, burning. Towns are being devastated, people are perishing, the children are made orphans and the women are

becoming widows. And this is only because of our heedlessness of Thy commemoration and our deprivation of Thy love. Verily, we have been occupied with ourselves. The intoxication of passion seized us; we have taken the road of heedlessness and blindness; have abandoned the path of guidance and have chosen the path of obstinacy and forgotten the commandments of the ancient scriptures. We have forsaken the exhortations in the preserved tablets and parchments—the great verses.

O my Lord! O my Lord! I confess and acknowledge the sins. Verily, every dark calamity and every hard ordeal has surrounded us by our own hands, in this transient world. O Lord, verily, the minds are astounded, the souls are repelled. And there remain only darkened faces, deaf ears, speechless tongues and hearts heedless of thy commemoration, filled with human passions and desires.

O Lord, Thou hast said in Thy manifest book and in thy great glad tidings, with explicit statement, “God does not change that which a people have, until [VIII:14:195] they change what is within themselves.” “And when they forgot God, He made them forget themselves.”

O my Lord, verily, the nations have gone too deep into the fields of battle and struggle. Nothing will check this sweeping torrent and this grinding war but Thy mercy, which has encompassed that which was and is.

O Lord, do not deal with us according to our offences and forgive our sins and trespasses. Imperfections are the characteristic of everything possible of creation in the arena of Thy world. And to Thy forgiveness and pardon Thou hast accustomed every one in existence.

O my Lord, only favour and mercy to every sinner, who has fallen into the pit of degradation and wretchedness, is befitting to divinity and only by the imperfections of servitude will the perfections of divinity become manifest. O Lord, verily, the brilliant rays of the Sun of Reality are the removers of the utter darkness and the pure water cleanses the foulness and the sorrow of the world.

O my Lord, verily, the sins are bubbling foam and a full ocean is Thy mercy. Trespasses are bitter trees and Thy pardon is a fire whose flame is intense.

O my Lord, remove the veil, scatter this dense cloud on the horizon, extinguish these fires, subdue this flood, in order to staunch the bloodshed, as compassion to the widows and mercy to the orphans, that these hurricanes may cease, the thunderbolts be extinguished, the torrents quelled, the land become visible, the souls find composure, and the breasts be dilated. And we will thank Thee for Thy abundant favour, O Thou dear! O Thou forgiver!

O my Lord, verily, thou hast clearly stated in the tablets and scriptures, that, had the ordinances fallen on solid rock, rivers would have gushed forth and it had crumbled to pieces from fear of the Dear, the Powerful. But the hearts are harder than the rocks. And the souls are in heedlessness and pride. The people of heedlessness do not profit by the verses and exhortations.

O my Lord, verily, Thy exhortations are celebrated and have been spread broadcast, in the east and the west of the earth. Thou hast called all to love and harmony and to forsake discord in all regions, so that the east of the earth may embrace the west; the people of the desert may embrace the people of the city; their scattered members become reunited and the lost ones be gathered together; that the darkness of the earth may pass away and its lights shine forth. But the eyes and the inner sight have become blind, the ears deaf, the hearts hardened and the susceptibilities like rocks and stones. The minds and intellects are being confused. Souls have forgotten the explicit teachings of the Book, wherein Thou hast warned them of punishment. Thus they have merited severe punishment and deserved the sentence of torment.

O Lord, forgive our sins and stumbling. Make us not an example for the possessors of insight. Guide us to the straight path, so that we may awake from the slumber of passion and be saved from heedlessness and blindness. Deliver us, O Lord of Verses, from the abyss of passions and preserve us from errors.

O my Lord, verily, we have forgotten faithfulness and are revelling in unfaithfulness. With the people of oppression and vice we are associating. There is no deliverer for us save Thee. There is no answerer save Thee. There is no refuge save Thee. Verily, we have trusted in Thee and we lay our affairs in Thy hands. Deal with us according to Thy favour and pardon and punish us not [VIII:14:196] according to Thy justice and wrath. Verily, Thou art the compassionate. Verily, thou are the pardoner and, verily, thou art the forgiver.

O my Lord, verily, the people of righteousness and goodness and the communities of freedom in every country are turning to thee, at dusk and dawn supplicating between Thy hands during the wing of the night and in the dew of the morn, lamenting as a bereaved mother laments during the grievous nights, burning with the fire of sorrow, yearning and separation. They are longing for Thy meeting even with rending of soul, as they traverse the dunes and the hills and cross the valleys and the heights. But these wars that demolish mountains have interfered so that news has ceased and the doors are closed.

O Lord, comfort them in their loneliness; deliver them from their terror, and guide them in their affairs.

O my Lord, Thou knowest my sighs, my cries and my anguish, the burning pain because of their separation; my great longing for their meeting, my yearning for their love, my desire for their remembrance and my anxiety to see them. Day and night their remembrance is my treasure and my roses. When night comes my heart loves the memory of their illumined faces. I yearn for them as the nightingale yearns for the beautiful meadows.

O my Lord, O my Lord, open the doors; prepare for us the means; render the path safe and pave the way so that the sincere ones may be reunited in the lofty meetings; the attracted ones gathered together in Thy commemoration in the great assemblies, to speak among the people of Thy bestowals, taste of the honeycomb of Thy meeting. Then the breezes of acceptance will reach them and they will be swayed thereby as if intoxicated by wine.

Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Dear, the Giver and, verily, Thou art the Generous, the Compassionate, the Chosen One.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

VIII:14, 23 November 1917 [VIII:14:204]

The city of God

A compilation of utterances of Bahá'u'lláh

In this day a great banquet is celebrated in the Supreme Concourse for all that was promised in the Divine Books has appeared. This is the day of the most great rejoicing. All must direct themselves to the court of Nearness (to God) with the utmost joy, happiness, exultation and gladness, and deliver themselves from the fire of remoteness.

The way of freedom is opened; hasten thereto: and the fountain of knowledge is welling up; drink thereof. ... Truly I say that which will diminish ignorance and increase wisdom is pleasing to the Creator. Say: O people, walk in the shadow of justice and uprightness and enter the pavilion of unity.

It is hoped that in this morn when the world is illumined by the Sun of Knowledge we may seek the good pleasure of the Friend (the Heavenly Father) and drink from the sea of recognition.

O friends! Sleep with your face turned to the Friend and rest in bed in the thought of the Beloved One. From flowers inhale the Fragrance of the Loved One, and in every fire see the light of the face of the Desired One. ... Then exert thyself in love with thy soul, and enter the abode of the Beloved One with thy heart. Abandon grief for the world to its people and give no heed to the limited days of this worldly life. (Pass over all else save God with the swiftness of lightning.) Thus mayst thou cast off the old garment of this world, be seated on the immortal, everlasting throne, be clad in a divine raiment, drink the wine of love from the cup of the Beloved One, become ablaze with the light of love and sew the robe of love! This is that matter which shall never change. Know thou, therefore, that in every age and dispensation all divine ordinances are changed and transformed according to the requirement of the time, except the law of love which always flows and is never overtaken by change. This is of the wonderful mysteries which God hath mentioned for His servants! Verily He is the Merciful, the Compassionate!

In this day the City of God hath appeared and is seen in full adornment. This is the city wherein the God of all is become manifest. Take the rod of resignation in the name of God and guide the erring people with entire severance to the great city of God, that perchance the wanderers may attain to the real native land and the blind may receive discerning sight. Verily, He is powerful to do that which He willeth. All things are in the prayer of His power. Verily he is the Powerful, the Mighty.

VIII:14, 23 November 1917 [VIII:14:204]

A question answered

From a Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Ella G. Cooper, San Francisco. Translated and mailed from Haifa, Syria, 19 March 1916.

Question: In the copies of the talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Society of Friends in London, there seems to be a discrepancy in the time in the opening line. In some it reads, "About six thousand years ago", in others "six hundred years", and in others "sixty years". If the Society referred to signifies the Bahá'í Movement, would not sixty years be the correct number?

Answer: This talk opens with the words, "About six hundred years ago." This Society was founded in the city of Hamadán six hundred years ago and has nothing to do with this movement. It is almost disbanded, but under different names and forms one may come across them in Persia. They were called the Society of Sokoutyyoun,¹ that is, the "Silent Ones".

VIII:15, 12 December 1917 [VIII:15:205]

"Concerning the station of this servant, the answer is: "Abdu'l-Bahá"

The Master

"My Father!" said Valí'u'lláh Khán, the son of the glorious Persian martyr, "was much with Bahá'u'lláh. One night Bahá'u'lláh, as he strode back and forth in his room, said to him: 'At stated periods souls are sent to earth by the Creator with what we call the Power of the Great Ether (Holy Spirit). And those who possess this power can do anything; they have all power. Jesus Christ had this power. The people thought him a poor young man whom they had crucified but he possessed the power of the Holy Spirit; therefore he could not remain underground. This ethereal power arose and quickened the world. And now look to the Master,' said Bahá'u'lláh, 'for this power is his.'

"Bahá'u'lláh," added Valí'u'lláh Khán, "taught my father much about the Master. The Master, you know, is one of the titles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the Greatest Branch is another.

¹ Sukútiyyún.

Bahá'u'lláh, the Blessed Perfection, revealed the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to my father; and my father wrote many poems to the Master, though the Master would chide him and [VIII:15:206] say, 'You must not write such things to me.' But the heart of my father could not keep quiet. Once he wrote: 'O Dawning-place of the Beauty of God, I know thee. Though thou wrappest thyself in ten thousand veils I know thee. Though thou shouldst wear the tatters of a beggar still would I know thee.'"

We spoke of having read so many tablets in which we were told that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should be known only by the name of "'Abdu'l-Bahá". Munavvar *Khán*um, the daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, said that Bahá'u'lláh called him "Master". And every prophet, after proclaiming his mission, adopts a name. Moses spoke of himself as the Interlocutor; Christ of himself as the Son of God; and 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls himself the Servant of God.

Flowers from the Rose Garden of Acca, p. 8.

During the lifetime of the Blessed Perfection, the Master, one day, was going to Tyre. He wanted to take me with him; so he sent me to Bahjí [the house of Bahá'u'lláh] to fulfil some errand. When I reached there the Blessed Perfection sent for me. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"The Master is going to take me to Tyre," I answered.

"Very well; always listen to the Master. Whatever the Master speaks, I speak; and whatever I speak, the Master speaks. ..."

Whenever the Master came from 'Akká to Bahjí, Bahá'u'lláh would see him from his window and then call aloud to his sons and secretaries: "The Master is coming! The Master is coming! Everyone must hurry downstairs and out in the field to welcome him."

Abu'l-Qásim: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 15 December 1913. Abu'l-Qásim is the gardener of the Riḍván, the wonderful garden just outside of 'Akká.)

At another time the Blessed Perfection instructed the gardener, Abu'l-Qásim, to attend to some business for him, he and the Master both being in the Riḍván. The Master, meeting Abu'l-Qásim just afterward, instructed him to go to 'Akká and bring them some food for supper.

The gardener sought Bahá'u'lláh and asked that he might tell him of the Master's command. Bahá'u'lláh said in reply to Abu'l-Qásim: "That is well. You must go. You must do everything that the Master says. Everything the Master says is just the same as if I said it. He is me, and I am he. There is no difference between my commands and the commands of the Master."

Notes of Mrs I. D. Brittingham, September 1901.

The Greatest Branch

The Kitáb-i-Aqdas was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation, soon after his arrival at 'Akká, and is the greatest Book. ... The statutes and laws were given in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. In this Book is mentioned everything that is necessary for us, and in two places he says: "After the Sun of Truth sets, we must turn our faces unto 'Him-whom-God-hath-chosen', who is branched from the Ancient Root"; and in another place: "Anything you do not understand from the Book, must be submitted to the great chosen One." Nothing whatever is mentioned in the Book concerning any other one save the Greatest Branch, and if you read from the beginning to the end, you cannot find anything that refers to any other person save him. Although it was known to all the believers that the Greatest Branch was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at the

time of the Manifestation if any one pronounced the word “Áqá”¹ (Lord or Master), and [VIII:15:207] meant by it any one of the branches besides ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá’u’lláh would say: “There is only one ‘Áqá’ and he is ‘Abbás Afandí [given name of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]” and the Manifestation would point to him at every important question.

The Manifestation wrote the *Kitáb-i-Ahd* two years before his departure, in which he said: The One-whom-God-hath-chosen is the Greatest Branch, and he commanded the branches, the twigs and kinsmen to turn their faces unto Him-whom-God-hath-chosen. “Aghşán” means the branches of the Manifestation; “Afnán” means the branches of the Báb. He said: “We have chosen Akbar after ‘Azím (Akbar-Muhammad-‘Alí)”, but he does not command us to obey him or to turn our faces unto him and there is nothing in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* which refers to Muhammad-‘Alí, and this word “We have chosen” does not give Muhammad-‘Alí any importance or high station to enable him to be our commander or master.

We must not be astonished that such a choice was given by the Manifestation, because the same thing took place at the time of Christ, for instead of choosing two branches, he chose twelve, and it is impossible for us to say that Christ did not know which one of those branches would betray him. Neither can we say: Why did the Manifestation, knowing all things, choose Muhammad-‘Alí after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá? Because Christ also chose his twelve, and commanded obedience to them, saying: “He who gives them a glass of water, will have a great reward in the Kingdom.” So if the same thing occurred in the past, you must not be astonished at what takes place in the present, for the two are similar. But the only proof which will make us understand this question, is this, that God, according to His law, will never pronounce any judgement or condemn anybody before one shows his disobedience and commits the crime for which he is to be judged: because, if God would pass judgement upon all, though some are good and some bad, before the good or bad actions are exercised by us, there would be no necessity whatever for laws, statutes or ordinances, and because God does not judge anybody before good or bad actions are produced. He chooses some to be his people, and then he waits for their actions to prove whether they are good or bad. As Christ chose his disciples and said to them: “I am the vine, and you are clean through the Word which I have spoken, but every branch which does not bring forth good fruit, will be cut off”; so also, the Manifestation chose the branches and declared they would be the best of people if they continued to be under the shadow of the Tree. In several tablets, he said: “Any one of the branches who departs from the shadow of the Tree; will be cut off.” Besides there is a special tablet which was revealed by the Manifestation to Muhammad-‘Alí, in which he says: “Shouldst thou deviate from the right path for an instant, thou shalt be cut off.”

Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl: From notes of Mrs Sara Herron at ‘Akká, in 1900.

If one of my sons should exceed beyond the ordinances of God, by God, my eye shall not turn to him at all, and to this bear witness all the just and informed. (p. 34)

Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers, Instructions, Tablets and Miscellany* gathered by American visitors to ‘Akká in 1900. [VIII:15:209]

The Servant

Now listen unto what I say for it is the foundation of success and the basis of righteousness among the people of the world, that you may be obedient unto ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in all he wishes and says, Verily this is possessing strong faith.

Therefore, know that I have sacrificed my soul, spirit, life, mention, honour, at- [VIII:15:210]

¹ As a common noun, the word ‘áqá’ in the Persian language is used as a title before a name. It is similar to ‘Mr’ in English. However, if used on its own as a proper name it signifies the exalted position of a person.

tributes, my comfort and my name in the path of God and I have chosen no dignity or possession save the obedience of Bahá and no name or title save 'Abdu'l-Bahá (servant of Bahá). Therefore be content with this and follow in my words and wishes, because in so doing the blessed trees of life springing up in the paradise of God will become green and verdant.

If you desire to speak in praise, praise the Beauty of Abhá; if you desire to commend, commend the name of your Supreme Lord; for if you exalt the Tree you also exalt the Branch. If you mention the sea you are also mentioning its gulf and bays. Therefore mention the "Beauty of Abhá" by this sweet command among the people, for in my command is contained his command, my attributes are embodied in his attributes. If, therefore, you commend a man you commend all related to him. This is that upon which all the believers will unite and harmonize. Therefore let nothing arise to cause separation among the chosen ones.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

I ask one favour of all the friends of God: It is the wish of my soul that they may all praise me only in my utter servitude to the Holy Threshold, without any interpretation and not to commend 'Abdu'l-Bahá with any other than the words and explanations which have proceeded from the very pen of this servant; that they may depart by no means therefrom, but confine themselves to that same measure.

Verily, my qualification, praise, rank, name, title, being, substance, reality and renown is "Abdu'l-Bahá," and I have no grade except this.

The friends of God shall certainly agree with the request made by this servant with the utmost lowliness and humility. They shall thus rejoice this afflicted heart and bestow new life upon this weak body, so that by hearing this mighty glad tidings and obtaining this divine gift 'Abdu'l-Bahá may rejoice and find divine gladness and exultation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From Tablet to Mírzá 'Alí Qulí Khán and Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl; translated by Mírzá Khán, 4 June 1903.)

I am a servant and this station I have chosen for myself.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

I am serving God. I am the servant of God. I give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the power of speech to the mute and knowledge to the ignorant. I raise the dead, I deliver those who are in darkness and guide them into the realm of light. I make the poor rich and the weak powerful. I satisfy the hungry ones with the bread of life and allay the thirsty ones with the pure water of immortality. This is my work.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 30 June 1914.

Servitude to all the human race is my perpetual religion. Through the bounty and favour of the Blessed Perfection, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the ensign of the Most Great Peace, which is waving from the Supreme Apex; and through the gift of the Greatest Name, he is the lamp of universal salvation, which is shining with the light of the love of God. The herald of the Kingdom is he, so that he may awaken the people of the East and of the West. The voice of friendship, uprightness, truth and reconciliation is he, so as to cause acceleration throughout all regions. ... Through the appearance of the Blessed Perfection the theories are abrogated and the facts established. The time of superficiality is gone by and the cycle of reality has appeared. One must become the incarnation of servitude, the personification [VIII:15:211] of love, the embodiment of spirituality, and the mirror of mercy. ... The quintessence of truth is this: We

must all become united and harmonized in order to illumine this gloomy world; to abolish the foundations of hostility and animosity from among mankind; to perfume the inhabitants of the universe with the holy fragrances of the nature and disposition of the Beauty of Abhá; to enlighten the people of the East and West with the light of guidance; to hoist the tent of the love of God and suffer each and all to enter under its protection; to bestow comfort and tranquillity upon every one under the shade of the Divine Tree; to astonish the enemy by the manifestation of the utmost love. ... to reach the ears of the inhabitants of the Kingdom with the outcry—"Verily the earth is illumined by the lights of its Lord." This is reality! This is guidance! This is service! This is the consummation of the perfection of the realm of humanity.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet revealed for New York Board of Council, translated 1 January 1907.

... I am the servant of Bahá'u'lláh and nothing more; 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the sum of all perfections. They must not attempt to surpass that name, "'Abdu'l-Bahá". All must say to others that he claims for himself to be 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the believers must call him by his name as he wishes. This is the only name he has appointed for himself.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From notes of Mr and Mrs J. H. Hannen, Haifa, 1909.

Know thou that all the promises of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are true and his instructions are inspirations of the Holy Spirit and received as suggestions from Bahá'u'lláh.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From Tablet to Mrs Lua Getsinger.

Concerning my power: it is one bestowal of the bestowals of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. It is my confirmer. It is the light of my guidance. It is the fire of my love. Save it I have nothing. Beside it I know nothing. Except it I wish for nothing.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 May 1914.

Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá considers himself as a drop, yet this drop is connected with the Most Great Sea. Although he looks upon himself as an atom, yet this atom is related to the world-illuminating Sun. As is said: "The originator of all these voices is the King himself" or in other words: "It is through his assistance."

'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Blessed Perfection has explicitly promised me with his own tongue that he will assist me. "Rest thou assured," he said, "my confirmations shall reach thee." This has ever been the cause of my consolation. Whenever these words are remembered my wound is healed and all the tempests are calmed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 10 January 1914.

As to the critical period (1901): Know thou, that verily, 'Abdu'l-Bahá dominates every critical period through the confirmation of Bahá, nor is he dominated by any critical period. And as a proof of this 'Abdu'l-Bahá has withstood all critical periods and great dangers since his earliest childhood to the present day through the assistance of the Supreme Lord.

My assistance is the assistance of the Blessed Perfection. If all the world should gather together against me I would still possess this and all the world could not take it from me. I

have a weapon to fight with forever and ever. With it I am always victorious. It is a [VIII:15:212] sword which can never be dulled, a magazine which will always be full.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From booklet, *Abdul-Baha*.

If any soul asks concerning the station of this servant, the answer is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If he inquires after the meaning of The Branch, the answer is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If he desires to know the significance of the verse regarding The Branch, the answer is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If he insists upon the explanation of the meaning of “The Branch extended from the Ancient Root”, the answer is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

In brief, the friends must be satisfied with the word of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Outside of this word, “Abdu’l-Bahá”, no other word, not even the word, Branch, should they refer to in their writings and their speeches. By no means whatsoever should they exceed this word, neither ought they to harbour any discussion and question. However, if any other soul declares another word than this, he will make this servant a target for the arrows of opposition and will become the cause of my grief. For the utmost desire and the ultimate hope of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is to be a sincere servant at the Holy Threshold. This gift is enough for this servant throughout the worlds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from a Tablet revealed for Persian believers, about 1906.

At the time of the end God shall manifest himself to all mankind with all the attributes of divinity and majesty, but very few shall advance toward him and the rest shall exclaim in horror: “We take refuge in God! O what blasphemy!” Then again he will appear a second time manifesting all the qualities of servitude and the people will flock around him and believe in him and praise and laud his uncreated virtues.

A tradition of Muḥammad, related by Bukhárí, who is celebrated for his accuracy, and wisdom. From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 19 January 1914.

My name should be confined to “Abdu’l-Bahá” in all writings. This is the collective name which will gather all the people and it is the strong fortress and protection of the Cause of God. The beloved ones must limit themselves to this. However you may mention me as the light of the love of God, the flame of the guidance of God and the banner of peace and harmony. I trust in God that you may ever be confirmed through the Holy Spirit.

You must know this, that the principle of the divine foundation is love, unison, oneness and the purity of intention. When love is attained, the mystery of truth will then become manifest. No one should adhere to different titles; one title (or station) is enough, and it is, “Abdu’l-Bahá”. All must agree to this word, until the difference of opinion be removed from their midst. But that which is essential to the acknowledgement of this word (i.e., ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) is attraction to the love of God, service to the Cause of God, diffusing the Word of God, severance from all else save God, affinity, union and oneness, humility, meekness, nothingness and servitude to the beloved of God. If one does not become characterized with these attributes he has not acknowledged the title (or station) of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the banner of the love of God, the lamp of the knowledge of God, the herald of the kingdom of God, the commander of the hosts of peace and reconciliation, and the orb of union and harmony among all the nations of the world. Consequently, every one in whose heart the love of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has irradiated must act in this manner. And when persons walk and move in this path all differences shall be removed.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From booklet, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

VIII:15, 12 December 1917 [VIII:15:208]

“The people are vociferously discussing this Manifestation and all nations are investigating”

This Tablet, revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the Persian Bahá’ís some years ago, was translated by Dr Dīyá’ M. Baghdádí, Chicago, 29 November 1917.

HE IS GOD!

O ye beloved and ideal friends of God!

The divine voice from the invisible Kingdom of Abhá is reaching those who are asleep in the valley of unconsciousness with the call:

O ye heedless, awake!

O ye drunken, be sober!

O ye dead, arise!

O ye wilted, be revived and full of vigour!

O ye dumb, speak!

O ye silent, cry out!

The voice is the melody of the Covenant, and the effulgences are from the Light of the bountiful bestowals of the horizons. It is the breeze of the meadows of singleness that is blowing and the effusion of the fragrances of the rose gardens that are wafting; it is the candle of the favour of the Ancient Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) that is lighted in every assembly; it is the outpouring of the clouds of mercy that is bestowing freshness to every garden and lawn; it is the verse of oneness that is uttered in the glorious Book, and the tablets of the unique Lord of the Kingdom are unfolding the mysteries of “they are clothed by the new creation”; incline your ears in order that ye may hear the melody of joy, and open your eyes to see the lights.

The favour of the Truth is abundant and His ancient bestowal is uninterrupted. His cycle is all light. His century fulfils all the signs. Be not hopeless neither disappointed. It is the day of hope and the century of the Glorious God. It is the first resurrection and the dispensation of the Beauty of Abhá! May my soul be a ransom to His Blessed Threshold.

In every horizon His light is brilliant and in every region His bounty is manifest. His great fame has filled the east and the west. The song of His divinity has encompassed the south and the north, and caused a tumult among the pillars of the world, making the hearts of the sons of Adam to quake. [VIII:15:209] The people are vociferously discussing this Manifestation and all nations are investigating. The flame of this burning fire in all regions has reached the zenith of heaven, and the call of, “Verily, the evident Light is manifest!” has ascended from the earth to the inhabitants of the Supreme Kingdom. All are exuberant with joy and intoxicated with the wine of love!

Ye, who are dwelling in the native land of His Holiness (Bahá’u’lláh) and are in the place where the Blessed Tree hath grown: Why should ye sit quietly as in a corner? Ye must be so aflame that the heat of your fire may enkindle the adjacent districts; the fragrances of the rose-garden of your hearts may perfume the nostrils of the Supreme Concourse; the flood of bestowal may pour from those hills and mountains to all regions, and the rivers of knowledge may flow from that city to all the valleys and the desert.

Hasten ye to prosperity!

Hasten ye to success!

Hasten ye to the great favour!

Hasten ye to evident light!

Hasten ye to the glorious attainment!
Hasten ye to the abundant share!

Bahá be upon ye!

O my Beloved, God! These are thy servants who have heard thy voice, responded to thy word and accepted thy call. They believed in thee; became assured in thy verses; acknowledged thy proofs; listened to thy evidences; walked in thy path and followed thy guidance; became informed of thy mysteries; comprehended the symbols of thy Book, the signs of thy Scriptures and the glad tidings of thy epistles and tablets; grasped the hem of thy garment and were held by the radiance of thy grandeur; their feet became firm in thy Covenant and their hearts strong in thy Testament.

O my Lord! Ignite the fire of attraction in their hearts; let the birds of knowledge soar in the rose-gardens of their breasts and sing in the meadows of their souls, songs of love with the most wonderful melodies and harmonies; make them strong verses, unfurled ensigns and perfect words; elevate thy Cause by them; raise thy banners, spread thy signs, assist thy Word and support thy friends by them; make them to utter in thy praise and inspire them to arise in thy good-pleasure; illumine their faces in the Kingdom of thy holiness, and complete their joy by confirming them in assisting thy Cause!

O my Lord! We are weak, strengthen us in spreading the fragrances of thy sanctity; we are poor, enrich us from the treasury of thy singleness; we are naked, clothe us from thy generous bounty; we are sinners, pardon our transgressions by thy favour, generosity and forgiveness.

Verily, thou are the Confirmer, the Helper, the Beloved, the Mighty, the Omnipotent!

Bahá be upon those who are firm and steadfast!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

VIII:16, 31 December 1917 [VIII:16:213]

“If the world should combine to overthrow the Covenant, it could not succeed”

For years God has been preparing you for this day, in order that you may be illumined like a candle for the dark night, that you may direct the people and establish them in the divine Covenant and Testament. And if, like pure gold, you should be melted in the fire of calamity, you will be purged by that fire of calamity but you will be content.

The time was fully ripe for your coming and for the testing of man, because the great basis of the divine Cause is firmly fixed upon the pillar of the Covenant and Testament and the skies of the divine religions are brilliant and illumined by the stars of the Covenant. God be my refuge! If this pillar is to be opposed by a low fellow (anoud)¹ there will remain no supports for the divine Tabernacle and for the lesser tents, and there will be no candle lighted for the divine Assembly. The well-built house will be razed to the foundation, it will become like a useless tomb, the commands will be delayed and the waves of the sea of favour will be retarded. The sea of assurance will be cut off, the Breath of Life will cease to blow, the sails of the life-boat will be destroyed, the bright dawn will become dark evening, the dawning-point of desire will be covered under the clouds of regrets; all these troubles will become useless and all these sheddings of blood will be fruitless; the pure blood of the martyrs will become defiled and the remembrance of the blessed Báb [the Forerunner], whose breast became the target for a hundred thousand arrows, will disappear from among men, and his influence will become non-existent. The whole fifty years of the troubles of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh), the looting and plundering, the imprisoning and beating; the false accusing and

¹ 'Anúd, contumacious (stubbornly or willfully disobedient to authority).

injuring; the wandering and homelessness; the threatening by dagger and sword; the shackles and chains will become forgotten and without result. It will become the source of joking and quarrelling among the enemies, the source of their gaiety and rejoicing.

Then, whatever mountain or plain you traverse, cry aloud: *This cycle is the Cycle of Alast*¹ *And this Covenant is the Ancient Covenant, the Illuminator of the horizons. The armies of the Kingdom are the protectors of this foundation. The sun of righteousness is radiant stability and this becomes the shining lamp of the assembly of unity. It is the Strong Rope and the illumination of the Giver of Light. It is al-'urva (untranslatable)*² *and the fruit of the Túbá tree*³ *is in the concealed tablet and is recorded in the Book and the decreed Leaf. It is the Testament and the [VIII:16:214] Covenant and it is mentioned in all the tablets and in all the early Books and in the later tablets. It is the governor of the era of Shadad*⁴ *and the balance of the day of reckoning. It is the life-boat and the refuge of the future. It is the holy fragrance of His Holiness, the Creator, and the Breaths of Life of the garden of the Creator. It is the strong fortress; therefore it is a sure shelter for all created beings, and in brief, it is the sum of all the sacred writings, ancient and modern!*

How happy is the man who lays hold upon God; trusts in him, remains firm and inwardly becomes confirmed in the love of God and takes refuge under his banner!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: A tablet revealed for a believer in Tíhrán, sent to America by Dr Moody.

The radiance of servitude shining from the Candle of the Testament has illumined all horizons in spite of the people of discord, and the renown of the grandeur of the Blessed Perfection hath caused such an outcry throughout the world that it hath made the limbs of all nations quiver.

All the religions of the world have the loud cry of "Woe unto us!" on their lips, and the cry of "Woe to our Faith!" which is raised by the ignorant, is heard in the east and west. The power of the blessed Cause has such effulgence that it has become apparent to all peoples; and all the nations and creeds have acknowledged and confessed the greatness of the Cause of God. Had it not been for the injuries inflicted by the party of conceit (the Náqidín or Covenant Breakers), the world of existence would have been in this day an exalted garden. But the people of conceit, being heedless of this cup mixed with kafur⁵ (a fountain intended to be drunk by the true and firm believers), have imagined that they can upset the standard of the Testament, and that they can disappoint the delivered nations. They have poured forth seditious rumours on the lips and tongues of all people, and they have made calumniating statements, hoping by this means to mingle the contents of the pre-existent cup of the Testament with the bitterness of violation. Far, far be it from them to do this!

Jesus Christ—May my soul be a sacrifice to him—had only a few followers in the time of his departure. Then after his departure all the kings of the world, philosophers of all nations, learned men of all races, and wise men of all creeds, arose to suppress and degrade his cause; but finally, all the standards hoisted by those numerous nations were upset, and the banner of Jesus Christ was fluttering on the loftiest mountain.

Now, praise be unto God, that hundreds of thousands of souls have assembled under the

¹ Alast was used to signify the night that the Qur'án was revealed to Muḥammad and he received the message: "Am I not thy God?" to which he replied affirmatively.

² al-'urva comes from (al-'urwa al-wuṭḥqá) meaning the Firmest handle or Most Trustworthy Hand hold that never breaks. In Shí'í (Shí'ite) Islám it is a reference to the Imams and in the Bahá'í Writings it signifies attachment to the Covenant as the safest way of life, i.e. the Central Figures and now the Bahá'í Institutions.

³ Túbá (blessedness, beatitude); name of a tree in paradise (Qur'án 13:29).

⁴ Shidád has a numerical value of 309—described as "year of stress", AH 1309 [CE 1892], the date of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension.

⁵ Ka'fur, literally camphor. Symbolically it refers to a spring in heaven or an added spiritual flavour, etc.

standard of the Covenant through the assistance of the Blessed Perfection. I declare by the Educator of the visible and invisible, it will evidently be witnessed that the descendants of the violators will think their descent as a disgrace and will disown their fathers and forefathers, just as Akrama, the son of Abú-Jahl,¹ kept clear of his father, and Khálid, the son of al-Walíd, left his father. As these darkened people (náqidín) have imagined that the power of the divine Testament is but a power of man, and that the edifice of the Covenant is as one of the baseless foundations of the material world, they are plotting to destroy this divine edifice with all intrigues and machinations.

Praise be to God, that the power of Nero, the great Roman emperor, proved impotent to withstand the cause of Christ—while these weak souls are plotting to resist the power of the Covenant of God! “Wherefore, take example from them, O ye who have eyes!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Portion of Tablet revealed for one of the Persian believers. Translated about 1903.²

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that he had seen the faces of the American believers and he was very glad—for their faces were radiant with the light of the Covenant of God, for the faces of those who violated the Covenant of God would appear veiled in darkness.

The Covenant of God is like the sun—the brilliance and light of the Covenant radiates and shines forth from the faces of those who are firm in it. He said: “I pray to the Blessed Perfection that he will so turn their faces to the Covenant, that all America may be enlightened by the brightness of their light.” ... The radiance of this Sun (the Covenant) has been felt from here to America, and notwithstanding all this, the violators desire to quench the light of the Covenant of God. They wish to extinguish this light, but they do not know that the light of God’s Covenant is kindled and comes from the presence of God, and though it were surrounded by all the winds of the earth, they could not prevail to blow it out.

The existent contingent world was shaken by the Covenant of God, and yet they wish to remove it by their most weak power. It is as if a handful of earth should endeavour to stop the waves of the ocean. It is like a mote trying to stop the rays of the sun from reaching the earth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from *Prayers, Tablets, Instructions and Miscellany*, gathered by some American visitors to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1900.

From the graces of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh I beg for you firmness and steadfastness. Today whosoever is a herald of the Covenant is confirmed and assisted. In these days a number of souls, whose deeds are known in America as clear as the sun, have arisen in enmity against the Centre of the Covenant. Theirs is the vain imagination that they can extinguish the light of the Candle of the Covenant. Vain indeed is their thought. The Candle of the Covenant is like unto the Morning Star which never sets.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 19 October 1914. [VIII:16:216]

If the world should combine to overthrow the Covenant, it could not succeed. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá loves all no matter how they turn away from him. Whether they love or hate him, go or come, he never changes in his love for them. The Blessed Perfection has left nothing undone. What he ordained can never be set aside.

¹ ‘Ikrima ibn Abí Jahl Amr ibn Hishám (598–634 or 636) was a leading opponent-turned companion of Muḥammad. ‘Ikrima’s father was Amr ibn Hishám ibn al-Mughíra, a leader of the polytheistic Quraysh tribe’s Banú Maḥzúm clan, and was the uncle of Muḥammad and his greatest enemy. He was known as Abu’l-Ḥikam (the father of wisdom); but for his envy and opposition, Muḥammad named him Abú-Jahl (the father of ignorance) for his stringent opposition to Muḥammad.

² The complete tablet is in *Star of the West* XII:14, pp. 235–236.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 8. [VIII:16:217]

O my Lord! O my Lord! Intoxicate them with the wine of knowledge; sweeten their tastes with the delicacies of prayer in the early morn and eve; gather them together in one congregation; confer upon them a shelter; protect them in the cave of thy Covenant and thy Testament; shield them from the doubts of the violators and the evil suggestions of the waverers; make them mines of knowledge, wisdom and assurance; cause their feet to be firm and steadfast in the straight pathway and grant unto them prosperity in whatever country they call the people to thy Name! Verily, thou art the Lord of the Cause, and thou are powerful to do whatsoever thou desirest!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 18 July 1913.

Give my salutations and praise to that assembly who are firm in the Covenant of God, and say:

O ye whom God hath chosen from among those who are called (know ye that many are called but few chosen); upon whom he caused the evident light to descend; whom he guided into the right path and to whom he gave the glad tidings of the great success—ye must be sincere and faithful, ye must follow the ordinances which refer to the Covenant of God, which is the solid edifice.

O ye beloved of God, know that steadfastness and firmness in this new and wonderful Covenant is indeed the spirit that quickens the hearts which are over flowing with the love of the glorious Lord. Verily, it is the power which penetrates into the hearts of the people of the world! Your Lord has assuredly promised His servants who are firm and steadfast, to render them victorious at all times, to exalt their word, propagate their power, diffuse their light, strengthen their hearts, elevate their banners, assist their hosts, brighten their stars, increase the abundance of the showers of mercy upon them, and enable the brave lions (teachers) to conquer.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet revealed for an American Bahá’í, July 1900. [VIII:16:218]

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the Covenant of God and His Testament is the lamp with world-illuminating rays, and from the Supreme Concourse it enlightens the horizons of the earth and heaven. Whoever stations himself in front of this divine Light, his face will become illumined with the Manifest Glory, his speech will become effective in the hearts and spirits and God shall reinforce him with power which permeates through the realities of things.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 18 July 1913.

Know thou this of a certainty that today the title of the most great bestowal is firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant of the Almighty, but the magnet for the attraction of the graces of His Highness the Merciful is to teach and guide mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 12 October 1913.

If you could realize what an effect your letter produced, undoubtedly you would feel assured that the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has the utmost attachment to you, and day and night he is supplicating toward the Kingdom of Abhá and begs for you confirmation, for you are firm in the Covenant and are the heralds of the Testament.

Today the greatest of all affairs is firmness in the Covenant. This Covenant is the Covenant

of God, and this Testament is the Testament of the Lord of Hosts. If you consider that any soul shows the slightest weakness in the Covenant, undoubtedly counsel him and guide him so that he may become firm.

Today no soul has any station or enjoys any title except the soul who is firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament, who entirely forgets himself and is released from the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Portion of a Tablet revealed by him in response to a letter asking him to visit the Northwest. It was signed by about ninety Bahá’ís of Spokane, Seattle and Portland. [VIII:16:219]

This (Covenant) is the Ark of Noah, its moving power is the fire of the love of God and its captain is Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 6 December 1912.

Thy detailed letter ... was duly received. Its contents produced joy and happiness, for it indicated the manifestation of the power of the Cause of God in that country, and the worthy services rendered by the firm ones in the Covenant and Testament.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet, translated 5 March 1914.

Firmness in the Covenant contains an odour like unto the fragrance of the musk which perfumes the nostrils, while violation of the Covenant has a stench which nauseates the nostrils. Therefore, when one inhales with a spiritual power unquestionably he will distinguish between the two smells.

The world of violation is like unto a rootless tree, ere long it will entirely die. The world of the Covenant is like unto the Blessed Tree which is growing beside the river of the Water of Life in the utmost delicacy and beauty, and day by day it is developing and adding to its verdancy. Ere long no trace will be left of the world of violation. No one will ever abandon His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh and his incontrovertible texts and no one will ever follow the superstitions of the náqidín [the violators]. For in his irrefutable utterances and blessed writing he has most emphatically commanded all the náqidín to obey (the Centre of the Covenant). All the náqidín whom you observe know this fact but self-interest having crept in they are following violation.

This century will pass and in the next century there will remain not one náqidín.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Portion of Tablet, translated 30 September 1913.

Thy letter was received and its contents imparted the utmost of happiness because it was an indication of thy firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant. Today whoever is firm in the Covenant shall become ignited like unto a candle in the assemblage of the world and the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá shall encircle him from all directions. Thank thou God that both thyself and thy revered husband are confirmed in the firmness of the Testament and from every standpoint thou art serving the Kingdom of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Portion of Tablet revealed for a Los Angeles believer, translated 16 July 1913.

Today the highest of all the degrees are the degrees of firmness and steadfastness in faith and certainty. This firmness and steadfastness will be conducive to the descent of divine assistance and confirmation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 July 1914.

Thy letter was received. Its perusal indicated thy faith and firmness in the Covenant and Testament. ... Therefore, exercise the utmost love and kindness toward each other to the utmost degree, and love each other heartily and strive in the assistance of each other and take a firm hold on the divine Testament and the Covenant. Because the spirit of this age is the Covenant and the Testament of God. It is like the pulsating artery in the body of the world. Speak in your meetings and assemblages about the Testament and the Covenant, and invite every one to firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant. Know ye this: that if any person is the least doubtful about the Covenant, he is immediately cut off—although he may be the greatest among men. The harmful results of such an event will appear [VIII:16:220] in the future; therefore, give your utmost attention to this question. Consider that the words of Mírzá ‘Alí Akbar [a Bahá’í teacher] were so effective because he is firm in the Covenant.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet, translated 4 July 1913.

You have written that “We all pray that we and all the friends everywhere be favoured with the Will of the Centre of the Covenant, which is by itself, the good of the whole world, the eternal glory and life (for humanity).” This statement plainly shows that, thank God, you are firm in the Covenant. Today whosoever is firm in the Covenant is helped by the hosts of angels, and favoured with the Spirit of God. Wherever he may be, he will shine forth like unto a bright star. This has been experienced by some. But, if he hesitates, although he may make great noises, yet he is in evident loss in the end.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet, received 7 September 1914, by a London Bahá’í.

As to thee, O thou who art confessing the oneness of God! arise with all thy power to keep firm in the Testament of God, and firmly believe that, verily, all troops are defeated save those of the Testament and all banners are reversed, save those of the Covenant of God, which will wave over all horizons and will overshadow the hosts of spirit, love and peace, while agitated by the breeze of the favour of God. Be thou of this great host and among the vanguard of this great and powerful army. (p. 108.)

“Leave them to amuse themselves with their own vain discourses”, and turn thou to the light of the Testament, and rejoice at the bounty of the effulgence, and seek shelter under the shadow of the standard of the Covenant. Thou wilt soon find it fluttering on the highest summits of glory, surrounded by the valiant hosts of the angels of heaven and assisted by spiritual armies of great number that proceed from the Supreme Concourse. (p. 72.)

Be ye assured with the greatest assurance that, verily, God will help those who are firm in His Covenant in every matter, through His confirmation and favour, the lights of which will shine forth unto the east of the earth, as well as the west thereof. He will make them the signs of guidance among the creation and as shining and glittering stars from all horizons. (p. 83.)

Soon the lights will glisten and the Sun of Truth will shine with a burning ray in that country. At that time the maid-servants who are firm and constant will rejoice; while every doubtful soul who wavers will regret. Woe unto him! woe unto him! in that day wherein the beloved will attain joy by the surrounding Kingdom of thy Lord, the Precious, the Beneficent. Verily, the end is for them who are ushered into the tent of the Covenant of thy merciful Lord. (p. 96.)

Be well watered with the abundant rain falling from the clouds of the Testament of God. (p. 131.)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, pages indicated, Vol. I.

Therefore, roll up thy sleeves to serve the Covenant, make the hearts firm in the Covenant of the beloved Lord, create harmony and agreement among the believers. ... Verily, I send thee good news of the confirmation which thou shalt receive ... if thou wilt arise with all thy power to assist the Testament of God and to serve the Covenant of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 161.

VIII:16, 31 December 1917 [VIII:16:216]

“This is what we inform ye in the days of tests”

Through his honour, Dr Baghdádí, to the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, Muskegon, Michigan.—Upon ye be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye who are attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá!

Verily, I have read your letter, which indicates illumined consciences and hearts filled with the love of God. Blessed are ye, for ye have attained to a Bounty which was the desire of the greatest holy men in past centuries and which is befitting for those who are like unto ye.

Verily, I ask God to make ye the signs of guidance among mankind and to bestow upon ye stability and uprightness.

Perhaps papers of doubts will come to ye from souls who have emerged from the Kingdom of God. Care ye not therein. Arise with a firm foot in the Covenant, in order that the people of hypocrisy becomes hopeless, even if they should come with the greatest intrigues, evil suggestions and discords.

This is what we inform ye in the days of tests. ...

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Díyá’ M. Baghdádí, Chicago, 19 November 1914.

VIII:17, 19 January 1918 [VIII:17:221]

“Today the penetrative power in the heart of the world is the power of the Covenant”

Jesus Christ said only a few words to Peter, telling him that upon that rock he would build his church. He left no written instruction or will, and yet because it was the Word of God, it took root, and millions have obeyed it. And now, when the Covenant has been written and established, how can any one be foolish enough to imagine that they can resist it? No, the ensign of the Covenant has reached to the supreme heights, and its authority will be spread over all the earth.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Prayers, Instructions, Miscellany* gathered by American visitors to ‘Akká in 1900.

Moses said that after him should come Joshua. The Christ said, addressing Peter “Thou art the rock and I will build my temple upon this rock.” Jesus spoke this to Peter by word of mouth. The Blessed Perfection¹ did not appoint his successor by statement of tongue, but in the *Kitáb-i-‘Ahd* (Book of the Covenant), he wrote it with his own hand, commanding therein that all the branches and relations should look toward the Centre of the Covenant. Also in the

¹ Bahá’u’lláh.

Kitáb-i-Aqdas revealed thirty years before his ascension, it is mentioned in two places. During these thirty years these commands of the Blessed Perfection were known and clearly understood by all. Again in a tablet he refers specifically to this, naming one who would violate his commands.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 62.

Real obedience and real sacrifice are identical—absolute readiness to follow and perform whatever you are called upon to do in the Cause of God. When you really love God you will be willing to sacrifice everything and submit yourself entirely to his will. Consecrate yourself wholly to him. His will is everything, his service paramount. If they were to burn me, kill or torture me—no matter what affliction might descend upon me, I would welcome it as one welcomes pleasure. These are precious moments in ‘Akká; so precious we wish that they might never end. ... After your return (to America) the believers will be in a much stronger and better condition. But this cannot be unless they see and know the will and desire of God. I have no wish but his will. His will is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If each human creature had his own will and way, spiritual development would be impossible. The soldiers in an army are under the will and control of one commander; therefore they are united and can press on to victory. If each soldier carried out his own inclination and desire there would be just that many different intentions and nothing would be accomplished. [VIII:17:222] One thousand soldiers under the control of a commander can overthrow and defeat any number of disorganized troops. Without a directing will all would be conquered and defeated.

Be sure, therefore, that if the believers are not united in the will of God they will not be assisted. This is especially necessary because all of them are under the tent of the Covenant in this revelation. There is strength only in unity. Under one tent there is union and harmony. The Covenant of God in this day of manifestation is a lifeboat and ark of salvation. All true followers of the Blessed Perfection are sheltered and protected in this ark. Whoever leaves it, trusting in his own will and strength, will drown and be destroyed. For the Blessed Perfection left no possibility for discord, disagreement and dissension. The Covenant is like the sea and the believers as the fishes in the sea. If a fish leaves the water it cannot live. There is nothing to equal, nothing so effective as the Covenant of God to bring about and continue unity. Christ said to Peter “Thou art my rock upon which I will build my church.” Therefore, all the disciples followed Peter and there was no dissension among them. The Blessed Perfection wrote a Testament or Covenant with his own pen so that no one who obeys it will deny or disobey God. The point is expressed very clearly in the Covenant he revealed. Therefore there can be no possibility, no position of disobedience. He knew that Muḥammad-‘Alí would disobey the Covenant. By violating the Covenant he has become a fallen branch. The Covenant was also written by Muḥammad-‘Alí’s own hand from dictation of the Blessed Perfection who knew he would disobey. What cause of union could be greater than the Covenant God has revealed through his Manifestation, Bahá’u’lláh? After the departure of Bahá’u’lláh the beautiful blossoms upon the Tree of Life were destroyed by Muḥammad-‘Alí and must now be grown again by the love of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The work and mission of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are very great. No one could express the grief which followed the turning away from the Covenant by Muḥammad-‘Alí. We should be thankful that the Blessed Perfection, foreseeing this action, ordained a Centre of the Covenant through which by allegiance and love we may protect and preserve the Cause of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 48. [VIII:17:223]

Praise be to God, that you have a blessed Assembly surnamed by the name of the Centre of the Covenant! This is an evidence of your utmost firmness and steadfastness and a proof of

your faith and assurance in the Blessed Perfection.

For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord. The Blessed Perfection, in all the tablets, books, epistles and supplications, has begged confirmation for and praised and commended those who are firm in this Covenant and Testament, and has asked the wrath of God and woe and desolation unto the violators.

For firmness in the Covenant will preserve the unity of the religion of God and the foundation of the religion of God will not be shaken.

According to the clear text of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and other tablets, the Centre of the Covenant is the remover of all difficulties, for he is the interpreter of the Book. Not one soul has the right to say one word of his own account, or to explain anything or to elucidate the text of the Book, whether in public or private. ...

Convey the rare greetings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to all those who are firm in the Covenant. If all the believers and maid-servants of the Merciful do proclaim their firmness in the Covenant, such steadfastness in the Covenant, like unto a magnet, will draw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to those regions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Portion of Tablet revealed for San Francisco Bahá’í Assembly, during 1912. [VIII:17:227]

Thou hast written regarding the love and unity of the believers and their firmness in the Covenant. This is through the confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá which has attracted those souls and made them steadfast in the Covenant. Today the penetrative power in the heart of the world is the power of the Covenant. The more firm the believers are, the more they are confirmed.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet to American believers, translated by Mirza Sohrab, 16 July 1913.

Firmness in the Covenant means obedience, so that no one may say this is my opinion. Nay, rather he must obey that which proceeds from the pen and tongue of the Covenant. I am ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The crown of my head is the servitude of Bahá’u’lláh and the service of his believers.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from a Tablet, translated 4 March 1913. [VIII:17:228]

As thou hast realized thy own shortcomings, rest thou assured that thou art firm in the Covenant and Testament, and in the love of the True One art steadfast and growing.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet revealed for an American believer, translated 1 November 1909.

This is the first step in the path of God, but the distance of the way is great. I hope that thou mayest traverse that distance and reach the house of the object. That pathway is that of severance from the world-tie[s], reliance upon God, baptism through spirit and fire; namely, to attain the spirit of the knowledge of God, and conflagration with the fire of the love of God; trustworthiness, faithfulness and firmness in the Covenant, steadfastness in the cause of God, and service to the kingdom of peace which shall soon establish its tent in the centre of the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablet revealed for an American believer, received 8 October 1906.

O thou daughter of the Kingdom! If thou desirest divine confirmation and assistance, so that the heavenly Cohorts may grant thee victory, remain thou firm and steadfast in the cause of God and be thou constant in the Covenant and Testament—thus like unto a solid structure thou mayest become established and unshakeable throughout all eternity. Whenever a great object adheres to its own centre, great results and signs will become apparent.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 13 July 1914.

But the sincere servant of Bahá’u’lláh who is firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament while surrounded by the most great sea of tests, threatened by the surging, rocking waves of persecutions and encircled by the whirlwinds of calumnies and backbiting, will blossom like unto a rose and break into joyous song and sweet melodies like unto the nightingale.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 28 July 1913.

The words of love and unity have been more dwelt upon in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh than by any other prophet. In the Book of the Covenant it is noted most especially. In this tablet he says: “O people of the world! I hope you will hold to the principles which will uphold your station.” The station of man is great if he be true to himself and live up to it. If the friends live up to the teachings of the two pages of the Covenant, it will be sufficient.

Wife of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Flowers from the Rose Garden of Acca*, p. 31.

VIII:17, 19 January 1918 [VIII:17:224]

Prayer

Translated by Dr Díyá’ M. Baghdádí, Chicago. This supplication was revealed at a time when in some parts of Persia the believers were awaking to an understanding of the importance of the Covenant.

Praise be unto thee, O God, and glory be unto thee, O my Lord, for thou hast sent from among thy servants those whose consciences became clear: whose countenances were beautified; who flourished outwardly; became inwardly purified; whose faces became illumined; whose stars shone; whose hearts rejoiced; whose sorrows vanished; whose breasts dilated—when they heard the call of the Covenant.

They witnessed the signs of harmony; saw the light of dawn and responded to the Orb of the Horizons. Their faces radiated with the light of bounties and their tongues delighted in the mention of the Lord of great bestowals. They spoke with praise; were illumined with the light of guidance and became ignited with the blazing fire of the Tree of Sinai. They became firm in the Ancient Covenant; walked in the straight path; took hold of the mighty rope; turned to the manifest horizon and followed in the steps of the greatly refined. They gathered in the assembly of glory, in thy name, the Merciful, the Compassionate. They consulted concerning the mighty Testament; agreed upon the right decision and were confirmed with a new spirit. Their breasts were dilated through the reading of the mighty Covenant. They wrote the evident book which speaks of firmness and indicates steadfastness. They held fast to the strong and unbreakable support and grasped the hem of the Garment of Grandeur.

O Lord, illumine their faces in the Kingdom of Abhá; incline their ears to the voice of commendation from the Supreme Concourse; make them great signs of thee; ordain for them the best of this world and the world to come; elevate their stations to the sublime canopy. Give them a truthful tongue among the people of the world and usher them into the paradise of thy meeting after they ascend to the Supreme Companion.

Verily, thou art the Omnipotent in whatsoever thou desirest and verily thou art the Pure Almighty.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

VIII:17, 19 January 1918 [VIII:17:225]

“From all parts of the world, tribes of Jews are coming to the Holy Land”

When the Sun of Reality shone forth from the horizon of sanctity it flooded the world with the rays of the oneness of thoughts, the oneness of opinions, the oneness of ideals and the oneness of truth so that mankind, in doctrines and articles of belief, might converge toward one common centre; differences, contention and discord be entirely effaced from the world of humanity and the unique light which hath branched forth from the Sun of Reality might illumine all the hearts.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the Centre of the Covenant of God, the Branch which is subservient to the Tree. The essential object is the Tree, the foundation is the Tree and the universal reality is the Tree.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Tablet to the American believers, translated by Mirza Sohrab, 19 April 1914.

Know ye of a certainty that the question of the gathering of the descendants of Abraham in Jerusalem is an inviolable fact; for that time of the fulfilment of all the promises which the Lord of Hosts gave them through the prophets of the people in the Taurat (Bible)¹ hath dawned and the divine will is predestined to fulfil all the prophecies. Now day by day the signs thereof become apparent, its arguments obvious, its proof evident and its path visible.

From all parts and corners of the world the descendants of His Highness, the noble Friend (Abraham) are arriving in the Holy Land and are engaged in the cultivation and development of towns and villages. However, the divine standard is the ensign of the Covenant. It is the manifest assister of the [VIII:17:226] children of Israel and the cause of their gathering and unending glory. This promise is already fulfilled in part and ere long will be fulfilled completely.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: To the sons of Áqá Joseph, the Jew of Ramaḍán, translated 26 July 1907.

Mr ____ referred to a meeting (in Persia) when a Jew, a Christian, a Zoroastrian and a Muslim were present and remaining for the night, shared the same bed. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Consider what the power of the Covenant has done. It was an absolute impossibility for a Zoroastrian to unite with a Jew, a Siyyid, and a Mullá and for these to unite with a Christian was an impossibility; but the power of the Covenant has even so gathered them that they are accounted as one spirit. Although the bodies are numerous, the spirit is one.”

From the notes of Kinney-Beede-Thompson visit to ‘Akká, 1909.

Regarding the rainbow, this rainbow is the Covenant of God and the Testament of the Merciful One. The lights of the Kingdom and the heavenly illumination emanated from this rainbow. This rainbow is the sign of the removal of the wrath of God from all the people and the sign of prosperity, tranquillity, universal peace, the oneness of humanity, and the unity of the world of man.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a Tablet translated about 1907.

¹ Tawráh, Jewish Scripture.

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon.

Chapter VIII Spiritual Healing

O maid-servant of God, there are two kinds of disease, spiritual and physical. Physical diseases are cured by medicine and the essence of shrubs and plants. Diseases which are caused by the emotions of the mind are cured by the power of the spirit of man. But the power of the divine spirit dominates all the bodily ailments and those of the mind. When the spirit of man is confirmed and assisted by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, then it will show its effect in every condition in the world of existence.

As to mental healing,—it also has an effect because some reflections are produced between the hearts by the power of concentration. From this power of concentration impressions are produced and healing or relief is realized from these impressions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Between material things and spiritual things there is a connection. The more healthful his body the greater will be [VIII:18:230] the power of the spirit of man; the power of the intellect, the power of the memory, the power of reflection will then be greater.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Table Talks at Acca*; p. 5.

I hope thou wilt become as a rising light and obtain spiritual health; and spiritual health is conducive to physical health.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 305.

O maid-servant of God! The prayers which were written for the purpose of healing are both for the spiritual and material healing. Therefore chant them for the spiritual and material healing. If healing is best for the patient surely it will be granted. For some who are sick, healing for them would only be the cause of other ills. Thus it is that wisdom does not decree the answer to some prayers.

O maid-servant of God! The power of the Holy Spirit heals both material and spiritual ills.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Daily Lessons Received at Acca*, p. 95.

It is not the body which feels pain or trouble, but the soul. If we have a pain in our arm the defect is in the body yet it is the soul which feels the pain and is troubled, not the body, though the body is the cause of that trouble.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

My spiritual health is always perfect. I enjoy an eternal health of the spirit. I hope all of the people of the world will win this celestial gift. Pray that the spiritual health of mankind may

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944. Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted. Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16; Chapter II appeared in issues VII:18 & 19; Chapter III appeared in issue VIII:2; Chapter IV appeared in issue VIII:4; Chapter V appeared in issue VIII:6; Chapter VI appeared in issue VIII:8; and Chapter VII appeared in issues VIII:10 & 11.

be improved daily, for there are many doctors who attend to the physical ailments of the people, but there are very few divine physicians. It is in this connection that Christ said: "Do not be afraid of those people who have control over your body, but have fear of those who may control your spirit." Let your spirit be free so that it may soar toward the heights [VIII:18:231] of sanctity. Let your spirit unfold the white wings of progress. Often physical sickness draws man nearer unto his Maker, suffers his heart to be made empty of all worldly desires until it becomes tender and sympathetic toward all sufferers and compassionate to all creatures. Although physical diseases cause man to suffer temporarily, yet they do not touch his spirit. Nay, rather, they contribute toward the divine purpose; that is, spiritual susceptibilities will be created in his heart.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 27 October 1913.

O thou who art conscious! At last thou didst learn of salvation and didst find the straight way. Now remain firm that thou mayest attain confirmation and victory.

The powers of the sympathetic nerve are neither entirely physical nor spiritual, but are between the two (systems). The nerve is connected with both. Its phenomena will be perfect when its spiritual and physical relations are normal.

When the material world and the divine world are well co-related, when the hearts become heavenly and the aspirations grow pure and divine, perfect connection will take place. Then will its power produce a perfect manifestation. Physical and spiritual diseases will then receive absolute healing.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 309. An answer to the question of a physician regarding the sympathetic nervous system.

Christ healed by the power of his word, because the word of the Messiah was the Holy Spirit purified from all else.

The words of many speakers are mixed with the lusts of their souls and their worldly appetites; therefore they will have neither authority nor success.

Jesus said: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." He did not use prayers or mental suggestion. He used spiritual authority in the command which was the power of the Holy Spirit manifest in him. Therefore his word was obeyed because it was creative.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

As to the fact that man must entirely forget himself, by this is meant that he should arise in the mystery of sacrifice and that is the disappearance of mortal sentiments and the extinction of blameable morals which constitute the temporal gloom, and not that the physical health should be changed into weakness and debility.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 244.

Looking after one's health is done with two intentions. Man may take good care of his body for the purpose of satisfying his personal wishes. Or, he may look after his health with the good intention of serving humanity and of living long enough to perform his duty toward mankind. The latter is most commendable.

A teacher should sleep at night with the thought that the next day he may be refreshed in order to do his duty more fully in relation to teaching his pupils. Therefore, Mrs ... must take good care of her health. Just look at Mr ...'s very good health—see how much work he can do,

how much work he can stand! Whatever work is referred to him, he can discharge it fully. But remember that the essential health is spiritual health, for by means of spiritual health eternal life is obtained; whereas, through physical health only temporal results are achieved.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *A Heavenly Feast*, p. 11.

If the health and well-being of the body be expended in the path of the Kingdom, this is very acceptable and praiseworthy; if it is expended for the benefit of the human world in general—even though it be for their material ben- [VIII:18:232] efit and be a means of doing good—that is also acceptable. But if the health and welfare of man be spent in sensual desires, in a life on the animal plane and in devilish pursuits—then disease is better than such health; nay, death itself is preferable to such a life. If thou art desirous of health, wish thou health for serving the Kingdom, I hope that thou mayest attain a perfect insight, an inflexible resolution, complete health and spiritual and physical strength in order that thou mayest drink from the fountain of eternal life and be assisted by the spirit of divine confirmation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 207.

O thou who art supplicating unto God! I read thy precious letter and am informed of its contents, which show that thou art ill in body and weak, and indicates thine affection toward thy daughter who is in the age of youth.

I beseech God to ordain prosperity unto thee in this world, to confer favour upon thee in his supreme Kingdom, and to heal thee from the illness which has befallen thee for some hidden reason which no one knows save God. Verily, the will of God engages occasionally in some matter for which mankind is unable to find out the reason. The causes and reasons shall appear. Trust in God and confide in him, and resign thyself to the will of God. Verily, thy God is affectionate, compassionate and merciful. He will look at thee with the glances of the eye of mercifulness, will guard thee with the eye of bounty, and will cause his mercy to descend upon thee.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

I hope, as you have received physical health, you will receive your spiritual health. As the body will be cured of physical diseases, in the same way the spirit will be cured of all spiritual diseases. A cure of physical disease is very easy, but the cure of spiritual disease is very difficult. If one has fever and you give him medicine, the fever will vanish; but if the spirit is afflicted with the disease of ignorance, it is difficult to remove that disease. For example, if the spiritual health is afflicted with the love of the world, spiritual medicine must be given. These medicines are the advices and commands of God, which will have effect upon it.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Tablet to Mme L’Astre, ‘Akká, January 1905.

For these thy prevailing diseases are not on account of sins, but they are to make thee detest this world and know [VIII:18:233] that there is no rest and composure in this temporal life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 185.

O thou who art attracted to God! May God uphold thee. ...; he who is filled with the love of Bahá, and forgets all things, the Holy Spirit will be heard from his lips and the spirit of life will fill his heart, the lights of the sign will shine forth from his face, words will issue from his mouth in strands of pearls, and all sickness and disease will be healed by the laying on of the

hands.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Turning the face toward God brings healing to the body, the mind and the soul. When this advancement toward God has become complete, one is able to overcome passion and desire, one becomes protected from sin and transgression and is delivered from heedlessness. This will bestow eternal life and will grant the imperishable gift.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Prayers—for spiritual and physical healing

O thou kind God! To me thou art kinder than myself, and thy love is more abundant and more ancient. Whenever I am reminded of thy bestowals I am made happy and hopeful. If I have been agitated I obtain ease of heart and soul. If I am sick, I gain eternal health. If I am disloyal, I become loyal. If I have been hopeless, I become hopeful. O thou Lord of the Kingdom! Cause thou the rejoicing of my heart; empower my weak spirit and strengthen my exhausted nerves. Illumine thou my eyes: suffer my ears to become hearing, so that I may hearken to the music of the Kingdom and attain to the joy and happiness everlasting. Verily, thou art the Generous, the Giver, and the Kind!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

VIII:18, 7 February 1918 [VIII:18:229]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb of Portland, Oregon.

... [VIII:18:234]

Chapter IX Tests

... [VIII:18:235]

Thou hast questioned concerning ordeals and difficulties and catastrophes: “Are these from God or the result of man’s (own) evil deeds?”

Know thou that ordeals are of two kinds: One kind is for trial (to test the soul), and the other is punishment for actions. (“As a man soweth so shall he also reap.”) That which is for testing is educational and developmental and that which is the punishment of deeds is severe retribution.

The father and the teacher sometimes humour the children and then again discipline them. This discipline is for educational purposes and is indeed to give them true happiness; it is absolute kindness and true providence. Although in appearance it is wrath yet in reality it is kindness. Although outwardly it is an ordeal yet inwardly it is purifying water.

Verily, in both cases we must supplicate and implore and commune to the divine Threshold in order to be patient in ordeals.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Tablet to Portland, Oregon, believer; translated 27 July 1909.

O ye friends of God! The joy and happiness of the people of faithfulness consist in serving

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944. Extracts available elsewhere have been omitted. Chapter I appeared in issue VII:16; Chapter II appeared in issues VII:18 & 19; Chapter III appeared in issue VIII:2; Chapter IV appeared in issue VIII:4; Chapter V appeared in issue VIII:6; Chapter VI appeared in issue VIII:8; Chapter VII appeared in issues VIII:10 & 11; and Chapter IX appeared in issue VIII:18.

the Threshold of the Most High and turning their faces to the Kingdom of Abhá. The hope of the lovers is self-sacrificing and the yearning of the longing ones is self-effacement and evanescence. For love is an irresistible power and an inextinguishable conflagration and the mirror of the love of God is the great martyrdom. Therefore, the sanctified souls and the Manifestations of God yearned for self-abnegation and attainment to the city of martyrdom. They gave up their lives, experienced exile and banishment, endured persecution and dire calamities, became subject to imprisonment and bondage and the targets of the arrows of oppression and objects of the sword of malice. They did not complain; neither did they become disheartened. They drank the cup of martyrdom from the hand of the Cup-bearer of Providence and tasted with the greatest joy the sweetness of annihilation. They found not a moment of rest. They sought not an instant of tranquillity. They withstood the persecution of the enemies and became the Centres of the derision and scoffing of the people of envy. They sacrificed their homes and property and became homeless and wanderers. They experienced not one hour of safety nor a day of repose of mind and body. This [VIII:18:236] is the proof of the sincere lover and this is the evidence of the faithful friend. If it were not so every stranger would become a friend and the deprived one would become the confidant of the mysteries, the remote one would become the near one and the outcast would become the beloved. Consequently the most great wisdom has ordained that the fire of tests shall rage and the rushing torrent of ordeals sweep tumultuously from the mountain of revelation, so that the untruthful may become distinguished from the truthful, the unrighteous be known from the righteous, the worshipper of self be separated from the worshipper of God, the good fruit be set apart from the evil fruit, the signs of light be manifest and the gloom of darkness be dispelled, the nightingale of trustworthiness sing the melody of love and the raven of oppression croak the discordant notes of error, the fertile soil become green and verdant and the barren ground produce its thorns and thistles, the ones attracted to the breath of Abhá become firm and the followers of passion and desire turn away. This is the wisdom of trials and this is the cause of ordeals.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahai News*, No. 3, pp. 2-3.

Thy detailed letter was received. Its perusal produced the utmost happiness for it revealed the fact that thou hast attained to the knowledge of the reality of tests; namely, that tests endured in the path of God are conducive to confirmation, nay, rather, they are heavenly powers and the bounties of the realm of Might. But to the weak believers tests are trials and examination, for, on account of the weakness of their faith and assurance they fall into difficulties and vicissitudes. However, to those souls who are firm and steadfast, tests are the greatest favours.

Consider thou that at the time of an examination in sciences and arts, the dull and lazy pupil finds himself in calamity. But to the intelligent and sagacious student, examination in learning produces honour and infinite happiness. Alloyed gold subjected to the fire portrays its baseness. While the intensity of the flame enhances the beauty of the (pure) gold. Therefore, tests to the weak souls are calamity and to the veiled ones the cause of their disgrace and humiliation.

The point is this, that in the path of Truth every difficulty is made plain and every trial is a matchless bounty.

Therefore, the believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful must not relax during trials, and no disaster must deter their service in the Cause of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Daily Lessons Received at Acca*, pp. 85-86.

That soul is alone who is negligent of God. But if he knows God, although he may live in an interminable desert without water and vegetation yet he is not alone,—God is with him. The sky of this terrestrial globe is always obscure and misty and covered with black, inky clouds. Now the thunder rolls and anon the lightning flashes. Now the hail falls and again the snow descends. Now there is a wild hurricane and then a tempestuous torrent rushing down from the mountain side. Therefore, do not think for one moment that these trials and ordeals are confined to thee. In reality all the people are surrounded with sufferings so that they may not attach their hearts to the world, but will seek for composure and rest in the divine world and beg for the bestowal of the Kingdom. Consequently be thou glad from the bottom of thy heart and be rejoiced through the divine glad tidings.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 20 July 1914.

VIII:19, 2 March 1918 [VIII:19:238]

The Divine Art of Living (continued)¹

Chapter IX (continued)

Tests

As to trials (tests in the path of God), verily, they are necessary. Hast thou not heard and read how there appeared trials from God in the day of Jesus, and thereafter, and how the whirlwind of tests became severe? Even the glorious Peter was not rescued from the flame of trials, and wavered. Then he repented and mourned the mourning of a bereaved one and his lamentations raised unto the Supreme Concourse. Is it, then, possible to be saved from the trials of [VIII:19:239] God? No, verily. There is a great wisdom therein of which no one is aware save the wise and knowing. Were it not for tests, genuine gold could not be distinguished from the counterfeit. Were it not for tests, the courageous could not be known from the coward. Were it not for tests, the people of faithfulness could not be known from those of selfishness. Were it not for tests, the intellects and faculties of the scholars in the great colleges would not be developed. Were it not for tests, the sparkling gems could not be known from worthless pebbles. Were it not for tests, the fisherman could not be distinguished from Annas and Caiaphas who were amid glory (worldly dignity).

Were it not for tests the face of Mary, the Magdalene, would not glisten with the light of firmness and certainty unto all the horizons. These are some of the mysteries of tests which we have unfolded unto thee that thou mayest become cognizant of the mysteries of God in every cycle. Verily, I pray God to illumine the faces as pure gold in the fire of tests.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Tablet to an American believer, 23 December 1902. [Refer to *Star of the West*, XIV:12, p. 355.]

Verily, I read thy latest letter, and my great love welled forth unto thee on account of its wonderful contents. Verily, it showed thy firmness in the Cause of God and that thou wilt resist great tests in the future.

As to thee, make firm the footsteps of the believers of God on this right path, and say, verily, the test has a great power and when its storms wax fierce they uproot everything, even large and well-rooted trees and they wreck great ships on the ocean.

But whosoever among the maidservants of God firmly resists a great test, her face shall gleam and her brow shall glitter in the Supreme Concourse. This is what we inform thee, so that when the test appears thou mayest be heedful thereof, and mayst remind the maid-

¹ This title was later used by Mabel Hyde Paine for her compilation first published in the *World Order* magazine between April 1940 and September 1941, and as an independent title first in 1944.

servants of God that the tests have also occurred in former dispensations, even at the time of Christ.

Christ said, "Fast, so that you may not fall into temptation." Verily, tests withheld a great apostle (Judas) from the mercy of God and made him take part in the shedding of the blood of Jesus. Tests made Peter, the apostle, deny Jesus Christ. Tests made the brothers of Jesus deny him. Many a just, faithful and assured soul did not endure the power of tests but turned backward, until they reached the lowest of the low.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Daily Lessons Received at Acca*, pp. 97–98.

[Tablet to Charles F. Haney, May 1911.]

[Thou art not and shall never be forgotten.] Be thou resolute and steadfast [strong and firm]. When the tree is firmly rooted, it will bear fruit. Therefore, it is not permitted to be agitated by any test. Be thou not disheartened! Be thou not discouraged! The trials of God are many, but if man remains firm and steadfast the test itself is a stepping-stone for the progress of humanity.

[I hope that thou mayest show such firmness in the Cause of the Kingdom that all may remain astonished.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

[Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. Additions and alternatives are from *Star of the West*, X:19, p. 348.]

The rain does not stop. I have been intending every day to go up the mountain, but I have been detained on account of the rain. This is the rainy season. If the rain does not pour down, if the wind does not blow, if the storm and tempest do not rage, the soul-refreshing springtime will not appear. If the clouds do not weep the meadows will not laugh. The hurricane and tornado, the cyclone and the blast are the harbingers of the spring.

Likewise, were there no tests and trials, no hardships and afflictions the attraction of the hearts could not be realized, the spiritual fragrances could not be obtained, nor could merciful happiness be acquired and the beauties of the celestial springtime would not have been disclosed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 10 January 1914. [VIII:19:240]

Thou hast manifested joy at the freedom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This happiness came from thy great love. There is no doubt that the friends have become joyful on account of the liberation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. But I was thankful for this prison in the path of God and the lack of liberty was very pleasing to me, for those days were passed in the path of the love of God with the utmost difficulty and trials, bearing fruits and results. Unless one accept suffering, undergo trials and endure vicissitudes he will reap no reward nor will he attain success and prosperity. Therefore, thou must likewise endure great tests so that the infinite divine outpourings may encircle thee and that thou mayest be assisted in spreading the fragrances of God. Behold the apostles of His Highness, Christ! They accepted all trials and persecutions and received all kinds of oppression and trouble until they became assisted by great bestowals and confirmed in the guidance of the people.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From a Tablet.

My happiness was complete in those dark days of imprisonment and vicissitude. I was

happier than now, because I had no will of my own. I was perfectly resigned. The life of this world is only a few days. Whether happy or unhappy, in freedom or in bonds, healthy or ill, in comfort or in poverty,—they will pass away. The one who is established on the throne and the one sitting on the mat—both will cease to exist here.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 1 April 1914.

It is difficult for the weak ones to endure the tests but for souls like you, it is very easy. It is my hope that during the time of tests thou mayest remain in the utmost firmness and steadfastness, so that like unto a lamp thou mayest be protected within the glass, and be not extinguished by the blowing of winds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Tablet to an American believer; translated 4 August 1911. [VIII:19:241]

The higher our station is, the nearer we are to God and the more severe do our tests become; when we have received great blessings, we are apt to become self-confident and think that we are secure from falling, and then is our danger great.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Notes of Miss E. J. Rosenberg, ‘Akká, 1901.

Rest assured in the protection of God. He will preserve his own children under all circumstances. Be ye not afraid nor be ye agitated. He holds the sceptre of power in his hand, and like unto a hen he gathereth his chickens under his wings. “To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the sun. A time to be born, and a time to die, a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to keep silent and a time to speak.” Now, friends, this is the time of assurance and faith and not fear and dread.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 June 1914.

These people who called on us today were in a state of fright. They are expecting daily the bombardment of Haifa by the foreign warships. As soon as they see a little moving speck in the horizon of the sea, they look through their glasses, anxiously scanning to see whether these are the expected cruisers. Their hearts are in a state of anxiety. They are terror-stricken. They have no peace of mind. This is one of the signs of absence of faith. It is stated in the Qur’án: “They imagine every cry raised is an enemy unto them.” For example, when a thief enters a house, the least noise causes his flight. He trembles and quakes.

But the hearts of the people of faith are assured. If they are surrounded by a thousand enemies they stand firm on their ground. The greatest divine bounty is a confident heart. When the heart is confident, all the trials of the world will be as child’s play. Should they throw him into prison, should they cast him into a black well, should they heap upon him all manner of afflictions, still his heart is content, peaceful and assured.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 18 October 1914.

To enter the Kingdom is easy, but to remain firm and constant is difficult. The planting of trees is easy but their cultivation and training to strengthen their roots and to make them firm is difficult. Now, as thou art a firm tree, thou shalt certainly grow and send out branches, leaves and blossoms and bear fruits. These branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits are the souls who may be guided, through the providence of God, by thee.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 105.

Man must seek to gain the acceptance of God and not that of the different classes of men. If one is praised and chosen by God, the accusation of all the creatures will cause no loss to him; and if a man is not accepted at the Threshold of God the praise and admiration of all men will be of no use to him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 158.

Thou hast written concerning the tests that have come upon thee. To the sincere ones, tests are as a gift from God, the Exalted, for a heroic person hasteneth, with the utmost joy and gladness, to the tests of a violent battlefield, but the coward is afraid and trembles and utters moaning and lamentation. Likewise, an expert student prepareth and memorizeth his lessons and exercises with the utmost effort, and in the day of examination he appeareth with infinite joy before the master. Likewise the pure gold shineth radiantly in the fire of test. [VIII:19:242] Consequently, it is made clear that for holy souls, trials are as the gift of God, the Exalted; but for weak souls they are an unexpected calamity. This test is just as thou hast written: it removeth the rust of egotism from the mirror of the heart until the Sun of Truth may shine therein. For, no veil is greater than egotism and no matter how thin that covering may be, yet it will finally veil man entirely and prevent him from receiving a portion of the eternal bounty.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, p. 722.

Be not sorrowful on account of the affliction of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, for calamity is a light whereby his face glistens among the Supreme Concourse; affliction is healing to his breast, joy to his heart, happiness to his soul; nay, rather, a most honoured garment upon his temple, best gown upon his body, and dearest crown on his head. This is his utmost desire.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a Tablet to Johnstown Bahá’í Assembly; translated 24 June 1902.

Ye have expressed words of solicitude and anxiety over the troubles and persecutions which have fallen upon this imprisoned one. Do not be at all sad, be ye not affected. Do not worry, for incarceration to this prisoner is a feast of bliss and a perpetual paradise. Persecutions and adversities are the merciful gifts. If these persecutions and sufferings did not exist in the path of God, how could ‘Abdu’l-Bahá obtain happiness and peace? Through the appearance of tests, my heart is consoled, and through the experiencing of dire afflictions my soul is calmed.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Tablet to Oakland Assembly; translated 17 July 1908.

Hájí Kamálu’d-Dín was one of God’s own servants, severed from aught else save him, enkindled, trusting in God and free from every tie. Before accepting this Cause, he was much respected and honoured in Naráq.¹ When he embraced this Cause, they pursued him with such dogged perseverance and enmity that he was finally obliged to leave his native land and come to Baghdád. Having arrived, he found himself in most difficult circumstances, and in great need of his daily bread. Being a man of letters, he had never essayed any work; but putting aside his pride, he opened—with a small capital given to him—a little grocery shop at the entrance to the curious boat-shaped bridge of the Euphrates, where multitudes of people cross and re-cross daily. Not for one moment did he think of his noble connections nor brood over his former position of leisure, ease and worldly honour. He never bothered his mind over what his many countrymen might think who passed yearly by his store to visit the Holy Shrine of the Imams in Najaf and Karbilá; nay, rather, he sat there serene and with the

¹ Naráq is a town 53 km west of Káshán.

happiness of the Kingdom and the joy of heaven in his heart. The spiritual station of that household will become evident in the future. Whenever he would hear that the Blessed Perfection had gone to Kázimayn, although the distance was several miles and the weather hot, he would immediately shut his store and start for that town afoot. Although at that time one could hire a donkey for five cents yet he could not very well afford this lavish expenditure. Nevertheless you never saw him cross or bad-tempered. He was a source of delight and happiness to all. Such souls are the bright gems in the crown of existence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 21 June 1914.

Grieve not at the divine trials. Be not troubled because of hardships and ordeals; turn unto God, bowing in hum- [VIII:19:243] bleness and praying to him, while bearing every ordeal, contented under all conditions and thankful in every difficulty. Verily, thy Lord loveth his maid-servants who are patient, believing and firm. He draws them nigh to him through these ordeals and trials.

Be not sorrowful on account of the departure of thy good son. He hath indeed departed from this narrow and gloomy world which is darkened by unlimited sorrow, unto the Kingdom which is spacious, illumined, joyous and beautiful. God delivered him from this dark well and promoted him unto the Supreme Height! He gave him wings whereby he soared to the heaven of happiness. Verily, this is the great mercy from him who is precious and forgiving.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 51.

“I have heard thy cries and am conscious of thy tears. Remember at all times and in all places that God is faithful and do not doubt this. Be patient even though great calamities may come upon thee. Yet fear not! Be firm in the path of thy Lord; as a mountain unmoved, unchanging in thy steadfastness.”

These words were written by Bahá’u’lláh to Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí to strengthen him during great persecutions. In his early days Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí travelled from city to city in Persia proclaiming with great wisdom and love the glad tidings of the new and divine day which was dawning upon the earth. But the fanatical religious leaders to whom the vision of universal brotherhood and peace was too bright to be endured soon persecuted him with terrible bitterness. At one time he was beaten and driven through the streets of a city by a wild and howling mob. During this experience he cried out, “This is my triumphal procession.” Again he was transported from one prison to another in a very cruel fashion. His hands and feet were tied and he was put in a bag, head downward, and flung across the back of a donkey. Another Bahá’í was put in a bag on the donkey’s other side. The head of each of the prisoners dragged [VIII:19:244] on the sand as the donkey was driven the long journey over the desert. Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí sang gaily as they went along. The guard whipped him unmercifully, saying, “Now, will you sing?” Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí replied, “I will sing more gladly than ever because you have given me the pleasure of enduring something for the sake of God.”

For twelve years Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí was a prisoner in Khartoum, Egypt. The dungeon-room in which he was confined had a tiny window through which the sun shone but one hour a day. For one precious hour every day Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí read with glowing heart the Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh. The rest of the day he was in the twilight. But he concentrated his spirit upon the glory of God so perfectly that each day he grew more saintly.

When, in later years, he was asked by Miss Stevens why the Bahá’ís all looked so happy (she was thinking especially of the radiant joy in his face), he replied, “Sometimes we have surface troubles, but that cannot touch our happiness. The hearts of those who belong to the

Kingdom are like the sea. When the wind is rough it troubles the surface of the water; but two metres down there is perfect calmness.”

Fortnightly Review, June 1911.

Mrs Lua Getsinger was one day in ‘Akká. A western woman was there also and she was telling ‘Abdu’l-Bahá all about her troubles. This was a strange thing to do for usually people when they enter the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are so filled with the contagion of his radiant love that they think only of their blessings. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with great kindness listened for half an hour to the western woman’s troubles; they were really not very big troubles. At last he arose, and said he had another engagement and must be going. “But there,” he said, pointing out of the window, “goes a man whom I will bring in to see you. His name is Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí. We call him the ‘Angel of Mount Carmel’. He walks on earth but he lives in heaven. He has had many troubles and he will tell you about them.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went out, but quickly returned with Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí whom he presented to the woman, and then departed.

The “Angel of Mount Carmel” with great humility and sweetness of manner began to talk with the woman of the luminous century in which we live and the divine age that is to be. She listened for a while, impatiently, and at last broke in with, “But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said you would tell me about your troubles.” Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí looked up in amazement.

“Troubles?” he replied, “why madam, I never had any troubles, I don’t know what troubles are.”

O ye beloved of God! When the winds blow severely, rains fall fiercely, the lightning flashes, the thunder roars, the bolts descend and storms of trial become severe, grieve not; for after this storm, verily, the divine spring will arrive, the hills and fields will become verdant, the expanses of grain will joyfully wave, the earth will become covered with blossoms, the trees will be clothed with green garments and adorned with blossoms and fruits. Thus blessings become manifest in all countries. These favours are results of those storms and hurricanes.

The discerning man rejoiceth at the day of trials, his breast becometh dilated at the time of severe storms, his eyes become brightened when seeing the showers of rain and gusts of wind whereby trees are uprooted; because he foreseeeth the result and the end,—the leaves, blossoms and fruits; while the ignorant person becometh troubled when he seeth a storm, is saddened when it raineth severely, is terrified by the thunder and trembleth at the surging of the waves which storm the shore.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 13.

VIII:19, 2 March 1918 [VIII:19:237]

“This is the conduct and manners of the people of Bahá”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Compiled from the *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, pages indicated.

O ye sanctified souls! It is the time of firmness and steadfastness and the period of arising in the service of the Word of God, for the Blessed City (‘Akká) is environed from all directions with the tempestuous waves of tests and trials and the sweeping hurricanes, of persecutions and hardships are blowing and roaring high. The joy and happiness of the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá depends upon the stability and constancy of the believers. For they must live and act in accord with the divine advices and exhortations and show forth to each other the power of the perfection of love with infinite accord and unity, so that they may become the embodiment of one existence, the waves of one sea, the myrtles of one rose-garden, the rays of one sun, the stars of one horizon, the fruits of one tree and the birds of one meadow.

Likewise, they must treat with and behave toward all the governments, nations, communities, kings and subjects with the utmost sincerity, trustworthiness, straightforwardness, love and kindness. Even they must make hopeful a bloodthirsty enemy, show sympathy with the utmost faithfulness and honour to the perfidious unjust, know the ill-wisher as the well-wisher and torment not the sinner with reproaches. Should they become the targets of a thousand arrows of persecution, they must challenge it with love and friendship and treat every one with purity of purpose and kindness.

O ye friends of God! Show ye an endeavour that all the nations and communities of the world, even the enemies, put their trust, assurance and hope in you; that if a person falls into errors for a hundred-thousand times he may yet turn his face to you, hopeful that you will forgive his sins; for he must not become hopeless, neither grieved nor despondent. This is the conduct and the manners of the people of Bahá. This is the foundation of the most high pathway! Ye should conform your conduct and manners with the advices of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. (pp. 435-436.)

If any one of you enters a city he must become the centre of attraction because of the sincerity, faithfulness, love, honesty, fidelity, truthfulness and loving-kindness of his disposition and nature toward all the inhabitants of the world, that the people of the city may all cry out: "This person is unquestionably a Bahá'í; for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature and his disposition are of the attributes of the Bahá'ís." Until you do attain to this station, you have not fulfilled the Covenant and the Testament of God. For according to the irrefutable texts, he has taken from us a firm covenant that we may live and act in accord with [VIII:19:238] the divine exhortations, commands and lordly teachings. (p. 42.)

Arise with every power to assist the Covenant of God and serve in his vineyard. Be confident that a confirmation will be granted unto you and a success on his part is given unto you. Verily, he shall support you by the angels of his holiness and reinforce you with the breaths of the spirit that ye may enter the Ark of Safety, set forth the evident signs, impart the spirit of life, declare the essence of his commands and precepts, guide the sheep who are straying from the fold in all directions, and give the blessings. Ye have to use every effort in your power and strive earnestly and wisely in this new century. By God, verily the Lord of Hosts is your support, the angels of heaven your assistance, the Holy Spirit your companion and the Centre of the Covenant your helper. Be not idle, but active and fear not. ... Ye are now in a great station and noble rank and ye shall find yourselves in evident success and prosperity, the like of which the eye of existence never saw in former ages. Bahá and salutations be upon every one who is firm in the Covenant, free from dissension, sanctified from deceits and steadfast in the path. (p. 162.)

VIII:19, 2 March 1918 [VIII:19:238]

Habits of prayer in the Orient

From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 3 October 1913.

Here in the East everybody arises very early so that between five and six o'clock we are all out of our beds with the words, "Alláh-u-Abhá", on our lips, greeting each other. There are four customs that have impressed me deeply and are significant signs of the religious nature of these people.

First: Their uniform early rising. Although in the West it is taught, "Early to bed and early to rise", it is seldom practised.

Second: No sooner do they open their eyes than the holy name of God is upon their lips, thanking him for all his past graces and future bestowals.

Third: Their quiet, solitary prayer and concentration lasting from ten to thirty minutes according to the religious spirit of the individual.

Fourth: As soon as they have finished their individual prayer and before taking their breakfast they assemble in the reception room and pray to God, read communes or chant tablets. They will then, refreshed by the spiritual food, gather around the table to partake of the material breakfast.

IX:1, 21 March 1918 [VIII:21:5]

“Bahá’u’lláh is the Promised One expected by all nations”

A compilation by Mrs Mary M. Rabb¹

From the Words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The promised one of all the nations of the world has become apparent and manifest. Each community and religion expects the coming of their promised one, and his highness, Bahá’u’lláh, is the promised one of all. Therefore, the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh is conducive to harmony, raises the canopy of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity upon the apex of the contingent beings, and unfurls the ensign of universal brotherhood and ideal commonwealth upon the summit of the hills and mountains.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from a Tablet revealed for an American Bahá’í; translated by Mirza Sohrab, 14 December 1908.

Praise be to God, he hath appeared with a luminous countenance. Verily, the promised one is his highness, Bahá’u’lláh, who hath dawned from the eastern horizons like unto a glorious sun and hath diffused the rays of the most great guidance (i.e., the heavenly teachings), in all the countries of the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from a Tablet to the Los Angeles assembly of Bahá’ís; translated 10 July 1913.

Regarding the appearance of Christ, there were many prophecies in the Bible which foretold his coming. ... The teachings of Moses were like a seed, but when the seed grew into a plant and bore blossom, then fruit—the fruit signified Christ, who was the result of all the teachings of Moses. ... As to the Manifestation (Bahá’u’lláh) all the religious books in the world bear witness to him. The Magis² have resisted the Muslims for nearly 1,400 years, refusing to accept Islám, and suffered great persecutions. They accept and believe in the Manifestation (Bahá’u’lláh), because of the prophecies of their books. The Jews would not accept Christ, but, because they see their Bible prophecies literally fulfilled, they are becoming believers in great numbers. All of the Qur’án bears witness to the coming of God. It is said: “O people, you will meet God in the flesh; you will visit him.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From notes of Mrs Sarah Herron, 1900).

O thou who art looking for the Kingdom of God! Thy letter was considered. Glad tidings be unto thee for thy supreme wish became manifest in the assemblage of the world. The spacious Kingdom was newly adorned, and like unto paradise, manifested beautiful scenes. The King of the Kingdom established his canopy in the centre of the universe. The Sun of Truth dawned and the light of God appeared. The banner of holiness was lifted up and the

¹ Texts available in earlier volumes and elsewhere are omitted. Some Writings of Bahá’u’lláh could not be found elsewhere or only as fragments.

² Majúsí, pl. Majús.

Holy Spirit began its work of confirming. The fragrance of God emanated and his divine Spirit conferred life. Turn absolutely to that Kingdom, and thou wilt see, at every moment, new manifestations.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from a Tablet to an American believer, dated 12 February 1904. [VIII:21:6]

All nations were promised by a sure promise and were awaiting with anxiety and longing the coming of the promised one.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From Tablet to an American believer, dated 9 June 1903.

The Lord of the day of the Manifestation is his highness, Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a Tablet, dated 20 July 1911.

What is meant in the prophecies by the Lord of hosts, the promised Christ, is the Blessed Perfection (Bahá’u’lláh) and his highness, the Supreme (Báb).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a Tablet revealed for the New York Assembly of Bahá’ís; translated by Mirza Sohrab, 1 January 1907.

The Cause of Bahá’u’lláh is in fulfilment of all the prophecies in all the books of the religions of the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 13 July 1914.

“What art thou reading?” “A lecture on the coming world teacher, by Mrs Besant.” “The great world teacher has already come,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said.

From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, dated 26 July 1914.

The “One who is to come” is he who was promised in the books of God and his epistles; that is, this Manifestation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From a Tablet dated 13 March 1903.

The Manifestation (Bahá’u’lláh) had all the qualities of the Sun of Truth manifested in him. All of the learned and wise men confessed that the teachings of the Manifestation were complete and perfect. The glory of the Manifestation was acknowledged by people of all nations of the earth, but they did not believe in his divinity. People of all nations composed poetry in praise of the Manifestation. The explanations of the Manifestation were all revelations, and there is not a single learned man on the earth who can produce the like of them. During fifty years the Manifestation withstood all nations of the earth. Though all nations were against him and contradicted him, they were always submissive and humble before him. As the miracles and the extraordinary signs of the Manifestation will not be proof for the centuries to come after this, we have not mentioned them. The miracles are only proof for those who are present, not for those who are to come, for the idolators have also recorded miracles, on the part of their gods, in their books.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From notes of Mrs Herron, 1900.

The Zoroastrians, who were very numerous throughout Persia, notwithstanding all the calamities and sufferings inflicted upon them by the Muslims, would not accept the teachings of Muḥammad, but they say that their books plainly indicate the coming of the Manifestation in this time and many of them have accepted this religion because of this fact. ... All the Old Testament prophecies foretold the coming of Christ. The Gospel of Christ shadowed forth the coming of the Manifestation (Bahá'u'lláh). There is a sect in Persia of the Pársí faith, who would not read the Qur'án or the Bible, but who have now organized an assembly under the laws of the British and Persian governments, and day before yesterday (3 December 1900) 'Abdu'l-Bahá received a letter from the chief acknowledging Bahá'u'lláh to be the divine Manifestation of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From notes of Mrs Sarah Herron, 1900. [VIII:21:7]

Let us consider the prophecies announcing the coming of God or the Manifestation: The coming of the Kingdom of God is foretold in all the holy books, and these sayings are not confined to a small number, but the books are full of them—especially Daniel and Isaiah. It is plainly stated in the Bible that, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." This refers to the Manifestation. Christians have always believed that this refers to the Holy Spirit. How can this be? The Holy Spirit (Christ) was already in the world. He came in Jesus when he was born. ... The Qur'án says, "There is a day in which the Lord shall come." and again, "Know ye that ye shall meet him." ... The prophecies in the books of Zoroaster plainly foretold the coming of the Báb and the Manifestation.

There are no prophecies to foretell the coming of Moses, but for the coming of Jesus we find them, and in the Bible the coming of Muḥammad was mentioned in the Gospels as the Advocate; but regarding the coming of the Báb and the Manifestation, all the religious Books foretell of them—the Bible, the Gospels, the Qur'án, the holy traditions of 'Alí, and the Zoroastrian writings; all are quite plain on this point. No one can contradict them.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: From notes of Mrs Herron, 1900.

The world of humanity has ever been in a state of anticipation of the coming of the divine Manifestations. Each religion expected the coming of a promised one. They longingly prayed for the dawn of the Sun of Reality. A thousand times alas, when he appeared they remained heedless and did not turn their faces toward him! Pitiful indeed is this condition. They were praying for the glorious dawn of the Sun of Reality, but when it appeared from the eastern horizon they exclaimed: "Where is the sun? We do not see it." For instance, the Jewish nation expected the coming of a Messiah. ... They were hoping for the arrival of their promised one, but when his holiness, Christ, appeared they turned away from him. ...

This century is the century of the Sun of Reality. This century is the century of the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Extracts from address to Theosophists, 13 February 1913.

But now after the lapse of many centuries, his highness, the Almighty, has again looked upon them with the glance of mercifulness, and the cup-bearer of celestial bestowals became manifest in the land of Persia. The Sun of Reality shone forth, casting the effulgences of his graces upon that country. He proclaimed the heavenly teachings and instituted the religion of the clement Lord. ...

But alas, alas! still the majority of the inhabitants of Persia are in sound sleep and have not

heard, neither are they informed of the most eminent bestowal. The owner of the house has come to the door, but the dwellers in the house have shut the door and do not desire to let him in. They have treated the friend as though he were the stranger, and the known as though he were unknown. They seem to say: "We are satisfied with this degradation. We are comfortable amidst all these distractions, dissipations, grovelling in dirt and uncleanness. We do not want the owner of the house. We are not seeking his faith. We loathe him and are holding aloof from his favour and grace. This is not the kind Father but a foreigner. Even though he may be the beloved one of all the nations of the world, his renown world-conquering, the fame of his grandeur reaching the ears of the rich and poor alike, others from different [VIII:21:10] parts of the world entering under the shade of his sacred tree by cohort and cohort, accepting his teachings, and receiving a share from the table of his sustenance."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 13 October 1914.

Thousands of souls, including the great divines and Pharisees among the Jews, were awaiting the Manifestation of Christ, lamenting and weeping and supplicating that the Messiah should soon appear. But when his holiness, Christ, came with a beautiful face and sweet utterance and dawned from the day-spring of the contingent world like unto the shining sun, all those souls who awaited him rejected him, became afflicted with the sleep of heedlessness, did not wake up by the voice of Christ nor did they gain consciousness. Now again the same is the case in the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 688.

The various religious systems are coming closer together. Bahá'u'lláh stands at the meeting of their ways to God. In him the Muslims are going forward to meet their promised Imám Mihdí, the Christians to meet Christ, the Jews their Messiah, and so on. When they meet Bahá'u'lláh they meet each other as at the top of a mountain. There they find unity because there they find him. There is the widest view, the heavenly horizon. No one but a Manifestation of God can unify the religious systems of the world. No law, no war, no power of kings could do this. The Kingdom is a real visible Kingdom, a real unity. This cannot be attained from books. It comes from the heart.

Spoken by Mr MacNutt while in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, pp. 74-75. [VIII:21:11]

This is indeed the Father, whereof Isaiah gave you tidings and the Comforter whose covenant the Spirit (Christ) hath received. ... The perfection of the Ancient hath come by his most mighty name and hath desired to make the people enter into the most holy Kingdom, and that the sincere may see the Kingdom of God before his face ... Blessed is he who fulfil the Covenant, and woe unto him who breaketh the promise and denieth God, the knower of secrets. ... Advance thereunto, verily thy glorious Lord hath honoured his country by his coming, thus we teach you the path whereof the Spirit (Christ) hath declared. Verily, I bear witness for him as he was indeed a witness for me; verily he said: "Come, that I may make you fishers of men," and today we say, "Come, that we may make you vivifiers of the world." Thus was the decree ordained in a Tablet written by the Pen of Command.

Bahá'u'lláh: Extract from a Tablet revealed for the Pope.

We have commanded you to purify your hearts from the love and detestation of those who are upon the earth, lest anything will prevent you from one direction and enforce you to another,—and this is of my greatest advice unto you in a perspicuous Tablet. He who

adhereth to either the one or the other, verily he cannot know the command as it is,—unto this will bear witness every just and informed one. Ye have forgotten the promise of God, and violated his Covenant in such a manner that ye turned away from the one by whose appearance the eyes of the Unitarians were consoled. Purify your sight from the hidden and the veiled, than look to the evidences of the prophets and messengers, that ye may know the matter of God in these days wherein the promised one hath come with great sovereignty.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Súriy-i-Hakal*, p. 58. [VIII:21:12]

O king of the earth, hear the voice of this servant. Verily, I am a man who hath believed in God and his signs, and I have sacrificed myself in his way; to this do the afflictions wherein I am—the like of which none among mankind hath borne!—testify, and my Lord the All-knowing is the witness to what I say. I have not summoned men unto aught save unto thy Lord and the Lord of the worlds. In love for him there hath come upon me that whereof the eye of creation hath not beheld the like.

Bahá'u'lláh: Extract from Tablet revealed for Sháh of Persia. [Second paragraph in *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 57.]

O thou Temple! We have made thee a mirror for the kingdom of the names to speak of my dominion among all the creatures and summon all the people to my meeting and beauty and to be a guide to my obvious and upright path. We have elevated thy name among the servants as a bounty on our part—verily, I am the Ancient Bounty!—and adorned thee with the embroidered garment of myself and cast upon thee my Word to use the authority in the Kingdom as it pleaseth thee and to do what thou willest. We have ordained to thee the good of the heaven and earth so that no good will be granted to anyone unless he enters thy shadow, as a command on the part of thy Lord, the learned, the informed. And we have given the rod of command and the divination of authority to enable thee to distinguish the wisdom of every question. We have shown forth from thy breast the seas of knowledge and revelation in the celebration of thy Lord, the Merciful, in order that thou shouldst praise and be of the thankful. We have chosen thee from among my creatures and made thee the Manifestation of my soul to whomsoever is in heaven and earth.

Bahá'u'lláh: *Súriy-i-Haykal*, p. 51.

O people of the Son (Christians)! We have sent unto you John the Baptist (the Báb, the precursor of Bahá'u'lláh) another time. Verily, he crieth in the wilderness of *The Bayán*: “O creation of beings, make clear your eyes, the day of vision and meeting hath come nigh; and O people of the Gospel, prepare the way, for the day whereon the Lord of Glory shall come, hath [VIII:21:13] drawn nigh. Prepare yourselves to enter into the Kingdom!” Thus was the matter decreed on the part of God, the cleaver of the dawn. Harken unto the strains which the dove of eternity hath sung upon the branches of the divine Lote-tree and is vocal with the melody of, “O people of the earth! We have sent unto you him who was named John, to baptize you with water, that your bodies might be purified for the appearance of Christ, and that he (Christ) hath purified you with the fire of love and with the water of the Spirit, as preparation for these days whereon the Merciful hath willed to cleanse your bodies with the Water of Life by the hands of grace and bounty.”

Bahá'u'lláh: Extract from Tablet revealed for the Pope.

His Holiness the Supreme (Báb)—May my life be a ransom for him!—is the promised one of the Qur'án, or in other words he is the Mihdí, the Qá'im, the promised one, who was to

appear after his holiness, Muḥammad. The Báb was the radiant Morn of Guidance, the herald of the Beauty of Abhá, the Blessed Perfection, the Sun of Reality—may my life be a sacrifice to him!

Bahá'u'lláh was his holiness, “Him-whom-God-shall-manifest”, the promised one of all the books and epistles of his holiness, the Báb.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet revealed for American believers; translated 19 April 1914.

Here follow some prophecies of the Báb:

“Before the twentieth year the creation of *The Bayán* will be perfected, and then the new advent shall take place.”—(From the *Book of Names*.)

“In the year *nine* you shall apprehend all the good.”

(This prophecy of the Báb’s in *The Bayán* was fulfilled by the exile of Bahá’u’lláh from Ṭihrán and his arrival in the ninth year of the Báb’s advent.—Note by Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán.)

“I swear by the most holy essence of God—glorious and mighty is he!—that in the day of the manifestation of ‘Him-whom-God-shall-manifest’, if one should hear a single verse from him and recite it, it is better than that he should recite *The Bayán* a thousand times.”

“All the Bahá (glory) of *The Bayán* is ‘He-whom-God-shall-manifest’. All mercy be on him who believeth, and all chastisement on him who believeth not in him.”

“Verily, I am the first one who worshipped him.”

“O people of *The Bayán*! Let neither *The Bayán* and whatever is therein, nor its letters, veil you from ‘Him-whom-God-shall-manifest’. If he abolishes all *The Bayán* he is the true one, and if he appears with one single verse he is the truth.”

“All the divine names and attributes revealed in *The Bayán* in their primary sense revolve around ‘Him-whom-God-shall-manifest’; and in their secondary sense around the ‘Branch-extended-from-the-Ancient-Root (‘Abdu’l-Bahá)’.”

The Báb, quoted by Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán from *The Bayán*, in an address at Washington, D.C., June 1903.

“Today, *The Bayán* is in the stage of seed, but at the beginning of the manifestation of ‘Him-whom-God-shall-manifest’, the ultimate perfection of *The Bayán* will become apparent, when he shall gather the fruits of the trees which have been planted.” (p. 225.)

“The third chapter of the third Vaḥíd. Concerning this, that *The Bayán* and whosoever is therein revolved around the saying of ‘Him-whom-God-shall-manifest’, even as the Alif (i.e., the Gospel) and whosoever was therein revolved around the saying of Muḥammad the Messenger of God, and as that which God revealed unto him at first and whoso- [VIII:21:14] ever was therein revolved around that which he said at the period of his later Manifestation. The quintessence of this chapter is this, that the gaze of *The Bayán* is not extended save towards ‘Him-whom-God-shall-manifest’, for none but he that raised or doth raise it up, even as none but he hath sent or doth send it down. And *The Bayán* and such as are believers therein yearn more after him than the yearning of any lover after his beloved.” (p. 348.)

“Though the ocean of woe rageth on every side, and the bolts of fate follow in quick succession, and the darkness of griefs and afflictions invade soul and body, yet is my heart brightened by the remembrance of thy countenance and my soul is as a rose-garden from the perfume of thy nature.” (p. 18.)

Báb: Quoted from Prof. E. G. Browne, *A Traveller’s Narrative*, pages indicated.

The Feast of Naw-Rúz (New Day)

Talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the Feast of Naw-Rúz, 21 March, at Victoria Hotel, Alexandria, Egypt. Eighty-five believers were then eating dinner at His table.¹

According to ancient custom, every nation has general holidays when all the people rejoice and are glad. That is, they choose the day of the year whereon a great or glorious event had occurred. On that day they manifest great joy and happiness. They visit one another; if they have any feelings of bitterness towards one another, they become reconciled on that day; hard feelings pass away and they unite in love for each other. As great events occurred on the day of Naw-Rúz for the Persians, that nation therefore made it a national feast and considered it a national holiday.

This is, indeed, a blessed day because it is the beginning of the temperate season and the commencement of springtime in the northern hemisphere. All earthly things, whether trees, animals or humans, become refreshed; they receive power from the life-giving breeze and obtain new life; a resurrection takes place and, because it is the season of springtime, there is a general marvellous activity in all contingent beings.

There was a time when the Persian dynasty died out and no trace remained thereof. On such a day [Naw-Rúz] a new one was founded. Jamshíd² ascended the throne.³ Persia became happy and at peace. Its power, which had been dissipated, once more returned. Hearts and souls became possessed of wonderful susceptibilities, to such a degree that Persia became more advanced than it had been in former days under the sovereignty of Kayumars and Húshang.⁴ The glory and greatness of the government and the nation of Persia rose higher. Likewise, a great many events occurred upon the day of Naw-Rúz that brought honour and glory to Persia and to the Persians. Therefore, the Persian nation, for the last five or six thousand years, has always considered the Feast of Naw-Rúz as a day of national happiness, and until now it is sanctified and recognized as a blessed day.

In brief, every nation has a day to mark as a holiday which they celebrate with [IX:1:9] joy. In the sacred laws of God in every cycle and dispensation, there are blessed feasts, holidays and workless days. On such days no kind of occupation, commerce, industry, agriculture, or the like, is allowed. All work is unlawful. All must enjoy themselves, gather together, hold general meetings, become as one assembly, so that the oneness, unity and harmony of the people may be demonstrated in the eyes of all. As it is a blessed day it should not be neglected or left without results by making it a day limited to the fruits of mere pleasure. During such blessed days institutions should be founded that may be of permanent benefit and value to the people so that in their conversations and in history it may become widely known that such a good work was inaugurated on such a feast day. Therefore, the intelligent must look searchingly into conditions to find out what important affair, what philanthropic institutions are most needed, and what foundations should be laid for the community on that particular day, so that they may be established. For example, if they find that the community needs morality, then they may lay down the foundation of good morals on that day. If the community be in need of spreading sciences and widening the circle of knowledge, on that day they should proceed in that direction, that is to say, direct the thoughts of all the people to that philanthropic cause. If, however, the community is in need of widening the circle of commerce or industry or agriculture, they should inaugurate the means of attaining the

¹ The following is the new translation from the 2nd edn. (CE 2000) of *Days to Remember*, pp. 25-26. The original was translated by Dr Díyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago.

² Legendary king of Persia.

³ About 3,000 BCE.

⁴ Legendary kings of Persia.

desired aim. If the community needs protection, proper support and care of orphans, they should act upon the welfare of the orphans, and so forth. Such undertakings as are beneficial to the poor, the weak and the helpless should be pursued in order that, on that day, through the unity of all and through great meetings, results may be obtained, the glory and blessings of that day may be declared and manifest.

Likewise in this wonderful Dispensation this day [Naw-Rúz] is a blessed day. The friends of God should be confirmed in service and servitude. With one another they must be in the utmost harmony, love and oneness, clasping hands, engaged in the commemoration of the Blessed Beauty and thinking of the great results that may be obtained on such a blessed day.

Today, there is no result or fruit greater than guiding the people, because these helpless creatures, especially the Persians, have remained without a share in the bestowals of God. Undoubtedly, the friends of God, upon such a day, must leave tangible, philanthropic or ideal traces that should reach all mankind and not only pertain to the Bahá'ís.

In all the prophetic Dispensations, philanthropic affairs were confined to their respective peoples only—with the exception of small matters, such as charity, which it was permissible to extend to others. But in this wonderful Dispensation, philanthropic undertakings are for all humanity, without any exception, because this is the manifestation of the mercifulness of God. Therefore, every universal matter—that is, one that belongs to all the world of humanity—is divine; and every matter that is sectarian and private is not universal in character—that is, it is limited. Therefore, my hope is that the friends of God, every one of them, may become as the mercy of God to all mankind.

IX:2, 9 April 1918 [IX:2:17]

Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land

Translated by Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí.¹

The following compilation of some of the blessed utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, after his return to the Holy Land from America, Europe and Egypt, tells some interesting news of that Holy Threshold.

It was on 5 December 1913, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived at his home in Haifa, Syria. His first words to the family and to the friends who flocked to see him were: "After the end of three years, again I return to the Holy Land. Were it not for the assistance and protection of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) I would never have had any hope of returning from such a long journey. I went as far as Los Angeles, which is situated on the western coast of America and directly opposite the land of 'Akká. Should a person drill a hole through the earth in that land he would come out here. Everywhere I went, my thoughts were in 'Akká. I travelled in many countries. I saw deserts and valleys, but no place could equal this. Indeed, the views here are indescribable. There are many places in other countries, which are famous for their grandeur; but here the views are of divine delicacy and of the gentleness of the Creator."

On 6 December, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, accompanied by a great number of pilgrims, went to the holy threshold, the tomb of the Báb, on Mt. Carmel. After praying, he said: "What a beautiful gathering! In all the places I went I did not see such a beautiful, live meeting. Pray, in my behalf, at this blessed spot, for all the friends and ask confirmation for them."

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was leaving, his honour Ibn-Aşdaq,² one of the famous teachers in Persia, fell on his knees at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's feet. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "According to the blessed

¹ Were it not for the assistance of Miss Edna True, the lack of time would have prevented this servant from preparing such an article. Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí.

² Hand of the Cause of God.

command, it is not permitted to fall on the knees and bow down except before the blessed home and the tombs of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. Beware of deviating from the divine commands.”

In the evening, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke in Arabic because of the good gathering of Syrian people with the Persian friends. First, he spoke of the difference between the God-made beauty of the Holy Land and the man-made or artificial development in the occident, saying that the spirituality and beauty of the Holy Land cannot be found in any of the European countries. Then he illustrated the length of his journey by the following story: “A certain Kurd was awakened in the morning to say his prayers. He arose and prayed five times successively. (The Muslim morning prayer consists of facing Mecca, reading a passage from the Qur’án, and bowing and kneeling twice in supplication.) The people said to him, ‘What art thou doing? The morning prayer should be uttered only twice and thou art repeating it five times.’ He replied, ‘God bless you. I do not say my prayers often. When I do say them, why should I say them only twice? The more the better!’ So it was with us. We had not travelled before, [IX:2:18] so when we started, we went on a long journey. Every day, we were in a town or a city. Indeed, the American cities are very large. I spoke of the validity of his holiness, Christ, and of the accepted Messenger (Muḥammad) in most of the Christian churches and in the synagogues of the Jews. When I arrived there, I found that the proofs of the validity of the divine Manifestations had not been given, nor the spiritual questions explained in those churches and public gatherings. Therefore, I arose to explain and give proofs. My addresses comprise more than two volumes.”

On 9 December, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to ‘Akká. The train was filled with the friends, who were chanting poems with infinite joy, until they arrived in the Holy City. After dinner ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to the holy tomb and prayed for all the believers. The inhabitants of ‘Akká, who had been bitter enemies for more than two-score years received him with utmost joy, respect and humbleness. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “I did not like to have such a big gathering on my arrival in ‘Akká. I intended to go quietly to visit the tomb of Bahá'u'lláh and to stay for a few days. Now I have to return sooner to Haifa.” And with the same joy and fragrance, they returned to Haifa.

As to the health and happiness of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, he said many times: “My health and happiness are in this, when I see the friends of God engaged in spreading the divine fragrances, arising to serve the Cause of God, forgetting every thought save that of teaching, casting into the corner of forgetfulness every matter but that of unity and harmony. Consider in every age what confirmation and assistance were received by those souls who devoted their time to serving the Cause and spreading the divine fragrances. On the contrary, those who were absorbed by personal interests or political affairs degraded not only themselves but their associates. Thus, in this day, the friends of God should see that all glory lies in teaching the Cause of God and that every happiness is found in the shadow of the Word of God.”

A talk by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, on 17 December, in ‘Akká: “How very unjust the people are! From the day of the appearance of his holiness, Christ, until now he has not been mentioned in the synagogues of the Jews. Now, the Bahá'ís are proving in the Jewish synagogues that Christ is the Word of God and that Christ is the Spirit of God. In the Christian churches, the Bahá'ís are proving that his holiness, Muḥammad, the Messenger was a prophet of God. Notwithstanding this, the people are not pleased with us. Once, when I was on my way to speak in a church in New York city, a person from India, a man prominent in that city, met us accidentally. He was surprised and said to himself, ‘I will go and see what all this is about.’ He came to the church and saw me standing on the platform, proving the prophethood of his holiness the Messenger of God. Indeed, he became amazed. When we came out, his face was radiant beyond

description. He said, 'In the name of God! What does this mean, that a person proves the prophethood of his holiness, Muḥammad, in the presence of the Christian ministers!' He became much attracted to the Cause. In reality, the church was full of people. Afterwards, the minister, too, showed his appreciation, thankfulness and joy.

"Although we were in the utmost weakness and feebleness during this journey, yet the confirmations of the Blessed Beauty were like unto the surging sea. Wherever we went, just before beginning to speak, I saw the doors opening and the lights of the Sun of Reality confirming, beyond the power of description. Everywhere we went, in churches, synagogues and meetings, I turned first to the Kingdom of Abhá, [IX:2:19] seeking, for a few minutes, the confirmations. Then, knowing that the confirmations of the Blessed Beauty were hovering over that assembly, I would begin to speak."

Talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his home, 20 December:

"Today I came down here. It was a pleasant walk. Praise be to God, that, through the favour and bounty of the Blessed Beauty, I reached the holy threshold. I had no other desire but to reach here. Many nights I thought of this wish. I saw that I did not want any thing but this and for me there can never be a better climate than we have here. I travelled in many countries. I went to the world's most famous climates, such as Dublin, New Hampshire, the summer resort of Washington's government officials and statesmen. It is a place of high altitude with many forest trees; its climate is of the utmost delicacy. Also, we went to Denver, Colorado. Its climate is very good; it is a beautiful city. Again, we were in Switzerland, which is far famed, and in the summer people from all regions go there. Yet there is no climate like that of Haifa. The climate of 'Akká is better than that of Haifa, but these forts and arsenals are connected together and are very damp. If these are removed, its climate will become excellent.

"When we first came here we were put into the barracks. In ten or fifteen days we began to fall like leaves because of sickness. No one remained upon his feet except myself and the late Áqá Riḏá. I used to cook a kettle of soup for them to eat in the daytime and a kettle of rice for the night. I saw Ḥájí 'Alí-Aṣghar with his eyes closed, crying, 'Nih nih Ján, nih nih Ján' (Grandma dear, grandma dear). I passed by him; he opened his eyes and became very much ashamed. His wife, Ḥusayn-Áqá's mother, had fever and was saying, 'What is the matter with me?' On the other side, Ḥusayn Áqá (Zínat Khánúm's father) was crying, 'Oh, my heart is inflamed.' Briefly, all were ill in bed. There was no one to give them water. This was the condition of 'Akká's climate. Our guards were ten in number. I saw nine of them in bed. The wells of 'Akká were as bitter as poison. Now they are sweet. During the twenty-five years that the Blessed Beauty lived in 'Akká there was no illness. Four times there were epidemics of cholera all about 'Akká, even coming very near, but they did not get in. Four persons who left 'Akká fell victims at its outer gates. When the news came that the plague had reached Haifa the Christian gentlemen of 'Akká fled away. They went out to the villages. The plague went there, too, and they returned to 'Akká. The famous Austrian doctor was asked, 'What happened that the plague did not reach 'Akká?' At first, he did not reply; afterwards he said, that the forts and arsenals protected it. Thus no sickness occurred in 'Akká until the departure of Bahá'u'lláh. Then all places except 'Akká became free from the plague. All the Christians in 'Akká said, 'The talisman of 'Akká is shattered.'

"The signs of power and greatness from the appearance of all the holy Manifestations of God—May my soul be a sacrifice to them!—were evident only to the believers. For example, in the days of his holiness, Moses, he was praised by those souls who were believers. In the days of the Spirit (Christ) the cause was evident to eleven persons. Likewise, in the days of his holiness the Messenger, the greatness of the cause was evident to the believers. But in this

Blessed Manifestation everybody wrote incomparable poems during the (days after Bahá'u'lláh's) departure. A certain Christian said: 'Though I am not a believer in Bahá'u'lláh, yet I find his miracles like unto the sun.'

"In Baghdád, all the learned, sages, great and high personages, among them [IX:2:23] Siyyid Dawúdí and 'Abdu'r-Rahmán Afandí Álúsí, were in the utmost humbleness."

On 22 December, a great number of pilgrims from all parts of the world gathered in Haifa. The large home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was too small for them all, so two meetings were held on the same night. To the first gathering 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke as follows: "You are welcome, most welcome! We have divided the friends into two groups, but the place is still too small—O my God, increase their number and bless them!"

"When I was in Europe and America I saw that some people were saying, 'How can this Cause grow as these grey bearded Persians imagine it will? The present world has changed and the time when religion had influence has now passed away.' I knew that they were saying these things to themselves and so at the end of the conversation I explained that when Christ was crucified he had twelve disciples. One of them denied him three times and another sold him for a little money; notwithstanding this, consider now how important was his cause. But at the time of the departure of the Blessed Beauty there were at least a hundred-thousand souls who would sacrifice their lives for him. These same thoughts that you have now were also prevalent in Christ's time and so little did they care for him that it is not even known where he was buried. And three hundred years later, when St. Helen went to the Holy Land, some people, thinking of their own personal benefit, went to her and said, 'We dug the ground here and found the cross on which they crucified his holiness, Christ.' This was the foundation of the tomb of Christ. It is not even known where the tombs of Mary and the disciples are. The Catholics say that the tombs of Paul and Peter are in Rome. Others say that they are in Antioch. They were so unimportant that one of the philosophers of that time who wrote a book against Christ, said, 'This person Christ, never existed and there never was such a man. This is what Paul and Peter have made up. A criminal person was crucified in Jerusalem. These two came and made him the Christ, for their own interests.' Praise be to God! in the days of the Blessed Beauty, his Cause became famous in all regions and all of his signs and friends are known and manifest.

"The Persians used to ask, 'What is going to happen to Persia?' I said: 'The conditions existing now, are the causes of destruction. These dissensions, these parties, one democratic, another constitutional, are destroying Persia day by day. Compare the present conditions of Persia with those ten years ago. These dissensions have destroyed Persia and day by day, it is becoming worse.' They asked, 'What will be the future?' I answered, 'I will give you an example which illustrates the future of Persia. It is sufficient and complete and you should take it as a standard: Mecca is a piece of stony land, a non-cultivated valley, where even grass never grows. It is a dry, intensely hot desert and is not fitted to be inhabited. What would thrive in a rocky, arid land? But because it was the native land of his holiness the Messenger, this rocky and stony land became the centre toward which people in all regions turn their faces and bow in prayer. From this, you should see the future of Persia. This is an illustration. An arid land, because it was the native land of his holiness, the Messenger, became the centre of all the horizons. But Persia is green and verdant; it has beautiful roses; its climate is gentle and its water is sweet. From this you should measure what the [IX:2:24] future of Persia will be. This example is sufficient.'"

"Welcome! How are you! No strength is left in me because I have talked so much, from morning until now. Sometimes it becomes a matter of duty to speak and if man fails to do so

he is held responsible by God. This is one of these days. Although I was not feeling well, I spoke in detail, because it was a matter of duty to speak. Through the spreading and circulating of falsehoods in these regions the hearts of certain people have harboured them. I spoke of what I said in Europe and America and of what was spread in the papers. I explained to them that it was not as they understood it. For instance, they believed that we were the enemies of his holiness Muḥammad, the Messenger, and yet, many addresses had been given in the Christian churches and in the synagogues of the Jews proving the validity of his holiness the Messenger. Some of these misunderstandings were removed. Today, the Muftí (judicial lawyer who rules according to the laws in the Muslim religion) said to me, 'These talks which have appeared in the papers have indeed removed many superstitions.' What an injustice!

"Philosopher Vambéry, who was in Budapest, Austria, had never believed in any of the religions. For years and years he travelled in Constantinople, Afghanistan, Turkistán and Persia and learned the languages of these countries very well. He said to me: 'Because of this, I am amazed and surprised, that I, Vambéry have not the courage to and cannot mention the name of Christ with reverence in the churches of the Jews. But you have proved with such courage and power, in the synagogues of the Jews, that Jesus Christ was the Word and the Spirit of God.'

"In America certain people gave warnings that, 'This person is the enemy of Christ', and upon our arrival there, they printed in the papers that 'The enemy of Christ has arrived'. Even when I was in Washington a bundle of pamphlets was thrown into my carriage as I was leaving a church in which I had just spoken to a very large gathering of people. The pamphlet contained several pages. They wrote that, 'These Bahá'ís are the enemies of Christ and they are destroying his edifice. Is it permissible that we leave Christ, who has given his life for us for this person?' But no one listened to them and all showed their joy and appreciation. ...

"The Jews in America, did not oppose us. They held very good meetings and invited me. I went and spoke to them and they became very happy and manifested infinite joy. In San Francisco, they all expressed their pleasure and happiness. ... After these talks the Rabbi said, 'We used to believe that the orient was extinguished, but now it is evident that the East is East. These talks which we have just heard are like those of the prophets and our glorious ancestors in the past.' They were so touched and affected by the talks given in the synagogues that a letter came, saying that the Rabbi went to a minister and said to him, 'Your church is being remodelled and it will be a long time before you can use it again. Come to our synagogue and pray and supplicate in the way you desire. Saturday is our special day of worship and Sunday will be yours'."

IX:3, 28 April 1918 [IX:3:25]

Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land (continued)¹

The following compilation of some of the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá after his return to the Holy Land from America, Europe and Egypt.

Translated by Dr DÍYÁ' M. Baghdádí.

The death of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl

Today very sad news has been received. He was indeed a very glorious personage. In every way he was unequalled. It is impossible for a person to be perfect in all things. His honour Áqá Mírzá Ḥaydar 'Alí must write his life history.

In reality, he was in the utmost severance, in the utmost firmness and steadfastness in the Cause of God. He was detached from all things. From the day this person became a believer until this day, he was engaged in service in the Cause of God. He was engaged either in giving

¹ Previous section is in *Star of the West*, XI:2, pp. 17-19, 23-24.

the Message or in writing. He was never attached to this world.

How learned he was and studious of books! He was familiar with every nation. With the precepts of all religions he was acquainted. He was my partner and participant in the servitude of the holy threshold.

During the days of sorrow, he was my consolation. I had perfect confidence in him. Every written criticism of the Cause I used to refer to him and he wrote the answer.

How humble and meek he was! No matter how much we insisted that this person take a servant for himself, he refused, that he might serve the friends and give them tea. All friends and strangers, when they went to his home, he used to serve. Although his body was weak, sick, feeble and feverish, he used to stand and make tea. All his thoughts were directed to making his visitors pleased and happy at any rate.

During all this time I did not hear from him the word—"I; I said or I wrote." He used to say, "I submitted to them; I submitted to the friends." Never a word was uttered by him, saying, "I have knowledge", or "I have experience". He was indeed effaced and selfless. He was self-sacrificing at the holy threshold. The odour of existence could not be inhaled from him.¹

A great wisdom necessitated his passing. There is nothing to do but to exercise patience. How many a man equals a thousand men!

All the friends of God should gather together and pray at the holy tomb of the Báb and I will pray here.

Talk upon Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his home, at Haifa, 21 January 1914. [IX:3:26]

The calamity of his honour, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl is indeed great. No matter how much we want to console ourselves, we cannot be consoled. How good for man to be like this, so that the hearts of all the friends are attracted to him in every way. While in Alexandria, every time my heart was depressed, I used to go and meet him and at once my depression vanished. He was very truthful. He never harboured deceit and revenge.

He left wonderful writings in proving the blessed Cause. His thought, reference, pen and tongue all were used in proving the blessed Cause. His custom was to occupy his time from morning to noon in writing. He did not receive anyone. In the afternoon, he received everybody who went to him.

He used to have difficulties with the American and European women because of their numerous questions and persistence. Some of these ladies said, "We went there and knocked at his door. We heard no answer. We persisted in knocking, knowing that he was in. We knocked and we knocked. And finally, he said in English, Abu'l-Faḍl not here." The ladies said, "We were convulsed with laughter. He himself, from the inside, laughed too. And then we departed."

Light flooded his face. How illumined he was! His heart was shining, radiant. The divine wisdom is wonderful. Man becomes amazed. Although such souls themselves are like unto a remedy for others, death is their utmost desire. It is the highest degree of existence and for him was life supreme. No greater bounty is there for man than to depart from the world of existence.

Those who associated with him and loved him have become sad. He was a sincere soul. There was nothing about him but sincerity. Never had he any superfluities about him. He was all sincerity. For example, if he loved a person, he used to love him more in his heart. If he

¹ Refer to *Star of the West*, VIII:6, p. 67.

attributed anything to a man, he used to attribute it more in his heart. And if he was in harmony with a man, he was more in harmony in his heart. He was sincere, not insincere. If he was angry at a man, he could not speak to him. He used to tremble at the sight of him.

Astonishing it is that one of the Páshás of Egypt longed to meet him, but Abu'l-Faḍl refused him. After that, a mediator went to him and asked, "Why don't you meet the Páshá?" He replied, "I don't like him. His desire must be insincere, because if his desires were sincere, God would have created love in my heart for him. At any rate, I am unable to meet him with love and truthfulness. It is better that I do not see him."

He was not entangled with this world. He was not entangled with anything. His heart was not attached to life, nor anything else. He was entirely severed, refined, spiritual and of the Kingdom.

The Shaykh of Islám, of Caucasia, wrote against the Cause. Some of the friends answered him. Shaykh of Islám wrote a second time a criticism. After that, Áqá Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl wrote a full, convincing answer. It surprised the Shaykh.

It was amusing and the joke is here, that the Azalís wanted Abu'l-Faḍl's book very much. Finally, one of the friends asked, "Well, you are Bábís; what is in this book that you want so much?" They replied, "For its good arguments in behalf of his highness, the Supreme (the Báb). And for these arguments, we want the book."

Talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his home, Haifa, 22 January 1914. [IX:3:27]

Miscellaneous topics

Meetings are held, in the home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, twice a week. One evening, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about the beauty and spirituality of Mt. Carmel. He spoke, also, of Elijah and of his arising to vivify the religion of Moses. Elijah cast out the statue of Baal (an idol) and reformed the Jews from harmful customs. When he had lead them to perfect spirituality and might, so that he had confidence in them he left them, instantly left them; because he saw that his work was finished. Man must be like this. At the time of difficulties and when his services are needed, he must answer the call of the hour and then, when his work is accomplished, he must hold aloof from leadership and power. This is the meaning of "the man of God" or "God's hero" and "service to God". After reading and chanting communes, the name of a Zoroastrian, who visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London and who became very attracted, was mentioned. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "As long as the love of God exists in a heart, there is progress, day by day, and vice-versa."

On 9 February 1914, a young English traveller went to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa. He was interested in the economic problem and asked the following question: "When the time comes for the working people to become the partners of their employers, will they have their own representatives to consult with the company and will those who invest more capital receive more shares?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "Certainly, when the working people become partners with the company, they will select their own representatives for consultation and those who have more capital will earn more money."

In the evening, 'Abdu'l-Bahá called one of the pilgrims, known as Mírzá Maḥmúd Furúghí, to him. (The translator knows this man personally. He is indeed one of God's heroes. One of his great works was this: When the first storm of tests blew in 'Akká and the fire of violation appeared, the eyes of most of the believers were closed to the truth; but his honour Mírzá Maḥmúd Furúghí sounded the trumpet of firmness and their eyes became opened.) 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to Mírzá Maḥmúd Furúghí about the victory of the divine sovereignty over the material, saying that spiritual matters are promulgated by the inward and ideal power and

not by outward conditions and circumstances.

At that moment, a group of Jewish Bahá'ís, from Hamadán, Persia, came and 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered all of their questions. The following is one of the answers: "The utterance of the Blessed Beauty that the descendants of Israel shall become dear, was made at a time when the people of Israel were still in the utmost degradation and before they had returned. He uttered these things in order that the glance of providence would surround them, so that they might progress, deliver themselves from humiliation and return to this Holy Land. That is why, day by day, they became dear and returned to the Holy Land. These things are all through the power of the blessed Word. They had been degraded for 1,600 years, but, after this blessed word was uttered, they became dear and progressed, although they had no soldiers, army nor government and although the other governments remained the same as before. But this blessed utterance is in behalf of the believers among the Jews, that is, those who became believers. When the believers of the Jews progressed and became dear, the non-believers progressed with them, like those, who go and eat at a feast, to which they are not invited. However, this progression is only as long as they are agreeable and friendly.

Should they exercise enmity, they will [IX:3:28] not progress. Nay rather, they will destroy their own homes."

On 11 February, Hájí Músá, a Jewish Bahá'í, arrived from Ádhirbayján, Persia. He went with the pilgrims to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who talked to them as follows: "Readiness is necessary in order to be a recipient of divine bounty. Souls who are prepared are like candles, coming in contact with fire. They become illumined. They are swayed by the wafting of a breeze. They become green and verdant from a drop of the sprinkling of the cloud of favour. They find merciful susceptibilities by hearing a word. But no fruits nor results can be obtained from the souls who are not ready. Thus the prepared souls, on hearing the divine call, respond, 'Here we are!' They turn to the Kingdom of Abhá, investigate the realities of divine questions and arise to spread the fragrances of God. How many souls in the world have longed all of their lives to live in the days of one of the near servants of God and to reach the favour of being in the presence of one of the accepted servants in the threshold of the Truth, and yet it was impossible for them! Praise be to God, you have responded with 'Aye!' to the call of God, in the days of the Blessed Beauty. You are in the age of light and in the century of mysteries. God willing, you may be confirmed in services to the holy threshold and firm in the Covenant and Testament of God."

On 12 February some of the friends went to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá and heard him say the following: "We must execute the divine ordinances. The Blessed Beauty says, 'If you have a word or a truth, which others are deprived of, present it with utmost compassion. If it is accepted, the aim is attained. If otherwise, you should not interfere. Leave him to himself, while advancing to God, the Mighty, the Self-subsisting.' The duty of the friends, is this: To be kind to all nationalities and parties; to be all love; to be well-wishers and to associate with everyone, in the utmost unity. ... They must always read the holy books, so that they may be familiar with their contents. ... Do not write anything for the *Star of the West* that might become the cause of repelling the souls. Nay, rather, write things that may become the cause of joy, advancement and hopefulness to the souls."

In the afternoon, some of the German and British leaders went to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá and he talked to them about the Holy Land and Mount Carmel. He said "The climate of Mount Carmel is peerless. Its sun is always shining, its moon, brilliant, its stars are gleaming and its lights are radiant. This Holy Land is the high land, wherein the prophets of God became manifest. Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Isaiah and the rest, were in the Holy Land.

You must know the value of this land and love it. If a person travels in all of this Holy Land he will find all kinds of trees, those that grow in tropical as well as those of the temperate climates, such as pomegranate, dates, cypresses, walnut, etc. You must love this Holy Land very much. The Sun of Reality shone forth upon it and it is the dawning-point of the Manifestations of the Light of Divinity.” Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá praised the climate and the inhabitants of Stuttgart, Germany, and spoke about the superstitions and imitations of the leaders of religion. He said: “They are promulgating matters which are not in accord with the divine books and which are contrary to sound minds. His holiness Christ says, ‘Sheath thou the sword’, but they make the Krupp cannons. If you compare the deeds of the present nations with the behests of the holy books and with the deeds of the divine Manifestations, you will find that there is no relation whatever between them.”

In the evening, the general meeting [IX:3:29] for the friends and pilgrims was held in the blessed home. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered the question of one, who stood at his service, saying: “This cycle is the cycle of favour and not of justice. Therefore, those whose deeds are clean and pure, even though they are not believers, will not be deprived of the divine mercy; but perfection is in faith and deeds. Undoubtedly, a person, who is not a believer, but whose deeds and morals are good, is far better than one who claims his belief in words but, who, in actions, is a follower of Satan. The Blessed Beauty says, ‘My humiliation is not in my imprisonment, which, by my life, is an exaltation to me; nay rather, it is in the deeds of my friends, who attribute themselves to us and commit that which causes my heart and pen to weep!’”

In the afternoon of 13 February, the American pilgrims held a special memorial meeting, for the departure of Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl at the holy threshold of the Báb, on Mount Carmel. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá attended the meeting and spent that night at the home of ‘Abbás Qulí, near the blessed tomb. In the morning of 14 February, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to the hospice (the home of the pilgrims) close to the tomb of the Báb and sat in the parlour, facing the tomb of Bahá’u’lláh. He said: “The view from this hospice is very beautiful, especially because it faces the tomb of the Blessed Beauty and ‘Akká. In the future it will all be built up between ‘Akká and Haifa. ‘Akká and Haifa will be joined together and will take the first place in the world. Now, as I glance into the future, I see the greatest port in the world here. This semi-circular bay will be a large harbour for ships, so that the entering boats may be protected from the waves and winds of the storm. This harbour will be filled with ships of the nations. All of these regions will be decorated by buildings and lofty palaces. Many gardens and flower beds will be made. There will be electric lights and from here to ‘Akká will be flooded with them. It will be a wonderful sight, especially at night, for those who come from the sea or who look from the summit of the mountains. From all of these regions, the cry of ‘Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!’ (O Thou Glorious of the Most Glorious!) shall rise. All the souls will come in a state of supplication, imploring and chanting the communes. In every town, the melodies from the Mashriq’l-Adhkár on this Mount Carmel, will be most pleasing to the ears.

“It is wonderful! Consider where this Cause was at first and where it is now! And where is Shíráz, Ṭihrán, Baghdád, Roumelia,¹ Constantinople and ‘Akká! These events took place only for the fulfilment of the prophecies of the prophets. God’s ways are wonderful. For 2,000 years, he has made the Cause travel here and there, until it reached the spot in which it would fulfil all the prophecies. God will, unquestionably, declare openly the Prince of Peace, of whom he spoke, through the prophets, and he will not erase a single letter.”

¹ Rúmilyá (Turkish (Rumeli) for “Land of the Romans”), was a historical term describing (after 1453) the area now referred to as the Balkans (an area primarily populated by Christians) when it was administered by the Ottoman Empire.

In the morning of 15 February, a large number of American ladies, who were going to Jerusalem, visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Afterwards, the Governor of Damascus, the Judge of Haifa and a number of statesmen went to see him, in his home. He spoke to them in detail about historical matters, scientific facts, the life histories of some of the doctors and sages of the past and of the requirements for this great century, the oneness of the world of humanity and universal peace.

In the afternoon, the president of Beirut College (Syrian Protestant College), the head of the hospital, and a large number of students, came to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá and he spoke as follows:

"The schools should be free from all religious and racial prejudices, for these often prevent good results from being [IX:3:30] obtained. All schools and colleges should have these three foundations:

First—They should be sincere in the service of training the souls. They should discover the mysteries of nature and extend the circle of art, commerce, etc., so that ignorance and the lack of knowledge will pass away and the lights of science and knowledge shine forth from the horizon of the soul and heart. In all schools and universities, a general rule for training should be made.

Second—Training in morality is necessary, so that the pupils' good conduct may remain unchanged and so that they may progress in a most befitting manner, become possessed of lofty ideas, lovers of the world of humanity and so that they will hold fast to the spiritual perfections and to that which does not displease God.

Third—Service to the world of humanity should be obligatory. Every student should know, with perfect certainty, that he is the brother of the people of all religions and nations and that he should be without religious, racial, national, patriotic or political bias, so that he may find the thoughts of universal peace and the love of humankind firmly established in his heart. He should know himself as a servant of human society of all the countries in the world. He should see God as the heavenly father and all the servants, as his children, counting all of the nations, parties and sects as one family. The mothers in the homes, the teachers in the schools, the professors in the universities, and the leaders in the lofty gatherings, must cause these thoughts to be penetrative and effective, as the spirit, circulating in the veins and nerves of the children and pupils, so that the world of humanity may be delivered from the calamities of fanaticism, war, battle, hate and obstinacy, and so that the nether world may become the paradise of heaven."

In the evening, a group of Persian pilgrims came from Merv,¹ Russia, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the following advices: "Never let the friends be separated from other people and nations. They must strive for unity and harmony, through good deeds and morals. They must be kind to all, tolerant with all and good in conduct. Day by day, may they become nearer to the threshold of the Blessed Beauty. May they engage in elevating the Word of God and arise in spreading the Cause of God. Day by day, may they become more attracted and more holy. Night and day, I supplicate and beseech the threshold of the Blessed Beauty, seeking confirmations and assistance for the friends of God. I have the greatest attachment for the friends of the Blessed Beauty and I never forget them."

On the morning of 16 February, the friends from Merv, Russia, left for their country and a party of nine, men and women, from Yazd, Nayríz (Persia) and Bombay (India), arrived in the Holy Land. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was exceedingly glad to see them and showered his blessings upon them, saying: "In the beginning of the Cause, the friends in Nayríz and Serostan² were surging

¹ Now named Mary. It is about 290 km south-east of 'Ishqábád in Turkmenistan.

² Sarvistán.

in activity. The friends there are either of the old believers or of the children of the martyrs. They have indeed been of great service in the path of God. They were self-sacrificing and fell victims to severe tests, but all remained firm and steadfast. Now, also, they are busy, teaching the Cause of God. Today, confirmation is with those souls who arise to teach. The gardener is pleased with the flower that is diffusing its fragrance. The nostrils are perfumed by its sweet smell. The souls, who are engaged in teaching the Cause, resemble the full-blown flowers. Sweet fragrances are being diffused from the rose gardens of their hearts.”

On 17 February, some of the believers, who had arrived the night before, [IX:3:31] from Khurásán (Persia), came to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and all bowed and fell at his feet. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá prevented them and said: “No, it is unlawful. It is unlawful, because, according to the blessed command, kneeling, kissing of the hands and bowing are prohibited. They are not accepted in the Cause of God. They belong to the holy tombs of Bahá’u’lláh, and the Báb and to the house of God.” Ustád Muḥammad Riḍá of ‘Ishqábád, asked if any of the great powers would become believers. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “All the people of the world will become believers. Should you compare the beginning of the Cause with it today, you would see what a quick influence the Word of God has and how the Cause of God has encompassed the horizons. At the time we left Ṭihrán (Persia) for Baghdád, there was not a single believer in all the way. In all the cities there were none. In Baghdád, there were two or three persons, in a very deplorable condition. All of the people used to say, ‘Now that the Blessed Beauty is gone, this Cause will be erased.’ The elevation of the Word of God, which you see at present, is from the potency of the Cause of God. Is it possible to compare the present condition with that previous one? How many of the believers did they kill, tie up, and confiscate and rob their homes! Notwithstanding this, the Cause has reached its present degree because it is confirmed. The hosts of the Supreme Concourse assist it and the powers of the Kingdom of Abhá confirm it. Unquestionably, all will come under the shadow of the Cause of God. Right there, in Ishqábád, had they ever before heard the name of the Cause? Now, praise be to God! the banner of the Cause of God is raised high. All the powers and nations are convinced that the aim of this community (the Bahá’ís) is the harmony and unity of the world. They never join in corruption. They want to become the cause of the life of the world and the means of safety; awakening the souls and the cause of the spirituality of the creatures; life-givers and not life-takers. In the beginning of the Cause, the Bábís (Azalís) brought affairs to such a state that safety was utterly lost and they put the lives and property of all at stake. What a dilemma it was! What implications, vice and immorality took place! All of the people became assured that the Bábís (Azalís) were the enemies of the lives, property and the honour of humanity and that they were blood-thirsty, immoral and evil-doers. In Ṭihrán, during the incident of the Sháh (Násiri’-d-Dín Sháh was shot by a boy), I remember hearing an ákhúnd (Muslim priest) crying, ‘O people! If you want to worship God and the prophet, if you want to protect your lives, property and honour, kill these Bábís. They are the enemies of your possessions and of your honour. They are against the laws and religion.’ All of these events took place, because Mírzá Yahyá (Azal), Siyyid Muḥammad, Mullá Ja’far Naráqí and such men, held disreputable gatherings every night and day. They were engaged in immorality and vice. This is why, in the history of the people, those calumnies were attributed to the origin of the Cause. They wrote that the Bábís allowed each woman to have nine husbands. Therefore the Blessed Beauty arose, with a divine power and might. He removed all of those implications, unfurled the banner of holiness, pitched the tent of universal peace and called the people to faithfulness, good morals and peace. He said, ‘If you are killed in God’s service, it is better than for you to kill. Should you be in need of the very essentials of life, you must not raise your hand against anyone, not even a Jew. (In those days, the Jews were under great persecutions.) Be ye kind to all people, loyal to all the governments and deal fairly with all humanity. Be faithful, truthful, merci- [IX:3:34] ful, compassionate and serve the world of humanity.

Consider the oneness of the world of humanity, because ye are all of one tree and the fruits of one branch.' Then it became evident to the governments and nations of the world that the Bahá'ís are the essence of sanctity, lovers of peace and of safety, kind to all sects, faithful, truthful, harmless, patient, loyal and fruitful. Should poison be given to them (the Bahá'ís) they will return honey. Should they be wounded, they will give in return a healing salve. If they hear curses and execrations, they send their prayers. In all of their aims, they only purpose the good of the creatures. They seek only the good pleasure of the Truth. They have no hope other than service and universal peace. Their happiness is only in the oneness of the world of humanity."

Afterwards, 'Abdu'l-Bahá inquired about the health of the pilgrims, who came from Yazd, Persia, and gave the following utterances: "The friends of Yazd suffered great calamities. They experienced severe tests, the greatest tests possible. Notwithstanding the firmness and steadfastness of these friends, the people of violation and of instability, thought that they could promulgate doubt among these upright people. They believed that they could bring about corruption in the Cause, destroy the oneness and unity of the friends and bring humiliation to the Covenant of God, claiming, 'That the Blessed Beauty has favoured us also.' They did not see that those favours were only in the relation of the souls to the Cause of God and that, when that relationship became severed and when the command was disobeyed, these favours vanished. Of what value, in itself, is the black stone (in Mecca)? But because it was given a [IX:3:35] relation to the Cause of God his holiness Muḥammad, himself, bowed down to it. Why? Because it was related to God. It is likewise with the house of God. But these relationships are figurative and metaphoric. God is holy above these relationships. These are all bounties and not from merit. What relationship remains when they have turned from the good-pleasure of the Blessed Beauty and when they strive to wreck the edifice of God? Undoubtedly, every relationship becomes severed. However, I consider myself as a mosquito; nay, even weaker than that; but the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá, are unending. The bounties of the Blessed Beauty encompass us on all sides. What art thou to do? The Blessed Beauty says, 'We see you from my Abhá (the Most Glorious) horizon. We shall assist those who arise to support my Cause with a host from the Supreme Concourse and a contingent from the near angels.' This is the field. Go forth and cry out! Raise the call! No one has confined nor prevented you. What will spending the nights and days in eating, sleeping, murmuring and finding fault result in, but loss? I do not prevent anyone from serving in the Cause of God. Nay rather, I always encourage and urge all to serve. I went myself and heralded the coming of the Kingdom. You, too, might have gone out, had you desired."

On 18 February, the pilgrims gathered to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at his home in Haifa. In that meeting, news from Baku, Russia, was read, saying that Áqá Músá had held a wonderful memorial feast in the name of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and that the friends had stopped their work, for three days and nights, because of their sorrow over his departure. In this meeting, the Persian consul gave a detailed address, telling of the unity and the harmony of the Bahá'ís and of how they differ from the rest of the Persian communities, in that they are the cause of honour to the government and to the nation of Persia. On that day, explicit commands were revealed to the American and English friends teaching in India, which absolutely forbade them to interfere in political affairs or to speak a word in politics. They were commanded to occupy their time in spreading the spiritual fragrances and in elevating the Cause of the affectionate Lord.

It was mentioned in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that Mr Andrew Carnegie of America had given \$2,000,000 for bringing about unity among the Christian sects. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "His aim is good and a service to the world of humanity. O how I wish that all of the leaders of the

people would spend their energy for unity and peace among all nations and sects!" At that moment, letters and newspapers arrived from the occident and Persia, bearing the glad-tidings of the harmony and purpose of the believers in teaching the Cause. 'Abdu'l-Bahá became exceedingly happy and prayed for confirmation from the Kingdom of Abhá and for the protection of the believers. He said: "They must step with steadfast feet into this field and must think of naught else save the unity of the people and the elevation of the Word of God."

On the next day, 19 February, 'Abdu'l-Bahá told the friends of the days of his childhood. He said: "In Tīhrán I spoke with a scholarly gentleman and gave him the divine Message. I talked to him about severance from all else save God, and I told him that the purpose of this life is not to attain high position, wealth and physical happiness; nor are eating, sleeping and enjoying the fellowship of the physical body, the only things to be desired. The purpose and end of the world of creation is spiritual life, knowledge of God, love of God, fear of disobedience to God and the perfections of the world of humanity. Should man characterize himself with [IX:3:36] these lofty qualities and virtues, the physical conditions will, undoubtedly, not seem interesting to him and he will detach himself from them. His heart will become illumined with the light of God; he will hear the call of the unseen joy and will become the centre of the names and attributes of God. I conversed with him a great deal on these subjects and he became a very good believer."

"On another occasion, in the city of Baghdád, I talked with a learned man, Mullá Ḥasan, some of whose relatives were believers. No matter how hard they tried to give him the Message, he would not accept it. Once, they brought him to my house when I was just getting up from my sleep and combing my hair. They said, 'We have brought so-and-so here and we beg you to come and speak with him; perhaps, he will become a believer.' I said, 'Very well,' and then I turned to the Blessed Beauty and prayed: 'O Blessed Beauty, confirm me!' Afterwards, I talked to him, and in the same hour he became a believer. He became exceedingly good and was so enkindled that, although he was of high rank, he used to go into the kitchen and cook things with his own hand to entertain the friends."

That day news came of the spreading of the Cause and of the entrance into the Kingdom of some of the ministers in America. It made him very happy and he sent a number of tablets to America, saying: "My happiness is in these glad-tidings and victories. Praise be to God! the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá are assisting. Although weary, weak and helpless, we are being assisted and supported by the bounties and confirmations of the Blessed Beauty. Who and what are we? These are the rays from the Sun of the Beauty of Abhá and the light of the Supreme Horizon. How beautifully the poet says, 'The mosquito, to which thou givest power to fly, becomes a falcon.' Under the shadow of the Blessed Beauty, the atom becomes the sun; the ant becomes a Solomon; the unpopular become popular, and the degraded find eternal glory."

In the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was very tired from speaking and writing, and so he went to his private place in his garden to rest a little. On the way, he jokingly told a story of a man whose wife had caused him such trouble and had kept him so busy that, when he was told to divorce her so as to get relief, he answered, "She does not give me a chance to find time to give her a divorce."

In the morning of 20 February 'Abdu'l-Bahá took a stroll in his garden and remarked on the beautiful weather, on the site and on the spirituality of Haifa and of Mount Carmel. Then, looking at the violets, carnations and other flowers, he said: "As long as a thing is rare and scarce, it seems more attractive and has greater value. In Baghdád there were few violets in our home and they were indescribably dear and attractive to our sight. But here none look at

these violets and they are lost among so many flowers. As the quantity of a thing increases, its value decreases. And so it is in the beginning of the days of the Holy Manifestations; because the souls are so few, they are counted as the essences of existence in the estimation of God. They are always mentioned and considered in the holy threshold and the sacred court and they attain to everlasting life and eternal bounty because they are detached from all conditions and have lost themselves entirely in the good pleasure of God." After a while, 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted the following verse: "We are from thee and we wish for naught else save thee. Give thou the sweets to those who have not tasted the ecstasy of love."

In the afternoon, some of the people took their children to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He received them with utmost kindness and generosity and even took off his own embroidered Persian shawl and with his blessed hands put it on the head of a little girl. In the evening he talked [IX:3:37] about the education of girls, saying: "In the past, they used to prevent girls from learning to read and write. In fact, these things were considered so sinful that should a woman know how to read or write she would not be desirable for marriage. But afterwards, through the influence of the teachings of the Blessed Beauty, the friends of God devoted most of their time to training their children. Now, they have established schools in Persia for teaching girls."

On the morning of 21 February, a number of Bahá'ís, from Bushrúyih and Khurásán, Persia, and from Ishqábád, Russia, arrived in Haifa. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke, in detail, about the steadfastness, sincerity and love of the believers, in those towns and countries. That afternoon a meeting and banquet were prepared, for all of the friends, at the tomb of the Báb. The men occupied one side of the holy threshold, the women the other. At the close of the meeting, 'Abdu'l-Bahá told the friends to enter, one by one, inside the holy threshold and, last of all, he came and chanted with his wonderful, melodious voice, the *Tablet of Visitation*. He and the friends supplicated and prayed for all of God's children and besought confirmations and heavenly bounty for them. When the prayers were over, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave permission for a photograph to be taken of himself sitting in front of the friends [See *Star of the West*, V:1, p. 2.], who were standing in a group. But, after consenting to this, he refused to remain seated, saying, "I prefer to stand as one of the friends and as one of the beloved of the Blessed Beauty." After the picture was taken, all were served with tea, fruit and sweetmeats.

On 22 February, a group of tourists from England visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He spoke to them about the teachings and of the history of the Cause and they left with their hearts exceedingly touched and attracted. Afterwards, while he was answering some important letters from the occident, a professor from Beirut College came to see him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to him about the importance of preventing all prejudices and superstitions and of bringing about unity and harmony among the different religions and sects. He said: "Everyone must do away with false prejudices and must even go to the other churches and mosques, for, in all of these worshipping places, the name of God is mentioned. Since all gather to worship God, what difference does it make? None of these worship Satan. The Muslims must go to the churches of the Christians and of the Jews and vice-versa, the others must go to the Muslim mosques. They hold aloof from one another merely because of unfounded prejudices and dogmas. In America, I went to the Jewish synagogues, which are similar to the Christian churches, and I saw them worshipping God everywhere. In most of these places I spoke to them about the original foundations of the divine religions and I explained to them the proofs of the validity of the divine prophets and of the holy Manifestations. I encouraged them to do away with blind imitations. All of the leaders must, likewise, go to the churches of one another and speak of the foundation and of the fundamental principles of the divine religions. In the utmost unity and harmony, they must worship God, in the worshipping places of one another and they

must abandon these false fanaticisms. Man must be possessed of sincerity and love and must be in a state of peace and safety. When you mention God to me, I must be pleased with you. The mention of God is good, no matter by what tongue.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá afterwards spoke of the prejudices and superstitions of the Jewish leaders and remarked in detail about the bitter persecutions inflicted by another Christian sect upon [IX:3:38] the Presbyterians in Paris, simply because of false prejudices.

(It is a fact that, in the oriental Christian Schools, all Muslims and followers of other religions, are compelled to attend the Christian chapels and churches. But the Christians do not go to the mosques or synagogues. In 1908, when the Turkish Empire was freed from the chains of absolute monarchy and the constitution was established by the Young Turks and the famous Society of Union and Progress, all of the students, who were not Christians, refused to attend any church by force. The college faculty, who were American Presbyterian missionaries, without making any exceptions, gave the students a choice of attending the church or of being expelled. The translator at that time, was just finishing his medical training in this university and this controversy was one of the causes for his leaving the orient and completing his studies in a Chicago university.)

(To be continued.)

IX:2, 9 April 1918 [IX:2:22]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, extract of a tablet

O friends, know that the believers of God must be the cause of union and love among all mankind, and until they attain to perfect harmony and agreement they will not become the remedy for the healing of this sick world. From the very beginning of the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* in *Ishqábád*, Russia, day by day, everything has been in perfect harmony, until the believers there accomplished their aim, and it was builded easily, for it was builded by love. Now I hope that in America it will be the same as in Russia, and the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* there be erected by the power of the union and love existing among the believers.

Extract from message to the American believers, revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘Akká, Syria, January 1909; translated by his daughter, Munavvar *Khánum*.

IX:3, 28 April 1918 [IX:3:32]

“And some of His signs”

Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the “signs” of Bahá’u’lláh.

HE IS GOD!

Praise be unto the One who created the world and made every existing thing wonderful!

He gave the sincere praise-worthy stations and made the invisible visible, but all others are groping in their deep sleep.

He laid the foundation in the erection of the lofty palace and the glorious light; created the new creatures in a manifest resurrection!—and still the people are heedless in their slumber.

He blew the horn; the (first) trumpet sounded; the drum was beaten; those in the world of existence were stunned!—and still the dead are dormant in the graves of their bodies.

Then the second trumpet sounded; it brought the breath of life to some of the dead; even the nursing mothers forgot their infants!—and still the people in their unconsciousness do not comprehend.

The day of judgement has come; the hour has struck; the path is extended; the balance (scale of justice) is set up; all the contingent beings are gathered (for judgement)!—and still the people are afflicted with blindness!

The light has shone forth; the Mount of Tur¹ became illumined; the soft breeze of the rose-gardens of the forgiving Lord blew gently; the fragrances of the Spirit were diffused; the dead were resurrected from the graves!—and still the heedless are asleep in their tombs.

The fires are blazing; heaven is nigh; the meadows are blooming; paradise [IX:3:33] has become a wonder!—and still the ignorant are wading in the stagnant pools of their imaginations.

The veil is removed; the curtain is lifted; the clouds are torn asunder; the Lord of Lords is manifest!—and still the criminally negligent are at loss.

He (Bahá'u'lláh) sounded forth the second trumpet and created for you the great Resurrection Day and gathered the holy souls in the Supreme Kingdom. Verily, therein are signs for the possessors of insight.

And some of his signs are the unfoldments of prophecies and glad tidings; the appearance of proofs and references; the expectations of the pure and devout—and they are of those who attain.

And some of his signs are his lights that are shining from the horizon of oneness; his rays that are beaming from the glorious dawning-point, and the declaration of the great glad tidings by his fore-runner (the Báb). Verily, therein is a clear evidence for those who reason.

And some of his signs are his manifestations and his appearance; his firmness and existence among the witnessing people in all the cities and among the tribes who attacked him from all sides like unto wolves.

And some of his signs are his steadfastness before the great nations and powerful governments, even before a host of enemies who shed blood and strive to wreck the divine edifice in every time and place. Verily, therein is a thought for those who reflect upon the signs of God.

And some of his signs are the wonders of his explanations; the eloquence of his utterances; the rapidity of revealing his words, verses, addresses, communes, interpretations of the symbols and illustrations of the parables. By thy life, the Cause is evident and clear to those who see with the eyes of justice!

And some of his signs are the rising of the sun of his knowledge; the ascending of the moon of his arts and the firmness of the perfections of his conditions. This is acknowledged by the well-informed and the learned of the nations.

And some of his signs are the preservation of his beauty, the protection of his human temple, the shining of his lights despite the attacks of his enemies with lances, swords and darting arrows from thousands of people. Verily, therein is an admonition to those who are just.

And some of his signs are his patience, calamities, ordeals, and sufferings under chains and fetters, while he was calling: “Come unto me, come unto me, O people of piety! Come unto me, come unto me, O party of goodness! Come unto me, come unto me, O rising points of light! “Verily, the door of mysteries is open—and still the wicked are wading in their mire.

And some of his signs are the revealing of his Book: his explicit messages as warnings to the kings; exhortations to the one who encircled the earth with a penetrating power and dominating force, whose great throne was destroyed [IX:3:34] within a few days (this refers to Napoleon III). This matter is well-known and obvious to the public.

And some of his signs are the sublimity of his greatness; the supremacy of his station; the

¹ An allusion to Mt. Sinai, meaning the Manifestation of God.

immensity of his glory and the shining of his beauty in the horizon of the prison ('Akká). Then the heads bowed, the voices were silenced and the faces were amazed at him. This is a proof that was not heard of in past centuries.

And some of his signs are the performing of miracles, the appearance of continuous and uninterrupted supernatural powers, like the bounty of his cloud and the acknowledgement by the heedless of the penetration of his light. By his life! the Cause is affirmed and clear to all who have come from all parties to the presence of the Living, the Self-subsisting.

And some of his signs are the shining of the sun of his century, the rising of the moon of his generation in the heaven of the ages—the supreme summit of the centuries, with exigencies, knowledge and arts that astonished the horizons, amazed the minds and became known and famous.

Verily, this is a complete matter!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Ḍiyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago, 14 February 1918.

IX:3, 28 April 1918 [IX:3:38]

The sterling faithfulness of Isfandíyár

Story told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá: From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 October 1913.

My grandfather had many coloured maids and servants. When the Blessed Perfection became the head of the family he liberated all of them, and gave them permission to leave or stay, but if they desired to remain it would, of course, be in a different manner. However, all of them, revelling in their new-found freedom preferred to leave, except Isfandíyár, who remained in the household and continued to serve us with proverbial faithfulness and chastity. Then when Bahá'u'lláh became known as a Bábí, and he was teaching many people, the populace rose against him, and with the tacit consent of the government, our house was pillaged and ransacked. My father was put into prison and we were persecuted on all sides. For days the rabble in their fanatical fury and rage threw stones into our house, broke the windows and damaged everything. At that time I was probably six or seven years old. Everybody had left us, and our family then consisted of my mother, my sister (the Greatest Holy Leaf) and Áqá Músá. Fearing that the stones thrown into the house might hit one of us, my mother set out and rented a small house in an entirely different quarter of the city, and for fear of recognition she carried us safely to our new, humble quarters by night.

On the other hand, the enemies of my father, who had poisoned the mind of the Sháh by saying that he harboured secret plans against the throne, were convinced that Isfandíyár was the guardian of all the secret plans of Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore, they imagined that if once they laid their hands on Isfandíyár they would force out of him everything, and then be able to substantiate their vague accusations with these solid facts. Hence they commissioned one hundred and fifty policemen to find him and bring him before them. Isfandíyár had a chum with whom he passed most of his time. At first they tried to get hold of his chum, thus he might divulge the hiding-place of Isfandíyár, but they failed in their purpose.

One midnight we were roused out of our sleep by a loud knocking at the door. It was opened, and lo, and behold, it was Isfandíyár. My mother said to him with anxiety: "How is it that thou art yet in the city? Dost thou not know that there are one hundred and fifty policemen after thee? Fly as quickly as thou canst. If they get hold of thee, thy life will be in danger." But he smiled and answered: "No, I will not leave [IX:3:39] Ṭihrán, even if an hundred or a thousand policemen are after me. I am not afraid. I have many debts in the bazaar. I owe money to many shopkeepers, and before I leave this city I must pay off all the debts. I do not want the people to say afterward that the Negro servant of Bahá'u'lláh escaped

without paying his debts.” Then he left us, and for one month and a half he walked in broad daylight in the streets and bazaars, and finally succeeded in clearing off all his financial obligations. All this time the policemen were after him, but could not catch him. Then, one night he appeared again, and said: “I am now free. I have actually paid all my debts and will leave the city with a clear conscience.” He went to Mázindarán, and the governor; who was not a Bahá’í, engaged him in his service, made him the chief of his equerry and protected him from the pursuit of his enemies. Years lapsed, and the governor, being a religious man, desired to make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Karbilá. Naturally, he took with him Isfandíyár, who by this time had grown so much in his favour that he could not bear to be separated from him. When they reached the city of Baghdád, Isfandíyár was overjoyed to stand again in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, because he loved him most intensely. He requested Bahá’u’lláh to keep him, saying that he would rather leave the governor and serve his old master. But Bahá’u’lláh said to him: “You must act in this matter in accord with the wish of the governor. You owe him a debt of deep gratitude, because at a time when your life was in danger, he gave you a position and stopped the persecution of your enemies. Now, if he is willing to have you remain with us, we will accept you; otherwise you must continue to serve him with the same zeal and sincerity that you have served us in the past.”

Isfandíyár went to the governor and explained his case. He answered: “It is impossible. I cannot find in this wide world another man as honest and faithful as thyself. Thou must continue to stay with me. I have grown to love thee and will do everything to add to thy comfort and happiness.” Of course Isfandíyár was heartbroken over this decision, but he had to abide by the decision of the Blessed Perfection. He in turn consoled him with his blessings showered upon him. Isfandíyár returned to Mázindarán with the governor and stayed with him until his last day.

Such was the sterling faithfulness of Isfandíyár that whenever I think of him, my eyes grow dim with tears. He was a king among men, a glorious star in the heaven of humanity. Although his face was black, his heart was white as the snow. He was peerless and had no equal. I cannot sufficiently praise him. I love him. He was a glory and a jewel on the crown of the coloured race, for his life was a noble record of proud achievement, and the whole world may learn a lesson from it.

IX:3, 28 April 1918 [IX:3:39]

“My home is the home of laughter and exultation”

From Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 26 March 1914

While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was dictating tablets this morning, an Arab was announced and after a few minutes another one came in. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá instantly saw that these grown-up children of nature were not friendly with each other and as a subtle master of human nature, he started immediately to establish conciliation between them. Each of them sat there inwardly growling at his enemy. At first ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to them in such a manner as to make them laugh. They did not want to laugh, neither did they want to look at each other, but they could not help doing both. Then with his deep insight into their hearts he said:

“Are not men really children? The [IX:3:40] life of men is but a few days; then death overtakes them. Is it not foolish to attach one’s heart to the worldly love and hate? Why should we let envy and hatred separate us? The strange part of it is that they have no outward existence. Happiness is the king of our hearts. Let us not part from it. If the candle of happiness is ignited in the chamber of our heart, all the foreboding gloom of evil suggestions will be dispelled. My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whosoever enters through the portals of this home, must go out with gladsome heart. This is the home of light; whosoever enters here must become illumined. This is the home of knowledge: the one who enters it

must receive knowledge. This is the home of love: those who come in must learn the lessons of love; thus may they know how to love each other. Whenever I see people exercise love and good-fellowship among themselves, my heart is exceedingly rejoiced. ... God willing, you will always love one another. Praise be to God, that you are brothers in faith. You are the citizens of one country, the inhabitants of one town. The members of your families have known one another for years. Why then this feud? Why this ill-feeling? Why this mutual hatred?"

Then he related to them story after story, making them now laugh and now become serious. Finally when he observed the time had come, he got up from his seat and asked them to kiss one another and be true friends ever afterwards. "Is it not much better to be friends than enemies?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked them. Then he went into another room and brought candy and two silk handkerchiefs for each one. "By this token you are plighted together forever."

"We are the slaves of 'Abbás Afandí. We will do thy holy bidding. It seems God directed our steps to your home this morning," they said. They left the house laughing and holding one another's hands.

IX:3, 28 April 1918 [IX:3:40]

The power of the Holy Spirit

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, June 1913.

In Tiberias the missionaries have built a modern hospital and pharmacy. The doctor has been serving there for thirty-two years. At least every year one thousand Jews enter the hospital and go out healed, but none of them ever becomes a Christian. The doctor used to tell me: "I am at my wit's end in thinking out the reason of the success of the Bahá'ís in the propagation of their teaching. Without any means at hand they succeed in making these Jews Bahá'ís, but with all these hospitals and schools and charities we do not succeed. How is this?"

I replied: "Think for one moment of this singular fact. The Jews who became Christians in apostolic and post-apostolic times were not attracted to the Christian doctrine by hospitals, etc. On the contrary they were beaten, persecuted and killed. Notwithstanding these things they accepted Christianity. Why is this? Those early teachers possessed the heavenly power and with that power they were able to carry the gospel into distant lands. Now, in this day the Bahá'ís are teaching people with the same divine power. They are baptized with the power of the Holy Spirit. They have forgotten the ego and are soaring toward the Kingdom of sanctity. The most efficient capital of the Bahá'í teacher is the divine power. With that alone he may conquer the cities of the hearts."

IX:5, 5 June 1918 [IX:5:57]

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá¹

To his honour, Mr Albert Windust, Chicago, Illinois.

Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of God!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written that the publication of the book of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl (*The Bahá'í Proofs*) is commenced. This is very acceptable, for his books are written with the utmost sincerity. Likewise, the translation of the *Hidden Words* that you are just thinking to print another edition, this is also acceptable.

If Khayru'lláh¹ claims that one of the communes is written by him, do not be astonished at

¹ Mentioned and discussed at Tenth Annual Convention of the Bahá'í Temple Unity, 30 April 1918.

this. For there is an ignorant, uneducated man in the United States, nay in Chicago itself, who has written a pamphlet, and after printing it, he is circulating it abroad. His aim is no other than the promotion of the superstitions of Mírzá Yaḥyá (Azal). Amongst other things he alleges that the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, (Tablets of) *Tajalliyát* and *Ishráqát* are written by Mírzá Yaḥyá. Consequently do not be astonished at the claims of others. There are and there may be found some souls who collect the supplications of the Blessed Perfection and take out of every supplication a phrase or a sentence and then attribute it to themselves. Such people are like unto the man who gathers out of the Gospel sundry sayings of Christ—that is, he selects from every page a few words, and as a result he composes phrases and sentences, and claims to be the original writer.

Be ye engaged with your own occupations. Do not trouble yourself with these statements. Such articles are like unto the mirage; they will vanish. That which is real will remain firm and established in the world of existence.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 13 July 1914, home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mount Carmel, Haifa, Syria.

IX:7, 24 June 1918 [IX:7:78]

In memoriam

Charles Ioas

To the honourable Mr C. Ioas,

O thou who hast advanced toward God!

By God, I rejoiced when reading thy letter which declares thy belief in the unity of God and thine acknowledgement of the appearance of the Kingdom of God. This is a matter whereby thy face shall brighten in the Supreme Concourse, and thy forehead shall sparkle among the people. Then know the worth of this gift, the lights of which shone forth unto all directions and indicate the attraction of the Concourse of Abhá, the Most Glorious. Then be firm in this Cause, and thou wilt behold thyself in a lofty station, having all that is in earth under its shadow, because, [IX:7:79] this is verily that gift which is mentioned in the Gospel. O how good is this bounty in this day, when the commemoration of the true God is published and spread in all directions!

Abhá be upon thee!

'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1900 [IX:7:80]

Arthur Pillsbury Dodge

Tablet Revealed when learning of his death, at New York City, 12 October 1915.

To Mrs Dodge, and William, Wendell and Paul Dodge—May their lives be happy!

O ye afflicted ones!

A most terrible news reached my ears and that was the death of his honour, Mr Dodge. Truly, this bereavement is unbearable and the hearts are afflicted with the utmost sorrow and grief that that divine personage hid his face from the world, hastened to the universe of God and left the friends in the remorse and regret of separation. In reality that honourable soul served the Cause of God and endured many hardships and vicissitudes. His services are registered in the everlasting book in the Kingdom of God and mentioned by the Supreme

¹ Dr Ibráhím George *Khayru'lláh*.

Concourse. They shall never be forgotten. Ere long they will yield great results and will become the means of happiness to that household and conducive to the honour of its members. I will never forget him and supplicate for trim graces and bounties from his highness the Almighty. Be ye not sorrow-stricken nor do ye lament or bemoan; for that drop joined the ocean, that ray returned to the sun, that thirsty one reached the fountain of eternal life and that fish swam in the sea of God's forgiveness. Although his star set in the horizon of this world yet he dawned with the utmost brilliancy from the horizon of eternity. You will find him in that divine universe. Consequently he is not counted among the lost ones.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

IX:7, 13 July 1918 [IX:7:81]

Bahá'í methods of education

A Compilation of the Words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá to assist parents and teachers in the education of children.¹

Compiled by Pauline A. Hannen. [IX:7:82]

Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá [IX:7:83]

Concerning education

The prophets also acknowledge this opinion, to wit: That education hath a great effect upon the human race, but they declare that minds and comprehensions are originally different. And this matter is self-evident; it cannot be refuted. We see that certain children of the same age, nativity and race, nay, from the same household, under the tutorship of one teacher, differ in their minds and comprehensions. One advanceth rapidly, another is slow in catching the rays of culture, still another remaineth in the lowest degree of stupidity.

No matter how much the shell is educated (or polished), it can never become the radiant pearl. The black stone will not become the world illumining gem. The colocynth² and the thorny cactus can never by training and development become the blessed tree. That is to say, training doth not change the human gem (i.e., human nature or entity), but it produceth a marvellous effect. By this effective power all that is registered latent of virtues and capacities in the human reality will be revealed.

Cultivation by the farmer maketh of the grain the harvest, and the effort of the gardener maketh of the seed a noble tree. The gentle teacher promoteth the children of the school to the lofty altitude and the bestowal of the trainer placeth the little child upon the throne of ether. Therefore, it is demonstrated and proven that minds are different in the original entity or nature, and that education commandeth a decided and great influence. Were there no educator, all souls would remain savage, and were it not for the teacher, the children would be ignorant creatures.

It is for this reason that, in this New Cycle, education and training are recorded in the Book of God as obligatory and not voluntary. That is, it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son, to nurse them from the breast of knowledge and to rear them in the bosom of sciences and arts. Should they neglect this matter, they shall, be held responsible and worthy of reproach in the presence of the stern Lord.

This is a sin unpardonable, for they [IX:7:84] have made that poor babe a wanderer in the

¹ Quotations readily available elsewhere have been omitted.

² *Citrullus colocynthis*, with many common names including colocynth and bitter apple, is a desert viny plant native to the Mediterranean basin and Asia.

Sahara of ignorance, unfortunate and tormented; to remain during a lifetime a captive of ignorance and pride, negligent and without discernment. Verily, if that babe depart from this world at the age of infancy, it is sweeter and better. In this sense, death is better than life; deprivation than salvation; non-existence lovelier than existence; the grave better than the spacious, regal home; for in the sight of mankind that child is abased and degraded and in the sight of God weak and defective, in gatherings it is ashamed and humiliated and in the arena of examination subdued and defeated by young and old. What a mistake is this! What an everlasting humiliation!

Therefore, the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful must train their children with life and heart and teach them in the school of virtue and perfection. They must not be lax in the matter; they must not be inefficient. Truly, if a babe did not live at all it were better than to let it grow ignorant, for that innocent babe, in later life, would become afflicted with innumerable defects, responsible to and questioned by God, reproached and rejected by the people. What a sin this would be and what an omission!

The first duty of the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful is this: They must strive by all possible means to educate both sexes, male and female; girls like boys; there is no difference whatsoever between them. The ignorance of both is blameworthy, and negligence in both cases is reprobable. "Are they who know and they who do not know equal?" (Qur'án)

The command is decisive concerning both. If it be considered through the eye of reality, the training and culture of daughters is more necessary than that of sons, for these girls will come to the station of motherhood and will mould the lives of the children. The first trainer of the child is the mother. The babe, like unto a green and tender branch, will grow according to the way it is trained. If the training be right, it will grow right, and if crooked, the growth likewise, and unto the end of life it will conduct itself accordingly.

Hence, it is firmly established that an untrained and uneducated daughter, on becoming a mother, will be the prime factor in the deprivation, ignorance, negligence and the lack of training of many children. [IX:7:85]

O ye beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful! Teaching and learning, according to the decisive texts of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh), is a duty. Whosoever is indifferent therein depriveth himself of the great bounty.

Beware! Beware! that ye fail not in this matter. Endeavour with heart, with life, to train your children, especially the daughters. No excuse is acceptable in this matter.

Thus may eternal glory and everlasting supremacy, like unto the mid-day sun, shine forth in the assemblage of the people of Bahá, and the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá become happy and thankful.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, pp. 577-580.

The tie between husband and wife

As to thy question concerning the husband and wife, the tie between them and the children given to them by God: Know thou, verily, the husband is one who hath sincerely turned unto God, is awakened by the call of the Beauty of Bahá and chanteth the verses of Oneness in the great assemblies; the wife is a being who wisheth to be overflowing with and seeketh after the attributes of God and His names; and the tie between them is none other than the Word of God. Verily, it [the Word of God] causeth the multitudes to assemble together and the remote ones to be united. Thus the husband and wife are brought into affinity, are united and harmonized, even as though they were one person. Through their mutual union,

companionship and love great results are produced in the world, both material and spiritual. The spiritual result is the appearance of divine bounties. The material result is the children who are born in the cradle of the love of God, who are nurtured by the breast of knowledge of God, who are brought up in the bosom of the gift of God, and who are fostered in the lap of the training of God. Such children are those of whom it was said by Christ, "Verily, they are the children of the Kingdom!"

Consequently, O thou maid-servant of God, go unto the maid-servants of the Merciful one and tell them from the tongue of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "O maid-servants of the Merciful! It is incumbent upon you to train the children from their earliest babyhood! It is incumbent upon you to beautify their morals! It is incumbent upon you to attend to them under all aspects and circumstances, inas- [IX:7:86] much as God—glorified and exalted is He!—hath ordained mothers to be the primary trainers of children and infants. This is a great and important affair and a high and exalted position, and it is not allowable to slacken therein at all!

If thou walkest in this right path, thou wouldst become a real mother to the children, both spiritually and materially.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, pp. 605–606.

As to thy question: "If the husband prevents his wife from entering into the Light, or the wife prevents the husband from entering into the Kingdom of God." In reality neither one of them prevents the other from entering into the Kingdom of God, unless when the husband has a great attachment to the wife, or the wife to the husband. When either one of the two adores the other instead of God, then each will prevent the other from entering into the Kingdom of God.

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

As to thy question concerning training children: It is incumbent upon thee to nurture them from the breast of the love of God, to urge them towards spiritual matters, to turn unto God and to acquire good manners, best characteristics and praiseworthy virtues and qualities in the world of humanity, and to study sciences with the utmost diligence; so that they may become spiritual, heavenly and attracted to the fragrances of sanctity from their childhood and be reared in a religious, spiritual and heavenly training. Verily, I beg of God to confirm them therein.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 87.

I ask God to help thy children to gain knowledge, to attain virtues and morals which are the refinements of the reality of man, and to strengthen thee to remain firm.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 67. [IX:7:88]

Regarding the education of those two daughters D___ and M___. If thou givest true Bahá'í education to those two young trees in the garden of Abhá know thou of a certainty that the highest glory, prosperity and success will become ready and prepared for them. This is the cause of everlasting honour.

Excerpt from a Tablet to Miss J. M., 13 September 1913.

Bahá'í methods of education (continued)

Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (continued)

Station of those who serve and teach the children

A woman who is a good Bahá'í, working for the children in the school, came. She showed her hands to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that he might see how she had scrubbed the floor. He kept her hands in his and said: "Hands which have laboured in the cause of education are ever blessed. I am pleased with your hands. I love such hands very much because they have worked for the children. May you become a great educator and guide to humanity.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, London, December 1912.

_____ [IX:8:90]

Praise be to God, that with your soul and with your heart you are striving to guide the children. Appreciate the importance of this favour, that you have been assisted to do such a work, for the result of the spreading of the Cause of God is eternal exaltation. It is as when a man sows a pure seed in pure soil and it grows through the showers from the clouds of mercy of the Educator. Consider what a blessing will be brought forth.

Tablet to Mrs. F. G., 1914.

_____ [IX:8:91]

Protection of children

Take away thy dear child from among the heedless ones, for they are fast after him in order that they may lead him astray from the right path. Keep him some time with thyself and train him as he ought and should be. Then send him to another school or another place.

Tablet to P. A. H., 27 March 1906.

Be thou kind to the "bantam chickens and their babies" and take good care of them; so that thou mayest learn how to train the living creatures. Teach and educate the "parrot" in order that she may be instructed with the heavenly words. Although the parrot may be unconscious of the meaning of the phrases, yet, God willing, thy heart will be inspired with such utterances, (the significance of which will be revealed to thee first and then the words will flow from thy tongue). Perfect thyself in the art of music so that thou mayest be able to play on the harp most divinely.

Tablet from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 31 July 1914.

Duties of children toward parents

There are also certain sacred duties on children toward parents, which duties are written in the Book of God, as belonging to God. The (children's) prosperity in this world and the Kingdom depends upon the good pleasure of parents, and without this they will be in manifest loss.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, pp. 262-263.

Father and mother are worthy of esteem and it is necessary (to secure their good pleasure); but this on condition that they may not prevent one from nearness to the Threshold of the Almighty and may not withhold one from walking in the path of the Kingdom. Nay, rather they (parents) should encourage and inspire one (to walk in God's path).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 463.

O thou my dear son! Thy letter sweetened the heart and the spirit. Thy lovely 1 face is engraved forever on the tablet of my heart. I am also longing to look into thy countenance. Say always the Greatest Name before beginning thy lessons. The confirmation and assistance of God shall encircle thee.

Tablet from the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 26 May 1914.

Although thou art small, yet I hope thou wilt become great in the Kingdom. His Highness Christ, sayeth: “Happy is the condition of the children!” God willing, thou art one of those children. [IX:8:92]

Be obedient and kind to thy father and mother, caressing brother and sister, and day by day adding to thy faith and assurance.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, p. 551.

O dear one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! Be the son of thy father and be the fruit of that tree. Be a son that hath been born of his soul and heart and not only of the water and clay. A real son is such an one as hath branches from the spiritual part of a man. I ask God that thou mayest be at all times confirmed and strengthened.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 342.

Duties of children towards God

O ye dear children!

Your father is compassionate, clement and merciful unto you and desireth for you success, prosperity and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you, dear children, to seek his good pleasure, to be guided by his guidance, to be drawn by the magnet of the love of God and be brought up in the lap of the love of God; that ye may become beautiful branches in the Garden of Abhá, verdant and watered by the abundance of the gift of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, p. 622.

_____ [IX:8:93]

Educating children

In that hour you should make the children familiar with the prophecies in the Gospels and with the Name of God, and with this Revelation: that is to say, instruct them how to become teachers, so that the love of God may be established in their hearts while they are young children. They should develop spiritual feelings. You should explain to them or read to them the *Ishráqát*, *Ṭarázát*, *Tajalliyát*, the *Words of Paradise*, and the *Tablet of the World*. You should make them memorize some of these verses. By these means they will become enlightened and well educated, for they are like unto a young tree: you can train them in whatever manner you like.

Spoken in February 1909, to P. A. H. and J. H. H.

Praise be to God! Thou art engaged in teaching and educating the children, for they have wonderfully memorized and read the manifest verses, the *Glad-Tidings*, the *Communes*, the *Ishráqát* and the *Word*. I hope that each one of them (those children) will become a peerless teacher and the cause of the guidance of the people. Praise be to God! All the members are

illumined with the light of the Beauty of Abhá!

Tablet to P. A. H.

Thou hast written regarding the spiritual education of the children. It is very acceptable and beloved. Undoubtedly these children will make ideal and physical advancement.

Tablet to P. A. H., 21 November 1913.

Indeed the sweet melody of the pupils of Mrs H. ____ gladdened the hearts of the people of the Supreme Concourse.

To Mr. R., May 1909.

____ [IX:8:94]

Sunday class is important

Question: "Is it right that Mrs H. ____ has given up the Sunday School work?"

He looked very much surprised and grieved and said: "Why? No! She must keep it up by all means. Why does she want to give it up?"

I answered that it was too far for most of the children and some were too delicate to walk.

He said: "If they cannot arrange to go every Sunday, they must go every other Sunday, if not every other Sunday then once a month. But they must come together and must keep up the Sunday School."

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Miss A. S. K. spoken in Stuttgart, Germany, April 1913.

'Abdu'l-Bahá listened very attentively to all that was said pertaining to the Sunday School, saying: "Khaylí khúb! Khaylí khúb!¹ It is very necessary that the Sunday School be renewed again and be made active." Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked: "The Sunday School is very important; then why did the parents become indifferent? It is very essential that the Sunday School be upheld, first, [IX:8:95] because the children are there taught the Words of Bahá'u'lláh. Second, because the morality taught there is the true Bahá'í morality. Third, because the children will there become firmly established in the precepts and truths of the Bahá'í Cause. Fourth, because the Sunday School is of great value: It is very good and they must attend it with joy and fragrance and with enthusiasm."

To Miss F. A. K., Paris, 20 May 1913.

IX:8, 1 August 1918 [IX:8:95]

Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to other Bahá'í children

A talk to the pupils of the Bahá'í School in 'Akká

A lesson in English by a Persian boy.

How lucky I was and what good fortune I had yesterday in the morning. While all the scholars and I were assembled together in the school and reading our lessons suddenly our hearts were filled with joy by hearing our Master's voice blessing the believers; then he entered the school with shining face and smiling lips and began to walk very calmly through the room, addressing us and saying: "Endeavour and strive eagerly that you may progress and advance rapidly. You are born in this holy day, attaining this great privilege by the favour of God, therefore you must not waste or throw away this bounty and mercy. Try always to get

¹ "Very good!"

more manliness and humbleness and to love one another. You are like a small plant newly sown. If the rays of the sun reflect on it and it is watered by showers of rain there is no doubt that it will by and by grow and become a very fruitful tree; [IX:8:96] but if cold winds blow and the plant be deprived of the shining of the sun and the rain it will certainly be withered and become a useless thing.

“Now, if you occupy yourselves, for instance, in affirming some reasons for the truth of this holy Cause and how to deliver the Word of God to everyone, these things will support and strengthen you and will prepare you for the good of this world and that which is to come; but if, God forbid, you lose your time in vain chattering and useless talk and running hither and thither, these things, be sure, will never lead you to the way of salvation.

“Never think whether you will have more or less wealth, for riches will never guide any man in the right way.

“O children,” continued our Master, “there is a matter which is very important and that is this, let none of you at any time be puffed up with pride or despise any other being. Never, never do this, this is worse than all things. Man is a sinful blunderer, therefore he must acknowledge his faults.

“His Holiness, the blessed Báb, mentions in his book that every one must consider at the end of each day what have been his actions. If he finds something which would please God, he must thank Him and pray to be strengthened to do this good act throughout his life; but if his actions have not been approvable or honest, he must earnestly ask God for strength to do better.

“And now,” said the Master, “the report of your weekly work is good and free from blunder and fault, therefore I am greatly pleased and very happy. I want you to work for the sake of God, and not for your own interest. Therefore I am advising you with the greatest love and kindness for your own benefit and comfort.”

These were our beloved Master’s utterances yesterday in the morning.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá takes a great interest in the progress of these boys, and often gives them helpful little talks; this one I have reproduced here in the words of one of the pupils, which he wrote out in English for me and which I have but slightly altered.—The Teacher.)

“You must give your daughter a Bahá’í education so that she may become an excellent teacher of the Cause. She must receive a spiritual education. Then she will make extraordinary progress. Religious teachings are essential for the proper development of the mind and the spirit. If religious instruction is not given to the children they will grow heedless and lose their moral susceptibilities. They will laugh at all moral obligations. The children are like unto green branches. As long as the branch is green, you can train it in whatever way you think best; but once the branch is dried up you cannot do anything with it. If you want to straighten it, it will break.”

Again he spoke with little Mona. “Do you love your parents?”

“Yes!”

“Which one do you love best? Your mother or father?”

“I love both equally.”

“Bravo! Well said! Now tell me, do you love Bahá’u’lláh or your mother best?”

This was a difficult question. She hesitated a moment, and then replied with much emphasis: “Bahá’u’lláh”.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 16 October 1914.

IX:9, 20 August 1918 [IX:9:97]

Bahá'í methods of education (continued)

Camp school in mountains approved

“When I was in Dublin,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “the professor of the out-door school invited me to visit the pupils. The school is in the mountains of New Hampshire, built among the woods. All around there are green valleys, verdant balsms and blue lakes. They have a large cabin and have pitched several tents. Their supreme object is to promote the art of beauty and gracefulness and the science of strength. For this reason they practise callisthenics and athletics and exercise bodily training. They are thinly clad and often sleep in the open air. They go bathing and during certain hours they study. Fresh air, outdoor exercise, wholesome food, clean sports, uplifting ideals and regular training of body, mind and spirit build up their constitutions and give them strong muscles, sterling characters and robust manhood. They have a school room and dining-room and except the hours of study and meals they spend their time entirely out in the open air, learning many excellent lessons from the book of nature. I saw there a very young lad who, I was told by the teacher, was very thin and emaciated when he was brought to the camp, but during his four weeks’ stay he was completely changed, having gained flesh, health and colour, so that he could take part in the vigorous exercises. The professor of this twentieth century school was one of the most refined and cultured men that it was my pleasure to meet in America, and he showed me much love, hospitality and affection. The boys were most polite and decorous and although some of them were very young yet they stayed through the talk and listened most attentively. I was very pleased with all of them. Resourcefulness and self-control are the two lessons taught to these boys through words and deeds—so that if in the course of their lives through an accident of chequered fortune they should be thrown on an uninhabited island in the midst of the sea, they would master the situation calmly, control themselves and provide through their own ingenuity and in- [IX:9:98] ventiveness the essential means of livelihood. After all, this is the greatest lesson that any highly-evolved civilization can teach us. They are so taught that when the proper time arrives, they will not shun the dangers and risks of life; that like unto the birds of the fields and the animals of the woods they may be able to procure their sustenance and protect themselves from the encroachments of the enemy.”

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 12 July 1914.

Cardinal Bahá'í principles of colleges and universities

In this age the college which is dominated by a denominational spirit is an anomaly, and is engaged in a losing fight. It cannot long withstand the victorious forces of liberalism in education. The universities and colleges of the world must hold fast to three cardinal principles.

First: Whole-hearted service to the cause of education, the unfolding of the mysteries of nature, the extension of the boundaries of pure science, the elimination of the causes of ignorance and social evils, a standard universal system of instruction, and the diffusion of the lights of knowledge and reality.

Second: Service to the cause of morality, raising the moral tone of the students, inspiring them with the sublimest ideals of ethical refinement, teaching them altruism, inculcating in their lives the beauty of holiness and the excellency of virtue and animating them with the excellences and perfections of the religion of God.

Third: Service to the oneness of the world of humanity; so that each student may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of religion or race. The

thoughts of universal peace must be instilled into the minds of all the scholars, in order that they may become the armies of peace, the real servants of the body politic—the world. God is the Father of all. Mankind are His children. This globe is one home. Nations are the members of one family. The mothers in their homes, the teachers in the schools, the professors in the college, the presidents in the universities, must teach these ideals to the young from the cradle up to the age of manhood.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 15 February 1914.

Characteristics of Bahá'í college students

You must become the shining candles of moral precepts and spiritual ideals and be the means of the illumination of others. Clothe your bodies with the robes of virtues. Characterize yourselves with the characteristics of the people of divine morality. Shun all manner of vices as you shun a poisonous snake or a leper. Let the corps of professors and the students be impressed with the purity and holiness of your lives so that they may take you as paragons of worthiness, examples of nobility of nature, observers of the moral laws, holding in subordination the lower element by the higher spirit, the conquerors of self and the masters of wholesome, vital forces in all the avenues of life. Strive always to be at the head of your classes through hard study and true merit. Be always in a prayerful state and appreciate the value of everything. Entertain high ideals and stimulate your intellectual and constructive forces.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 17 April 1914.

I hope that while you are studying in this college you may so excel all other students in the various branches of knowledge taught therein that all of them may testify that the Bahá'í students have another power, are inspired with another [IX:9:99] effort, are imbued with a nobler ambition, are stimulated by higher motives and make wider and deeper exertions than others. If you do not surpass the others, then what distinction will there remain for you? Therefore, you must strive to be superior to them, so that everyone may bear testimony to this fact. You are now like the tender plants that are trained according to the knowledge and wisdom of the gardener. From now on, you must strive to beautify the moral aspect of your lives. Advise one another with utmost consideration, watch daily your words and deeds; thus from the very beginning you may characterize yourselves with divine ideals.

The divine ideals are humility, submissiveness, annihilation of self, perfect evanescence, charity and loving-kindness. You must die to self and live in God. You must be exceedingly compassionate to one another and to all the people of the world. Love and serve mankind just for the sake of God and not for anything else. The foundation of your love toward humanity must be spiritual faith and divine assurance.

Again: be ye most careful that, God forbid, not one single word contrary to truth issue from your mouths. One falsehood throws man from the highest station of honour to the lowest abyss of disgrace. Always guard yourselves against this enemy so that all you state may correspond with reality. Forever supplicate and entreat at the Court of Majesty and beg confirmation and assistance. Make ye an effort that ye may win the good pleasure of the Blessed Perfection. All the natural and supernatural advancements in the human world revolve around this one problem. If you attain to this supreme goal all the elements of the world of creation will be ready to serve you at your bidding, (i.e., they will find their highest attainment in you and through you), or in other words you will become the fruits of the world of existence. The evolution of the trunk, branches, leaves and blossoms of the tree is the fruit thereof. Exalt your thought. Reflect over all your affairs. Magnify your endeavours. Enlarge the circle of your ideals. Open the wings of spiritual wisdom. Let your hope be the

accomplishment of most great deeds, the results of which may immortalize your names. All that the people are holding fast to is as the mirage and will not last. Praise be to God, that you are under the protection of Bahá'u'lláh and His bounties have encircled you. I will always pray for you, and with the utmost humility beg extraordinary progress for you.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 15 April 1914.

To the Bahá'í students of Beirut College (Syria)

Praise be to God, that the Bahá'í students in Beirut are well known for the beauty of their character, the purity of their deeds, and the loftiness of their morality. From whomsoever one enquires about the Bahá'í students, one will hear unstinted praise. This is through the favours and bounties of the Blessed Beauty, who has assisted you to attain such a high station. For you have lived in a manner conducive to the glorification of the Cause of God. Bahá'u'lláh is pleased with you; all the people are pleased with you; I am pleased with you, and the friends of God are pleased with you. This is the special divine bounty, which is being realized at rare intervals. If one asks any person concerning the Bahá'í students, he will answer: "In reality they are intelligent, sober, industrious, diligent, displaying good manners and behaviour and concentrating all their attention on their acquirement of knowledge. They do not spend their time in frivolous amusements and distracting recreations." Even the enemies testify to your spotless character. I hope that through the favour and bounty of the Blessed Beauty, his holiness the Báb, and the ineffable blessings which hallow this holy shrine,¹ the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá may encircle you, and that you may be characterized with the shining qualities and brilliant attributes of the Bahá'í life. May your morality become more defined day by day! May your faith and assurance be increased day by day! May your attraction to the kingdom of Abhá be intensified day by day! May your attainment in sciences and arts become more universal day by day! Perchance, God willing, you may become perfect and accomplished from every standpoint and be the means of the enlightenment of Persia.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 12 October 1914.

God be praised! How wonderful are these students!² I am looking forward with great hope to their future! In reality they are beneath the shade of the Blessed Perfection, they are being animated with the spirit of the Holy Land. For this reason, they are superior to many students. Their mettle will become known in the future. They are now under the process of refining. When they come out of the crucible their brightness will become manifest. The Word of God is the refining which will polish them, suffering them to become pure as tested gold. Every single assured and firm believer will consider himself the servant of all the friends of God, nay rather the servant of the world of humanity. The honour of man depends upon this. The everlasting glory of mankind lies in this! For this reason His Holiness Christ says: "The last shall be first, the least among you in the Kingdom is the greatest." Whosoever desires to walk in the path of the Kingdom—so that he may reach the court of the Almighty—must be a true servant. The path of God cannot be compared with the paths of men. The humbler the man is in the path of God, the more exalted is he; the greater his meekness and submissiveness, the more beloved is he; the more he is surrounded with tests and trials, the vaster the tranquillity and composure of his spirit.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 15 July 1914. [IX:9:101]

¹ The Students were visiting the Shrine of the Báb.

² This is a talk to the believers visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The students were also present. These students visit the Holy Land during their vacations and most of them are permitted to live the whole summer near the tomb of the Báb on Mt. Carmel.—Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding infants before and after birth

To an expectant mother

Your child will have extraordinary capacities. It will be a Bahá'í. Rear it in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Rest assured your child will be assisted by the Divine Concourse, and through this assistance it will exhibit a universal consciousness. For this Cause encompasses the West and the East, and children born under these conditions in this day will have the advantages of the universal illumination. Today some children are called prodigies, but the inheritors of this Cause will attain to a degree that the others, even though educated in the best schools and with every advantage, know nothing of.

Children blessed in this way before they are born are of the new race. I was born in Persia, and while I nursed with my mother's milk I received truth. When a little child my first words were "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!"

Divine Philosophy, p. 59.

Supplication for an expectant mother

My Lord! My Lord! I praise Thee and I thank Thee for that whereby Thou hast favoured Thine humble maid-servant, Thy slave, beseeching and supplicating Thee—because Thou hast verily guided her to thine obvious Kingdom and caused her to hear Thine exalted call in the contingent world and to behold Thy signs, which prove Thy victorious reign over all things.

O my Lord! I dedicate that which is in my womb to Thee. Then cause it to be a praiseworthy child in Thy Kingdom and a fortunate one by Thy favour and generosity; to develop and grow up under the charge of Thine education.

Verily, Thou are the Generous! Verily, Thou art the Lord of Great Favour!

Immortality of undeveloped infant souls

Question: "What becomes of an undeveloped infant's soul?"

Answer by 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "It rests with the mercy of God and through the eternal bounty it will not be deprived of that mercy."

Ten Days in the Light of Acca, page 4.

Station of oppressed infants and weak ones

As to the subject of babes and infants and weak ones who are afflicted by the hands of oppressors: This contains great wisdom and this a subject of paramount importance. In brief, for those souls there is a recompense in another world and many details are connected with this matter. For those souls that suffering is the greatest mercy of God. Verily, that mercy of the Lord is far preferable to all the comfort of this world and the growth and development of this place of mortality.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 337.

Children of unbelievers and infidels who die before the age of responsibility are not punished, because they are under the favour of God.

Mrs L. M. G. Notes

[IX:9:102]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpretation of a dream

"A young girl became evident to me as belonging with the family, but I could not make out

who she was. She spoke of a horse that my son had had long ago, but I did not understand what she meant. After a time it became known that she was my daughter, and I felt grieved to think that I had not been conscious of her presence in all the past years. She seemed not hurt, but surprised that we did not understand her. Just as I was waking, I realized that she was our little baby who had passed away over twenty-one years ago, when nine months old.” (End of dream.)

Mrs ____ added: “She was my idol, and because I loved her so much, I tried hard to put her out of my thought, and the dream made me feel that we should not do this.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá interpreted it thus:

“That child is your trust within the charge of God. She was a child when she went, but you shall find her full grown in the Kingdom of God. You shall find her mature. You shall not find her there as a child. You shall find her perfect and mature.

“As to the horse once belonging to your son, of which she spoke: Horse in the dream means a wish. It shows that your daughter has fulfilled her wish and her desire, and that shows the loftiness of her station. The wish is one in which your son shared, but she attained to it. It is my hope, God willing, that, he, too, will attain to it.”

Surprise was expressed that a child of only nine months could have a wish, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “The child was born with a wish.”

Mrs ____ was crying, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued: “Do not cry. Be happy because you saw her, and you saw her perfected. You must be happy. She is your trust with God. You have not lost her out of your hands. The only difference is this; that you gave her as a trust to God as a child, but you will take her back as a full grown person. I had a son who was four years old, and when he died I did not at all change my attitude. I gave my son to God as a trust, and so at his death I did not grieve.”

Mrs ____ said: “But there is a difference, you gave your son to God, but God takes ours.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “It is the same thing. In both cases it is a trust of God.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “The cause of her surprise, is this—that you are crying; your daughter would say: ‘I have a good mother. She must be happy. Why does she cry? I am surprised.’ The cause of her surprise is the thought that you do not recognize her. She belongs to a realm in which everything becomes mature, and she expected you to see her in the state of perfection in which she manifested herself to you; but the fact that you looked at her in this way, and that now you are crying—is a proof of your not having recognized her. For had you recognized her in the dream, you would not be crying now.”

Relative to the comment of Mrs ____ that she tried to put the child out of her thoughts, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “It is not in man’s control when to forget one. It is not good for one to try to forget them. One must always remember them.”

Notes by M. H. sent to ‘Akká for approval and returned with the signature of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as correct.

_____ [IX:9:103]
Christening or naming a babe

When thou wishest to name a babe, prepare a meeting therefor; chant the verses and communes, and supplicate and implore the Threshold of Oneness and beg the attainment of guidance for the babe and wish confirmed firmness and constancy; then give the name and enjoy beverage and sweetmeats. This is spiritual baptism.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 49.

Question: "Should we baptize infants?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "The people have not understood the meaning of baptism. In one place in the Gospels it is commanded that one must be baptized by water and spirit, and also by fire, and from these commands we can understand that the meaning is spiritual and not material. The baptism of Christians as practised today is not the teachings of Christ! The Christians in the beginning used to baptize as a symbol of the purification of the spirit.

"When the time drew near for the Manifestation of Christ, John the Baptist appeared and called the people to repentance, and when they repented they were baptized as a symbol that their hearts were purified and ready to accept the truth and teachings which would soon appear, for John was declaring the coming of Jesus. But these people were not children; they were men and women. And Jesus himself was baptized by John, but he was thirty years old when he was baptized. After he was baptized he said: 'John has baptized you with water, but I shall baptize you with the Spirit!' Water symbolizes the knowledge of God which gives eternal life, because all forms of life had their beginning in the water. Fire is the symbol of love, and the baptism by fire means the love of God which descends in the hearts that are turned unto him! Now as fire is used to symbolize love, be sure that water is used also as a symbol, for would it be possible for one to be put into the fire as one is put into the water for baptism? Many who have not understood what Christ meant by baptism think if a child dies without passing through this ceremony its soul is lost! But this is not true, for the child has not sinned and goes from this world quite free from faults and defects! And oftentimes baptism of infants is attended by great danger to the child.

"One time I was invited in this very house to witness the baptism of a baby who was very young. They had put olive oil in the water and when they put the child into it, it shrieked and struggled, swallowing some of the oil and water, after which it, together with the shock to the nervous system, caused the child to be very ill, and it died. These are ceremonies which have a spiritual meaning but no spiritual effect upon the soul!"

To Mrs L. M. G., 18 April 1904.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding the importance of prayer

The sweetest thing in this world is to obey strictly the commands of God and shun His prohibitions. Through this the attractions of the love of God will be created in human consciousness.

For example, there is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer. Man must live in a state of prayerfulness. The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication. Prayer is "conversation with God". The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is no other than "conversation with God". It creates spirituality, generates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets the attraction of [IX:9:104] the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence. The highest attribute given to His Holiness Moses is the following verse: "God carried on a conversation with Moses."

What is prayer? It is "conversation with God". While man prays he sees himself in the presence of God. If he concentrates his attention he will surely at the time of prayer realize that he is "conversing with God". Often at night I do not sleep, and the thoughts of this world weigh heavily on my mind. I toss uneasily in my bed. Then in the darkness of the night I get up and pray—"converse with God". It is most sweet and uplifting. Prayer and supplication are so effective as to inspire one's heart for the whole day with high ideals and supreme serenity and calmness. One's heart must be sensitive to the music of prayer. He must feel the effect of prayer. He must not be like an organ from which softest notes stream forth without having consciousness of sensation in itself.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 15 March 1914.

Mount Carmel is enveloped with the white mantle of spirituality. Its atmosphere is permeated with an indescribable peace and tranquillity. During these matchless moonlight nights, one's heart becomes tender and the mind wistful and meditative, pensive and musing. It is as though the trees, the brooks, the rocks, the sea, the grass, the stars hold communion with man and whisper into his ears the secrets of nature. It was mainly owing to this reason that the ancient prophets of God lived in the grottoes and caves of this mountain so that they might spend their time in quiet meditation. The divine, holy prophets have two stations. The first is the station of "abstraction". This is the station wherein they communicate with God, receive the graces of the Holy Spirit and become intimate with the fragrances of holiness. The second station is the station of "plurality". In this station they occupy themselves with the education of mankind. They have, as a result, to bear the enmity, persecution and calumny of the people. On account of their pride, haughtiness and conceit the people assail these divine temples of Truth; notwithstanding this they bring forward proofs and arguments, instruct them through the heavenly advices and exhortations and little by little cause them to ascend to the lofty height of beatific purity. This work is most exacting and difficult, yet they do not murmur. But the world of "abstraction" in which they quaff the chalice of immortality, is very pleasant and spiritual. It is a super-individual experience, commonly shared by all the elect of God. It is the light of the spirit and the spirit of the world. Its sweet delicacy is enjoyed by every class. For this reason, whenever the prophets of old desired to commune with God and enter the realm of "abstraction", they came to this holy mountain and prayed during the day and the night, thus strengthening in this manner the basis of their inspiration.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 6 September 1914.

Beg everything thou desirest from Bahá'u'lláh. If thou art asking faith, ask of Him. If thou art yearning after knowledge, He will grant it unto thee. If thou art longing for the love of God. He will bestow it upon thee. He will descend upon thee all His Blessings.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 9 May 1914.

IX:10, 8 September 1918 [IX:10:113]

Bahá'í methods of education (continued)

In prayer

Prayer and supplication are two wings whereby man soars toward the heavenly mansion of the True One. However, verbal repetition of prayer does not suffice. One must live in a perennial attitude of prayer. When man is spiritually free, his mind becomes the altar and his heart the sanctuary of prayer. Then the meaning of the verse "We will lift up from before his eyes the veil" will become fulfilled in him. Whenever I wanted to go to the Palace of Bahjí to meet the Blessed Perfection, I walked alone and on foot, in order to be in an attitude of prayer. In the Mosque of 'Akká for many years I had a simple room all to myself to which no one had any access. Now and then I would go there and stay one whole day, passing the time in quiet contemplation and prayer. But later on the affairs of the Cause became manifold, and I had to give practically all my time to their dispatch and management. Thus I could no longer enjoy those peaceful hours of spiritual reflection. How I would love to be able to arrange now so that I might go away alone and live in entire seclusion! For this reason I went to Tiberias, but it was not much of a seclusion.

Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 18 June 1914.

In prayer one must turn his face towards the sanctified Reality of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh—that Reality which surrounds all the phenomena. During the time of prayer His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh must be singly and alone the centre towards whom all the faces are turned.

Excerpt from Tablet. *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 30 July 1914.

Prayers for children

Make thou this little maid-servant a brilliant-starred daughter of the King- [IX:10:114] dom; endear her in the Threshold of Oneness and overflow her with the cup of Thy love, in order that she may raise the cries of joy and ecstasy and mix ambergris¹ with musk.

Verily, Thou art the Powerful and the Mighty, and Thou art the Wise, the Seer!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, p. 551.

Prayers to memorize and use

O Thou pure God! I am a little child; make Thou the bosom of Thy gift a dear resting place of comfort; suffer me to grow and be nurtured with the honey and milk of Thy love and train me under the breast of Thy knowledge. Bestow Thou freedom while in a state of childhood and grant Thou excellence.

O Thou Incomparable One! Make me the confidant of the Kingdom of the unseen! Verily, Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful!

Little book of prayers.

O unequalled Lord! For this helpless child be a protector! For this weak and sinful one be kind and forgiving.

O Creator! Although we are but useless grass, yet we are of Thy garden. Though we are but young trees, bare of leaves and blossoms, yet we are of Thy orchard.

Therefore nourish this grass with the rain of Thy bounty, refresh and vivify these young, languishing trees with the eternal springtime.

Awaken us, enlighten us, give us eternal life and accept us in Thy kingdom.

Little book of prayers.

O loving God! I am a young child, a suppliant, a captive. Be Thou my refuge, my support, my protector. I am in distress: give me the means of tranquillity. I am needy: bestow upon me the treasure of the Kingdom. I am dead: give me the spirit of life. I am weak: favour [IX:10:115] me with power and strength, so that I may be a maid-servant in Thy threshold, with perfect purity and sanctity; sacrifice myself unto Thee, be quit of myself and seek Thee, walk in the path of Thy good pleasure, speak Thy secret and witness the signs of Thy oneness wherever I look. O God! Make me ablaze, like unto the fire of Thy love, and make me free from attachment to this mortal world, until I find the peace of soul and the rest of conscience.

Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty! Thou art the Hearer, the Seer!

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 196.

O Thou kind God! I am a little babe; exalt me at the threshold of Thy Kingdom. I live on this

¹ Ambergris—This metaphor means the state of spontaneous prayer and communion with God.

earth; make me heavenly. I am of this world; make me of the world of the realm of might. I exist in this world of darkness; make me illumined. I am material; make me spiritual and suffer me to become the manifestor of infinite bounties. Thou art the Powerful, the Compassionate!

Tablet.

O God! Educate Thou this little child in the arm of Thy knowledge and nurse her at the breast of Thy providence. Plant Thou this fresh flower in the rose-garden of Thy love and refresh it by the showers from the clouds of Thy gifts. Make her one of the children of the Kingdom and guide her toward the realm of the Most High. Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Kind; Thou art the Giver, the Generous, the Bounteous.

Another translation of a Commune in 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. I, p. 50.)

IX:10, 8 September 1918 [IX:10:105]

Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land (continued)¹

The following compilation of some of the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá after his return to the Holy Land from America, Europe and Egypt.

Translated by Dr DÍYÁ' M. Baghdádí

Hájí 'Abbás is the name of an old Bahá'í who lived in 'Akká and for more than thirty years was chosen by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be the lantern carrier. Almost every night, whether walking in the dark narrow streets of the prison city 'Akká or in the fields outside, he was the only one who accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá. (The translator, and perhaps others, entertained the thought that this man, on account of his bravery, strength and courage, was chosen to be as a guard to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. But in recent years, it became evident that Hájí 'Abbás, during all those years of apparently faithful service was concealing a deadly weapon for the purpose of betraying and murdering 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whenever he could find an opportunity. This was because his mind was poisoned and his heart changed by the deceitful náqidín and the bitter enemies with whom he had joined.) 'Abdu'l-Bahá said regarding this person: "He was so sick and exhausted in 'Akká when he came to me for help and assistance, that I placed him in a hospital in Haifa and I loved him very much." Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá turned to Áqá Muḥammad Kirmání who was present and said to him:

"Tell me what is the voice that is calling loud in Kirmán (Persia)? Is it the voice of the darvishes² (tramps) or the moaning of shaykhís³ (a Muslim cult)? For the sake of the elevation of the call of God all these voices shall be silenced. When the call of God rises, all other calls become erased and forgotten. When the movement of the Supreme Pen (Bahá'u'lláh) becomes audible, undoubtedly the buzzing of flies ceases. This is evident. May God give assistance and confirmation to the souls who serve the supreme word and elevate this call. The powers of the Kingdom of Abhá and the divine confirmations will assist and reinforce every one who becomes engaged in teaching the Cause of God. There is no doubt about this."

23 February 1914.

'Abdu'l-Bahá and a number of the friends took a walk outside the city of Haifa. He told them of the lofty degrees of severance and attraction of the old friends in the Cause, and when

¹ Previous sections are in XI:2, pp. 17-19, 23-24; and XI:3, pp. 25-31, 34-38.

² Darwísh, pl. daráwísh.

³ Shaykh, pl. shuyúkh, ash'yákh.

they passed by a cave he showed it to Mirza Sohrab and said: “We had a person by the name of Ustád Ismá’íl. Indeed, he was peerless. He suffered great calamities and ordeals in Tīhrán (Persia) and in Baghdád—they confiscated all his belongings and they took his wife, yet he was in the utmost joy and he used to say, ‘Praise be to God! They have taken [IX:10:106] my wife and my belongings. God willing, a day cometh when I may sacrifice my life in the path of God!’ When he reached ‘Akká it was at a time when no one was allowed to enter the forts. When I heard this I managed to get him into the barracks. After one month I sent him to Haifa. He dwelt in this cave. He became a peddler in the daytime and in the nights he used to chant with attractive and indescribable sincerity the verses which the Blessed Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) had sent to him.”

In the afternoon of the same day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the following utterances to the friends who gathered in his home:

“It is the duty of all the friends to help the families of the martyrs. They have become flesh of my flesh because the martyrs have sacrificed their lives for me. Whosoever renders a service to the families of the martyrs is serving the Blessed Beauty. Whosoever supports them is supporting the Blessed Beauty. Whosoever becomes a self-sacrifice in their behalf is a self-sacrifice in the path of the Beauty of Abhá. The great martyrdom or the sacrifice of life is like unto a mirror and when turned toward the sun, the temple and the body of the mirror become utterly effaced; that is, the martyrs efface themselves in the love of God to such an extent that the bodies and mirrors no longer exist. They become the rays of the sun. Therefore, everything that is related or belongs to them belongs to God. Whosoever serves them serves God. Whosoever loves them, verily, he loves God. It is not a joke—when the time of test comes, for then the truth becomes known. Justice must be given. If a thorn enters our hand, we cry and become restless. If our head aches we become restless. But the sharp sword takes away one’s life. The martyrs have tasted the sweetness of that cup. That is why His Holiness, the Messenger (Muḥammad) said, ‘The martyrs have stations that prophets are envious of.’ Thus His Holiness the Supreme (the Báb)—May my soul be a ransom to him!—when addressing the Blessed Beauty, in his book titled *Aḥsanu’l-Qiṣaṣ* (The Best of Stories), said, ‘O our great Lord! verily, everything in me I sacrifice to Thee and I desire only to be killed in Thy path.’ To whom do these addresses in the *Aḥsanu’l-Qiṣaṣ* refer? Undoubtedly to the One-Whom-God-Shall-Manifest, that is His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, and not to Mírzá Yaḥyá (Azal). They used to attribute these references, before the declaration of the Manifestation to an imaginary person. Afterwards it became evident that the person was existing. But before investigation they believed that those references meant the Qá’im himself, yet the Báb was the Qá’im (Forerunner). Therefore, from these references, it becomes evident that the One-Whom-God-Shall-Manifest was existing. He (the Báb) says, moreover, ‘By God, the Truth! I am an húrí (girl of paradise) born from Bahá, in a place of the red ruby, and by all those who are in heaven, I yearn for the soul that is killed in the path of God.’”

Afterwards, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá showed infinite kindness to Mírzá ‘Ináyatu’lláh Khán, the son of Mullá Ismá’íl, the martyr. Then he ordered the friends to be served with fruits and preserves. One of the Zoroastrian Bahá’ís was present at that time and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said the following to him about another believer: “Indeed, Mullá Bahrám (a Zoroastrian Bahá’í) is a blessed being. He is active in the Cause of God and is never still. The station of such souls is not known now, but it will become evident in the future. During the first century of the holy Manifestations the beginning of the revelation is like the day, because the Sun of Reality is shining upon all the horizons, the stars are invisible. But in the second century, the station and the degree of the sincere ones will become evident. Their lights will become manifest and bright like unto the shining stars. The stations of the apostles of His Holiness Christ became known after three hundred years.”

In the evening there was a general meeting in the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Mr Rothchild, a

great financier, visited Haifa and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá talked about wealth. He said in part: “Unless the souls are believers in God and assured in the verses of God, wealth causes the hearts to be hardened and without light.” At the close of the meeting a supplication of repentance, confession and pleading written by Hájí ‘Alí-i-Yazdí, was read in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the hearts of those who were present became touched. They turned their faces to the Horizon of the Cause, and implored the Kingdom of the Covenant and of the Beauty of Abhá for a new confirmation. (Hájí ‘Alí-i-Yazdí was at one time one of the náqidín or violators of the Covenant and he lives in ‘Akká.)

24 February 1918.

Today, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed tablets, concerning deeds. In one of them he says, “The deeds of man must be the cause of glory. Everything that is conducive to the honour of the religion of God is good. Every action that becomes the means of the elevation of the Word of God is accepted. This is the standard.”

Afterwards, a group of Arabs and a Durzí Shaykh¹ (a priest or chief of a sect originally Muslim), went to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and he talked to them about the sublime qualities of the world of humanity. He said: “Generosity, courage, faithfulness, truthfulness, etc., are all shining stars and brilliant planets. They are the cause of the illumination of hearts, of the assurance of souls, of the honour and dignity of man in this world and in the Kingdom.”

Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to the believers about the station of sanctity and severance. He said, “In this station, the souls are tested. This is what Bahá’u’lláh said: ‘By the life of God! all shall be sifted just as the wheat is separated from the tares. In a sieve they shall be cleaned and purified from dust and chaff’. Likewise, those whose actions are good, will be distinguished from the others. Therefore, in every cycle when a sifting and a great testing occur, all (the violators) will fall away except the sincere souls, who come under the shadow of the Word of God. The sea does not accept the dead. The souls who come under the shadow of the Cause of God are holy and purified from all superstitions. Consider the blessed souls who were sent forth into Persia during the beginning of the Revelation. All have sacrificed their lives, given up their possessions and homes, in the path of God. But on the other hand, the deniers, who arose in opposition, became occupied in vain pursuits and, night and day, thought only of fame and easy life. Their hearts were not pure and their souls were waning in hopes and desires. This happens in every cycle. ‘Can light and darkness exist at the same time?’”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the Sea of Galilee

6 June 1914.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá uttered the following words to a Persian family known as Falláh,² who went to visit him at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee:

“In all the cities, the friends who are firm and steadfast, become the cause of guidance and illumination of the people. They endeavour to elevate the hearts and to enlighten the minds. For example, an arid valley, deserts of sand and waterless mountains which were near the equator and subject to intense heat, became the light of all the horizons and the pilgrimage of the people of the [IX:10:108] world, when it was illumined by the coming of His Highness the Messenger—May my soul be a ransom to him and his friends! How much it is advanced! In the beginning it was an insignificant village and now it is the mother of the cities (Mecca).”

¹ Durzí (Druze), pl. Durúz.

² Tiller of the soil, husbandman; peasant, farmer, fellah.

8 June 1914.

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab read to 'Abdu'l-Bahá an article from the *Christian Commonwealth*, in which there was an appeal to Christianity to cease its useless ceremonies and to return to its original simplicity and spirituality. The article spoke also of a minister who courageously said to an assembly of ministers that "the time had now come for us to be ashamed of receiving high salaries and to be living in such comfort and luxury while the poor are left in such misery. We must leave the thoughts of our desires and become self-sacrificing." 'Abdu'l-Bahá then said:

"They talk of doing, but they do not act. They think it would be easy to do this. They do not understand the meaning of martyrdom or self-sacrifice. As soon as a needle pricks the hand, their cries reach the heavens. There is no comparison between these souls and the sanctity and the self-sacrifice of the disciples of His Holiness Christ. They do not even breathe alike. It is the Bahá'ís who walk in the footsteps of Christ and his disciples. They endure such calamities, hardships of hunger and thirst, prison, murder, persecution and malice. They have endured all sufferings. These men of passion and desire—how can they do such things? There was an ákhúnd (Muslim priest) who thought that one of his fingers had become unclean and could not be purified. He went to a butcher and said, 'Come thou and cut off my finger. I do not want it.' The butcher replied, 'This is impossible. It is not easy to cut off a finger. The blood will flow like a fountain and there will be severe pain.' The akhúnd¹ replied, 'No! there is only one way and that is that thou shouldst cut.' When the butcher considered the akhúnd's great persistence he replied, 'Very well. Put thou thy hand on this block.' Then with the back of his knife, he pressed upon the finger. Suddenly the akhúnd pulled away his hand and began to scream, 'Ouch! thou hast cut my hand! What an oppressor and unjust man! How cruel and unmerciful thou art!' Briefly, it is very easy to write and to speak upon these matters, [IX:10:109] but it is hard to put them into action. Twenty years ago, this thought, that they must go out to teach as the disciples of Christ had done, was widespread among the Christians. Three or four persons went forth, but they could not endure it for more than two or three months."

One of the believers asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá to explain what is meant by the special indulgence (in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*) during the holidays. To this he replied: "Bad conduct or deeds are not allowed at any time and especially during the Feast. But those are the days of happiness, days of joy and gladness. This is from the verses that shall be known afterwards. For example, it is bad not to work on other days, but in these days of feasts, work must be abandoned. But it does not mean that it is permissible to drink liquor or commit immoral deeds. Those days are the days of forgiveness and pardon, days of cheer and enjoyment, days of affection and attraction, days of blessings. Such deeds as may become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity must be manifested by man."

To some of the visitors who were leaving for Haifa, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "God willing, ye shall be always under the protection of the Truth. In your behalf, I seek favour and bounty from the Blessed Beauty. Rest ye assured. I am happy that ye shall be confirmed in everything. I am pleased with ye and shall never forget ye. Convey the wonderful Abhá greetings to every one of the friends of God. Call them to steadfastness and firmness in the Cause of God so that the calamities and hardships may not become the cause of their relaxation. Should the sea of tests become almost overwhelming, it must not have any effect upon them. Consider ye that after His Holiness the Spirit (Christ), the disciples did not stop for a moment nor did they choose rest for themselves. They strove night and day. Then it is evident how much we must show self-sacrifice, service and steadfastness to the Most Holy Threshold! If the disciples had not been firm, after the departure of His Holiness the Christ, his Cause would have been utterly

¹ Akhwánd, akhúnd (also ákhúnd), tutor, master, preacher.

effaced and made non-existent. Now, the friends of God must be likewise firm and exercise effort and zeal in teaching the Cause of God. They may rest assured that the safety, protection, confirmation and assistance of the Blessed Beauty shall reach them. They must not be shaken by anything. Night and day, I pray in their behalf.”

Mr E. M. Newman, one of the best known and most eloquent American lecturers, who spends five months of the year travelling in different countries, collecting the moving picture photographs of famous people and places to accompany his talks, came to the Holy Land in 1914. He went to ‘Akká to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Not finding him there, he proceeded to Tiberias, where he and his party of two men and one lady, met and talked with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They asked questions about the purpose of the Bahá’í Religion, to which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “The purpose of this Cause is the investigation of Reality and the oneness of all religions. Bahá’u’lláh accepted fifty years of banishment, persecution and imprisonment for these divine principles. Now, praise be to God, His teachings have illumined the horizons of the East, delivered the souls and minds from worthless limitations, elevated the signs of guidance and united the East and the West with a spiritual power.”

Among a number of Persian believers who came to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was one from the city of Yazd, where (some years ago) a great number of Bahá’ís had been martyred. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inquired about the friends in Yazd and Ṭīhrán saying: “How are the friends of God? Are they enkindled and attracted? Those souls who arose against the Cause and brought about dissensions [IX:10:110] and corruptions, who brought hardships and afflictions upon the friends, think that they shall attain the greatest ease and happiness. But they have failed and lost all and their own households have been scattered to the winds. What have the people of Persia to say? All of this they have seen with their own eyes. With their ears, they have heard that no trace is left of a soul, who had enmity towards the friends of God. Are they not yet awakened? Have they not yet arisen from the sleep of heedlessness?”

After having talked on the subject of Socialism from a Bahá’í standpoint to a minister who had come to see him, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “His Holiness the Christ came to spread the law of love. The appearance of the Messengers and the revelation of the Books were for the promulgation of the law of love. But the souls with self-interest have made religion the cause of hate and animosity. They have stirred up among mankind quarrels and strife. Why should we oppress or be unjust to other religions? Why should we not love one another? Why should we curse and execrate? Every one of us must be the centre of love, the sun of love, the sea of love, the star of love, the light of love and the heaven of love. We must be kind to all, wish no evil to anyone and know that all humanity is from one progeny.”

9 June 1914.

The following tablet was revealed today for the friends in the Orient, at Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee:

HE IS GOD!

“With regard to the assembly, there must be spiritual consultation therein; discourses about the manifestation of the Greatest Orb, the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, the greatness of the blessed Cause, the power and penetration of the Word of God, the might of the divine Covenant and Testament must be mentioned. This will be conducive to the spirituality and illumination of the hearts. Every discussion besides this, will not give complete results. Therefore, you must have no secrets in your assembly and no word should be spoken that, were it made public, might be the cause of depression or sorrow to any soul.

“The utterances of all must be concentrated in consultations concerning teaching and the promulgation of the Cause of God. In this way, there will be no secrets that might be spread.

We have nothing to conceal, thanks be to God. We are famous for our devotion and all of the creatures jeer at us for our love in the path of God. Besides this we have no aim. It is impossible to have a secret that will not spread. It has been tried many times, especially when among a number of souls. It is said that every secret going beyond two people will go farther, because every member of the assembly must have a confidant in whom he has perfect trust, and oneness of condition. That person also has a confidant and, unquestionably, will not keep it from him. Therefore, it is much better not to have among you privacy and secrecy. May all of our secrets be a sacrifice to the secret of Bahá, and all of our confidentials be a ransom to Him. The secrets of Bahá are: The oneness of the world of humanity, universal love, mercy and compassion to the broken-hearted, sympathy to the suffering, peace and happiness to the world of humanity, merciful breath, attraction to the fragrance of God, severance of the heart from attachment to the transitory world, liberty, purity, relief from worries and anxieties of the earth, etc. Should such secrets spread they would become the cause of the life of the world."

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

11 June 1914.

'Abdu'l-Bahá went to bid farewell to Mr Newman and his companions. He said: "I pray that God may aid your [IX:10:111] journeys and that you may return to America with the utmost happiness and safety. May you be confirmed in a great service to the world of humanity. I shall think of you continually and I shall never forget this meeting at Tiberias."

In the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sat near the window at the hotel and revealed tablets for two of the friends who had departed from this mortal world. The following is for the family of an old believer known as 'Abdu'-r-Razzáq:

"O my Lord, confirm these Thy servants and maid-servants with Thy ever increasing mercy and complete bounty, ordain for all of them immersion in the seas of Thy mercy, attainment to Thy generosity and bestowal, fulfilment of Thy greatest hopes, possession of Thy grandest gifts and bounty in the beginning and in the end, so that the angels of Thy mercy may commune with them in the mornings and in the evenings. Verily, Thou art the Beloved, the Generous!"

The following is for Yúsuf (Joseph), the father of a believer known as 'Abdu'l-Ghaní:

"O my God! O my God! Verily, Thy slave, Joseph, the faithful, ascended to Thy supreme heaven hoping for Thy innumerable favours. O Lord! reach him with Thy forgiveness and pardon, O my Lord, the Merciful! Usher him to the summit of paradise. Verily, Thou art the Kind, the Bestower, and verily, Thou art the Generous, the Forgiver."

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to the pilgrims about the days of Christ and how he walked alone near the animals on the shore of Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee); and concerning the people, how they were prevented from seeing and knowing the Manifestation of God through their blindness, in these days. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "The Supreme Báb was the promised one of the Qur'án, with regard to the question of the Seal of the Prophets. Muḥammad was known as the Seal of the Prophets. (The Muslims think this title means that no prophet will appear after Muḥammad.) This belief is not only limited to the Muslims. The Jews believed that Moses was the Seal of the Prophets, that he sealed the prophethood of Laws. The Christians believe that after Christ, no prophet with Laws will come, but that Christ himself will descend from heaven. Yes, these creatures are not waiting for the manifestation of the Truth, they are waiting for the manifestation of their own superstitions. For example, the Muslims are waiting for the Dajjál (false Christ or anti-Christ) more than for the Qá'im (the Forerunner or Precursor of the Manifestation). They do not associate the appearance of the anti-Christ with

the Forerunner. Nay, rather they associate the appearance of the Forerunner with the appearance of the anti-Christ. This (the anti-Christ) is known to them as unlimited or independent, the Forerunner as limited and dependent.”

12 June 1914.

When speaking of readiness, capacity and purity of hearts, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Should a black stone be placed facing the light of the sun, the signs of brilliancy would not appear, but, in the pure mirror, the sun, with all of its attributes and perfections, becomes reflected instantly.”

Some Zoroastrian friend brought fruits and vegetables for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but he ate only bread and hot milk. Then he sat on the balcony facing the Sea of Galilee. A long letter was read from Mrs Lua M. Getsinger, saying that she was confirmed in giving the message to more than one thousand people at a meeting in India, that she answered all of the questions asked by Muslim and Zoroastrian nobles; also good news about the spreading of the Cause was received from Chicago, Washington, New York, London and Stuttgart, all [IX:10:112] of which became the cause of joy to his blessed heart.

13 June 1914.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá made the following statements concerning man’s duty: “Man must be qualified with the attributes of the Kingdom. Man must characterize himself with the characteristics of the Merciful. Man must be the source of the perfections of God. Man must be good personified. Man must be the cause of comfort and ease to human society. Man must be the fountain of the signs (or verses) of guidance. Man must endeavour and strive for the progress and advancement of all of the people. Man must be self-sacrificing in serving the Cause of God and spreading the fragrances of God. Man must not think of himself, he must think of others.”

Again ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sat, for about two hours, on the balcony of the hotel, speaking to the visitors on various subjects. The mayor, the judge and other eminent officials of Tiberias were present, and all were exhilarated by his utterances. Then, as the lake reflected the wonder of the rising moon and the stars—the beauty of the creator—‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to the friends: “His Holiness Christ, used to walk most of the nights when in the region of this lake. He was all alone, thinking of the illumination of the world of humanity. He did not rest for one moment. He was not at liberty for even one day. He spent his days as a wanderer, and was shelterless in these deserts and mountains. The place where he called the disciples to enter the Kingdom of God is in this region. They were engaged in fishing. His Holiness Christ, used to walk alone on the shore. When he saw the signs of acceptance in their faces, he said, ‘Come, so that I may make you the fishers of men’, and they at once left everything and followed that Light personified!

“God be exalted! Always, in the beginning of the Cause, common souls, who in the estimation of the people, were of no importance whatever, have advanced to the divine Manifestation. For example, these fishermen believed in His Holiness Christ. In the Qur’án it is revealed that the ignorant of the people would say to His Holiness the Messenger (Muḥammad), ‘None have followed thee except the most degraded of the people; the learned sages, the nobles and the high class count thee as a fool.’ However, it cannot be said of this Cause, for everyone testifies that all of the learned philosophers and nobles of every nation were humble in the presence of the Blessed Beauty, and great numbers of these became believers.”

14 June 1914.

The following tablet was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for one of the friends who had lost his daughter: “Beloved, the horrible and awful news of the departure of the daughter of that beloved became the cause of intense grief, because, undoubtedly, separation has a bitter taste; yet the people of the effulgences are happy by the favours of the Beloved of the Horizons, because the Lord of the Covenant has ordained eternal union, and everlasting unity for His friends. Therefore, this temporary separation, although it causes sorrow, yet, the infinite nearness and the heavenly union is the comfort for the hearts of the afflicted; although at present we are separated, confused, in anguish and helpless, yet, in the end, we will be His companions, His associates, joining in His melodious song and under His kind shelter. Therefore, thou shouldst not be grieved and saddened; comfort thyself with the infinite favour and the glad tidings of the heavenly life.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá listened, for about two hours, to the reading of letters received [IX:10:115] from America, and other parts of the world. It was mentioned that three ministers happily invited the Bahá’ís to speak and teach in their churches, concerning which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“Such incidents are so frequent now that they have lost their significance. There was a time when, if one heard a word of commendation from a minister, he was astonished. But now they come and invite the friends (Bahá’ís). This is only through the confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá.”

15 June 1914.

News of the marriage of Núrí, son of Akkash Effendi,¹ who lives in Aintab,² Asia Minor, was received, and the following tablet was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “My illumined Núrí! According to what is mentioned, with abundant joy through the bounty of the One whose favours are concealed, a wedding was celebrated in the utmost splendour; happiness and rejoicing were obtained. Although, outwardly, I was not present at that reception, yet with heart and soul I was in the companionship of that assembly, with equal pleasure and cheerfulness I was with the zealous friends. Therefore, I present congratulations and felicitations on the occurrence of such a blessed marriage. From the Ancient, the Living, my hope is that a happy family may be established, so that through ages and centuries it may become the cause of spreading the Light.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then revealed the following tablet to an American believer regarding the care of the orphans: “In this blessed Cause, the matter of the orphans has a great importance. The orphans must be greatly cherished, trained, taught and educated, especially in the teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. As much as possible, every orphan must be taught. I ask God that thou mayst become a kind father and mother to the orphan children. With the fragrances of [IX:10:116] the Holy Spirit thou mayest revive them so that they may reach maturity and that every one may become the real servant of the world of humanity, nay, rather, an illumined candle.”

In the evening, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to the believers regarding Persia, as follows: “The Cause appeared in Persia. The blood of so many martyrs was shed in Persia that, unquestionably, signs will appear. The Persians, for the safety and progress of the nation, have experimented during late years in several forms of government. First, independence and despotism, which resulted in destruction and oppression; then the constitution was established, the only effect of which was devastation and helplessness. The next step was to organize parties such as

¹ ‘Akásh (or ‘Akash)? Afandí.

² Gaziantep, city (37.068339, 37.386658) previously and still informally called ‘Ayntáb (Aintab) or Antep, located in the westernmost part of Turkey’s South-eastern Anatolia Region.

democrat, union and others; from these, too, there were no results. The constitution is very good, but the Persians did not realize any fruit thereof. Now, there is no way left to save Persia except through this Revelation. This is a Cause that has set all of the horizons in motion, and has made all humble. This Cause will be the means of progress, elevation and education of Persia. If from the beginning when His Holiness the Supreme (the Báb) appeared, Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí (the prime minister of Persia, who caused the martyrdom of the Báb, and in the Orient is known as Dajjál, meaning anti-Christ or false Christ) and others, had not resisted this Cause, Persia would now have been the first country in the world and distinguished in every way.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Haifa

16 June 1914.

After staying a period of six weeks in Tiberias and other towns, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá decided to return to Haifa. For a few moments he spoke to the friends about the Persian government: “In the laws of God the constitutional government is the law, but the electors of the people must abide by the conditions of the constitution; if they do not, destruction and misery will be more prevalent than before. We advised them according to our knowledge, but they did not listen or accept. In Europe I have met many chiefs, princes and ministers, advised them extensively and have said to them all that should be said.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then boarded the train for Haifa. There were some military officers in his stateroom. When they learned who he was, they showed him the greatest consideration all the way through. As the train reached Haifa, all of the believers were waiting in the station with longing and yearning, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s arrival was like unto the return of the soul to the body!

In the evening the friends gathered in the blessed home and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave them the following talk: “I went to Tiberias; this time my going was very long. Tiberias is an isolated spot. It is a quiet place; there is not a noise or voice; it is as though man finds a dwelling in the desert. It is situated in a byway, the place where His Holiness Christ—May my soul be a sacrifice to him!—was constantly travelling and moving. When man walks there, he thinks of those days when His Holiness Christ, was wont to walk there and teach the disciples. The place where he first proclaimed his Cause is near Tiberias, and is known as “the hill of home’. There was a temple built where His Holiness Christ, entered and spoke. It is greatly esteemed by the Christians. During the days of the Crusaders it was destroyed, but its foundation remains, and it is a holy place. The effect of the word of Truth is so wonderful, but the Jews there are fanatical, selfish and filled with self-pride. The American Jews are very intelligent people. They listened to what- [IX:10:117] ever was said to them, but these Jews never listened. One day I related the talk that I delivered in the synagogue of the Jews in America to a Rabbi in Tiberias. When I looked into his face, I saw no sign of intelligence. What a difference among the souls who comprehend and those who are utterly deprived of the bestowals of God!”

His honour Dr Ardashír, one of the Zoroastrian Bahá’ís of India, went to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá before leaving the Orient for America. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “Perchance, God willing, a new spirituality, a beautiful fragrance, zeal and stirring enthusiasm may become manifest in India. India is exceedingly ready, but the appearance of these is dependent upon the attraction and the enkindlement of the friends. In this day, the confirmation of God will reach everyone who arises to teach. Many instances of this are happening continuously. Indeed, the confirmation surrounding him will amaze man himself.

“The light of the love of God must be ignited in the hearts of the children, during their childhood. When a child is reared in the shadow of divine education, truth is mentioned to him day by day. The Blessed Beauty, the teachings, the history of this Cause and of the divine

prophets are taught him and then faith finds its place in his heart. Therefore, from this moment you must bring your brother under the system of the divine education. Speak to him of the love and the knowledge of God. Should a child be left without training and remain in his original state, he becomes like unto an animal and is a slave of nature.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, welcoming Sháhu’lláh Khán, who came from Afghanistan, said, “In ancient history, they have praised and lauded the city of Samarqand. It is the city of Prince Tímúr. But at present, it is entirely changed and transformed. ... This blessed Cause has such power and penetration that it will spread into all parts of the world. I am hopeful that in Afghanistan it will be of great effect. The gentlemen of Afghanistan are active. They are warm blooded. In their blood, there is power and heat. Therefore, you see that although the Muslim governments are in a state of chaos, Afghanistan is protecting itself as much as possible.”

When someone mentioned the name of the late Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan Khurásání of Cairo, Egypt, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “In justice to him, he served the Cause very much. He helped the friends everywhere. He had zeal and enthusiasm. He assisted everybody.”

On the subject of consultation, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “Man must consult with a trustworthy and wise person. His Holiness the Messenger (Muḥammad) says, ‘The consulted is trusted’. Therefore, if man does not consult with a trustworthy, wise person, his own mind becomes confused. When man’s thoughts are scattered, he falls into many troubles. But if he concentrates on one point, then he is relieved on all sides.”

17 June 1914.

A group of believers were strolling in the blessed garden. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent for them and when they came, he seated Mullá Abú Ṭálib, who was very advanced in years, in a chair close to him and said: “Father, how good it is for a man to be bent, to have bedimmed eyes and decrepit bones in the divine Cause.” Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá turned his face toward Agha Gholam’o’llah Ahmadoff,¹ formerly from the city of Meelan, Russia, and said, “The friends in Meelan were self-sacrificing from the beginning of the Cause. They have always endured calamities and hardships in the divine path. They were always firm and steadfast. They were always the cause of the glory of the Cause of God. Never has anything that might cause harm in the Cause, appeared from them.” After [IX:10:118] a while, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “We are continually working hard, writing and writing, encouraging and urging so that the fire of the love of God may be ignited in the hearts. Then suddenly you see one come and put it out.”

On the subject of the Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Endeavour ye night and day that the banner of the Covenant may wave as it should, in those regions. For in this day, the souls reverberate by the power of the Covenant. They become enlivened by the spirit of the Covenant. They move by the call of the Covenant, otherwise they become depressed and inactive as a body without a soul, a lamp without a light.”

18 June 1914.

The following is a tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá today, to the friends in Boston:

“If the tablets of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) such as the *Hidden Words*, *Ishráqát*, *Tajalliyát*, *Glad Tidings*, *Ṭarázát* and the Words are read and *one* of the divine exhortations lived up to[,] man attains to the degree of perfection. He becomes the centre of merciful susceptibilities, the source of human perfection and the lights of the Kingdom will shine from his face and character.”

¹ Áqá Ghulámu’lláh Aḥmadu’aff (Aḥmad ‘Aff).

Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá walked in his room and looking from the window, said, “During the days of youth, man sees the pictures of life in all things wherever he looks, but, as his age advances, he sees the picture of death in everything and that all things have an end. When he looks at the trees he sees that in the end they will dry up. When he looks at the buildings, he sees that finally they too, will be destroyed. If he sees a thickly populated place, he remembers that a time will come when it will be devastated. Briefly, all things inform man of an end.”

Afterwards, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke of the king-of-the-martyrs. He praised him very much and said, “During the life-time of the king-of-the-martyrs, the heart of the Blessed Beauty was in tranquillity for Işfahán (a city in Persia).” Then he related a story, which briefly was this, “One day, one of the opposers hit a dog with a stone, cursed him and called him names, hoping that by so doing, he might bring sorrow to the heart of the king-of-the-martyrs. ‘Write down in thy memorandum that half a mann (mann, a Persian weight, is seven and one-quarter pounds) must be sent daily to this dog, because he was hit by a stone and cursed for our sake,’ commanded the king-of-the-martyrs to his servant. These are the souls who ‘do not speak before He speaks and who do according to His commands.’”

Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá summoned the pilgrims and spoke in detail about assemblies and gatherings in London and Paris. He said: “There was a great commotion in the souls upon hearing my addresses. A seed was sown. God shall make it grow. Undoubtedly, He will make it grow. After 300 years, the seed that was sown by the disciples (of Christ) brought forth its fruit. But, in this day the seeds that the friends of God plant, grow in a short time. This is because of the power of the Cause.”

That afternoon, a feast was held at the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the marriage of Mírzá Munír Zayn with ‘Işmat, daughter of Ibráhím Maşhhadí Fattáh. These were all of the old believers in ‘Akká. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came in and after sitting in silence for a few minutes, he said: “It is one month and a half since I was in the assembly of the friends. Now, things are so arranged that I find myself again in the gathering of the friends. Praise be to God! In this day a double happiness is obtained for the friends of God. The first is that this meeting is held near the Supreme Threshold (at the tomb of the Báb) at the foot of Mt. Carmel, in the utmost joy and fragrance. Such a gathering, at such a place, in the neighbourhood of the Supreme [IX:10:119] Threshold is a great bounty and the cause of great joy. Our hope is this, that from the favours of the Blessed Beauty, we may walk in His path and become confirmed in whatever the duty of servitude in the Holy Threshold might be. Although it is impossible for us to arise in servitude as we should—as the poet says, ‘How can I raise my head for shame that I cannot serve the Beloved in a fitting manner?’—and although we cannot attain it in full degree, yet we should strive. Our hope is this, that although the whole ocean fail to confirm us, we may, through His confirmation, assistance, favour and bounty, be confirmed with *one drop*. The second joy is this, that this is the wedding of Mírzá Munír. Praise be to God, this feast was prepared in the utmost joy, under the shadow of the bounties of the Blessed One. I beg of God that a blessed family may be established which will become hospitable and famous throughout centuries and ages, in servitude to the Holy Threshold. This is the fruit of existence. If the fruit of the existence of man is not the servitude of the Divine Threshold, by God—save whom there is no God!—life is death, existence is non-existence, happiness is ennui, joy is sorrow and regret is the end. If man will only lay his time at His Threshold, then whatsoever is befitting and worthy of this Threshold, will become evident and manifest. This is the fruit of life. This is the result of existence. This is the illumination of the human world. This is the eternal life. This is the everlasting exaltation. This is the heavenly glory.”

20 June 1914.

Whenever news of teaching and spreading the Cause comes from various regions to

'Abdu'l-Bahá, he becomes exceedingly happy. Today, after receiving good news from America, he revealed and sent the following tablet: "Thy letter was received. From its contents, it became evident that, Praise be to God! the lights of the Kingdom are spreading and the souls are listening to the Word. The heedless are being awakened and the blind are seeing. This news became the cause of happiness. In this day, the power of the Kingdom is assisting those who are standing forth in service and who are the cause of guiding the people. A person who is a herald of the Kingdom of Abhá is like unto a lamp and the souls who possess high or lofty ideals are like unto butterflies. When the light is shining, undoubtedly the butterflies gather around it. Therefore, as many of ye as can, call ye to the Kingdom of Abhá so that ye may become near to the Threshold of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and so that the heavenly hosts may assist ye. In this day, the power of the Covenant is the magnetic power in the apex of the horizon. This is the power that moves the world of humanity. This is the power that causes the penetration of the words in the hearts. This is the power that ignites the fire of the love of God. This is the power that brings joy and cheer to the souls."

When Dr Ardashír was in the holy presence, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said jokingly to Mírzá Ḥaydar 'Alí: "Dr Ardashír has learned osteopathy very well. He desires to give you a massage. Are you willing to have him give you a treatment? He claims that if a person is feeling ill, he will make him well; the powerless become powerful and the old will become young!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá praised the people of America because they are worshippers of reality. He said, "They investigate every question. They do not quarrel and dispute. They think mostly of the investigation of truth or reality. America needs teachers who know languages. If there were severed and attracted souls who know the English language and who were skilled in ethics, great results would have been brought about. Like- [IX:10:120] wise, the teacher should know how to adjust his speech according to the exigency of the time and place. Now, if a person goes to Europe and someone asks him, 'What proofs have you concerning the prophethood of His Holiness the Messenger (Muḥammad)?' and he replies, 'The Qur'án', none would accept it. All the regions in the East and in the West are ready, but extraordinary souls who are highly developed in spirituality and refinement, are needed. If my health were good at present, I would not wait one day longer. I would go not only to America but to all parts of the world to cry and call out. Had I been free during the forty years of my imprisonment in 'Akká, I would have travelled to the East, West, North and South of the world. I would not have kept still for one minute and I would have illumined the horizons with the light of the Sun of Reality. And then you would have seen what great results had been obtained.

"There were three islands near the equator in the Indian (Pacific) Ocean. The weather there is very hot. The number of inhabitants was 4,000,000, all of whom were idolators, worshipping the sun and stars. In the ninth century of Islám, one blessed soul went there to serve God and God alone. He was alone and lonely. They inflicted upon him severe injuries, calamities and persecution, but he never ceased in his efforts until he had converted all the inhabitants of those three islands to Islám. Now if such souls could be found, in a short time all those regions (America) would become illumined."

The *North Shore Review*, dated 2 May 1914, reached Haifa and the friends rejoiced in reading the eloquent article on the Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár written by the sincere maid-servant of God, Mrs Isabel Fraser. In the morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about the wicked náqidín (violators of the Covenant). He said: "They go to self-interested strangers. They show unto them love and friendship; but they do not understand that these souls are the enemies of the Blessed Beauty. They go and show their love to the one who is an enemy to the Blessed Beauty. What ignorance! The Blessed Beauty said the following about such people, 'In every minute the wound of atheism and the arrows of infidelity come to me from them.' Also, He said, 'O Thou spirit of God, descend and see that my humiliation is more than Thy grandeur.'"

Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote the following tablet for a martyr from Ardikán, Persia:

HE IS GOD!

“Verily, those who quaffed the cup of the great martyrdom in the path of God, are favoured from the bounty of Thy Lord, the Merciful, the Compassionate. They are the ones whose hearts God has chosen for His love. Their faces are shining with the light of God in the paradise of the rose-garden. The angels of mercy receive them and announce to them the glad tidings of holy resting places and of the canopy of sincerity in the Kingdom of their generous Lord. Their enemies will be repulsed and degraded to the lowest of the lowest as thou hast seen others in manifest loss. Verily, there is in this an example for those who are mindful. God shall do away with the helpers of the unjust.

“O my Lord, confirm the relatives of these martyrs in serving Thy Cause, elevating Thy Word, spreading Thy Religion, igniting Thy Love in the hearts of Thy servants and guide those who are lost in the wilderness of error. Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Dear, the Exalted!”

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IX:11, 27 September 1918 [IX:11:121]

Talks by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Holy Land (continued)¹

The following compilation of some of the utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá after his return to the Holy Land from America, Europe and Egypt.

Translated by Dr DÍYÁ’ M. Baghdádí

In the evening ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke the following to the friends: “There were blessed souls during the early days of the Cause in the city of Naráq, Persia, such as Hájí Kamálu’d-Dín and his brother Mírzá Maḥmúd. They were the nephews of Hájí Mullá Muḥammad Mujtahid (a Muslim high priest). Although their uncle was very influential and the Mujtahid of Káshán and although he was very bitter in his enmity and hatred, all of his efforts to drive them away from the Cause only increased their faith.

“Hájí Kamálu’d-Dín, a great personage, was severed, trusting and free from all imitations. He was the nephew of Mullá Ahmad Naráqí and he was respected and esteemed in the city of Naráq. Immediately after he became a believer, the enemies arose against him until he was compelled to leave Naráq and go to Baghdád. Here at the edge of the bridge, where pilgrims pass, he opened a grocery store. He was so severed that he did not even give attention to the pilgrims who were going or coming from Káshán. He never gave thought to this idea, ‘I am the nephew of Mullá Ahmad Naráqí. I was honoured, respected and dignified. It is not becoming that these people should see me now in the grocery business.’ Nay, rather he was in the utmost joy. Later on the members of his household became very successful.

“When he heard that the Blessed Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) had gone from Baghdád to Kázimayn, although the distance was great, he travelled it on foot because he could not afford to pay the route-fare of a half ‘Abbásí (about half a cent). But his face was aglow with joy and happiness. He was indeed of the essence of existence. Such souls possess freedom and live in another world and condition. Their lives were not even for a moment in safety. Yet they lived in loving assurance. That is, although they expected any minute to be killed, they never thought of any fear. The majority of the friends in those days were waiting for martyrdom. They never thought of rest. They waited anxiously for the day when they could clasp the intoxicating cup of the wine of great martyrdom and for the hour when they would step forth into the arena of sacrifice, to lay their lives on the altar of love.”

¹ Previous sections are in XI:2, pp. 17–19, 23–24; XI:3, pp. 25–31, 34–38; and XI:10, pp. 105–112.

21 June 1914.

The students of Beirut College, some of whom were graduates of the medical college and some from the high school, arrived in Haifa to spend their [IX:11:122] vacation. The next morning they went to the garden and met 'Abdu'l-Bahá. With joy and praise he said to them: "The Bahá'í students in Beirut have so conducted themselves, both within and without the college, that even the Protestants and members of the faculty have testified to their superiority. He who is possessed of good behaviour is always happy, always at ease and every soul becomes attracted to him. There is nothing better than good conduct. A few years ago some young men from 'Akká entered Beirut College and so conducted themselves that everyone complained of them. They accomplished nothing and were finally expelled."

This same afternoon there was a wedding feast for Isfandíyár, a Zoroastrian believer from Bombay, India, and the daughter of Jamshíd, the gardener of Firdaws (the Garden of Paradise in 'Akká). In the afternoon there was a big meeting at which two American ladies were present. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told of some of the difficulties encountered in the early days, speaking thus: "I remember when I was a child in Tíhrán, that if two of the friends desired to meet they had to do so at midnight. It was impossible to see one another in daylight. Even if they accidentally met on the street, they dared show no sign of recognition. They saw each other only under the cover of night, and then always with the greatest precaution in going to one another's house. They guarded very carefully against being observed by anyone. In those days, the people of Persia considered the Cause of God entirely wiped out, and that all of the Bahá'ís had been killed and their homes destroyed. But, today, in spite of the deniers, and the opposers, under the shadow of the favours and bounties of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) in the neighbourhood of the Supreme Threshold, at the foot of Mt. Carmel, such gatherings and meetings are being held, blessed verses are being chanted, engagements and weddings are being celebrated, and happiness and pleasure is abounding among the believers. Praise be to God, this is a gathering of utmost spirituality, the hearts are turning to the Blessed Beauty; the souls are rejoicing in the glad tidings of God. His mention is their only thought. He their only sign. All of the friends are His servants. What a great bounty! Such a gathering, such a place at such a time was inconceivable to any of those in the early days."

In describing the imprisonment of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh), 'Abdu'l-Bahá added: "What days were those! They were days of great tests, self-sacrifice, absolute spirituality, severance, attraction and enkindlement. The physical conditions were insignificant. The friends were filled with the Spirit. They did not seem to be of this world, although they walked upon the earth, they were in the Supreme Concourse. They possessed another world. They were submerged in the ocean of severance. Souls could not be more attracted or enkindled than these. I hope that, God willing, this wedding will be happy and blessed through the infinite blessings of the Kingdom of Abhá. May they be under the protection of the Blessed Beauty. May the heavenly blessing descend upon them, the light of the Kingdom shine upon them and may they establish a new spiritual home. This is my hope."

23 June 1914.

'Abdu'l-Bahá spent the entire day in writing about fifteen tablets to Persia and America, receiving great numbers of friends and visitors. The military commanders of Damascus and Jerusalem came, too, and invited him to the old Holy City, Jerusalem. His answer to them was, "Inshá'alláh" ("If God is willing").

24 June 1914.

After the departure of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh), 'Abdu'l-Bahá showed and proved to

the Bahá'ís throughout the world that teaching the [IX:11:123] Cause of God is the greatest of all services. Therefore, whenever he hears of the splendid work achieved by the active teachers his face radiates with eternal happiness, and the signs of perfect joy become manifest in his bearing. The following tablet revealed by him that day illustrates this fact:

“Thy letter was received. Praise be to God, it contained the glad tidings of the firmness and uprightness of the friends of God. Because all are self-sacrificing in the field of teaching, have unloosened their tongues in the glorification of the Beloved of the horizons, have become the cause of leading the misguided people, they have throbbing hearts and singing souls. Spiritual happiness was obtained by such joyful news. Thanks be to God, the friends in ____ have become free from separation, all have become harmoniously united, and are sacrificing their souls in the path of the Blessed Beauty. This is the greatest attribute of the human world; this is the ultimate bestowal of the Merciful One; this is the magnet of assistance and protection of His Holiness, The Single; this is the attracting force of the reinforcement from the Kingdom of Majesty. Therefore, my hope is that, day by day, the light of guidance may flood the world, and the east and the west of Persia may become illumined and enlightened.”

25 June 1914.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the following advice to the friends who visited him in the morning: “If the friends of God listen to my first word, they will find the success of this and of the next world therein. But there are some who prefer their own thoughts above mine, and when they fall they beg me to save them. Progress and prosperity are in the first word. For example, should I say to so and so, ‘Go thou to America’, and should he reply, ‘I beg to remain a few days more’, I give him permission to do as he wishes. But this is not my thought; it is his thought. All of the opinions in the world are useless for the believers. I am the one whose heart burns for them and who sympathizes with them. I wish for them absolute good. I desire for them ideal advancement.”

Then he turned to a young Bahá'í student who recently arrived from Egypt, where he had been studying, and said, “Thou shouldst strive day and night, so that the fire of the love of God may become more enkindled in thy heart, day by day thy servitude to the Holy Threshold become more increased, day by day thy attachment to the Kingdom of God become stronger. If thou dost this thou shalt obtain great results from all of the studies; otherwise thou shalt not see any benefit.”

26 June 1914.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the following talk to the Persian believers: “Most of the Persian ‘ulamá (clergymen) became the cause of destruction and the casting of Persia to the winds. The ‘ulamá of every sect must act in accordance with the requirements of religion, the first of which is that they must believe in God, turn to God and be severed from all else save God. Such ‘ulamá are the illumined lamps of guidance and the stars of the heaven of mercy. But when some ‘ulamá enter a school their aim is leadership, to obtain fame, to gather luxuries and worldly possessions. They are like the disease, caboose (influenza),¹ that attacks man with helplessness and heaviness, during sleep, as though a mountain had fallen upon him and he was unable to move. Now, these learned men are similar to the disease that is attacking the body of the people. The requirements for the ‘ulamá are mentioned in the traditions. It is said by the prophet Muḥammad, ‘Let the public follow whomsoever of the learned controls himself, protects his religion, opposes his desire and obeys the command of his Lord’; that means the [IX:11:124] learned who controls himself from corruption and negligence, opposes

¹ Original used the word caboose (kábús) which means nightmare rather than influenza. See note in vol. IX:19, p. 230.

his own desire and passion, protects religion and the divine commands, fulfils the requirements.' The souls must follow the judgement of such an one regarding laws and by-laws. Shaykh Murtidá, indeed, was strictly religious. Once at noontime prayer, a group of people were praying in the mosque at Kázimayn, under the leadership of ákhúnds¹ (Muslim priests). At such a time Shaykh Murtidá arrived. He spread his cloak in the front hall and began to pray. Suddenly, thousands of the people left the ákhúnds and swept from all directions, standing in rows to pray under the leadership of Shaykh Murtidá. He had to employ seven muezzins (men who call the people to prayer from the tower of the mosque). He was trusted and strongly religious. Indeed, he used to work with honesty. No matter how much the people questioned about this Revelation, he answered according to his belief, 'I have not yet investigated this Cause. Go and investigate for yourselves.' The Shaykh never said any unsuitable word. On one occasion the 'ulamá united with the Persian consul in Baghdád and planned sedition. They sent for all of the 'ulamá of Karbilá and Najaf, also Shaykh Murtidá, perhaps he, too, would come to Baghdád. It happened that while on the road he fell and dislocated his shoulder. Although the leaders persisted in asking his opinion about the Cause, his only reply was, 'I do not think that it is my duty to interfere in this matter.'

"During those thrilling times, the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, never changed his attitude. Every day, as usual, he went to the bank of the Tigris river, accompanied only by Áqá Mírzá Muḥammad Qulí. No matter how much the friends tried to interfere, telling him that the multitudes were rising against him, he paid no attention. One day when Bahá'u'lláh was walking in the reception room, two of the hypocrites who, at heart, were with the 'ulamá, but who claimed to be sincere, went into the blessed presence. A number of the friends were there to whom Bahá'u'lláh said: 'All of the 'ulamá are urging others from Najaf and Karbilá to wage a holy war upon us.' Then, facing the two hypocrites, he said, 'By God! There is no God but Him, I do not need to send more than two persons to chase them to Kázimayn!' Shaykh Murtidá sent the following statement: 'I did not know anything about the aims of these people; I pray in your behalf.' He was such a religious man, he never gathered luxuries, enormous funds were sent him from India, [IX:11:125] but it was all spent on the poor; nothing was left after his death. How wonderful, indeed, were those days in Baghdád! Every one of the friends, through the favour and bounty of the Blessed Beauty, was in the utmost firmness and uprightness. How radiant were their faces! How merciful were their hearts! How severed and attracted they were!"

27 June 1914.

'Abdu'l-Bahá sent for an illumined young man, named Mírzá Ḥabíbu'lláh who was one of the visitors from Turkistán, Russia, serving for about nine months in the house of the pilgrims. Upon his appearance, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the young man permission to return to Merv² and 'Ishqábád, with the following words of farewell: "Indeed, thou hast served all this time with thy heart and soul. Now, too, wherever thou mayest be thou shalt serve the Cause. The aim is to serve and to obtain the divine good pleasure, not a place or station. Praise be to God! Thou are confirmed and I am also pleased with thee."

In the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent for the pilgrims. He talked to them concerning the spies of Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, as follows: "The Sulṭán sent his spies in different guise in order that they might investigate. It was very strange. Although we were in prison, yet he was still troubled. Each time he placed a different guard and spy. ... In past cycles the argument was complete, but in this Cause it is perfect. In the cycle of the Blessed Beauty, the events themselves are irrefutable proofs and complete arguments. For example, notwithstanding the

¹ Plural form: Akhwándahá or Akhúndahá?

² Marw or Marv.

hate and enmity of the Sháh of Persia and the Sultán of Turkey, Náṣiri'd-Dín and 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, exile and severe imprisonment, yet the Blessed Beauty elevated his Cause. This may be likened to a blessed bird that remains protected even under the claws of a thousand birds of prey, or the safety of a lamb among a hundred-thousand wolves. Although Bahá'u'lláh was physically a prisoner, yet all were humble and meek at the Most Holy Threshold, with a reverence indescribable."

The following is a tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to friends in Paris, France:

"O ye friends of God and maid-servants of the Merciful! The congratulations for the anniversary of the declaration of His Holiness, the beauty of the First Point, the Báb, was received. I became exceedingly happy that such a great celebration occurred in Paris. All of the souls are either occupied in pleasure, play, or united in gathering worldly luxuries, and intoxicated with the melody of the world of nature. But the friends of God have held a heavenly feast and celebrated the anniversary of the appearance of the Dawn of Guidance, the Báb. How much this is the cause of happiness! You became engaged in the commemoration of God, sang the verses of singleness and praised the Sun of Reality with the anthem of the merciful Kingdom. Unquestionably, in the future, feasts will be held uninterruptedly and such a wonderful melody shall arise from Paris as to astonish other countries."

In these days, Mr C. Mason Remey and Mr George Latimer visited Paris, Germany and Holland. They attracted many people in Europe and strengthened the souls in the great Covenant.

After revealing over twenty-five tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the following talk on teaching: "In his days, the Blessed Beauty encouraged everyone whom he favoured to teach. These were indications of his blessed bestowals. It was irrefutable evidence that whomsoever he encouraged to teach, either verbally or by writing, was surrounded by the glances of his bounty. The blessed tablets always were revealed in the names of the teachers. The mention of those who arose to teach with all their power, caused his blessed face to gleam with smiles. The appearance of the signs of happiness at the mention of a name was [IX:11:126] the greatest proof of his favour. He used to say, 'Teachers are the Israfilis (Angels of Life) of God, they breathe the Spirit of Life to the people. One day, Bahá'u'lláh showed such extreme kindness to the teachers that, although I was in the prison, I decided that I, too, might, perhaps, become confirmed in teaching. Thus I entertained the thought of going to Káshghar,¹ because, until then, no teacher had been sent there. I wanted to go singly and alone, without any burden. The only thing that I prepared was a small grip containing some of the blessed tablets, papers and pen. When I took my passport, the late muftí (lawyer who has religious jurisdiction) became my guarantor. I was about to begin my journey when the Mutaṣarrif (mayor) Ibráhím Páshá announced that he would not be impolite or prevent my departure, but according to his responsibility and the discharging of his duty, he would be obliged to send a telegram to Constantinople as soon as I was aboard the boat. The meaning was, that we shall prevent you, but the message was nicely phrased. Therefore, I did not go.

"The purpose is this, that when I permit the pilgrims to return, they may go and teach. It is evident that to remain here one minute is equal to a thousand years elsewhere, but teaching is greater. Whosoever is confirmed in teaching the Cause of God is the servant of the Holy Threshold and he is here also. There is no importance attached to the duration of time here. How many souls had the privilege of paying only three visits during the blessed days of Bahá'u'lláh, yet it seems that they are always present at the Most Holy Threshold. They received infinite bounty with the honour of one or two visits, and how many souls came and remained for a long time, yet returned as they came, the signs of their honour of visit to the

¹ Káshghar is in Khurásán Province.

Most Holy Threshold could not, in any way, be found in their faces. Some visit but once and become new souls.

“During the last days in Adrianople, Áqá Djama¹ and Áqá Mírzá ‘Abdu’r-Raḥím-i-Burújjirdí, twice came to the Most Holy Threshold. After their first visit Bahá’u’lláh said: ‘When Áqá Mírzá ‘Abdu’r-Raḥím entered he was a person, when he left he was transformed.’

“To visit the blessed tomb of Bahá’u’lláh, which is the sacred place of the Supreme Concourse, and the Sublime Threshold, the tomb of the Bá^b, is the greatest hope of the near ones, but in this day teaching and service in the Cause of God are greater and more important than all. Otherwise, it is my wish to have the friends always with me.

“Let all of your thoughts be thus: *To render a service to the Glorious Abhá Threshold, and be utterly selfless. This is the great bestowal!* By God!—There is no God but Him!—should men rule the earth for a thousand years, with utmost power, it would not be equal to one moment of servitude at the Holy Threshold, because that sovereignty of a thousand years will perish and be effaced, while servitude in this Cause, though of only one moment’s duration, is eternal!”

28 June 1914.

Mírzá ‘Alí Akbar Nakhjavání gave a banquet feast for all of the believers in the blessed home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. To the western friends he is known as Mírzá ‘Alí Akbar. After having the honour of [IX:11:127] being in the service of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America, Europe and the Holy Land, he was permitted to return to his home in Russia, accompanied by his bride, Fáṭimah Khánum, sister of Zínat Khánum.² On the occasion of the above mentioned feast, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the following talk:

“During all the blessed days of Bahá’u’lláh, my hope always was that a day would come, perhaps, God willing, when I might travel in a certain direction and, in proportion to my ability, make my utmost effort, as one in the last great struggle of death. But on account of our incarceration, as prisoners, all of that time passed with anguish—because the fruit of existence is, that spiritual motion or activity be obtained from man; that is, he should be moving and not still, flying and not resting. In all of the contingent beings, lack of motion is the cause of death, and motion is the cause of life. At that time I was very disheartened and depressed because I found myself unconfirmed and unassisted in service to the Holy Threshold—that is, hindered by the prison; but because I considered that hindrance was in the blessed path, therefore comfort could be obtained.

“When the ascension of Bahá’u’lláh occurred, the severity of its effect and anguish was to such a degree that it cannot be described. That effect and anguish overcame all other feelings. It left in me no life, will or thought. For a long time I was in such a state of sorrow. Afterward, the fire of dissension became ablaze. (This refers to the náqidín or violators of the Covenant.) All of you know that this, too, hindered me. Later, it was considered that the Cause of God had fallen into great danger. Notwithstanding this I intended to travel, but the government interfered. All of the enemies of the Blessed Beauty attacked from all regions. They believed that the ascension of Bahá’u’lláh was an opportunity for them, and in the utmost power they attacked. In every corner there was an armed enemy. Hatred and fighting were in evidence,

¹ The translator personally knows Áqá Djama¹ [Jamál]. He was one of the famous teachers in Persia, but later he followed the náqidín [Covenant Breakers]. In a short time, his only son was accidentally killed by a horse. He lost all of his possessions. Although the believers left him to himself, yet he could not remain in any of the towns. Finally he became a wanderer and died of shame, regret, remorse and fear. Such is the end of those who violate the Covenant of God!—Dr Díyá’ M. Baghdádí.

² The wife of the translator, Dr Díyá’ M. Baghdádí.—*Editors.*

especially among the Yaḥyáyís (Azalis),¹ who had been always hiding in the holes, without a name, a sign, a voice or calling, and who now became hopeful because of the ascension of the Blessed Beauty, that perhaps they might corrupt the Blessed Cause. They arose with utmost power, especially when the news of dissension (violation) was received. Also, the ‘ulamá and mujtahids (Muslim priests) believed that it was their opportunity and they began to attack. Beside these, the government gave us trouble. Other very hard problems came in the midst, such as the tragedy of Yazd (this refers to the martyrdom of more than 150 of the Bahá’ís in the city of Yazd in Persia). Indeed, on account of that incident my bones collapsed. Although I did not speak a word, yet night and day I did not have rest.

“It is quite evident what we suffered in those days. All of these hindrances became the cause of my disinclination to travel. When freedom was proclaimed (this refers to the freedom of the Turkish Empire from the obsolete monarchy of Sulṭán ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd to the present constitutional government) and exile and prison were over, I thought the time had come to travel, no matter what might happen. Immediately, though I was ill, without the knowledge of any soul, I took the boat and went away, saying, ‘In the Name of God, who moves and stops the ship!’

“The known people of discord (náqidín and enemies) in ‘Akká circulated the report that I had run away, that I feared the Society of Union and Progress, that I was a traitor—I take refuge in God!—and fearfully, chose to escape. God be exalted! In the time of ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd the enemies of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá constantly wrote reports that I was [IX:11:128] in perfect accord with the lovers of liberty, that I had communicated with them and was working against the despotic government. But when liberty was proclaimed they changed the issue and arose with a different calumny: Thus in their report they have written that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes in his letters that ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd was oppressed, and says the same thing of the Sulṭán of Persia; that he encourages and urges the friends to take refuge among the Russians and the British. God be exalted! ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd imprisoned the Blessed Beauty for twenty-five years. He imprisoned me during all of his reign (‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd succeeded to the throne of the Turkish Empire in 1876 and was deposed in 1908). The Blessed Beauty in the *Book of Aqdas*, clearly stated concerning him that he was an oppressor king, in these words, ‘O thou point (Constantinople) situated between the two seas (the Black and Marmara seas), verily, the throne of oppression is set on thee.’

“The Society of Union and Progress became the cause of my liberation. With all of this, how could I say that ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd was oppressed? The truth is that the lovers of liberty became the cause of safety to thousands of souls. Problems of this kind arose because my intention was that, perhaps, God willing, I might become confirmed in service to the Holy Threshold. I did not pay any attention to those reports. I went to Europe and America, and travelled in all of the cities. Through the assistance and bounty of the Blessed Beauty, the call to the Kingdom of Abhá was heralded, and the teachings publicly given. The blessed Cause was proclaimed in temples, churches, meetings and gatherings. No place was omitted. Although I was in the utmost weakness, yet the confirmations of the Blessed Beauty were continuous when I addressed the people and turned to the Kingdom of Abhá. I often spoke for one or two hours without ceasing. Although all of us are like particles, the light of the Blessed Beauty is like unto the rays of the sun. Every particle that falls in sunshine, becomes radiant and grows. Our growth is like the growth of the particles in sunshine. The purpose is that the bounty of the Blessed Beauty is so extensive as to be indescribable.”

Then, after reciting a beautiful poem of love for Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued:

“The breaths of the blessed confirmations were so effective that they melted the hearts and

¹ Yaḥyáy’í, pl. yaḥyáy’iyún.

caused the souls to rejoice in the divine glad tidings. On our own part, it was only an activity similar to a death struggle. Thanks be to God! A seed was planted in the gardens of the hearts that is growing throughout eternity. Blessed souls became enkindled, attracted and arose to serve until we returned to the Holy Threshold in the utmost joy and happiness. Thanks be to God! The friends of God from all regions came to the Holy Threshold and we met and associated with them. From the light in their faces their hearts are reflected. Assurance is obtained that these souls are self-sacrificing in the path of the Blessed Beauty. They have no aim save His good pleasure; they have no thought save spreading His fragrances; in the utmost enkindlement they gathered around the circulating place of the Supreme Concourse; they touched the Thresholds of the Holy Spot (tomb of Bahá'u'lláh) and the Supreme Threshold (the tomb of the Báb) with their heads, and journeyed to their countries. I am hopeful that from their return, great results and glorious signs may be manifest. Now that you are going away (referring to Mírzá 'Alí Akbar and others) you must go likewise with divine power, spiritual glad tidings and attractions.

IX:12, 16 October 1918 [IX:12:129]

Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land (concluded)¹

The following compilation of some of the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá after his return to the Holy Land from America, Europe and Egypt.

Translated by Dr DÍYÁ' M. Baghdádí

“While I was away, the people of discord (enemies and náqidín) endeavoured constantly to unite themselves with a group of people here, working secretly with some and openly with others. After my return they gathered again, and, as in the time of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, wrote reports and made calumnies and sent them to the Turkish government in Constantinople with the hope that they might cause me to go to prison, to be killed or to be exiled. This was their aim.

“The purpose is that the friends of God must not regard me. This Cause is a great Cause; it is the Cause of the Blessed Beauty. A thousand souls like me come and go; it is the same whether they exist or not. The importance is in the Blessed Cause. The friends of God must be firm, growing and steadfast. It is evident that I was and am constantly in danger, and, moreover, I am not always going to be in this world. The day is coming when I shall long to be in the neighbourhood of the Great Mercy!

“The friends of God must be in the utmost uprightness; in their sight there must not be any differences, no wavering should occur. Nay, rather, day by day, their firmness and steadfastness must be increased. Consider the servants of His Holiness Jesus Christ, when all of them departed from this world after his martyrdom, others greater than they arose in service. They showed greater power until the light of guidance illumined the horizons. You, too, must be likewise, and know this as a certainty that the confirmations of the Blessed Beauty will come. By God!—There is no God but Him!—if today one of the weakest creatures begins to serve the Truth, divine confirmations and assistance will surround him. ...

“May you be under the protection of the Blessed Beauty, confirmed and assisted, living in His holy fragrances, and may every one of you become a holy banner in His path. The purpose is that you should not look at me, whether I am present or absent, existing or lost. Be engaged in serving the Cause. Turn to the Blessed Beauty. He will make you independent of any soul. From Him ask reinforcement; be the servants at His door; be supplied from His bestowals; be illumined with His light. May you be protected, guarded and preserved, and rest assured under His shelter. Bahá'u'lláh says, ‘We shall help whosoever arises to assist My Cause, with a host from the Supreme Concourse and a contingent from the near angels.’ This is the real

¹ Previous sections are in XI:2, pp. 17–19, 23–24; XI:3, pp. 25–31, 34–38; XI:10, pp. 105–112; and XI:11, pp. 121–128.

foundation. Consider Áqá Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, how much he as- [IX:12:130] sisted the Cause. In every time and place he was confirmed. By God!—There is no God but Him!—should man become the king of the East and the West, it would not be a particle of benefit to him. The result is nothing but loss. Where is Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh? Where is Muḥammad Sháh? Where is 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd? Where is Bonaparte? Where is Wilhelm? No trace, no fruit! Although these were kings and in the utmost power, their end was manifest loss. This is what we see clearly, therefore strive that we may be upright in the servitude of the Holy Threshold. This is eternal glory, this is everlasting bounty. This is the cause of the illumination of existence of the Kingdom of Abhá! This is the cause of progress to infinite sublimity! Upon you be Bahá'u'l-Abhá! (the Glory of God)”

In the morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the following advice and encouragement to those in his presence: “Today, the friends of God are the illumined candles of the world of humanity; unless the candle burns it will not bestow light. Man must endure if he would obtain treasure. Unless the friends are self-sacrificing, wonderful signs will not become manifest; unless the seed is planted it will not become a fruitful tree; unless the water flows gardens will not become verdant. These are the days of service and not the days of self-concealment. This day is for calling to the Kingdom of God and not for silence. This is the day of firmness and steadfastness, the day of loyalty, not disloyalty. The Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, was fifty years in hardships and afflictions. He quaffed from every cup of calamity and suffered every pain. Then it is evident what the friends should endure and in what manner they should raise the victorious banner of the Cause of God. Easy living is conducive to coldness, and tranquillity and comfort causes the light to be extinguished. Every one of the Bahá'ís must be like unto a globe of fire, and as a blaze of light—dispel the darkness of ignorance with the lights of service, adorn the horizon of the world with brilliant stars, become the sweet-voiced nightingales of the Paradise of Abhá and the holy doves of the Supreme Heaven. Today, the confirmations of the Blessed Beauty are with the soul who utterly forgets himself, constantly investigates his own faults and defects, loosens his tongue in mentioning the good qualities and sublime susceptibilities of others, does not see or hear or speak evil. Goodness personified shines as a sun and wafts as the morning breeze upon the earth. ...

“We are fond of the light of justice from any horizon, and lovers of the beauty of the rose from any garden. His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, has admonished the Bahá'ís, in many tablets, that they should not have religious differences and racial or patriotic prejudices, that they must gather under the banner of the world of humanity. Addressing the world of humanity, Bahá'u'lláh said, ‘O, people of the world! Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. Glory is not for the one who loves his country, but for the one who loves the world.’ If thou desirest the gloom of the world of nature to pass away, thou shouldst illumine the candle of guidance, and if thou seekest a ripe harvest then plant thou a pure seed. If thou wouldst have delicious fruits, plant thou a blessed slip; that is, illumine the heart with the light of the love of God and act according to the exhortations of the Blessed Beauty.”

Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the friends in Khurásán, Persia.¹

HE IS GOD!

“O fragrances of God, waft with perfume! O breezes of God, pass with aroma and seek the valley of the Merciful, the assembly of knowledge, the Sa- [IX:12:131] hara of Khurásán! Become diffused before the friends of God and His faithful ones. Perfume the nostrils of His chosen ones—those whose faces shone forth, whose stars became brilliant, whose feet stood firm, whose banners unfurled, whose hearts grew strong, whose roots and branches flourished, whose breasts dilated in the day of meeting, and who became loyal to the Covenant

¹ Translated by Dr Baghdádí, 9 July 1918 at Chicago, Illinois.

of God in the world of eternity. Then convey thou to the dwellers of those regions and hills, the greetings of thy Lord, the Supreme, and announce to them the glad tidings of the days of God.

“By my Lord! This is a bounty that was desired in the past centuries by the dawning points of lights and stars, and the recipients of the inspiration of thy Lord, the Dear, the Self-subsisting. Their eyes were flooded, their tears flowed, their lamentations arose in yearning and longing for it. May you enjoy this table that has descended from the heaven of the favour of your Lord, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

“O breezes of longing and fragrances from the flowers of faithfulness! Stand in the courtyard of the friends, the rose-garden of whose hearts thrived by the flooding clouds of the love of God, and their faces shone with the light of the knowledge of God. Convey to them my longing, yearning and attachment; declare and announce to them my devotion, affection and fondness in their mention. Say to them:

“Upon ye be Bahá'u'lláh (The Glory of God) and His peace, His greeting and His praise! In your faces are His light and His effulgence. In your hearts are His Spirit and His faithfulness. In your bosoms are His love and His cure. O ye friends of the Merciful! Loosen your tongues in His thanks and praise, for He has confirmed you by the Cause, in the mention of which the Supreme Concourse warbled and the herald of glad tidings proclaimed in the books and tablets.

“Blessed are ye for this great bounty. Glad tidings be unto ye for this wondrous gift which is the full bestowal of God and the manifest light of God. May God make ye torches of His mention, centres of His secrets, dawning-points of His lights and rising points of His signs. Blind are the eyes that do not see the lights or His Bahá (splendour) and are not consoled by witnessing His marvellous signs, in the day of His Manifestation and His brilliant light. Deaf are the ears that do not hear His call and are not cheered by His wondrous utterances. Dumb are the tongues that are not loosened in His mention and His praise. Lost are the hearts that are portionless of His love and devotion. Cast away are the souls that do not walk in His good pleasure and quench their thirst at the fountain of His knowledge.

“O thou dove of faithfulness! Speak to the weak if thou findest that difficulties are intensifying, hardships extending, the earth quaking, the mountains shaking, the hurricanes of afflictions encircling, the sea of calamities surging, the winds of suffering blowing and the flood of tests surrounding the contingent beings. Have beautiful patience in the path of thy Glorious Lord. Beware! O servants of the Merciful, lest ye arouse the tumult when the blaze of the fire of trials become intense, and its crackling arises. Beware of crying and wailing in the path of your Glorious Lord. When the ocean of ordeals becomes stormy and its affairs become serious by the oppression of the rebellious people (this refers to the enemies, the náqidín), do not consider them in a place free from torment, and do not fear their strength and their numbers. Verily, their likes passed before them. Read to them from the book (Qur'án), ‘A Certain Army of the People is Fleeing.’ Verily, those in past centuries were much stronger than these, their possessions were greater and their armies mightier.

“Even though, O lambs of God, ye [IX:12:133] are between the claws of ferocious beasts and the nails of the carnivorous of the earth, do not be discouraged of the Spirit of God. The veil will be removed from the cause of the command of God. This ray will radiate in the horizons of the cities, the signals of oneness will be elevated, the banners of the signs (verses) of your Glorious Lord will wave upon the firm edifice, the structure of doubts will be shaken, the curtain of darkness will be torn asunder; the morn of proofs will dawn and the kingdoms of earth and heaven will shine with the lights of signs.

“You will see the banners of the sects lowered, and their flags reversed, their faces erased

and transfixed, their eyes staring and sunken, their hearts palpitating and failing, their homes empty and vacant, their bodies weak and decayed, and the souls falling into hell!

“By the Life of God! Verily, in the people of Noah, Lot, Thamúd (one of the first Arabian tribes) the Jews, the Tobbaas of Seba,¹ (ancient kings of Yemen in Hijáz, Arabia), the heroes of Baṭhá (Mecca), the kaisers of Fayhá’ (Basra), the Cyruses of Zora (Baghdád),² and in the fables of the ancient centuries, there is an exhortation to the mindful, and persons of innersight who unfold the end of affairs by the beginning of signs. Verily, their planets were scattered, their processions have perished, their faces became dusty, their stars darkened, their roots torn up, their seed crushed, their thrones wrecked, their armies routed, their pillars quivered, their edifices in ruins, their palaces forsaken, their backs broken, their tombs collapsed, their faces ugly, their skin chilled, their shelter swept away and their traces effaced. Look thou at their towns and villages in the desert. When the might of thy Lord came it made them extinguished, arid and devastated. No voice or whisper could be heard. But those who took the neighbourhood of the mercy of thy Lord Abhá (the Most Glorious) as shelter, refuge, asylum and protection, are like the birds who take the twigs of the Sadratu’l-Muntahá (the most distant tree in Paradise, according to the Muslim traditions, no angel or prophet can go beyond the limits of this Tree) as a nest and haunt. God established them in the earth. He made them good leaders, caused their signs to be famous and brought them from the horizon of singleness with lights radiating from their faces.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá dismisses all pilgrims

The 29 June 1914, was a day of great sorrow in Haifa because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá dismissed all of the pilgrims and bade them return to their countries.³ In the morning he spoke to the visitors from ‘Ishqábád, Turkistán, Russia: “Ishqá- [IX:12:134] bád is now a good centre. In the past, Merv was the centre of Khurásán, which is such a vast country including the provinces of Afghanistan, Sistán and Balkh. ‘Ishqábád also is near Merv. The Blessed Beauty often spoke of Khurásán in the tablets, saying that from this country would arise the first mention of God, which amazed the people. When ‘Ishqábád came into existence and the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár was built, the hope of the Blessed Beauty became manifest, and this, the first temple of the Bahá’í world, has become a shelter and refuge to the friends of God. They are drawn hither from all directions and when in difficulty they go to ‘Ishqábád. The friends made a tremendous effort to build this great edifice, they strove with heart and soul. At first it seemed impossible of accomplishment, but, thanks be to God, they were confirmed and assisted. Now, through this inspiration, the friends in all places are planning to build likewise, when it is possible. By founding the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár in the world the wonderful signs of God become manifest and evident. One must be built in every place, even though it be only a house or one rented room, if necessary, under the earth.

“It is very important to establish the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár of God, so that the friends may gather and become engaged in the commemoration of God. This has great importance. The confirmations of God will arrive, as to the friends in ‘Ishqábád. It has dear young men, also old important souls. His honour Afnán (cousin of the Báb) and Áqá Mírzá Maḥmúd (son of Afnán) are there. My heart is exceedingly attached to them. I love Áqá Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-Karím very much. He served constantly. His illness has a wisdom, later it will be manifest. I am hopeful that the districts of Turkistán, Russia, will become illumined, the cry of ‘Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá! (O thou Glorious of the Most Glorious!) will reach the Supreme Zone, and the melody of ‘Yá-Rabbu’l-Álá!’ (O thou the Most Exalted Lord!)⁴ will be carried to all horizons. The school of

¹ Tubbá’ (pl. of tábi’) is the title or family name of the Himyar kings in Yemen of the Hamadán tribe. Seba or Saba’.

² ad-Dawrah is a neighbourhood of southern Baghdád.

³ It is worthy of note that one month later the great pandemic war began, “the war unparalleled in history”.—*The Editors*.

⁴ A reference to the Báb.

‘Ishqábád has great importance. You who are going there, strive that it may become orderly, so that the children may progress. May they reach such a degree in knowledge and sciences that the fame of this school may reach to the horizons. Great effort is necessary to accomplish this. Convey my greeting to every friend of God and become an evident book to everyone.’

In the afternoon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the following talk:

“This is the day of farewell and the time of leave-taking is very hard. The Arabian poet says, ‘The days of my union with the beloved were so few that the greeting was the farewell.’ Indeed, I am deeply grieved, but I do not say good-bye to you because there is a complete connection among the hearts, and among the souls there is unity and agreement. We never have a separation from one another. This nearness and remoteness concerns the world of bodies. In the world of spirits and souls there is union, never separation. The heart feels the union. The eye sees and carries the sight to the heart which becomes affected. When the heart is engaged with the friends there is no separation, especially if you go in service to the Cause of God. When a soldier leaves headquarters to battle and to conquer, though far away in person, his remoteness is conducive to the protection of the country. He cannot receive the glances of favour of the king, yet he is nearer and dearer than the soldier who dwells at headquarters.

“Just so the friends of God who go to far regions to serve the Cause are always holy friends and receive the manifestations of the favours of God. There is a special bounty from the Blessed Beauty surrounding them. Convey my greetings and longings to all of the friends. I am in the utmost longing and have the desire of meeting every one of them. I am engaged in thinking of every one. From the Blessed Beauty, I seek confirmation and assistance that all may be protected in His Kingdom, and under the shadow of His bounty. May He gather them and shelter them in His shelter, and in the assembly of splendour submerge them in the sea of light.”

Thus all of the visitors returned to their own countries. From this it is evident that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knows that which no one knows. Undoubtedly, he knew that the world war was nearing, therefore he dismissed the people.

30 June 1914.

In the morning a young German from Stuttgart arrived (see *Star of the West*, VII:3, p. 20), and in the evening ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made the following statement: “When I leave the world I want my heart to be assured that the Blessed Beauty has self-sacrificing servants who, in the utmost reverence, arose to serve the Cause of God. This is the cause of quieting my agitated heart.”

1 July 1914, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went from Haifa to ‘Akká.

2 July 1914.

Today, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed the following tablet to a philosopher in India:

HE IS GOD!

“O thou lover of reality! His Highness, the Merciful, has manifested love and harmony to the world of humanity, so that all of the individuals may find a complete connection with each other and the lights of the Oneness of God may appear in the human world. For this He sent the Holy Manifestations; revealed the heavenly books; established the divine religions, so that these holy souls, these revealed books, and these divine religions may become the cause of unity, agreement, harmony and love in the world of humanity. When we consider the reality

of divine religions, we see that reality is one because all of the divine religions are reality, and reality does not accept multiplicity or division. Alas, that the foundation of reality has disappeared and imitations, customs and ceremonies that are the foundation of dissension, the cause of obstinacy, the means of war and struggle have appeared. The original purpose of the appearance of the Holy Manifestations and the establishment of the divine teachings have passed away. When this black darkness, that is, the imitations of fathers and forefathers, surrounded the world and the original illumination of divine religions became obliterated, the Morn of Truth dawned and the Sun of Reality (Bahá'u'lláh) shone forth from the horizon of Persia and cast the rays of heavenly oneness upon the world of humanity. He brought down the edifice of the imitations of the ignorant, the human conduct and customs that emanate from the prejudices of the ancient. These divine teachings are established in the heart of the horizons like unto the penetration of the spirit in the bodies. Thus, at present in Persia, through the breathing of the Spirit of God, different people have torn asunder the curtain of superstitions, become free from the imitations of the ignorant, reached reality, and in the utmost harmony and love are associating with people of different religions. Great assemblies are being organized consisting of Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians and sometimes Buddhists, including many races. Turks, Arabs, Persians, Kurds, English, French and Americans mingle together as kind and happy brothers. Like the lambs of God, they graze in the meadow of reality, under the shadow of the training of the heavenly Shepherd. When thou considerest truth or reality thou wilt see that these old and decayed limitations in religion become the cause of bloodshed among the people and the nations.

“As this age is a luminous age and this century the century of knowledge, new teachings are necessary, a new effulgence [IX:12:136] is essential and a new life is needed. The souls cannot accept the ancient ideas, a new thought and new teachings are necessary that shall be the spirit of this age and the light of this century. Investigate, make a great effort so that the Centre of the Light of Reality may be seen in the assembly of the world as a witness of love, and arise with such a power and confirmation that thou mayest shake that country. Upon thee be greetings and praise!”

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás.

3 July 1914.

The German battleship *Gaeben*¹ arrived at Haifa. Its admiral and officers were invited by the Persian consul to land and have dinner in the village Nahr (“river”),² which is about two hours distance from ‘Akká; also to visit the holy tomb of Bahá'u'lláh. It is said that they accepted the invitation chiefly to visit the holy tomb. They were accompanied by the Persian consul, the Mayor of ‘Akká and Turkish officers and statesmen. They entered the Holy Threshold and prayed with the utmost respect. The admiral remarked that he had been in many sacred places, but had never encountered one so filled with spirituality, or that had such a wonderfully beautiful site. As they went out they were served with tea, cakes, etc. While the military band played some of them also visited the Garden of Riḍván at ‘Akká. They boarded the ship at ‘Akká and sailed the same night.

4 July 1914.

The following tablet was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at ‘Akká for a believer in America:

“According to the text of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (the most Holy Book—Bahá'u'lláh's Book of

¹ *SMS Goeben*, transferred on 16 August 1914 to the Ottoman Empire and renamed *Yavuz Sultan Selim*.

² an-Nahr (33.006941, 35.141304) on SE part of Tel Kabri, 1.7 km SW of Kabri) is a former Arab village that Bahá'u'lláh visited in 1880.

Laws) and the explicit *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* (the Book of the Covenant), 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the interpreter of all the words and books of the Blessed Beauty. This matter is evident and clear to those who are familiar with the epistle and the tablets. If it were not so each one would interpret according to his desire, prefer his interpretation to any other, and become the cause of dissension. However, if a soul explains one of the divine verses, and the sanction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is not upon it, it is discarded. This is not the time of interpretation, it is the time of teaching. All of the friends must employ their tongues in teaching, because teaching is the cause of guiding the ones of earth, of illumination of the world, of leading the world of humanity, of the confirmations of the breath of the Holy Spirit. This is the great Cause. However, if a soul attempts to give his own explanation of the blessed verses and it is not detrimental to the Cause, do not object to him if it is only verbal."

The following tablet was revealed for one of the Americans, an illumined minister who became a believer when 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited America:

"O my revered! Thy letter that thou hast written in the utmost sincerity and love was the cause of perfect joy. Indeed, with soul and heart thou art striving in order that thou mayest be confirmed by the good pleasure of God. Undoubtedly, this blessed intention has a great effect. A good intention is like unto a brilliant candle, its light shines in all directions. Now, thanks be to God, thou hast risen with utmost effort to light a candle of guidance in that country, and to plant in the garden of the world of humanity a tree of love and gentleness, to herald to the Kingdom of God, to become the cause of awakening of the heedless, to give healing to the spiritually sick, to become the cause of broadening the thought, to train characters, to impart progress to the minds and souls, to bring the lost sheep to the shadow of the real Shepherd, and to guide the migrant birds of the rose-garden of reality. Rest thou assured that the confirmations of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh will come."

IX:13, 4 November 1918 [IX:13:140]

Doors of the Holy Land open

Recent letters from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab [IX:13:141]

Extract from letter to Mr Alfred E. Lunt

The enclosed words are from a letter just received by me from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab. These are the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed, as Mirza Ahmad says, many times during the last months. Certainly they are full of significance. ... Faithfully yours, *Alfred E. Lunt*.

Recent words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The darkness of this gloomy night shall pass away. Again the Sun of Reality will dawn from the horizon of the hearts. Have patience—wait, but do not sit idle; work while you are waiting; smile while you are wearied with monotony; be firm while everything around you is being shaken; be joyous while the ugly face of despair grins at you; speak aloud while the malevolent forces of the nether world try to crush your mind; be valiant and courageous while men all around you are cringing with fear and cowardice. Do not yield to the overwhelming power of tyranny and despotism. Serve the cause of democracy and freedom. Continue your journey to the end. The bright day is coming. The nucleus of the new race is forming. The harbinger of the new ideals of international justice is appearing. The trees of hope will become verdant; the copper of scorn and derision will be transmuted into the gold of honour and praise; the arid desert of ignorance will be transformed into the luxuriant garden of knowledge, the threatening clouds shall be dispelled and the stars of faith and charity will again twinkle in the clear heaven of human consciousness.

Letter to Mr Joseph H. Hannen

Haifa, Palestine, 26 September 1918.

To Mr Joseph H. Hannen,
Washington, D.C.
... [IX:13:142]

... The last four years, the best of my life, were spent under the worst conditions imaginable, the Turkish rule, which was more venomous than a serpent and more deadly than a scorpion; but, praise be to God, a hundred-thousand times praise be to God, that we are at last free; all Palestine is free; the people are free to think as they like, to write as they like and to speak as they like. Palestine from now on is on the road to national life, virtuous achievements and unlimited progress.

The victorious British army came down from Nazareth like unto a mighty irresistible whirlwind on 23 September, and at 3 pm took possession of our town, after a battle of twenty-four hours, the picture of which shall never be effaced from the page of my memory. The army that captured Haifa were all English and Indian cavalymen, and they showed courage, invincibility and heroism in the very jaws of death.

... Personally, I had become like a man deaf, blind, and speechless. All the fair realities of my past happy life in America, England, and France had become like faint dreams, and these dreams also had begun to fade away from the page of my memory, when all of a sudden, as though out of the clear, blue sky, the booming of the cannons was heard across the mountains, heralding the glad news of the approach of our liberators and presaging the coming days of reunion, happiness and mutual association of the friends. Now again the world is mine. My happiness is boundless. I can breathe the fresh air of friendship. I am planning to leave for the United States as soon as possible. What joy, what real intoxication to see again the friends face to face!

...

Your sincere brother,
Ahmad Sohrab.

Letter and Tablet to Mrs Georgie Ralston

Haifa, Palestine, 8 October 1918.

[Original covering letter dated 10 January 1917] ... was written nearly two years ago, but returned to me from Constantinople because war was declared between the United States and Germany. ...

Ahmad Sohrab

10 January 1917

... [IX:13:143]

... The news about the progress of the Cause and the awakening of hearts in the United States has imparted to us life and happiness. Referring to this question, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said today:

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

"I am like a man who has lost the most priceless jewel. He is seeking here and searching there, perchance he might find it and regain his old happiness and assurance in its possession. The Blessed Perfection knows that, day and night—nay rather, every hour—I am looking toward the East and toward the West, toward the North and toward the South, to see whether severed and attracted souls have arisen to teach the Cause of God, to behold whether divine beings; who are the jewels of the treasury of the Spirit, are living in accordance with the principles of this Revelation, to discern whether enkindled hearts are raising their clarion

voices in the assemblages of mankind, calling them to the Dawning-place of Truth and the Fountain of Reality. These souls are my lost jewels. Whenever I find a trace of them or someone gives me a clue about them, I become infinitely happy and, adding to my zeal, I continue my indefatigable search. I pray to God that He may give me many such jewels in America. My hope is that every one of the believers may become a brilliant jewel of the mine of guidance and a shining star of the heaven of virtue. Whenever I hear that such a soul is found, I praise the Blessed Beauty for His favour and bounty and beg Him to encircle him with the angels of protection and the seraphs of preservation.”

Your kind and welcome letter of 25 June 1916, enclosing a petition for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reached me, and I read to him the contents of both. He was most glad to receive the good news of your health and spirituality and that you have been in California, associating with dear Mrs Goodall and her daughter. No doubt you are now back again in New York, co-operating with the friends in that city in the service of the Kingdom. The following is the translation of a Tablet dictated in your name:

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Mrs Ralston

O thou my daughter of the Kingdom! Thy letter full of significances imparted spiritual joy and stirred the hearts into cheerfulness. It was an indication of thy inward illumination and a brilliant proof of the fact that thou art drawing the rays of Truth from the fount of Mercy. From the time of our separation up to this hour thou wert and art ever in my mind. I have not forgotten thee even for one day, similarly Mr Ralston; for both of you are most dear to me. Praise be to God, that your eyes are seeing and your ears hearing and your hearts illumined with the Light of the Most Great Guidance. Your trip to New York was most seasonable and the means of the tranquillity of heart and soul. I hope that during this winter you may spend your time with the utmost rejoicing, but you must be present in the meetings of the believers and become the means of love and affinity of one toward another. Soul-cheering news reaches us from New York, that good-fellowship is realized amongst the friends and union and accord is perfect. I hope that Mr Ralston and thyself may become the means of holding such meetings, the harvests of which may be abundant, day by day the believers may be- [IX:13:144] come more loving and kind toward each other and always good news may arrive from New York, granting joy and happiness to the hearts of the yearning ones. Convey on my behalf kindness and greeting to each and all the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

IX:14, 23 November 1918 [IX:14:153]

“Now is the time that the teachings of His Highness Bahá’u’lláh be promulgated in that continent”

First Tablet revealed for American Bahá’ís since the opening of the doors of the Holy Land.

To the maid-servants of the Merciful, Mrs Helen S. Goodall and Mrs Ella G. Cooper, San Francisco, California—Upon them be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two blessed, believing souls!

It is now some years that correspondence was interrupted and communication discontinued. Outwardly there has been no news, no letter and no greeting, but the ideal relations have been strong and unshakeable.

From the rose-garden of the hearts of the friends we inhaled sweet and perfuming fragrances. This was indeed conducive to the consolation of the souls.

Now, praise be to God, the road of correspondence is already wide open and ere long the means of meeting will become available. Therefore, I engage myself in writing this epistle, addressing all the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful who are absent, though present spiritually.

All that has been explicitly recorded and embodied in the tablets of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh more than fifty years ago, are in these days revealed and unfolded. Read those tablets, especially the Epistle of the Temple (*Súriy-i-Haykal*) and the tablets to the kings and rulers of the earth!

Consider ye! What greater miracle is there than this! [IX:14:154]

Not a single individual could conceive that Bahá'u'lláh addressed on that day, kings and emperors whose fame had filled all the regions and who had raised themselves to the utmost height of autocracy, predicting in an unmistakable and clear tone the events and happenings of these days. Notwithstanding this the people are not awakened!

In brief, now is the time that the teachings of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh be promulgated in that continent, so that all the inhabitants may become ready for the establishment of universal peace, the flag of the oneness of the world of humanity be unfurled and all the nations and tribes may obtain tranquillity and composure under the shade of the tabernacle of unity.

Upon ye be greeting and Bahá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

IX:14, 23 November 1918 [IX:14:155]

Tablets revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the winter of 1916–17, but just received in America

Tablet to Mr Vail

(Dated Haifa, Syria, 27 December 1916. Mailed on that date but returned to Haifa from Constantinople, and remailed 9 October 1918.)

To Mr Albert Vail.

O thou heavenly youth! O thou herald of the Kingdom of God!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written that the light of the Islamic world and the Holy Land is being spread in the West. This news imparts happiness to the hearts of the Unitarians that, praise be to God, the reality of the Holy Manifestations is becoming manifest and evident. The divine outpourings are like unto the sun. The sun has many houses, different dawning-places. Whosoever loves the vision of the sun, his eyes will become illumined through its rays, no matter from what dawning-place it may arise.

Thou hast written regarding the programme of the Green Acre Conferences in the past summer, that the believers were in the utmost attraction and from all parts the guests hastened to that spot saying that such radiant meetings had not been brought about in any of the former ages, the members of which associated with each other with perfect love and affinity. This was a most auspicious glad tidings to the Unitarians. Wherever the blessed souls gather together the Beloved of that meeting is the love of God and the utmost joy and happiness is obtained. Should Green Acre follow firmly in this path and continue the annual holding of its impartial, universal Conferences, there is no doubt that that region will become illumined with the light of unity.

Praise be to God, that Dr ___ rent asunder the veil of imagination and became enlightened with the effulgence of Unity. Mr Urban Ledoux became lordly, heavenly and became instrumental in releasing Miss Farmer from that prison. Convey to him on my behalf the

utmost kindness. Gladden thou the hearts of Mrs ____ and Miss ____ with the divine favours and promise them the gain of a new confirmation. Say to Mr ____, the Indian: "Render thou thanks unto the Lord, for the heart and the soul became luminous with the light of Guidance and in that gathering thou didst become enkindled like unto a candle and thou art realizing the value of the spiritual fraternity." Announce my greeting to Mr Randall and say: "The love of the Word of God is the magnet of heavenly glory and beauty. I hope that thou mayst become a centre for the emanation of the lights of love and a dawning-place of the sign of unity." Say to Miss Juliet Thompson: "Praise be to God, that in the midst of the whirling tempest of test thou didst remain firm and steadfast and like unto the pure gold in the fire of ordeal thou didst unveil thy happy and confident face." Give thou the glad tidings of the spiritual confirmation to Miss Martha Root and say: "During thy travel around the world the assistance of the Holy Spirit followed thee at all times; for this reason thou didst become able to fulfil its duties." Mr Wilhelm, my son, of the Kingdom, verily, verily, I say unto you, on his head he has a crown of everlasting glory and dignity with the utmost beauty and perfection. Convey on my behalf longing greetings to M. *Ishti'ál ibn-i-Kalántar*.¹ I am pleased with his lectures delivered with eloquence and fluency. Day and, night I remember Mr Hall and do not forget the days that I [IX:14:164] spent with him. This personage has rendered many services to this Cause. The value of his services must be appreciated. Mrs True is one of the first maid-servants of the Kingdom of God. She is well known to and praised by the believers and the maid-servants of the Merciful both in the East and in the West. She has displayed and is displaying the utmost effort in the construction of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. I am most pleased with her. And I beg of God that she may become assisted to bring this service to an end. Likewise convey on my behalf to each and all the believers who have gathered together in Green Acre my love, kindness and spiritual greeting.

As to thee, O thou herald of the Kingdom! Rest thou assured. The favours and bounties of the Merciful One are all-encircling and likewise my love for thee is perfect. Every night from the divine Threshold I beg for thee confirmation and assistance, so that on the continent of America thou mayst become a brilliant proof, a shining light and a beaming star. Praise be to God, that in the publication and circulation of the *Star of the West* thou art displaying the utmost effort.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

'Abdu'l-Bahá

(Signed, on the English translation, in Persian and English.)

Tablet to Mr Wilhelm

Haifa, Syria, 27 December 1916.

Mr Roy C. Wilhelm.

O thou my heavenly son!

Several letters and cards have been received from thee, and each one indicated thy firmness and steadfastness in the love of God. Praise be to God, that that illumined youth is like unto an enkindled candle and hast dedicated thy life in the service of the Kingdom of God, and day by day thou art adding to thy illumination and spirituality.

Thou hast written about the conferences of Green Acre. I became very happy that a number of sweet-singing birds were engaged by day and by night in the praise of His Highness the Almighty. Should, in the coming year also, a great conference be held in that meadow, a heavenly festival be organized with the utmost love and affinity and the jubilee of the oneness of the world of humanity be arranged, there is no doubt that each soul will become like a

¹ Nom-de-plume of 'Alí-Qulí *Khán*.

candle in that gathering and such joy and happiness will be unveiled that the continent of America will be moved and stirred. Day and night, with the utmost supplication and entreaty, I beseech and implore at the Threshold of divine servitude, and beg for those friends confirmation and assistance and read in your behalf this blessed verse of the Qur'án. He says: "The believing souls who are in the utmost sincerity and steadfastness will undoubtedly become confirmed and assisted." Now, praise be to God, that you are the manifestors of divine aid and are being helped to render services to the Kingdom of the Merciful.

You have given the glad news that the foundation of the *Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár* will be laid next year. This is also my hope that this Temple may become fully constructed and the holy verse of the Qur'án, "We have given thee a great victory", become realized. For the building of this Temple is a most great triumph.

Convey to all the friends longing greetings. Praise be to God, we are all safe and guarded under the protection and preservation of God.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá [IX:14:165]

Tablet to Mrs True

(Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and signed by him, for Mrs Corinne True. Sent from Haifa, Syria, through Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 9 January 1917, but returned to him owing to suspension of mail service in Syria during the war, and, with the opening of the mail service, was received in Chicago 22 November 1918.)

O thou beloved spiritual daughter!

Thy postal card of 26 August 1916, was received and its contents indicated that the believers of Detroit, Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Chicago and Fruitport have gathered together and have spent their time with perfect love, unity and joy.

In whatever place the believers of God hold a meeting, peruse the heavenly teachings and associate with each other with the utmost amity, affection and harmony, there is no doubt whatsoever that the Holy Spirit will become the Candle of that gathering; and the blessed souls participating in that meeting will feel spontaneously the confirmations of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I became most happy over this news contained in thy card. With infinite kindness convey my longing and greeting to the believers of all these cities. I desire for all of them life eternal; beg for them heavenly outpourings, and seek for each the effulgences of the Sun of Reality.

I hope that in this year [1917] the solid and firm foundation of [the] *Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár* be laid. In reality, thou art displaying great effort. Praise be to God, that through thy endeavour and magnanimity useful results were produced. I hope the believers of God will become able to pay the \$200,000 which they have pledged themselves to contribute. God says in the Qur'án: "Those who believe in God and in the Day of Judgement will become able to build the mosques of God." In other words: Divine Temples are built by holy souls who believe in God and in the Kingdom of God. I hope that the American believers may soon become able to accomplish this work.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translation of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Tablet to Mr Hannen

(Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Haifa, Syria, 26 December 1916. Received at

Washington, D.C., 20 November 1918.)

To Joseph H. Hannen, Washington, D.C.

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Truly I say, thou art the servant of the Kingdom of God! And thou hast no other intention and aim save the promotion of the Word of God and the diffusion of the fragrances of God. The call of approbation and "Well done" descends from the Unknown World and the voice of "Happy is thy condition! Happy is thy condition!" reaches the ears of the spiritual ones without cessation. From the time that I have hastened from America to the East thou hast spent thy time in the service of the Cause. I bear testimony to this. Up to this time the divine confirmations and spiritual aids have descended upon thee uninterruptedly, and in the future you will be encircled with the same, more than before. Rest thou assured. Although we are as the weak ants, yet praise be to God, the "Great Power" is our helper; therefore with perfect strength arise thou in the service of the Cause and convey on my behalf respectful greeting to all the believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful.

I hope that in the next year the foundations of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár be laid and in the United States the dome of this heavenly building will be so raised that [IX:14:166] it may be viewed from long distances and the melody of thanksgiving and glorification ascend to the Kingdom of Glory. In the past the Eastern believers have sent a contribution, and at the present time international communication is at a standstill and Persia is ruined; otherwise they would have made still another effort and collected another contribution. I hope that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Chicago may become the second Temple of God in the world of humanity, and, like the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Ishqábád, it may become the means of the promotion of the Cause.

Convey on my behalf infinite kindness to thy respected wife; likewise the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

IX:15, 12 December 1918 [IX:15:171]

**Tablets revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the winter of 1916-17,
but just received in America (continued)**

Tablet to Juanita Storch

Revealed at Haifa, Syria, 25 December 1916, mailed but sent back from Constantinople.

Remained when doors of Holy Land were opened recently and received in California, 25
November 1918.

To Juanita Storch.

O thou light of the love of God!

Thy detailed letter and also the second one received. Both of them reflected the luminous susceptibilities of a universal consciousness, indicating that (Praise be to God!) that beloved daughter has become like unto a clear mirror, upon the translucent surface of which is focussed the beaming rays of the shining Orb of this century and her heart and spirit is so set aglow with the fire of the love of God, that involuntarily and passionately she is raising the call of the Kingdom of God.

The darkness of the world of nature has encompassed the kingdom of creation. In these

tenebrous¹ darkneses tremendous calamities are hidden for mankind, except those souls who have drawn light from the Sun of Reality. These sanctified souls like unto the birds are always soaring, and in the rose-garden of Truth, ever singing songs and melodies. Praise be to God, thou hast a listening ear and didst hear the spiritual lay² of the Covenant from a hundred-thousand miles! What a stirring anthem is raised from the Supreme Concourse!— for it imparts joy and exhilaration to the hearts. The attracted hearts are like unto harps and lyres from which continually issues forth a rich stream of harmonious colours, charming notes and divine airs!

O thou beloved daughter! Praise be to God, that thou hast capacity and worthiness, in order to become the maid-servant of the Kingdom of God and in the heavenly festival and spiritual society thou mayst decorate the meeting with the beauties of song and melody. In the world of humanity the “Commonwealth of the Kingdom” is being organized and from this “collective Centre”, merciful emotions and light-beaming rays are being diffused to all directions. The love of God is the attractive force of this “Ultra-Cosmic-Centre.”

O thou beloved daughter! At the time when the Light of Reality shone forth from the Mosaic dawning-place, the Mount of Sinai became luminous; but the hearts of the heedless ones remained in intense darkness and they reproached the blessed believing souls. Afterwards they perceived that it was themselves that merited contempt and censure. Likewise, when the Word of God, His Holiness Christ and His apostles upraised the flag of guidance and the Light of Reality dawned, all the people abused and scorned them, as the texts of the Gospel bear testimony to this fact; nay rather, they spat on the holy countenance of Jesus Christ and ridiculed, insulted and vilified Him. Later on, it became manifest that He was the Light of Truth and was bestowing the spirit of eternal life. When in the Arabian peninsula the light of prophethood shone forth and His Holiness Mohammed (Upon Him be peace) engaged His time in the guidance of those barbarous people, everyone reviled and calumniated Him. Their answer was given by divine revelation in the following Qur’anic verse:

“Woe unto the servants! No prophet cometh unto them, but they laugh him to scorn!” Afterwards it became evident that that blessed Personage was conducive to the illumination of the peninsula of Arabia, and the cause of the guidance and progress of those tribes who ascended to the supreme apex of eternal felicity. Consequently, do thou not wonder at the ridicule of the ignorant ones and the blame of the witless. Those who are ignorant have always cast reproach upon those who are wise.

Convey longing greeting to all the believers of God.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

(Signed in Persian and in English)

Tablet to Mrs Page

A letter dated Haifa, Syria, 26 January 1917, enclosing the following Tablet, was received recently from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, through Joseph H. Hannen.

Mrs Arthur Page.

O thou respected maid-servant of God!

Thou hast written that since two years the fragrance of the rose-garden of Bahá’u’lláh is being diffused in Detroit, Michigan, and two ministers have invited Bahá’í speakers to their

¹ Gloomy.

² i.e. song.

churches, so that they may speak about divine principles and cause the irradiation of the light of guidance. Praise be to God, the Bahá'ís are characterized with such qualities and attributes that they are the object of the praise and commendation of all nations; they are the means of the proclamation of the oneness of the world of humanity and the promotion of the ideals of universal peace.

Today, the most great foundation of real civilization is this, and this is conducive to the tranquillity of the world of creation.

In this glorious century, this basis is most firm and strong. But there must needs be the power of the Kingdom in order to establish these principles. Because the believers of God are confirmed with the heavenly power, I hope they may enkindle the candles of the oneness of the world of humanity in all the societies of mankind, the anthem of universal peace may reach the East and the West, religion may become the means of good-fellowship amongst the people, justice and equity may unfurl their flags on the apex of the world, religion and science may correspond with each other and be conducive to the promotion of peace and salvation, ignorant prejudices may be dispelled and the lights of Reality be diffused.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet to Alberta Hall

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 19 December 1916, and mailed, but returned from Constantinople. Remained upon the opening of the doors of the Holy Land and received recently in America.

To Miss Alberta Hall.

O thou maid-servant of God!

Although in body thou art weak and ill and, like unto Job, the object of many trials, yet (Praise be to God!) thou art strong in spirit and in the utmost health and joyousness. The peculiarities of this physical world are illness and diseases, and the essences of the universe of God are health and vigour. The body is like unto the lamp and the spirit like unto the light. Praise be to God, that the light is in the utmost brilliancy no matter if the lamp is somewhat affected. May the illumination of the light remain eternal and undying. Thank thou God that the light of thy spirit is burning with the oil of the love of God and its flame is becoming brighter day by day.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

'Abdu'l-Bahá

IX:17, 19 January 1919 [IX:17:194]

News of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—letters received by Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, from Shoghi Effendi and Major W. Tudor-Pole

Letter from Shoghi Effendi

Acca, Palestine,
19 November

1918.

Dr Lotfullah Hakim,
London, England.

My dear spiritual brother:

Captain* Tudor-Pole surprised and gladdened us with his unexpected arrival from Egypt. My grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was so glad to look at his radiant face and feel, from shaking his hands, the fresh fragrances of the ablazed Bahá'ís of England. He inquired for you and was gratified to know you were all under God's protection throughout this great world war. The Beloved has been sojourning for a month and a half at Acca, visiting almost daily the Tomb of his father and offering his thanksgivings for the bounty, care and protection of the Blessed Perfection. Today Captain Tudor-Pole accompanied him to the Holy Shrine, and tomorrow the Beloved will drive with him to the Riḍván, the garden in which His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh spent many days and nights.

The Master is expecting, now that the communications are restored, to hear from you frequently and directly of the progress of the Cause and the spiritual gatherings and of the concord and harmony of the souls.

I am so glad and privileged to be able [IX:17:195] to attend to my Beloved's services after having completed my course of Arts and Sciences in the American University at Beirut. I am so anxious and expectant to hear from you and of your services to the Cause for by transmitting them to the Beloved I shall make him happy, glad and strong.

The past four years have been years of untold calamity, of unprecedented oppression, of indescribable misery, of severe famine and distress, of unparalleled bloodshed and strife, but now that the dove of peace has returned to its nest and abode a golden opportunity has arisen for the promulgation of the Word of God. This will be now promoted and the Message delivered in this liberated region without the least amount of restriction. This is indeed the Era of Service.

You have undoubtedly done a large amount of work in this respect and the Beloved is eagerly awaiting its fascinating and pleasing account.

Hoping I shall hear from you and from the dear friends,
I remain, your brother in the Cause,
Shoghi.

Letter from Shoghi Effendi forwarded by W. Tudor-Pole

(Letter addressed to Major W. Tudor-Pole, at Cairo, Egypt, by Shoghi Effendi, the grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.)

Haifa, Palestine,
17 December

1918.

My dear spiritual brother:

Your long-expected letter was heartily welcomed, so glad was the Beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá to hear from you and through you to know that the friends were all well. In fact, a few days ago, when the Beloved was paying a visit to Colonel Staunton, the Military Governor, Captain Kerr, being in his presence, was asked whether he had any news from you, to which he replied affirmatively. I conveyed your message of love and gratitude to the Master, and we all look forward to the time of meeting you in Haifa, this time we hope more fully. The Beloved's health is excellent, and he reveals these days different Tablets to Persia, Europe and America. Two Tablets have been revealed for England, the latter for Dr Esslemont, whose sup[li-] [IX:17:196] cation I translated yesterday for the Master. I quote fully this Tablet:

Tablet

To his honour Dr Esslemont Upon him be greeting and praise!

* Now Major.

O thou lover of all mankind!

Verily, have I chanted thy verses of praise to God, inasmuch as He hath illumined thine eyes with the light of guidance, the light of the oneness of the world of humanity; so much so that thy heart overflowed with the love of God and thy spirit was attracted by the fragrance of God, and I supplicate divine Providence that thou mayest become a torch to that gathering, so that the light of knowledge might shine out from thee, that thou mayest be confirmed to act in accordance with the significances of the *Hidden Words* and strengthened by God under all circumstances.

Concerning the book you are editing, send me a copy thereof. * * * Convey my greetings to the respected maid-servant of God, M_____

I pray the Lord to support thee in the service of all humankind, irrespective of race or religion. Nay rather, thou shouldst deal with all according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, which are like unto life to this Glorious Age.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás.

The Beloved was very glad to hear from Miss Rosenberg, whose letter you had sent but without any supplication of yours enclosed. I wonder whether you enclosed any supplication or not.

The Master a few days ago was invited by Colonel Staunton to assist at a meeting of the different religious heads of Haifa, to institute a relief work for the poor of Haifa. The Beloved responded and then after many discussions, when the time of donation came, the Governor announced that although a poor man, yet he would give five English pounds for each of the three religious denominations. Major Nott followed with nine, then publicly and directly the Governor declared that he had the honour of announcing that His Excellency Abbas Effendi ('Abdu'l-Bahá) had kindly given the noble sum of fifty Egyptian pounds for the poor, at which all present clapped. Quite a high standard for the Mufti and the Archbishop of Haifa to follow.

The Master uttered the final word of prayer at a public and immense gathering just given to celebrate the end of the war. This is the text of the prayer:

Prayer

O Omnipotent God! Verily, the pavilion of Justice has been raised in the Holy Land, extending from East to West. We thank Thee and we praise Thee for the establishment of this just and equitable Sovereignty, and this mighty Government which strives for the comfort of its people and the safety of its subjects. O Almighty God! Confirm the Greatest Emperor George V, through Thy divine confirmations, and strengthen him by Thy merciful power, and perpetuate his protecting shadow upon this noble land. This we ask through Thy help, assistance and protection. Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent, the Exalted, the Omniscient and the Generous!

Space forces me to stop, awaiting your news.

Yours very faithfully,
Shoghi Rabbani.

IX:17, 19 January 1919 [IX:17:197]

Tablets revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the winter of 1916–17, but just received in America (continued from IX:15:173)

Tablet to Mrs Addison

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 18 December 1916. Mailed at that time but returned. Rемаiled 11 November 1918.

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Juliet P. Addison—Upon her be greeting and praise!

O thou who art enkindled with the fire of the love of God!

Thy letter was received on 24 November 1916. Thou hast written concerning the trip of the daughter of the Kingdom, Mrs Ford. That heavenly speaker delivered the divine glad tidings through whichever city she passed and occupied herself in the promotion of spiritual teachings. She suffered the ears to hearken to this heavenly melody. Infinite results and heavenly illumination will appear out of this endeavour and service. It is hoped that other souls will walk in her footsteps, so that they [IX:17:198] may become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity. Consider, when the confirmations of God have encircled a soul, how it is assisted to render great services! I hope that this unlimited bounty may encompass one and all.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Tablet to Mrs Waite

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 29 January 1917. Mailed at that time but returned on account of the war conditions. Rемаiled 8 October 1918.

O thou sweet singing bird!

Thy letter was received. From its contents it became evident that thou hast moved from Chicago to Los Angeles. Praise be to God, that thou art engaged and confirmed in the services of the Kingdom of God. With a sweet melody thou art imparting joy and exhilaration to the souls; in the meetings stir and move the audiences through the heavenly call. Arise thou in offering due thanks for this bounty, because thou art assisted in such a Great Cause. The results of thy services thou shalt find in the divine world—the limitless universe of the True One. Their fruits will likewise become apparent ere long in this world.

I perused the article thou hast written concerning the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*. Thou hast taken much trouble in the correspondence of Numbers. The digit 9 is the perfect number, and other high numbers are the mere repetition of number 1 to 9. For example: Number 10 is the repetition of number 1; 20 is the repetition of number 2; 100 is the repetition of number 10; 1000 is the repetition of 100, ad infinitum. Consequently the most perfect and greatest number is 9. Extract as far as thou canst the hidden significances from number 5 and 9. Thy reasoning and the power of thy thought are very penetrating. The poem, “Sons of God”, that thou hast forwarded was in reality wonderful, sweet, eloquent, and fluent, and its meanings most thrilling. Strive thou in the composition of such pieces, so that at all times the river of pure poesy¹ may flow from thy tongue. The maid-servant of God, who ascended to the divine Kingdom, Ṭáhirih, made matchless translations of thy poems; she always translated them into Persian poetry, which made them very attractive. Keep the letters which thou hast with thyself; for many letters now mailed from America do not reach us. Praise be to God, that the meetings in Los Angeles are in the utmost state of unity and concord—this news brought to us

¹ Archaic form of the word poetry.

great happiness. Convey on my behalf to each and all of the believers my loving greetings and kindness. Thou hast written about Mrs Ella Wheeler Wilcox. This respected lady has infinite capabilities. She is like a lamp filled with oil which no sooner comes in contact with fire than it is set aglow. Now it is thus hoped that she may become enkindled with the fire of the love of God, and her torch become so illumined, so luminous, as to illumine all directions. A letter is written in her name; deliver it to her.

Upon thee be greetings and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet to Miss Annie Boylan

Translated about two years ago by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, but owing to the war was held in Palestine. Mailed 12 October 1918.

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy postal card received. It indicated thy firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant and Testament. Thank thou God that thou art holding fast and art a promulgator of the Covenant of God, art suffering the thirsty ones to drink from the spring of guidance and inviting the hungry ones to the heavenly [IX:17:199] table. This is one of the greatest bestowals of the Almighty. Thank thou God for it, because thou art confirmed therein. Convey my utmost kindness to the attracted maid-servant of God, Mrs Krug. It is a long time that we have heard no news from her. Of late, we received the news that her daughter has the intention of marriage. We hope that this marriage will be a blessed one!

In brief, that dear daughter is always remembered. I pray in thy behalf, that day by day thou mayest become more illumined and draw more nigh unto the Kingdom of God.

Convey longing greeting to all the believers and the maid-servants of the Merciful.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

IX:14, 23 November 1918 [IX:14:161]

Teach the Cause of God—the most important work

A compilation of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from talks and tablets—By Albert Vail.

The world illuminating sun—The promotion of the Cause of God

To a Persian believer in Tihrán he ('Abdu'l-Bahá) says: "Thou has longed for the power of teaching the Religion of God. This desire is the ultimate hope of the sincere ones. Unquestionably, a wise man strives to attain to the highest and greatest object in the world of creation. Today the world-illuminating Sun is the matter of the promotion of the Cause of God. Whosoever is assisted in this, he is favoured at the Threshold of the Almighty. Therefore, do thou not behold thine own capacity and ability; nay, rather, during the hour that thou art teaching the Cause of God, turn thy face toward the [IX:14:162] Kingdom of Abhá, beg for Divine Confirmations and with the utmost confidence and power open thy tongue and speak out boldly all that with which thy heart is inspired. ..."

From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 16 August 1914.

Cry out the message of the Kingdom

Today we are standing before the illimitable sea; let us not deprive ourselves. Let us heroically dive into the depths of the great ocean and gather the scintillating pearls of wisdom. Thou must teach the Cause and spread the Message. When thou art asked to talk at a meeting, turn thy heart to Bahá'u'lláh, begging confirmation from Him, and then speak; He will

inspire you. Cry out the message of the Kingdom; do not be silent; be not quiet; teach the Cause.

From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 19 January 1913. Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a man who had become a Bahá’í since meeting him the previous year.

Become lamps of the true one

As to human souls, unless they acquire the lights they are unable to shine upon other individuals. But when a man arises to expound the argument of God and invite people to enter into the Religion of God, and when he utters those arguments and advances consummate proofs concerning the appearance of the Great Kingdom—then intense love shall become manifest in his heart. This love causes the development of his spirit by the Grace of the Beneficent Lord. Consider the bearer who brought the garment of Joseph to Jacob; that messenger was the bearer of the garment, but he could not inhale the fragrance of Joseph. But Jacob, whose nostrils were pure, inhaled the fragrances of Joseph from a long distance.

It may be that a man can guide a blessed soul unto the Kingdom of God while he himself is deprived thereof. Consider Judas Iscariot; he invited others while he himself was deprived of the Kingdom of God. But in spiritual training it is impossible for an imperfect one to perfect another, or train another, unless he first conquer his own self and desire, and become purified from selfish iniquities in order to become capable of Merciful Splendours. When he acquires divine Bounties, then he is able to train another. An ignorant man has no power to teach a seeker, and a poor man has no power to succour a needy one. Consequently be thou assured that verily man needs to wish for Eternal Life and then confer the same upon another. The human perfections and Merciful Bounties are that Peace which was promised and spoken of by Christ.

Then know thou verily that the people [IX:14:163] of Bahá must needs be distinguished from others in all respects, until they become the lamps of the True One among the creatures, and the stars of Guidance shining from the Supreme Concourse.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Tablet to Mrs Kate Ives, translated by M. *Ishti’ál* ibn-i-Kalántar,¹ October 1904, Eliot, Maine.)

The greatest of the gifts of God

Through Mr Thornton Chase, *Thábit*—Upon him be Bahá’u’lláh!—to the maid-servant of God, Mrs Cecilia Harrison.

O thou maid-servant of the Kingdom!

Thy service in the Kingdom of God is known and thy troubles in serving the Cause of God are evident and apparent.

This is the greatest of the gifts of God, that in such a blessed age and holy century thou shouldst raise thy voice in the Kingdom of God and invite people to the holy mountain of the Lord of Hosts.

Soon thou shalt see that on account of the bounties of the Kingdom thou didst become the cause of guidance to others, and by the grace of the Lord Almighty thou hast surpassed the queens of the world. Thou shalt see eternal honour; thou shalt find everlasting life; thou shalt see the world illumined with the light of great guidance.

O dear maid-servant of God!

All the people, day and night, are working and striving and have no leisure at all; but in the end they will be disappointed and deprived; the effect of their efforts will be obliterated, and

¹ Nom-de-plume of ‘Alí-Qulí *Khán*.

with the utmost loss and chagrin they depart from this world and do not receive any value for this life. But, on the other hand, the sons and daughters of the Kingdom will ultimately become burning lights and will be as shining stars in the horizon of eternal honour. Therefore, thank thou God that thou didst arrive at this station.

‘Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mírzá S. M. Raffle, Chicago, 6 February 1909.

IX:15, 12 December 1918 [IX:15:169]

First Tablet revealed for the Bahá’ís of Persia since opening of doors of Holy Land

To his honour Áqá Siyyid Naşru’lláh Bágirúf.—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

It was a long time since the thread of correspondence had been entirely broken, and the hearts were affected with sorrow and agitation. Now, praise be to God, that in these days, through divine favour, the black clouds are dispersed and the light of composure and tranquillity has enlightened this region; the tyrannous government is done away with and followed by a just administration. All the people are delivered from the most great hardship and the most difficult affliction. In this huge tempest and violent revolution, in which all nations of the world were caught and were involved in dire calamity, cities were destroyed, people were slaughtered, properties were pillaged and taken as booty, the cries and lamentations of the helpless ones were raised from every prominent spot and the tears falling from the eyes of the orphans like a flowing torrent in all the low countries—under all these conditions, praise be to God, that through the favour and bounty of the Blessed Perfection and because the believers of God have lived in accord with the lordly teachings, they have been protected and guarded. Not even a single particle of dust settled on the face of a believer. Verily, this is a most great miracle which cannot be denied except by every stiff-necked transgressor! It has meanwhile become evident and manifest that the holy teachings of His High- [IX:15:170] ness Bahá’u’lláh are the cause of the comfort and illumination of the world of humanity. In the blessed Tablets (of Bahá’u’lláh)¹ the justice and the administrative sagacity of the Imperial government of England have been repeatedly dwelt upon, and now it has become clear that, in reality, the inhabitants of this country, after untold sufferings, have attained to composure and security.

This is the first letter that I write to Persia. God willing, I shall write others afterwards. Convey with the utmost longing to each and all the believers of God the wonderful Abhá greeting, and give us the glad-tidings of the health and safety of all the believers. Although the tempest and the hurricane were intense and violent, yet, praise be to God, the Ark of Salvation reached the heaven of security, while protected and guarded. Announce greeting and salutation on behalf of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with the utmost joy and fragrance “to the hands of the Cause of God”, his honour Amín and likewise the rulers of firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant and Testament.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

¹ Refer to the *Lawḥ-i-Dunyá* (Tablet of the World), *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 93.

IX:15, 12 December 1918 [IX:15:172]

“Fourteen peace points” for Bahá’ís to discuss in public meetings

Alláh-u-Abhá!

Some years ago, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the following principles or “points” in a Tablet to Mr C. Mason Remey, dated 5 March 1914. They speak for themselves:

“In those public meetings, universal and not particular principles must be discussed; those principles which I have expounded in the public meetings. *Only that identical programme must be followed:*

1. The oneness of the world of humanity.
2. The investigation of Reality.
3. The essential unity of the Religions of God.
4. The abandonment of religious, denominational, racial and patriotic prejudices.
5. The conformity of divine Religion with reason and science.
6. The Religion of God must become the cause of amity and love amongst mankind, otherwise it is better to forswear it.
7. Equality between man and woman.
8. The essential necessity of the confirmation of the Holy Spirit.
9. The demonstration of divinity and inspiration.
10. The power of the (spiritual) influence of Bahá’u’lláh.
11. The underlying unity of all existing faiths.
12. The dawn of the Sun of Reality from the horizon of Persia.
13. Universal peace.
14. Universal language: The education of the children of all the Religions, under a universal standard of instruction and a common curriculum.

“Questions of this nature must be propounded in the public meetings.”

The Editors

IX:16, 31 December 1918 [IX:16:177]

Stories children should know

Compiled from the words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to assist parents and teachers in the education of children—a sequel to “Bahá’í methods of education”

Pauline A. Hannen

Stories about Bahá’u’lláh [IX:16:182]

Vision of Bahá’u’lláh at the age of six years

He saw himself fall into the sea. In the water his long hair became shining [IX:16:183] like the sun, and spread out around him like a golden net. All the fishes, large and small, came swimming towards him, holding to the strands of his hair. The fishes came closer and closer, following him as he swam through the waters which were shining like the sun. The fishes were countless in number. ‘Abdu’l-Karím, a wise man who interpreted visions for the kings, was told of this vision by the father of Bahá’u’lláh. ‘Abdu’l-Karím answered: “Your son will be a great man. The water is knowledge, the fishes swimming about him are the people of all nations who will come to be taught by his wisdom. He will be forced away and separated from earthly things, and will reflect the light of the Word of God.”

Words of Munírih Khánum, wife of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. From *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 88.

Bahá’u’lláh as a dervish in the mountains

A boy, attending a village school, had been flogged and sent out for failure in his writing. While he was weeping outside the school room, this holy man came by and asked the cause of his grief. When the lad had explained his trouble the dervish said: "Do not grieve, I will set you another copy, and teach you to write well." He then took the boy's slate and wrote some words in very beautiful characters. The boy was delighted, and showing his slate in pride at now having a better master than he had had in the school, the people were astonished, dervishes being commonly illiterate. They then began to follow the dervish who wishing to meditate and pray in solitude, left that place for another.

Words of Bahá'íyyih Khánum, sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. From *Abbas Effendi, His Life and Teachings*, by Myron H. Phelps, p. 22. [IX:16:184]

Description of a beautiful garden

As told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Outside of Tíhrán we had a great park planted by the father of the Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh. This was a wonderful garden. It contained four gates, eastern, western, northern and southern. As you entered the eastern gate, the western gate was visible, and similarly from the northern gate you could see the southern gate. In the centre of the garden a great throne was built, and four straight avenues branched off toward the gates, so that you could see all four gates as you sat on the throne. On both sides of these avenues poplar trees were planted, to the number of ten thousand. These trees arose erect and majestic toward the sky. Under the trees thousands of rose bushes were planted, the fragrance of which filled the air. Often we used to sleep at night on this throne. The moon, clear, full, silvery, shone upon us, the galaxies of stars shedding their rays, now faintly and again with a lustrous twinkle over the calm and mystic scene of the garden. Long before sunrise I would open my eyes, admiring with wonder this infinite universe of God. Then all at once the nightingales in sweet melodies would break into a concert of divine music, the gentle murmur of the rills flowing in from all sides reaching to the ears and the zephyrs would pass through the leaves making the noise of a soft sweeping hand-clap and applause. In the early mornings the Blessed Perfection would arise and prepare tea for all of us, and while the sun was dawning from the eastern horizon we would gather around Him, drinking tea and enjoying the heavenly scene all around us.

(Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá started to walk through the rose-garden, now and then standing before a rosebush and deeply contemplating its construction and petals. Looking at a rose which was very like an American Beauty, he said:)

"When we arrived in Constantinople it was just at this season [September]. The garden of the house wherein we lived contained one rosebush, on every branch of which one rose blossomed forth after sunset. The believers not having seen roses at this season were overjoyed, and until late at night were gathered around it."

(Then he passed by, himself a unique rose in the garden of the world of humanity, the fragrance of which has filled all creation!)

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 19 September 1913.

IX:18, 7 February 1919 [IX:18:201]

Stories children should know (continued)

Incidents in the childhood of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

It is good to be a spreader of the Teachings of God in childhood. I was a teacher in this Cause at the age of this child (eight or nine years). This reminds me of a story. There was a man, highly educated, but not a Bahá'í. I, but a child, was to make of him a believer. The

brother of this man brought him to me. I stayed with him, to teach him. He said, "I am not convinced, I am not satisfied." I answered, "If water were offered to a thirsty one, he would drink and be satisfied. He would take the glass. But you are not thirsty. Were you thirsty, then you too would be satisfied. A man with seeing eyes sees. I can speak of the sun to every seeing one, and say it is a sign of the day; but a blind person would not be convinced because he cannot see the sun. If I say to a man with good hearing, listen to the beautiful music, he would then listen and be made happy thereby. But if you play the most beautiful music in the presence of a deaf man, he would hear nothing. Now go and receive seeing eyes and hearing ears, then I will speak further with you on this subject." He went; but later he returned. Then he understood and became a good Bahá'í. This happened when I was very young.

Told in Stuttgart, Germany, 4 April 1913.

When I was a little boy in Tīhrán I was followed and beaten by the boys and the people because I was a Bábí, but my own people were very glad of this, for they knew that the power of God is manifested in persecution. If the tree is watered by the rain and the sun shines upon it, is it any worse for it if a little dust falls upon its leaves? If the father is pleased with his child what does it care about the neighbour's opinion?

From *Book of Miscellany*, etc., p. 54.

I cared more for hearing the Tablets of the Báb recited than anything else. I used to commit them to memory and repeat them. This was the greatest pleasure I knew in my childhood—my play and amusement. I was not fond of study, nor did I care for books.

At Baghdád I rode on horse back; at one time I had an idea that I would [IX:18:202] like to hunt. So on a certain occasion I joined a party of hunters and went with them to the chase. But when I saw them killing birds and animals, I thought this could not be right. Then it occurred to me that better than hunting for animals, to kill them, was hunting for souls of men to bring them to God. I then resolved that I would be a hunter of this sort. This was my first and last experience in the chase.

Footnotes from *Abbas Effendi, His Life and Teachings*, p. 20. [IX:18:203]

Stories told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The box of jewels

Once upon a time, there was a king who went out to hunt with all the members of his cabinet, the diplomats, the officials of the court and a large number of important personages, especially invited for this occasion. As the king intended to stay in the country all summer he ordered the master of ceremonies to take the imperial tent which was a wonderful work of art, for the king on important occasions had ordered the inside walls and the ceiling of this royal tent to be decorated with hundreds of precious jewels, the price of which could not be measured by dollars and cents. This year also he asked the minister of finance to take with him the large box of jewels. Finally after many days of preparation the imperial caravan, which was more than a mile long, started out. The king headed the procession. After him came the cabinet ministers, the diplomatic corps, the courtiers and the guests. They had to travel six days before they could reach the hunting ground. On the fourth day of travelling it so happened that the horse carrying the box of jewels was toward the end of the caravan. After three hours march the king looked around and to his apparent surprise, found no one with him but Ayas¹ and he observed the caravan more than half a mile away from him surrounded with dust and in great confusion. "What is this?" asked the king. "Half an hour

¹ Ayás?

ago,” Ayas humbly answered, “the box with the jewels fell from the back of the horse and all of the precious stones were scattered on the ground. Then I saw that a wild scramble followed, everyone forgot his duty and each one tried to collect those jewels.” The king did not move nor show that an extraordinary event had happened. “Ayas!” the king said after a few moments of reflection, “Why did you not join them and get a portion of the spoil? Are they not precious jewels?” “Yes, my lord! Those jewels are good for them, I preferred to be with thee. Thou art the greatest jewel of my life.”

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 8 July 1913.

The shepherd of Bahá'u'lláh

‘Abdu'l-Bahá took little Mona in his arms and kissed her on both cheeks, and started to talk with her. “Are you [IX:18:204] French or English?” he asked. Being shy, she did not answer. “If the people ask you whether you are English or French, tell them you are a Bahá'í. Once upon a time there was a shepherd who tended the sheep of Ḥusayn ‘Alí (Bahá'u'lláh). He was a very simple man. He could neither read nor write. His neighbours would come and ask him: ‘Art thou a Muslim, a Jew or a Christian?’ He did not know how to answer them, but after a moment of reflection he would say, ‘I don’t really understand your question, but all that I know is that I am the shepherd of Ḥusayn ‘Alí.’ ... Thou art my daughter, my dear little daughter. I want to slap you!” and with great gentleness he patted her cheeks and back.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 16 October 1913.

The worldly king’s lament

It is related that Saboktakeen,¹ one of the renowned ancient kings of Persia, lived in the utmost grandeur and splendour. His palace was like unto the delectable paradise, and his table was provided with royal bounty and his life was like unto a stream of milk and honey. His treasuries were full and his riches unlimited. He was in the utmost joy and happiness. Suddenly he was attacked with a malady and was burning away like unto a candle, and with jeremiads of disappointments² he was singing the most mournful tunes. When he became hopeless of this life, three days before his death, he commanded all his chamberlains, wearing golden girdles, to form a long line, and ordered all the ladies-in-waiting to present themselves before him. His treasures and all his precious jewels were on display before his eyes, and his accumulated wealth was arrayed in dazzling fashion. Then he invited his ministers, courtiers and statesmen to be present in the throne room on a certain hour, and asked his immense army to be engaged in the manoeuvres of victory and triumph in the military square in front of the palace. While sitting on his throne, he looked regretfully, now on this scene, now on another, and again on all this matchless array of grandeur and magnificence and wept most bitterly, crying aloud: “O! Why must I be deprived of this imperial sovereignty and these royal prerogatives? Why should I not enjoy this life? Why bid farewell to all these things? How can I leave them behind and hasten empty-handed from this [IX:18:205] world to another world?” He wept and wept till he drew his last breath.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 July 1914.

Kindness to birds and animals

Did you hear the cooing of the doves? Just now some one fired a gun and they all became silent. How sweetly they coo. How lovely it is to see them enjoying their unrestricted freedom! Is it not cruel to kill these sweet little birds? How much better to see them tamed

¹ Sabuktigín.

² Jeremiad: a long lamentation or complaint—in allusion to the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*.

through the gentleness of man! In many countries of the West, laws are enacted to restrict the cruelty of man toward animals, and in some states they can be hunted only at certain seasons. When I was in America, I went through several large Zoological Gardens, some of which covered many acres. In these gardens hunting is strictly prohibited. There are other large National Parks in Western America which I have not seen, where I have been told, gazelle and deer roam at will and man is not allowed to interfere with their freedom. In these places the animals become so tame that they associate with men. How ideal this is; how perfect, how good!

One day when we were in Baghdád, a company of small birds took refuge in a tree, because they were chased by a hawk. Someone took a gun and fired at the hawk. It fell to the ground dead. The birds became very happy and flew away, circling in the air and singing songs of joy.

Another day we went from Baghdád to Salmání Park, a village several miles from Baghdád. On the way I saw a large bush of thistle, under which numerous sparrows had gathered and over which perched a hawk. The poor sparrows, having seen the hawk, had sought shelter under the clump of thistle and the hawk had followed them. However, fate was against it, for one of the thorns had pierced its breast, causing its death. The sparrows, unaware of this fact, continued to remain there until they died of starvation.

Another day the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, desired to go to Salmání Park. This village was a country place and its climate being fine, Bahá'u'lláh liked to go there. A fine white donkey was brought, upon which he rode while several of us followed on foot. When we reached the place, we asked the keeper of the Muslim shrine, whether he had anything for us to eat. He had nothing, but told us there was a little hamlet six miles away, where one could buy eggs. At this moment the Blessed Beauty heard our voices and came out of the room. He said: "Tonight, I will cook for you a nice dish." When the time arrived, he said to us: "Bring some dates and butter and I will cook for you a Kurdish dish. Put the butter in the pan, let it be boiled, then pit the dates and put them in. Then stir all with a spoon until they are well mixed." We followed his advice, and the dish turned out to be very delicious. Up to the present time the taste of that dish is in my mouth.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 16 October 1914.

The innocent birds

There was a man by the name of Hájí Muḥammad Taqí Shírází, who had joined our company. He was a great hunter. He was such a fine marksman that while his horse was galloping he could shoot birds on the wing. Riding on his horse, with his gun, he followed us. "Don't kill these innocent birds!" Bahá'u'lláh said. But the man paid no attention. Without exaggeration, he fired on that day five or six hundred shots but without killing one bird. On our return trip we saw a crane. It was very large. This bird rises very slowly from the ground, but once in the air it flies very rapidly. [IX:18:206] When Hájí Muḥammad Taqí saw this crane, he became elated, because he thought he could show his skill here. The bird had just risen from the ground, when he fired the first shot and missed. He fired four more times without success. By this time the bird was high in the air, and he thought now he would surely bring it to the ground and again fired two shots and missed. Because he disobeyed Bahá'u'lláh, he did not succeed and not a single bullet found its mark.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 16 October 1914.

Obedience

During the war against a foreign nation one of the soldiers was stricken with a severe sickness. The military doctor, observing his case, recommended him to the sentry. "Do as I

tell you," he said. "This man will not sleep tonight. It is the crucial night of his sickness, but tomorrow morning he will feel much better. Nurse him very carefully and watch over him all night. "The doctor went and after sunset the sentry came around to take his position. After an hour or two, he saw the sick man was getting worse, bemoaning and lamenting loudly. In order to alleviate his pain, he gave him an opium pill. As a result of this, he slept soundly all night. In the morning, the doctor came and saw that the condition of the patient was worse than the day before. Not being able to explain this relapse, he sent for the sentry. "What did you give him last night?" "Oh! he was so frantic with pain that I gave him only a pill of opium, after which he slept quietly, all night." "Did you think, that I, a doctor, didn't know this remedy just as well, but I did not give it to him because it would have made him worse?" "What could I do? On my watch-night I wanted to sleep, and this patient disturbed my sleep. I gave him an opium pill and it served its purpose. Tonight there will be another watchman. If the patient is getting worse, it does not trouble me in the least."

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 August 1913.

Real contentment

Once upon a time, Salmán called on Abú Dharr. When the lunch time came around, the host brought two loaves of bread and some salt. There was noth- [IX:18:207] ing else in the house. Salmán, as though talking to himself, said: "I wish there were a little cheese!" Abú Dharr, feeling ashamed, went out, sold his only goat, bought the cheese and brought it to the table. The guest helped himself generously, and when he was quite satisfied, he raised his hands towards heaven and prayed: "Blessed are those who are satisfied with very little, and are contented." Abú Dharr, feeling the superfluity of such a prayer, said to his friend: "If thou wert really satisfied, and contented I would now have my goat in the house!"

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 4 May 1914.

Insincerity¹

Once a Muslim Mullá thought that one of his fingers had become impure, because he had touched an unclean article, and consequently he thought that it must be cut off. Passing by the butcher's shop, he stopped and asked the butcher to cut off his finger. The butcher was astonished, and refused. The Mullá explained his reason, and persisted in his extraordinary demand. "All right," said the butcher at last, "put thy hand on this block of wood and I will cut off thy finger." Then taking his large cutting knife, he brought down, with apparent force, its blunt side on the hand of the Mullá. No sooner had the Mullá felt the harmless pain, than he pulled away his hand, while crying out and cursing the butcher for his merciless, cruel heart: "O thou tyrant! What have I done to thee that thou wilt thus cut my hand?" he bemoaned. The butcher, realizing the utter weakness of the Mullá, laughingly said: "Go to; I did not harm thy hand. Thou coward, I just tested thee to see whether thou art made of heroic stuff." Many people think it is easy to walk in the footsteps of the Apostles, but it is most difficult, it is the task of the superman. Only those are able to do this who are awakened with the outpourings of the new spiritual consciousness in this age.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 6 June 1914.

A thankful subject and his king

A great king walking in his garden one day noticed a man, about ninety years old, planting some trees. The king asked what he was doing and the old man answered that he was planting date seeds. "How long before they will bear fruit?" asked the king. "Twenty years,"

¹ See also *Star of the West*, IX:10, p. 108.

the old man answered. "But you will not live to enjoy the fruit, why then should you plant these trees?" said the king. The man answered: "The last generation planted trees that bore fruit for my benefit, so it is now my duty to plant for the benefit of the next generation."

The king was pleased at this answer so gave the man a piece of money. The gardener fell on his knees and thanked him. The king asked, "Why do you kneel before me?" "Because, your majesty, not only have I had the pleasure or gift of planting these seeds but they have already borne fruit, since you gave me this money." This so pleased the king he gave the man another piece of money.

Again the old gardener knelt, saying, "Again I kneel to thank your majesty. Most trees will bear fruit only once, while these trees of mine have already borne two crops—since you give me two pieces of money."

The king smiled and asked, "How old are you?" The man answered, "I am twelve years old." "How can that be, you are surely a very old man?" The gardener answered, "In the days of the king your predecessor, the people were in a most unhappy state of constant warfare and trouble, so I cannot include that as a part of my life. But since your majesty came to rule, the people [IX:18:208] are happy, contented and at peace. Therefore, as it is but twelve years since your gracious reign began, I am only twelve years old." This pleased the king so very much that, perforce, he gave the old man another piece of money, saying, "I shall have to leave you now, for your words please me so greatly that if I listen to you longer I shall become a pauper!"

From *Daily Lessons Received at Acca*, p. 44.

A thief

There is a Persian story of a thief who, in order to rob a certain house, went to work to undermine the foundation. The owner of the house happened to be on the roof and looking down discovered the thief and asked what he was doing. The man replied, "I am trumpeting." "Trumpeting!" exclaimed the owner, "Why you are not making any noise." "Oh no," answered the thief, "you will hear the noise tomorrow!"

Lesson: You are shouting although you are silent; but your words will be heard in the future. The Words of Christ were not heard until three hundred years after his death.

From *Daily Lessons Received at Acca*, p. 40.

The bitter melon

A master had a slave who was completely devoted to him. One day he gave the slave a melon which when cut open looked most ripe and delicious. The slave ate one piece, then another and another with great relish (the day being warm) until nearly the whole melon had disappeared. The master, picking up the last slice, tasted it and found it exceedingly bitter and unpalatable. "Why, it is bitter! Did you not find it so?" he asked the servant. "Yes, my Master," the slave replied, "it was bitter and unpleasant, but I have tasted so much sweetness from thy hand that one bitter melon was not worth mentioning."

From *Ten Days in the Light of Akka*, p. 109.

Lest we forget

A certain king had a subject who having by a heroic action rescued the king from a great peril, was raised to a position of honour in the royal court. Here he continued to please the king and finally came to occupy an apartment in the palace close to the imperial chambers. The other courtiers of the king naturally became very jealous and lost no opportunity of

carrying tales to the king, seeking to lower his opinion of the fortunate subject. One day they reported to the king that this man was unfaithful and dishonourable; that each night after everything was quiet in the palace, it was his custom to go stealthily to a room in a remote corner of the palace carrying a bundle of stolen valuables which he hid there. The curiosity of the king was aroused. He watched and found the report true. Thereupon, he summoned his retinue and next evening when the subject had gone to the room as usual, the king quickly followed, knocked upon the door and demanded entrance. When the door opened, nothing was seen in the room but a dilapidated bed, some old clothes and the suspected servant. "What does this mean?" demanded the king, "Why do you come here like a thief every night and what do you bring in the bundle you carry?" "O King!" replied the subject, "Thou hast blessed me with every gift and kindness, far more indeed than I can ever deserve. By thee I have been raised from poverty and lowliness to greatness and honour. Knowing this and fearing I may grow negligent and fail to appreciate thy bounty and love, I come here each night to pray God that I shall ever remain grateful to thee for thy goodness; bringing with me my old peasant clothes, [IX:18:209] which I put on and then sleep in the humble bed in which I slept when thy love and mercy first lifted me up from my lowly state. Thus am I taught gratitude and appreciation of thy loving kindness."

From *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 109.

A miracle of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád

There was a man in Baghdád who was the chief of a thousand warriors. These men were not in the regular army, but the Government gave the chief \$2,000 a month to divide amongst them with the stipulation that whenever war broke out, this chief with his one thousand strong warriors would join the army. But instead of paying two dollars to his men monthly, he would give them each one dollar and pocket the balance. He abused his soldiers continually. He had also ten coloured men in his personal service, but treated them shamefully. He would say: "As the coloured people are more faithful, therefore I employ them." One day this man with his evil reputation came to see Bahá'u'lláh and afterward came frequently. He gave ear to all his advices and exhortations. Little by little the magical change was wrought; and one day he called together his thousand men and told them that for several years past he had been depriving them every month of half their pay, but that now he had realized his mistake and sought their pardon. From now on they were to receive their full pay of two dollars a month. His men were wild with joy and from that moment they nicknamed him, "The-darling-of-our-heart." Then he went to his home and called together his ten Negro servants and told them he was extremely sorry for his treatment of them, that he now knew better; that he would try to amend the past by being kind to them and would treat them as if they were his real sons. Often I called upon him and enjoyed the intimate relation which existed between this man and his "Negro sons". They adored him. Then, before his death, he incorporated a clause in his will that his "Negro sons" should be free, and bequeathed to them a quarter of all his possessions.

By relating to you this story I want to impress upon your minds what miracles the love of Bahá'u'lláh can accomplish. This man was not a Bahá'í—he did not believe in Bahá'u'lláh—he simply loved him. We who believe in him must most naturally do a hundred times more than this simple man. We must be ever ready to sacrifice our lives through the power of faith.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, to H. M., June 1913.

Useless meditation

Once there was a man who had a Negro servant. His name was Káfúr. Having decided to make a journey, he bought a horse, and took Káfúr with him. After travelling all day, they

reached a small ruined caravanserai, and realizing how tired they were they resolved to pass the night here, and refresh with sleep their weary bodies and continue their journey the next morning. As that locality was lately infested with robbers, they decided that the master should sleep until midnight, while Káfúr kept guard over the horse. Then he (Káfúr) would sleep in turn and the master would sit awake. After their supper the master slept, but after an hour he awoke and asked: "Káfúr, what are you doing?" He (Káfúr) answered: "I am meditating!" "On what are you meditating?" "I am meditating on the subject of—Why God has fashioned the edges of these thistles so sharp and cutting." "Very good!" the master chuckled to himself as he drew his head under the blanket, "continue to meditate. That is a good subject." [IX:18:210] Again he awoke half an hour before midnight and asked Káfúr pleasantly: "On what are you meditating now?" "O Master! I am meditating as to who is going to carry on his back tomorrow morning the saddle and the bridle."

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 23 October 1913.

Selfish prayer

It is said that once a Muslim, a Christian and a Jew were rowing in a boat. Suddenly a tempest arose and the boat was tossed on the crest of the waves and their lives were in danger. The Muslim began to pray: "O God! Drown this infidel of a Christian!" The Christian supplicated the Almighty: "O Father! Send to the bottom of the deep this Muslim!" They observed the Jew was not offering any prayer, and therefore asked him: "Why do you not pray for relief?" He answered, "I am praying. I am asking the Lord to answer the prayers of both of you!"

Told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 20 October 1914.

The theologian at sea

Once there was a theologian who took a sea trip. While he was walking on the deck and watching the calm sea, the captain passed by and inquired about his health. Our friend was so full of his theology that he asked the captain: "Do you know theology?" He answered: "No." "Then," our student declared with much pompous dignity, "half of your life is lost." The captain did not answer him, but continued his walk. Another day the sea became very stormy and the ship was in danger of being wrecked. The captain called on the theologian and found him prostrated with sickness. "Do you know how to swim?" he asked. "No." "Then, all your life is lost!" the captain roared at him.

Told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 2 September 1913.

The camel and the cannon

Muḥammad 'Alí Páshá had a big, fat camel. When the Ḥájís¹ started on their long pilgrimage to Mecca through the desert, he ordered a rapid-fire gun to be mounted on the back of the camel and fired each time that they halted. The ear of the camel was so accustomed to the thundering noise of the cannon that although it was fired on its back, it never [IX:18:211] moved. Because this camel performed such an important service and carried such a heavy load, the Páshá had ordered that it could graze through anybody's farm without any hindrance. Having reached a station, the camel entered the farm of a poor farmer. In his absence he had left a young boy to drive away the animals. On seeing the camel the boy started to scare it away by firing in the air with a small revolver. "What are you doing, my boy!" a Ḥájí asked. I want to scare away this camel. "O, don't trouble yourself. On the back of this camel a cannon is fired twice daily, and it does not move. Do not expect to scare him

¹ Ḥájí (Pers. hájí), pl. ḥujjáj, ḥajjí.

away with the sound of a small revolver.”

Lesson: Refutations written by the missionaries are exactly the same.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá. From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 10 August 1914.

The dead dog

The disciples of Jesus passing along the road and seeing a dead dog, remarked how offensive and disgusting a spectacle it was. The Christ turning to them said, “Yes, but see how white and beautiful are its teeth!” Thus teaching that there is some good in everything.

From *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 109.

The clay bird

In the Qur’án are many things referring to Christ not mentioned in the Gospel. For instance: It is said that Christ took a bit of clay and shaped it into the form of a bird. Then he blew upon it, and it flew away.

The interpretation of this is that the bird symbolizes an earthly man, who received spiritual education through the Christ. The story says: “He blew upon it, and it flew away.” This means that the man received the breath of Life Eternal, and through this enlightenment, soared into the Heaven of Knowledge.

From *My visit to Acca. M.A.L.*

The need of one language

At the city gate four travellers sat, a Persian, a Turk, an Arab and a Greek. They were hungry and wanted their evening meal. So one was selected to buy for them all. But among them they could not agree as to what should be bought. The Persian said ángúr, the Turk ‘uzúm, the Arab wanted árib and the Greek clamoured for staphylion green and black. They quarrelled and wrangled and almost came to blows in trying to prove that the particular desire of each was the right food. When all of a sudden there passed a donkey laden with grapes. Each man sprang to his feet and with eager hands pointed out: “See ‘uzúm!” said the Turk. “See árib!” said the Arab. “See ángúr!” said the Persian. And the Greek said, “See staphylion!” Then they bought their grapes and were at peace.

From *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*.

The Arab and the king

It is said that at one time a king went out travelling incognito. He put on an humble suit of clothes and started on his way in a scorching desert and finally reached the door of an Arab tent. The Arab finding the man exhausted from heat and hunger dragged him under the shade. When the king was revived he asked the Arab what he had to eat and drink. “I have a goat skin of wine and a little goat,” the Arab answered. “Very well, bring the wine and kill the goat to be cooked,” he said. The wine was brought. When the king drank one cup of wine he looked at the Arab and said: “Do you know who I am?” “No.” “Then you must know that I am a sol- [IX:18:212] dier in the king’s army. “The Arab was glad to entertain a brave man. The king drank another cup of wine. “Do you know who I am?” “Who are you?” “I am a minister in the king’s council chamber.” “I am delighted to receive such a distinguished statesman.” A third cup was taken. “Do you know who I am?” “Well!” “I am the king himself.” The Arab could not stand it any longer. He arose and took the goat-skin of wine from him. “Why do you do this?” the guest asked astonished. “Because I believe if you drank another cup you would be the Prophet of God, and a fifth cup would raise you to the station of God, so it is better for

you to stop.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá. *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 5 August 1913.

Story of Jesus and the poor man who wanted to marry a princess

It is said that Jesus entered a village. In those days many houses were broken into and everything carried away by the robbers; hence the authorities had issued an order that none of the inhabitants should entertain strangers in their homes, fearing that they might be in alliance with the robbers outside. Jesus stopped before the house of a very poor old woman, and knocked at the door. The old woman opened the door, and saw that Jesus was seeking a shelter. Looking into the face of Jesus, and beholding his gentleness, humility and spirituality, she did not have the heart to refuse him and send him away. Therefore with the utmost respect she invited him to enter the house. From his speech and conduct, the old woman intuitively felt that she was entertaining more than an ordinary mortal. She came forward and kissing his hand said: “Save my son, I have no one else in this world. Up to a short time ago he has been sober, intelligent and industrious, and his income is our sole support. But now he has become moody, morose and irritable. Whereas formerly ours was a home of joy and happiness, now it is changed into a home of mourning and sadness. He works all day, but when he comes home he does not speak, and moves restlessly all night in his bed. To all my pleading questions, he turns away his face and does not answer.”

Jesus said: “Send him to me. I will speak with him!” After sunset, the son returned to the house. His mother went to him and said, “We have a guest tonight who is noble and spiritual. If you have any trouble go and tell it to him. I feel sure he can help you.” At first he did not want to go, but the solicitous mother persuaded him to do so. At last he consented. Entering the room, he found Jesus sitting on the floor. Immediately Jesus was on his feet, welcoming the wayward son. After a few moments of intimate talk, Jesus asked the boy: “Well, my son, tell me, what troubles you? What is the cause of your worry?” He replied: “Nothing.” “You are not telling the truth. I know you are labouring under the weight of a great pain, my son. Tell me the cause of your trouble. I am interested in your welfare and my heart is full of sympathy for you. Rest assured that I will not divulge your secret to any human being. I will keep it to myself and will do my utmost to lighten the burden. Am I not your kind father and you my beloved son?” “My pain is irremediable!” the boy said, softening the tone of his answer somewhat under the loving gaze of Jesus. “I will find a remedy for it,” Jesus answered. “Oh! I know so well that no one is able to take away this load from my heart.” “I am able!” “But you are powerless. You are a poor man like us. You have no remedy for my malady.” “I am powerful, and I am a physician for all manner of diseases!” “This is impossible. There is no man living who can claim so much,” he said, yet impressed [IX:18:213] by the gentle authoritative tone of Jesus. “Come! Come! Tell me the secret of your heart!” “But I feel ashamed to confess it to you.” “Did I not tell you that you are my son? And why should there be anything but perfect trust between the son and the father?” “But I feel it is not proper to speak about these things. Besides, I cannot find words to adequately express my inmost feelings and then I am afraid I shall be misunderstood.” “No! No! You are my real son! I will surely understand you. Be not afraid. Be frank!” After a moment of silence he said: “In the neighbourhood of this village there is the summer palace of the king. Once I saw his daughter walking in the meadows. I loved her at first sight. She is the daughter of a mighty king, and I am a poor, miserable thorn picker. I cannot say more!” And he began to weep. His Holiness consoled him and said: “Rest assured, God willing, your hope will be realized.”

In brief, after awhile Jesus so arranged everything that the king consented to give his daughter to the poor thorn-picker. For days the royal preparations went on, and the date for the marriage was fixed. All the time the boy was very happy: he thought he was in a fairy dreamland; he could not believe that this was all real. When he entered the marriage room,

and saw all around the exquisite decorations and furnishings, and then looked into the face of the beautiful bride—suddenly a thought sprang up in his mind: “This man (Jesus) has been the instrument of giving to me this undreamed of felicity, this wonderful bride for whom I was pining in my solitude in the wilderness; he has made it possible for me to enjoy all this luxury and comfort. If he were so powerful to prepare all these things for me, a poor peasant boy, why should he not have done the same for himself? If he could spread such a banquet of rejoicing for me, he could do it for himself a hundred times better. Notwithstanding this ideal power, he is still walking in the wilderness, eating the grass, sleeping on the ground, sitting in the darkness and living altogether a life of poverty. “No sooner had this thought come to his mind than he turned his face to his bride, and said: “Stay where you are; I have important business to attend to. I shall return as soon as I have finished my work.” This said, he ran out of the room and hastened toward the wilderness.

After much search, he found Jesus sitting on a rock. Impetuously he prostrated on the ground, and kissed his feet and hands. “O my Lord! Thou wert not just towards me. Thou hast not treated me fairly.” “How is that? Why so? Have I not realized for thee the highest desire of your heart?” “Yes, yes! But you have desired for me that which you would not desire for yourself. Surely, surely, you must possess something by far greater and more important than that which you bestowed upon me. If these things were acceptable and worthy of possession, you would have chosen them for yourself. Therefore, it is self-evident that you have something more valuable and precious than all these things. Oh! I feel so sad and ashamed, because you have granted me those things which are not worthy of your own consideration!”

His Holiness smiled and said: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou art telling the truth. But hast thou the capability and worthiness to possess that pearl of Great Price?” “O my Lord and my hope! I will strive and pray to become worthy!” “Art thou able to leave all these things behind?” “Yes.” “Then verily I declare unto thee, I possess the mysteries of the Kingdom, which are the Knowledge of God, the Love of God and the Guidance of God. These are greater than all worldly possessions. Now if thou art willing to possess the [IX:18:214] jewels of the Kingdom, follow me. “He followed Christ till they joined the apostles. Then addressing his disciples, he introduced to them his new follower: “I have had a treasure which was hidden in this village. I have just now unearthed it. Here is my treasure.”

Told by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 3 July 1914.

Justice

A certain ruler wished to appoint one of his subjects to a high office, so in order to train him, the ruler cast him into prison and caused him to suffer much. The man was surprised at this for he expected great favours. The ruler had him taken from prison and beaten with sticks. This greatly astonished the man for he thought the ruler loved him. After this he was hanged on the gallows until he was nearly dead. After he recovered he asked the ruler: “If you love me, why did you do all this?” The ruler replied: “I wish to make you Prime Minister. By having gone through these ordeals you are better fitted for that office. I wish you to know how it is yourself. When you are obliged to punish, you will know how it feels to endure these things. I love you so that I wish you to become perfect.”

God sometimes causes us to suffer much and to have many misfortunes that we may become strong in His Cause.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 10 October 1912.

IX:18, 7 February 1919 [IX:18:214]

Story told by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl—an incident in his prison life

Longing for martyrdom

When he was imprisoned in Ṭīhrán with eleven others, there was an old man among them by the name of Mírzá Muḥammad Riḍá. He was well known for three rare qualities, firmness, fearlessness and truthfulness. He defied all the prison authorities by his courage; awed all the enemies by his firmness and set at naught the intrigues of all the foes through his truthfulness. “Whenever,” Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl said, “one of the ministers of the court, Ḥájibu'd-Dawlih, came to the prison to investigate the conditions of some one, Mírzá Muḥammad Riḍá would run to him and keep on talking into his ears for a few minutes with great earnestness. Finally Ḥájibu'd-Dawlih would turn to him and with a despairing look say: “Sir, this is impossible. I cannot do it. Why did you not ask the Prince Náyibu's-Saltáníh about it? He can do it. He is the one in authority.” At last one day we asked him, “What is this you are constantly asking the Ḥájibu'd-Dawlih whenever he comes to the prison, and which he so emphatically refuses you?” He said: “I ask and plead with him to sentence me to death. I tell him I am an old man; I am of no good to the world. I want to bathe my body in blood for the sake of Bahá'u'lláh. Please! Please! I beg of you to do something for me. Is this too much of a favour that I ask of you? Are you not kind enough to fulfil this last wish of an old man? Praise be to God, that you are an influential man—but he does not listen to me, and answers me loudly the way you have all heard. “At another time the chief of the jailers passed by him and scornfully pointed out his long hair. “Why do you keep your hair so long? What for?” he asked, and laughed. Mírzá Muḥammad Riḍá asked him: “What is that insignia on thy breast?” “It is the sign of my office,” he answered, with great flourish. “So is this”—and he pointed to his hair—“the sign of a Bahá'í!”

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 4 August 1913.

IX:16, 31 December 1918 [IX:16:179]

“The war was not an act of God”

I hope that the war may soon come to an end, so that I may again look in the faces of the believers. It will be a great joy to me. This war lasted very long, but it had to come. The corrupt world needed such a purification. The war was not an act of God, but rather the results of the accumulation of our own evil deeds. Because peoples and nations did not act in accordance with justice, and tyrannized innocent men, this war had to sweep away all remnants of autocracy, absolutism and militarism, and usher in an era of democracy, equality before the law, and international peace.”

‘Abdu'l-Bahá

Words of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá spoken 19 October 1918 to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and recorded in a letter to Miss Juliet Thompson just received in America.

IX:17, 19 January 1919 [IX:17:185]

Extracts from the Diary of Major Wellesly Tudor-Pole, Holy Land, 1918

Edited by Claudia Stuart Coles, Washington, D.C.

Mount of Olives, Jerusalem,
16 November 1918

From my room in the great German Hospice on this Holy Hill, I have the most wonderful view that it has ever been my lot to gaze upon. There is a pillared arched balcony outside my windows which makes a superb frame for the picture.

In the foreground olive trees clothe the hill which slopes down toward a most fascinating middle distance, made up of rocky undulating desert plateaux. These lend themselves in some unexplained fashion to curiously beautiful sun and shadow effects, so that the view changes almost from minute to minute.

Beyond again lie the volcanic mountainous erections amongst which lie the (supposed) ruins of Sodom, while Gomorrah lies away to the west down the plain.

It is as if these hills had been “dancing together with joy” and in the midst of all the gayety and motion, they had become petrified suddenly without warning. They are fantastic yet beautiful, weird yet ever changing, although one never loses the feeling of eternal petrification, which is not only apparent, for it is a geological fact.

Beyond these crater-like erections, and far, far below them, lies the Dead Sea, green-blue, clear as crystal, reflecting the mountains of Moab which rise steeply from the water high up, until they form a skyline background for the whole picture.

Away to the left lies the Jordan valley, and one can trace the river wending its way northward like a blue ribbon among the foothills. But it is not the physical scenery that holds one spell bound, it is the *atmosphere*. It comes resistlessly up towards one until one is bathing in its strange magnetism.

Ancient majesty and strength flow out from the mountains of Moab, mystery rises from the waters of the Dead Sea, beauty flows forth and upwards from the Jordan river, tragedy and joy rise up together from the lonely solitudes of the desert, and the craters in the middle distance. All these seem to blend into one resistless wave of colour and significance which sweeps up towards one through the olive groves to the Mount of Olives itself.

No photograph or picture or description can possibly convey one-thousandth part of the strange charm of that which lies before me as I write.

The past week has seemed like a dream. On the 11 November 1918, at 4 pm, the news of the Armistice reached me as I was sitting in my office [IX:17:186] at the Savoy. ... I gave a small dinner to my staff ... and having toasted those present, I spoke for awhile. The following is a partial summary:

“Many of you do not at present realize that we stand at perhaps the most remarkable point in the history of the world. One era has closed before our eyes; it is closed in the midst of carnage and tumult. We are now actually witnessing the birth of a New Day, a Day during which the human race will be enlightened, transformed, regenerated. Do not let this hour pass lightly; enjoy the outward triumph of the Armistice, but let your thoughts run deep as well. Reaction from this moment of exultation is inevitable. We have all lived the past few years under conditions of an ever growing strain. The strain has lifted. If an elastic band is held taut for some time, when released it will be found that its elasticity has vanished, it will hang limp and almost lifeless.

“Many years will pass before the racial mind will regain its inherent elasticity; meanwhile, many tests will come to you and me. The war is over, but we must look forward to many months filled with revolutions—volcanic eruptions both within the racial mind and in the earth’s crust.

“Those of us who have looked death in the face during the past few years, and who realize something of the tragedy that war brings in its wake, have determined to carry out two resolutions: We will bring home to our children and to those around us some idea of what war really means. ... We will create in the minds of the next generation such a detestation of human warfare, its horror, its uselessness, that the tradition of peace universal shall grow up firmly implanted in the human consciousness of the future, and war will become

inconceivable. Secondly, we have determined that the world of our generation shall be lifted out of gloom and sorrow towards peace and steadfast happiness.

“Each one of us can do more than he realizes to bring joy into the lives of those around him, and joy spreads. This means that we must go deep down into our beings to find that joy which is the spiritual heritage of the whole race, which only waits to be tapped in order to release the waters of true happiness. Vast problems await solution, the world is upside down; revolutions, bloody and bloodless, lie immediately ahead. It is only for a time that this revolution is taking the place of evolution, for nothing can now stem the great wages of spiritual energy waiting to flood through the world of men. ... After destruction, reconstruction! We can each in our humble sphere help forward the building of a new and better world upon the basis of sure foundations. Let us be very sure of our own foundations before we begin to build, either within or without, and all will be well.”

I came up to Jerusalem on 13 November 1918.

The drive from Ludd (Lydda, birthplace of St. George) to Jerusalem is so splendid that I never grow tired of it, although I now know every inch of the road. ...

Sunday, 17 November 1918.

Today I attended the Peace Celebration Service at St. George’s Cathedral, Jerusalem.

The church was packed—half the congregation were officers and men. Col. Storrs read the lessons.

All the Religions whose headquarters are in Jerusalem were represented, and a Scotch army chaplain preached in English and Arabic. The Grand Rabbi arrived in rich furs and chain of office. The Grand Muftí (Muslim), with flowing beard and snow white head dress (a broad minded, fine old fellow); the Greek Patriarch in black vestments and jewelled cross upon his breast; the Armenian Patriarch, also in black with a [IX:17:187] mosaic in jewels hanging around his neck; the Russian Orthodox Arch Priest sat near the altar; the Coptic Bishop sat under the organ; the Roman Church was not represented, but Abyssinian priests put in an appearance and were evidently greatly puzzled by the organ strains. ... To have been present at such a service on Peace Sunday, here, in the religious centre of the world, was a never-to-be-forgotten privilege.

...

Mount Carmel Hospice, Haifa.

18 November 1918

This morning I left Jerusalem travelling by car and train, arriving here at 8 pm, having started at 7 am

I have just sent word to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, asking to be allowed to present myself tomorrow, and await his answer. ...

Prison House of Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Akká,

20 November 1918

How often have I pictured myself in these surroundings. I have longed to be here ever since those distant days in 1908 when I first heard of the Bahá’ís and their Masters (the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) ... when I was in Constantinople. ...

I arrived at Haifa at 8 pm ... Immediately on arrival I sent a messenger to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house further up the mountain, asking to be allowed to present myself.

Two of the younger Persian believers came down at once to see me, one was Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, one of the editors of the *Star of the West*. They told me the Master was at 'Akká and was not expected back for several days. Next morning I hired a two-horse carriage and leaving my servant and the luggage at the hotel, set off for 'Akká. The journey has been described too often to bear repetition. It is perfectly fascinating. There is no road between Haifa and 'Akká, and the light railway has been torn up, so one drives for two and one-half hours around the bay on the hard sand close to the blue, blue sea. Half the time the carriage is in the sea, because the sand is harder where the waves lap over it.

From a distance the ancient walled city of the Crusades looks most picturesque, standing right up out of the water, and reminds one a little of a miniature Istanbul. But 'Akká from the inside is an awful place, full of smells and slums and dirt.

Its one feature of beauty is the sweet and abundant water supply, brought into the city from the distant hills along a Roman aqueduct. At last we reach the Master's house, close to the sea wall, but shut in on all sides by slums and courts. A long stone stairway leads up to the living-room in this prison house where Bahá'u'lláh spent the last years of his life and where his son has lived on and off for forty years.

The Master was standing at the top waiting to greet me with that sweet smile and cheery welcome for which he is famous. For seventy-four long years 'Abdu'l-Bahá has lived in the midst of tragedy and hardship, yet nothing has robbed nor can rob him of his cheery optimism, spiritual insight and keen sense of humour.

He was looking little older than when I saw him seven years ago, and certainly more vigorous than when in England after the exhausting American trip. His voice is as strong as ever, his step virile, his hair and beard are (if possible) more silver-white than before.

He is delighted to welcome the change of regime, but I could detect the tragic note, for if the British occupation had taken place ten years ago, he would have been able to travel throughout the Near and Middle East spreading the glad tidings of his father's mission. [IX:17:192]

Teaching the Bahá'í Cause has never been allowed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Turkish Empire until now. ...

... He still, however, spends a few weeks now and again in the 'Akká prison house, that has now become his property. ...

After lunch 'Abdu'l-Bahá drove me out to the Garden Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh about two miles from the city. ... He approached the Tomb in complete silence, praying with bent head—a wonderfully venerable figure in his white turban and flowing grey robe.

On reaching the portal to the Tomb itself, the Master prostrated himself at length, and kissed the steps leading to the inner chamber. There was a majestic humility about the action that baffles description. ...

Then we took tea in the garden, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá told many stories about Bahá'u'lláh, his superhuman endurance and his wonderful teaching.

When we returned to 'Akká, the Persian Colony, consisting of perhaps thirty-five persons had assembled, and we sat around the room drinking tea whilst 'Abdu'l-Bahá described his visit to Clifton [England—home of the writer] and the people he had met there.

... Then I went to pay my respects to the Military Governor, curious to discover what he knew of, and felt about the greatest religious personage in Asia today. The Governor was full

of a demonstration he was arranging for the morrow in celebration of World Peace. A band was coming, the notables of 'Akká were to parade around the town, the Governor would answer cheers and make a little speech from the balcony of the Town Hall. [IX:17:193]

A notable occasion for 'Akká, freed after all these hundreds of years from the cruel Turkish yoke.

I enquired whether 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been invited to the function. "Do you mean 'Abbás Afandí? Well, no, I don't think we've asked him. Perhaps he should have an invitation."

(He who has worked night and day for over fifty years to propagate the ideals of World Peace and Brotherhood, whose devoted followers number millions, whose Cause is doing so much to lessen religious discord in the East—he had not even received an invitation to take part in the Peace celebrations of his native town, *because, as it turned out, his name did not appear on the list of the local notables prepared by the municipal authorities for the guidance of the Governor. "A prophet in his own country" with a vengeance!*)

I expressed surprise—shock had driven indignation from me—and *an invitation was duly dispatched*. Then I returned to the Prison house and spent the evening with the Master, supping with him and answering his questions about the new administration.

Then I slept, in the room next 'Abdu'l-Bahá's (which was Bahá'u'lláh's before him)—simple attics with stone floors and practically no furniture. 'Abdu'l-Bahá still gives away all money, and lives the life of poverty himself.

Before breakfast the house was filled with believers who had come to receive the morning blessing.

I had brought 'Abdu'l-Bahá letters from all parts of the world, and he spent the morning dictating replies for me to take away. I gave him the Persian camel-hair cloak, and it greatly pleased him, for the winter is here, and he had given away the only cloak he possessed. I made him promise to keep this one [IX:17:194] through the winter anyway, and I trust he does.

At lunch we had another long talk; then came the leave-taking and the Master's blessing. He sent greetings by me to all his friends in Egypt, Europe, England and America!

As I, drove off on my return to Haifa, I caught a glimpse of the Master, staff in hand, wending his way through the awful 'Akká slums, on his way to attend the local Peace celebrations. ... He stands out a majestic figure. ...

And here I am again on Mount Carmel, writing this letter with the moonlit sea before me. I have paid my visit to the Governor of Haifa, and tomorrow am free to climb Mount Carmel, to visit the Tomb of the Báb, and to spend one night in the house of the Master among his devoted friends. He himself will not return here for another week.

He is helping to solve religious problems that have arisen in the 'Akká area as the result of the British occupation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is quite satisfied that an *era of peace is immediately ahead*, and that the *vast outstanding problems left to us as an aftermath of war, will gradually be solved*, so that the *prophetic* utterances of his father will become *clearly manifest* during the present generation. ...

'Abdu'l-Bahá looks to America as the nation which, being more disinterested than any European Power, will be able to help forward the realization of the world-wide unity and peace.

He anticipates a *spiritual* revival, not merely one of religion, but possibly one outside organized religion altogether. ...

It is hoped that we may shortly look for the publication of the complete works of

Bahá'u'lláh, and America will probably take the lead in this work. Meanwhile, it would seem absolutely essential that those interested in the matter should collect the authorized writings and should make every effort to see that a really accurate history of the Movement from the beginning of the last century to the present time should be published.

IX:17, 19 January 1919 [IX:17:188]

Letter from Mirza Ahmad Sohrab to the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth*, London

(Also sent for publication to the *Star of the West*)

Haifa, Palestine, 2 December 1918

Dear Sir,

Probably it is impossible to express in so many words the feeling of a man who has been compelled to live for years in a dark, wet and narrow cell, with no companion except the four walls and the occasional visits of the rude and cruel [IX:17:189] gaoler,—and then this man suddenly taken out to the top of a mountain, the sun shining in all its glory, the birds singing hymns of praise in the swaying branches, the green and luxuriant forest girdling the surrounding hills, all nature aglow with the first flush of spring and friends on every side pushing forward to shake his hands and inquire about his health. The man is astonished, is confused, he cannot believe himself, he rubs his eyes, looks around with wonder, tries to realize the change and thinks this is in all probability a trick, a deception of legerdemain¹ which will soon vanish and then he has to go back to his cold, rayless, damp jail.

Such were our emotions when on the memorable day of 23 September, at 3 pm the British and Indian Cavalry forces captured Haifa and 'Akká and freed us from the decadent and ignorant rule of Turkey. For years we had not seen an Englishman and we were forbidden to speak the language even in our homes. We had almost forgotten that there were countries like England, France and America, as no news reached us from those regions. Daily we were fed on so many falsehoods and lies that we could digest it no longer. ...

...

But the sudden and unexpected attack and capture of Haifa by the victorious British Army under the matchless leadership of General Allenby, threw an electric wave of joy through all parts of Syria, set at liberty hundreds of thousands of men and opened the doors of correspondence and communication with our friends abroad.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, after four years of silence and isolation, was again pleased to meet and speak with men who understand his ideas and respect his convictions. English officers of all ranks, Major General, Brigadier General, Colonels, Majors, Lieutenants, Captains and non-commissioned men and privates have called on him and drank tea with him and listened reverently to his words of wisdom. The military Governors of 'Akká and Haifa have often met him; the former being his guest at dinner. Once about eight members of the Australian Flying Corps, who have their aerodrome at the foot of Mount Carmel, were his guests all day in Bahjí, near 'Akká. They visited the tomb of Bahá'u'lláh, listened to the lecture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the history of this Cause and its principles, and left in the evening in their large auto with glad hearts and beaming faces. Never were they so royally received in Palestine! They were overwhelmed with the extreme kindness and attention of the Master. Surely they will never forget what they heard and saw, and they will write home about their unique experiences and relate the same to their friends. ...

Since the beginning of the war, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has been subjected to manifest [IX:17:190]

¹ Trickery, sophistry.

trials and difficulties, but through them his invincible spirit shone forth with greater brilliancy, his complete trust in God was a source of comfort to others, and his good-humour saved all of us from a bitter pessimism which was too prevalent at the time.

It has been my good luck not only to be with him during these dreadful years of the world war, but was constituted a member of his party when he was travelling through Europe and America, and thus I can say from my own experience that the Master teaches us to look on the bright side of life with intelligence and understanding, not to moan and grumble but bear our burden with a serene nature, to be firm and resolute, far-seeing and resourceful. His talks and advice imparted happiness to those who were laden with the burden of sorrow. He was ever ready to help the distressed and the needy; more than often he would deprive the members of his own family of the bare necessities of life that the hungry man be fed and the naked be clothed.

With unconquerable determination and wonderful resourcefulness, he was divinely assisted to protect and keep alive the almost 300 members of the Persian Bahá'í Colony in Haifa and 'Akká. For three years, he spent months in Tiberias and Adasiyyih, supervising extensive works of agriculture and raising wheat, corn and other foodstuffs for the maintenance of all of us, and more to distribute among the many starving Muslim and Christian families, many of whom gave eloquent testimony to his all-inclusive charity and philanthropy. I assure you that were it not for his provision and ceaseless attention to the works of agriculture, none of us would have survived the war, for with an awful famine raging in all cities and towns, one could not find bread and even in case a loaf of black, coarse barley was found, such a high price was asked for it that one could not find enough money to buy it.

Aside from the scarcity of food and famine, for two years all the harvests were eaten by the innumerable armies of locusts, the like of which were never witnessed by the old men of the community. At times like unto the dark clouds they covered the face of the sky for hours.

This condition, coupled with the unprecedented extortions and looting by the Turkish officers and the extensive buying of foodstuffs by the Germans to be shipped to the "Fatherland" brought about an awful famine. In Lebanon alone more than 100,000 people died from starvation. In the cities men, women and children became like mere skeletons and with gaunt faces, sunken eyes, yellowed skin and bent backs walked rather like ghosts through the half-deserted streets of Beirut and Damascus, while crying pitifully for a bit of bread. Thousands upon thousands lived for a few days on the peelings of oranges and bananas, the skin of watermelons and the grass of the country, and then died away with no one to mourn over them or bury their corpses, while other thousands who were a few steps higher were dragged down by the pitiless force of circumstances and followed the same course of inanition,¹ starvation and death. Ah, my friends! My head burns and my eyes are wet with tears when I now think of those harrowing events. Can I ever forget them? It had become a usual sight to find every morning dead bodies of young girls and children along the public thoroughfare. People looked at them and passed by. Oh my God! Are all feelings of pity, sympathy and love dead in us, that at the sight of suffering children and dying old men and women we stand unmoved?

This unprecedented famine lowered the standard of life, killed the finer emotions and deadened the softer sentiments. Men become like wild beasts, [IX:17:191] fighting without kith and kin with cruel ferocity and elemental passions. Each, impelled by the instinct of self-preservation fought the fight to the finish, trampled on the strewn bodies of others, but none or only very few survived the beastly struggle to relate the gruesome tale. Hunger and need forced thousands of chaste, lovely, pure girls—girls who were destined to be the future

¹ Emptiness, especially exhaustion from lack of nourishment.

mothers of the nation—into the degrading walks of prostitution, selling their honour for a few pence—thus for a time keeping the wolf away from the door. The awful increase in the number of prostitutes, brought down the edifice of morality, shame was banished, vice and corruption were enthroned and God totally forgotten.

Thousands of boys and girls who were as pure and beautiful as the young dawn a year ago, were now afflicted with horrible diseases, while the lack of proper nourishment, ignorance and inattention, undermined their power of resistance and carried hosts of them to an early grave. These contagious and communicable diseases became so prevalent that the intelligent members of the various communities took alarm and notwithstanding the severe censorship of the press, the editors wrote long articles, plainly stating that the future life of the nation was in jeopardy and the spring of the vitality of the race was being rapidly poisoned. These amazing revelations goaded the sluggish Government to open a few clinics and treat these unfortunate creatures free of charge.

With the transfer of the scene of war from the Dardanelles to Syria, the Turkish government subjected the already impoverished and depleted inhabitants to unbearable sufferings, exacting from them fines, requisitions and exorbitant taxes. Everything was taken away from them, horses, cows, camels, donkeys, sheep, even their household furniture, such as copper and brass vases and caldrons, iron railings, mattresses, clothing, wood and fencing wires. In fact, the majority of the shops and houses were swept clean of everything.

In brief, the past four years were unparalleled years of sufferings and hardships for the people of Syria and Palestine, and it will take a long time to remove the harsh traces of Turkish oppression, nevertheless all the people are nearly unanimous in their opinion that the chapter of lawlessness and retrogression in the Holy Land is forever closed and with the coming of the English the reign of law and the era of education and progress is inaugurated. The flag of England is hailed as the symbol of justice and equal opportunity for all. The Jews, the Christians and the Muslims wish England to remain here as their teacher and educator; so that they may be led by a process of evolution to the higher altitude of modern civilization, introducing new and practical methods of intensive farming and agriculture, establishing industrial plants, building railroads, founding public schools and technical institutions, developing the rich and hidden natural resources of the country and paving the way for the ultimate liberation of the soul from the narrow bounds of racial, religious and national prejudices.

For ages this sacred land of Palestine has been a battleground for the nations of the East and West. Here they fought their battles which decided the fate of the nations lying far to the North and to the South. The last government that controlled the political life of this country for over 500 years contributed not a blessed thing toward its internal improvements. Now there is a general feeling amongst all the classes of Palestine that all these destructive wars and deteriorating influences must be given up for good; so that under the equitable and just administration of Great Britain the people may advance [IX:17:192] along the line of general progress and contribute their share towards the up-building of a strong, noble and stable State.

I may be permitted to close this paper with the characteristic remark of a Muslim Shaykh, just a day after the British occupation of Haifa: "With the coming of the English we were led from darkness into light!" And in this short statement the feeling of the whole population was summed up.

Praying that the *Christian Commonwealth* may ever remain a torchbearer of truth, justice and righteousness and a harbinger of peace and conciliation amongst all nations and religions, I remain,

Your sincere servant,

Ahmad Sohrab

IX:17, 19 January 1919 [IX:17:194]

News of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—letters received from Shoghi Effendi

‘Akká, Palestine, 19 November 1918.

Dr Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím, London, England.

My dear spiritual brother,

Captain¹ Tudor-Pole surprised and gladdened us with his unexpected arrival from Egypt. My grandfather, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was so glad to look at his radiant face and feel, from shaking his hands, the fresh fragrances of the ablazed Bahá’ís of England. He inquired for you and was gratified to know you were all under God’s protection throughout this great world war. The Beloved has been sojourning for a month and a half at ‘Akká, visiting almost daily the Tomb of his father and offering his thanksgivings for the bounty, care and protection of the Blessed Perfection. Today Captain Tudor-Pole accompanied him to the Holy Shrine, and tomorrow the Beloved will drive with him to the Riḍván, the garden in which His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh spent many days and nights.

The Master is expecting, now that the communications are restored, to hear from you frequently and directly of the progress of the Cause and the spiritual gatherings and of the concord and harmony of the souls.

I am so glad and privileged to be able [IX:17:195] to attend to my Beloved’s services after having completed my course of Arts and Sciences in the American University at Beirut. I am so anxious and expectant to hear from you and of your services to the Cause for by transmitting them to the Beloved I shall make him happy, glad and strong.

The past four years have been years of untold calamity, of unprecedented oppression, of indescribable misery, of severe famine and distress, of unparalleled bloodshed and strife, but now that the dove of peace has returned to its nest and abode a golden opportunity has arisen for the promulgation of the Word of God. This will be now promoted and the Message delivered in this liberated region without the least amount of restriction. This is indeed the Era of Service.

You have undoubtedly done a large amount of work in this respect and the Beloved is eagerly awaiting its fascinating and pleasing account.

Hoping I shall hear from you and from the dear friends,

I remain, your brother in the Cause,

Shoghi.

Letter addressed to Major W. Tudor-Pole, at Cairo, Egypt, by Shoghi Effendi, the grandson of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Haifa, Palestine, 17 December 1918.

My dear spiritual brother,

Your long-expected letter was heartily welcomed, so glad was the Beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to hear from you and through you to know that the friends were all well. In fact, a few days ago, when the Beloved was paying a visit to Colonel Staunton, the Military Governor, Captain Kerr,

¹ He is now a Major—*Editors*.

being in his presence, was asked whether he had any news from you, to which he replied affirmatively. I conveyed your message of love and gratitude to the Master, and we all look forward to the time of meeting you in Haifa, this time we hope more fully. The Beloved's health is excellent, and he reveals these days different Tablets to Persia, Europe and America. Two Tablets have been revealed for England, the latter for Dr Esslemont, whose supplication [IX:17:196] I translated yesterday for the Master. I quote fully this Tablet:

Tablet

To his honour Dr Esslemont—Upon him be greeting and praise!

O thou lover of all mankind!

Verily, have I chanted thy verses of praise to God, inasmuch as He hath illumined thine eyes with the light of guidance, the light of the oneness of the world of humanity; so much so that thy heart overflowed with the love of God and thy spirit was attracted by the fragrance of God, and I supplicate divine Providence that thou mayest become a torch to that gathering, so that the light of knowledge might shine out from thee, that thou mayest be confirmed to act in accordance with the significances of the *Hidden Words* and strengthened by God under all circumstances.

Concerning the book you are editing, send me a copy thereof. ... Convey my greetings to the respected maidservant of God, M_____.

I pray the Lord to support thee in the service of all humankind, irrespective of race or religion. Nay rather, thou shouldst deal with all according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, which are like unto life to this Glorious Age.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The Beloved was very glad to hear from Miss Rosenberg, whose letter you had sent but without any supplication of yours enclosed. I wonder whether you enclosed any supplication or not.

The Master a few days ago was invited by Colonel Staunton to assist at a meeting of the different religious heads of Haifa, to institute a relief work for the poor of Haifa. The Beloved responded and then after many discussions, when the time of donation came, the Governor announced that although a poor man, yet he would give five English pounds for each of the three religious denominations. Major Nott followed with nine, then publicly and directly the Governor declared that he had the honour of announcing that His Excellency 'Abbás Afandí ('Abdu'l-Bahá) had kindly given the noble sum of fifty Egyptian pounds for the poor, at which all present clapped. Quite a high standard for the Muftí and the Archbishop of Haifa to follow.

The Master uttered the final word of prayer at a public and immense gathering just given to celebrate the end of the war. This is the text of the prayer:

Prayer

O Omnipotent God! Verily, the pavilion of Justice has been raised in the Holy Land, extending from East to West. We thank Thee and we praise Thee for the establishment of this just and equitable Sovereignty, and this mighty Government which strives for the comfort of its people and the safety of its subjects. O Almighty God! Confirm the Greatest Emperor George V, through Thy divine confirmations, and strengthen him by Thy merciful power, and perpetuate his protecting shadow upon this noble land. This we ask through Thy help, assistance and protection. Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent, the Exalted, the Omniscient and the Generous!

Space forces me to stop, awaiting your news.

Yours very faithfully,

Shoghi Rabbani

IX:17, 19 January 1919 [IX:17:199]

Recent tablets revealed for Bahá'ís of Egypt and Persia

Tablet to Egypt

O ye who are enkindled with the fire of the love of God!

Ever do I inhale the fragrance of faithfulness from the rose-garden of the hearts of the believers and I was filled with joy at the receipt of the good news of the prosperity and success of that merciful community and their humility and submission towards the Cause of God.

Verily, I received a letter from his honour Áqá Muḥammad Taqí, giving the glad-tidings that the friends are in the utmost of joy and fragrance. Spiritual emotions are ever stirred in my heart and the rays of their remembrance and the heat of their love are continually reflected in my soul. I supplicate at the threshold of the Supreme Lord to make them the signs of guidance amongst mankind and as brilliant lamps scattering their lights to all the regions. ... [IX:17:200]

Tablet to Persia

O thou kind friend and spreader of truth!

The eloquent letter of your honour received and its contents imparted the utmost joy, that, praise be to God, this unique newspaper is still being published, showing firmness and steadfastness and during the past years of revolution and commotion it failed not nor was it discontinued. It is hoped that it may become a centre through which great and general services may be rendered to the world of humanity. Praise be to God, that although in the past few years many newspapers stopped their publication, this newspaper, which is a well-wisher, remained firm and its issue was not brought to a close.

Should you inquire concerning the conditions of these exiled ones, praise be to God, that notwithstanding thousands of afflictions we are kept safe and guarded in the Fortress of Divine Protection. Verily, this is a most miraculous matter!

Although the booming of cannons and the terrific noises of machine guns had thrown the world into utter commotion and earthquake in Europe and America, the voices of the members of this community were raised, encouraging men to the ideal of universal peace. Many articles were published in the newspapers that the great, final result of this war would not be bad for Persia. The various political parties in Persia, such as the party of Liberty, the Revolutionary party, the Democratic party, the Unionist party, in brief, all these and other parties brought ruin upon that country. But, God willing, ere long these exiled ones will be assisted to render a most great service to Persia and the Persians, because we are taking hold of every effective means and are connected with important personages.

IX:17, 19 January 1919 [IX:17:200]

“Unloose the tongue in teaching the Cause of God”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

As much as you are able, unloose the tongue in teaching the Cause of God and demonstrate ye extraordinary effort in the guidance of the souls. The Cause of God will advance only through the effect of teaching and the friends will achieve victory through the holy fragrances. I declare by the mystery of existence that were there a number of souls to arise, opening their

tongues and delivering the Message with the utmost severance, sanctification, holiness and power of attraction the powers of the world would not withstand them and the hosts of the earth would not prevent them from accomplishing their tasks.

From the *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 25 June 1914.

IX:19, 2 March 1919 [IX:19:220]

Nearly one hundred Tablets revealed for the Bahá'í friends in America

Word from Shoghi Effendi, grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine,
29 January 1919.

To Dr Díyá' Baghdádí, Chicago.

Dear brother in al-Abhá:

Greetings and salutations! Your supplications are arriving; the news of the friends of God noted. A Tablet has been revealed for you; a telegram dispatched. So far, the Beloved ('Abdu'l-Bahá) has revealed nearly one hundred Tablets for the friends in the United States of America. Some of them have been dispatched and others will be. Convey the glad-tidings to the friends. Beloved in perfect health. Supplications and cables are pouring in constantly from morn till eve; life-giving words are revealed. From Persia, India, Japan, France, England and Switzerland, letters and telegrams are showering. The friends are ablaze and serve heartily. In the Tablets revealed, ninety-five per cent strike the chord of union and the note of absolute harmony among the friends. The Beloved declares that if the union and concord among the friends of the Merciful is strengthened and fortified, it shall, like unto a lodestone, attract 'Abdu'l-Bahá to their shores. Abhá greetings.

Shoghi

P. S. Your daughter is named Parvene¹ by the Master.

IX:19, 2 March 1919 [IX:19:222]

“Blessed is the one who has believed on Thee”

Extracts from *The Visiting Tablet* which all pilgrims chant in the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh²

The praise that appeared from Thy supreme soul and the glory (Bahá) that dawned from Thy most glorious (Abhá) Beauty be upon Thee, O Thou Manifestation of the Almighty, King of Immortality and Lord of whomsoever is in earth and heaven.

I testify that, by Thee was revealed the Sovereignty of God and His dominion and the greatness of God and His might, and by Thee arose the suns of eternity in the heaven of destiny and dawned the invisible Beauty from the horizon of Bahá. And I testify that by a movement of Thy pen appeared the order of Káf and Nún³ (be and it is) the hidden mystery of God was manifested, creation commenced and the manifestations (prophets) were sent.

And I testify that by Thy Beauty appeared the Beauty which is worshipped and by Thy face was revealed the Face of the Desired One, and by a word of Thine a separation (differentiation) affected the creation; the sincere advanced to the lofty summit and the polytheists descended to the lowest state.

¹ Parvín (“Pleiades”).

² Tablet of Visitation, *Bahá'í Prayers*, pp. 230–3.

³ The newer translation uses the words “Be Thou”. Káf is the first letter of kun (“be!”) and metaphorically the beginning of creation. Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, has explained the significance of the “letters B and E”. They constitute the word “Be”, which, he states, “means the creative Power of God Who through His command causes all things to come into being” and “the power of the Manifestation of God, His great spiritual creative force”. Nún is the last letter of fayakún (“and it is”). Hence, kun fayakún: “Be! and it is”. (Qur’án 2:117, 36:82)

And I testify that whosoever knows Thee verily knows God, and whosoever attains Thy meeting has verily attained the meeting of God.

Therefore, blessed is the one who has believed on Thee, attained Thy good pleasure, walked about Thine abode and presented himself before Thy throne.

IX:19, 2 March 1919 [IX:19:222]

Intercession, a special teaching of this religion

The following was sent by Miss Ethel Rosenberg from her notes while in 'Akká 1904. (Extract from the Teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.)

The Master said that by the mercy of God, not through His justice, the condition of those who have died in sin and unbelief can be changed. We are commanded to pray that their condition may be changed. As we have the power to pray for those souls here, so we shall have the same power in the after-life in the Kingdom. The power of this prayer of intercession is a special teaching of this religion. To pray for the dead was not given as a special religious command (of the divine Teachers) until this day of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh). The grace of effective intercession is one of the perfections belonging to perfect and advanced souls, as well as to the Manifestations of God. Jesus Christ had the power of interceding for the forgiveness of his enemies when on earth, and he certainly has this power now!

'Abdu'l-Bahá never mentions the name of a dead person without saying, "May God forgive him!" or words to that effect. He says, "Followers of the prophets have also this power of praying for the forgiveness of souls; therefore we may not think that any soul is condemned to a stationary condition of suffering or loss, arising from their absolute ignorance of God. The power of effective, intercession for them always exists. All the people in the other world, are they not the creatures of God? Therefore, they can progress in the other world. As they can receive light from supplication here, there they can also receive light from supplication. The rich in the other world can help the [IX:19:223] poor, as the rich can help the poor here. In every world all are the creatures of God. They are always dependent upon Him, not independent, nor can they ever be so. While they are needful of God, the more they supplicate, the richer they become. What is their merchandise? What is their wealth? In the other world what is the means of help and assistance? It is intercession. First, undeveloped souls must gain progress through the supplications of the spiritually rich; afterwards, they can progress through their own supplications."

IX:19, 2 March 1919 [IX:19:228]

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To the maid-servant of God, Sarah Gertrude Harris, New York City.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou my beloved daughter!

Your letter dated 13 November was received. Its contents occasioned infinite grief, for it spoke of the ascension of that illumined youth.¹ Indeed in the rose-garden of God that young man was like unto a shrub in its utmost freshness and promising good fruits. Whoever has seen him or heard him has undoubtedly been shocked and grieved at the news of his passing away.

However, although that peerless shrub has sought separation from the woods of the nether world, yet, it has appeared fully adorned and resplendent in the rose-garden of the world on-

¹ Her son, Erwin Harris, who died as a result of wounds on 7 October 1918 in Berkshire, England.

high in the Abhá Paradise. That divine bird has flown away from this mortal and earthly nest, has ascended to the Kingdom of God and has been engaged in singing the sweet melodies of praise and thanksgiving on the lordly branches in the rose-garden of the Merciful. Happy is he and blessed in his abode! He has reaped the result of life and has become a fruitful tree. Grieve not therefore for his death and be not depressed.

With regard to his life insurance, act in accordance with his will. I have perused his letter and have supplicated for him from the Threshold of Oneness an exalted station.

As to my presence in America for the laying of the corner-stone of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, this depends upon the unity and harmony among all the friends of God. For their union is like unto a lodestone which draws me to their shores.

I have been gladdened by the news you have conveyed of the gathering of the friends and their union and affiliation.

Convey the utmost kindness on my behalf to Bahá'íyyih. I hope that Mr Harris will fully recover, and engage as it ought to be in the service of the Lord.

The relatives who are here all convey to you their longing greeting.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 28 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

IX:19, 2 March 1919 [IX:19:228]

Supplication for Lua Getsinger¹

Home of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Akká, Syria, 8 February 1917.

My dear brothers and sisters in the Cause:

It was one afternoon of the month of September 1916, when the Master was sojourning along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, that we received the sad news of the death of the beloved Lua. No one could believe it. When the Centre of the Covenant heard about it he was deeply affected and felt more than any one of us her great loss. Since that day I have heard him more than a hundred times exclaiming with a moving voice: "What a loss! What a loss! What a loss!" In this short letter I cannot reproduce all the words he uttered about her, but I can say that all the believers mourned for her and regretted her departure most sincerely. We know full well that her purified spirit freed from the fetters of water and clay soared to the Kingdom of Glory and received the reward of her services to the Cause of God! In a Tablet revealed years ago, the Master gave her to me as a mother, and from that time on I tried always to fulfil this heavenly [IX:19:229] pledge of sonship. She always directed my sentiments and deeds towards the heights of nobility and truthfulness. ... She was a source of inspiration and consolation in all my affairs. If I desired to do something, I consulted with her, and she never failed in giving me good, elevating advice or when she travelled or I was away we corresponded together. And now that she is living in the Supreme Concourse, I feel every day her supporting mother-love and her solicitude about my welfare. From many standpoints she was a unique teacher.

Firstly, she was one of the earliest believers in America who, enkindled with the fire of God's love, travelled extensively and called the people to the Kingdom.

Secondly, she was amongst the very first pilgrims who came to 'Akká and received the blessings of the Master. Her verbal account of that first glorious pilgrimage was enough to

¹ Copy sent by Ahmad Sohrab, 18 December 1918.

convince anyone of the validity of this dispensation.

Thirdly, she was strictly speaking a disciple of the Master, taught by him and educated by him and sent out by him as an ordained teacher.

Fourthly, she travelled throughout the continents of America, Europe, Asia and Africa to spread the Word of God and diffuse the fragrances of the flowers of truth.

Fifthly, in this Cause we have two kinds of teachers. The first are those who teach new souls and spread the Cause in new environments, the second are those who work amongst the believers. Lua belonged to the first order of teachers.

Sixthly, she taught many important souls, and her pupils, both men and women, in the United States and Canada, are numerous—pupils who are zealous and active, carrying along her work of spiritual illumination with intelligence and enthusiasm.

Seventhly, she was one of the very few souls who visited the Holy Land seven or eight times, lived in the blessed household for months at a time, and was considered as one of the members of the holy family, one of the daughters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Eighthly, she was the one living believer who visited the Sháh of Persia years ago in Paris and interceded in behalf of the friends of his kingdom.

Ninthly, her faith in this Revelation was perfect, her heart was a treasure of the jewels of the Kingdom, her tongue was eloquent in the praise of the Lord, her consciousness mirrored forth the rays of the Sun of Reality and her aim and object was for no other than the teaching of the Cause and the glorification of truth.

On the evening of 21 December, when the believers were in the presence of the Beloved in Haifa, I begged him to reveal a Tablet of Visitation in her honour, as a celestial token of her services. A translation of it is enclosed herewith.

Hoping that all may be inspired through her self-sacrificing example, I am,

Your sincere servant,

Ahmad Sohrab

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Supplication for the attracted maid-servant of God, Lua, who ascended to the Supreme Concourse,—Upon her be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O Lord! O Lord! Verily Thy maid-servant who was attracted with the fragrances of Thy Holiness, enkindled with the fire of Thy Love, the herald of Thy Name, the spreader of Thy Signs amongst Thy people,—ascended to Thee with humility and lowliness, trusting in Thee with all her heart, liberated [IX:19:230] from all worldly ties and attractions, hoping for Thy Universal Favour and Mercy, desiring to enter Thy radiant Presence, supplicating Thy all-encircling Bounty, and begging for the descent of Thy glorious Bestowals!

O Lord! Exalt her station, submerge her in the ocean of Thy Compassion and establish her in the midst of the Paradise of Immortality,—in the Universe of Lights, the Centre of the Beatific Mysteries.

O Lord! She believed in Thee, chanted Thy verses, turned her face toward Thee with all her heart; her spirit was rejoiced through Thy glad-tidings and her soul was purified through the fire of Thy Love. Then amidst the concourse of humanity, she arose in the promotion of Thy Word, suffered every thirsty one to drink from the goblet of Thy Guidance and healed every sick one with the antidote of Thy Knowledge. In Thy Path she travelled to distant countries

and remote regions and gave the good-news of Thy Kingdom throughout vast and spacious continents—until through the difficulties that she endured in Thy Path, her very flesh and bones were melted, diseases and sicknesses attacked her, her frail body failed her, her nerves and muscles weakened their functions and her heart became the target of conflicting ailments. Then while hoping for the immortal life, the eternal existence, she abandoned this mortal, ephemeral world.

O Lord! Grant her a palace in the neighbourhood of Thy Most Great Mercy; cause her to dwell in the gardens of Thy paradise, the Most High; illumine her countenance with the effulgence of Thy Good-pleasure, in the Kingdom of Thy Glory; usher her into the heaven of Thy Meeting and suffer her to live ever-lastingly in the assemblage of transfiguration, whose refulgent lights are shining upon the world of hearts and the realm of consciousness.

Verily, Thou are the Forgiving, verily Thou art the Pardoner and verily Thou art the Merciful of the Most Merciful!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

X:1, 21 March 1919 [X:1:1]

Tablet revealed by His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh

HE IS GOD!

The Supreme Pen says: O friends of the Truth! The purpose of bearing these continuous sufferings and uninterrupted calamities is, that the souls who are assured in God may, with utmost unity, associate with one another to such an extent that discord and difference between two individuals may vanish from them, except in special ordinances revealed in the divine Books. The man with inner sight does not see imperfection in any condition. Whatsoever happens is a proof of the greatness of his condition and of the purity of his entity. For example, if a soul becomes humble, indeed this humbleness to the friends of God returns to God, for they look at his faith. By God! In [X:1:2] this case, if the opponents do not act similarly, or if arrogance is shown by them, the person with insight (and humbleness) is in his own sublime deed and has already received and will receive recompense. The harm of the action of the opponents will return to them. Likewise if a soul becomes arrogant this arrogance returns to God—We take refuge in God from that!

O people of comprehension! I declare by the Greatest Name that it is a pity for you to consider incidental conditions. Arise for the Cause of God and with one another affiliate in the utmost love and sincerity, for the sake of the Face of the Beloved. Burn the veils of self with the fire of oneness and with bright and cheerful faces associate with one another. All of you have seen with your own eyes the qualities of the Truth. It was never approved that a single night should pass and any of the friends of God be away from this Slave. The heart of the world is ablaze by the Word of God. It is a pity that you do not become ablaze by this fire. God willing, we are hopeful that this blessed night you may call "The night of unity". Become united with one another and adorned with the embroidery of goodness and praiseworthy conduct. Your efforts should be to guide a strayed, perishing soul to the laws of eternity and among the creatures conduct yourselves in such manner that the sign of Truth may become manifest in you; for you are the first of existence, the first worshipers, the first who bowed and the first to encircle the Holy Threshold. By the one who caused me to utter that which He desired, your names in the Supreme Kingdom are more famous than they are to you. Do not think this utterance is imagination. I wish that you could behold what your Lord, the Merciful, sees of the sublimity of your condition, the greatness of your degrees and the supremacy of your stations. We ask God that your desires may not prevent you from that which was ordained for you. We are hopeful that in the utmost harmony, love and friendship you may deal with one another in such a manner that the banner of oneness may be raised. Surpass ye

one another in good affairs and in showing contentment.

His is the right to command! He doeth whatsoever He wisheth and ruleth whomsoever He desireth, and verily He is the Powerful, the Dear, the Mighty!

Translated by Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago, 9 July 1918.

X:1, 21 March 1919 [X:1:3]

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá recently revealed

Mr and Mrs Vail

To his honour Mr Albert Vail and the maid-servant of God, Emily Vail, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.—Upon them be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O ye who are firm in the Covenant!

Verily, your letter was the third of those received from America. subsequent to the extinction of the fire of war. I was indeed gladdened to peruse it for it was indicative of a pure purpose and a lofty ideal, to wit: the service of the world of humanity.

The most advisable thing, therefore, is to gather every Sunday in order to discuss "Pure and Sanctified Living", "Universal Brotherhood", and the "Philosophy of Universal Religion".

As to the promulgation of Truth, verily it is divine and heavenly character, action in accordance with the divine and merciful instructions and the propagation among men of lordly behests and exhortations.

I pray God that He may therein confirm ye.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 17 December 1918. [X:1:7]

Marion Jack

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Jack, Chicago, Ill.—Upon her be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art the well-wisher of mankind!

Thy letter was received and was perused most attentively; its contents were exceedingly pleasing. Thy wish, as well as that of the friends of America, is that I may undertake a voyage to that land; but my heart is there and I am always thinking of them; and as they associate and affiliate in the utmost of love and union therein, my heart and spirit reside. Entertain no doubts whatever for I am linked with you spiritually even though separate in body. We are all under the shade of the unicoloured pavilion of the world of humanity, but heedlessness forms a veil and an obstacle. When it is removed the veil will be rent asunder and we shall see one another gathered up together and present. [X:1:8]

Thou hast written of thy wish to use the money of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to aid some of the dear sisters to get well: If you have gathered the sum from your own money, spend half of it for the sisters, and the other half, spend it for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; and if the sum is from other people, refer to them (i.e., the contributors) and act according to their wish.

Convey on my behalf greetings and the utmost of respect to the maidservant of God, Mrs Eva Cooper, (of Fruitport, Michigan).

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 27 December 1918.

Amy Wilkinson

To the maid-servant of God, Amy K. Wilkinson, Boston, Mass.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art enkindled with the fire of the love of God!

Your letter dated 26 November 1918 was received. Those souls that, in this day, enter into the divine Kingdom and attain everlasting life, although they materially dwell on earth, yet in reality they soar in the realm of heaven. Their body may linger on earth but their spirit travels in the immensity of space. For as thoughts widen and become illumined, they acquire the power of flight and transport man to the Kingdom of God.

I beg of God that Mr Randall and thyself may both become two lofty soaring birds; that ye may nestle and abide in the loftiest summits of the Kingdom; that ye may behold the glorious signs and may perfume the nostrils with the fragrances of the Abhá Paradise.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 9 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Ella Goodall Cooper

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Ella Goodall Cooper, California—Upon her be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O thou respected maid-servant of God!

Your letter, dated 22 October 1918 was received. Although for four years communication between us has been interrupted, yet the spiritual messenger was heartily and continually engaged. At all times I implored from the divine Kingdom, begging for the maid-servants of God and the friends of the Merciful divine assistance and confirmation.

At present, praise be to God, your detailed letter is at hand, and its news of the health and safety of the believers of God imparted a joy unlimited. From the unity of the friends of that land we have felt greatly happy and glad. I pray God that this union, firmness, steadfastness and spiritual consultation may become day by day more pronounced, and this rose-garden which has been planted in that continent may bestow perfume, through the scent of its flowers and blossoms, upon the nostrils of the people of the world. [X:1:9]

How beautifully thou hast expressed the thought, namely: "We hope that the love and unity of the friends may soon become the magnet of attraction which will draw thee again to our shores." This is evident and sure—that if the light of love among the friends will be as resplendent as it ought to be and like unto a candle will illumine that gathering, it will surely exert the effect of a magnet.

Convey on my behalf the utmost longing and love to all the assemblies.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 12 December 1918.

Roy C. Wilhelm

To his honour, Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, New York.—Upon him be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received and its contents imparted the utmost of gladness. Thou hast inquired about our health. Notwithstanding the great agitation in the East, thanks to Divine grace and bounty, we have passed these years of war in joy and gladness under the care and protection of Divine Providence. Now, praise be to God, the darkness of oppression has passed away and the light of justice has dawned and a just government has been ministering to this land.

O thou who are firm! What glad-tiding better than the one which thou hast imparted, to wit: that misunderstanding from among the friends has [X:1:10] been eliminated and harmony and concord established! This good news has made everybody hopeful that soon the torch of the Oneness of the World of Humanity may be enkindled in New York.

As to my voyage to India, it is not yet decided. In case it is settled we shall inform you.

Convey the utmost love and attachment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's heart to the favoured and respected maid-servant of God, Mrs Parsons, Mr Randall, Mr Mills, Mr Ashton and Mr Hall. I hope from the bounties of the Kingdom these souls may enlighten the world of humanity, may promulgate the oneness of the world of existence and like unto stars may shine upon men by the light of union and concord from the horizon of the world.

...

... Send to me the design of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as produced by him. I pray God that this year the construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be started.

...

Concerning communication with the Holy Land, that is to say, Haifa, communicate directly for the hindrances and obstacles have been eliminated.

Convey to each and all the believers of God the utmost longing and greeting.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

P.S.: The enclosed booklets¹ have been perused. Send for us one hundred copies of each for they are exceedingly praiseworthy. Verily, you are engaged in serving the Cause and thus His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh is well pleased with you and I am also satisfied and content.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 12 December 1918.

Corinne True

To the maid-servant of God, Corinne True, Chicago, Ill.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou firm in the Covenant!

Your letter dated 23 November 1918 was received. Its contents indicated that, praise be to God, you were engaged in the service of Mashriqu'l-Adhkár; that this Universal Edifice may be erected. Indeed you spare no effort in this respect, and I entertain the hope that this endeavour may grow day by day. Deeds are like unto trees, for to plant a shrub is no difficult matter, while the care necessary for its growth and yielding fruit is hard and difficult. So far, effort was expended to lay the foundations of the Temple, but now its erection and completion

¹ Booklets "Big Bens" and "Little Bens".

is a difficult matter, and my hope is that the friends of God may be therein assisted.

The second question which is of vital importance is that the friends of God must strive with heart and soul and promulgate heavenly teachings and spread [X:1:11] far and wide the Light of the Kingdom; for the world of humanity has acquired, as a result of this great carnage, a great capacity for the propagation of universal peace. Ears are longing to hearken to the call of the oneness of the world of humanity, to universal reconciliation, and to the abandonment of ignorant prejudices.

In fine, if all the friends of God engage in the promulgation of heavenly teachings, the establishment of universal peace shall be a foregone conclusion.

Praise be to God, whatever has been explicitly recorded in the divine Tablets has been fully realized, and all the warnings and appeals of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the temples and gatherings of America have come to pass. At present we hope all will engage in the service of the Kingdom and will promulgate whatever is the will of God.

The teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh are today the spirit of life, the means of peace and reconciliation, the cause of amity and union, and the promoter of the oneness of mankind. One should engage in such a service.

Thy eldest and respected daughter, having striven hard and cared for the wounded, is permitted to present herself whenever she has the opportunity. Praise be to God, the condition of your youngest daughter has ameliorated. ...

As to Mr Fugeta; He is permitted to present himself, but he must first go to California to meet the maid-servants of God, Mrs Goodall and Mrs Cooper, and thence start for the Holy Land. ...

Convey longing greeting to all the friends of God.

Upon all be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 7 February 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

[X:1:12]

Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí

To his honour, Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí, Chicago—Upon his be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou favoured servant at the Threshold of the Almighty!

The letter thou hast written on 25 September 1918 has been received. Praise be to God, thou hast remained safe and protected throughout these years of disturbance and commotion. Thou wert guarded by the eye of Bounty and wert the recipient of infinite blessings. Now that disturbance and commotion have abated, you must more than ever before endeavour in teaching and promulgating the divine teachings. Today the promulgation of the foundation of the divine teachings, which has been explicitly recorded in the blessed Tablets, is the cause of the life of the world. Emphasize and attach importance to this great cause. Arise in teaching. These are the days of seed-sowing. One's time must be occupied continually in sowing so that the station of the divine gardener may be attained and great harvests be prepared.

As soon as the way of communication has been opened I have taken up correspondence with thee.

...

Embrace and show utmost affection in my behalf to thy little daughter.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To his honour, Dr Díyá' Baghdádí, Chicago.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

Thy letter dated 21 December 1918 reached us.

Concerning the House of Spirituality: I pray God to assist them in all conditions and confirm them for the elevation of the Word of God and the promulgation of the divine teachings, so that they become the cause of the establishment of the oneness of humanity and the diffusion of the Merciful fragrances, in order that the prejudice among the religions, the sects and the races may not remain and all together take hold of the rope of God, the mis-[X:1:13] understandings among all the parties may vanish and the human world may become the mirror of the Kingdom of God on which the lights of consciousness shine. Convey thou my greeting and longings to the House of Spirituality ...

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 10 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Jessie Revell

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Jessie Revell, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.—Upon her be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast wished and asked for help and assistance. As thy purpose is right and thy aim service to the world of humanity; the propagation of the light of truth and the abandonment of the superstitions of the nether world, undoubtedly divine confirmations shall encompass thee and thou shalt be assisted and confirmed.

Convey my love and my kindness to thy respected mother and likewise to thy brothers and sisters. Present my considerable respects to Mrs Isabella D. Brittingham and similarly to Mr Paine, Mr and Mrs Walter Bowen and their children.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 30 December 1918.

X:1, 21 March 1919 [X:1:16]

Three kinds of martyrdom

Martyrdom has many explanations, of which the first is to stand bravely and meet death unflinchingly in the path of God, as those wonderful souls have recently done in Persia without wavering for an instant in constancy, nor, under the hands of torture, denying for a single moment their faith.

The second is to, little by little, detach one's heart entirely from this world, laying aside, deliberately and voluntarily, all vanities, worldly seductions, and devoting one's self to the Vineyard of God in whatsoever capacity he is fitted to serve, letting every action, word and deed become a telling monument, a fitting praise and an everlasting glory for His Holy Name!

The third consists in doing the hardest and most difficult things with such willingness and self-sacrifice that all behold it as your pleasure. To seek and accept poverty with the same

smile as you seek and receive fortune. To make the sad and sorrowful your associates, instead of frequenting the society of the careless and gay. To dress in such a simple, plain manner that your appearance becomes a comfort to the poor and an example to the rich. "To yield to the decree of God and to be rejoiced at the most violent calamities, even when the suffering is beyond endurance." And he who can fulfil these last conditions becomes a martyr indeed. Then your good deeds will be your garments, your words of praise to God will be your jewels, and your purity of spirit will be your riches.

A portion of a letter from one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's daughters, Munavvar Khánum, to a Paris believer.

X:2, 9 April 1919 [X:1:17]

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá recently revealed [X:1:19]

Charles Mason Remey

To his honour, Mr Charles Mason Remey, Washington, D.C.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Since the extinction of the fire of war four successive letters have been received from you. The utmost happiness they brought for they carried with them the glad-tidings of the health and welfare of the friends of God.

Praise be unto God, that throughout this violent storm the Ark of the Covenant hath attained unto the shore of Salvation. The danger was imminent and the occasion for fear and apprehension prepared. The friends in all regions remained safe and preserved under the shade of divine protection, particularly in the Holy Land where the danger and calamities were infinite and limitless. Every day brought a new trial and every hour carried with it a special difficulty. In brief, had not divine protection been extended, existence for a single day would have been absolutely impossible. This, verily, is one of the miracles of God that I and the friends in the Holy Land should remain safe and protected while being held in the strong grip of a group of sanguinary¹ persons.

Prior to the war, numerous letters were dispatched to America wherein it was manifestly recorded that a severe commotion was ahead and a great agitation lay in the near future; that the people of the world would be involved in crucial danger and affliction, and trying tests would come to pass; that the pillars of comfort would quake from the intensity of commotion and that blessed souls would shine resplendently like unto the stars of the Supreme Horizon.

Praise be to God, the showers of the blessings of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) are abundantly pouring and the grace and bounty of the loving Lord are complete. At present these gloomy clouds are in the process of dissipation from the horizon of the world. The friends of God must, in accordance with the prescribed directions which have formerly been sent, forget everything, hasten to different lands and regions and promulgate the divine teachings. For this blood-thirsty war has made the world of mankind tired of life, all ears eager to hearken to the call of universal peace, to the declaration of the oneness of the world of humanity, to full understanding, to the annihilation of estrangement and the hoisting of the standard of affection. The majority of the people are ready to listen to the divine teachings. Opportunity must not be let slip away for at another occasion such a capacity will not be found and endeavour and effort shall be in vain. Today is the day of teaching, for all men are athirst and divine teachings are as the refreshing water. Later on, the thirst shall not remain so severe. Hence one should seize the opportunity so that possibly all races and creeds shall

¹ Bloodthirsty.

unite and this enmity and rancour may vanish from among men. [X:1:27]

Convey on my behalf to the two respected personages, Mr Richard Mayer and Mrs Ledyard the utmost love and kindness. I beg and supplicate to the divine Kingdom and beseech for these two purified souls limitless favour that they may sprout in the Paradise of Abhá on the banks of the Water of Life and grow and flourish by the outpouring of the Cloud of Bounty.

The designs of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár have been perused. All are good. That which is chosen by the Committee of the Temple is best. The report which thou hadst written of thy travel with Mr Latimer to the various parts of the world, to Honolulu, Hawaii, and other regions has been noted. Praise be to God, thou has been assisted in such a great service.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 8 January 1919. [X:1:28]

Genevieve Coy

To the maid-servant of God, Genevieve L. Coy, Columbus, Ohio.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who hast sought guidance from the Kingdom of God!

Thy letter, dated 24 October 1918 was received. The purport was conducive to happiness. Praise be unto God, thou hast been freed from the fetter of agnosticism (I know nothing) which is indicative of utter ignorance, and hast hastened to the Realm of "Verily, I know everything!" For heavenly souls acquire the power of perception and ultimately reach unto a station at which they comprehended the realities of things. Formerly they were agnostics; later on they became true and firm believers. My hope is that thou mayest attain such a station.

In that city, although the fire of the love of God has not yet been set ablaze, soon it shall become aflame; blessed souls shall enter the divine Kingdom, shall arise with righteous aim and chaste deeds in the service of the world of humanity, shall raise the call of the Kingdom and shall ignite a candle in every heart.

I pray in behalf of the inhabitants of that city and beg for them the light of supreme guidance, that spirits may be illumined and hearts may be gladdened by the glad-tidings of God.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 9 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Anna Van Blarcom

To the maid-servant of God, Anna Van Blarcom, Montclair, New Jersey.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art encompassed with the blessings of God!

Thy letter was received. Praise be to God, it contained good news, namely that a group of coloured men have become illumined and have acquired a new zeal and ardour. When I was in America, I exerted a great deal of effort in order to promote a great harmony and union among the white and the coloured, for men are like unto doves which associate in perfect concord and amity whether white, black, yellow or red in colour. My hope is that this may

happen among men. Consider ye, that colour has been obliterated among birds, among whom distinction in colour does not prevent intimate association. The same applies to animals which give no importance to colour, but rather take into consideration the species.

How then can man, who is the highest type in the world of creation, attach importance to unimportant matters and make difference in colour the cause of alienation and enmity?

Endeavour ye, therefore, to bring about absolute affiliation between the white and the coloured. This variety in colour is indeed an ornament. If in a rose-garden all the flowers are unicoloured, what beauty may be found therein? [X:1:29] Whereas if thou beholdest a garden wherein multi-coloured flowers bloom, infinite grace and beauty will appear therefrom.

Likewise if the world of mankind were of one colour what preference would it have? Whereas multiplicity of colour is an emblem of the Power of the Merciful.

Convey to Mrs Beede the utmost kindness on my behalf and to Mr Randall the glad-tiding of the Kingdom and my utmost love to the Edsalls and Reids.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 9 January 1919.

Emma Carmichael

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Emma Carmichael, Brantford, Ontario, Canada.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

Your letter dated 14 November 1918 was received. From its contents it became known that you are in Canada, and are turning your face, with a clean and pure purpose to the Kingdom of God.

Among the inhabitants of Canada, the attracted maid-servant of God, Mrs Maxwell, is in reality in the utmost attraction and enkindlement. Convey my greeting to her. I hope that, having joined hands together, you may strive for the promulgation of divine teachings and thus be the cause of the enlightenment of that region. Those souls of the Kingdom who are attracted in these days are like unto a gardener, are ceaselessly sowing seeds, are bestowing growth through the outpourings of the cloud of guidance and are heaping up piles of crops and harvest. My prayer to God is that you may also act similarly.

Concerning what you had written about your husband, be thou not grieved for, praise be to God, he has attained unto everlasting life and has reaped the fruit of his existence on earth, and this is faith and the complete turning of the face toward the Kingdom of God. This is verily everlasting health, this is eternal comfort, this is heavenly exaltation and this is merciful bounty.

Convey on my behalf greeting and kindness to the maid-servants of God, Mrs Mabel Davis Reley and Mrs Emma Reasner. Although their two supplications have not materially arrived, yet the heart from their contents is indeed gladdened.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 9 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Martha Root

To the maid-servant of God, Martha L. Root, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou enkindled with the fire of the love of God!

Your detailed letter dated 7 November 1918 was in these days received. The contents produced great joy, for they indicated a benevolent purpose, an untiring effort and an extended tour around the different parts of the globe. [X:1:30] Today the promulgation of the ideal principles of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, which are manifestly recorded in the Books, is the spirit of this age and the cause of the realization of assistance and confirmation. Assuredly whenever thou holdest fast to it, in whatever enterprise thou mayest engage, thou shalt find the doors of might and power flung open to thy face. My hope from the blessings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh is that thou mayest become self-sacrificing in His path, that thou mayest forget rest and composure and like unto a swift-flying bird, thou mayest cover long distances and in whatever land thou tarriest thou mayest reproduce the melody of the Kingdom and engage in songs and music in the best of tunes.

At present the whole world is prepared for the call of the Kingdom. The past war has given rise to a wonderful capacity among men, for the underlying foundation of the teachings of God rests upon the comfort and the well-being of the denizens of the world and upon the establishment of Universal Peace.

As ears are awaiting the summons for Universal Peace, it is therefore advisable for thee to travel, in case comfortable journey is possible, to the different parts of the globe and roar like unto a lion in the Kingdom of God. Wide-reaching consequences thou shalt witness and extraordinary confirmations shall be exhibited unto thee. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has said: "Verily, We gaze upon ye from My Abhá Horizon and shall come to the assistance of him who has risen to the service of My Cause with the phalanxes of the Supreme Concourse and with a legion of chosen and favoured angels." Thus the diffusion of divine fragrances is above all the most important matter.

I very much desire that thou shouldst visit the Holy Land and thus to meet thee, but teaching stands above everything else and if thou deemest it advisable, engage thou in the spreading of it throughout the regions of the world.

His honour Mr Harry Randall is indeed the herald of the Kingdom of God, serves His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and the friends of God beyond his own endurance and is the cause of the extension of the sphere of teaching.

His honour Mr Roy Wilhelm is in reality a true servant. He has no thought save service to the Kingdom of Abhá and is therein engaged day and night.

Mr Richard Mayer is self-sacrificing in service to the world of humanity and is the cause of the diffusion of Divine fragrances. His efforts are accepted at the Kingdom of Abhá.

As to Green Acre, it is indeed an important spot. Far-reaching consequences shall result from the gathering at that spot. May the spirit of (her honour) Miss Farmer rejoice and rest in peace and may her reality be glorified in the Kingdom of Abhá! I always beg assistance and confirmations for the friends in Green Acre.

His honour Áqá 'Abbás 'Alí is indeed the 'Abbás of Bahá, i.e. the lion of Bahá'u'lláh, for he roars and proclaims the call of "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!" on mountains and in jungles.

Concerning the Esperanto language, numerous letters have been written by the friends and have been spread over all the world. My hope is that the Esperantists may become attracted by these epistles, may consider the magnitude of confirmation bestowed upon some of the important Tablets of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and propagate them all around. I trust they may turn their faces towards the Abhá Kingdom and may solicit assistance and confirmation in this noble undertaking.

O thou beloved maid-servant of God! I presently implore and entreat at the Kingdom of God and beg for thy late mother unbounded forgiveness that [X:1:31] her chaste and pure essence may become sanctified from the pollutions of sins and may turn out bright and resplendent by the glorious Light in the limitless Kingdom.

Convey, on my behalf, the wonderful Abhá greetings to all the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 10 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Mabel Nickerson

To the maid-servant of God, Mabel A. Nickerson, Chicago, Illinois.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O maid-servant of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh!

Thy letter dated 25 September 1918 was received. Thou hadst solicited confirmation. Know thou verily that the magnet of confirmation is the promulgation of divine teachings. Whosoever arises for the diffusion of the fragrances of God, the confirmation of the Kingdom will assuredly surround him to such an extent that he will himself remain confounded.

However, this is conditioned upon the conformity of words with deeds. The people of Bahá must strive to diffuse the fragrances through deeds more than through words, for a single deed, motivated by the Essence of Sanctity, so promulgates (The Word) that its sweet-scented fragrances are transmitted to all the regions of the world. My hope is that thou mayest be confirmed and assisted.

Thou hast asked for permission to attain the court of presence. Whenever travel in comfort and ease is made possible, then thou art granted permission.

Convey to all the friends and maid-servants of God respectful greetings.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated Haifa, Palestine, 10 January 1919 [X:1:32]

Belle Luxmore

To the maid-servant of God, Belle B. Luxmore.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou respected one!

Praise God and be grateful that thou hast become the recipient of divine bounty, has illumined thy sight and heart with the light of guidance, hast responded to the call of the Herald of the Kingdom and hast turned thy face to the Most Exalted Summit.

Appreciate thou the value of this supreme bounty and praise and thank the Lord day and night.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani. 10 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Henrietta Wagner

To the maid-servant of God, Henrietta Clark Wagner, Akron, Ohio.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-

Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter dated 24 October 1918 was received. Praise be to God that, like unto the shower of bounty, thou hast caused every soil to be fertile and every plantation luxuriant.

Thou wert only complaining of Cleveland. The reason why this inactivity prevails is because some heedless and thoughtless ones are corresponding with some of the people of that city. But this depression and inactivity is like unto a mist which the Sun of Truth shall eventually dissipate through the heat of its rays. Thus the obscurity of error shall give way to the morn of guidance.

Praise be to God, thou art engaged in service and art occupied in promulgating the Divine Teachings.

Appreciate thou the merit of such confirmed deed and thank thy Lord for it day and night. The gratitude for this favour consists in thy adoption of divine morals, thy teaching the Cause of God and thy holding fast to His Covenant.

I beg for thee the Bounty, the Favour and the Blessings of God.

Forward the enclosed letters.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 10 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

X:2, 9 April 1919 [X:2:24]

Recent tablet to an eminent Bahá'í in Persia

Translation of the blessed Tablet revealed by the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and sent to the *Star of the West* by him for publication.

To his honour Áqá Mírzá Muḥammad Bakr Khán, Shíráz, Persia.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament!

Your letter has been received in the best of time. For some years not a melody has reached the ear of the longing ones from the district of Shíráz. This letter is a faithful messenger that has arrived in this Blessed Spot from [X:2:25] that fragrant and pure country. It is the message of that kind friend and the cause of joy and fragrance.

Thanks be unto God! The friends in Shíráz, notwithstanding the cessation of news, were confirmed in firmness in the Covenant, through the favours of the Orb of the horizons. I am hopeful that the melody of the Kingdom will so arise as to make that section envied by all regions. It was written in the past, my hope is that the queen of songs from Shíráz may reach the ears of the Supreme Concourse. The aim was that the friends of God may be so ablaze with the fire of divine love that the fra- [X:2:26] grances of God may be diffused to other parts. That was the purpose of this Servant.

All the governments and the nations of the world have fallen in painful torture from the mischief of this universal war; the edifice of mankind quaked and the world of humanity fell into a great crisis. All the sects have become targets for the arrows of calamities; but through the infinite bestowals of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) this oppressed party (the Bahá'ís) in

all countries remained safe and protected. This is from the blessings of the divine teachings. All the nations and governments are assured that the party of God has no other purpose and desire save peace, reconciliation, the oneness of the world of humanity, harmony and kindness. Even all the enemies give testimony to this. For this world-consuming war has become the cause of the fulfilment of that which had been explicitly recorded in the divine Tablets and like unto the sun in the setting horizon, has become manifest and evident. There remains no room of denial for any soul. The evidence is complete. Some of the enemies who composed books merely for corruption and to ignite the fire of hate, have recorded in their own books these divine behests which had emanated from the Supreme Pen and were printed and distributed more than thirty years ago. They have even interpreted and explained some of the words that were slightly obscure so as to agitate the authorities of the enemy to strike and uproot the Blessed Tree! Even the well-known Mírzá Mihdí Khán, wrote in the book of his delusion¹ these divine records. For example, he put in parenthesis the word “Constantinople” for “O thou point that art situated between the two seas” in order to disturb the celebrated personage² and to make him understand that “verily, upon thee hath been established the throne of oppression” meant himself—the Sultán. These enemies were indeed the heralds. Now that these divine behests have, after fifty years, become fulfilled, there remains no room for denial for any soul, because as above written, these were recorded and printed in the writings of the enemies. Every one who denies may refer to them.

Undoubtedly, you have perused the European papers. This Servant in all gatherings, assemblies, synagogues and churches, declared at the top of his voice: “O ye who are present! O ye who are hearing! The continent of Europe is like unto hell! Below the surface the earth is filled with combustible materials. It is an arsenal and a storehouse for ammunition and it depends only upon a spark to have its flames suddenly reach the zenith of heaven! The fire of war will envelop the horizon and assuredly this shall come to pass! O ye people, strive and make great efforts, perchance this world-consuming fire may become suppressed and extinguished. Otherwise, countries shall be overturned, the world from the East to the West will become devastated, the human edifice shall be upset and in the world of His creation the structure of rest and happiness shall fall!”

These explicit talks were spread in the papers of the year 1912. Now, according to the divine texts the susceptibilities of Universal Peace are emanating from the hearts. The wise among the people who considered this great Cause as an impossibility and thought of it as superstitions, have now arisen in its promotion. The divine texts are being used by the mouths of the well-wishers in different expressions.

Unquestionably, you have heard of the splendid addresses delivered by His Highness the President (Woodrow Wil- [X:2:27] son) in great gatherings and you have read them. His Highness the President, explained his fourteen points in these great meetings, that they are the cause of progress and prosperity of the world of humanity. Twelve of these fourteen points were recorded in the divine Tablets fifty years ago. They were printed and most of them were translated and distributed. Consider how the law of God is being spread by ideal forces.

The ascension of some of the friends to the infinite realm was the cause of sorrow to these wandering ones. Yet for those blessed souls, their departure was the cause of joy and happiness. The prisoner became free and the victim of deprivation hastened to the meeting-place of manifestation in the invisible world.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to a book called *Miftáhi Bábul Abwáb*—the key of the door of doors—written by Mihdí Khán in Egypt in the years 1907–1908.

² The Sultán of Turkey, ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd.

In regard to the book of the illiterate Javád¹ there is no significance to it whatsoever, because every just one who reads such writings will instantly know the truth and will understand that these statements emanate from the world of doubts. This book is not from the composition of the illiterate Javád, it was published in his name according to instructions from the centre of violation. Likewise, other books that have been distributed are composed by the centre of violation but known in the name of different persons. Let us leave aside this hearsay; become rejoiced in the fragrances of God and act according to the blessed commands. In the Epistle of the Kings, (Bahá'u'lláh) quoted the following verse: "My heart is depressed by men of weak elements! My hands desire to reach the Lion of God² and Rustam"³.

Thanks be unto God! Their honours Khans⁴ are safe and guarded under the shadow of divine protection and engaged in completing their studies. When the way becomes open and travelling facilitated, they will return to those regions with utmost longings.

Convey on my behalf, the greeting of the yearning one unto all the friends and unto each individually.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá.

Revealed 23 March 1919. Translated by Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, April 1919.

X:3, 28 April 1919 [X:3:33]

The Bahá'í movement—is it the coming universal religion?

From the *Helena Daily Independent*, Sunday, 2 February 1919.⁵

Jean Masson

The Holy Land had just been released from the grip of the Turk. Communication was made possible between Palestine and the West after many months of interrupted intercourse. And then through the British embassy came the message over the cable to America:

"I have much pleasure in informing you that I have received a telegram from my government stating that His Eminence 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás is in Haifa and that he is in good health and is well cared for."

Press notices in early October were sent out over the country, through the British Bureau of Information, that British troops came upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa.

Who is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that he should be the subject of telegraphic and press information immediately upon the complete defeat of the Turks and the establishment of communication?

At Leland Stanford university, in October 1912,⁶ this same 'Abdu'l-Bahá predicted the great war:

"We are on the eve of the battle of Armageddon, referred to in the 16th chapter of Revelation. The time is two years hence, when only a spark will set aflame the whole of Europe.

"The social unrest in all countries, the growing religious scepticism, antecedent to the millennium, are already here. Only a spark will set aflame the whole of Europe, as prophesied in the verses of Daniel and in the Book of John.⁷

"Before 1917 kingdoms will be annihilated, cataclysms will rock the earth. Then all nations

¹ Muḥammad Javád-i-Qazvíní lives in 'Akká and was well known among the early believers but now is a violator.

² The "Lion of God" was a title given to 'Alí, the brave son-in-law of Prophet Muḥammad, by Muslims.

³ Rustam was a great Persian hero—"Hercules".

⁴ Sons of Áqá Muḥammad Bakr *Khán* at Beirut College. *Khán*, pl. *khánát*, *kháwánín*.

⁵ Not all quotations on page 33 could be located in the specified references.

⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 348. Quoted text is not in this Talk.

⁷ Some similar statements are in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 22–23.

shall be as one faith and all men as brothers and these fruitless strifes and ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come, and man shall not glory in this, that he loves his country, but rather in that he loves his kind."

On Sunday, 12 May 1912,¹ in Grace Methodist Episcopal church, New York city, this same 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave utterance to this momentous warning:

"Just now you can say Europe is a battlefield; like ammunition ready for a spark. And one spark can set aflame the whole world.

"Before these complications and colossal events happen, take a step and prevent it."²

Who is this 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with the [X:3:34] vision of the seer, who so unerringly could prophesy world events?

Fifty years ago his father before him, the great Bahá'u'lláh, out of a prison in the Holy Land, sent letters to the kings of Europe, calling upon them to establish universal peace and righteousness among men. He warned them of approaching calamity. He predicted the downfall of Napoleon III, then at the zenith of his power; of the emperor of Austria; of the Sultán of Turkey.

To the emperor of Germany he wrote:

"O banks of the Rhine! We have seen you covered with gore, inasmuch as the swords of retribution were drawn against you; and you shall have another turn. And We hear the lamentations of Berlin, though she be today in conspicuous glory."³

Neither England, nor Russia, nor Persia, nor America was ignored by the prophetic and mandatory pen of Bahá'u'lláh.

To England he wrote through England's queen, Victoria:

"We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples. Do not rob them to rear palaces for yourselves; nay rather choose for them that which ye choose for yourselves. Thus We unfold to your eyes that which profiteth you, if ye but perceive. Your people are your treasures. Beware lest your rule violate the commandments of God, and ye deliver your wards to the hands of the robber. By them ye rule, by their means ye subsist, by their aid ye conquer. Yet, how disdainfully ye look upon them! How strange, how very strange!

...

"O Rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions."⁴

To America this authoritative pen wrote:

"Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise."⁵

And the rulers—some of them responded to Bahá'u'lláh, and some of them have fallen, in unerring fulfilment, apparently, of the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 116.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 122.

³ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 39.

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 12–13.

⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 63.

You will hear their names around the world today, if your ear is sensitive to spiritual verities. To know them you must first know the Bahá'í Movement, of which they and the great Báb are the central vivid figures.

And you cannot investigate the Bahá'í Movement without immediate association with the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the great Bahá'í temple, that shall rival in beauty and perfection all other temples of historical import.

Recently there has been on exhibition at the National Museum in Washington a series of architectural designs of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, executed by Charles Mason Remey.

Other architects from the east and middle west, from Canada, have submitted designs embodying their conception of this great institution, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár—an institution unparalleled in religious and architectural history.

An institution that commands the attention of noted American architects; that has inspired one of them to make nine different studies of the same subject; an institution known in the orient as well as the occident; that shall take visible material form on Lake Michigan, in the very heart of the continent—the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár—what is its significance? What does it mean today to a world searching, searching as never before for the reality of life; seeking after God, if haply we may find Him?

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, translated from the Arabic into English, means the dawning point of praises (to God). It is a creational idea that marks the beginning of a new historical era—an era of mutuality of service to God and man, of co-operation, the end of destructive competition, the beginning of the realization of the Christ teachings.

No appreciation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár can be had without knowledge first of the Bahá'í Movement, for its history is inextricably interwoven in the development of the great structure. You will hear today of the Bahá'í Movement in every part of the world. Representatives of all races and nations are its adherents. If you are a Bahá'í, the name is open sesame around the world, even to the jungles of India. You will hear of the Movement, not only in every civilized country of the world, but in the outlying posts of civilization, in unexpected islands of the sea, up in Alaska, down in uttermost Africa, so universal is its diffusion—a dynamic movement that penetrates, by virtue of its tremendous truth and vitalness, silently, ceaselessly, resistlessly, into the great heart of humanity.

The Bahá'í Movement had its origin in 1844, when, on the 23 May, a Persian youth, calling himself the Báb or Gate, arose among his countrymen and proclaimed the coming of the universal Teacher of Men, the Great One, whose appearance had been anticipated and prophesied by all the Scriptures of the world, who would lead humanity into all truth. He called men to prepare themselves by self-purification for the recognition of the Great One, when He should appear among them.

It was a sceptical Muslim world that greeted the proclamation of the Báb, for his teachings meant assuredly the overthrow of ancient Islamic institutions. And so, after a mission of six years, having lived a blameless, unsullied life, the Báb was martyred in the public square of Tabríz. To the end he held tenaciously to his faith in his own personal mission as herald of the Mighty One, soon to stand forth, revealed to the world as the Manifestation of God. His very name, indicative of His station, the Báb announced—Bahá'u'lláh, Arabic for the Glory of God.

In 1852, Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí of Núr, a man of ancient, distinguished Persian lineage, began an exile of forty years from his native land. Persecution and imprisonment had been his portion at the hands of his government. For, where the Báb ended his work, Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí assumed the responsibility for the spiritual guidance of humanity. Today, throughout the world, he is known as Bahá'u'lláh, "Him whom God should manifest", in fulfilment of the

prophetic utterances of the Báb. And the message he has given to the world, out of the deeps of his spiritual consciousness, is known as the Bahá'í Revelation.

The Holy Land was the scene of the last exile and imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh. At the instigation of the merciless Islamic government, with his family and a few followers, he had been ruthlessly sent forth, divested of all his estates, first to Baghdád, then to Constantinople and Adrianople, and, finally, in 1868, to the Turkish penal colony of 'Akká, nine miles north of Mt. Carmel, on the Mediterranean coast "the most desolate of the cities of the world".

The horrors of the Turkish prison, the tragic sufferings of the exiles are historical facts—horrors and sufferings that would have dissuaded ordinary men from pursuing their spiritual mission to the world. Yet, in the midst of it all, as throughout the life of the brilliant protagonists of the Bahá'í Movement, those marvellous souls manifested only [X:3:45] an amazing patience and sweetness of spirit. No resentment against their keepers! No resentment against their government!

Two years of imprisonment in the barracks of 'Akká were followed by nine years of close confinement for Bahá'u'lláh, within the town in an abode, the threshold of which the great prisoner was not permitted to cross. This was the external life of him whom today multitudes of people believe to have been the most extraordinary figure of any age.

Before his death, in 1892, there were a few years of somewhat greater freedom, within a radius of fifteen miles, which included Carmel and the village of Bahjí, his final resting-place.

No less extraordinary a figure than Bahá'u'lláh is his son, 'Abbás Afandí, known to the world as 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Arabic for the Servant of Bahá. He was born on the very day of the Báb's proclamation. And, at the age of eight, he began, with the exile of Bahá'u'lláh, his long, remarkable career of persecution, banishment, imprisonment, which ended only in 1908, when, by the overthrow of the Turkish government, he was granted his freedom. Fifty-six years an exile from his native land! Forty years a prisoner in the "most great prison" of 'Akká!

By the death of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá became the leader of the Bahá'í Movement. To this station he had been accredited by his father, both verbally and by written document. His peculiar function in the movement is interpreter of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and exemplar for the world of the Bahá'í life.

In 1911–1912, you will remember, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at the age of sixty-eight, journeyed to Europe and America, to spread the message of Bahá'u'lláh in the occident—that tremendous message of internationalism and religious unity, a basic principle of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. Statesmen, scholars, people of every degree of intellectual and spiritual attainment recognized his greatness and power.

Back in 1892, before the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, wrote Edward Granville Browne of Cambridge university, concerning 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "About the greatness of this man and his power no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt."¹

And since that date 'Abdu'l-Bahá has been the subject of many interviews and many articles. But no journalistic analysis has been able to penetrate the mystery of a life martyrdom for a spiritual ideal, a conscious spiritual mission to all the world.

When, in 1914, the European war burst forth in all its fury, friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, anxious for his safety, urged him to leave his home on Mt. Carmel and accept the greater security of America—a hospitality which he refused to accept, for the people of Palestine had need of him. And there, on the mountain of God, in a war-ravaged land, he dwells, sending forth dynamic thoughts of love to a suffering humanity and a devastated world.

¹ E. G. Browne, *A Traveller's narrative*, Vol. II, p. xxxvi.

It is difficult to write dispassionately of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who sacrificed their lives, political and social freedom, all physical comfort, for the propagation of ideals, the establishment of principles, which are the common talk of men today. Easily do we inherit them from these great souls. Our statesmen today are interpreting government and social reconstruction in terms of the universal. In the middle of the last century, Bahá'u'lláh gave the creative impulse to the new order of civilization that should include all humanity, [X:3:46] and the new order is upon us. The old is swiftly passing.

Bahá'u'lláh from the prison of 'Akká, proclaimed his great revolutionary principles of world government and social readjustment to the crowned heads of Europe and to the common people.

These principles include the oneness of the religions of the world; the oneness of humanity; the universal brotherhood of man; universal peace; the harmony of religion and science: the search for truth and the abolition of all prejudices, religious, national, racial, social; the equality of the sexes; equal educational advantages for both; equalization of the means of livelihood; social, industrial. economic reorganization; the establishment of justice among men. He urged the creation of a universal language. He emphasized the necessity of a parliament of man, a universal tribunal of justice or arbitration to adjust international affairs.

He taught purity of life, selflessness, personal sacrifice and service to humanity.

There is inherent in the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh, as there is in the words 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a vitality, a power that compels attention, a creative quality that somehow makes them the effective, dominating influence in human hearts. Tyrannical, mediaeval efforts of enemies to suppress the Cause, to destroy its leaders, have been futile. And we have, today, millions of Bahá'ís who believe, with an indissuadable faith, that in the Bahá'í Movement only will the world find relief from its tragedy. Has it not recreated them, transformed their individual lives? Does it not make of every Bahá'í Assembly of the world an international group in itself—people of all races and nations? The extension of such a group to include the world, how easy a matter, how logical a consummation.

Of this supreme unity of nations and races, this oneness of humanity and religion, the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is symbolic. It is the Bahá'í Movement in action, in service.

Commanded Bahá'u'lláh, in his book of laws for the world, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*:

“O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light.”¹

“Teach your children the verses revealed from the heaven of majesty and power, so that, in most melodious tones, they may recite the Tablets of the All-Merciful in the alcoves within the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs*. Whoever hath been transported by the rapture born of adoration for My Name, the Most Compassionate, will recite the verses of God in such wise as to captivate the hearts of those yet wrapped in slumber.”²

In response to this command, the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of the world was built in *Ishqábád*, Russian Turkistán. The second will be established on the shores of Lake Michigan, just north of Chicago. And every *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* convention has for its impelling motive the construction of this great, impressive institution.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 29–30.

² Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 74.

It is not a local, not a national, but a world proposition, this building of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of the occident. Bahá'ís of every race and nation have [X:3:47] contributed to the purchase of the site and the creation of the initial fund for the erection of the central building, the House of Worship, the Bahá'í Temple.

A significant place, in the history of the Bahá'í Movement, the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of America will hold. Says 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"This organization of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* will be a model for the coming centuries, and will hold the station of the mother."¹

Several years ago, the Bahá'ís of Chicago set up a sign on the Temple grounds explanatory of the institution, whose walls would soon begin to rise upon the site. Wayfarers read and wayfarers understood somewhat of the exalted purpose of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*:

"These grounds are the site of an edifice to be erected as an 'evident standard' in America of the oneness of humanity.

"Its doors will be open to all nations, races and religions.

"Its charities will be dispensed without regard to race or colour. 'Prejudice toward none—love for all.'

"Here, for the first time in history, religion and science will become harmonious, each the handmaid of the other, both showering their spiritual gifts on all humanity.

"Until the erection of this great edifice, all are welcome to this beautiful spot and, in its enjoyment, we ask you to keep it pure and sacred."

Service to humanity, hospitality slogans of the Bahá'í Movement. Hospitality which, as to the Temple grounds, has been overwhelmingly accepted.

When, in the future, the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* stands before the world, in all its completeness, it will comprise the Temple of Worship with numerous accessories for service—the externalization of the great principles, so emphatically, so insistently proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh—a college for the higher scientific education, a school for orphan children and the poor, a hospital and medical dispensary, a home for cripples, a hospice, and other institutions, where art and music and science and truth shall find their highest, most brilliant, freest, most perfect expression.

The *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* will be more than a university, more than an institution conceived by men, established by men. From it shall emanate the most advanced scientific knowledge, which shall harmonize in its entirety with our developing religious consciousness, our heritage from the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Theirs is not empirical knowledge.

The *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* shall be the standard for human achievement. Here art and music and literature shall have their beginning and their glorious fruition. And, under its powerful influence, life shall be forever changed, forever glorified.

"When the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, with its accessories, is established in the world, aside from its religious, or spiritual, influence, it shall have a tremendous effect upon civilization."²

The building of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is a colossal undertaking. The central house of worship is concentrating the attention and the energies today of the followers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. No decision as yet has been reached as to architectural design. The ultimate may be a composite, achieved by the spiritual consecration of the architects of the orient and of the

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 351.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reported in *Star of the West*, I:14, p. 7.

occident. The Taj Mahal of India has been suggested as a model for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, because of its beauty and perfection of architecture.

Whatever architectural plan will be chosen for the Bahá'í Temple, it will emphasize, in its structure, essential features of the Bahá'í Faith. Great beauty of design, the expression of nine, the perfect number, throughout the structure. Nine entrances will distinguish the Bahá'í Temple from all other temples of the world, symbolic of the religious paths by which the Bahá'ís of the world have come into the realization that religion is one, that humanity is one, that God is One, Father of all. Beautiful flower gardens shall adorn the grounds and fountains of pure water. Beauty and majesty of outward expression. The whole surmounted by a towering dome, it, too, a symbol of the great unity, as conceived by Bahá'u'lláh.

The Bahá'í Temple will carry its message far. Far up and down the shore of Lake Michigan, far out upon the lake, its dome will be visible, the first landmark sighted by sailors coming into port, the last seen by them after departure. And from afar, inland, will rise upon the vision this lofty monument to the greatness and glory of God, manifested through Bahá'u'lláh.

Into the Bahá'í Temple, this Holy of Holies, this Sanctuary of the living God, the Bahá'í will go for prayer, for worship, for spiritual refreshment. This is the first requirement. He comes forth renewed and strengthened, and stimulated to greater service for humanity, through the various accessories of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

“The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of Chicago is of the greatest importance. This is a Bahá'í Temple, a supreme house of worship, a place of spiritual gathering, and the manifestation of divine mysteries.”¹

The relentless forces of freedom and justice and truth are at work in the world. The spiritual currents of the new cycle submerge us. Political and religious formulas of the past have failed of effectiveness. Out of the old the virtue has gone. We demand a new interpretation of life, of God, of service; a new religious statement, that shall demolish antiquated dogmas and superstition. In the perpetual presence of God would we dwell, face to face with the great Reality.

Heretofore, in our quest for light and truth, we have stumbled and groped blindly. Today the scales have fallen from our eyes. We are clear of vision, dauntless of soul. Destruction all about us. Yet do we feel the infusion of new vivid life blood into the dead body of the world.

Destruction all about us—to make way for the brilliant era of reconstruction before us.

“A new era of divine consciousness is upon us. The world of humanity is going through a process of transformation. A new race is being developed. The thoughts of human brotherhood are permeating the depths of hearts and a new spirit of universal consciousness is being profoundly felt by all men.”²

The new statement of truth and life, the new interpretation, is made with tremendous, overwhelming, irrefutable power by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In the Bahá'í Movement lies the hope of the future. “It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century.”³ Ideals that are not mere abstractions, but the impelling force of dynamic action in human life.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the first institution of the new age, is the expression of Reality—reality of worship, reality of service, reality of brotherhood, reality of internationalism.

“For just as the external world is a place where the people of all races and colours, varying

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reported in *Star of the West*, II:3, p. 7.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reported in *Star of the West*, VI:15, p. 120; and XIII:1, pp. 6–7.

³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reported in *Star of the West*, V:5, p. 67.

faiths, denominations and conditions come together—just as they are submerged in the same sea of divine favours—so, likewise, all may meet under the dome of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and adore the one God in the same spirit of truth; for the ages of darkness have passed away, and the century of light has come.”¹

X:3, 28 April 1919 [X:3:36]

News from the Holy Land

Letter from Shoghi Rabbani

Haifa, Palestine,
17 March 1919

Mrs. Corinne True, Chicago.
My dear sister in al-Abhá:

Although the recollection of your face and of your visit to the Holy Land is thoroughly effaced from my memory, yet what enkindles the fire of interest within me and impels me to drop you these lines is the glorious mention I hear of your services at the Threshold of Abhá. Your supplications, your keen interest in the Bahá'í Temple and the remarks and comments of the Beloved upon your work offer ample justification. I am so glad to correspond with you and write to you on a card, trusting it will reach you sooner.

Your kind letter, dated January 27, 1919, was received and imparted intense joy. Your supplication since the last Tablet (the first revealed for you since the liberation of Haifa), dated February 7th, has been received and will soon secure for you another Tablet. I hope you will soon receive your Tablet of February 7th.

The members of the household ever remember you and pray for you and convey to you their most wonderful Abhá greeting.

The doors of communication with Persia and India are open and supplications are constantly pouring in. The Beloved from morn till eve, even at midnight is engaged in revealing Tablets, in sending forth his constructive, dynamic thoughts of love and principles to a sad and distracted world. In most of the Tablets he lays great stress upon unity, love and firmness in the Covenant.

Awaiting your good news,
Yours in al-Abhá,
Shoghi.

X:3, 28 April 1919 [X:3:38]

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá recently revealed

Agnes Parsons²

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Agnes Parsons, Washington, D.C.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved daughter!

Formerly a cable through the British Government was received from you but it was misrepresented and vague. Although it could not be understood yet an answer was dispatched through the same Government. Your letter dated 21 October 1918 has just been received. Infinite gratitude have I tendered for the blessings, of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 65–66.

² Two paragraphs of this Tablet are in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 106.

have laid my head on His Sanctified Threshold and have offered my praise and thanks that, praise be to God, that beloved daughter has remained firm and steadfast throughout this violent storm and has wished and purposed nothing save service to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and the promulgation of Divine Teachings. Rest thou assured that assistance and confirmations shall encompass thee.

Thou hast written concerning organization. The divine teachings and the admonitions and exhortations of Bahá'u'lláh are manifestly evident. These constitute the organization of the Kingdom and their enforcement is obligatory. The least deviation from them is absolute error.

Thou hast written concerning my travel to America. If thou couldst see how the waves of constant occupation are surging thou wouldst have considered that time for travel is absolutely lacking; in times of fixed residence partial [X:3:39] rest is even impossible. God willing, I trust, through the bounty of Bahá'u'lláh, that as soon as means for the composure of mind and of heart are provided, I shall determine to journey and shall inform thee about it.

Convey on my behalf utmost kindness to thy beloved son and in perfect love kiss thou his two cheeks. My prayer to God is that he may grow to be the cause of thy happiness and satisfaction.

The maid-servant of God, Edna Ballora, has been struck with a great affliction. She is deeply grieved and sad. Assuredly extend thou thy care upon her and be thou her stay and solace.

Convey to the two enlightened souls, Leona Barnitz and Mrs Finch, my love and kindness, and tell them: "Praise ye God, that assistance has been extended and ye have turned your faces to the Supreme Horizon: the bounty and guidance of which the mass of people are unaware, ye have found, and have adorned your head with a crown of supreme guidance, the glittering gems of which gleam and glisten throughout ages and generations. Do not look at the present condition, contemplate the future. The Apostles of Christ were fishermen, were destitute of fame and position and enjoyed no grade and rank. They were, as it is intimated in the Gospel, insignificant persons, yea, they were low in the sight of the people. At present consider ye, what change has taken place—how great they have become! Nay rather, they have been the sovereigns of the Kingdom. The bounties of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh to His servants shall in the future be made evident and manifest."

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 8 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Alice Ives Breed

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Alice Ives Breed, New York.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou respected maid-servant of God!

Thy letter dated 17 November 1918 was received. Its contents was an exposition of truth.

Indeed, had the world of women wielded sufficient prestige, the conflagration of this war would not have set the world aflame.

If the mass of women in Europe and all those of America had been enfranchised throughout all the states, undoubtedly they would not agree to war. At present, this war has made millions of children fatherless and millions of fathers and mothers destitute of sons; this war has snatched from pitiable sisters their brethren; this war has turned millions of women widows and destitute of husbands; this war has made cities desolate; this war has brought

confusion and chaos in millions of villages; this war has made the very foundations of mankind quake and quiver.

If, in the future, women like unto men are given the franchise, assuredly they shall prevent the occurrence of war, whereas otherwise the matter will be difficult. Man is sanguinary¹ and even worse than devouring beasts. Of what use is exhortation and to what amounts admonition? A mighty power is necessary in order to make an effective opposition—otherwise it will be exceed- [X:3:40] ingly difficult. I pray God that the world of women may be assisted and confirmed for their purpose is Universal Peace.

At present the friends of God must lay aside all thoughts and preoccupations and concentrate their energies upon the proclamation of the Cause of God and the divine teachings which lay the foundation of Universal Peace.

I supplicate and pray to the Divine Kingdom and beg for the friends of New York assistance and confirmation that they may, day by day, fortify the bonds of amity and union and may become the cause of the spreading of the Word of God.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 9 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

[X:3:41]

Isabella D. Brittingham

To the maid-servant of God, Isabella D. Brittingham, San Francisco, California.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O dear maid-servant of God!

Indeed, what thou hadst written is true. Communication and connection between the sons and daughters of the Kingdom are not conditioned upon material links. Spiritual means have ever existed and will continue to exist. As, for instance, throughout all these years of commotion, when ways were barred and the doors of communication closed, notwithstanding this, hearts were attracted and gladdened by the fragrances of God.

This was because the bond of connection was firm and the link of association was strong.

The letters which thou hadst enclosed in thy letter have been received. Praise be to God, thou hast acquired a long and spiritual lineage, and this is by far the most blessed of all lines. For material lines of descent may either be greatly praiseworthy or mean in character, while spiritual lineage is the offspring of heart and of soul and is in every respect praiseworthy.

Ye had celebrated the Feast of the Covenant. It was very proper. Mr and Mrs Zim have served the Kingdom of God and on that day called a meeting in their home and celebrated the Feast.

I have been very pleased with the service of Mr Milton who has supported the government, for according to the explicit command of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, all Bahá'ís are ordered to serve, to obey and to be faithful to their government. Convey my greetings to Mr Herbert.

The respected maid-servant of God Mrs Goodall and the attracted maidservant of God Mrs Cooper are indeed two candles illumined by the light of the love of God.

Thou shalt in future reap the fruits of thy tour to the southern states.

¹ Bloodthirsty.

All the family and the Holy Leaves, convey to you their salutation and their longing.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 28 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Vitula Edith Whitton

To Mrs Vitula Edith Whitton, Geyserville, California.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou maid-servant of God!

The letter thou hadst written 23 November 1918 was received. Its context indicated that—praise be to God!—thou art intoxicated with the wine of the Covenant and art aloof and away from all else save God; that thou hast a truthful heart and a firm step.

Although thou hast a small meeting, yet, as thou art firm and resolute, in future this gathering shall greatly expand and shall become elaborate, for the souls that are firm in the Covenant are, ever assisted and confirmed. Rest [X:3:42] assured of the divine confirmation which strengthens all who are feeble and energizes all who are frail.

Convey on my behalf the utmost love and kindness to the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 3 February 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Elizabeth P. Hackley

To the maid-servant of God, Elizabeth P. Hackley, Urbana, Illinois.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Its contents indicated the turning of thy face to the Kingdom of God, thy freedom from the obscurity of the world of nature, thy illumination with the light of guidance, thy acquisition of spirituality and thy seeking to draw nearer to God.

My prayer to the Almighty God is that, day unto day, thou mayst increase in spirituality and attain to an ideal advancement.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 1 February 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

David Buchanan

To his honour, David Buchanan, Portland, Oregon.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art turning thy face to the Kingdom of God!

Thy letter dated 2 December 1918 was received. Although the representatives of various governments are assembled in Paris in order to lay the foundations of Universal Peace and thus bestow rest and comfort upon the world of humanity, yet misunderstanding among some individuals is still predominant and self-interest still prevails. In such an atmosphere,

Universal Peace will not be practicable, nay rather, fresh difficulties will arise. This is because interests are conflicting and aims are at variance.

We pray and beseech at the divine Kingdom and beg for the world of humanity rest and composure. For Universal Peace will not be brought about through human power and shall not shine in full splendour unless this weighty and important matter will be realized through the Word of God and be made to shine forth through the influence of the Kingdom of God.

Eventually it shall be thoroughly established through the power of Bahá'u'lláh!

Verily, His Honour President Wilson is self-sacrificing in this path and is striving with heart and soul, with perfect good-will, in the world of humanity. Similarly the equitable government of Great Britain is expending a great deal of effort. Undoubtedly the general condition of the people and the state of small [X:3:43] oppressed nationalities will not remain as before. Justice and Right shall be fortified but the establishment of Universal Peace will be realized fully through the power of the Word of God.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 10 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Claudia Stuart Coles

To the maid-servant of God, Claudia Stuart Coles, Washington, D.C.

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved maid-servant of God!

Thy letter dated 4 October 1918 was received. It was not a letter but rather a bouquet of flowers diffusing the sweet scent of firmness and steadfastness and so it gave pleasure to the nostrils of the soul.

Praise be to God, the test proved to be the cause of the firmness and the steadfastness of the people of faith.

Throughout these years of disturbance and commotion when the world of humanity was physically and spiritually afflicted, the friends of God passed the day in rest, ease and comfort. In the western countries only a few shared in the hardship and affliction of other souls while the mass of the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful, of whom Mrs Coles is one, have been living quietly and peacefully. In the Orient every nation became distracted and every gathering dispersed save the friends of God who remained all protected and sheltered from every trouble and calamity in the Fort of Bahá'u'lláh's protection. Verily, this is a divine miracle—that we helpless, friendless, unprotected, unsupported wanderers in these regions should be saved amidst the fire of oppression and tyranny. This is God's miracle.¹

In fine, praise be to God, yourself and the friends of God and the maidservants of the Merciful have, like unto an immovable rock, remained firm and resolute in the Cause of God.

Organize ye meetings and strive day and night that ye may be the cause of the diffusion of divine fragrances and the exaltation of the Word of God.

Concerning the book² that thou hadst written about; it has been written on political affairs so that justice and equity may be promoted and the comfort of the world of mankind may be realized.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

¹ This paragraph is in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 386–387.

² Refers to *Mysterious Forces of Civilization*.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 28 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Jean Masson

To her honour, Miss Jean Masson—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou herald of the Kingdom!

The detailed letter thou hadst written was perused. Its text was conducive to joy and it embodied refreshing news. Praise thou the Lord, that thou hast become the means of the promulgation of heavenly teachings and hast [X:3:44] served the oneness of the world of humanity that all denominational, sectarian, racial, political, economic and even patriotic prejudices may be removed and the illumination of the love of God may enlighten the courtyard of hearts.

My hope is that day by day thou mayest be more confirmed and may serve to the best the world of humanity; that thou mayest adore mankind and ignite in every heart the lamp of guidance, may serve the world of morality so that human realities may be freed from the gloom of the world of nature which, in essence, is purely animal in character, and may be illumined with the light of the divine realm.

What service is there nobler than this and what gift more precious than this; what exaltation is higher than this and what sovereignty mightier than this? I hope that therein thou mayest be confirmed.

As to Margaret Nelson, she has been emancipated from this gloomy dungeon of the world of dust and has hastened to the sanctified realm. I pray on her behalf and beg for her the forgiveness and the pardon of the Lord of Creation, that she may secure rest and comfort in the realm of the Kingdom.

The article that thou hadst edited in the *Helena Daily Independent*¹ was received and was perused. Happy art thou that the Lord hath assisted thee in such a distinguished service.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 17 March 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Dorothy Nelson

To the maid-servant of God, Dorothy Nelson.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O dear maid-servant of God!

At the divine threshold address this prayer and beg forgiveness for thy sister. That prayer is the following:

“O forgiving and kind God! My beloved sister Margaret has hastened from this world to Thy realm and has abandoned the nether world to soar in the realm on high. She was like unto a shelterless bird but has yearned for a rest and shelter in the celestial realm. She was a thirsty fish and longed to be immersed in the sea of light.

“O God! We are captives to innumerable sins, but need Thy pardon and Thy forgiveness. We have lost the way but have hastened to Thee. We suffer deprivation, but seek Thy rich treasury. We are disabled and broken-winged, but are treading Thy path. O God! Forgive us

¹ See page 33 of this issue.

and bestow upon us Thy pardon.

“Verily, Thou art the Refuge and Shelter of sinners and Thou art the Bestower, the Radiant One in the realm of heaven!”

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 17 March 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

X:4, 17 May 1919 [X:4:73]

Recent tablet to the Bahá'ís of Egypt

To the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful in the country of Egypt—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye who are sincere! O ye who are attracted! O ye who are of the new creation!

God, the Praised and the Exalted, hath said: “Are these the same as the old creatures? Nay rather, they are clothed in garments of a new creation!” Then know ye that in the estimation of God, the example of the creatures is like unto a pure, blessed tree of a wonderful trunk and strong seeds. He causes it to grow gracefully, then its roots become firm, its twigs spring forth, its leaves become verdant, its flowers bloom and its fruits appear. Then its shade expands over all the regions, until it reaches its ultimate evolution and growth, attains to its development and height, its significances become perfect and its branches extend over the East and the West of the earth. Then its creation is completed, its evolution is accomplished, its hopes become evident, it obtains its desire, it attains to its utmost perfection and its beauty becomes manifest. Then its withering begins, its leaves turn yellow, its flowers become scattered, its fruits fall down and its earthly elements return to the layers of its soil. No fruits remain upon it, no leaves, no attractiveness, no beauty, no sweetness and no freshness, until it becomes like unto an old hollow palm tree. Then a new tree grows from its seeds, green, verdant and freshened by the divine outpouring, the merciful breeze, the heat from the Sun of Reality, the heavy rain from the clouds of the abundant mercy and the blowing wind from the wafting place of Providence. “Whatever verse we abolish or forget we replace by a better one.” This is the example of the new creation, the miraculous cycle and the second resurrection, which is in conformity with the first creation.

Then thank ye God, the Praised and the Exalted, for the light of guidance, this complete bounty and this great bestowal. “He chooseth for His mercy whomsoever He wisheth.” Then it is incumbent upon ye to cry out with most wonderful melodies:

Praise be to the One who created this marvellous dispensation!

Praise be to the One who made this new creation wonderful!

Praise be to the One who ordained this great outpouring!

Praise be to the One who shone forth with this evident light!

Praise be to the One who renewed this wonderful springtime! [X:4:74]

Praise be to the One who perfumed the nostrils of the people of oneness with the merciful fragrance which is diffused in all the countries! “And thou didst see that the land which was barren and lifeless when we caused the water to descend upon it, moved and grew and brought forth a beautiful pair of all things.”

Praise be to the One through the outpouring of Whose clouds these countries became verdant!

Praise be to the One through the heavy rain of Whose compassion these rose gardens became beautified!

Praise be to the one through the current of Whose stream, these reservoirs became overflowing!

Praise be to the One who has chosen the sincere ones to spread His teachings in the countries!

Praise be to the One who selected for His mercy pure souls; through the fragrance of whose love and perfumed breaths the hearts of the pious throb!

Praise be to the One who made the stars of guidance to smite the wicked!

Praise be to the One who guided the chosen community to the upright way and straight path! [X:4:75]

Praise be to the One who made them the signs of glad tidings among the people!

Praise be to the One who confirmed them by the banners of the great signs!

Praise be to the One who reinforced them by the mighty forces!

Praise be to the One who assisted them with the hosts from the Supreme Concourse!

Praise be to the One who built for them lofty palaces commanding the zeniths of heaven from which the lights sparkle throughout the centuries and the ages!

Then, O ye who are attracted by the fragrances of God, thank ye God for this complete bounty, infinite mercy, encircling outpouring and perfect attainment! I pray God to strengthen your loins, give power to your backs, clarify your secrets and purify your consciences in all times and moments.

Upon ye be greetings and praise!

Translated by Dr Ḍiyá' M. Baghdádí, May 1919, Chicago, Illinois. [Sent 17 March 1919 by Shoghi Effendi.]

X:4, 17 May 1919 [X:4:76]

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá recently revealed

Santa Barbara Assembly

To the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, Santa Barbara, California.—
Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Praise ye God for having entered into this Great Cause which is the illumination of the universe and the promulgator of the Oneness of the world of humanity. Ye have been freed from every prejudice and are exercising the utmost love and kindness to all religions. Ye love all men and seek service to the world of humanity.

Santa Barbara was an ordinary girl, but as she sacrificed her life and her soul for Christ, consider ye how resplendently, like unto a star, she shines from the horizon of the world.

Even until the present day her light is still resplendent.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 26 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

[X:4:77]

Akron Assembly

The friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, Akron, Ohio.—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Your letter was received. From its contents the truth of the saying of His Holiness Christ was realized when He says: "From all parts and regions they flock and enter into the Kingdom, while the sons of the Kingdom depart from it." Now ye who belong to the distant and outlying regions of the world,—almost half the globe standing between us;—yet notwithstanding this remoteness, have been awakened by the Call of the Kingdom, have been made aware and, thanks be to God, ye have become attracted to the splendours of the Sun of Truth.

My hope is that ye may raise high the standard of the oneness of the world of humanity and that ye may become the cause of union and harmony among all the races and religions, so that mankind may unite, may fling away the garb of indifference and engage in affection, that the fire of religious, racial, political and patriotic prejudices may be quenched and the burning flame of the enkindled fire in the Mount of Sinai may illuminate the world.

The blessed pictures of those illumined souls have been noted. Praise be to God, the light of God's love shines brilliantly in your faces.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 28 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Urbana Assembly

To the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, Urbana, Illinois.—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful!

Your detailed letter was a full exposition of firmness and steadfastness. Although throughout these days of abundant trials the maintenance of perseverance and firmness was difficult yet the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, praise be to God, have remained like unto an immovable rock, firm [X:4:78] and steadfast. Nay, rather, they have added to their stability. It is customary and as a rule in times of trial the feeble souls waver and turn away and the firm souls who are endowed with the power of the Spirit double in energy and strength. Adulterated copper turns totally black when thrown into the fire of test while pure gold increases in lustre and brilliancy.

His honour, Mr Vail, is indeed an ignited candle and likewise his respected wife. They have no thought and no concern save the good of mankind and entertain no wish save the guidance of men. Day and night they strive with heart and soul, they labour arduously and endeavour heartily that this mortal world may reflect the splendour of the sanctified Realm and these disturbed souls may become the embodiment of faith and assurance.

As to the meeting with the friends and the maid-servants of the Merciful it is undoubtedly possible. Praise be to God, the way will be levelled and the doors will be opened and traffic and travel will become easy. But they must take into consideration the comfort of the journey so that no hardships may be endured on the way.

Concerning my travel to America, it is conditioned upon the harmony and the unity of the friends of God. They must be so united as to have the effect of one soul so that like unto a magnet which draws to itself the iron they may attract me to America.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 28 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

[X:4:79]

Louise D. Boyle

To the maid-servant of God, Louise D. Boyle, Miami, Florida.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Your letter dated December 1918, was received. Thou hast written that in these days, in view of these terrible battles and the extinction of the fire of war, a new capability has sprung in men.

It is evident that not until rain, snow, cold, storm and hurricane come to pass will the capacity for spring be attained. In winter divine Providence prepares for the advent of the life-giving spring.

Similarly this terrible war has awakened people's minds and has given rise to sentiments of Universal Peace so that the divine teachings may exert an effect upon the peoples of all races.

At a time when I was in Europe and America, I raised high my voice in all temples and gatherings and it was published and circulated in the papers that—"O ye concourse of listeners! An imminent danger lies ahead. The whole of Europe has turned into a huge arsenal which a single spark will set ablaze. The flame of war shall attain supreme height and Europe shall be convulsed and this Balkan strife shall lead to universal war; the foundations of the world of humanity shall quake, cities shall be demolished and villages shall be razed to the ground; fathers shall lose their sons and sons shall lose their fathers; mothers shall wail and children shall cry and lament. O ye listeners! Endeavour perchance, God willing, ye may prevent this fire from spreading and this storm from raging!"

Whatever was explicitly recorded in the epistles and Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh concerning future events was mentioned, but these exhortations were not accepted until this conflagration was set up.

At present all people have realized that war destroys the foundations of mankind and that men are in need of universal peace and similarly of the rest of the divine teachings. [X:4:80]

Strive, therefore, that the light of the oneness of the world of humanity may be made resplendent, that misunderstanding among the religions and races of the world may be eliminated, that the nether world may reflect the realm on high and the Sun of Truth may shine over all regions.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 1 February 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Juliet Thompson

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Juliet Thompson—Upon her be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. It contained the most great glad tidings, that is, praise be to God, in New York the divine believers are united and agreed. For my heart there is no greater happiness than the unity and concord of the friends. The progress of the world of humanity and the illumination of the hearts and lives of the people are realized through unity and agreement and the promotion of the Word of God. Difference destroys the foundation of the divine edifice, causing coldness amongst the souls and the lethargy of all the active members. I hope that, day by day, this bounty may become more revealed in New York. Truly, I say, if the believers of God become united together with heart and soul, in a short while they will shine forth like unto the sun; they will obtain a joy and happiness the splendour of which will be cast upon all the regions of America.

Thou hast written that Mr Vail, Mr Ives and Mr Horace Holley have loosened eloquent tongues and in the explanation of the divine teachings they deliver fluent speeches. This news also gave the utmost pleasure and delight.

Convey my longing greeting to the reverend minister whose name you mention in the letter and deliver to him this my message:

O thou dear friend! A wise farmer scatters his seeds in rich, productive soil. Those pure seeds are no other than the new, heavenly teachings and the rich soil is the hearts of the chosen ones. Become thou a heavenly farmer. Do not sow the seeds in barren soil. These variant and confusing thoughts have no results and produce no fruit. The time is spent without a crowning glory. Consider that millions of leaders of thought have come to this world and have dedicated their lives to the propagation of different schools of ideas, yet they obtained no result but the Apostles of His Holiness Christ scattered such seeds that up to this date they are gathering many harvests. There is no greater example than this.

Convey longing greeting on my behalf to each and all the friends.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 29 June 1916.

X:5, 5 June 1919 [X:5:83]

The sacred fire

Address by Chairman Howard MacNutt, of Brooklyn, N.Y., delivered at the opening of Second Session of the Bahá'í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Sunday afternoon, 27 April 1919.

Alláh-u-Abhá! "Like unto the cup-bearers of eternity, turn ye round in the assemblages of mankind the overflowing goblets of guidance, and intoxicate them with the wine of the Love of God." (Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.)

In the *Words of Paradise*, the Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, has said: "In this Day a great festival is taking place in the Realm above; for whatsoever was promised in the sacred Scriptures hath been fulfilled. This is the Day of great rejoicing."¹

Every Manifestation of God, who appeared in the world, saw this day in spiritual vision and perspective, announcing what he saw in the symbolical language of prophecy; for mankind could not bear the full proclamation of the reality. That which we are now witnessing and what is yet to come, appeared to his inner sight in complete clearness. After his ascension to the supreme world, his followers and believers crystallized his teachings and ceremonials in a

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 78.

temple of worship which became the expression and reflection of the divine religion in that age and cycle. And now we see by the eye of heavenly illumination that the temple itself was but a symbol and prophetic sign; that the intended expression of divine purpose and goal of divine revelation was the conscious heart of man, the true and ultimate temple of the living God. Therefore what we are witnessing in this day is the consummation of the plan and Covenant of God and the reality of His promised presence in the purified heart of humanity.

Furthermore, the most central symbol within the temple of worship was the altar of sacred fire which was always kept burning. This Pentecostal flame, this fire from heaven, this fire of the love of God appeared with each Manifestation of the Word; the holy spiritual flame perpetually burning. When that fire waned and grew dim, the religion of God became obscured and disintegrated; a change came; another Manifestation of God descended into the world from the Supreme Kingdom and with him the heavenly flame was lighted anew in the temple of its incarnation in human hearts.

Today we know and realize in the loveable personality and spiritual perfection of the glorious Servant of God, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that this sacred fire has come again into the world to glorify the heart of humanity, to purify, sanctify and illumine the universal heart of the nations. This is the sacred fire of the heavenly Books and teachings, fulfilled and interpreted in its outer, inner and complete meaning. We have clear evidence and definition of that sacred fire today in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the great principles set forth by him [X:5:84] in this country and throughout the world. We have explanation of it in his teaching that the fire from heaven is the fire of the Holy Spirit; that the Holy Spirit is the divine beneficence and grace, the heavenly bestowal, the bounty of God, the generosity and confirmation of God; and that it descends upon those who are sincere and humble recipients.

Each one of these great Conventions we have held during the last ten years has seemed to me a manifestation of the sacred fire of divine love. A heavenly flame, a heavenly power, the Holy Spirit of God has come down upon us at these Conventions. Each time, each year, more and more we renew this bounty. It comes stronger and lasts longer; the interim is not so great as the years increase. And now spiritually attuned with the Centre of the Covenant we are awaiting its descent in the glorious meetings of this 1919 Convention.

...

X:5, 5 June 1919 [X:5:84]

The power of the Holy Spirit

Address by Louis G. Gregory, of Washington, D.C., delivered at the Second Session of the Bahá'í Congress, Sunday afternoon, 27 April 1919.

The finite cannot grasp the Infinite nor can the creature comprehend the Creator. So we approach this subject, "The Power of the Holy Spirit", in a spirit of meekness and reverence, with a desire for evanescence in the path of God and to testify only to what He has revealed to us in the day of His appearance. As "one of the journeys in the pathway of love is from the creatures to the creatures," the testimony of our companions on the ideal pathway confirms our happiness.

Truly we are living in a great and wonderful day, when the bounty of God's Holy Spirit is felt in all parts of the supreme world and the hearts of all humanity are quickened with this divine power. A new consciousness of life, freedom, happiness and power is reaching all races, classes and conditions of men. As is suggested by our learned brother, testimony of the Holy Spirit has been, from time immemorial, given in all the Holy Books. This divine power has been the reality of all the messengers and prophets, the creative Word by which, as mighty speakers of God, they addressed themselves to the creatures.

The Holy Spirit is compared in some of the sacred writings to the air, because it covers the whole earth. We are told that “the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind”. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is symbolized by “the rushing of a mighty wind”. Bahá'u'lláh says: “I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been.”¹ These are the symbols of an unwearied and irresistible power, the supreme might of God which creates and transforms the face of His universe. [X:5:85]

Oft-times the Holy Spirit is symbolized by water, oft-times by fire. The water and the fire are one. The hearts become aflame with the divine fire. They are purified by this fire from the dross of ignorance, superstition and imaginations. Then they can quaff the water of knowledge; then they are initiated into the mysteries of God; then they can look upon all the created beings with a divine eye. Yes, through the divine favour it becomes possible for the creatures to look upon the other created beings with the eye of God. By seeing with the eye of God we mean the universal vision, for the divine gifts and bounties are universal in their adaptability to human needs. The air we breathe cannot be confined to any household. Shall anyone say: “This air shall exist in my house but not in that of others?” Or: “This atmosphere shall be breathed by the people of my country and not by those of other nations?” The air is universal because it is the bounty of God.

In like manner the radiance of the sun is a universal light. We cannot limit the effulgence of that sun. It shines for all the created beings. It lights, cheers and warms the universe. So it is when the Holy Spirit, the Sun of Truth, arises. This healing influence penetrates to the utmost parts of the earth. This bounty flows forth with a mighty power. It conveys, with the greatest illumination, the most marvellous happiness, giving to the creatures the consciousness of the divine. In our humble acceptance of this bounty we draw near to God, the Supreme. It is reflected from the mirror of the hearts.

But in order to know this glorious Reality—which is the life of the world and the healing of the nations—we must know the mystery of God and His appearance in this world of ours. We are told by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that, “The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations; ...”² It is a light which is not extinguished; it is a duration that never ends; it is a life that is never swallowed up by death; it is an honour which is not followed by abasement and shame.

Great is the opportunity of the people of earth in this marvellous day in which we are living, to see a new source of that wonderful power of attraction, guidance and supreme happiness. In order to know the mystery of greatness and the secret of might it is necessary to draw near to the divine Messenger at the time of his appearance. Shall we not accept the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Holy Books and realize that the day has come which is the sun of all the days of past centuries and ages? The appearance of God Himself, His light in the world, His Tabernacle among men, this is the life of mankind, the true wealth of nations, the healing of all the people and their drawing together under the tent of the oneness of God and the oneness of all humanity.

When the Báb arose in Persia, creating in that far-off country, by the fire of his word, a moral and spiritual awakening, the power of that word or spirit was illustrated and proved by its attracting energy in the lives of the people whom he trained and educated. When that Word went forth the query was asked, “Am I not your Lord?” Wonderful souls arose who answered this call. Prominent among these was Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, a woman beautiful, clever, accomplished. Yet with all her fair fame and good character, had she continued to live the

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 11.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 108. “By ‘the Holy Spirit’ is meant the outpouring grace of God and the effulgent rays that emanate from His Manifestation.” *Some Answered Questions*, 2nd edn, p. 122.

conventional life, it is most improbable that she would have been known outside of the narrow limits of her environment. But because she heard and heeded that wonderful voice, she was exalted to a supreme station. She shone forth with a marvellous radiance. She travelled through that country with a flaming sword, dividing truth from error. The elevation of her character guided souls to the divine pathway. She had discerned in [X:5:86] the divine call the duty and privilege of serving God. She embraced the opportunity to serve her country, to exalt her fellow creatures, especially to help women, who in that country were for the most part in a most benighted condition, owing to the prevalence of superstition and the want of elevation and knowledge. And because she heard this voice and at the call of her Lord arose to teach and guide the people, we find that her fame is spreading throughout the world. Although she lived and taught in the Orient, her traces now appear in the Occident. Whenever the cause of freedom for women is advanced we find traces of this illustrious woman who answered the call of her Lord and sacrificed her life for the freedom of humanity. The power of the great Báb was demonstrated in the training of this soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. But he trained not only one, but many thousands. He was not only the herald of the new day but the divine Messenger, the First Point of Revelation. He upturned the soil and planted the seeds of God. He opened wide the gate for the appearance of God Himself in His greatest Manifestation to all the created beings.

The Báb finished his work and the splendour of Bahá'u'lláh arose like a brilliant sun enlightening the world. And again the spiritual power was proved upon a more magnificent plane than men have ever known. The spiritual power and the divine teachings of this Manifestation brighten the mind and gladden the heart. Not only do they lend themselves to the peculiar needs of the individual, unfolding the divine plan for each of His children, but they are conducive to the needs of the world of humanity, unfolding those universal principles which enlighten, vivify and regenerate the world.

It is related that in the time of Bahá'u'lláh there was a boy in Persia who was not noted for his wit or intelligence and yet within him was a soul which responded to the universal call. Thus he became one of the chosen and was entrusted by Bahá'u'lláh with a difficult and perilous mission. At the appearance of the Manifestation of God it is necessary that the people shall know. It is the divine wisdom that the kings and rulers of the people shall be informed of so marvellous an event. As an instrument for carrying the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to the ruling power of Persia, the mighty Sháh, surrounded by his great soldiers and his elegant and dignified court, this simple, humble boy was selected. We know the human limitations of this boy. But what happened to him, the mighty transformation that was wrought when he was entrusted with this wonderful mission, is told by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Tablet of Badí'*. He was called into the holy presence of Bahá'u'lláh and such a power was breathed upon him that he would have overcome the Supreme Concourse! Then he was no longer Badí' he ignorant. Then he became Badí' the wonderful! Badí' the mighty! Then he became a new creation, because his heart was illumined by the Spirit of Truth, the Word of God, the Light of Guidance. He felt the vibrations of that mighty love, the presence of God standing within him, "powerful, mighty and supreme!" His mission was executed in a way that will compel admiration as long as men pay a tribute to virtue and fidelity. And again, through this spiritual outpouring scientific discoveries were increased and spiritual sacrifices were multiplied as the earth became more and more illumined by the face of God.

Now again that great power, the supreme Word, the manifest light goes forth to heal the nations and quicken the dead. This time it descends upon the created beings from the Centre of the Covenant of God. Bahá'u'lláh, speaking of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant of God, says, "He is the east of my Cause, the shining-place of [X:5:87] my identity, the sea of my bounty, the heaven of my will, the lamp of my guidance, the path of my justice, the standard of my laws. Whoever hath turned to him hath turned to me." So if we want now to know that

mysterious force which is the source of life and power, we must turn with severed hearts to the Centre of the Covenant of God. This is the dawning-place of righteousness and peace. This is the mystery of God which is the mystery of divine love.

Love is the cause of the creation of all the beings. It is the power of unity in all the universe of God. Through His love for His creatures, through His will to be known, God created man. We can only realize the divine image and likeness as we draw near to God in loving, sacrificial service to our fellow beings. Thus the limitations of man depart, and his horizon is widened. The distinctions of race and creed and religion no longer exist and the oneness of creation reflects the oneness of God. But such a vision is impossible without the bounty of the Holy Spirit. Through this ideal gift man is enabled to look over the created universe, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, with "the glorified vision of a seer and a prophet."

One way to become receptive to this heavenly visitation, which no one of the creatures can of himself merit, is to carry this message of unity to the people of the earth. God wills to be known, and happy are those souls who respond to the desire of God! The divine Message creates human unity, ideal brotherhood, heavenly harmony and universal peace. It is also necessary to humble ourselves before the True One, knowing well that His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. Whenever a Messenger of God appeared in past cycles and ages, those who drew near to him with a desire for knowledge and in a spirit of loving service and humble submission, found their stations exalted by that Supreme Power and Manifest Light. It is even so today. The God whose manifest Word and Holy Spirit create us is not a God of poverty or of limitations. He is the Lord of wealth, of affluence, of inexhaustible power. He does not create us poor. He creates us rich. He desires that we shall be wealthy through the divine affluence. He wills us to be strong through the divine strength; to be wise through the divine knowledge; to be illumined through the divine radiance. Shall not our minds and hearts expand and grow through the great spiritual bounty which is the life of all the beings?

There are those who seem to rest contentedly in the thought that there is nothing new under the sun. There are others who in their desire for the expansion of the soul and the ideal freedom, are ever striving for something new. The savage may look upon the sun and find satisfaction in the thought that it is the same that shone upon his forefathers and ancestors for many generations. He has the same light and warmth and wants nothing more. But how different it is with the scientist, who regards the same sun! Although he cannot know the essence of that sun, yet one by one he discovers more of its qualities and attributes. He invents the solar spectrum and with its aid discovers the identity of the elements of the sun and of this earth, although the proportion and composition of these elements differ in different worlds. He discovers the sun spots, those great apertures through which myriads of worlds might pass. To the astonished vision of the scientist is revealed the great coats of the sun, the great spheres of radiance and the sources of the light. He perceives the great masses of radium which are the dawning-places of its radiance and illumination. As the poet says, "That which is, is but earnest of the things which are to be."

Who knows but that in the future, [X:5:90] through the evolution of science and religion and when the thoughts of all the world are concentrated upon peaceful and constructive measures, we may communicate with the inhabitants of that glorious sun, may respond to their vibrations of understanding and light and may quicken them to ours, so our hearts and minds are fixed upon noble, exalted and altruistic ideals! Immobility is ever the cause of stagnation and death. Motion is ever the cause of progress and life. Man should ever strive to grow and develop along lines of both material and spiritual evolution. Thus he may discover the mysteries of his own being and come to know himself, which we are told, on the highest authority, is identical with knowing God.

The Kingdom of God has descended, in accordance with the promises of past centuries and ages. The invitation to be citizens of that great and glorious Kingdom is extended to each and all. The light of God which is shining forth from His greatest Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh, and the Centre of His Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is veiled only by its intensity of splendour. There have been numberless appearances of the divine Logos, the "Word made flesh", in past cycles and ages. For these appearances have been the divine wisdom and mercy to the people of the world. These lordly splendours have been the educators of the peoples and nations as they laid the foundations for all past civilizations. The glories of the past, wonderful as [X:5:91] they have been, are veiled to us by the imitations, forms, interpretations and divisions that have crept in after the lapse of ages. But now the supreme joy and the glorious knowledge of the appearance of God is ours. The brief span of our lives upon earth is contemporaneous with the most marvellous event that has ever happened in all the ages. This event has been the dream and promise of wise men, prophets and seers, in past centuries and ages. How glorious to be living in the day of its fulfilment, when the whole earth is illumined by the face of its Lord! By obedience to the divine commands we become conscious of the divine power. It is the privilege of all who hear this Message to become instruments in the hands of God of quickening flesh with the spiritual power and of receiving the peace, harmony and security of the world of existence.

"To souls of fire He gives more fire and to those who are manful, a might that is more than man's!"

Truly if a man lived upon this earth one hundred thousand years, no higher hope, no brighter destiny could be his, than to be an instrument in the hands of God of bringing universal happiness to man. The greatest souls of past ages, were it possible, would hasten to such an attainment and the kings of the earth, could they but know, would abandon their crowns for affinity with God in the day when His Kingdom is glorified by His greatest Manifestation and the Centre of His Covenant is living, moving and vibrating among men!

The gift of God is to be quickened by His Holy Spirit, to know His oneness, to realize His singleness, to be mindful of His appearance and to characterize our reality with His attributes. This is drawing near to God, this is being illumined by His light; this is looking upon the face of His beauty. This is the attainment of the station of man. "This is eternal life and heavenly honour."

X:5, 5 June 1919 [X:5:92]

Religion must be the cause of amity and friendship

Address by Joseph H. Hannen, of Washington, D.C., delivered at the Second Session of the Bahá'í Congress, Sunday afternoon, 27 April 1919.

In the great principles laid down by Bahá'u'lláh for the government of the world in the new age that is to come, the third is that religion must be the cause of friendship and amity.

First let me quote to you from some of the sayings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon this subject: "The basis of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the Unity of Mankind, and his greatest desire was that love and goodwill should live in the heart of men.

"As He exhorted the people to do away with strife and discord, so I wish to explain to you the principal reason of the unrest among nations. The chief cause is the misrepresentation of religion by the religious leaders and teachers. They teach their followers to believe that their own form of religion is the only one pleasing to God, and that followers of any other persuasion are condemned by the All-Loving Father and deprived of His Mercy and Grace. Hence arise among the peoples, disapproval, contempt, disputes and hatred. If these religious

prejudices could be swept away, the nations would soon enjoy peace and concord.”¹

“If only the whole world would acknowledge the greatness of Muḥammad and all the Heaven-sent Teachers, strife and discord would soon vanish from the face of the earth, and God’s Kingdom would come among men.

“... If men could only learn the lesson of mutual tolerance, understanding, and brotherly love, the unity of the world would soon be an established fact.”²

The Centre of the Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, has explained to us the principal reason of the unrest so apparent among the various religious groups of mankind: The followers of each religious Teacher, Manifestation, Prophet—call him what you will—regard themselves as the chosen people of God, and all others as merely *tolerated* beings.

Now, in promulgating this great principles for the government of the world in the new age, Bahá’u’lláh has declared in the third, that religion must be the cause of amity and friendship. All religion, like all love, is universal in its inception. The child that loves its home, tenderly and unselfishly, is potentially the man who expresses much love. The little girl who mothers her doll will make, we know, the best mother; and the mother is the heart of the nation; of the world. But man is not content to continue upon the unselfish basis which marked all beginnings of real religion. He would circumscribe the divine revelation of love—regarding himself and those of his persuasion as the children of God, and all others as being outside the love and care of an all-loving Father! What a misapprehension! And yet as an unselfish community, filled with the spirit of co-operation and brotherhood, is developed by binding together many families rich in family love, so God, today, having trained His people in the principles of spirituality, is bringing them together [X:5:93] on a basis of amity and concord. All the past is but a preparation for this day, which is truly one of coming together, of unity—the promised day of all the ages, of all the cycles, of all dispensations. This is the day of which Jesus, the Christ, spoke, when He said: “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”

Let us think of the people of the world from a spiritual standpoint; they are as several flocks, each under a different shepherd. They are each gathered into different pastures, separated by walls—walls made not by God, but by man. Gradually the existence of these walls breeds the selfish thought in the heart of each flock. Each believes its pasture the only pasture; its shepherd the only shepherd. At last, when selfishness through separation has reached its climax the mighty blast of the same all-powerful Spirit at whose command a trumpet blast destroyed the walls of Jericho, levels all walls of separation, and lo!—the One Great Shepherd appears, and the sheep, passing over lines where walls once stood, realize His presence, and know themselves every one as the sheep of God, knowing the Voice of One Shepherd!

Fancy the possibilities of unity, the possibilities of friendship, whereas before there existed suspicion and enmity. This is the message of the divine Shepherd who has appeared today. He has spoken—aye, He is speaking; and in the hearts of those capable of understanding the voice they have heard, the basis of a great unity has been practically established. This is no idle dream, millions with understanding hearts have already heard the voice of Him who has joined them together in a bond which shall last forever! For those of us who have had the privilege of seeing people of many races, many languages and different religions, meet as brothers, loving each other—recognizing points of contact and forgetting differences—in the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, there can be no question. We are indeed living in the great day of unity—the great promised day of God.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 45–46.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 49.

Studying over this question, it seems to me that one of the great causes of dissension among religions is the loss of the dynamic element which rouses to *action* and lifts men from the lowest depths to the greatest heights. In the early days of Christianity, for example, men were filled with the divine enthusiasm that spurred them to marvellous action. Today we hear in the pulpits fervent prayers that God will raise His people to greater heights. Aye, therein lies the weak point, that God *shall raise them*. For as long as religion is passive and people depend upon something outside of themselves to elevate them, just so long will there be the selfish desire to be in the highest place; just so long will there be the personal creed, the thought that my way is the most direct way, the only way, and that those who do not follow after my way are lost. But the religion that is dynamic, the religion that is active, is that of which our Lord Christ spoke when he said, "He who drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst, but out of him shall proceed streams of living water", and so today the call is a call to action, the call is that through the power of the Holy Spirit as exemplified and given to us by the Centre of the Covenant we are to raise ourselves to the sublime, divine heights. The way we do this is by raising others. As we raise others to these higher thoughts, these higher ideals, we shall indeed raise ourselves and in this active conception of religion there can be no selfishness, there can be no enmity, there can be no prejudice, for we are all striving, perhaps through different paths, toward the same goal, and animated by the great unselfish conceptions which have been given to us today in the precepts of Bahá'u'lláh, and the teachings and [X:5:94] example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we shall find our greatest happiness in giving, giving, giving to others.

This is the day of the divine harmony. Goethe compared the world's great religions to the strings of a harp, each of which gives forth a peculiar note of its own, while the harmonious blending of all produces a symphony of music. Each of the seven great religions has its dominant note, its distinctive feature, a doctrine which differentiates it from all the rest. The several melodies constitute, when blended, a symphony of universal religion. The dominant note of Hinduism is the divine presence; the permeating note of Buddhism, renunciation; of Parsi-ism, purity; of Confucianism, reverence for the past; of Judaism, righteousness; of Christianity, love, and of Islám, submission.

Have you ever stopped to realize that seven major notes with variations and the demi-semi-tones and combinations make up all of the harmony of the world? And so we have here outlined before us seven dominant notes representing the seven great religious systems of the world. The creeds and the sects are many, and yet they are but variations of these seven primal notes. These notes, these great divine strings are sadly out of tune. There comes One then, the Author and Creator of all, and by the wonderful power of His Word attunes anew these strings, these seven great notes, and lo, when played upon by the master hand we have again sweeping from East to West, from continent to continent, from ocean to ocean, aye from world to world in this vast universe of ours, the divine harmony, the harmony of the new day. There is no spot so remote but what that divine harmony may be heard by those whose ears are attuned to the Infinite; and so today it is our privilege to stand, to listen, and to make ourselves as reeds through which the divine breath may blow, as strings upon which the divine hand may play, and thus the world shall become one great symphony of love, of peace, of unity, of all the blessings of God's new day, the day of harmony, the day of unity through love.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

X:5, 5 June 1919 [X:5:94]

"Concerning the matter of receiving Orientals"

Recent Tablet to Joseph H. Hannen

To his honour, Mr Hannen, Washington, D.C.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Your detailed letter dated 10 March 1919 was perused. It imparted great joy and happiness that, praise be to God, the friends in Washington are in the utmost joy and fragrance and are acting and conducting themselves in accordance with the Covenant and the Testament. They are kind to one another and are ready to sacrifice themselves for the promulgation of heavenly teachings.

Assuredly, invisible confirmation shall come to their aid and assistance and manifest light shall illumine their sight.

Concerning the matter of receiving Orientals regarding which you had inquired, affiliate and associate and exercise the utmost kindness to the Hindus, Chinese and Japanese Orientals for they have no bad intentions and are not ill-natured; but assuredly do not receive and associate with any Persian or Arab who may come to those regions without having an autographic letter of recommendation from me and bearing my signature. He may perhaps go to those [X:5:95] regions in order to intrigue, to sow the seeds of sedition and to create difference and enmity. The blessed souls, however, will undoubtedly carry with them a letter of recommendation from me.

I pray God that thy respected wife and the children may, under the shadow of the Covenant, be confirmed in the realization of their highest wish.

His honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab has undoubtedly reached that country by this time and is associating with you in the utmost love. Convey to him, on my behalf, greeting and kindness.

Concerning thy mother, Mineola, Misses Fanny and Alma Knobloch, I supplicate for them the assistance and the favour of God. Convey to them on my behalf the utmost kindness.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

Signed 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 26 April 1919. House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

X:5, 5 June 1919 [X:5:95]

“The Covenant of God shall remain stable and secure”

Recent tablet to Roy C. Wilhelm.

To his honour Mr Roy Wilhelm, New York City.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant.

Your numerous letters have been received and their contents noted. In every age and cycle, in the time of Moses, of His Holiness Christ and of His Holiness Muḥammad as well as after these sacred Manifestations, some people of evil intention have been found and have sown the seeds of discord and of sedition. Even after Christ, Arius, the well-known patriarch, was the cause of a widespread schism in the Cause of God and intense agitation among the believers. His followers numbered even three million, and he as well as his successors exerted the utmost effort in order to produce a great split and a widespread commotion in the religion of God. But eventually the power of Christ exterminated and utterly destroyed them all to the extent that no trace (of them) has been left. These people are like the froth that gathers on the surface of the sea; a wave surges from the ocean of the Covenant and through the power of the Abhá Kingdom will cast these foams ashore. In the Qur'án it is mentioned: “As to the foam, it is quickly gone; and as to what is useful to man, it remaineth on the earth.” These corrupt thoughts that emanate from personal and evil intentions will all vanish,

whereas the Covenant of God shall remain stable and secure.

The design that Mr Bourgeois has prepared and has indeed striven hard therein has been received. Blessedness awaiteth him and a goodly home.

Convey, on my behalf the utmost love and kindness to thy respected parents. As it has been previously wired, communicate directly with Haifa.

Convey to Miss Lloyd my greeting and my kindness. I have the utmost longing for Mr Bourgeois. In reality, this respected personage is worthy of praise.

You had written concerning the Wednesday evening gathering which was in the utmost spirituality. From this distant region I felt the fragrance of that meeting. Attach great importance to the Japanese people. Mrs Magee should continually communicate with them. As to Miss Rude and the aunt of Mr Edsall, convey to them my greeting. ...

Thou hadst written that the health of thy father and mother has improved; this news has made me very glad. ...

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 26 April 1919. House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

X:5, 5 June 1919 [X:5:96]

“The ocean of the Covenant shall send forth a wave”

Recent tablet to Louise R. Waite

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Louise Waite, Los Angeles, California—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of Bahá'u'lláh!

The letter thou hadst written to his honour Mr Tudor-Pole was perused. It is just what thou hadst written, namely, that the question of supreme importance centres around the promulgation of divine teachings. This is conducive to amity among all denominations and races that dwell on earth, nay rather it links together the East and the West, binds closely together the North and the South, pitches the pavilion of the oneness of the world of humanity, lays the foundation of universal peace, emancipates mankind from the gloom of the world of nature and elevates it to the illumination of the Kingdom, secures freedom for all the hearts and gladdens the souls with the glad tidings of God.

As to the question of reincarnation which thou hast inquired: It is better for thee to refer to the *Book of Certitude (Kitáb-i-Íqán)* revealed through the Supreme Pen, wherein the question is fully treated. This is the explicit text of the divine utterance and therein thou shalt find that it has been manifestly declared that by “Return” is meant the return of human perfections and divine illumination. The *Book of Íqán* has been translated and possesses the decisive verdict. Consider and peruse it with the utmost carefulness.

Concerning the childish activities of some (violators) which thou hadst written about: Praise be to God, thou hast been able to fulfil admirably thy mission. Thou hast, armed with the power of the Covenant, resisted and surmounted these unwise and foolish attempts; thou hast protected the Cause of God and hast striven to expose and reveal the Truth to the people of that region. These people are like unto children—at every hour they exhibit a fresh and puerile attempt, but all that is likened to a ripple on the surface of water. Ere long thou shalt consider that no sign and no trace shall remain therefrom. The ocean of the Covenant shall send forth a wave and shall disperse and throw out these foams. Consider thou, at the time of Christ and after Him, how many childish attempts were made by different persons! What

claims they have advanced and what a multitude have they gathered around themselves! Even Arius attracted to himself a million and a half followers and strove and endeavoured to sow the seeds of sedition in the Cause of Christ. But eventually the sea of Christ surged and cast out all the gathering froth and nothing was left behind save everlasting malediction.

In fine, engage in the promulgation of divine teachings, that ye may serve in a distinguished manner the oneness of the world of humanity, may be the means of the propagation of universal peace, that the world of mankind may reflect, like unto a mirror, the divine Kingdom and that the lights of the realm on high may shine in the nether world.

Convey, on my behalf, to all the friends and particularly to thy respected husband, Mr Waite, the utmost love and kindness.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 15 March 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Reprint book 6

Vol. X, Nos 6–19 (24 June 1919—2 March 1920)

and

Vol. XI, Nos 1–18 (21 March 1920—7 February 1921)

X:6, 24 June 1919 [X:6:98]

Glad tidings!

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab at the Eleventh Annual Mashriq'u'l-Adhkár Convention.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the Sun of Reality hath shone forth!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the illumination of heavenly brotherhood hath encircled the East and the West!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the doors of the Kingdom of mercy are wide open!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the melody of the Supreme Concourse hath reached the ears of every old and young one!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the banquet of the Lord is spread in the assemblages of the friends!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the period of bloodshed and carnage hath passed away and the century of universal peace and the gathering together of the nations of the earth hath dawned upon us!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the weeping eyes are made joyous and laughing, and ere long the diamond age of the Kingdom of Abhá will be established in the hearts!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! For the sleepy ones are awakened and the negligent ones are made mindful!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the call of the Merciful is raised, the resurrection is set up, the dead are resuscitated, the lame are dancing like unto the gazelles, the deaf are endowed with hearing and the dumb are granted the power of speech!

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the breaths of the Holy Spirit confer life and day by day the world of humanity advances toward the goal of perfection.

O ye inhabitants of the world, awaken ye! Awaken ye!

O ye factions of the earth, become ye mindful! Become ye mindful!

O ye devotees of religions, obtain life! Obtain life!

O ye sects and denominations, move ye! Move ye!

O ye lovers of the beauty of the True One, become ye self-sacrificing! Become ye self-sacrificing!

O ye enkindled ones! O ye supplicating ones! Become ye the confidants of the mysteries! Become ye the confidants of the mysteries!

O ye birds of the rose-garden of Abhá! Sing ye the anthems of mercy! Break ye into the songs of beatitude!

O ye brilliant stars of the heaven of God! Shine ye! Shine ye!

O ye teachers of the Cause of the Supreme Lord! Travel ye, teach ye! Destroy ye the foundation of hatred, malice and contention from amongst the children of men, and lay ye the basis of the palace of love and universal peace!

X:6, 24 June 1919 [X:6:99]

Unveiling of the Divine plan for the Southern States¹

Second Talk by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab at the Eleventh Annual Mashriqu'l-Adhkár Convention and Bahá'í Congress held in McAlpin Hotel, New York City, 26–30 April 1919. [X:6:103]

...

And now I must bring this second talk to a close by quoting to you two short talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Here is the first. Having looked over and corrected the second Tablet to the South, he handed it to me, saying:

“Come, my son, take it. I have corrected it. The importance of this Tablet will be revealed in the future. In these vast sixteen states the lights of the Sun of Reality shall shine with great power and the dark clouds of ignorance and human prejudices will be dispelled from its horizon. Mr Gregory must demonstrate a self-sacrificing spirit in teaching the Cause amongst the black race, diffuse the fragrances of God in every part of the South, and let his cry of ‘Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!’ reach to the apex of heaven, in their meetings, gatherings, churches, colleges and schools. The believers of God with the utmost firmness and steadfastness must go forth and teach the heavenly institutes to the inhabitants of the South. They must not turn their faces from any difficulty. Like unto a waving sea they must be tumultuous and full of divine acclamation, and similar unto the thankful birds they must be always singing the songs of love, light and life. Every person in accordance with his capability and ability must engage in teaching the Cause of God and show an effort in the illumination of the souls, so that praiseworthy results may appear and become manifest from him. I desire nothing else from the believers of those States save teaching the Cause of His Highness, the Almighty. See with what love, with what attraction, with what exhilaration I wrote this Tablet for them. One of [X:6:111] the wisdoms of this universal war is no other than the writing of these Epistles, so that the believers may realize that the Cause of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh must ultimately encircle the globe. Having thus clearly perceived their duty they will spare no effort to hasten its consummation.

“The prominent believers of the South, like Mr Remey, Mr Hannen, Mrs Parsons, Mr Gregory and others must come together, hold meetings of consultation and devise efficient ways and means for the teaching of the people of this great section and promote amongst the inhabitants the spirit of brotherhood, unity and the love of His Holiness Christ and Bahá'u'lláh. Do thou present thyself in their meetings, and through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit make

¹ Refer to the Tablet for the Southern American States in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 67–73.

them realize and feel how this question of teaching is one of the utmost importance in the Cause. Tell them: 'Do not let your thoughts and ideals be crystallized around particular matters. Close your eyes to outward differences and look upon each other with the eye of universal oneness. Like unto the cup-bearers of eternity turn ye round in the assemblages of mankind the overflowing goblets of guidance and intoxicate them with the wine of the love of God. Walk ye always in the pathway of lights and let the pillars of shining Bahá'í inspiration lead and direct you to your glorious destination. Let your thoughts be of Bahá'u'lláh, your mention be of Bahá'u'lláh, and fill all hearts with the truth of Bahá'u'lláh. Like unto the sanctified souls, associate ye with the people of the world and show ye that which ye have. Do ye not hide the precious jewels of the Kingdom under the earth. This day is the day of revelation! This Manifestation is the manifestation of knowledge and understanding.'"

The second talk was given one morning in February 1918, while he was walking in his lovely garden. The names of the Southern States were brought to his attention, and his face was suddenly brightened with the light of inspiration. Then, as he continued his walk, he uttered the following poetic message, redolent with the fragrance of the garden of Abhá:

"Praise be to God, that the dark ages have passed away and the century of light has come. Praise be to God, that the traces of prejudices and superstitions are effaced, and the horizon of the minds and the hearts of humanity are broadened. Praise be to God, that the seas of the idle fancies of the religionists are calmed down and the oceans of the realities and significances of the Blessed Perfection are set in motion. Praise be to God, that the gloomy nights of ignorance have flitted away across the receding ages, and the bright dawn of intelligence and wisdom is becoming visible. Praise be to God, that the cold winter of fanaticism and bigotry, with its chilling hand and irrational heterodoxy has come to an end, and the soul-refreshing springtime of the imperishable flowers and hyacinths of universal love and toleration, has dawned, perfuming all the nostrils with the sweet odours of trust and confidence. Praise be to God, that the black clouds of human limitations and man-made restrictions are dispelled, and the world-enlightening Sun of the Kingdom hath dawned from the horizon of the hearts! Praise be to God that the chains of injustice and the fetters of the oppression of the Pharaohs of the earth and the despotic rulers of men have crumbled to dust, and the age of justice, equity, brotherhood and real democracy is inaugurated. Praise be to God that the crowns of the [X:6:112] despots have fallen to the earth, and the thrones of the absolutists are shaken to the foundation. But the real diadems of glory and power and the royal seats of just governments and democratic institutions were raised high. Praise be to God, that the period of satanic suggestions hath come to a close, and the cycle of angelic ideals and seraphic thoughts hath opened before the eyes of men.

"The past age was an age of wondrous achievements. All the inventions were perfected, new discoveries created, new fields of human activities, new undertakings gave deeper significance to the law of co-operation; new arts helped to make life more beautiful and new international laws are now in the process of formation to bind all nations of the earth together. The international tribunal of justice will soon be organized in accordance with the principles of Bahá'u'lláh, and then all the differences will be adjusted before the members of that impartial tribunal.

"Therefore, as a result of these changes in the outward world, it has become part of the heavenly wisdom in the inner world to create a new spiritual plan for the propagation of the religion of God; thus the divine believers may obtain a new joy and a new happiness and display an extraordinary effort in the promotion of the reality of the religions of God; to deliver the nations from old, superannuated prejudices and diffuse the fragrances of the flowers of the primal truth; to unfurl the flag of the love, amity and the oneness of the world of humanity and remove the international misunderstandings from amongst the nations of the world. From their hearts and souls they must cry out:

[Here followed the proclamation on page 98, beginning: *“Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! That the Sun of Reality hath shone forth!”*]

“The lights of the oneness of the world of humanity are scintillating like unto precious jewels; scatter their rays to all parts! Upraise ye the banner of unity, fraternity, co-operation and reciprocity amongst all the people; so that there may not be left from prejudice aught save a name and from ignorance not even a shadow; the religion of God may pitch its tent over the East and the West, the light of the Kingdom may illumine all hearts, perfect agreement and association may be realized between races, religions and nativities, and the world of creation may find composure and tranquillity.”

On another occasion, he said: “Give my greeting to the friends in Washington and say: ‘O ye believers of God! I am always thinking of the days that I associated with you. Never will I forget you and the spiritual meetings held in your city. I beg from the favours of the Blessed Perfection that ye may become assisted to promote the Cause of God and promulgate the Word of God in the Southern States, that just as Washington is the political centre of the American Republic, she may become the dawning-place of merciful susceptibilities and celestial feelings. Arise ye without any fear in the promulgation of the religion of God! Become ye firmly rooted in this great aim, send ye teachers to all directions, and become ye not apprehensive that ye meet strong opposition. The contradiction of others is more conducive to the strength of the Cause of God. Ever do I beg for you divine confirmation. My spirit is with each one of you. Do ye not look upon your own capacities. Rest ye assured in the bounties of the Blessed Perfection. He shall change the drop into an ocean and the moth into an eagle. He changes the stone into the precious ruby and the scintilla¹ into the world-illuminating sun. Open ye the eloquent tongues and day and night consult with each other regarding the promotion of the Cause of God, so that in the end you may crown your heads with this diadem and carrying in your hands the swords of light, ye may conquer the kingdoms of the hearts.”

X:6, 24 June 1919 [X:6:104]

News from the Holy Land and Persia

Letter from Shoghi Rabbání—Also containing recent Tablet revealed for a well-known Bahá’í of Teheran.

Haifa, Palestine,
25 April 1919.

Dr Zia M. Bagdadi, Chicago.

My dear brother in the love of God:

As there has been a lull and decrease of activity in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ever-widening correspondence these days, I find ample time at my disposal to write you this letter acknowledging the receipt of your letters that have been sent to me and those supplications which you have forwarded to the beloved Master. I profit moreover by the occasion to give you the news of the Beloved’s health and safety and a summary of the news of the Holy Land. Since the dispatch of your last Tablet dated 10 January 1919, four supplications, enclosing other supplications from the friends, have been received from you as well as two letters addressed to me and dated 28 February and 6 March. The contents of all these letters have been fully exposed to the Beloved and have received his due and full consideration, a detailed Tablet in answer to all your questions has been revealed for you this afternoon and will be duly dispatched. The second (or middle) name granted to your dear daughter is Habibeh,² after the name of her respected grandmother. Convey my greetings and my best wishes to your

¹ A spark.

² Ḥabībīh (“sweet-beloved”).

dear wife who, I hope, is enjoying good health and is collaborating with you in your indefatigable services to the Cause of God.

As to the news of the Holy Land, many and varied they are in these significant, memorable days. Friends from France, as M. and Mme. Dreyfus-Barney; from England, as Major Tudor-Pole; [X:6:105] from Cairo, as Muḥammad Taqí Iṣfahání and others; from Adana, as Ḥusayn Iqbál, your dear and charming brother with his family all these are daily flocking in and are being privileged to gaze at the Master's radiant face after this unprecedented period of separation.

News, refreshing and inspiring, is being daily received from all over the world, from the far west in the United States of America to the middle east in Persia and the far east, Japan and India, and still beyond from the Hawaiian Islands in the mid-Pacific ocean. From New Zealand even the glad tidings of the Kingdom are breaking upon us and indicate the brilliant future that is stored for the far-off continent of Australia.

In Persia and particularly in Teheran, the Cause is advancing by leaps and bounds, the number of the friends is prodigiously multiplying, their gatherings and assemblies are open to the public, an intense and widespread interest is being aroused, many an important, responsible position is taken up by wise and firm Bahá'ís, Bahá'í literature is being printed, published and widely circulated, the seed of knowledge and of faith is being sown broadcast by intelligent and well-directed hands and the influence of the friends of God is being felt everywhere. Throughout this period of ceaseless activity of reconstruction and of service at a time when the whole world was in confusion and commotion and when human blood was being so profusely spilt; the friends in Persia were wonderfully protected and saved. Civil war, pestilence and famine ravaged and devastated Persia and although the death rate on one day had reached the unprecedented number of 1172, the friends of God were miraculously preserved, not a single one fell victim of this great calamity.

From what was once an integral part of the vast Russian Empire, from the distracted region of Turkestan a letter has been received from a friend of God residing in the city of Ishkabad.¹ Praise be to God, that dear spot which has the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár erected within its walls and which has of late been shrouded with a heavy mist is now again unveiling itself and appears in its full light and splendor.

What strikes us most vividly is the good news of the welfare and safety of the friends of God. All throughout the years of war, civil as well as national, of loot and of riot and rebellion and of bloodshed, the friends have been continuously engaged in service to the Cause of God. Their meetings have not been discontinued, their fervor has not decreased and their energy has not relaxed.

This news from such a part of the world, together with the letters that have been received from Alma Knobloch and Consul Schwarz, have opened up all the closed channels of correspondence which the war had sealed with the Holy Land. The Beloved is in perfect health, strong and vigorous, happy and joyous and often does he wake up at midnight in order to peruse the contents that are being received from the East as well as the West

With best greetings to all the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, I am

Your brother in the Cause,
Shoghi Rabbani.

May I end this letter of mine with the translation of one of the most important Tablets that have been recently revealed to a well-known friend in Teheran?

¹ 'Ishqábád.

Tablet to a Persian Bahá'í in Tíhrán

O thou honourable martyr and the pioneer of the Cause of God!

The letter which you had written on the 19 December 1918, arrived the 5 February 1919. In spite of lack of time it was read with the utmost attention together with the enclosed letters. It gave us the glad tidings of the good health, safety, joy and fragrance of the friends of the Merciful. In this day one cannot conceive of greater news, [X:6:106] for in these years of agitation heart were in anxiety and affliction. This universal storm was so bewildering, so terrific, so frightful that reason could not conceive that this oppressed people would be protected and safe in all countries. This is only from the decisive and extraordinary power of His Highness the Desired One—May the spirit of existence be sacrificed to the feet of His friends!

Consider that in all countries these oppressed people were in the hands of tyrants; in the days of peace and concord, of general tranquillity and comfort they were without help and support, subject to every tyrant, and inflicted with every calamity. Now, thanks to the assistance and favour of the Eternal Beauty, such a great miracle has become manifest and clear. During the years when all the peoples of the world were in infinite trouble and torment, in the utmost distress, commanded, subjugated, deprived and devoid of reason, these oppressed ones, through the power of the divine teachings and of everlasting confirmation, were everywhere in the utmost tranquillity and composure.

What miracle greater than this? If any one stops to think one instant, he will not find a greater proof.

Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá had striven to the utmost of his power in this praiseworthy Cause prior to the declaration of the war, and so much have we said and spoken in connection with the lines of conduct, but without the favour of God we are nothing, absolutely nothing. This brilliant victory and this remarkable protection are exclusively ascribed to the blessings of the Eternal Beauty—May my spirit be a sacrifice to His friends!—otherwise human power is absolutely impotent. The tastes and inclinations of the people of Persia have decidedly changed; religious habits have disappeared and eventually unworthy habits may prevail in Persia. But rest assured the power of the Cause of God shall conquer and waves from this infinite sea shall surge and shall roll away, casting out upon the shore these foams, and verily our legions shall have the victory.

This is what He says in explicit terms in the *Ishráqát*: “Religion is a brilliant light and a strong fortress for the protection and comfort of the people of the world. If the lamp of religion remains veiled, chaos will take place, the luminary of justice and of equity, and the sun of rest and security, will be deprived of light. Any one who knows will ever bear witness.”

Reflect what has been perpetrated by the miserable party in Russia! How they have destroyed this imposing empire and caused this mighty edifice to crumble into dust, and at present they are in a hopeless state. The state of affairs has become so acute that the pure and chaste women of Russia have brought their complaint before the great powers of the League of Nations, saying that this unprincipled party is forcing us to become public property. High and low, everyone has been vilified. The veil of shame has been entirely rent asunder and the mass of the people have attained a stage of savagery.

Consider, that fifty years ago the Supreme Pen foretold these events: “Verily, our armies will have the victory.” Soon they will find themselves disappointed and at a loss and they will have to follow the commands.

In Persia we see now the beginning of heedlessness and the first manifestations of neglecting religion. If this state of things is not stopped by the power of the divine teachings,

it will soon be chaos and distress, eternal vileness and shame. I take refuge in God in this impossible assumption.

The sacred Manifestations were not known in the first cycles and the fruit of their mission had not been discovered. But in this spiritual age, in this divine time the exaltation and the luminosity, the truth and the greatness of the Cause of God have become manifest and evident as the sun in all regions. All wise men [X:6:107] witness that these divine teachings are the very spirit of this age, and the light of this cycle; humanity will never find peace and tranquillity without the spreading of these teachings, nor will it attain perfect civilization.

In all temples, gatherings, assemblies of the West ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has spread these teachings most forcibly. Not a single person could oppose him, nobody raised an objection. Everyone listened and with great applause and in the utmost respect manifested their approval. No one was found who said: “This is only the legends of the past.” Even in a meeting of atheists a detailed address was delivered. Everybody approved of it and it was published in the American papers. Likewise in Oxford (England) an address was given, and also at the University of California in San Francisco [Leland Stanford, Jr. University; Palo Alto] were explained a part of the divine teachings. Everywhere I met with approval, but the Persians are still asleep. So great a blessing has been manifested in Persia, such a bejewelled crown has been set on its head—but a thousand times alas! that the Persians do not appreciate it and are suffering from neglecting religion. May God end it well. Praise be to God! All future events were clearly, openly and explicitly revealed in previous Tablets, some fifty years ago, others thirty years ago. All have come to pass, and yet the Persians are negligent!

The Eternal Beauty—Glory be to His Greatest Name!—proclaimed this Supreme Cause under fetters, hoisted this remarkable standard in the midst of prison and has given rise to such commotion! Yet the Persians are slumbering! The people of the West consider the East as inhabited by wild tribes and refer to it as a vile race, low and unfavoured; now the power of the Greatest Name has had this deep effect in the hearts of the people of the West and in all the countries of the world there are groups respecting Persia.

Notwithstanding the manifestations of this great power, the Persians are still unaware and are immersed in heedlessness. Be admonished, ye people of light! The one to whom God has refused the light, he is deprived thereof.

In brief, we hope that the friends of God will be confirmed in the path of guidance and will remain and abide at the threshold of the Eternal Beauty.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 25 April 1919.

X:6, 24 June 1919 [X:6:107]

“Every latest (new) order should be acted upon because the general conditions vary and change”

Recent tablets to Dr Baghdádí

To his honour Dr DÍyá’ M. Baghdádí, Chicago, Illinois.—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy numerous and successive letters have been perused in their meanings, and now we answer thee these general inquiries which thou hast asked. This is of my love for thee and tenderness toward thee. I ask God to confirm all in spirit and fragrance, to change every

darkness into light that will illumine the universe; to make the hearts united and combined as the mixing of water and wine, so that all may arise for the elevation of the Word of God and the diffusion of the teachings of God; the abandonment of every mention that does not inherit a gift from God.

...

As to Mr George Lesch: Verily, he has attained to the meeting of his Lord in the Kingdom of Abhá, and he is saying, "I wish my people knew how my [X:6:108] Lord has forgiven me, and made me the sign of mercy in the world of light."

As to the turning of the coloured race to the praise-worthy station: This is a matter that was promised in the Scriptures and the Tablets by the affectionate Lord. Therefore, we have rejoiced in the great glad tidings and we desire that the unity may be increased between the white and the black and the difficulties vanish, so that they may become intimates, strong in faithfulness, and as brothers reclining on the couches face to face, attracted to the manifest light.

...

Concerning the book of his honour Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání: It is acceptable if you translate and distribute it, especially among the friends.

As to the Chinese, Japanese and Hindu students: It is acceptable to receive them into your gatherings.

Concerning the printing of the Tablets and the Epistles: It is conditioned and depends upon the opinion of the Executive Board of the Convention, so that it may not be the cause of disturbing the minds.

Every latest order (new) should be acted upon because the general conditions vary and change; therefore, a new order is issued to readjust the old order.

As to the *Star of the West*: It is better if the English is mixed with the Persian. His honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab has acquired skilfulness in the Persian in these later days.

As to all the epistles and the books pertaining to the Cause: They must be under the management of the Executive Board of the Convention. ...

As to the souls whose consciences are clarified, whose secrets are sweetened, who have become assured in the mention of their Lord, who have sincerely turned their faces to God and who have travelled in the East of the earth and its West, its South and its North for the diffusion of the fragrances of God, unquestionably the merciful confirmations, the divine assistance shall reach them under all conditions and circumstances. Joy be unto the souls who help this illumined group and spiritual party.

As to the Epistles, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* and the *Traveler's Narrative*: Verily, they are the important epistles which vivify and civilize the souls and educate them with the best virtues and the best of politics. Therefore, attach ye to them great importance, and ye, O ye who are noble, do not waste your time in discussions that are useless and from which no benefit can be obtained; it is incumbent upon ye to elevate the Word of God and to spread the fragrances of God.

In these days a letter was received from his honour Ibn-i-Aşdaq, saying that he had sent you articles in order that they be published in the *Star of the West*; their distribution is acceptable.

Convey my greetings and my longing to all the friends in that country of the vast regions.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
25 April 1919.

As to thy inquiry about travelling to nearby towns out of Chicago for the promulgation of the divine teachings: It is acceptable if thou dost continue in this work.

As to the House of Spirituality: It is the name for the group, the committee, and it is the best of all the names.

Convey my greeting and praise to the maid-servant of God, Mrs Grace Anderson, and say unto her: “Verily, I bury my face in the dust of supplication and invocation and I pray for thee to God to make thee free from every hindrance and attachment in the life of this world, so that thou mayest be clothed with the garment of holiness in the Kingdom of Abhá, and become sanc- [X:6:109] tified from the darkness of the world of nature and its limitations, enkindled with the fire of the love of God and attracted to the fragrances of God.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
18 May 1919.

X:6, 24 June 1919 [X:6:109]

“The economic teachings shall, henceforth, be written in detail”

Recent tablet to Juliet Thompson

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Juliet Thompson, New York City—Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Numerous letters have been received from you and their contents noted. At present the presentation of a letter to the Presidents is not advisable, for they are occupied.

Convey my respectful greeting to Mrs Barbee of St. Louis and say: “I hope that in this nether world thou shalt attain unto heavenly light, thou wilt free the souls from the gloom of nature, which is the animal kingdom, and cause them to reach lofty stations in the human kingdom. Today all people are immersed in the world of nature. That is why thou dost see jealousy, greed, the struggle for survival, deception, hypocrisy, tyranny, oppression, disputes, strife, bloodshed, looting and pillaging, which all emanate from the world of nature. Few are those who have been freed from this darkness, who have ascended from the world of nature to the world of man, who have followed the divine Teachings, have served the world of humanity, are resplendent, merciful, illumined and like unto a rose garden. Strive thine utmost to become godlike, characterized with His attributes, illumined and merciful, that thou mayest be freed from every bond and become attached at heart to the Kingdom of the incomparable Lord. This is Bahá’í bounty, and this is heavenly light.”¹

Convey to the maid-servant of God ___ greeting and kindness. On her behalf I supplicate and entreat at the Kingdom of Abhá, in the utmost humility and lowliness, that she may be assisted to conduct herself in accordance with the divine teachings.

...

Convey my message to Mrs Lehmann and say: “Service to the friends is service to the Kingdom of God, and the consideration shown to the poor is one of the greatest instructions of God.”

¹ Quoted section is in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 206.

Convey on my behalf the utmost kindness to Mr Comfort (Will Livingston Comfort) and say: "When in the midnight hour the eye is awakened, affectionate sentiments are felt."

...

Say unto ___ and ___ "Strive as much as you can to turn wholly toward the Kingdom, that ye may acquire innate courage and an ideal power."

...

Convey on my behalf the utmost respect to Rev. Van Kirk and say: "Reflect upon the past events during the time of Christ; present events shall become clear and manifest."

...

Convey my message to Frieda Bullinger and say: "If until eternity thou remainest grateful to Mrs Grace, thou shalt not acquit thyself, for she has [X:6:110] caused thee to harken to the divine call and to turn thy face to the divine Kingdom. I hope that thou shalt acquire health and prosperity."

The economic teachings shall, henceforth, be written in detail.

...

Convey my greeting to Dr Guthrie and Mr Ledoux. From the bounties of God I ask that these two souls may be the cause of the promulgation of divine teachings, may proclaim the oneness of the world of humanity, may spread the cause of universal peace, that ignorant, religious, racial, political and even patriotic prejudices may vanish and the earth may become one home and all peoples be unified; and the same with the other divine teachings which are recorded in the Tablets and Epistles.

Convey my greeting to Dr Guthrie and Kalil Gibran¹ and say: "In the future some Tablets will be sent that ye may translate them, and, having translated them, print them."

To Mr Bouck White say: "If thou seekest real liberty, thou shalt find it in the Bahá'í Movement."

...

Convey to each and all the friends the most wonderful Abhá greeting. ...

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 4 April 1919, Haifa, Palestine.

X:6, 24 June 1919 [X:6:110]

"Undoubtedly, the standard of universal peace shall be unfurled"

Recent tablet to Mrs J. Stannard of London, England

O thou who art attracted to the Kingdom of God!

Thy letter dated 26 December was received. I praised the Lord for having protected the friends all throughout the war that has now subsided. All mankind was held in the grip of anguish, and calamities afflicted every soul, while the safety of the friends constituted one of the greatest gifts. For that we thank God and pray that He may confer upon every one that which will illumine the hearts, refresh the souls, bestow light to the eyes and brighten the visions; and that is the dawn of the Sun of Truth upon all regions, from the horizon of universal peace.

Praise be to God, whatever was recorded fifty years ago in the Tablets and Epistles, has in

¹ Khalil Jubrán.

these days been fully realized. Undoubtedly the standard of universal peace shall be unfurled, its legions shall conquer, its call shall be raised, its rays shall beam forth upon all lands. At present it is only the dawn of its morn, for its sun shall shine in full splendour upon all regions. As to thee, rest thou assured in the bounty of thy Lord, and if possible travel thou to the Holy Land and thence to Egypt or Europe as thou chooseth.

Convey greetings and praise to the friends and maid-servants of the Merciful. In the utmost humility and lowliness I entreat the powerful, and the Omnipotent God that He may confirm them with that which pleases Him; that He may draw the hearts together, cause displeasure to vanish in the twinkling of the eye, and that thou mayest be the cause of joy and fragrance among the servants of the Merciful.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 30 January 1919, Haifa, Palestine.

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:115]

The heart

Lesson by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl given to Mrs Corinne True, summer of 1914

Interpreted by M. Ishti'ál ibn-i-Kalántar.¹ Read at the Second Bahá'í Teaching Convention of the Central States, 23–25 May 1919.

The likeness of the world is like the body of man; the likeness of God is like the spirit in the body. As the spirit pervades and controls the whole body, so likewise God pervades and controls the whole universe. As none of the limbs on the body of man are in communication with the spirit in the body of man and not one of the five senses can ever feel the spirit, therefore, God has created the heart in man to be the central ruler and has endowed it with two phases, spiritual and material. Through its spiritual phase the heart absorbs the commandments of the spirit, and then through its material phase it transmits them to all parts of the body through the agency of the organs, veins, arteries, muscles, etc.

Likewise all the different particles of the universe are beyond having any communication with God, but God, the Supreme Ruler, chooses one man from among the world and makes him to be the heart to the body of the universe and calls him the Word of God. This man or centre is Moses, Jesus, Bahá'u'lláh—according to the different cycles or ages—and is endowed with two phases, spiritual and material. Through his spiritual faculty he receives the teachings and bounties of the Almighty God and then imparts them to the world through material means in which he shares with other men. This Centre is, according to the spirit, the recipient of the divine names and attributes, while in regard to his material side he is no other than a man and shares their material requirements such as eating, sleeping, etc., and it is for this reason that Christians always testify to the fact that Jesus Christ was both a perfect God and a perfect man. The Christian testimony of Christ being a perfect God 'proves' his being the manifestation of divine power, glory, grandeur and might, and the Christian testimony to his being a perfect man 'proves' that he should be perfectly endowed with material requirements such as eating, sleeping, etc., inasmuch as if any of such requirements are not perfect in him, it would be as a flaw in his perfection.

It is not possible for the body of man to be established without its being fortified by the heart, so likewise the body of the universe can never continue in a perfect establishment unless it is enlightened by the Word of God. The likeness of the Word of God in the body of the universe is like the heart in the body of man. Therefore this primal Word is always in the universe, but the difference is that sometimes it manifests itself to the people while at some

¹ Nom-de-plume of 'Alí-Qulí Khán.

other time it is concealed and people are veiled from its presence. For instance, Moses was the Word of God and in manifestation, and Joshua was also [X:7:116] the Word in concealment. But had Joshua manifested himself in this name he would have to bring new laws and ordinances. All the Jewish prophets have been the manifestation of the Word of God in concealment. Jeremiah 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down and to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant," proves that these prophets were the Word. In that day God appointed Jeremiah to do those things and gave him the power, and those who denied Jeremiah denied God himself. The same was said to Peter, and had men denied Peter, they would in reality have denied Jesus.

Likewise Bahá'u'lláh appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be the Centre of his Covenant and endowed him with great power, and those who deny him in this day have denied God and His Cause.

In every age and dispensation the distinction between a believer and a denier would become manifest by his belief in or denying the appointed successor of the Word of God. For instance, if among the followers of Moses one denied David, Jeremiah, *et. al.*, this would be a proof of his lack of faith in Moses.

As it is proved that not one part of the body can ever move unless the heart is cognizant thereof, so likewise no one of the people of the world can do anything anywhere unless the Manifestation of God, the Word, is cognizant of it.

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:116]

The mysterious forces of civilization

Address by Albert R. Windust, delivered at the Third Session of the Bahá'í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Sunday evening, 27 April 1919.

When we look out upon this phenomenal existence of which we are a part, we find distinctive planes which the mind of man has classified and named: The mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom, and the human kingdom.

If we investigate any one of these planes we find a great force or urge for unity dominating each group or species. For instance: In the mineral kingdom; the atoms of a lump of iron are held together by a force that unites them. In the vegetable kingdom the same force is manifest in the grouping of the various kinds of vegetation—the grasses assembling so thickly upon the meadow that it has the appearance of a carpet, and the trees of like kind making a grove or forest. In the animal kingdom it is the same—the flocks of birds and herds of cattle manifest this force or urge. So also on the human plane. Everywhere we behold this uniting force: "Like seeks like and has affinity with its own kind."

On the human plane this force manifests in all degrees and we speak of some of them familiarly as: Fellowship, the family, the tribe, the city, the state, the nation, and the empire—such as the Egyptian, the Assyrian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman.

This uniting force or urge is natural to all the kingdoms mentioned and the combinations produced by it on the human plane are, therefore, *natural*.

But this force is *not* the *mysterious* force of civilization. Rather we are to consider a force above the natural. It is often termed mysterious because not generally recognized and understood.

In brief: Natural civilizations are racial, political, philosophical, commercial, etc.

Furthermore, when we examine carefully the individuals constituting a [X:7:117] group or species in any of the kingdoms, we find no two alike. Among all the grains of sand no two alike, no two blades of grass alike, no two shrubs or trees alike, no two animals alike, and no

two human beings alike.

Observe also the varying degrees in addition to the diversity in every kingdom. In the mineral kingdom, from the dull grain of sand to the sparkling diamond; in the vegetable kingdom, from the lowly blade of grass to the tall cedar; in the animal kingdom, from the weakest creeping thing to the strong lion, and in the human kingdom we find all the degrees from the humble peasant to the powerful king, wise philosopher, or diplomatic statesman.

There is another plane, a higher kingdom, to which the Bahá'ís direct particular attention. It is the super-natural¹ plane or divine Kingdom. This plane becomes manifest through a supernatural type of men who make known or reveal in their lives and words this higher Kingdom. History recognizes them as prophets. Manifestations of God is the Bahá'ís term for the highest of such men. Their force or power, they say, is of the Holy Spirit and they come to lead mankind from a material outlook upon life unto a spiritual outlook. They come as guides, as teachers to lift men up from the natural to the supernatural, from the human to the divine. Such men were Moses, Jesus Christ, Muḥammad, and Bahá'u'lláh.

History shows that they manifested an attractive force—a power which drew men and women to them while in the body and after leaving it, which was above racial, political, philosophical and commercial interests.

Consider: Moses, a humble man, meek, after years of exile in the wilderness of Canaan, returning to Egypt, leading and teaching the slaves of the Egyptians in such a manner, with such force that within a few centuries they became the dominant spiritual civilization of the world and the philosophers of Greece and Rome went to sit at the feet of the Hebrew sages to learn from them.

Christ: His influence we are all familiar with. Consider how he changed civilization after his advent; for through his teachings he united Romans, Greeks, Chaldeans, Assyrians and finally Europeans and Americans, revealing more than any previous Manifestation the power of the Holy Spirit—the mysterious force of civilization.

Muḥammad, six hundred years after Christ, astounded the world with this wondrous force. Consider a people who were surrounded by the civilizations of Egypt and Palestine, and near to Greece and Rome—wild tribes roving the plain of Arabia untouched by these civilizations—changed in a few hundred years to become the wonder of history; even the Christians of Europe sending their sons and daughters to Muslim universities in Spain to be educated by those who but a few generations before were the wild tribesmen of the desert!

This is indeed the mysterious force of civilization.

But even these supernatural or divine civilizations arose and fell as well as the natural or racial and political civilizations of old. The Jews fell away from the teachings of Moses into such a condition that at the time of the appearance of Christ they were ruled by Rome, and soon after were scattered over the world. Islám has today degenerated from what it was, and the Christian world is witnessing the fall of its civilization through the great war and the attending horrors in Europe.

Students of the sacred Books recognize that up to the time of the fall of Jerusalem it was the “Jewish age” and from the scattering of the Jews [X:7:118] until recently, it was a period known as the “times of the Gentiles”. And now the Gentile age has ended.

It would seem then that the civilizations founded by such great Manifestations on the supernatural or divine plane experience birth and death. But they foresaw, as well as the prophets and disciples who carried on their teachings, that a time would come when the

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá even terms the inventive faculty supernatural because inventions make it possible for men to overcome the natural.—*Editors*.

spiritual Kingdom they had helped to prepare mankind for would become manifest in its fullness. They foresaw a time when the spiritual Kingdom set up would not fall.

Isaiah gave word pictures of that promised age. Daniel said, “In the days of these kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed” and “it would stand forever”. Jesus holds forth this same promise in his teachings and in the Lord’s prayer—wherein his disciples and followers pray for the coming of the Father and His Kingdom on earth, that the Father’s will should be done on earth, and that His Kingdom should have the power and the glory forever.

In reality, the civilizations of Moses, Christ and Muḥammad did not die, but were rather the different phases of preparation for the final accomplishment by “Him whose right it is”, for these great Manifestations of the Will and Word of God in this phenomenal world, were bound together by a Covenant. Each spoke of the other. Moses spoke of Christ, not mentioning the name, but telling of his coming; Christ spoke of Muḥammad, not mentioning the name, but telling of his coming. And all spoke of the coming of the Great One who should appear in the latter time, “*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*”. This Covenant is the bond between this Great One and those who prepared the way for His coming. This is the mysterious force that binds the religionists of the former Manifestations to the Great Manifestation today, Bahá’u’lláh.

That Covenant has been fulfilled and its door of bounty opened to all on earth through the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh, the Glory of God. As Isaiah said, “the Glory of the *Lord* shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together”—that is, universally.

This is the Day of the Lord. This is the day when the Kingdom of heaven has been established on earth. Its power is here. Its mysterious force is creating a new civilization, a divine civilization that shall not be overthrown and it shall stand forever. That mysterious force has drawn us here from all parts of the continent to be present at this meeting, and that same force is uniting the hearts of men everywhere. This force is reconstructing civilization.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of Bahá’u’lláh, was in America in 1912, he foresaw the particular phases necessary for the spiritual reconstruction of this western world. Most of us are familiar with the principles he laid down, expounded, elaborated, made clear to the minds of the peoples of the West. Other speakers will undoubtedly elaborate them here in this Congress before it closes. I will just outline them:

Bahá’u’lláh taught the oneness of the religions of the world, the oneness of all humanity, the universal brotherhood of man, universal peace; the perfect harmony of religion and science. He enjoined men to search diligently for truth and to abolish all prejudices, religious, national, racial, and social. He proclaimed the equality of the sexes, commanded equal educational advantages for both, besides vast equitable social readjustments, the equalization of the means of livelihood and the complete establishment of justice among men. He proclaimed the urgency of a universal language to bring men into closer fellowship and mutual understanding. He emphasized the incumbency of a Parliament of Man—a universal tribunal of justice or arbitration for the adjustment of international affairs. And, unequivocally, he taught the [X:7:119] power of the Holy Spirit in the life of humanity.

In brief: The Holy Spirit revealed by the Manifestation of God, Bahá’u’lláh, is the mysterious force of civilization in this new age.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has revealed a prayer vibrant with this force:

“Bring them together again, O Lord, by the power of Thy Covenant and gather their dispersion by the might of Thy promise, and unite their hearts by the dominion of Thy love; and make them love each other so that they may sacrifice their spirits, expend their money, and sacrifice themselves for the love of one another. O Lord, cause to descend upon them

quietness and tranquillity. Shower upon them the clouds of Thy mercy in great abundance and make them to characterize themselves with the characteristics of the spiritual. O Lord, make us firm in Thy noble command and bestow upon us Thy gifts through Thy bounty, grace and munificence. Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Merciful and the Benevolent!"

Today, on earth—according to the Will of Bahá'u'lláh—'Abdu'l-Bahá is establishing the new civilization through this mysterious force.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:119]

The universal house of worship for the new age

Address by Mrs Corinne True of Chicago, at the Third Session of the Bahá'í Congress, held at New York City, Sunday evening, 27 April 1919.

The *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is one of the greatest proofs of the working of the mysterious force of civilization discussed by Mr Windust. It is the first outward symbol, the first divine institution, under the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, to be erected in the West. I will read you Bahá'u'lláh's own Words about the construction of this house of worship. In the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá'u'lláh says:

"O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light."¹

In Chicago we had a peace meeting not a great while ago. Mr Taft came and held a conference regarding the League of Nations; the different religious denominations met and worked together as hard as they could, and on the last afternoon of that conference, someone arose and suggested that the League of Nations was a Christian institution. A Jewish rabbi, who had worked equally as hard as the Christian, insisted that it could not be limited to a Christian institution.

And so today in all walks you will find the same thing, because we are in a new day. You cannot put wine into old bottles when it is new wine. It will ferment. It will burst your old bottles. You must put your new wine into new bottles. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says "The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion."² [X:7:120] It is the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* that is the great outward symbol to humanity of this oneness of the world of humanity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent us word and he has written in his own handwriting that in *Ishqábád*, the believers of God made the erection of the temple conducive to affinity and unity, so that it really became the cause of the oneness of the world. He also makes the erection of the temple in America conducive to the unity and oneness of the believers, of the maid-servants and servants of the Merciful, so that in one thought, one aim, they engage themselves in the building of the temple.

The work of this mysterious force of civilization brought to us by the Manifestation of this age is to establish upon the earth a divine civilization. We have been living under a material civilization, but the day has come when the divine civilization must be established—the spiritual brotherhood of man. The reason we have wars and strife is because the people are not serving one aim, one purpose. Each one has his own thought, his own self-interest—each person, each nation—and this leads to separation and division. We will always have wars until some great power comes into the world and inspires and fills us with one great aim and

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 29–30.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 19.

one great purpose and we sacrifice our lesser aims to this great, this enormous aim; so that we forget our individual interests and the interest of all becomes our interest.

The great Mashriqu'l-Adhkár stands for that sacrifice of self, that sacrifice of the personal, so that we may come into this knowledge of the oneness of humanity. We must find out that we are a part of this one great body of humanity and the working for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will bring humanity into this knowledge. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent Tablets to the orient as well as to the occident, and encouraged the believers all over the world to arise and take part in the contributions for this tremendous work. He said that every soul in the orient, whether he was rich or poor, should give something. We received letters telling how they would go out and sell a little article of clothing, perhaps a tin pan from the kitchen, because they had not the ready money to send us. One of the most touching contributions we have had for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár came during this last year from India. The different assemblies of India collected a contribution for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and sent it in a lump sum in September and a letter from one of the prominent believers in India itemizes what each assembly had sent. In 1910, when Mr Remey and Mr Howard Struven made their wonderful trip around the world and visited India, we had a most interesting letter published about the jungle dwellers of India, how perfectly wonderful was their hospitality. That letter was printed in the little *Bahai News*, the beginning of the *Star of the West*. It would really do you good to read that letter and see the fire and spirit that was among those jungle dwellers when they received Mr Remey and Mr Struven. When Miss Martha Root was in India, she was to have visited that assembly but could not do it, and one of the believers, I think, made three hundred buttons with the face of Miss Root on it, and sent them up to the jungle dwellers in order that they might all have a visit from Miss Root. Well, those jungle dwellers have sent a contribution to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and the same spirit came with that contribution of the jungle dwellers that comes from the men and women from the centres of civilization and cultivation, from Paris, or London or New York, or any other part of the world; the one spirit, the one fire, of the love of God, emanates from the letters which bring these contributions to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

When such a dynamic force as that is working in the world, surely great changes are imminent. It cannot help but make great changes. From all the [X:7:121] various religions of the world these contributions come. From all the various continents. One year I was very much embarrassed because in giving my report I had to say that all of the continents had contributed to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár except South America, and just before I left for San Francisco that year, South America arose with a contribution, the wife of the owner of a large coffee plantation in Brazil, sending a contribution to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, so that with the greatest joy I could say at that convention that all of the continents had contributed to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

I want to give you the Bahá'í definition of the house of worship or church; so that you may see why we call this the Universal House of Worship. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has so beautifully defined these things. There was a believer who wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, because she was a member of the church, and this is what 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to her:

"Thou hast questioned how thou canst accept this divine Cause, for thou art a member of the church. In the day of the Manifestation of Christ, many souls became portionless and deprived because they were members of the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem. According to that membership, they became veiled from that brilliant Beauty. Therefore, turn thou thy face to the Church of God which consists in divine instructions and merciful exhortations. For what similarity is there between the church of stone and cement and the celestial Holy of Holies!

“Endeavour that thou mayest enter in this Church of God.”¹

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave a marvellous talk in the Church of the Ascension here in New York, giving a definition of the church, of what the Bahá’ís mean by the church. He says “... the church is a place where people of different thoughts and divergent tendencies—where all races and nations—may come together in a covenant of permanent fellowship. In the temple of the Lord, in the house of God, man must be submissive to God. He must enter into a covenant with his Lord in order that he shall obey the divine commands and become unified with his fellowman. He must not consider divergence of races nor difference of nationalities; he must not view variation in denomination and creed, nor should he take into account the differing degrees of thoughts; nay, rather, he should look upon all as mankind and realize that all must become united and agreed. He must recognize all as one family, one race, one native land; he must see all as the servants of one God, dwelling beneath the shelter of His mercy.”²

When we really and truly arise and fulfil the building of such a church as that we will not relegate certain nationalities to the Chinese section, other nationalities to the Ghetto section; we will not separate our brothers and sisters into these divisions; we will recognize the oneness of all humanity. And so this Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is the universal house of worship because it is the only house of worship in the world except the one at Ishqábád, Russia, that does really carry out these teachings.

Regarding the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár and its accessories, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to Mr and Mrs Holbach, of London, England:

“When these institutions—college, hospital, hospice, and establishments for the incurables, university for the study of higher sciences and giving post-graduate courses, and other philanthropic buildings—are built, its doors will be open to all the nations and all religions. There will be drawn absolutely no line of demarcation. Its charities will be dispensed irrespective of colour and race. Its gates will be flung wide to mankind; prejudice toward none, love for all. The central building will be devoted to the purpose of prayer and worship. Thus for the first time religion will become harmonized with science and science will be the handmaid of religion, both showering their material [X:7:122] and spiritual gifts on all humanity. In this way the people will be lifted out of the quagmires of slothfulness and bigotry.”³

I must tell you of one of the last contributions which we have had. We owe everything to Persia. It is the birthplace of the Báb. It is the birthplace of Bahá’u’lláh. It is the birthplace of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and there is an emanation from Persia that you do not get from any other place. A traveller came through Chicago the other day bringing a contribution from the believers in Tihrán, Persia, to me, and he told his sister of the dreadful conditions that they had been suffering under in Persia. He said he had paid \$400 for a small sack of sugar. In certain parts the people were becoming cannibals, they were so hungry—it was reducing them to that—and yet, with all the suffering and denial, those friends sent a good contribution for the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár. There was pure, unadulterated sacrifice.

When we can follow the example of Persia, it will not take us very long to build the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár; because America is not suffering from the same things that Persia is. May this great example from Persia inspire our hearts so that very quickly—to make the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá happy—we may complete the sum he has requested us to raise in order that we may actually start the building of this Universal House of Worship, the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 390.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 163.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Star of the West*, Vol. V, No. 5, p. 71.

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:122]

Unveiling of the Divine plan for the central states¹

Third talk by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab delivered at the Eleventh Annual Mashriqu'l-Adhkár Convention and Bahá'í Congress, held in McAlpin Hotel, New York City, Sunday evening, 27 April 1919.

... [X:7:126]

Having revealed the above wonderful Tablet for the Central States,² the Centre of the Covenant spoke often about the future work of the friends of God, and I have gathered his scattered words into one heavenly rosary.

He said: "In reality the geographical position of the Central States has great importance, for just as I dictated to you now, it is like the heart of America. Passengers going east or west, north or south pass through that section. Similarly, it is a point of connection for the friends of God. The believers in Chicago must be so enkindled with the fire of the love of God and must be so characterized with the characteristics of unity and agreement, that other states may learn from them this all-important lesson; that their pure lives and holy words, their selfless services and deeds may affect the hearts of all the outsiders.

"Just as the earth attracts everything to the centre of gravity and every object thrown upward into space will come down; so also material ideas and worldly thoughts attract man to the centre of self. Anger, passion, ignorance, prejudice, greed, envy, covetousness, jealousy and suspicion prevent man from ascending to the Realms of Holiness, imprisoning him in the claws of self and the jail of egotism. The physical man, unassisted by divine power, trying to escape from one of these invisible enemies, will fall unconsciously into the hands of another. No sooner does he attempt to soar upward than the density of the love of self, like the power of gravity, draws him to the earth. But the only power that is capable of delivering man from this captivity, is the power [X:7:127] of the breaths of the Holy Spirit.

"The believers in the Central States must, through this all-conquering power, free the inhabitants from the claws of self, negligence, lust and imagination. The attraction of the power of the Holy Spirit is so effective that it keeps men ever on the path of upward ascension. The malevolent forces of no enemy will touch those sanctified souls who have made this universal power their guide. With tranquil heart and assured spirit they are flying upward day and night and are journeying through the illimitable space of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

"The believers in America must be like lighthouses, lightships and searchlights, so that in the tempestuous sea of the world the arks of lives may reach the haven of security. Each individual Bahá'í must be a life-saver who, facing the rough waves of the sea, may plunge into the whirlpool and save the souls from drowning. To sit, to talk, to listen—there is no virtue in that. To rise, to act, to help—that is a Bahá'í life.

"The sincerity and earnestness of the friends in the Central States must appear through deeds. Deeds are the standards! I have done all that is necessary. I have drawn for them the Plan of God which must guide them through all the coming years. I have explained to them the principles of Bahá'u'lláh. Now the promotion of those principles depends upon their co-operation with each other and their turning their faces to the Kingdom of Abhá. Without walking, a traveller will not reach his destination. Without working, a poor man will not obtain wealth. Without diving to the bottom of the sea, a diver will not gather pearls and corals, and without going through the lower classes, a student will not be able to take up the higher courses in sciences and literature.

¹ Refer to the Tablet for the Central American States in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 13–17.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 13–17.

“The believers of God, in reality, display much effort; but this effort must be expended in the right direction. A sagacious thinker will always perceive the end before he takes up a certain kind of work. A youth desiring to prepare himself for a medical career must study those courses which are directly or indirectly connected with his profession, so that he may become efficient and skilful. Consequently, the friends of God must themselves become the fountain heads of divine characteristics and attributes, and then call others to this exalted station. They must first be attracted and enkindled, then try to attract and enkindle others. Let them cleanse their own hearts like unto clear mirrors, then strive in the purification of the hearts of mankind.

“In brief, I hope that the friends in the Central States may become assisted in rendering these great services. May they become centres of merciful susceptibilities and spiritual guides to the Kingdom of Abhá! From every standpoint, ways and means for the teaching of the Cause of God must be prepared. The question of teaching, like any other question, is evolutionary and not revolutionary. This matter must become very plain to everyone, so that all the friends, like so many spirits in one temple, may arise in the accomplishment of this great service.

“When the foundation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is laid in America, and that divine edifice is completed, a most wonderful and thrilling motion will appear in the world of existence. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will become the centre around which all these universal Bahá'í activities will be clustered. From that point of light, the spirit of teaching, spreading the Cause of God and promoting the teachings of God will permeate to all parts of the world. I hope that ere long the foundation of this celestial temple will be laid—thus it may become conducive to the happiness of the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. All the inhabitants of the world are in these days engaged in warfare and strife, but the friends of God are striving with heart and soul to lay the basis of this palace of the Kingdom; [X:7:138] so that the call of prayers and supplications may ascend to the heights of heaven. The flowers of material and divine civilization shall grow in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, perfuming the nostrils with the fragrance of truth. Its doors will be open before the faces of all races, nations and religions. Whosoever enters therein is welcomed. Bahá'u'lláh is the universal Shepherd. All mankind are His sheep, and the adherents of all religions are welcomed in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to worship the Father of all humanity with perfect freedom and reverence and obedience.

“Likewise, great importance must be given to the development of the *Star of the West*. The circle of its discussion must be widened; in its columns must be published the essential problems pertaining to the Bahá'í life in all its phases. Its contents must be so universal that even the strangers may subscribe to it. Articles must be published, dealing with the universal principles of the Cause, the writers proving that this Cause takes a vital interest in all the social and religious movements of the age and is conducive to the progress of the world and its inhabitants. In short, the *Star of the West* must promote the aspirations and the ideals that will gather little by little around these general Tablets, bringing into the light of day all the historical, religious and racial knowledge which will be of the utmost value to the Bahá'í teachers all over the world.

“In a similar manner, the scope of the Bahá'í Publishing Society must be greatly enlarged, so that books and pamphlets may be translated into different languages and published. These short pamphlets and historical reviews, giving the proofs and arguments of the Cause, must be written in accordance with the intellectual and spiritual capacity of each people.

“In short, for the diffusion of the fragrances of God the friends must think of detailed ways and means and year by year add to their efficiency, practicality and thoroughness. They must organize classes for teaching the young and preparing teachers to go to all parts of America. God willing, the believers like unto bright candles will illumine the assemblage of the world of

humanity with the light of truth.”

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:136]

Recent tablet revealed for Bahá'ís of the British Isles

Through his honour Mr Tudor-Pole, Egypt—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—To the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, British Isles.—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom!

Your joint letter was received. Its contents made us exceedingly glad, for it indicated that, praise be to God, during those days of trial these blessed souls have withstood every test in the utmost steadfastness and perseverance. Like unto pure and unadulterated gold they shone with infinite brilliancy in the flaming fire of tests. Verily, this is the bounty of divine Providence. For the gift of guidance is great, it illumines the soul, converts the court of the heart into a rose-garden and gladdens the spirit with the good-tidings of God.

But all this is dependent upon firmness and steadfastness throughout all trials. Not until the tree is rooted and firmly planted can it give forth fruit; no matter how fresh and graceful it may appear, eventually it will wither, fade away, and only be fit for the fire.

At present, praise be to God, these sons and daughters of the Kingdom have, like unto blessed trees, strengthened their roots, are unaffected by the blowing of violent winds, and they are like [X:7:137] unto a building resting on a solid foundation.

This world-war has come to an end. We trust that at least it will lead to the preliminaries of universal peace, just as it is plainly foretold in the blessed Tablets.

The greatest means for its realization is in the entreaty and supplication of the friends to the Kingdom of God. Ye should all implore and pray, supplicate and beseech that, through the grace of God, this world-consuming war may be changed into a world-illuminating peace. It is certain that the entreaty and supplication of these servants will be acceptable at the divine threshold, for we wish nought save the tranquillity of the world of existence; purpose nothing but unity among men and aim at nothing save the eradication of ignorant prejudices, so that all religions and races, embracing one another, may gather under the shade of the pavilion of the oneness of God.

O ye sons and daughters of the Kingdom! The most pressing need today is harmony and union among the friends of God. Strive your utmost for this. Not until this intimate unity is realized can universal harmony be established. Therein lies the reason of Christ's saying: "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted." Exert ye a great deal of effort on this momentous question.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 28 January 1919. House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:137]

Recent tablet to Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím

His honour Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, London—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

The letter which thou hadst written on 16 December 1918, was received.

Praise be to God, it was an evidence of the comfort and the spirituality of the friends of God and therefore infinite joy and satisfaction ensued.

Concerning the gathering on the 30 November at the house of the maidservant of God,

Roseh,¹ at which ye composed and prepared a letter; as the contents of the letter are known and noted, its despatch at present is unnecessary. Postpone the time of its forwarding.

Praise ye God, that He hath assisted ye in calling a meeting in the utmost of union and love, in endeavouring to promote rest and comfort for the world of mankind, in doing away with dispute and wrangling and in converting misunderstanding among religions to full understanding and good will; so that all races and nations may affiliate in the utmost love.

Convey, on my behalf, the utmost regard and respect to Sitárih Khánum and her daughters, Parvín and Núrí, and present my utmost respect and greeting to the respected maid-servant of God, Mrs Cropper, and similarly to the maid-servant of God, Roseh, who indeed continually and uninterruptedly is engaged in service to the world of mankind; and to Mrs Stannard, who is the true maid-servant of the Kingdom and who is restless day and night.

Mr George Latimer, of America, who is in active service, is an illumined, God-like youth. When released from military service he is permitted to present himself.

Convey, on behalf of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, infinite longing to Dr Esslemont. Through translating the *Hidden Words* into Esperanto, a copy of which he has sent, he has in reality served the Kingdom of God and has likewise rendered a distinguished service to the Esperanto language. May God confirm him!

Send Professor Browne’s book. Neither object to nor correspond with this person. Leave him to himself. [X:7:138]

His honour, the beloved Daniel (Jenkyn) addresses you from the hidden Kingdom as follows: “O ye friends of God! Be not grieved because of my separation, for I am abiding in a realm wherein all my wishes are realized!”

When Dr Esslemont has finished his book, send a copy thereof.

I have felt deeply sad at the passing away of Professor Cheyne at Oxford. Send a copy of his book, which is (partly) on the Cause.

Praise be to God, in these regions, due to the establishment of an equitable government, security and comfort have been realized for everybody, and all denominations are safe and protected from all calamities and are engaged in providing the means of their welfare and prosperity.

The hope is entertained that, through the blessings of Providence, the standard of universal peace may be raised and the pavilion of the oneness of the world of humanity may be pitched upon the apex of the contingent world; that the different races may be fused into one, and the surface of the globe may become one native land; so that the divine Kingdom may be fully represented and gloriously shine in the nether world.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 19 January 1919. House of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:142]

The first tablet received in Egypt after the opening of the doors of communication

HE IS GOD!

To the believers of Egypt

O true friends! Separation from the friends causes the burning of heart and soul.

¹ Probably Rawza[h] (Rauza, Rouza, Roza Rozza, Roseh), Perso-Arabic term (“shrine” or “tomb”) derived through Persian from the Arabic rawḍah.

Separation, distance and foreignness are the cause of injury and loss, especially as no fragrant messages, nor a faithful messenger, nor courier, nor post, nor information, nor news from any source have been received, and the mind has been deprived of comfort. Life and spirit were in the utmost sadness and grief until the conquering army arrived in the Holy Land and seized the reins of government from the cruel ones, and overthrew the authority of the tyrants, and quietness and safety were assured. The leaders of the country and the army showed sympathy and kindness, soothing every oppressed one; the black cloud was dispersed and the horizon of the political situation cleared. Believers and unbelievers were at rest, and acquaintances and strangers were playing cheerful melodies. Verily, the darkness of injury and error was uncovered by the light of equity and justice, and the government put on the garment of probity.

Praise be to God! By the bounty and favour of the Blessed Perfection, amid such great confusion and severe whirlwind of calamities and severe oppression, these distressed ones were in safety and rest. No distress came upon any one. There was no trouble or suffering nor pain, until the Ark of the Cause of God reached the shore of rescue from the whirlpool of danger. Now the ruling government was overcome and all the people of the country of every nationality and tribe were made comfortable on the couch of rest and safety.

'His honour Mr (Colonel) Storrs came from Egypt and gave tidings of the health and safety of all the believers. I became very happy and grateful that, praise be to God, the friends in Egypt were also preserved and guarded.

Night and day we are remembering you and sincerely praying for you and the hope that we may meet. With heart and soul I am longing for all the friends.

Upon them be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr S. I. Moody and Mírzá Faraju'lláh Khán, Tíhrán, Persia, February 1919.

X:7, 13 July 1919 [X:7:143]

Tablets recently revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Alfred E. Lunt

To his honour, Mr Alfred E. Lunt, Boston, Mass.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou firm in the Covenant!

Your last letter dated 28 October 1918, was received. Its contents caused joy and gladness for they indicated the firmness and steadfastness of the friends in the Cause of God.

Praise be to God, the gloomy clouds of war have been partly dissipated from the horizon of the world. The hope is entertained that gradually they will utterly vanish and rest and comfort will be established. Grasp therefore the present opportunity, for a wonderful capacity for the hearing of divine teachings has been manifested among men. Concentrate, therefore, at present your whole effort in spreading the Message. It is time for the diffusion of fragrances and the promulgation of divine teachings and for nothing more. The world of humanity is athirst and these divine teachings are pure and limpid water. Exert effort in teaching and if blessed souls undertake to travel through all the states of America, complete and thorough confirmations from the Kingdom of Abhá shall be witnessed by them, so much so that they shall be bewildered. Verily, this is an exceedingly momentous question.

You had inquired about the despatched and unsigned letter. That letter is authentic and its original copy is safely kept and signed. Whenever an unsigned letter arrives, inquire before

putting it into action and wait until an answer is given.

Convey respectful greeting to all the friends. The question of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* is of great importance. The friends accordingly must exert a great deal of effort and must be self-sacrificing so that its construction may begin.

As to appeal and encouragement for the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, in view of the glory and eminence of the Cause, it must be made orally or through private personal letters.

Your children who indeed are mine, embrace each of them and show them on my behalf utmost kindness and amiability.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 10 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Edna True

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Edna True, Paris, France—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou respected one!

Your letter dated 2 February 1919 has been received, and thy service to the world of humanity, during these days of terrible war, acceptable at the Kingdom of God. Verily, thou hast magnificently engaged in service; hast given up thy rest and comfort in America and hast hastened to Europe so that thou mayest be of service to the world of humanity.

Praise thou God for having been therein assisted. At present continue these services until the end in the same department and whenever it has been made possible for thee to undertake a trip to the Holy Land in the utmost joy and fragrance, thou art permitted to present thyself.

Convey in writing to thy respected mother greeting on my behalf.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 30 March 1919. House of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

[X:7:144]

Ella and Ellah A. Rice-Wray

To the maid-servants of God, Ella and Ellah A. Rice-Wray, Detroit, Michigan—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two dear maid-servants of God!

Your letter dated 4 December 1918, was received. Praise be to God, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh—May my life be a sacrifice to his friends—hath expounded and fully explained everything in the manifest Book, hath not given any soul the chance to be confounded, hath designated the Expounder of the Book that he may fully explain and expose the manifest teachings of God; and hath devolved the ordinances which are not literally recorded in the Book, upon the Universal House of Justice which, whenever it is organized, will engage in the service of promulgating those ordinances which are not manifestly mentioned.

Indeed, as thou hast written, the trials are severe. I, however, entertain the hope that as the winds of tests wax more severe, the friends of God will exhibit and assert more firmness and steadfastness; that souls will be assisted through the confirmation of the Abhá Kingdom and

will conquer and quench the uproar of self and worldly desire which is nothing but the world of nature to which man is enslaved and from which he can be emancipated only through the power of God.

Concerning the effect of translation, it is evident that it is not as effective as the original. For instance, the Tablets of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh which have been translated from Persian or Arabic, the original text exerts a wonderful power, while translation may produce certain effect but cannot be measured with the original. The delicacy, smoothness and sweetness of the Words of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh are beyond any human conception. It is, however, conditioned upon one's knowledge of Persian and Arabic.

Convey greetings to all the friends.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 26 January 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

C. Mason Remey

To his honour Mr Remey, care of his honour Mr Roy Wilhelm, New York City—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O my dear son!

Numerous letters have been received from you and their contents have all been conducive to happiness. Praise be to God, thou art confirmed in service to the Kingdom art promulgating divine teachings, art raising the call of the oneness of mankind, art detaching the souls from ignorant racial prejudices, art summoning them to the investigation of truth, art showing forth unto them the light of guidance and art offering them the chalice of the wine of the love of God. This blessed purpose of thine is the magnet of the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom.

Rest thou assured and engage with Mr John Bassett in service to the Kingdom of God throughout the same southern states. This is what is required at present. Later on, undertake a tour to the north of America and after that thy course of action and that of Mr John Bassett shall be determined.

Convey, on my behalf, the utmost love and kindness to Miss Margaret Klebbs and say: "The people of the Supreme admire your work that, praise be to God, you are firm in the Covenant and Testament, and are serving the Kingdom of God."

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 23 May 1919, Haifa, Palestine.

X:8, 1 August 1919 [X:8:147]

What is truth?

Stanwood Cobb

"What is truth?" So asked a Roman governor and jurist at a time when the moral and spiritual horizon of the world was undergoing a tremendous expansion; when the old values were changing, and the new had not yet been established; when a great Manifestation of God was upon earth, and men knew it not. Yes, and it was to this very Manifestation that the stern Roman governor addressed himself. Christ had already said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Pilate had the earnestness to inquire, but not the capacity to receive, the truth.

"What is the truth?" This question is asked today as eagerly as in the days of Imperial

Rome. Again there is a vital shifting of values; a running to and fro; a falling away from the old and an earnest search for the new. What must one believe? Where pin one's faith?

Is truth to be found in the old denominationalism? If so, it is a very divided truth, a truth in rebellion against itself; and that cannot be, for truth is harmonious, catholic, whole. Is it to be found in any one of the existing world religions to the exclusion of all others? So once thought the adherents of each great world religion. But truth as the exclusive possession of one race, of one religion, is as illogical as that truth should be confined to one sect.

Is truth then relative? God forbid. It is neither fractional, nor formless. Truth is one for the whole world; one and indivisible, for the whole universe.

In 1867 Bahá'u'lláh, in Adrianople, on his way to years of exile and imprisonment in the Holy Land, declared himself to be "The Promised One"; and of his inspired words he says, "This is that which descended from the Source of Majesty, through the tongue of power and strength upon the prophets of the past. We have taken its essences and clothed them with the garment of brevity as a favour to the beloved, that they may fulfil the Covenant of God."

What is the truth which Bahá'u'lláh taught? That God exists. That He can be known only through His Manifestations. That He has manifested Himself to the world at different epochs and in different lands. That He is again manifesting Himself to the world, to fulfil His promise; and to satisfy the expectation of every religion and every race for a great Leader, who should lead mankind into the Promised Land; who should initiate the movement which should not end until all had become children of the Kingdom; who should lay down the principles of a spiritualized humanity, exemplifying them in his own character and life.

What are those principles which Bahá'u'lláh laid down for the guidance of humanity? But first let us ask ourselves what, if one had the opportunity and the choice to create an ideal religion answering to all the needs of humanity,—what, we question, would be its nature? [X:8:148]

Such a religion must in the first place be universal. It must unite all races in one sublime Truth.

Secondly, it must wipe out war, the greatest handicap under which humanity now labours.

Thirdly, it must solve the vast problem of labour and capital, a problem which lies at the very roots of human progress and of joy upon earth. For it must guide the habits and regulate the lives of men in such a way as to enable all to exist in happiness, health, and nearness to God.

Last, and most important, and as a means to all the foregoing, it must fill the hearts of men with love for God and love for humanity, so their faces shine and the whole being is radiant of joy.

And all these things the true seeker will find in the Bahá'í Movement. It not only preaches universal brotherhood and universal religion, but it demonstrates these things in practice. It is the only religious movement which has united, in the thousands, Jews, Protestants of every denomination, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Brahmins, Zoroastrians and Confucianists. It is the only movement which amalgamates men of every race and caste and joins the orient and occident in loving partnership of progress. No other movement has ever done this,—even Christianity has never spread east of its birthplace; it became and has remained an occidental religion.

As to war, the Bahá'í Movement condemns it as a crime against man and God. Only one kind of war it permits, a war of justice, a war against war—but the aim even of such a war is universal peace—peace based not upon politics and selfish interests, but upon tolerance, internationalism, justice—and a humanitarianism that is not confined to nationality. Only the

power of a great religion can perform this task of welding together the hearts and lives of men of every race. Christianity once did it; Buddhism and Islám have done it; and the Bahá'í Movement once and for all will do it in a lasting and world-wide way.

The Bahá'í Movement is not an otherworldly, an ascetic, or an esoteric religion. Its teachings are for all, and apply to this life as well as to the next. Its aim is to make this life happy, just and perfect—to establish on earth the Kingdom of heaven. It does not say to the poor man, "Submit to your poverty and degradation, for greater will be your glory in heaven." It says: "Poverty is a social crime. It must not exist. Every man has the right to secure work and by it the sufficient means to meet his daily needs. There cannot continue to exist the vast extremes of wealth and poverty."

To the capitalist it does not say, "The Church accepts your support and condones your ill-gotten wealth," but it says: "Share your profits with your workmen. Divide up your estates at death so that the many and not the few shall enjoy them." And the Bahá'í laws will enforce, where capitalism will hesitate, the greater sharing of its profits with labour, a wider distribution of wealth by bequest, and the abolition of poverty.

Thus and thus only can material conditions upon earth make possible a spiritualized humanity. For while all strive madly after wealth and but a few attain it, the hearts of men are too bitter to listen to the voice of God. But the combined results of confiscatory taxation beyond a certain income, and of spiritual love and humanitarianism on the part of the rich, will turn our great achievers from greedy competition unto deeds of more human value. And the satisfaction of the daily needs and the feeling of justice in the distribution of wealth will change the jealous attitude of labour into one of co-operation and happy industry. For every producer, in the Bahá'í state, will receive not only wages, but a share in his profits.

The Bahá'í Movement is the only re- [X:8:149] ligion that has ever made work equivalent to prayer. It is not necessary to flee from the world in order to be near to God; nor need one retire from the work-bench in order to pray. For by Bahá'u'lláh's command, work done in the spirit of service is equivalent to prayer. Service done in love is the key to the Kingdom. Of this there is potent witness in the personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Servant of God, who has made his life a perpetual and joyous sacrifice,—first to Bahá'u'lláh, his father, and then to the whole world. He is the personification of service; and his words and actions are the inspiration which spur on others to give their time and strength and money to the Cause of humanity and of God.

No one must be idle. In the Bahá'í state there will be neither tramp nor monied loafer-beggar nor remittance man. All will contribute some service to the state—else they sin in the eyes of God. But work will then be far more joyous than it is now—because it will be done in the spirit of love, done under divine inspiration—and the task-like quality of work will yield to a happy creativeness such as now characterizes only the artist's productions.

"Thou shalt earn thy living by the sweat of thy brow"—is supplanted by "God cares for all his creatures".

Liberty of government—equality before the law—has been achieved by the advanced members of the human race; but nowhere is there real equality of opportunity. Poverty is a handicap too great for all but the most powerful wills to overcome; while property and privilege raise to eminence men worthy only of the workshop or the prison bench.

Education,—free, thorough, practical,—is the key to equal opportunity. By this means are the talented brought forward, the great achievers of the human race discovered and aided in their work. Not equality of position, but equality of opportunity, is the standard of the Bahá'í state. Let the great enjoy a position and a wealth commensurate with their abilities and service. But let all have an equal chance to achieve.

So Bahá'u'lláh lays great stress on education. To give one's children the best education possible is a spiritual duty—and daughters must receive an equal education with the sons, because they are to be the mothers of the coming generation. These commands for universal education, less needed in the occident, are absolutely essential to oriental progress; for the great weight which keeps the orient down is the ignorance of its masses.

The Bahá'í Movement brings a message of inspiration and freedom to women. They are in all things potentially the equals of men—and their training and education is to be as broad and far-reaching as that given to their brother-men. Humanity cannot fly on one wing only. Woman's power must be added to man's power, woman's vision and ideals to man's vision and ideals for the achievement of a perfect humanity. The vanity and domination of the masculine element must yield to a greater harmony of sex, in which sympathy, understanding, and co-operation will enable man and woman to march abreast toward the victory of spirit.

In the Bahá'í Movement, the antagonism between science and religion is abolished. There can be no quarrel between the truth of science and the truth of religion, because truth is one. If there is an apparent divergence, it is due to partial error. For religion to deny the truths of science is folly. By so doing it becomes mere superstition. Religion must comport with science, Bahá'u'lláh declared.

But there is a limitation in the science of today which must be overcome before it is worthy of sharing truth with religion.

For science to deny God, is for it to deny the very ground work and substance of existence. Such a science is no-science. There can be no harmony [X:8:150] between contemporaneous religion and contemporaneous science, for both are dogmatic. The religion of today is mentally wrapped in the swaddling clothes of an infant humanity, while science, in bursting free from this oppression, is lost in an anarchy of materialism. When scientists live as close to God as the prophets of the past, a new and spiritual civilization will pervade the earth.

In the Bahá'í Movement, it will be no man's duty to preach unto his neighbours. All will have the Word of God at their disposal—its meaning to be sought in their own hearts and from the heart of God. There will be no paid profession of the spiritual teacher. This function will be absorbed by the educator, the scholar, and the scientific investigator.

In the Bahá'í teachings we find a platform so wide, so universal, that it meets every need of man: one that appeals to both the intellectual and to the emotional; to the humanitarian and to the mystic; to the oriental and to the occidental.

These teachings are for all humanity, nor is there in them fault either of omission or commission. Herein lies the outline of a perfect world-religion; the pattern to which humanity may weave its future destiny; the foundation stone for the building of the Temple.

Yet were the Bahá'í Movement a mere platform it would soon pass, as have passed all other platforms made by man. It is not because of its platform that it is spreading over all the world, but because of its inner spirit, its cohesive force. It is a religion, not an ethical or philosophic cult. It moves men to great and lofty deeds; purifies their hearts; leads them to God. It is the Water of Life, bringing rejuvenation to a thirsty age. To one man it may appeal first through the intellect, to another through the heart; but in time it unifies these two sides of man into a perfect harmony of spirit. The oriental, mystically inclined, it makes more practical. The occidental, inclined toward materialism, it awakens to the existence of spirit. And upon all it enjoins deeds.

This is not a religion of words, of lip service, of inherited tradition. It is a religion of action, appealing to the virile, the pioneer, the heroic in man. It points the way to a new and glorious civilization, the keynote of which is social love. And not only does it point the way, but it gives

also the impetus, the motive, and the power toward this better life. For many have the eyes to see, the heart to yearn, but few the power to achieve. And the friends of God must be distinguished, not by fine words merely and ideals, but by spiritual achievement. When the Bahá'ís in any community stand out perceptibly as the sweetest, the noblest and the most powerful personalities of them all, then will the Bahá'í Movement win its adherents by the thousands and the Bahá'í State come to realization.

Much as it may so be thought, man is not, however, made for living, but life for man. Not a perfect world is the goal of humanity, but a perfected soul. This world is but the battle ground, upon which victory is to be attained of spirit over sense. Hence, of far more importance, in any religion, than the means of a happy civilization, are the means of an individual salvation. "What shall I do to be saved?"—is the eternal quest.

Salvation is a term in obloquy¹ among trained minds. Modern cultured man has deemed himself the peer of existence, needless of salvation, beyond good and evil. If this attitude brings happiness, let the years 1914–1918 bear witness.

If salvation means anything, it means the ushering of the soul into immortal joy; it means the freeing of the soul from sorrow. There is only one way of freedom. It is the way of love. In that predestined union of the soul with God, happiness is found. In separation, only sorrow—no matter how the soul [X:8:151] may seek to shield itself against misfortune. "Grieve not save when thou art far from us; and rejoice not save when thou art near and returning unto us."

To overcome self is the task set for humanity; the earth-task, in which beads of blood oft-times perspire. The task is great, and many shrink therefrom. Yet, sooner or later, it must be faced by all. There is no escape. For the finite life can never become infinite, nor can mortal put on immortality, until this task is done. Severance from self, this is salvation.

To achieve this goal, but one means is given to man—that of love. That which as duty is difficult, with love becomes a thing of joy. The Friend awaits eternally the first pledging of friendship. He never wearies of the quest—forsakes no seeker, answers love with love. But those who love Him not can never know His love, how infinite, how joy-giving it is. His heart of infinity yearns after all finite beings, draws them as a magnet. But freedom of will gives opportunity for resistance. Man may, but will not, seek this goal; for self-love is a force compelling on the soul of man a long and weary journey, a pilgrimage through sorrow till the peaks of gold are reached.

When will humanity overcome this terrible egoism, this vast conceit in its own powers? When learn that there is no safety save in God; no guidance but the Friend's; no deliverance from evil except by aid of the Holy Spirit? If nothing but universal disaster, and the resulting conviction of human frailty, could avail to turn men to Him who is Mighty, would it not be a favour on the part of destiny to send affliction over all the earth?

And so woes shall increase, that evil may decrease; complacency shall fail in order that yearning may be aroused; happiness shall wane, that spirituality may grow. But in all trials, in all difficulties, love is the clue, the guidance. In love is deliverance from all evil.

Love in its highest aspect means union, harmony, evanescence before God. But man is too proud to seek this road. He will not submit his heart,—but by foolish imaginings seeks salvation in empty abstractions, in a hollow eclecticism, in a vain endeavour to reach the Divine Essence without accepting the guidance and infinite love of the Divine Friend. It may not be. Those who would enter by any other way are thieves and they shall be rejected. One gate, one way, one path; not many to salvation.

¹ The state of being generally ill spoken of.

Such are the teachings of the Bahá'í Movement. They are not new—they have existed in the world before, in essence, but not in full expression. This, their new and epochal arrangement, is the destined avenue of Truth to the world today. The power of God is behind it, the power of holy spirits in the celestial Kingdom, the power of all good. And nothing can stay its progress, because it is harmonious, catholic, and whole.

X:8, 1 August 1919 [X:8:165]

Post card from Shoghi Rabbani

Acca, Palestine,
11 June 1919.

To Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí, Chicago,
Dear brother:

... A general Tablet, remarkable and detailed, has been revealed for the friends and maid-servants of God throughout the United States and Canada. It has been dispatched. I am enclosing the supplication of over 1000 American friends. Their names have been sent with the Tablet. 'Abdu'l-Bahá ordered me to write to you concerning this important, momentous question. Publish in the Persian and English columns of the *Star of the West* the Persian and English texts of the enclosed supplication. Then publish all the names one by one and after that publish the general Tablet in Persian as well as in English, all in the same copy of the *Star*, no matter how voluminous it may become. Then send at least a couple of copies to every province in Persia, addressed to Bahá'í Assemblies or individuals. Also send at least one copy of the convention photo to each province of Persia, that all Persian Bahá'ís may see what miracles have been wrought, what achievements have been made, what victories have been won, what a universal, a simultaneous response to the trumpet call of service has taken hold of the western friends. This is the Beloved's command, fulfill it

Ever yours affectionately,
Shoghi.

X:9, 20 August 1919 [X:9:179]

The power of the influence of Bahá'u'lláh

Address by Dr Frederick W. D'evelyn of San Francisco, delivered at the Fourth Session of the Bahá'í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Monday afternoon, 28 April 1919.

...

Today, we are told, the world of humanity is inadvertent. We realize it is at variance. Today no nation, no people are confident and at ease, because confidence and security have passed away from the world of humanity. Presidents, kings, labour, capital, subjects—are all in danger. The need of a collective centre, where these differences may be annulled and the oneness of unity be established, is as urgent as it is evident. In the world of divinity, quality and identity are inseparable. No duality; absolute oneness. The power and influence of Bahá'u'lláh are divine entities, inseparable, the perfection of unity. The perfection of unity vocalized, materialized, is the Bahá'í Message, and the Bahá'í Message is the need of the world today. When you hear this acclaim for the first time it would be very human, it would be pardonable, if a certain measure of unbidden resentment arose within you, born into being by the very assurance of the statement and by the alleged comprehensiveness of the claim. That claim is specific rather than elaborate; it is centripetal rather than diffuse. It at one and the same time breaks down barriers, for to it they are non-existent, and overcomes difficulties; because in the onward progress of its triumph they are non-retarding. In its appeal to humanity it concedes a universality that makes all the world kin. If we were asked to classify, to align the Bahá'í Message with some [X:9:180] of the great historical pronouncements of the world, we should speak of it as the Declaration of Independence.

Today in the school houses, in the halls of council, in the chambers of congress, rarely indeed are the echoes of the utterances of the great father of our country silent. Today if you pick up a dozen of the leading newspapers, the possibility is that ten of them would be again repeating his wonderful warnings against “entangling alliances”. Thus contrasted, thus aligned, the Bahá’í Message becomes an ordinance of the most supreme inner significance, for its pronouncement is “Take ye heed, beware ye of entangling limitations.”

Think, think of a God’s message so curtailed, so foreshortened, that any of His entities fall outside of its boundaries unreached, unsurrounded, unincluded. Such a message would not be comforting, would not be assuring. It would not be God-like. It would not be glorious, and it could not be Bahá’í.

A few days ago I read in one of the London newspapers an article on literature, written by a special writer, in which he said, amongst other things, “The most read of the recent books is the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, a work of twelve volumes, ten already published.” A holy father just returned from Rome, was present at the interview, and he added: “Yes, and there is no book today more frequently consulted in the Vatican than the one you have just mentioned.” If I were permitted to write into that, “the greatest recent book”, a definition of the Bahá’í Message, I think I would write, “The Most Great Consummation of all God’s relationship, plans and purposes bestowed upon humanity since that day when in the beginning the Word was God.” Thus is it the Alpha and the Omega.

A few moments ago we spoke about the world being at variance. It might seem a disconnected sequel to claim these are victorious days, these are triumphant days. This is *the cycle of deeds,—not of words*, and deeds proclaim the station of the doer. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says: “Yes, these are great days, the time of the end has come, the doors of the Kingdom are open, the Supreme Concourse is descending to assist all.” Yes, these are great days, for back to memory, back to recognition, back to acceptance, is coming the fact that man is not merely the output of a system, nor the by-product of a community, but is a God-created, a God-claimed entity. The Bahá’í teachings say, the honour and the glory of man consists in the fact that amongst the beings he is the dawning place of righteousness, and adds Yes, and with divine assistance, the peace, welfare and prosperity of the world of humanity are in his hands. The Bahá’í Message does not tell us that all men are equal, but it tells us that the crown of humanity rests upon all alike. This Message, the incarnate power and influence of Bahá’u’lláh, affirms that the birthmark, the reality of man is the Throne of Divinity. The Manifestation of today is not an accident; is not a coincidence; is not merely history;—it is the voice and the will of God, the meaning and the entity of God. Ethically it is the spiritual complement to the material development of mankind today. I say it with the conviction of every fibre of my being, that it is a normal thing, that it is a logical thing, that it is a fair-play thing, and with all the awe and the veneration that my soul is capable of, I say God could not, God would not, God dare not, deny to that thing which He says is “the dawning place of righteousness”, nay, would not deny to him the opportunity of ascending to a spiritual height complementary and co-equal with his permitted material development. The power and the influence of Bahá’u’lláh will make this mundane sphere of ours the great arena in which this chosen thing of God, this thing *man*,—all other teachings, all other dogmas, all other predictions or [X:9:181] doubts to the contrary,—in station become the dawning place of righteousness, will attain to the victory over the city of the hearts, and will confirm and conform to the created innateness of his birthmark, his inseparable possession of “reality”. The clear judgement must consider the obligation for the fulfilment of these promises. Mankind of necessity must reach the loftiest destination, the exalted grade, the supreme station—chosen for him by his Creator “in whose grasp is the kingdom of destiny and the power of execution”. This is the cycle of that confirmation, the uncompromising consummation of the oneness of the world of humanity.

Look at these times and seasons. Years are no longer of equal measure. A day may mean

more than a year and a flash more than a day. It is not exaggerated to say that anything can take place in the spiritual life of man today. Consider for a moment the important values attached to material speed and nearness, the physical values of speed and nearness today. Our God is marching on,—and, the question is where is humanity, ahead, abreast or in the rear? That is the most vital question for whom? For you, as an individual; for you as individuals coalesced into the masses. Our God is marching on. Where is humanity? That supreme guidance which our teachers are looking for, our guides seeking after, our congressmen yearning for, that Supreme guidance which in their limitation they term “statesmanship”. Statesmanship, the greatest good for the greatest number. What is statesmanship in its essence, in its final analysis? What is it? Is it not merely the harmonizing of the spiritual movement of the age? If that movement, that spirit, is unknown, is uninterpreted, unreceived, where can be the statesmanship, where can be the efficiency, where can be the standardization? Our God is marching on, while mankind is standing afar off, aloof, because our guides have not interpreted the spiritual movement of this age. The power and the influence of Bahá’u’lláh, the Bahá’í Message, in its potency, in its universality, in its domination, is the ally of the God that is marching on, the God that is doing great things. Yes, the Bahá’í Message, the power and the influence of Bahá’u’lláh, the manifestation of today, is just this, it *is God’s ways, God’s means*, whereby humanity can come abreast with a God that is marching on, with a God who is fulfilling His promises, with a God who is completing His purposes. Therefore, we ask you, acquaint yourself with its teachings. Investigate its principles, exchange your ignorance for its knowledge, your weakness for its strength, your invalidism for its potency, your blindness for its illumination. You see that beautiful invention (pointing to a light filter installed upon the platform)—an unique thing, a helpful thing, but its sun, its rays, will not put the gold on the wheat, the red on the cherry, or the blush on the peach. It is a mere twilight,—twilight even as the twilight of orthodoxy, the reflection of a sun that is not. The power and the influence of Bahá’u’lláh is the full orb sun of today that gives to the seasons their quickening and to mankind his fruitage. *There is no power, no power, save the power and influence of Bahá’u’lláh concentered into the Bahá’í Message, the will and the Word of God; there is no power today save that power that can bring together beneath the same tree the hearts and the minds of the world of humanity. It is the motive power in all things; it is the mover of souls; it is the governor and the controller of the world of humanity. Be ye illumined with the light of today, do not put light filters over your soul and be shaded by the nether gloom of yesterday.*

The power and influence of Bahá’u’lláh is the zenith sun of today, the consummation of all God’s relationships, from way back when the Word was in the beginning, when the Word was God, [X:9:182] until this hour, the time of the end. The glory and the honour of man consists in the fact that amongst the beings he is the dawning place of righteousness. The power and the influence of Bahá’u’lláh has come to the world in this most great cycle, asking you to come back and claim your birthright, the birthright God gave you, the birthright man cannot take from you. Come back! Be illumined with the light of today and turn your sight into yourself and see that claimant standing within you, glorious, mighty and supreme!

The power and the influence of Bahá’u’lláh, the Bahá’í Message, are just God’s ways and God’s means whereby humanity today can come abreast with a God who is marching on. “Blessed are those who attain.”

Alláh-u-Abhá!

X:9, 20 August 1919 [X:9:182]

To live the life

Address by Mary Hanford Ford, at the Fourth Session of the Bahá’í Congress, at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Monday afternoon, 28 April 1919.

... Dr D'Evelyn has been telling us of the supreme message which has been given to us, of its grandeur, of its magnificence, of its supremacy, and it seems as if ever since 'Abdu'l-Bahá had begun to talk to us, he has been trying to tell us how we can catch up with that message, what we can do to lift ourselves out of personalities and into entity, out of animalism and into spirituality, out of that self-indulgence which is the curse of the natural man and into that superb effort which is the acme and attainment of the spiritual man.

... You know, we are living in such an astounding day of tumult and endeavour, a day when all the old world is so absolutely falling to pieces that sometimes we are in despair, sometimes we say how can any great edifice ever lift its head out of this rain and catch the light of the sun once more? Now and again the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá come to us across the ocean and across the continent and give us hope because they always practically point out a direct pathway which we must follow to attain this end. It is a pathway always along certain lines and always, on the other hand, inclusive of that great realm that is described by that little word *conduct*, the one word that we are most prone to forget in our march towards spiritual attainment and supremacy. And so I want to read these words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which have been recently received by a friend in New York.

He says: "No doubt had the world of women wielded sufficient prestige, the conflagration of this war would not have set the world aflame. If the mass of women in Europe and of those in America had been enfranchised throughout all the state undoubtedly they would not agree to war. At present this war has made millions of children fatherless and millions of fathers and mothers destitute of sons; this war has snatched [X:9:183] from pitiable sisters their brethren, this war has turned millions of women into widows and destitute of husbands, this war has made cities desolate, this war has made the very foundations of mankind quake and quiver. If in future, women, like unto men; are given the franchise, assuredly they shall prevent the occurrence of war; whereas, otherwise the matter will be difficult. Man is sanguinary and even worse than devouring beasts. Of what use is exhortation and to what amounts admonition? A mighty power is necessary in order to make an effective opposition, otherwise it will be exceedingly difficult. I pray God that the world of women may be assisted and confirmed for their purpose is universal peace."

You know how it is yourself in this new era in which we are living; how difficult we find our situation everywhere. For instance, here is the man of the old order who nevertheless has been endowed with new ideas and he has to have a little struggle with himself when instead of handing out to his wife the customary quarter for bread and tea, he is obliged to say, "My dear, my bank account is open to you", and then accept with humility the number of checks which pour in for cashing, as a result of the new and inexperienced liberty which this woman is enjoying. And on the other hand, you know, it seems a little queer to the new woman who has submitted always and whose grandmothers have submitted always, to begin suddenly to realize what it means to not only boss the household but boss the head of the household as well (laughter)—frequently realizing that unless she bosses the head of the household the household will go to ... [ruin]. And you know what Bahá'u'lláh says to us about the world of the past, about the world of the present; that it is a world of animalism, a world of cruelty, a world of self-indulgence, and that he says also this world of the past has been governed by force. That day has ended. The world of the future is to be governed by love. The world of the future is to be ruled by the spirit, not by the arm of law, even in the old sense, but by that new and wonderful knowledge of our nearness to that heavenly source of light which alone can give us wisdom and alone can carry us to the acme of our success and attainment in this world.

Look at it, this question of man and woman, from the point of view of the ideal which 'Abdu'l-Bahá offers to us.

Man is the objective side of existence. Man is the objective actor in existence. He is the individual who does things outwardly. And what is woman? Woman is the subjective element in existence. While man is the fighting one, woman is the praying one. While man wields all the material forces of existence into the forms which he chooses, woman waits and listens for the pattern to be given through which those forces and into which those forces may be moulded. Always in the past the world has been dominated only by the objective side of its existent power. Is it any wonder we have had wars? Is it any wonder we have had disharmony after disharmony and injustice after injustice, and that again and again, in the eras of our history, we have had to confess that we have completely forgotten God?

And now suddenly what does 'Abdu'l-Bahá say to us: That henceforth women are to be equal in franchise with the men, that women are to be equal in power with the men, that women are to sit in our council halls and women are to be recognized as our counsellors. Why? They are the element of love. They are the element of creation, they are the medium through which God speaks to the world. And do you not stop in reverence and fold your hands in prayer as you gaze forward and [X:9:186] realize what that world may become when the objective side of existence has put its hands firmly into that of the subjective side of existence and both reverently and lovingly are looking to that divine Source from which alone our wisdom can arrive to us? That is what 'Abdu'l-Bahá means when he says that women will prevent war. It is that woman knowing in the soul of her infinite patience, what is the divine ideal to which mankind may attain, waits patiently for its consummation and is never willing to hurry it by the crudity and the coarseness of force, and so in that world which is stretching before us through all its tumult, through all its anguish, through all its anger, there is coming this new presence of patience, this new presence of love which will wait, this new presence of kindness which will not criticize, and that is to make itself present in the world through this franchise which is given everywhere to womankind, through this council which is granted to womankind, through this freedom and this equality of comradeship which henceforth will guard and guide not only the fortunes of the world collectively, but, thank heaven, the individual fortunes of the individual man and woman who are united to consummate the life of this world. I know you have thought of the meaning of that wonderful little word, conduct, and how it applies to your life, how it applies to mine, of how it is the silver thread marking the path along which we finally reach the little haven of rest and of comfort whence we can look back and survey the anguish of the path which we have pursued because it is through conduct that we attain intuition, it is through conduct that we obtain self control, it is through conduct that we are enabled at last to stand off and look at ourselves and realize what beastly things we have been, in the past which is so near us, because we may theorize and we may prophesy all that we can, and we may read holy books and we may commit them to memory, we may have every text at our tongue's end, and if we have not stopped to say, "What did I do yesterday? How did I hurt my friend? How did I forget that wonderful law which 'Abdu'l-Bahá has given us as the Golden Rule of this day and the coming day?"—"*Be not a cause of grief to anyone*"—it is all in vain.

Be not a cause of grief to anyone. There is so much grief in this world. There is so much anguish that we cannot escape. There is so much sorrow that we cannot avoid that presently, after we have begun to realize it, and after our own heart perhaps has been burned to ashes, there is a spark left which says to us, "At least you can do this thing, you can live in your corner of the world so that no one in that corner of the world suffers from your act or word. You can do that." And what would become of us if all the world would do that? What would become of the universe if every one were doing that? Living in his corner of the world so that no other suffer through him; so that no other had a moment of grief or an added anguish because he stood there in that place? [X:9:187]

I think often as I look forward to the future and the day when I lay my head down for its

final sleep in this work and I hope its lovely awakening in the next world; I may be able to look back and say at least, in the last days of my life I remembered that I was careful not to grieve those who were next to me. I was careful to spread love as fully and as freely as possible in my passage of life. And you know that is concerned in this word conduct. That is concerned in this word service, in the word that is constantly on the lips of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and which he is not willing to use just as service, but which he turn, again and again into that more powerful word of *servitude*, which some of us come to know very well. Indeed, in these days of our existence that word servitude which imprisons us until the fleshly desire has fallen away from us; the desire for domination, the desire for supremacy, the desire to be the chief one in any place, is our salvation. And presently, when our servitude has been long and has been harsh and has been very severe, until our limbs are torn with the chains that bind us, what has happened to us? Why, a strange freedom has come, in which light blazes about us and fragrance is in our nostrils and a heavenly voice sounds through our ears, saying, "My beloved servant, thou hast done well." When you hear that voice, you know what happens to us, because it has happened to you many times. You know that you say to yourself, "Let the servitude be doubled, let it even never end, so that I may hear again those wonderful and lovely words that concern not my life here alone but all the everlasting life that stretches forever beyond us and is so different from this one, that when we have once had the tiniest glimpse of it everything in this life must necessarily fall into complete insignificance."

There is a beautiful story that 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us in his book *The Secret of Divine Civilization*. It is a wonderful story and an eloquent story, a universal story, as are all the stories which 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us, and he tells of how a king in Arabia was like many kings, given to satisfaction of his impulses and his appetites, and one day, satisfying his appetite, he fell desperately drunk, so not knowing what he did, suddenly commanded the execution of two men that he loved best in the world, and, because his word was law, his command was obeyed immediately, and the heads of his faithful servants were stricken off. In the morning when he realized how faithfully the commands of his obdurate and unobstructed will had been fulfilled, in that morning his soul could not contain the anguish that possessed him at his own wretched conduct, and so, out of ignorance and out of his stupidity, he issued another decree even worse than the first one. He said, "I will build me two houses and on the anniversary of the death of these two men whom I have slain I will sit between these two houses and whoever comes to me on one side shall be slain in memory of those whom I slew ignorantly, and whoever comes to me on the other side shall be granted the desire of his heart." So it happened, that the king in travelling about the world had a most lovely and beautiful experience, because that is the grace of heaven to us, you know, that in the height of our foolishness, and of our self-indulgence, the refreshing draughts of divine ichor¹ fall into our parched lips, and we know we are not forgotten of heaven. So he came hunting alone and forlorn, and having lost his companions, he arrived at the house of a poor *shaykh* of the desert, who had little in his place to eat, but who received the king with the hospitality which was his habit, and seating him at his table he said to his wife, "See the little kid that we have, although it is the last one, kill it and prepare it and bring it to our guest, everything that we have." So they put it all before him on the simple [X:9:188] table, and the king ate there with greater joy, with greater gladness, than he had ever known. Wishing to reward that kindness, as he left, he said to his host, "Come to me any time you are in trouble and I will grant you any wish that you make to me. I am at your command; my realm is at your service." So he went back to his home, but remembered that table, that hour; he could not forget it. Then by sad fate, there were a couple of years when the harvest failed, when poverty doubled, poverty struck this son of the desert, who was in reality a son of God, and his wife said to him, "What shall we do, we have nothing to eat," and he replied, "I will now go to the king, I will ask for the fulfilment of

¹ Blood-like fluid.

his promise and he will save us.”

So, getting on the back of his horse, he flew across the desert, seeking the king, seeking salvation, and came upon the wrong side of the pathway just on the day when the king sat there to reward or to kill. The king, knowing nothing but his own obdurate material, animal, physical will, said to him, “Why have you come on this pathway and on this day. You whom I wished to reward with every blessing of my realm, and now I can only give you death?” Ḥanẓalah, kneeling before him in dismay, said, “Only grant me one privilege, then, that I may have a year to arrange my affairs, and I will come back to you a year from today and suffer the penalty that is imposed upon me?” The king said, “I cannot grant you this without a surety; you know that well. I have you now in my hands, and how do I know what will happen if you get out of my hands?” He was accustomed to physical laws. He was accustomed to animal passion. He knew nothing about a spiritual law which over-rides all that. So the man, looking about among the courtiers, asked one and was refused, and then at last appealed to another so powerfully that his soul was quickened, and he said, “I will be surety for him on his return.” So the shaykh rode away, not endowed with great earthly possession, but to prepare for the death which was to be his a year from that time. When that day came, they watched for him and watched for him and he did not come. The king, knowing only the material law of satisfaction and demand, having never heard of anything else, said: “We must slay his substitute, nothing will save him,” but nevertheless waited until sunset was near, and then as the man was brought forth for execution, suddenly a warrior was descried, a horseman, on the horizon, and they waited, and he came nearer and nearer, and finally flung himself at the feet of the king, and the king, lost in astonishment, said to him: “But why are you such a fool, why have you come back to death when you had escaped, when you knew very well that justice would be satisfied by the sacrifice of your substitute.” Then, lifting his head, Ḥanẓalah said to the king, “But I could never have rested with such a conclusion as that. Does not honour hold a man, and is a physical life so precious that one would sacrifice his love of God and his love of his kind for the sake of such a miserable thing as the saving of physical existence? Why I would gladly give my life, I have arranged my affairs and I have no fear of death, it is sweet to me.” The king looked at him with amazement. “You are not pale, you are not trembling, you are facing the executioner, and you are not afraid, how is this? What upholds you?” And he said, “I am the follower of my Lord, I have learned from him the secret of life, the joy of existence; long ago I heard the words of the Lord Christ, and they gave me eternal life. How could I fear when you give me the entrance into that eternal life? Is not this something to rejoice over?”

You know how it is with you in this world. You have gone on in your physi- [X:9:189] cal existence, you have satisfied all your desires, you have sat upon your throne, and you have slain your enemies, then suddenly the word of the Spirit falls into your heart, such a thing as you never experienced before, the word of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit, scales fall from your eyes, at last you know that you are not a physical being, that the loss of your physical life is nothing to you—instantly you stand before yourself, glorious, enfranchised, alive, living eternally, looking back with the eyes of wisdom at the paltry things for which you would have sacrificed that eternity.

And it was so with the king. “Oh,” he said, “why did I not know this before? Why did I slay my friends first, and how, later, could I have built these houses and slain so many others? Oh,” he cried, “tear them down quickly, and you, beloved one, you sit beside me and tell me all the secrets of this truth which has given you such power, which has given you such wisdom, which has brought you such happiness, which has taught you what nothing else can teach, what life actually is.” That was what happened to the king. And Ḥanẓalah sat sweetly beside him in his humility and talked to him; gave him noble writings; the houses were both torn down and the wicked paths were all made clear. Henceforth the king was known as the

blessing and the father of all his people.

Do you think that story belongs to the past? Do you think it lies only in the fourth or fifth century in which its scene is laid, and in Arabia? It is for each one of us, because each one of us has to tear down his houses which he has built with the wrong feeling and each one of us has to take into his heart that wonderful knowledge, that message of the spirit which fills us with joy and makes us indifferent to all the voices of ambition and privilege. It brings to us the meaning of that other lovely thing that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said to us. You know we can never complete the repetition of all these wonderful words that he has said to us pointing the way of the future. He says this little word. "The divine nearness is unlimited both in this world and the next." The divine nearness is so many things, the divine nearness is the inspiring idea falling upon us from heaven, carrying with it its ideal, surrounding us so that we forget ourselves and those who are near to us, and know only the presence of that ideal and the power of that idea which consumes us until we have carried it out completely. The divine nearness is that consciousness of the word of the Spirit which sears us sometimes like a flame, and fills us sometimes like a fragrance, cutting us off again from all the meanness of the ambitions of this world and carrying us on into the mysteries of life that stretch into the other world and bring us a consciousness of God that we have never had before, a realization of His nearness, a knowledge of what the Holy Spirit is and what is the work of the Holy Spirit, so that presently we begin to see it is all that we want.

If I can have the divine nearness, if I can have the Holy Spirit, what do I care as to the texture of my gown, the height of the walls that cover me, my station, or the quality of the food that I eat? Because this divine nearness, this which must pervade the world, this which I begin to know, this which I can do my part in sharing with every one, this is the greatest blessing of existence and this is the foundation of the new world that is to be built out of the ashes of the past, and will construct everywhere again, and again those temples whose principles and gilded tops will catch the rays of the universal sun, so that they will be reflected upon all mankind and all mankind will know here on this earth what it is to live in heaven.

X:9, 20 August 1919 [X:9:184]

Recent tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to American Bahá'ís

Mrs Brooker

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Brooker, Akron, Ohio—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

The letter thou hadst written on 22 January 1919 was received. Praise thou the Lord, that thou hast been ushered into the divine Kingdom as one of the chosen people of God and the light of guidance hath been reflected upon thy pure heart like unto a light which is ignited in a lamp and a candle which bestows light to a gathering; thou hast organized a meeting and hast been engaged in the promulgation of divine teachings.

Rest thou assured that divine confirmations shall reach (thee) and heavenly cohorts shall assure (thee) the victory and that thyself and thy respected husband shall attain unto everlasting life and shall serve the oneness of the world of humanity, and shall bring together other souls under the shade of the pavilion of the Kingdom.

At present engage in service and you will have permission to present yourself.

Convey longing greeting to Mr Russell Brooker and tell him: "Praise the Lord, for He hath flung open to thy face the doors of Solomon's wisdom, and pray God that He may bestow upon thee an everlasting sovereignty, for Solomon's kingship was ephemeral, it passed away and

did not remain forever, while the sovereignty of the love of God is perpetual and endless. I hope that thou mayest sit on this throne and that is firmness and steadfastness in the love of God." [X:9:185]

As to thy new business, the former trade ____ is the cause of thy comfort. The new business will engage greatly your mind. It is advisable for thee to engage in the previous trade and devote the rest of your time to spiritual matters.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 30 March 1919, house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Dr Olive G. Couch

To her honour, Dr Olive G. Couch, New York City—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou attracted to the Kingdom of God!

Thy letter dated 31 January 1919 was received. Although I am bodily far and remote, yet in spirit I associate and am intimate with you. Do not be grieved. Divine beatitude is thy possession and divine glad-tidings abide with thee. This bliss and gladness is not followed by grief and this illumination leaves no room for darkness.

At present engage in service to the Kingdom of God. Whenever the ways will be opened and the means will be fully provided by which thou mayest travel in perfect comfort and ease then thou hast permission to present thyself.

Convey my greeting to Mrs Beede. It was a long time that the (holy) leaves were awaiting the receipt of her news, but so far no letter has been received from her. But now that you have informed us of her news the whole family has been made grateful.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 30 March 1919, house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

Will Levington Comfort

To his honour Will Levington Comfort, through Shahnáz Waite—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou son of the Kingdom!

Praise be to God, that like unto a torch thou hast been ignited, and like unto a star thou hast shone. This light is the light of reality, which is divine guidance, and not a material one. It is a heavenly lamp and not an earthly one which, although it reveals objects, yet it does not discover and comprehend them, i.e., it is unaware of the world of things, and simply reveals them to the eye; while on the other hand, the light of Truth both reveals and discovers objects and does moreover comprehend them.

Praise be to God that thou hast attained to such a light.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 15 March 1919. Home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

X:10, 8 September 1919 [X:10:195]

Declares zionists must work with other races

Leader of Bahai-ism believes neutral government like British is best for Palestine at present—
Says His Father advocated League half century ago.

Marion Weinstein

From the *Globe and Commercial Advertiser*, New York, 17 July 1919.

While the league of nations is hailed or attacked here as a Wilsonian project, out in Palestine is a religious leader who claims it first saw the light in the writings of his father, fifty years ago. He is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son and successor of Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the modern cult, Bahai-ism.¹

'Abdu'l-Bahá, or 'Abbás Afandí, as he is widely known in the Near East, counts hundreds of followers in America. He made a tour here in 1912, preaching his doctrine of universal love in churches and halls from coast to coast. Born in Persia in 1844, he went to 'Akká as a young man. He was imprisoned by the Turks for his teachings, but was released in 1908, the year of the new Ottoman constitution.

Interested in World League

I met 'Abdu'l-Bahá lately in his home in Haifa. He has many friends among the British, including General Ronald Storrs, military governor of Jerusalem, and it was a British officer who took me to him. His influence is considerable in the Holy Land, but it is almost impossible to reduce it to actual numbers. I went to him curious as to his views of the future of Palestine, but he seemed more eager to talk of a matter of world importance—the league of nations.

He spoke in Persian, a well trained secretary interpreting his low, soft words in good English. Through the open windows of the large sunny salon of his modern house came the trill of songbirds in the Afandí's lovely garden. In white galabieh² and turban, he fitted into the summery scene, his voice falling on the silence like a woodland echo. An ancient, venerable patriarch he seemed, with his snowy beard, a kindly patriarch, but with little of the Biblical fire.

Tells of Father's Plan

"Fifty years ago," he began, "Bahá'u'lláh wrote that there must be a league of nations to establish universal peace. He worked his idea out on practical lines, too. He said every nation must choose representatives, approved by the senate, the cabinet and the ruler of the country. They were to meet to found a universal peace congress to be forever a world court of arbitration.

"Bahá'u'lláh saw even then, half a [X:10:196] century ago, that unless universal peace is established, the world of humanity will continue in a state of barbarism. For it is a world of struggle for existence, of sensualism, a world of nature. Only when universal peace comes to stay will it become a world of spirit.

"I went to America myself on a mission of universal peace. I proclaimed seven years ago that Europe was an arsenal that needed but a spark to turn it into a volcano. The world leaders, I urged, must prevent this catastrophe. But they did not heed me. Now that they themselves are working for universal peace and we are soon to have a league of nations, there is no need for me to go to America again.

¹ Bahá'ís understand the Word of God again was "made flesh and dwelt among us" in the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh. Miss Weinstein, not being acquainted with this fact, looks upon the Bahá'í Movement as a cult or "ism".—*The Editors*. Bahá'íya, Baha'ism, the doctrine of practice of the Bahá'ís.

² Ar. Jillábíyya, Pers. gúllábíyya, "coat".

Message to His Followers

“Tell my followers,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued, “that I am always asking heavenly help for them, and that my deepest desire is that they shall be the source of the enlightenment of humanity and the unity of all the races of mankind. The point of distinction among men, let them remember, is their deeds, not their beliefs or words. I charge my disciples, too, at this time to show love even toward their ‘enemies’. They have no ‘enemies’. The enemy of man is himself.”

His religion, this leader explained, includes the highest principles of its forerunners, with this addition—it fuses them all in the pursuit of one goal, the unity of mankind in universal love. Unlike its Muslim neighbour, it teaches the equality of man and woman. “The world of humanity has two wings,” is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s view, “man and woman. If one wing is weak then the bird cannot fly.”

He looks to the rebirth of religion as a result of the war. The Bolshevist movement, he believes, will prove an admonition to the religious world and send mankind back to the fold, convinced that religion is the sole source of order and peace. Bolshevism was inevitable, because religion was on the daily decline in Europe, particularly in Russia.

Has Hope for Palestine

For Palestine ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has the brightest hopes. “It will develop day by day now,” he declared, “in industry, in commerce, in agriculture, under an enlightened government. Up to the present the people of this country were like lost sheep. Now they have found their shepherd.

“If the Zionists will mingle with the other races and live in unity with them, they will succeed. If not, they will meet certain resistance. For the present I think a neutral government like the British administration would be best. A Jewish government might come later.

“There is too much talk today of what the Zionists are going to do here. There is no need of it. Let them come and do more and say less.

“The Zionists should make it clear that their principle is to elevate all the people here and to develop the country for all its inhabitants. This land must be developed, according to the promises of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zachariah. If they come in such a spirit they will not fail.

Must Be Open to All

“They must not work to separate the Jews from the other Palestinians. Schools should be open to all nationalities here, business companies, etc. The Turks went down because they attempted to rule over foreign races. The British are always in power because they keep fair and promote harmony.

“This is the path to universal peace here as elsewhere—unity. We must prevent strife by all means. For 6,000 years man has been at war. It is time to try peace a little while. If it fails, we can always go back to war.”

X:10, 8 September 1919 [X:10:197]

Unveiling of the Divine plan for the western states

Fourth talk by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab at the Eleventh Annual *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* Convention and Bahá’í Congress held in McAlpin Hotel, New York City, 26–30 April 1919.

... [X:10:200]

...

When the original of the above Tablet¹ was corrected the next morning by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he handed it to me and slapped me hard on both my cheeks, laughing heartily, saying: "It is very good. It sticks. This was thy wage for today in writing over that Tablet. Now let us go and take a walk in the streets of 'Akká." As he walked along the narrow lanes, he turned his face to me and said:

"Speak!" The contents of the Western Tablet being fresh in my mind, I related to the Master how in 1848 gold was discovered in the stream gravels of California, and how when the news was spread, tens of thousands of persons in the Eastern States left farms, factories and homes in a mad rush for the gold fields, and how many thousands died on the way before reaching their goal.

The Beloved thought for awhile, and then said: "Consider how men, in order to gain wealth and honour, threw themselves in the midst of all kinds of danger! How cheerfully they accepted all these extraordinary hardships, left homes and factories and travelled thousands of miles through deserts and over mountains, in order to reach the gold mines! But now in this day the mines of the Kingdom of Abhá are being discovered, and the precious jewels of the spirit are exposed. These mines are inexhaustible. [X:10:201] The more they dig the greater will be the output of the ideal precious gems, silver, gold and diamonds. The believers of the Western States must find their way from these earthly mines to the spiritual mines. They must realize how their forefathers, in order to obtain gold, underwent the most incredible adversities, exposed their lives to danger and accepted all the difficulties with a firm resolution. The friends also, in order to guide the souls, to promote the Word of God, to discover the unseen treasures of the Kingdom, and to prospect the invisible mines of the Realm of Might, must be willing to undergo any difficulty, so that they may achieve greater results and enrich the world with the boundless wealth of Truth.

"To the friends of the Western States, the self-sacrifice of the old pioneers and the patient gold-diggers must serve as a great example of perseverance. The mines of the Kingdom of Abhá and their precious jewels are the praiseworthy attributes and characteristics. These divine perfections are hidden from the sight of men. The believers of God must by day and by night strive in their exposition;—so that their lustre and brilliancy may increase. The material mines make man independent during his earthly life, but the mines of the Kingdom of Abhá will enrich him throughout all eternity, and deliver him from crudeness, ignorance and poverty. The Western friends must become labourers in these great, spiritual mines, and fill the markets of the world with the gold and silver of the Kingdom of righteousness. For every head they must make a heavenly crown of self-sacrifice; for every neck a necklace studded with the scintillating jewels of humility; for every ear an earring of truth and obedience; for every hand a bracelet of universal service, and for every finger a ring of sympathy;—so that the wonders and beauty of the world of the Kingdom may encircle the globe."

Another day I spoke to the Master, while he was coming out from the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh, about the system of irrigation in Southern California, and how the waste and barren deserts are turned into a paradise of flowers, fruit trees and sweet homes. He quickly turned to me and said: "When thou travellest in those parts, tell the people: The Heavenly Irrigator appeared 70 years ago in Persia and taught His disciples how to flood the dry fields of the hearts. Through His knowledge and inspiration they were enabled to transform the waste deserts of the minds and souls into the luxuriant gardens in which the rivers of light are flowing from the inaccessible mountains of God.

"Now, O ye friends of the Western States, just as your Government is spending extraordinary effort and money in the matter of irrigation, building dams on the tablelands to

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 83–89.

save the winter rain, so that the valleys, the plains and the orchards may be flooded during the summer season,—you must also exert yourselves in the irrigation of the hearts of men. Learn ye perseverance from your universal teacher, Bahá'u'lláh, who was not disheartened by any obstacle from irrigating the hearts of humanity. Kings and nations arose against Him and banished Him to distant lands and countries. Nevertheless, whenever He entered a new place, fearlessly He occupied His time in the spiritual irrigation and the sowing of the seeds of knowledge and wisdom in the prepared fields of spirit. Through His tender care the wildernesses were changed into rose gardens, the sad hearts were made happy, the sleepy ones were awakened, and the weak ones strengthened. Irrigation! This is the real and permanent irrigation of the Lord! One drop from this water will allay the thirst of all mankind, suffering the fields of all hearts to become green and luxuriant throughout all eternity. If the ground of the spirit is flooded with this pure water, it will not be followed by any drought; its [X:10:202] flowers will never fade and its freshness never pass away. I hope that the Western friends may become the spiritual irrigators of the Kingdom, allay the thirst of the thirsty ones and let the waters of divine knowledge, the ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, flood the world of humanity.”

Many days later, while I was following him through his garden in Haifa, he again asked me to speak. I talked about the wonderful natural scenes in the Western States. I dwelt on the hot geysers of Yellowstone Park, the wonderful waterfalls of the Yosemite Valley and the strangely formed cliffs of the Grand Canyons of Colorado. I spoke about the wooded valleys, the snow-capped mountains, the wonderful bursting springs, the shimmering lakes, the granite peaks, and the giant trees. The Master always made a big capital about my love for America, and laughed at my enthusiasm in half-earnest, half- [X:10:203] joking manner. Then he said: “Why didst thou not tell me about these wonderful things when we were travelling in America? Now that we are living so far away, thou comest to me with such fairy tales, praising America to such an extent as though God has not created another country in the world!” Then he became serious, and said: “All these majestic scenes of nature, in reality, prove the greatness of the Creator and the antiquity of the world. This globe is indeed millions of years old, and its Creator has had no beginning and will have no ending. He has been, is and will be the Alpha and Omega. A creator presupposes creatures, just as light presupposes the existence of the sun.

“Now just as these wonderful scenes of the world of nature are witnessed in all the Western States, I hope the rare signs and traces of the Kingdom of Abhá may also become incarnated and personified; such souls may appear from these States who will be considered the wonders of the age and the geniuses of the time; from their services infinite results may become manifest in the world of existence; their words be penetrative, the trees of their lives fruitful, each one a flag of the victory of the Cause of God and a column of light to guide the wanderers to the religion of God. Then the nether world will attract and in turn reflect the virtues of the world of the Kingdom. Within the short space of our lives or the lives of generations, very little changes will come over these natural scenes and no practical results are witnessed from their mineral lives. But the life and teachings of a single human wonder transforms the whole world. Columbus was a genius in his time. Consider what world-encircling results appeared from his voyage of discovery! Copernicus, Kepler, Laplace and Newton were all geniuses, and their contributions to the sciences have made them benefactors of humanity? The inventors and discoverers of telegraphy, telephony, electricity, wireless, etc., have all, through their distinguished labours and discoveries made man a monarch over the laws of nature, broadened his vision and freed him from the lower, miserable life of the savage, ever fighting with the beasts of the jungle in order to satisfy his bare wants. This is, of course, in the material world. But if we concentrate our attention on the spiritual world and the rich results issuing therefrom, we observe that through the

teachings of Christ and the self-sacrifice of His disciples, Europe and America were adorned with the bright jewels of divine civilization, ferocious characters were refined and the love of humanity spread.

“In a similar manner in the Bahá’í Cause, there must appear extraordinary spiritual geniuses, wonders of the Kingdom of God, souls who in knowledge, sciences, sociability, tenderness, loving-kindness, universality, joyfulness, may be considered unique and peerless. Should such heavenly beings appear in the Western States, the power and the creative energy of the Kingdom of Abhá will become manifest and apparent; souls who have discovered their ways to the mines of the Kingdom; souls who are the irrigators of the grounds of the hearts of humanity; souls who are the wonders of the realm of Truth. Then and not until then will the spiritual creation of the Almighty become perfected in those States; the miracles of the transforming power of the Spirit embodied, the mysteries of the Holy Books be revealed and the golden age of peace and brotherhood be established.”

We all know that the Western States are thinly settled; that the population of these eleven states is only about seven million, while that of the North-eastern and Southern States together is over fifty million. Still, everyone realizes that the West is the seat of a mighty, virile civilization, that the possibilities of its development are unlimited under the wonderful promises of the Centre of the Covenant of God regarding the future of that country.

X:11, 27 September 1919 [X:11:211]

The oneness of the world of humanity

Address by Urbain Ledoux delivered at the Fifth Session of the Bahá’í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Monday evening, 28 April 1919.

God has given me the power of speaking to many people. It is rightly said that one may present to you the prelude of the organ, but the organ itself has been destined to chant the praise of One whose glory would extend to all parts of the universe, and that part of the universe that it took the longest to reach was the universe within. And as ‘Alí has so beautifully and so inspiringly said, “Why worriest thou when in thee is being unfolded the universe?”

I travelled far and wide—as a pioneer I came from New France (Canada)—to all parts of the world of men and the world of earth, seeking, seeking ever seeking, for the glory of God expressed in justice and in loving service. In vain did I seek, for it was not to be found. Justice had fled from earth and loving service was expressed in inaction. And as a sunken trunk of a tree was I drifting upon the ocean of life, sinking, sinking and sinking continually into the condition manifest in certain periods of history—a dead primeval humanity. Justice, loving service, so expressive of the oneness of the world of humanity, was not there shining forth. ...

Like a discoverer had I gone forth, possibly like Cartier, when he left St. Mahlo, to discover the new France. Like a child had he gone forth in a new world, to discover a new humanity. But the voyage was long, very long indeed, for what the child was seeking was the oneness of humanity within. There were two personalities struggling with each other, the material and the spiritual. And the material had as a motto, “Go there in the struggle of life, in the strenuous life of America; that nothing was impossible to him who willed.” With that he had gone forth in material conquest, and for a certain time was spoiled that note so beautifully brought by the love of a mother, whose human tender feelings were great and whose oneness of love centred upon an only boy for whom she had waited ten years. Being absolutely material in his ambition he became part of that world of materiality that today is struggling against the true realities of life, and that we find manifested in these divisions of races, in these divisions of nations, and in these divisions of caste.

The oneness of the world of humanity can be found first of all in the conquest of the self

within you! Selfishness, pride, vain-glory, social distinction, intellectual superiority, material acquirement. If you are able to sever yourself from these slaveries of pride, of selfishness, of greed, of vain-glory and of distinction of caste classifications, you will have the beginning of the assurance of oneness within yourself. It is the first and greatest struggle. [X:11:212]

Then, if you are able to realize that there are neither Brahmans nor Pariahs in the world, and that there cannot be the distinction of classes, there cannot be any class struggle because of the fact that you shall reach up to the station of the poor, then you shall attain to the oneness of the world of humanity. But you can attain to that distinction only if you have conquered within yourself that other self which rebels against oneness; that other animated by pride, animated by selfishness and animated by greed, which divides this world today, not principally in that of an Asia, in that of a Europe, in that of an old or that of a new world; but divided into two great struggling classes of those who possess materiality and those who do not, those who possess spirituality and those who do not. These are the two great classes today, yet our eyes are continually cast upon regions, divisions geographical, racial, of nations and colours, and so forth, notwithstanding the fact that the barrier is greater in that of possession than that of non-possession, of materiality than of spirituality.

If you have conquered your materiality, then you can go forth and serve Almighty God in a manifestation of oneness with those who need to share your bounty, or rather God's bounty—for what are we but the servants of God upon earth to deliver what God has given—and yet we keep, we keep, we keep, and we rarely give but to ourselves and to those we call dear to us. As I speak to you tonight, how many homes in this city, how many homes in this state, how many homes in the world, are suffering while we in this great city are in the midst of luxury, where people are spending, spending thousands and thousands and millions of dollars in festivities of all kinds. Tonight two thousand men are assembled in the Bowery Mission, and there is a tax of one cent to each ticket they shall receive and most of them have not got that penny to give; and we are the children of God here on the earth to deliver God's bounty; and yet thousands are here who suffer continually for the lack of the necessary things to enable them to exist. Oneness calls for your sharing all that you have with them. That is the first duty. The first duty is to share with your brother. Not simply to share what you have of money, not simply to share what you may have of garments, not simply to share what you may have of bread, but to share of yourself, of your companionship.

You say they have not got the education; they have not got the manners. Oh, they have not got it, because you do not mix up with them! You have not given them that, and God has given you talent, God has given you the possibility of elevating their life into a higher moral world, into a higher spiritual world, and you are here without putting into practice that spirit of oneness which brings the Pariah and the Brahman to each other.

This is the message of the Bahá'í Revelation. It is the grand message of the Bahá'í Revelation that 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'u'lláh have both so beautifully practised in this world; they have shared their bounty not simply in principle but in person. They have nothing but of themselves to give in person and they gave all of that. They had only the period of life in themselves to give to humanity and they gave all of that, and the greatest message which was brought by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to England and to the United States was brought in the Missions of the poor, in action, the oneness of the world of humanity. We see it is bringing together people of different colour, in bringing together the Chinese and the Americans, in bringing together the South and the North. O my friends, it is in bringing together the child of the Ghetto and you, it is bringing together the Bowery man and you; it is to bring together the man who possesses and the other who possesses nothing. That is the grand work before us, brothers and sisters in the Bahá'í teaching. It is! It is! It is here for you to do and you have not far to travel. You have it in your midst. You have it in your midst. You have it in your midst!

And then that oneness of the world of humanity calls for you to be very tolerant of those who hold a different vision than you do as regards the economic and social questions that are agitating the world today. Christ said, "Call no one fool." Be careful of the expression that you may use whenever you designate any one that is struggling towards an equalization of the worldly and spiritual opportunities. Do not simply try to dominate them through your superior intellectuality. Rather go for a certain time and live the life with them. Share their tribulations. Share their sorrows. Share their trials and bring some joy into their life. Sometimes you may realize it is difficult for you to bring laughter upon the lips and that it may take time, if you come with silks and satins and pearls, to convince them that you are sharing with them all that you have of self and position, and you are one with them, that you are with them in a spirit of unity. Because they have eyes that see and penetrate, for they have gone through sorrows, they have gone through tribulations, and their eyes do not see simply the outward things, but they see the inward. And men, in order to be one with them, you must be in the spirit of severance, you must be the servant of the servants of God, and only in that way may you be at one with humanity by being the servant of the servants of God, and that calls for severance.

And to be at one with the world of humanity you must then, after having given all of yourself to Almighty God and to His servants upon the earth, soar forth, delivering your material self to humanity, soar forth in the spirit of Almighty God, vibrating in harmony with His divine flow, and there, reaching out to Him, find that inspiration that will guide you on without thought of boundary, of social distinction, of racial distinction, of national distinction, unto the Kingdom of God which has been prepared for all of His children and which today is being illumined by the divine Tablets that are being revealed, being presented, to us.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

X:11, 27 September 1919 [X:11:213]

The seed sowing of the ages

Address by Mrs May Maxwell of Montreal, Canada, delivered at the Fifth Session of the Bahá'í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Monday evening, 28 April 1919.

Beloved friends: As we have gathered here day by day and night by night in this room in the heart of this great city, we must have all realized that we are in the presence of an extraordinary event, that as the torrents of living water have poured from these great creative Tablets over our souls, we have been submerged in a realm of light and beauty and love which leaves us in great amazement. It may be that the most difficult thing for the soul is to become conscious of the greatness of events with which we are contemporaneous. We look back over the history of the human race and we see how many thousand years ago God made covenant with mankind through Abraham, and in that covenant He promised that the day would come upon this dark world when the seed of Abraham should be as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea. When Moses gave the great Tablets to the Jewish people and they gathered on either side of the mountain and took an oath of allegiance and devotion and love and loyalty to that great covenant of steadfastness and servitude [X:11:214] to the people, another great epoch in the seed-sowing was unfolded.

When we look back upon such periods in the world we realize their greatness. We understand their sublime significance, and yet we here gathered are living in a period so infinitely greater and more wonderful that we are dazzled by the brightness of the light so that we cannot see. Those Jewish people fulfilled their covenant and were led away and found the Promised Land of God and then, after a period of time came the Beloved One, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and gathered around him a little group of souls and illumined them, educated them, taught them and prepared them for the great seed-sowing of that Christian era. After their Beloved One had ascended to the supreme realm and they were left alone on

earth without him they went to the mountain top and renounced all that they had in this world. They gave up their homes, their families, their possessions, all that was near and dear to them on this earthly plane of existence, and they dedicated themselves utterly to the servitude of Jesus Christ, to their Lord and their Master, to go forth and to be the torch bearers to the world of humanity. They were the seed of God in the world. Their seed and their children's seed spread and enveloped the world until today the great Christian dispensation that was sown by these early disciples has enveloped a great part of the world.

In what a day are we living, in what an age are we? We have the privilege today that those disciples had, but not after the departure of our Beloved, but while he is still in our midst. He is calling us to ascend to the mountain top, to sacrifice and renunciation, to give up all in life, because Bahá'u'lláh has said in this day let no one come to me unless he have his head in his hand. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is calling us again; he has for twenty years been calling this nation. We have been partially asleep and partially deaf and partially blind, but now we are awakened and because in his infinite bounty he has created a new spiritual springtime. God through the great laws of evolution has permitted the world to be harrowed and furrowed by war and sorrow and calamity until it is prepared; the soil of human hearts is prepared for the eternal seed of life, the seed of the love of the adored Beloved One. And now 'Abdu'l-Bahá has sent this seed to us, the potentiality, the mystery of a seed which shall unfold throughout ages, and cycles and generations to millions and millions of human beings.

What is that seed to be? Are we not ourselves that seed? Must we not be of that pure essence that wherever we go and become implanted in that place even temporarily we impart the life of God, the life of the Covenant to the people of the world? This is the seed of life. See the whirlwind that the world has reaped in this day because they have sown their tares! Mankind has sown in selfishness, darkness, ignorance and greed, and now today it is reaping this terrible whirlwind of the flood of infinite calamities; but now 'Abdu'l-Bahá is calling us to sow the seed of truth, of love, of light, of justice, of righteousness, and eternal unfathomable peace, that shall envelop all mankind for hundreds of thousands of years.

We must all realize that never from the beginning of the world until now was such a moment offered to any people. We are truly standing in that "eleventh hour" promised from the foundation of the world. You remember in the Book of Daniel it says that at the time of the end, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they who turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And this is that hour of consummation in which we are gathered. Everyone of us is blest beyond all the inhabitants of the earth because we have the privilege to be in the presence of the most sublime creative Word of God [X:11:215] which is being poured upon our hearts and innate reality to create in us a new capacity and to send us forth to give life to the people of the world.

Jesus said, "Work while it is day, for soon the night cometh, when the way to the vineyard will not be so easy to find." And 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Now while the Sun of Truth is still shining and the Son of God's Covenant is manifest, go forth and work, for soon the night time cometh and the way to the vineyard will not be so easy to find." Many years ago in 'Akká our Beloved Master said to us, "The time will come when the people will come here to 'Akká as you are coming now and they will weep and lament because they have not seen one of these days." He said, "They will tear down these gates and build gates of the most beautiful marble in the world and then the ages will roll by and new generations will come and they will bring bricks of solid gold and silver and build the gates." And then in the garden of Riḍván which sheltered Bahá'u'lláh during his lifetime, he said, "You are privileged to enter this garden to drink of this Fountain of Light, to be in this presence during his appearance in the Temple of Man on this earth. There is no period that can be compared in this world to living in the day contemporaneous with the appearance of that Beloved One on the earth. It is different from any other time. It is life, it is joy, it is ecstasy, it is springtime, because his feet are treading this

earth!”

We can hear his voice. We know that he is still guarding, and protecting and sheltering us in the midst of this dark world and never shall we have such a privilege to serve as while he is in our midst. There must be a great significance in his saying, “Soon the night time shall come and the way to the vineyard will not be so easy to find.” What is this great mystery? Why is he calling on us now to go forth and sow the seed at this time, now? Because the ground is prepared, the way is made plain, the hearts are hungering and thirsting in every corner of the world, and this great capacity is created; also because the seed only germinates in the heat rays of the Sun of Truth. There is no period of love like the period when the Beloved is in our midst. He is the Beloved and we are his lovers, and while he is on the earth the heat of his love, the fire of his beauty, that love burning in the hearts of his servants is what will cause the seed which is sown to grow and germinate and expand and bring forth a great harvest. That is why he said one word spoken during the lifetime of the Beloved is worth volumes hereafter. One word spoken during this day while he is on the earth is worth volumes hereafter, and he has said, “One deed done in this day is worth the greatest deeds in the future generations.”

He told us that even the words of the thieves upon the cross are known and remembered throughout all ages and throughout all nations and people because they were spoken in the lifetime of Christ while he was on the earth. They were spoken in the full blazing light of the Sun. Now we have this privilege to go forth and in the light of the Sun of Truth and the Sun of Reality and sow these seeds, and they will produce a wonderful harvest because the rays of his love are pouring upon the world. How can we do less than this for him? We have no other way of expressing our love for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This is the proof of love. It is this love that has drawn us together. He is the great magnet that has drawn us together from all parts and brought us here until we are fused and united in a love that makes us seem an absolute body, a temple. We are one people, one gathering, one congregation of the Lord in this day and he is pouring His Spirit upon us for a great purpose.

We must not leave these gatherings even for a moment, and we must not [X:11:222] leave them when the final Tablet is given to us and we have heard its wonderful message. Then we must stay together, all whose hearts are touched and moved by this great force, we must come together and work to carry out this plan. We must grasp this wonderful opportunity and realize that the like of this has never been given to any people in any time from the beginning of the world until today.

Today, heralding the Kingdom is the magnetic force of the world of humanity because there is great richness in the souls. The divine teachings are the spirit of this age; they are the sun of this age. Every soul must endeavour in order that the veils may be torn away from the eyes, then instantly they see the Sun, and the heart and the eyes become illumined thereby.

Now, through the assistance and favour of God, this power of guidance and this merciful bestowal are found in thee! Therefore, with the utmost power go forward so that to the mouldering bones thou carriest life, to the blind eyes thou givest sight, quickening souls that are depressed—for every road will in the end become crooked except the road of the Kingdom, which day by day becomes straighter!

Unquestionably the heavenly melody cannot be measured by the melody of the earth, and the artificial lamps cannot be measured by the heavenly Sun. Therefore, one must strive for whatsoever is eternal and everlasting in order day by day to become more illumined, day by day to grow stronger and day by day find new life.

X:11, 27 September 1919 [X:11:216]

Diary letters of Shoghi Rabbani

Written to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Haifa, Palestine.
8 February 1919

Dear Ahmad,

The Tablet revealed yesterday to one of the tried and firm American friends disclosed general and important questions related to the future development of the Cause. I quote some of its leading passages:

“O thou firm in the Covenant! Your letter dated 23 November 1918 was received. Its contents indicated your being engaged in the service of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, that this universal edifice may be erected. Indeed, you spare no effort in this respect and I entertain the hope that this endeavour may grow day by day. Deeds are like unto trees; for to plant a shrub is no difficult matter while the care necessary for its growth and yielding fruit is hard and difficult. So far, effort was expended to lay the foundation of the Temple, but now its erection and completion is a difficult matter and my hope is that the friends of God may be therein assisted.

“The second question which is of vital importance is that the friends of God must strive with heart and soul to promulgate heavenly teachings and spread far and wide the light of the Kingdom. For the world of humanity has acquired, as a result of this great carnage, a great capacity for the propagation of universal peace. Ears are longing to hearken to the call of the oneness of the world of humanity, to universal reconciliation and to the rejection of ignorant prejudices.

“In fine, if all the friends of God engage in the promulgation of heavenly teachings, the establishment of universal peace shall be a foregone conclusion. [X:11:217]

“Praise be to God, whatever has been explicitly recorded in the divine Tablets has been fully realized and all the warnings and appeals of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the temples and gatherings of America, have come to pass. At present, we hope that all will engage in the service of the Kingdom and will promulgate whatever is the will of God.

“The teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh are today the spirit of life, the means of peace and reconciliation, the cause of amity and union, and the promoter of the oneness of mankind. One should engage in such a service.”

This afternoon our Indian officer, Captain Áqá Khán of Lahore, Punjab, who is a devout Moslem, keenly interested in the role that the Cause will play in the future—a traveller and observer in different regions of the West as well as the Far East, a tourist to Spain and a resident for many years in Peking, Tientsin, Tokyo and Yokohama, a scholar of the religious movements in the East—called on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá carrying with him the article of ‘Abbás ‘Alí of Rangoon, published in one of the local Indian papers of Punjab, which he had translated for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá into English. The article was a lucid and at the same time a striking account of the teachings of the Cause, of the early life, the declaration, the persecution and the martyrdom of the Báb and the rise of Bahá’u’lláh, his early trials, his exile, his declaration and his amazing power displayed in the distant fortress of ‘Akká.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá entertained for over an hour this diligent scholar, told him that under chains and fetters Bahá’u’lláh propagated his teachings, the mutual arrangements of the rulers of Turkey and of Persia to quench his Light and the utter failure of their plans and intentions. Áqá Khán was amazed to know that the remains of the Báb, who was shot in Tabríz, were transferred to this Holy Mount on the slopes of which, and not far distant, his tent was pitched and his camp was established. He resolutely decided to visit the shrine and if possible to visit the Holy Tomb in ‘Akká. When he left he told ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that next time he would bring with him some of his Indian friends and colleagues who expressed their wish to meet the Beloved.

9 February 1919.

Dear Ahmad,

This morning some Tablets were revealed to the friends in the United States of America. One of them, a devout and active soul has written these words to 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "This humble maid-servant especially wishes to ask thee at this time, concerning the publication of two indexes which she has prepared, one to the first eight volumes of the *Star of the West*, the other to the three volumes of the *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*. If this work does not interfere with carrying out thy instruction already given, this maid-servant would like very much to go on and work on a complete and scholarly index of all the writings. This would take years of time and the efforts of many individuals, but this maid-servant might be able to make a good beginning and she has been trained in science, mathematics and systematic arrangement, and has a steadfast longing to be engaged in this work."

These are the efforts expended, such are the views that are being planned and so untiring are the services rendered. Although the answer to the supplication has not yet been revealed, yet one thing is sure, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá will most deeply appreciate such services and will undoubtedly breathe into their life a new breath that will sustain them throughout their activities.

This afternoon being bright and warm, 'Abdu'l-Bahá ascended the mountain and visited the Tomb of the Báb where the friends had assembled for their weekly Sunday gatherings, where he inquired regarding the spiritual activities of the S.P.C. students (Beirut) to which one of [X:11:218] its members, Mr Bahádur, who is still here for a short visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, replied that their weekly Sunday gatherings are uninterruptedly held within the college grounds. This leading to a certain statement made by the president of the college with respect to his Sunday morning Bible classes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to the relative standing of the Holy Books and their adaptation to their respective environment. The Old Testament, he said, is largely historical and partly states various commands and regulations. The Gospel, on the other hand, in addition to these two subjects, reveals a whole set of admonition and exhortation, of counsels and of advice. The Qur'án embodies all three of these and in addition reveals abstruse, scientific and mathematical problems. He then spoke in detail of the variety of the branches in mathematics and astronomy as expounded by the Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman and Persian leaders and scientists. He then referred to the rise of Ptolemy, his compilation of the different theories of past mathematicians, his school in Alexandria, his book being the essence and gist of previous laws and theories and his founding the well-known Ptolemaic system. He told us how all astronomers and philosophers believed in his system and although Pythagoras and Plato revealed contradictory facts, that the Ptolemaic system was considered the immutable and correct law. Then arose that illiterate, young, inexperienced Arab leader in the Arabian peninsula, who revealed his Qur'án wherein the following words are incorporated: "The sun moves in a fixed place and each star moves in its own heaven." These bodily challenged the whole Ptolemaic system and shook it down to its very foundation. However, it was not until the 15th century, when the famous Copernicus discarded the baseless interpretation of the 'ulamás in their explanation of the two above-mentioned verses, overthrew the Ptolemaic system and asserted the truth of the statement of the illiterate Arab youth, who declared the movement of the earth and the immobility of the sun. The whole scientific world arose to the consciousness of this truth. What clearer and stronger proof may be stated for the establishment of the truth of the Islamic Revelation? The Qur'án itself abounds with similar conclusive evidences.

10 February 1919.

Dear Ahmad,

The misery and need of the civil population of Haifa, at the time of British and allied occupation, has necessitated the formation of a Haifa Relief Fund composed of the heads of the different religious denominations and acting under the surveillance of the British authorities with a fund collected and deposited at the newly established branch of the Anglo-Egyptian Bank. The first meeting which was held at the Governorate where from the bishop to the Jewish rabbi, the religious heads had all assembled and where 'Abdu'l-Bahá, through the announcement made by the military governor, contributed the noble donation of £50 and inserted his name at the head of the list of contributors, which will stand as a token of his generosity, his approval of the means undertaken to alleviate the burden of the poor and his setting the noble example to the rich and leaders of the city. This morning again I was sent to the Governor and offered him a further sum for the relief of the poor. Colonel Stanton was indeed touched and, moved by this further donation, hastened to write these lines to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in token of his admiration and thanks, as follows:

"Your Eminence: I have today received from your grandson the sum of £50 as a further donation from yourself to the Haifa Relief Fund. Please accept on behalf of the committee of management, my very sincerest and most grateful thanks for this fur- [X:11:219] ther proof of your well-known generosity and care of the poor, who will forever bless you for your liberality on their behalf. Please accept the sincerest assurance of my deepest regards and respect. (Signed) G. A. Stanton, Colonel, Military Governor."

This undoubtedly will be a stimulus for the indifferent rich men of the city who will be urged to put their hands very deeply in their pockets in order to allay the suffering and distress which in spite of all these activities is still prevalent.

The supplications that have come today abound with refreshing news. A letter from Bombay discloses the rise of newly attracted friends, particularly Yúsuf 'Alá'u'd-Dawlih who is one of the well known Khagetes¹ of India. He, with Mírzá Maḥmúd Zarqání, is yearning to visit the Beloved and will be delighted to hear of the granting of their permission. From Lausanne, Switzerland, Mr Riḍá Salím writes that the friends of God including Mr Schwarz, Miss Knobloch, Mr Herrigel are all, large and small, old and young, healthy and sick, at home and abroad, glad of the events that have recently transpired; they are all one soul in different bodies, united, agreed, serving and aiming to serve the oneness of the world of humanity. From southern Palestine, a letter from Shaykh Amín Ḥalabí who had drunk plentifully from the fountain of inspiration during his last stay with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, indicates the attraction of two souls, deeply interested, eagerly seeking and wide awake to the new spirit of the present age. His stay in Jerusalem on his way to Beersheba had yielded good fruits and of this he was proud and for it grateful. A detailed supplication from Juanita Storch, exquisitely written, reveals the sentiments of love and of thankfulness. I have already quoted [a] few of her characteristic lines and I cannot prevent myself from sharing with you some of its charming passages:

"How quickly these days of whirling activities are passing. History is being made in the twinkling of an eye. How storm-tortured the world is. When will it recover from the storms of hatred of mental crashing, of heart-torn agonies? Yea, and still the great Spirit hovers over us, daily waiting, patiently holding out its loving arms silently growing more and more passionate in its desire for the love of its people.

"An angel of hope walks through the Riḍván of Abhá. Upon her shoulder is poised a vase filled with the rose petals of love and upheld by the right hand of wisdom. She walks through the olive groves of peace and by the beds of the sweet hyacinths of knowledge and over to the fountain of mercy. Here she kneels on the steps and sets her vase under the crystal spray of

¹ The political entity ruled by a Khán is a Khánát or Khanate (Khaganate).

the fountain. The petals in the vase are soon covered with the water. Then this angel of hope sets this rose jar out in the brilliant Sun of Truth and leaves it there. After many days the essence of the roses gathers as oil on the surface of the water. O precious attar of the fragrances of God!

“A picture of the Master comes to me as he holds his rosary in hand outstretched to all who heed to this heavenly call. A picture of the Master comes to me as he holds his rosary, thinking of friends both far and near as pearls of his heart. A picture of the Master comes to me as he holds his rosary, chanting in a prayerful hour, ‘Glory to the Most Great Power.’”

To this profusion of genuine sentiments and to this authoress of tender feelings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá not only spends the days in revealing his words of appreciation, but even until late at night when everything is hushed in silence and every tongue is at rest, then does the wakeful Beloved reveal his soothing words and his precious lines. The experience of last night afforded a striking illustration and evidenced the close attachment the Beloved feels for his friends and his maid-servants. As I am [X:11:220] writing these lines, I am again moved to present myself in his presence and take down his words in response to the recently arrived supplications.

11 February 1919.

Dear Ahmad,

Another veil is lifted. News as contained in letters, the first so far since the outbreak of the war, have reached us from Persia as well as from India. Meagre and insufficient as the news is at present, yet it assures us of the welfare of the friends. Although few have succumbed to the trials and calamities occasioned by the war, such as the reported death of Nayyirih Lina, Bamandar and Mírzá Na’ím of Tíhrán, three of the choicest friends in the Cause, yet consolation lies in the safety and well-being of the mass of the friends, their unanimous rise to herald the Kingdom, to tear asunder the veils of concealment and prudence and their unrestricted, unhampered activity in the Cause of God. Their meetings, notwithstanding famine, pestilence, rapine, internal war and isolation from the Holy Land, have been regularly conducted and elaborately organized. In Tíhrán, the most active centre of Persia, the friends associate, deal and transact as Bahá’ís, openly declaring their faith, emphatically and fearlessly delivering the message and gathering in their flood men of every class, of every denomination and of every sect—as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has already repeatedly intimated in his blessed Tablets for Persia, Russia and Egypt, the only group and the one body which is able and wields the necessary power to assure for Persia her integrity, her weal and her prosperity. Factions and parties have failed in their aims and have met disappointment in the realization of their aspirations. The Nationalists, the Reactionaries, the Liberals and the Democrats have made Persia a desolate country, while these wanderers and strangers shall soon, God willing, render a distinguished service to Persia and to her sons, for we hold fast to effective means and are attached to powerful souls. Indeed, this wish of the Beloved is being realized and fulfilled, for at present amid the agitation and uproar that still prevails in Persia, the qualities of trustworthiness, truthfulness, obedience, frankness, conscientiousness and loyalty are exclusively embodied in the friends of God—so much so that a government that has persecuted, tortured, exiled, burned and devastated the homes of those who were related to this Cause, has now placed its full confidence and has elected a Bahá’í to be its representative at the great International Congress sitting at Paris.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent the whole day indoors, with no outstanding event marking the activities of the day save a detailed telegram bearing your signature, dated 10 February, and reading as follows:

“With thy divine assistance leave now on *Yahoshi Maru* Japanese steamer direct for New

York via Gilera. All things perfect, travelling first class. Am only passenger, fare 38 pounds. Mahmond Noushogadi, one of friends helped me in this. Beg thy favour and Tablet for him.”

Your sailing directly to New York was providential and just the will and desire of the Beloved. A good start. I wish you a comfortable and speedy voyage.

Shoghi Rabbani

[continued XI:3, p. 48.]

X:11, 27 September 1919 [X:11:221]

Recent tablets from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to American Bahá’ís

Elizabeth Herlitz

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Elizabeth Herlitz, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art enkindled with the fire of the love of God!

Thy letter was received. Thy gladness made me happy that, praise be to God, that torch has been lit and the chamber of thy heart and soul illumined and resplendent. Do not consider thy capacity and worth. Turn thy face to the Abhá Kingdom for that shower of perpetual bounty causes flowers and lilies to grow from stones, and that ray from the Sun of Truth breeds a shining diamond in a heart of stone.

Ever add to thy hope and endeavour that the supreme favour may be made manifest and the glorious bounty be made resplendent.

Convey my utmost love and kindness to thy dear and respected husband.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 11 April 1919; house of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine.

[X:11:222]

Juliet Thompson

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Juliet Thompson—Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved maid-servant of God!

... Add as much as ye can to love and affinity and produce ye amongst yourselves unity and agreement. Put ye in practice the principles of consultation. ...

Do ye not refer regarding any matter in these days to the President of the Republic.

Strive ye as far as ye can in the establishment of love and reconciliation amongst the religions and service to the oneness of the world of humanity; perchance, God willing, universal peace may be founded and all the communities and religions of the world may usher under the uni-coloured shade of the canopy of the Merciful,—that this dark cloud of hate and animosity amongst the religions and nations may be scattered from the horizon of the world and the light of love and fellowship may dawn and flood all the regions.

Convey on my behalf to the attracted maid-servant of God, Mrs Maxwell, the greeting of heart. I beg of God that she may become confirmed and assisted in all affairs.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 10 July 1919. Revealed 30 December 1918.

X:12, 16 October 1919 [X:12:226]

Recent tablet to the Paris Assembly

To the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful One, in Paris, France

—Upon them be the Glory of God Abhá

HE IS GOD!

O friends of God!

Your letter was received through Mrs Stannard. Its contents gave me the utmost joy, for—Praise be to God!—the Spiritual Meeting has been organized also in Paris. Confirmed believers come together and engage in speaking of the Kingdom of God, in seeking the Truth, and in speaking the teachings which are the spirit of this age:

The unity of mankind.

The establishment of universal peace, right and justice.

Showing that religion must be conducive to harmony amongst men, and conforming to reason and science.

The equality of men and women.

Freedom and liberty for all.

The enlightenment of heavenly morals.

Love for all men and even for animals.

The universalization of general knowledge.

A profession, trade, agriculture, are worshipping God. A farmer who cultivates his land with the utmost application is like a worshiper who, with deepest reverence and humility, prays to God in a temple. When the labourer works honestly and sincerely it is as though he were praying.

These are the teachings which are the spirit of this century and the light of this age. Whoever inhales their fragrance is drawn to them, especially as they are confirmed by the Testament and the Covenant, the Covenant which is the cause of illuminating the world, which gives the Spirit of Life, makes souls enlightened, divine and celestial, causes them to shine like a light and transforms them into scintillating stars.

O friends of Paris! Know that no soul is quickened except through the spirit of the Covenant, no eye is illumined except by the light of the Covenant, no ear is thrilled except by the melody of the Covenant, and no heart shows forth the divine sentiments except by the bounty of the Covenant. The people of Paris are full of enthusiasm and become attracted with the utmost swiftness. Therefore, the fire of the love of God will burn intensely and spread everywhere.

Some of the regions of Europe are extremely enthusiastic. Day by day more souls enter the Cause. You have heard of this certainty. Now, make an effort, and with all your might enkindle the fire of love of the Covenant, so that Paris may surpass the other regions; and if the Covenant is made to shine forth as it should, in a short time wonderful results will become apparent; for, in this day, the moving power throughout the whole world is the power of the Covenant: it is the artery pulsating in the body of the phenomenal.

To sum up, I am greatly pleased with these few souls who are in Paris, and I love you very much. I hope that you will fill the meeting with enthusiasm, and be the cause of guidance to

others. Convey greetings on my behalf to each one, and upon you be greetings and praises.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

23 July 1919.

X:12, 16 October 1919 [X:12:230]

Recent tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to American Bahá'ís

Corinne True

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Corinne True, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Your numerous letters have been received. The question of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is of supreme importance and of great results. It is the first edifice to be placed in that country and—Praise be to the Almighty!—the friends of God, all, from all parts are contributing. Numerous designs for its erection have been drafted. One of these designs must be chosen in the Convention.

His honour, Mr Albert Vail is prepared and has capacity for great services. From the favours of God I hope that he may enkindle in the globe of that land a light that shall illumine with its rays of guidance the vicinity and the surrounding regions.

The organization of joint assemblies for white and coloured people shall manifest the oneness of the world of humanity; shall dissipate totally and eradicate ignorant racial fanaticism, and shall satisfy all from the fountain of the water of Life.

We have cabled Mr Remey to postpone his tour, for his presence, in these days, in America is necessary. In reality, he has been and is engaged in the utmost power in service and I love him infinitely, and verily he merits this love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

... Convey on my behalf the utmost love and kindness to Miss Jean Masson for she has expended the utmost effort in writing the article in the newspaper. She serves thereby the Kingdom of God and promulgates divine teachings. Deal ye with love and kindness with Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

God wishes love, unity and harmony. Upon this exert ye all effort. This is the cause of the glory of God; this is the cause of drawing near to the court of the Almighty, and this is the cause of entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Convey on my behalf, to Dr Ḍíyá' (Baghdádí) the utmost love and kindness. In my estimation, he is very near, for he is the son of his honour Áqá Muḥammad Muṣṭafá.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 23 May 1919.

Roy C. Wilhelm

To his honour Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, New York, N.Y.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant and the Testament!

Thy letters dated 22 and 29 March, as well as thy card of 11 April were received. The organization of the meeting representative of different denominations in New York, at which

all religions and sects had affiliated together in the utmost love and harmony, was conducive to extreme joy.

My hope is that meetings of such nature may often be organized so that representatives of all the different races, religions, sects and countries of the world may in the utmost love embrace one another, that no trace of bigotry and of ignorant prejudice, of obstinacy and rancour may remain, and the pavilion and canopy of the oneness of the world of humanity may be raised upon the apex of the world. For all men are the sheep of God and divine providence the kind and loving Shepherd.

Similarly the meeting that had been called at Washington, my hope is that remarkable consequences may result therefrom.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 25 May 1919. [X:12:231]

Kawkab MacCutcheon

To the maid-servant of God, Kawkab¹ MacCutcheon, Minneapolis, Minnesota—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou brilliant Kawkab (Star)!

Praise be to God! Thou hast become resplendent with the light of guidance and from the bestowals of the Kingdom of God thou hast partaken a share and a portion. In tests thou hast remained firm and upright.

At present thy purpose is to organize a meeting and to guide the souls in the divine Kingdom. Excellent is thy intention. Found thou this assembly in thy own home and arise in the guidance of souls.

Be thou not grieved on account of the departure of thy father, mother and brother because they became delivered from the world which is full of sadness and sorrow and they have hastened to the realm of joy. They have become freed from the fetters of this prison and soared to the divine court.

Thou hast asked for permission to come. At present your presence there is necessary, so that the Cause may be established. After the establishment of the Cause thou hast permission to come.

Should it be possible for thee to establish a school for the Bahá'í children and teach, it will be exceedingly acceptable.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago, Illinois, 25 July 1919. Revealed at Haifa, Palestine, 31 May 1919.

Cora Ditmars

To the maid-servant of God, Cora Ditmars, Spokane, Washington—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

¹ Kawkab ("star"), name given to Miss H. A. MacCutcheon.

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast exerted a great effort for that imprisoned person. Perhaps it may prove to be fruitful. Tell him, however, that the denizens of the world are confined in the prison of nature—a prison that is continuous and eternal. If thou art at present restrained within the limits of a temporary prison, be not grieved at this; my hope is that thou mayest be emancipated from the prison of nature and may attain unto the court of everlasting Life. Pray to God day and night and beg forgiveness and pardon. The omnipotence of God shall solve every difficulty.

O thou dear maid-servant of God! Praise be to God, thou art endowed with a pure heart and an exalted determination. Thou hast an eloquent tongue and givest to every person a share and portion of the teachings of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá does not seek membership at the Peace Congress. He promulgates peace through the power of the Word of God. It is impossible to establish universal peace save through this power.

Convey on my behalf to those souls whose names thou hast mentioned in thy letter, greeting and kindness. I pray God that they may be confirmed in service to the Kingdom of God.

It is preferable that in the meetings, one of the attendants should read or chant the Tablets of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and the others listen to the reading.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 3 June 1919.

Annie L. Parmerton

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Annie L. Parmerton, Cincinnati, Ohio—Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant and the Testament!

Your detailed letter dated 30 April 1919, was received. It contained joy- [X:12:232] ful tidings that—Praise be to God!—thou hast been assisted to raise the call of the Kingdom and hast become the cause of the guidance of many a soul. In assemblies thou hast shed light like unto a candle, has eloquently spoken and hast promulgated the divine teachings. Today whosoever arises to serve the Kingdom, heavenly angels shall confirm him, spiritual forces shall be his help and support, the breaths of the Holy Spirit shall vivify his heart and all existent beings will be his assistants.

Consider how all the contingent beings have supported and served those blessed souls who have arisen in service to the Kingdom. A fisherman became the most great Peter; Mary Magdalene, only a peasant, gained a precedence of the queens of the world, for a hundred-thousand queens have come and gone and no trace and memory have they left behind, but Mary Magdalene to the present day, like unto a star, is shining from the horizon of the most Supreme Glory. This is what is meant by everlasting life, by baptism with the Holy Spirit and by being born again to which Christ refers.

Convey on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the utmost love and longing to the friends in St. Louis, in Cincinnati and in Kansas City, and to the maid-servant of God, Mrs Jones. From the bounties of God I hope that, through spiritual power and the remedy of the Spirit of God, thou mayest acquire physical health.

As to the questions thou hast asked: Concerning Malachi, chapter 3, verses 16, 17 and 18 refer to the friends of God, and in St. Matthew, chapter 25, the object of verses 31, 32 and 33 is the Blessed Beauty. As to Micah, chapter 5, the 4th verse refers to Christ. In Zephaniah, chapter 1, verses 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18, and in Zechariah, chapter 2, verses 10, 11, 12 and 13, and in St. Luke, chapter 21, verses 20 to the end—all these refer to the century of the Blessed Beauty.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 4 June 1919. [X:12:233]

Harlan Foster Ober

To his honour, Mr Harlan Foster Ober, Cambridge, Massachusetts—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Your detailed letter was received. Praise be to God, that in the utmost energy, the friends of God have arisen to promulgate heavenly teachings and are self-sacrificing from every standpoint. Verily, this is the sign of the confirmations of the divine Kingdom which, like unto the sun, are manifest and evident. The sending of teachers to different parts is highly acceptable and praiseworthy. Act in accordance with the instructions previously sent.

Today the stirring power that exhibits itself throughout all regions is the power of the Covenant which, like unto the artery, beats and pulsates in the body of the world. He who is firmer in the Covenant is more assisted, just as ye are manifestly witnessing how firm souls are enkindled, attracted and confirmed.

Strive, therefore, day and night that ye may cause the hearts to become firm and resolute. The journey of teachers to different parts is like unto the rays of the sun which radiate from a central point to the surrounding regions and undoubtedly great illumination will be obtained.

You had inquired concerning the financial question of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* and the expenses of the teachers. Appropriation of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* fund for purposes different from those that pertain to the Temple is not permissible and conversely the teaching fund is not to be used for *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* purposes. Both should be used in their own respective spheres. If it is not done accordingly matters will be completely upset. The future should be taken into consideration and not the present. I beg God that He may confirm you always in that which is the cause of the gladness of your heart.

Concerning the *Star of the West*, the organ must be so promulgated in America and Persia that at least its necessary expenses may be provided. Upon this point a letter shall be written to Persia.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 24 June 1919.

Executive Board of Bahá'í Temple Unity

To the members of the Executive Board of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye blessed souls!

Praise be to God, that ye have been confirmed with such a supreme bounty and have arisen

with all your power in the service of the Kingdom, which is no other than service to the oneness of the world of humanity.

The magnet attracts unto itself the iron, while this promulgation of divine teachings attracts heavenly confirmation. Soon ye shall consider what a profound effect it shall exert and what a manifest sign it shall display.

I am greatly pleased with you, for day and night ye concentrate your time upon the commemoration of God, that ye seek the divine good-pleasure, pray for heavenly bounty and are firm in the Covenant.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 24 June 1919.

Sarah van Winkle

To the maid-servant of God, Sarah van Winkle, Boston, Massachusetts—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written that in view of the questions of [X:12:234] violation thou art perturbed. There is no occasion for perturbation for the Blessed Beauty has closed all doors of error and doubt and has entered with all the friends into a Covenant and a Testament, beginning first with the Aghṣán, the Afnán¹ and the relatives. Explicitly and in a way that shuts out all interpretation, he says that “after My ascension, turn your faces toward him who has branched from the Pre-Existent Root”, and then he manifestly says that by him who is branched from the Pre-Existent such a person is meant. In fine, he has appointed the Centre of the Covenant as the authority and the Expounder of the Book. Now it must be either said that the Blessed Beauty has done wrong and was ignorant of the fact that this person deserved this station, or obedience should be shown. In brief, it must be either said that the Blessed Beauty was wrong or right, there is no third alternative. And furthermore, through the assistance and the bounty of the Blessed Beauty, a power and might has been displayed by the Centre of the Covenant that all the contemporary great men and philosophers are amazed, and bear witness to the fact. There should be no occasion therefore for agitation. If, God forbid, a weakness and inability is exhibited, how will Bahá'í unity be preserved and how will the teachings of the Blessed Beauty be promulgated? Will they be promulgated through the senseless words of those who pretend to be philosophers, or through the doubts of the people of violation and lust? In brief, strive thou to remain firm in the Covenant and under the guarding protection of His Highness the Merciful.

Convey on my behalf to the maidservant of God, Miss Wilson, the utmost kindness.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine. 18 July 1919.

Martha Root

To the maid-servant of God, Martha Root, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

¹ Ghṣn, pl. aghṣán; and fanán, pl. afnán. Both plurals were used with an added English “s” ending!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy detailed and brief letters have all been received, and have been attentively perused. Praise be to God, they imparted glad-tidings and joyful news. Thou are indeed serving in the path of God, art with all thy energy showing love to others, art raising the call of the Kingdom and, art illumining the hearts of men. Rest thou assured that the confirmations of the Kingdom shall encompass thee and thou shalt become the recipient of the bounties of the Lord of Hosts. Strive as much as possible to be ever active, travel to the north and south of that land and summon all to the oneness of the world of humanity and to universal peace, saying: "O ye men! His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has, fifty years ago, laid the foundation of universal peace. He even addressed epistles to the kings wherein he declared that war destroys the foundation of the world of humanity, that peace is the cause of everlasting life and that a great danger awaiteth the world of mankind. Likewise, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, prior to this world war and three years before its outbreak travelled throughout Europe and America and raised his call at all gatherings, temples and churches saying: 'O ye who are present! The continent of Europe has become a huge arsenal abounding with combustible material and below which are stored inflammable materials which only a spark will set aflame and will shake the world to its very foundation. O ye who are wise! Strive perchance these inflammable materials will not be set aflame.' But the appeal was not heeded and therefore this great carnage has come to pass. At present all the peoples have realized what a great calamity war is, that war turns man [X:12:235] into a rapacious animal, razes to the ground flourishing cities and towns and causes the foundation of mankind to totter. As all men have been awakened and are harkening to the call, it is time for the promulgation of universal peace—a peace which has for its basis right and justice; so that mankind will not be exposed to danger. At present it is the dawn of universal peace, we hope that its sun will soon shine and flood the East and the West with its light. The establishment of universal peace is not possible save through the power of the Word of God and hence one must endeavour to promote the Word of God and thereby establish universal peace. Strive at present as much as possible to raise the call of the divine Kingdom for this call bestows the Spirit of Life. Endeavour to raise the call of the Covenant and the Testament for the power of the Covenant, like unto arteries, pulsates in the body of the world!"

Thou hast mentioned a great number of souls in thy letter. Verily each one of them deserves a separate letter, particularly some who, with all their power, are serving the Kingdom of God, have no purpose save the common weal and no aim except the exercise of the utmost love and kindness to each and all the individuals of the world of humanity. These souls, although they pertain to the nether world, yet their souls belong to the world of spirit; i.e., they have been vivified by the breath of spiritual life. Their hearts are the mirrors of the Sun of Truth wherein this sun shines with the utmost splendour. Convey on my behalf to each of those souls the utmost love and kindness and tell them that day and night I entreat and supplicate to the Kingdom of Glory with the utmost humility and lowliness and beg for those souls heavenly confirmations.

Thou hadst written, concerning the friends of Pittsburgh, that misunderstanding has been caused among them. Misunderstanding cannot be eliminated by any power save that of the Covenant. The power of the Covenant is all-inclusive and solves all difficulties, for explicitly and by the Supreme Pen it is declared that whatever misunderstanding takes place, ye must refer to the Centre of the Covenant for he eliminates all difficulties. Therefore, no power will do away, with misunderstanding among the friends except the Covenant and the Testament of God. Encourage and draw, therefore, all the friends to firmness in the Covenant and the Testament. His Holiness Christ said to Peter: "Thou art a rock and upon this rock I shall build my Temple." This is not written by the Supreme Pen of Christ and does not manifestly command anyone to turn his face to him and has not been revealed and recorded in the book

of His Holiness Christ. It is *only* a tradition transmitted by the Apostles. This tradition, however, has exacted obedience from all and has eliminated all misunderstanding among the Apostles and the Christians. At present this is the *Book of the Covenant* and not a tradition and is revealed by the Supreme Pen and not transmitted orally. He explicitly declares that “ye must turn after Me to the Centre of the Covenant and whatever misunderstanding may happen he is its Expounder, and whatever he says it is right.” He made it all-exclusive and this Tablet is the last one which has been revealed by the Supreme Pen before ascension. All previous books are subordinate to this *Book of the Covenant* for it has been revealed subsequently to all the previous ones. He has named it the “Book of the Covenant” and, therefore, consider that if the friends remain firm in the Covenant, will there be any misunderstanding among them? No, by God! Except those souls who have an evil intention and are thinking of leadership and of forming a party; those souls, although they have written epistles with their own pen and have execrated the violators denouncing them as having destroyed the foundation of the monu- [X:12:236] ment erected by His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh and have written that he has written this Covenant with his own pen and that whoever deviated the least from the Centre of the Covenant is of the people of treachery and well deserves the wrath of God—these souls are themselves at present among the pioneers of violation. This is because of their personal motives for they had thought of securing leadership and wealth, but when they considered that in remaining firm in the Covenant their purpose would not be realized, they deviated from it. Those souls must have been either at first truthful and now disloyal or at first disloyal and now truthful. At any rate their lie is manifest. Notwithstanding this, some souls who are not aware of this fact waver when those cast the seeds of suspicion. Awaken all the people and send a copy of this letter to Mr Remy Mrs Goodall and Mrs Cooper.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, ‘Akká, Palestine; 20 July 1919.

Amy Williams

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Amy Williams; Cleveland, Ohio—Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou living flame of the love of God!

Thy letter was received. It was indicative of the illumination of thy heart and the spirituality of thy soul. Praise be to God, thou hast attended the Convention and hast beheld the signs of the power of God, that in such a place He hath gathered together different people under the shadow of the pavilion of the oneness of mankind. This Convention shall expand in the future and shall gain preference over all the Conventions of the world for it is a Convention of the Kingdom divine, and its basis lays upon love, kindness, the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity, and non-interference in political matters. Undoubtedly divine confirmations shall be extended and the assistance of the Lord shall be secured.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 18 July 1919.

X:13, 4 November 1919 [X:13:243]

“You will find Bahá’í centres in most parts of the world”

Talk by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Assembly Rooms, San Francisco, California, 5 October 1912.

I have the utmost joy to find in the distant West such an established Bahá'í centre, where the friends of God have assembled associating with each other in the utmost love. This affords me great joy and I ask God that this revered assemblage may be made the cause of illumining the East and the West. This is my wish, and with the utmost of happiness I am grateful on account of the susceptibilities of your conscience.

Today the people in general are self-occupied. They are engaged either in warfare, or in commercial, political, industrial, or agricultural pursuits. Their interests are of a personal nature; they are thinking of self-aggrandizement, having no desire, no purpose save the acquisition of worldly possessions.

The assemblage in the world which today is thoughtful of God, the assemblage which is occupied with the thought of illumining the world of humanity, the assemblage which is occupied with the mentioning of the Kingdom of God, the assemblage which has as its chief motive the good pleasure of the Lord of Hosts, is verily the assemblage of Bahá'ís, for they have no intention, aim, or purpose save the attainment of the good-pleasure of God, and entrance into the Kingdom of God, and of being the promulgators of the religion of God. They are the spreaders of the fragrances of God. These are the desires of the assemblage of the Bahá'ís.

All the sects of the world are on the wane except the Bahá'í assemblages which day by day are achieving ideal progress, for they are confirmed by God's assistance.

I hope that many such assemblages may be founded in America, and that from all the centres of the world people may come to the Bahá'í assemblages and there manifest the oneness of the world of humanity.

The people in general are all asleep; they are all inadvertent; they are all slumbering, because their thoughts are confined to materialism; they are not at all thoughtful of God's thoughts except you, who are thinking of God. Verily, you are the spirit of the world! You are the cause of the light of the world! You are the salt of the earth!

Do not look at your limited numbers now. Ere long you will see that the divine Radiance has flooded all regions. The believers in the various sects are decreasing in numbers, whereas the people of God are constantly increasing, progressing, developing, day by day growing stronger and greater, day by day becoming more effective.

Consider how the assembly of His Holiness Christ was limited to eleven souls, but that assemblage has given birth to innumerable assemblies! How many denominations are sheltered beneath it! Its efficacy is evident, and it has become the dominant factor of all the civilized world. [X:13:244]

Now, praise be to God, your assembly is a great one; you are about two hundred in number; judge thereby of the future.

The Bahá'ís are not in one place only, but you will find Bahá'í centres in most parts of the world, and they are daily increasing and spreading. You must rest assured, knowing for a certainty that the confirmations of the Kingdom are yours, that the favours of Bahá'u'lláh are with you, that the power heavenly is with you, that the assistance of God is with you. If all the inhabitants of the earth should gather they will fail to withstand you, for they are on the wane, whereas you are waxing stronger. They are retrogressing; you are progressing.

When they exiled us from Persia, from Tīhrán to Baghdád, the journey was made in thirty stages and in these thirty stages we did not find one Bahá'í. Now in every one of these places there are great numbers of Bahá'í friends.

Notwithstanding that the ruler of Persia and the Sulṭán of Turkey opposed the Cause so violently—exercising tyranny and oppression thinking to extinguish the Lamp of God—yet

this Lamp day by day grew in radiance, its power increased and its illumination became greater, until it reached such a degree that now its lights are spread throughout the world—even as far as San Francisco, which is very far from Persia. See what this will mean in the future!

At the time His Holiness Jesus Christ was crucified, there were eleven disciples and even they were doubting—Peter heading them—until Mary the Magdalene, that lioness of God, strengthened them and was the cause of confirming them. Then consider how great were the results!

And now, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, when He ascended, had half a million souls who were self-sacrificing and all were perfectly firm and staunch! Consider what a marvellous potency this will exercise.

Rest assured in the favour of God, and know that God is your Assister. So with great power, with great confidence, strive that the lights of God may be spread and in this country from East to West the light may be shining.

Be confident! Have no doubt about it! This banner of Bahá'u'lláh will be unfurled, waving toward all regions! The lights of the Kingdom of God will illumine all these climes, and the call of God will reach the hearing of all the American Republic!

Hence, you must in the utmost of love, in the utmost of sanctity strive night and day that you may be the cause of spreading the light. If we are not the instruments in spreading this Cause, others will be chosen. Then let us strive so that this crown may be placed upon our heads—that we may be the promulgators of the light, that we may be the resuscitators of souls, that we may be sight-givers to the blind, that we may be the remedies to the sick, that we may guide the people. Otherwise, God will raise up a people who will hoist the standard of God, who will ignite the Lamp of God, who will conquer the cities of the hearts, who will show forth the potency of the Word of God.

But for us the desire is that we may be the instruments and thus we may be crowned. Otherwise, God is able to create instruments whereby His Word shall be published broadcast. If this does not happen today, and if not on the morrow, then on the day after tomorrow. But the desire is that today the Word may be spread, that our activity shall be beneath this banner and standard, that we shall be the cause of giving forth the summons of God, that we may invite the souls to the Kingdom, that we may be their guides.

Thus, this will be the cause of illumining faces and will win the praise of all the Manifestations of God. This is our [X:13:245] hope. This is the utmost of our desires, and I ask God that He may aid you all, that He may aid me, that together we may be occupied in the service of the Kingdom of God.

This is a very blessed gathering. It is a source of great joy. It is a source of great potency in the world. This very gathering has its effects. The assemblage here and the fellowship exercised are a magnet attracting the confirmations of God. Even now the confirmations of God are surrounding such a gathering as this. Ere long you will see its signs and your joy will reach the superlative degree.

X:13, 4 November 1919 [X:13:245]

Recent tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to American Bahá'ís

Mother Beecher

To the maid-servant of God, Mother Beecher, care of his honour, Mr Roy Wilhelm, New York City, N.Y.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou green leaf of the Tree of Life!

Thy letter was received and from its contents it became known that in the past summer, in Green Acre, a remarkable Bahá'í movement took place, blessed souls gathered in that place such as Mr Remey, Richard Mayer, Harry Randall, Howard Ives, Albert Vail, Harlan Ober, Şafá Kinney and Stanwood Cobb. These souls indeed are firm in the Covenant, are the heralds of the Kingdom of God, promulgating the divine teachings, are self-sacrificing in the path of the Kingdom, are ignited candles and twinkling stars. At present this is not known; in the future it shall be made evident.

The Pharisees, during the time of Christ, did not consider the Apostles as worth addressing and took them as the lowest of people, although they were the stars of guidance and the lamps of the Supreme Concourse. But at present consider what has happened!

I hope that this year in Green Acre the candles of supreme guidance will be better enkindled, the melody of the nightingales of Truth may reach the supreme heights and attain the ears of the denizens of the Abhá Kingdom, and this shall be to such an extent that all people may be amazed. This shall be attained if the friends of God will in the utmost union, love and harmony associate with one another, strive day and night to relieve one another's burden, promulgate the divine teachings and raise so high the call of the oneness of mankind and the melody of universal peace that the world of humanity may be stirred.

As to his highness, President Wilson, the fourteen principles which he has enunciated are mostly found in the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and I therefore hope that he will be confirmed and assisted. At present it is the dawn of universal peace; my hope is that its morn will fully break, converting the gloom of war, of strife and of wrangling among men into the light of union, of harmony and of affection.

Convey on my behalf to Mrs Champney the utmost love and kindness. From the bounties of God, I hope that she may become utterly attracted to the Kingdom and become wholly spiritual. Convey my love and kindness to Mrs Watt. I beg for her from God assistance and bounty. Convey to thy grand-daughter, Dorothy Beecher, the utmost kindness on my behalf and extend to Mr Hilgert my warm and heartfelt sentiments; I am greatly pleased with him.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani., Bahjí, Acre, Palestine, 23 July 1919. [X:13:246]

Mary Morrison

To the maid-servant of God, Mary Morrison—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

When I was in Denver I enjoyed greatly the climate, the beauty and the views of that city; and, therefore, I wished that therein the light of the love of God might spread, and hearts might be stirred by lordly sentiments, and the pavilion of the oneness of mankind might be pitched in that city. I, therefore, encouraged those friends who resided there, and urged them to acquire the perfections of the world of humanity.

At present, praise be to God, the signs of the attraction of hearts by the divine fragrances are manifest. I rest assured, therefore, that the perfections of mankind may be made resplendent in that city, and human souls may become heavenly angels, may acquire the characteristics of the Merciful; and that thou mayest become the sign of guidance and the cause of the illumination of the hearts of friends.

Upon thee be greetings and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919. [X:13:247]

Bahá'ís of the Central States

The friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful in the Central States of the United States of America, care of Mr Carl Schefer, Chicago, Illinois—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye faithful friends and maid-servants of the Merciful!

Verily, ye are self-sacrificing in the path of the Kingdom and have no wish save the diffusion of Light throughout all regions. Ye are the real gardeners, are sowing the seeds of guidance in the soil of hearts and assuredly ye shall be confirmed and assisted. The expert gardener ever reaps rich and plentiful crops, obtains a pure and fertile soil, sows the seed, waters it and always secures heavenly blessings. Praise be to God, ye are expert gardeners, your soil is the heart, wherein ye sow the seed of the love of God, and water it from the fountain of knowledge. Ye depend upon the Sun of Truth that its light and heat may develop that blessed plantation, that the breeze of His bounty may waft and the dew of His blessing may fall, thus securing for it luxuriance, freshness and prolific results. The earthly gardener obtains but one fruitage while the heavenly One with one casting of the seed secures an everlasting result.

From the bounties of God, I supplicate that this Second Convention (for [X:13:248] Teaching) held in the Central States may exert a great influence, may be assisted by the confirmations and bounties of the Supreme Concourse, and may give forth remarkable results.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 29 July 1919.

Gertrude Buikema

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Gertrude Buikema, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received. From its contents it became known that thy eager wish is to serve the *Star of the West*. This wish is due to the exaltation of thy nature and is highly praiseworthy, and in the divine Kingdom is accepted and praised. Verily, Mr Windust has so far exerted a great effort for the arrangement of the *Star of the West* and I am greatly pleased with him.

At present both of you must, as ye have been doing in the past, endeavour for the arrangement and the publication of the *Star of the West*. However, the means of subsistence are necessary for both of you and ye cannot concentrate your time in this matter. Serve, therefore, as much as it is possible, the *Star of the West*, and in order to secure the means of livelihood, do not abandon your own occupations. When the *Star of the West* will be so widely published as to insure your necessary expenses, then if we abandon your occupation and concentrate upon the *Star*, it will be preferable. But at present ye are forced to engage in your occupation that the means of livelihood may be secured.

As I have no time, I have written thee in brief. Whatever question comes up, submit it to the Editorial Staff Committee for discussion and consideration and then hold to what ye deem advisable and suitable. [X:13:249]

Convey, on my behalf, the utmost love and kindness to his honour Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí and his honour Mr Windust.

The seven bound volumes of the *Star of the West* have been received and your labour is indeed worthy of praise.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani; Haifa, Palestine, 29 July 1919.

Albert R. Windust

To his honour Mr Albert R. Windust, Chicago, Illinois—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh

The letters thou hadst written on 1 October and 23 November 1918, were received. Their contents indicated thy joy at the victory secured by the just government, the safety of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the good tidings of thy health and safety of thy honourable wife and thy three respected daughters.

Thou hadst written that all throughout the days of severed communication ye were engaged in service, were printing and publishing books, while the *Star of the West* was also published and regularly circulated. Verily, ye have laboured hard and have not fallen short of your duty.

Indeed, the respected maid-servant of God, Miss Mary Lesch, has been directing affairs with the utmost loyalty, faithfulness, good wishes and endeavour.

Name the book¹ which Mr MacNutt is compiling, "The Promulgation of Universal Peace". As to its introduction, it should be written by Mr MacNutt himself when in heart he is turning toward the Abhá Kingdom, so that he may leave a permanent trace behind him. Send a copy of it to the Holy Land.

The *Star of the West* must, at present, be written both in English and Persian. Miss Gertrude Buikema is indeed serving the *Star*. We hope that with his honour Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí—Upon him be the Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—ye may be both assisted in remarkable services. Your efforts are evident and well known in the sight of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I pray God that, under all conditions, ye may be assisted and confirmed. As to the editorship of the *Star of the West*, whatever ye deem advisable is accepted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí

To his honour, Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago, Illinois.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou merciful youth who art the son of that glorious man!

Verily, thy letters have been received. They indicate thy great love to God, thy attraction to His fragrance, thy attachment to His Kingdom, the establishment of a meeting for the singing of the verses of God, the reading of the Holy Books, the study of the Tablets by the youths of that city, who have sincerely turned their faces to God and became enkindled with the fire of

¹ The Addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered in America in 1912.

the love of God, abandoned all the conditions that prevent the acquiring of the merciful virtues and the good illumined morals, so that they may love one another and become united in the promulgation of the fragrances of God. The love of God kept them busy from ought else. This establishment is a blessed establishment. I ask God to make this meeting sanctified and holy above the human temperaments, illumined and [X:13:250] adorned with the outpourings of severance to the Lord of mankind, so that they may become as one bouquet, spiritually and physically in the service of the Cause of God.

As to the matter of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, it is of the most important affairs. Relaxation therein is not permissible. Verily, I shall write to the Easts of the earth and to its Wests and urge them to assist the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. Concentrate thou thy thought in the service of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* under all conditions so that thou mayest obtain confirmations and assistance under all conditions and circumstances. ...

As to the translation of the *Súriy-i-Haykal*, at present we do not find a translator who can give it its merit. God willing, in the future a committee shall be organized whose members are experts in Arabic, Persian and English. By that perfect committee, the *Súriy-i-Haykal* will be translated, but one person cannot arise and give the translation that it deserves. God willing, this committee will be organized and thou shalt be an important member thereof.

Convey thou on my behalf the utmost mercy and tenderness to Bessie Digget, her mother and her sister. Convey my abundant greeting to Mr Anderson and his wife. Verily, I ask God to make them manifestations of His merciful bounties. Convey my hearty sympathy to Julia Jordan, Emma Marky Appel, and Walter Bohanan. Verily, I pray God to make them the signs of guidance among the people and the banners of the Supreme Concourse. Convey my greeting and tenderness to Mr and Mrs Alfred Anderson, Mr and Mrs August Anderson, Mr and Mrs Peter Nelson, Mr and Mrs Henry Bennings, Mr and Mrs Schend, Mrs Hertel, Mr and Mrs Yeager, Mr and Mrs Lindstrom, Mrs Redeem, Mrs Tressa Jacobsen, Mr William Redeem, Mr George Steppy. Verily, I pray God to guide them in their affairs, to make them attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá, sanctified above self and desire, seeking nothing for themselves save severance to God, delivered from the selfish suggestions in the Cause of their Lord, the Precious, the Exalted! For, verily, to God is the praise. They are lamps aflame with the fire of the love of God, majestic trees in the rose-gardens of the knowledge of God.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Dated 24 July 1919, Haifa, Syria.

Contributions collected for the teaching fund must be used for teaching. Likewise contributions collected for the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* must be used for the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. These two must not be mixed.

Convey thou on my behalf the fatherly greeting to Katherine Ferguson and say: "I ask God to confirm and guide your brother and sister of whom you have written in your letter. Convey thou the utmost respect to Mr Chapman. Appreciate thou him for he became the cause of thy everlasting life and thou hast become of the people of the Kingdom. This is thy real father."

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

P.S.—The maid-servant of God, Zínat, is permitted to come. Be very kind to Háshim Zádih and give him the Message and Bahá'í literature.

Dated at Haifa, 24 September 1919.

Ella Quant

To the maid-servant of God, Ella Quant, New York City, N.Y.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. It was indicative of thy attendance at the Convention where thou hast witnessed the [X:13:251] lights of the divine teachings resplendent and hast seen the souls vivified by the spirit of everlasting life. As thou wert endowed with the power of insight, thou hast in this manner discovered Truth. Whoever is firm in the Covenant and the Testament is today endowed with a seeing eye, and a responsive ear and daily advances in the divine realm until he becomes a heavenly angel.

Convey on my behalf to the two respected souls, Margaret LaGrange and Grace Vosburgh, heartfelt sentiments. I pray God that they may become the recipients of bounty and the manifestations of limitless favours.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

X:14, 23 November 1919 [X:14:263]

Recent tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to American Bahá'ís

Ella G. Cooper

(Portion of Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mrs Ella G. Cooper, San Francisco, California.)

... Four letters have been received from you, the last dated 18 April 1919. All of them were indicative of firmness in the great Covenant. Praise be to God, the friends in California are holding fast to the helm of the Almighty and are attracted to the God of Elijah. Their movement is like unto the attraction of steel which is subjected to magnetic power; their aims are confined to the good pleasure of God and their highest wish centres around the unbounded blessing. They are engaged in service and are intimately connected with the Holy Spirit. ...

Thou hast referred to the little assembly of Los Angeles. Although that assembly is small, yet it is kept under the protecting eye of God. If it prove to be firm and steadfast it shall resist all that is on earth.

Consider how many souls arose after His Holiness Christ and determined to extinguish the Lamp of God. Even the Roman emperor, who was a most eminent philosopher, exerted the utmost effort in order to resist the sweeping movement; he wrote a refutatory book against His Holiness Christ, published it throughout his empire, and caused a great many to turn away from His Holiness Christ. But, eventually, the power of the Word of God conquered and broke all imperial resistance. The resplendent light of the Covenant and Testament of God dissipated the darkness of doubt and suspicion that was entertained by those philosophers and potentates. It is evident, therefore, as to what will result from these important forces.

At most it is this: that some feeble and heedless souls will waver in the Cause of God, but ultimately this fire will be quenched.

Refer to the history of the Church and read the details of the activities of Arius, the Patriarch of Alexandria. Notwithstanding the fact that his followers numbered a million and a half, and the support of the mighty emperor was extended to him, eventually he was completely destroyed and no trace of him whatever remained, and so on and so forth. ...

Undoubtedly, wherever a carcass is to be found, a number of ravens and contemptible dogs gather around that putrefying body, but ere long they shall be scattered in great distress.

... Read attentively the translations of his honour Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's book, *The Brilliant Proof*; it is very necessary,—and send it then to the spiritual assembly of Los Angeles. ...

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 2 June 1919.

Mary Rabb

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Mary Rabb, care of Mrs Ella Goodall Cooper—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Your letter dated 5 March 1919 was received. Its contents were conducive to gladness and they indicated firmness and steadfastness in the glorious Covenant.

Today the pulsating power in the arteries of the body of the world is the spirit of the Covenant—the spirit which is the cause of life. Whosoever is vivified with this spirit the freshness and beauty of life become manifest in him, he is baptized with the Holy Spirit, he is born again, is freed from oppression and tyranny, from heedlessness and inclemency which deaden the spirit, and attains unto everlasting life. [X:14:264]

Praise thou God that thou art firm in the Covenant and the Testament and art turning thy face to the Luminary of the world, His Highness Bahá'u'lláh. Thou hast illumined thy face with the light of guidance and perfumed thy nostrils with the fragrances of the Abhá paradise. Strive therefore that thou mayest attract the souls and train them through the divine teachings that they may become the signs of guidance, may turn into blessed trees and may secure a large share from the day of Manifestation.

The teacher is like unto a farmer who sows a seed, the cloud of mercy pours out its showers and every seed multiplies a hundred fold, gives forth a luxuriant harvest and becomes the cause of heavenly benediction.

I hope that thou mayest be confirmed to acquire that heavenly benediction and may become my partner in this lucrative enterprise; that thou mayest grow to become a blessed tree, fruitful, green and rich in foliage and laden with sweet and delicious fruits.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 3 June 1919. [X:14:265]

Bahá'ís of California

To the friends and maid-servants of the Merciful in Los Angeles and the other cities of California, care of Mr and Mrs Beckett—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye friends and maid-servants of the Merciful!

O ye friends and maidservants of the Merciful! From the Spiritual Assembly of Los Angeles a letter hath been received. It was indicative of the fact that the blessed souls in California, like unto an immovable mountain, are withstanding the gale of violation, have, like unto blessed trees, been planted in the soil of the Covenant and are most firm and steadfast. The hope is entertained, therefore, that through the blessings of the Sun of Truth they may daily increase in their firmness and steadfastness. The tests of every dispensation are in direct

proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe. These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected. These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features; but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and shall cast ashore the bodies of the dead, for it cannot retain them. Thus it is seen that the ocean of the Covenant hath surged and surged until it hath thrown out the dead bodies—souls that are deprived of the Spirit of God and are lost in passion and self and are seeking leadership. This foam of the ocean shall not endure and shall soon disperse and vanish, while the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar.¹

Consider then that Christ, in order to preserve the unity of Christendom, said to Peter: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” This word has secured every one’s submissiveness and allegiance and has preserved for a thousand years the unity of the Christian world. Notwithstanding the fact that this declaration was not, a command to obey and to follow and was verbally delivered, yet it has proved to do away with any foam that might appear on the surface of the ocean of Christ and to cast ashore any dead body that sought the vanities of this world. At present His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, through His Supreme Pen, has written the *Book of the Covenant* and has called it the “Book of the Covenant”, and has entered with every one into a covenant and a testament. He first addresses the Aghsán, then the Afnán and then the relations bidding [X:14:266] then to turn their faces to the Centre of the Covenant and has then, in accordance with the explicit text of the *Most Holy Book* (the Book of Laws [*The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*]), made the Centre of the Covenant the Expounder of the Book.

From the early days of creation down to the present time, throughout all the divine dispensations, such a firm and explicit Covenant hath not been entered upon. In view of this fact is it possible for this foam to remain on the surface of the ocean of the Covenant? No, by God! The violators are trampling upon their own dignity, are uprooting their own foundations and are proud at being upheld by flatterers who exert a great effort to shake the faith of feeble souls. But this action of theirs is of no consequence; it is a mirage and not water, foam and not the sea, mist and not a cloud, illusion and not reality. All this ye shall soon see.

Praise be to God, ye are firm and steadfast; be ye thankful that like unto blessed trees ye are firmly planted in the soil of the Covenant. It is sure that every firm one will grow, will yield new fruits and will increase daily in freshness and grace. Reflect upon all the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, whether epistles or prayers, and ye shall surely come across a thousand passages wherein Bahá’u’lláh prays: ‘O God! Bring to naught the violators of the Covenant and defeat the oppressors of the Testament.’ ‘He who denieth the Covenant and the Testament is rejected by God, and he who remaineth firm and steadfast therein is favoured at the Threshold of Oneness.’ Such sayings and prayers abound, refer to them and ye shall know.

Never be depressed. The more ye are stirred by violation, the more deepen ye in firmness and steadfastness, and be assured that the divine hosts shall conquer, for they are assured of the victory of the Abhá Kingdom. Throughout all regions the standard of firmness and steadfastness is upraised and the flag of violation is debased, for only a few weak souls have been led away by the flattery and the specious arguments of the violators who are outwardly with the greatest care exhibiting firmness but inwardly are engaged in agitating souls. Only a few who are the leaders of those who stir and agitate are outwardly known as violators while the rest, through subtle means, deceive the souls, for outwardly they assert their firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant but when they come across responsive ears they secretly sow the seeds of suspicion. The case of all of them resembleth the violation of the Covenant by Judas Iscariot and his followers. Consider: hath any result or trace remained after them? Not

¹ Paragraph from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 210–211.

even a name hath been left by his followers and although a number of Jews sided with him it was as if he had no followers at all. This Judas Iscariot who was the leader of the apostles betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Take heed, O ye people of perception!

At this time these insignificant violators will surely betray the Centre of the Covenant for the large sum which by every subtle means they have begged. It is now thirty years since Bahá'u'lláh ascended, and in that time these violators have striven with might and main. What have they achieved? Under all conditions those who have remained firm in the Covenant have conquered, while the violators have met defeat, disappointment and dejection. After the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, no trace of them shall remain. These souls are ignorant of what will happen and are proud of their own fancies.

In short, O ye friends of God and maidservants of the Merciful! The hand of divine bounty hath placed upon your heads a jewelled crown, the precious gems of which shall shine eternally over all regions. Appreciate this bounty, loose your tongues in praise and thanksgiving, and engage in [X:14:267] the promulgation of the divine teachings, for this is the spirit of life and the means of salvation.¹

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 23 July 1919.

Agnes Leo

To the maid-servant of God, Agnes Leo, Spokane, Washington—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
HE IS GOD!

O thou maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received. Thou wert complaining of your assembly that it has fallen into disgrace. Every ailing has its remedy, and every affliction its relief. The efficacious remedy of this disease with which the assembly has been afflicted lies in meditation and contemplation over the Covenant and Testament. It should be observed whether the Blessed Beauty has entered into this Covenant and Testament in order to exact obedience from all, or to bring about disobedience. If the latter is intended, then nothing is to be said, and if obedience and compliance are the objects aimed at, then wavering leads to utter loss, and disobedience and rejection are absolute error.

His Holiness Christ, with reference to Peter, hath uttered one word, and has not personally written anything, and that word is: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Notwithstanding the fact that it was only one word, void of any great importance and has been orally communicated and not written, nor has it been put down by the pen of Christ, yet all the apostles submitted and complied.

Now, the Blessed Beauty has given explicitly through His own writing, and by the stroke of the supreme pen the absolute command of obedience, and of the turning of the face toward the Centre. It must be either said that, God forbid, the Blessed Beauty was ignorant and has been wrong in commanding that all should obey the Centre of the Covenant or, on the other hand, obedience should be shown, and the face should be turned towards him. Strange! What answer will they give to the Blessed Beauty in the divine Kingdom? This much consideration is enough if justice is considered; and if it is not, and injustice prevails throughout discussions, then it is another question.

In fine, these Covenant-breakers and their disobedience are like unto froth, which does not last, and which shall soon vanish, while the sea itself which is the cause of life, will remain and

¹ Previous five paragraphs are from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 211–213.

continue to exist. Reflect upon the time subsequent to the manifestation of Christ: How many souls have sown in the Cause of God the seeds of sedition and intrigue but eventually their efforts were doomed to disappointment and failure and Truth hoisted its banner. This breaking of the Covenant is likewise doomed to failure. Like unto a mirage, soon it shall vanish and disappear.

Upon thee be greetings and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine; 24 June 1919.

Ernest Walters

His honour, Mr Ernest Walters, Chicago, Illinois—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of God!

Two letters have been received from thee and from the contents of both the turning of thy face toward the Kingdom of God was noted. Divine bounty has been extended and the blessings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh are complete. Rest thou assured that thyself and thy mother shall ever be encompassed by divine bounty, but thou must be so firm [X:14:268] and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament that the violators who may be found at thy meeting may not even draw a breath.

Today the magnet of the confirmations of the divine Kingdom is firmness in the Covenant and the Testament and all else save that is useless talk for by what can Bahá'í unity be preserved? Can it be preserved through the absurd and useless words of some people? God forbid. His Holiness Christ, in order to preserve the unity of Christendom addressed one word to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." This word preserved the unity of Christendom for 800 years although it was communicated only orally. But on the other hand the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* is not an oral communication; it is the mark of the Supreme Pen. It has been revealed in order to preserve Bahá'í unity, so that the souls may not become agitated and perturbed, may not every day set up for themselves an idol and establish a new centre of authority and seditious men may not agitate.

Glory be unto God! Notwithstanding this some thoughtless and ambitious persons desire to turn away through their meek language and flattery the souls from the straight path and cause them to wander aimlessly in the wilderness of superstitions. They have their liberty. On us it is incumbent to state the truth. Whosoever desires may accept it, and he who refuses, "Verily, God is independent of all the world."

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 18 July 1919.

Mr and Mrs Scheffler

To their honours, Mr and Mrs Scheffler, Chicago, Illinois—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two firm ones in the Covenant!

Happy are ye that, like unto a blessed tree, ye have struck roots deeply in the soil of the Covenant, and are in the utmost firmness and steadfastness. If a thousand winds begin to blow, they shall not affect ye and such should be one's firmness and steadfastness. Otherwise, if by the diffusion of the offensive odour of violation, health is converted into sickness, of what use is existence? Death and life are alike in that respect.

In short, I pray on your behalf and beg from the divine Kingdom assistance and bounty. Rest ye assured that ye are confirmed souls. Convey to all the friends my greeting.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, ‘Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

Mary Lesch

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Mary Lesch, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!
HE IS GOD!

O thou maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received and its contents indicated firmness in the Covenant. Therefore, the hope is entertained that thou wilt be assisted under all conditions, for today that which is most important is firmness in the Covenant and the Testament and otherwise Bahá’í unity will not be preserved. If Bahá’í unity could be preserved through something else, undoubtedly the Blessed Beauty would have commanded it.

In accordance with the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, which is the supreme authority and the *Kitáb-i-Ahd* which is the last book of the Blessed Beauty written by His supreme pen, all are addressed in a clear and explicit manner.

First he addresses the *Aghsán*, then the *Afnán* and the relatives and finally the rest of the friends and bids them to turn their faces toward the Centre of the Covenant. And the verses which have been revealed in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* [X:14:269] ordering all to turn after His Ascension to “Him who is branched from the Pre-Existent Root” are explicitly recorded in the *Kitáb-i-Ahd* as having for their object the Centre of the Covenant. And in another special Tablet the authenticity of which is admitted by every one, it is recorded that if the centre of violation whose proper name he mentions, deviates the least from the shadow of the Cause, he at once loses the station of Branchhood. How could it be more explicit? Now it must be either said that the Blessed Beauty has done wrong and has led the people to error for he ordered them to obey a person who ought not to have been obeyed, or on the other hand it must be said that the least deviation from the Covenant and the Testament entails deprivation from the bounties of the Luminary of the world. One of the two alternatives must be true and there is no third one to it.

In fine, Bahá’í unity cannot be preserved save through the Covenant of God. Today the stirring power in the body of the world is the Covenant, and if this Covenant is made ineffective, what power will be able to stir it? The statement which was made orally by His Holiness Christ to Peter—that “thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church”—this declaration preserved for a thousand years Christian unity. After the lapse of a thousand years, due to political questions, dissensions happened. Now, if this Word of Christ has preserved the unity of Christendom for a thousand years, consider what will be done by the *Kitáb-i-Ahd* which has been revealed by the Supreme Pen. But superficial, restless souls, who at first were firm in the Covenant and have written epistles with reference to their firmness and detachment from violators and have considered them as outcasts from the Threshold of the Almighty—and these epistles are still extant—these persons like unto Judas Iscariot, have for personal interests and financial motives, deviated from the Covenant. They followed the people of craft and stained their hands with the blood of Christ. Be admonished, O ye who possess intelligence!

If at all thou art firm and steadfast in the Covenant, strengthen and fortify thy relationships with the Convention, and from whomsoever thou inhalest the odour of violation, avoid his company and keep aloof, that thou mayest remain safe and protected under the protection of

the Covenant, and, like unto a candle, be ignited with the light of steadfastness.

I am kind to all people and do not attack anyone. I pray on behalf of all that all may gather under His divine protection. This Covenant and Testament have been entered into by the Blessed Beauty and I have not taken any such part. Let them answer Him and I have no objection. My duty is to be kind to everyone; vengeance is reserved for the Blessed Beauty and not for myself. As I am kind to everyone, I mention only the good characteristics of a person and if a word is written, the intention is the setting forth of truth and the preservation of the religion of God, so that Bahá'í unity may be preserved. If any persons desire to upset this unity, they are free and let them present their answers to the Blessed Beauty in the Abhá Kingdom, should He address them as follows:

“O ye, my friends! Have I, through My Supreme Pen and the explicit verses of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* commanded obedience or disobedience? Have I not ordered the centre of violation to obey and to turn his face (towards Him)? Why have ye turned away from My manifest and irrefutable Centre? I have given the command to turn your faces toward Him, how have ye turned away? Why have ye upset Bahá'í unity?”

What will they answer?

The friends must be very attentive and then whatever they deem advisable, [X:14:270] they may perform. I have nothing to impose. In America, no doubt whatever call is proclaimed, ambitious and thoughtless souls will be found to support it for a time. Even at Green Acre it has been remarked that one of the inhabitants of Malta was summoning men to excessive hunger [fasting] and used to receive pay for it. Notwithstanding this, some souls gathered around him and from hunger they seemed dead yet would pay to that man.

Do not grieve for thy dear brother who has ascended from this mortal world to the eternal realm and do not feel depressed. That drop has hastened to the limitless ocean and that wandering bird has flown to the shelter and nest of the Supreme Concourse. Thou shalt find him at the effulgent gathering in the Kingdom of Mysteries.

As to the dream thou didst have that thy brother appeared fully dressed, clothing is the ornament of man and that is the bounty of the Merciful. As to the bundle he had in hand, it is his benevolent deeds, and his serious look denoted his purpose to make thee realize the following fact: “Consider to what bounty I have attained! Praise be to God, that I am safe and well and have on me the garment of piety and carry in my hand the bundle of my deeds. I am alive and not dead. Consider closely, I am living and have not passed away. Be thou attentive.”

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

Mary Hall

To the maid-servant of God, Mary Hall, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

Thy letters were received. God willing, this time that thou hast turned away from the Theosophists to the Bahá'í faith, thou mayest remain so firm and steadfast that if all the people that dwell on earth should gather to deviate thee a hair's breadth from the path of Bahá'u'lláh, they would fail in their endeavour. Consider, that in the time of Christ, how much the Pharisees—and those souls who at first believed in Christ and then turned away from Him, such as Judas Iscariot and his companions—scattered the seeds of doubt in the Cause of

Christ, in order to shake the faith of the believing souls. But these doubts and those who originated them are like unto the foam of the ocean, which has been cast ashore by the ever-surfing ocean of Christ. This is because the foam does not last, while the ocean is eternal.

Praise be to God, thy eye has been again illumined, thy ear has responded, thou hast investigated the Truth and hast believed in the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. I hope that, day by day, the bounties of the Kingdom may constantly encircle thee, thou mayest daily increase in firmness and become the cause of the guidance of other souls.

As to thy presence in the Holy Land, these days it is very difficult, and here the conditions are not yet quite stable. God willing, when conditions are stabilized and travel is made easier, thou shalt present thyself.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 26 July 1919.

Dr Pauline Barton-Peeke

To the maid-servant of God, Dr Pauline Barton-Peeke, Cleveland, Ohio—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Praise be to God, it was indicative of the utmost firmness and steadfastness. It behoves [X:14:271] thee to be the herald of the Covenant and the Testament and to be attracted by the fragrances of the Merciful. The meeting thou dost hold at thy house pertains to the Kingdom, for the Sun of Reality shines therein. At the meeting the memory of God is commemorated, the hearts are turned to the divine Kingdom and the eyes are opened to witness the signs of the Merciful. Continue to hold this meeting and strive daily to fortify its basis and to arrange its sessions. My hope is that meeting may become in that land the recipient of merciful susceptibilities and the cause of the manifestation of divine illumination and the training of human souls.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 26 July 1919.

Roy Williams

To his honour, Mr Roy Williams, care of his honour Mr Hannen, Washington, D.C.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou firm in the Covenant!

Three consecutive letters have been received from thee. From their contents it became known that in Cleveland from the murky breaths of the Covenant-breakers the hearts are afflicted and among the friends harmony has decreased. Praise be to God! A hundred times it has been foretold that the violators are lying in ambush and by a certain means desire to cause dissension among the friends so that this dissension may end in violation of the Covenant. Notwithstanding this warning, how is it that the friends have neglected this explicit declaration?

The point at issue is firm, direct and in the utmost brevity. Either His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh was wise, omniscient and aware of consequences or was ignorant and a sinner. He entered by

His Supreme Pen into such a firm Covenant and Testament with all the Bahá'ís, first with the Aghṣán (branches), Afnán (twigs) and Muntasibún (relations)¹ and commanded them to obey and turn toward (him). By His supreme pen, He has explicitly declared that the object of the following verse of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (the Book of Laws) is the Greatest Branch:

“When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.”² Its meaning briefly is this: That after my ascension, it is incumbent upon the Aghṣán, the Afnán and the Muntasibún and all the friends of God to turn their faces to him who has branched from the Pre-Existent Root.

He also plainly says in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Book of Laws): “O people of the world! When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.”³ Addressing all the people of the world, He says: When the Dove of Holiness flies away from the orchard of praise to the Most Supreme and Invisible Station—that is, when the Blessed Beauty turns away from the contingent world towards the invisible Realm whatever ye do not understand from the Book refer it to him who has branched from the Pre-Existent Root. That is, whatever he says that is the actual fact.

And in the *Book of the Covenant*, He explicitly says that the object of this verse, “Who has branched from the Pre-Existent Root”, is the Greatest Branch. And He commands all the Aghṣán, Afnán, Muntasibún and the Bahá'ís to turn toward him. Now either [X:14:272] one must say that the Blessed Beauty has made a mistake or He must be obeyed. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has no command to call the people to its obedience save the diffusion of the fragrances of God, the exaltation of His Word, the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity, the establishment of universal peace, and so forth, from the Commands of God. These are divine commands and have nothing to do with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Whoever wishes may accept them and any one who rejects them may do as he pleases.

Now some of the mischief-makers, with many kinds of tricks are seeking leadership and in order to reach this position they instil some doubts among the friends that they may cause differences, and differences may result in drawing a party to themselves. But the friends of God must be awake and must know that the scattering of these doubts have as their motives personal intentions and the realization of leadership.

Do not break up Bahá'í unity, and this unity cannot be maintained save through faith in the Covenant of God.

In fine, thou hast the desire to travel about that thou mayest spread the fragrances of God. This is highly suitable. Assuredly divine confirmations will assist thee and the power of the Covenant and the Testament will secure thee triumph and victory.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 18 July 1919.

X:15, 12 December 1919 [X:15:275]

The collective centre

Address by Hooper Harris of New York City, delivered at the Sixth Session of the Bahá'í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Tuesday afternoon, 29 April 1919.

¹ “Hybrid” plurals formed by adding an English “s” to plural forms. e.g. Muntasib, pl. muntasibún.

² Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 63.

³ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 82.

In the great *Tablet of Ishráqát*, in the Persian meaning, shining forth; in the great Tablet of the shining forth, Bahá'u'lláh says, beginning the Tablet with this expression—"When He purposed to call the new creation into being, He sent forth the Manifest and Luminous Point from the horizon of His Will; it passed through every sign and manifested itself in every form until it reached the zenith

"This Point is the focal centre of the circle of Names and marketh the culmination of the manifestations of Letters in the world of creation. Through it have appeared indications of the impenetrable Mystery, the adorned Symbol, He Who standeth revealed in the Most Great Name And when the Point was joined to the second Letter¹ ... it traversed the heavens of exposition and utterance. Then the eternal Light of God shed its radiance, flared up in the midmost heart of the firmament of testimony and produced two Luminaries."²

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

The Word of God is that luminous point, the desire or the will or the Word of God. He, therefore, first sends forth His Word, His will, and that will traverses the circle and these two great orbs [luminaries] are produced. We read in the Old Testament that the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water and then the creation, took place. In other words, creation is not out of nothing, as the theologians say. God has not spoken in our own Scriptures or in any scriptures of creation *ex nihilo*, that is to say, creation out of nothing.

Creation is a process, is a forming, and the process of the forming is plainly told us if we have the eye to see it in these words of Bahá'u'lláh in the great shining forth. There we have the point and the circle, the centre and the circumference, and in the point and the circle the centre and the circumference, we have the whole of all there is in the science of mathematics. In the point we have the symbol of the singleness of God; in the circle we have the symbol of the all-ness of God. Both the point and the circle are the symbols of eternity because you can extend the point forever and ever in either direction and never reach the end of it; you can subdivide it forever and ever and never reach the end of it. It is infinite in its minuteness; it is infinite in its greatness. The circle is the enclosure; it is the horizon, it is the circumference. You can go around it forever and ever and never get to the end of it.

The point is the symbol of the Occident, the singleness of God; the circle is the symbol of the Orient, the all-ness of God, and not until the point and the circle meet do you have the absolute oneness. So Bahá'u'lláh has taught us the singleness and the oneness of God, and in the singleness and oneness of God [X:15:276] we again have the point and the circle, the circle and the circumference.

In the West, every church spire pointing with its sharp point up into the heavens, represents a mathematical idea of God, the one God in heaven in singleness. In the East every religious temple has a dome, it has the half circle; it represents the eye of God, looking out in every direction and seeing His all-ness. The symbols, the point and the circle, the symbols of geometry and the symbols of arithmetic are concrete mathematics, yet nothing in themselves. The one can do nothing alone; the cipher can do nothing alone. But when you bring the two together, the one and the cipher you have the ten, and in the ten you have the decimal system and in the decimal system you have the principle of mathematics that builds everything; the principle of mathematics which builds your cities, which builds your great bridges, your great works of engineering, your great construction work because the Occident and the Orient have come together. They have clasped hands.

The point is the symbol of the objective being, the circle is the symbol of the subjective

¹ That is the letter 'B', the second letter of the Arabic alphabet.

² Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 101-2.

being. Now we see that even in the description given us in the creation, the earth was without form and void and the Spirit of God moved upon the surface of the waters and there commenced to be a forming, a creating, a drawing in toward a collective centre. And then in the spiritual sense when God sent forth His prophet, His Manifestation, His Word, for the purpose of a new spiritual creation in this universe, the same principle exactly was followed. He sent forth the luminous point—as in this great, new wonderful creation of our own day, the Báb—and eighteen others, making nineteen “letters of the living”.

If you will study carefully you will find that Jesus the Christ had twelve disciples, men—and there were six women dear to his heart, his faithful servants who, because of the character of the times and the conditions were not outwardly known as disciples, but who were in a spiritual and inner sense just as truly disciples of the blessed Christ as were his twelve men disciples, and so then there were eighteen “letters of the living”, and together with Christ, himself the point, made the nineteen; and the one and the nine, ten. The Báb, the luminous point, passes through these signs or letters. He has his eighteen “letters of the living”, the greatest of all of whom, thank God, was a woman, Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, who gave her life for this great Cause in such a manner that Dr Pollock, a western physician present at the time and witnessing her execution, makes the statement, publishes it in writing, that that magnificent, that wonderful woman bore with infinite patience, without a murmur of complaint, with great gladness, a long and torturing death for the sake of the great freedom of woman and of the race. Eighteen “letters of the living”, himself the point, the luminous point, nineteen; one and nine, ten.

And then there were created these great two orbs [luminaries], the great Manifestations of God, the orb of command, the orb of revelation, the orb of manifestation; and the other orb, the Centre of the Covenant. Two great orbs. So we have in the outer, physical creation, according to the description, the great collective centre as well as in the spiritual creation the great collective centre. We have outwardly in this physical universe of ours, the great collective centre the sun. Around it revolve the planets and everything in the circumference of that enclosure is pulling upon the sun, and the sun in its turn is pulling to it every particle, every smallest atom throughout the solar system. And so, through this great collective centre, the sun, and through the great law of gravitation—which on the material and the outer plane is the expression of love, because that is the attraction of gravitation, the affinity of atom for atom, the love of atom for atom—through this great central orb, the sun and the physical expression of love, gravitation, the order of the universe is maintained.

And then, I think you will find in the great book, *Seven Valleys*, Bahá’u’lláh—long before the scientists knew anything about it—said “Split the atom’s heart, and lo! Within it thou wilt find a sun.”¹ The scientists came along and have discovered that the atom could be split and they did split it, and at its centre they found a form of electromagnetic energy that they named the electron. So even the little atom is a world complete in itself, the point and the circle and its point or centre is the electron. Its circumference is all the rest of it and through the radiant energy at its centre, its world is held together and the order of the integrity of even the little atom is maintained and preserved through this principle of the collective centre.

The great organism we call the macrocosm; man as an individual has been called a microcosm. What is true of the macrocosm is also of the microcosm because man, as an individual, has also his own universe and at the centre of that universe is a great collective centre. And in the individual man what is that collective centre? Bahá’u’lláh says in his *The Hidden Words*, “... and within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else ...”² So that the centre of each individual human being, the centre of

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*, p. 12.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 12.

the universe of the individual, he calls the essence of the light of God, radiance from God at the centre of the individual human being. And where does that centre exist? God has told us that there is a connection between the individual and the soul.

The soul is not in the body like something within a shell but each individual is connected with his soul and his soul is the carrier of the commands of God. Through the soul the individual receives the light of the inspiration and the knowledge God. Not merely by their circumferences meeting; they are connected by the meeting of their centres.

When centre is connected with centre then you have a real unity, a real joining. When only circumference is joined with circumference you merely have an outer contact, which is a very different thing. So the man or the woman who is truly joined to the great collective centre, God, is joined at that point of connection where the two worlds meet, joined at the place where the soul connects the individual with the great, the eternal, and the universal.

We pass on to the collective centre of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. You will remember how one day Jesus was walking with his disciples, and he passed the temple, the outer temple of stone, and he said, "You see this temple? Destroy it and in three days I will build it again," and the writer, the reporter of the words of Jesus, notes that he did not refer to this temple of stone; he referred to the temple of his own body. Again Jesus said, "Know ye not that the Kingdom of Heaven is amongst you?" The words do admit of the meaning that the Kingdom of Heaven is "within" you, that is quite true, but that is not the primary meaning of the words. The primary meaning of the words was that the Kingdom of Heaven is amongst you, and he meant by that that the Word of God in the flesh, walking among men, was the organic law of men, in the midst of them; that He was their king, He was their charter; He was their law, He was the Kingdom of God amongst them. The commentators point out that he must have meant this because the words are addressed to the Pharisees and the commentators say that it is not likely that in addressing the Pharisees he would have said the Kingdom of Heaven is "within you".

The body of the Manifestation of God upon the earth is the Kingdom of God amongst men, and He is the great col- [X:15:278] lective centre of the whole human race. In the Tablet¹ ... 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives illustrations of various collective centres. You will hear these things from his own pen and he says that the collective centre, the real collective centre among men, is the body of the teachings of the Kingdom of God. What does he mean? That the teachings of God are not something which are just scattered here and there and everywhere without any system and without any order, but that they have a body and a body means an organism. You cannot have a body without an organism; a body must have its head, it must have its heart, it must have its lungs, it must have the things that constitute a body. Now, there are different ideas of what might be considered the body of the teachings of God, the body of the teachings of God on the earth today.

First and foremost, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant, is in himself, in his own personality, the body of the teachings of the Kingdom of God. Mrs Dreyfus-Barney said to me when I was in 'Akká, "The Master does not pose, there is no posing about the Master." He is as simple as a little child, so simple that he fools people who do not know who and what he is. That dear, sweet, wonderful old man, in his own personality, in his own body walking this earth today is the body of the teachings of the Kingdom of God, is the law of the Kingdom of God, is everything that there is in the Kingdom of God embodied and shown forth in a human life, in a human personality.

Now, the Centre of the Covenant of God upon this earth today, the body of the teachings of God upon the earth today, has himself told us that the Mashriqu'l-Adhikár, the outward

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 100–107.

physical temple, will one day show forth the most marvellous spiritual results and that all of the activities of the Kingdom are to go forth from the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the outer physical temple. He himself has named that outer physical temple as a collective centre for the teachings of God. He has sent us a great and wonderful Tablet, a Tablet calling for action, a Tablet calling for us to do something, not merely to take his words and to say of them, Beautiful! Wonderful! Not merely to enjoy ourselves in a great spiritual feast in the delight of listening to that word and utterance, not merely in the sacred reverence we have for those writings and their embellishment as we have them here in these unveilings, Beautiful, beautiful! Wonderful, wonderful! But that is not what the Great Master is calling on us for. He is calling on us for *action*. He is calling on us to do the things that he is asking us to do, telling us how to do, in these great Tablets.

We should respond to the call, we should see the necessity of the collective centre after he himself has told us about it, we should realize that here is the collective centre whose radii extends from that centre to the circumference and that from everywhere throughout that whole circumference every least and little ray, even at the outer edge of the circumference if it is turned toward the centre, will come together in a great meeting and join and know each other in the centre. It is inevitable, it cannot be avoided. But the minute you turn your back upon that centre, the minute you say, "I am an individual, I am going to have my own individual way, I don't believe in any collective centre, I think I can do this thing for myself", and you begin to look out toward the horizon, toward the outer rim of the circle and you have your own little way, talking—Oh, how beautifully people can *talk*, when they should do—talking in the most beautiful and wonderful way, all the time you are getting further and further apart from everyone of these little rays that start from that collective centre. And we might go on for ever and ever and never come together, because the mathematical principle is contrary to our coming together if we follow that course. But the very minute that we turn in our tracks, each one of us gets rid of his desire to have his own little particular or individual way, or to exalt himself in any little way, or to think that he amounts to anything—Ah, how could he amount to anything if he only knew in comparison to the great heart of God how little he really is and how big he can become if he finds his reality there in Him, the bigger One!—if he only comes to know that, and to realize that and turns his back to the circumference and his face toward the great Centre of the Covenant, then he is marching from the great outer rim—column after column, you can see them as they come, marching and marching from every point of that circle and from the circumference, each one intent upon his own business, each one doing his own duty, and yet every one of them from every point, gradually, persistently, inevitably, tending to the great union—where he and they are joined in the Centre, and are not merely brought together by contact on the outer circumference.

If this great Congress and Convention does not succeed in bringing us to this realization, that we must obey the call of the Centre of the Covenant, that we must listen with all our hearts and souls to what he has to say about the commands and about the collective centre, then our session will have failed, and who are to do the work?

Thank God for ever and for ever, eternally thank Him, that you shall hear His words in these great Tablets, quoting first the words of Jesus the Christ, "Blessed are the poor for theirs is the Kingdom of God," and then He Himself saying, "Blessed are the nameless and the traceless poor, for they are the leaders of mankind!"¹

X:15, 12 December 1919 [X:15:279]

The Manifestation of divinity through inspiration

Address by Şafá Kinney of Boston, delivered at the Sixth Session of the Bahá'í Congress at

¹ Bahá'u'lláh in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 34.

Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Tuesday afternoon, 29 April 1919.

My beloved brother, Hooper Harris, has given you really the first phase, or the first conditions of my topic and in all that I have to say, I want you to consider that as the first part of my few words. ... I have taken for my text this afternoon the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," and I wish to present the same thought that Brother Harris has presented from the standpoint of one who is trying.

Everything, everywhere, has a manifestation of some wonderful thought or idea behind it, or lying concealed, shall we say. If you wander through the fields, if you wander through the rose-gardens, if you pass into the midst of the great forest there you see nature in activity; there you see the wonderful flowers of the field, the daisies, growing, passing through their phases of development and then passing away, and you see the wonderful gardens coming to fruition and fullness, passing into the blossoms and then into the seed, and passing away, leaving the seed behind; [X:15:286] and if you go into the forest there you hear the rustling of the giant trees, and the wind blowing through their branches to a sighing tune, and you say to yourself, if you are a thoughtful man, "Why, I see all these things, I feel all these things, I smell the beautiful flowers and hear the whispering trees, and I may even break the branches, but whence came they?" Have you never thought of that? You must realize that they come from an invisible idea. In other words, that they are indeed manifestations of some perfection, laying hidden somewhere, and then if you pass away from the forest and away from the flowers and away from the fields, and into the cities, and come into the great cathedral and hear the organ playing and on all sides of you, you see the mighty, massive columns and the vaulted roof, the beautiful statuary, you see another phase of the same thing. There you see things born of the idea and the brain of men, something more tangible, perhaps, than nature. You say to yourself, "Oh, how beautiful that statuary is! Why, it looks so much like someone I knew", as we might say in Boston, like Phillips Brooks, or like Lincoln or a great picture of Washington, or a great statue that resembles some great saint of the past ages in the church; and the mighty organ, which is the idea that embodies forth the mysteries of music, and you say to yourself, "There is the mind of man at work. What a wonderful idea that artist had, that genius had, that great creator, that great architect had, when he put them forth, and we have these wonderful results to turn to, all manifesting the idea lying hidden and concealed."

And after awhile perhaps we ask ourselves, "Now, which is most real of all these things: The manifestation of them in the concrete forms that we see before us, or the idea lying behind?" And in this wonderful age when so many things are transpiring every moment of the time, when you see giant planes flying through the air in such a marvellous way that seems to take you out of yourself, when you put your ear to a little instrument and you hear the voice of a friend you know is thousands of miles away, you are not satisfied with ordinary explanations. The logic of a simple explanation will not appeal to your soul. You say, "The mystery of nature is too great; the mystery of the mind is too great. Where may I go to look for the explanation for all these things" And the only answer, is the divine prophet of God, a wonderful picture of whom has been portrayed by my beautiful brother, such a valiant warrior of God. In that collective centre and from that divine point of energy, each of us realize that something may flow, that something may happen, that something may come to the earth, and the next question you will ask of yourself, "Well, when does he come? I myself, feel that I am a manifestation of myself. Am I a manifestation of this centre?" And so we question ourselves. We go all about, and some people feeling their own importance do say they are this centre and do feel that they are God, but I tell you after they come in contact with the real thing, they begin to forget all about it, because we have every evidence as Bahá'ís that everyone of us, with no exception, fails at some point, except the One who is that collective centre. In that collective centre we do find perfection, we do find the infallible, but nowhere

else. Praise God that it is so. How fortunate that we have some standard of knowledge that will give us a realization of the truth and the answer to our question.

But let us go on. Take that for [X:15:287] granted then, that there is set up this eternal connection between the individual and the divine centre. There must be then some further thought on the subject, and in studying over the history of the world which is the only answer to all these great questions, we find that just so often there comes into the world these divine ones, claiming to be that collective centre, not so much by the very proposition, not so much by their saying, "I am this divine centre", but from the result of their work, which is ever the proof. And so we find that just so often there has come into this world a manifestation from this hidden place, this concealed origin, this divine wisdom, this holocaust which in turn fires you and me, and this is ever the process. It has ever been so.

The other evening at the wonderful dinner we all attended our beautiful speaker, Dr Guthrie said that there was nothing new in this Bahá'í Revelation, and he said "Praise be to God that this is so." Well, I praise God that there is something new in this divine Revelation, and I want to simply correct Dr Guthrie and say that he had not found the point of contact. He was looking on the surface for the new things. Oh, no, the sunlight is always new. But we do not look for the sunlight to the sunlight, or in the sunlight for new things, but when the sun strikes the earth in spring we have the new flowers and so the Bahá'í Revelation is to give to the world the new things and the wonderful things that the people who have not become real intrinsic Bahá'ís cannot find. They cannot find it yet because the sunlight is just glancing on the spiritual world. Sometimes there will come the divine blossoming of this flower which is coming now. Then we will have the new things. Then we will manifest forth the divinity of our inspiration, and that is the point I want to make.

Now, you and I are the strugglers toward the new and wonderful things that will manifest through inspiration. God gives us the grace and grants us the power to do it. How can we ever get there? Just through one magic word, "sacrifice", that is the absolute requirement. The first great sacrifice, we have been told, is to cut oneself loose from the tales of the past. Is the past all wrong? Are the tales of the past all wrong? No, thank God, they were not all wrong. They are not today all wrong, but those of us who are to manifest to the world through inspiration can never do it if we are tied to the old, and no matter how true the old may be, no matter how fitting it may be we have got to bare our souls until there is nothing left of self, until all the tales, all the knowledge and all that we have is gone, and then will God send to you and to me a new inspiration. Then will we manifest and then only, the new, through inspiration. Indeed, the mind must be fortified, the way must be made clear through the divine Word; there must be no mistake about it, because the mind is not in a condition to be truly inspired yet, but the time will come no doubt when we will not have to be so guarded about the words, in fact our beloved Master said to me one day when I was wandering in his garden and taking pictures, he said to me, in the most comical way—he caught me unawares; I had my coat off, and I was dreadfully ashamed, I did not know why—"Ah," he said, "you take pictures and you steal my house and you steal my grounds and you steal my people, and you take them away with you to America in your camera. I will send my lawyer after you and I will put you in prison," and then he waited a moment, tapped me on the shoulder, and laughing, said, "All things will pass away, some day my words that I have written down will pass away; but the words that I have written on the tablet of the heart will never pass away." So you see that is the real meaning of the manifestation of divinity through inspiration, the blessed [X:15:288] words written on the heart of a true believer by the finger of God.

Oh, the sacrifice that is needed! Oh, the cutting loose from all things! Oh, the self-abnegation that you and I must practice! Oh, the torture of the wounds that we must endure, laughing and joyfully! Oh, the prayers that we must pray that at the very moment of triumph we may not yield to the Satan and glory in self, to the awful serpent that is always in our

garden presenting to us the wonderful feast of the flower of self-indulgence in some way or other! God grant that we may endure, and God grant that we may ask for calamities and sacrifice so that we may get away from that thing, because in that way alone can you and I manifest divinity through inspiration.

What is inspiration? What is the manifestation of divinity through inspiration? I tell you, the finger of God will not write a great story in the mirror that is dulled with the ashes of self. The light will not shine powerfully through that mirror. Inspired words are not born forth from such a mouth, and when in the mercy of God everything has been taken away, and we are only left the power to testify to His glory—and perhaps nothing else—then will our souls glory in that we have been given the power for His sake to endure, that this thing might happen.

Oh, brothers and sisters of the Cause, seek, seek, seek, for eternal happiness in that way! Do not rest a moment and do not forever be asking that your self-satisfaction may be gratified, that you may be put up or put down in some place you may like, but that you may endure, that you may receive. Because all sacrifices, the sacrifices that these blessed Ones, these glorious Ones, come and make are the greatest of all. What they have endured! Why? Let me mention one thing which is in keeping with our subject. You and I collectively have the power to make of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the false Christ, we have that power when you and I do not let him write on our hearts and speak through our lips of his power and testify from whence he comes. But as you and I prove faithful to the truth, as we receive in our hearts the glory of this power, and as we, through faithfulness, on the mount of faithfulness dwell, so will we testify that he is no false Christ, but in our lives prove him to be the return of the Son of God upon earth, who is for you and for me that divine manifestation through inspiration. "How great, the greatest sacrifice that ere was made for man, when from the heavenly radiant throne the light descends to our dark world—God's perfect plan!"

Again and yet again hath shone
That ray divine, supreme,
God's lowly Messengers have come,
Have sacrificed and have proclaimed
The mighty theme.

It mirrored forth through our Lord Christ
Who left for us this prayer
To pray, that God's blest day would come
When all would be fulfilled, and Love
Reign everywhere.

Now, is the sacrifice complete!
God doth His day enthrone!
The Lamb of God, 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
Hath come! He is our King of Love
And we, his own.

Come forth! from every land appear!
In him are all things well.
Awake! and leave behind aught else
Ye sons of God; He's calling you With him to dwell!

New glories on new glories dawn—
O do not hesitate!
The mystery of love is ours
And for our sake hath come this high,

This vast estate.

X:16, 31 December 1919 [X:16:295]

The solution of the economic and industrial problem

Address by Alfred E. Lunt of Boston, delivered at the Seventh Session of the Bahá'í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Tuesday evening, 29 April 1919.

Today from all parts of the world, from every corner and nativity, we hear the moans of the widows, the cries of the fatherless; the anguish of the suffering, the poor and the unfortunate, has arisen to such a degree that the flame of revolution in the social, the industrial and economic fields of humanity is well-high sweeping the whole globe. We should not dwell in a false security, ignorant of that which is in process. His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, when in America in 1912, clearly stated these events. He stated, among other things, that except the great divine remedy which has been brought to humanity today for the purpose of quelling this revolutionary rage shall be exercised, the world will inevitably pass through a condition most perilous, most dangerous, most destructive. He said one other thing, and he has reiterated this saying so frequently that it seems to me to have a distinct bearing upon this great subject.

You all recall, or many of you recall, his statement concerning the human soul, that it is capable of two flights, one upward towards the very throne of the divine, one downward into the mire and clay of the contingent world. That mankind, the noblest of the creation, the royal falcon of the skies of heaven, has so besmeared himself with the mire and [X:16:296] clay of disobedience to God, of selfish purpose, of acquisition of wealth, of isolation from his neighbour, of ignorance of God, that the bird of his soul has become ensnared in this mud of disobedience. This is the water and clay symbolically expressing the contingent world.

Have you ever thought of the meaning of that really dread term, the contingent world; the contingent world, the world of corruption and generation, the world of composition and decomposition? The very meaning of the word, contingent is that it is dependent upon something else. By itself it is non-existent; it is in a constant state of flux; it is the world of darkness and duality. In the contingent world the law of duality has its full sway. In the worlds of God, praise be to God, the law of contrast and duality is extinguished. In the great orb of the sun, if we imagine life there, there is no night, it is always day. But in this contingent world in which we dwell, duality and the requirements of duality exist; here are the great contrasts of darkness and light, selfishness and love, of life and death. The great tidal movements in the world are, themselves, dual and contrasted. How wonderfully Tennyson has expressed this in his poem "Crossing the Bar:"

"But such a tide that moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home."

That tide that drew from out the boundless deep, and thus returns from whence? From that remote place to which it has hastened in response to the great law of its being, the law of opposites in the world of mortality. In this world, the soul of man which is drawn from out the boundless deep, from the bosom of God, begins its return journey to Him, if perchance it heeds His call, but in the worlds of God there is only one movement, one return-flow; there is no longer involution as in this world and the lower kingdoms, but conscious evolution towards Him who is the origin and the return.

So the law of the contingent is the law of savagery; it is what has been called by 'Abdu'l-Bahá the rapacious law of nature which holds in its clutch even humanity itself. Today nine-tenths of our beings, through disobedience to the divine law, have become ensnared in the,

claws of nature, and unless the divine power which has entered the world shall lift up this bird of humanity, shall cleanse its wings of the mire and clay so that it may fly in the high atmosphere of devotion and obedience, then only destruction can be looked for, for the entire race. This is the beginning of a cycle when that great mystery of God is being accomplished. The appearance of Bahá'u'lláh marked the entrance into this world of that divine power through which all mankind may be uplifted.

Among the requirements of the [X:16:297] contingent world is one which lies at the very seat of economic difficulties. It is called the law of the "survival of the fittest"; this law is inexorable, it is merciless, it overcomes everything which assumes to stand in its way, it is the car of the Juggernaut, and in its course mankind is as a pygmy. How well I recall that splendid old professor, N. S. Shaler of Harvard, when he said to us in one of his lectures, as a means of protest or amelioration of the inexorable character of this law of survival which was first mentioned by the great scientist Charles Darwin,—that there is another pre-eminent law in this world of creation, the aesthetic law, the law of beauty, and he gave us this illustration. He referred to the Irish elk, an extinct animal which ages ago lived in what is now Ireland. This great animal developed through the natural law of aesthetic beauty the most wonderful antlers. These antlers developed through the process of the ages until they were the most beautiful antlers of any animal in the world. They have been found in fossil condition, and it is known that they grew to that degree of beauty and size that the great elk in running through the forests caught his antlers in the high branches of the trees and tore them off. Thus he became extinct. The whole species perished by bleeding to death. This animal became extinct because in the contingent world he found himself in the clutches of the law of destruction, so that we see there is no escape in the animal realm from this; even the law of selective beauty did not save him. Although its traces appear in this world as a foreshadowing of the reality of the beauty of God, yet it also, encompassed by the dominating power of the natural law of survival of the fittest, became the agency of his destruction. Likewise there is no escape for mankind if he remain in these clutches.

There is another great law, a great intangible law, called by the economists the law of "supply and demand". This also is a law of duality, supply and demand, ebb and flow, and in the face of this law, mankind in the industrial sense has been helpless from the dawn of history. Man has tried for centuries by various measures of legislation and the enactment of statutes to overcome or modify this law, but without any measure of success.

Today, we witness various attempts in the legislatures of the world, especially in this country, to blunt the sharp instrument of that law,—old-age pensions, minimum wage laws, have been devised which it is believed will result in ameliorating the conditions occasioned by the application of this greater law, but they are not adapted to the seriousness of the disease. The old age pension law is only the faintest trace of the divine remedy which has been given us today for the solution of sociological needs. It attempts only to take care of persons who have passed, for instance, the age of sixty-five, and these are to be given a mere pittance which in turn is raised by various means from taxation, but it entirely ignores those under this age limit who are likewise subject to vicissitudes. Consider how often that men and women of thirty, forty, fifty and sixty years find themselves the victims of this pitiless economic law, through no fault of their own, and are deprived of the necessities of life, having to turn to charitable organizations or the almshouses for their food and their shelter. The widow and fatherless, left without means, find no relief under this law. The young or middle-aged, upon whom fortune has temporarily frowned, are left without remedy. How frequently it is that such souls, temporarily tided over the hard places, become sources of economic wealth to their communities and countries. Is it right that mankind should be subjected to such humiliation and pauperism as this? The old age pension plan will never care for these universal needs, it [X:16:298] cannot be acceptable as a complete remedy.

Likewise the minimum wage law. Originally intended to assist the poorest paid women workers—a very high ideal brought it forth—it was found, in many typical cases, that the moment it was put into operation these needy ones became the victims of the law, wholesale unemployment resulting in factories and in stores. In my own state of Massachusetts, from the moment the minimum wage decrees went into effect in certain industries, hundreds of girls were discharged by their employers, who said, “If we must pay a high wage, we will see that we get the very most efficient service, and you to whom we have been paying a low wage are not able to earn this, therefore you must go out in the street,”—and when that condition was brought home to some of the advocates of the law, they said, it is true it is inevitable, but, they said “No wages is better than low wages.” Does this sound reasonable? And yet these are the highest expressions and attempts of American and English legislation to meet this tremendous question which is on the tongues of every one, which is responsible for the risings in Russia, which is responsible for the famine in Europe, which is responsible for the breadlines in New York.

We as Bahá’ís, nay the whole world, have been given a complete and detailed remedy by the heavenly law-giver. Why, then, do we reach out to the theories and imaginations or the disputes of theorists in Russia or anywhere else? Their protest is sound. They need the divine, help. They need proper legislation. They need kindness. They need brotherhood and all the high elements of life, but the remedy they offer and the means they use is the remedy of force and violence, is the remedy, at times, of assassination, is the remedy of ignorance, is the remedy of a class system, simply substituting a class control by a certain part of the workers for the former class control by the Czar and his nobles. This limited remedy cannot surely be acceptable in this divine plan because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said, “Force is not acceptable, you cannot obtain these remedies by force,” he says. It must be done through love, it must be done through justice, it must be done through the inclusion of every class, for, as he said to the Socialists, “There must always be the captain of industry, the general, as he called him, the captain, the private, and lieutenant in the body of humanity.”

You cannot level mankind. You cannot equalize mankind in that sense because it is contrary to the inherent creative elements with which man has been endowed by God Himself, the law of variant capacities. These theories which we are hearing from all quarters are the theories of desperation and of imagination; they are theories which ignore absolutely the law of unity so wonderfully set forth in the Bahá’í teachings, which show that the body of humanity is even as the body of a man. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, in substance, “The body of humanity is stretched on the bed of severe disease, almost perishing, and only the divine physician can save it.” That is, the diagnosis and prescription of that Holy One alone can raise this patient, desperately ill, into health.

Among the theories of the controlling Russian element today is one ignoring certain classes. For instance, they say, “We will not have the bourgeois have any part or share in government”, yet the bourgeois, as we know them in this country, are frequently the eyes and the ears and the brain, we will say, or some other important function of the body politic, not more important, not more necessary than the other organs, but necessary. The truest and most divine government is that which co-relates, most closely to the divine type of the composite man, the various functions of that body as represented by the varying capacities of the individuals and groups [X:16:299] making up its citizenship. Therefore until they produce a system, a method of adequately meeting the real evils, shall we run after their ideas when God Himself has given us the solution to these industrial and economic problems?

Only the emanations, of the divinity, the love of God, can solve this problem. Until the hearts of humanity are instilled with that love, until they are transformed, until the bird of humanity is raised from the mud and clay of desire and passion and selfishness, and released from these chains, and from the prison of the contingent world, and flies in the air of the spirit,

how can we apply the divine remedy? In other words, it is transformation, it is metamorphosis, it is resurrection, it is rebirth, which is needed. And that is the mission and the task of the great Manifestation of this age, and the Centre of His Covenant who is amongst us; and unless we look to that divine plan we have no redress.

If we want to help the people of the world and ourselves and rise from this low, degraded station, let us find the sweet words of life which have flowed from the lips of the mighty Manifestation of God. He is the skilful physician whose finger is on your pulse and mine, on the pulse of those needy souls in the Bowery, on the pulse of the souls in the palaces. He is God, and He includes them all, and He has a provision for all, and His provision is this—His provision contemplates an arrangement which will forever prevent pauperism, which will forever prevent the sufferings of the poor, such as we have known and know today, which will forever prevent the continued amassing of cumbersome fortunes on the scale we have witnessed by those who recognize no master but self, in respect to the use that they make of their possessions.

This provision will equalize to a certain degree society, without interfering with the inherent, creative, and individual initiative, which God has implanted at the roots of our beings. It is not going to be a Socialistic collectivism or communism. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says this is impossible because it would interfere, or attempt to interfere, with the divine law itself, and when you attempt to interfere with the divine law you are overborne, defeated. Therefore, these remedies of equality, so-called, which do not take into consideration the varying capacities of men, do not succeed. The divine physician recognizes His handiwork and He calls for the administration of justice to every soul, and the inclusion of all.

Now this divine plan comprises several different aspects. First, the inheritance law. No longer shall a wealthy man be able to hand down his entire fortune to his oldest son, creating a family autocracy of enormous wealth, which through the years, or so long as the family resists the process of degeneracy, may constitute a menace to society. Instead of this, the Bahá’í law provides that every fortune, small and great, shall be distributed equally among the children, and others of kin and groups in certain definite proportions. In this, also, is contained another important provision which in turn must not be ignored because it relates to the very heart and soul, that of *education*—that is, for the establishment in every life, in every distribution of fortune, of a definite part to be given to the teachers of the world. How this will elevate the station of the teacher, which is so crippled today, ill-trained, poorly paid as many of them are, incompetent in many cases. Under the training of the divine institutes, illumined by the light of the new and wonderful sciences of this new age, the teachers of the world, endowed and protected by this fund, will become the mirrors of heavenly knowledge, and the moulders of character and wisdom. Then, you will see humanity leap forward into the arena of mental conquests previously undreamed of, under the guidance of teachers adequately prepared for this greatest of human services. Such teachers will be informed of the inner life of the child, the realities, of the indwelling spirit which must be brought forth, fostered and made brilliant, inasmuch as these are the divine jewels of each soul.

Next, we have the encouragement of profit-sharing for the worker, i.e., the employee; this provision forms a part of the divine solution. Wages, as a means of satisfying labour, have proved inadequate. The wage system has led to strike upon strike, force upon force, violence upon violence. This is because wages alone, as a means of determining the value of labour, are peculiarly subject to the inexorable economic law of supply and demand, which is a requirement of nature, as we have seen. There must be an added determinant of value which will draw the worker nearer the centre of common interest which the industry presents both to him and his employer. This common interest is the welfare and prosperity of the business itself. If this be done, the outer pressure upon the worker which ever seeks to array him

against the employer, by force, if necessary, finds its influence diminished and the appeal to force will be substituted by that persuasion of unity which is the *common interest* of both. Until society properly and justly cares for the worker by making him a real partner in enterprise to a certain degree which is just and equitable, entitling him to a share, at the end of the year, of the profits according to the interest he holds, we will never find labour either quiescent, peaceful or contented.

It is certain that wages alone as a means of compensation has led to these constant strikes and lockouts, bitterness and great economic loss; whereas the matter should be dealt with at the fountain head. The meaning is not to abolish the wage system, but to supplement it. The bargaining power of enormous aggregations of workers, i.e., trade unions, is at present necessarily invoked to combat a stubborn employer, or one who is himself helpless in the grasp of the economic law of competition with its frequently sharply defined margin of profit. But this bargaining power of the labour union sometimes openly ignores the justice of the common interest. In its anxiety to demonstrate its power, unemployment, following the strike, hits hardest at the slender pocketbook of the worker, the unionist, himself. Its most serious failing, however, lies in its being an instrument of force and compulsion, setting up a similar psychology in the employer. Shutdowns, and lockouts result, with great financial loss to the ones who can least afford this, the workers themselves.

This mode of settling great industrial conflicts is rejected by the enlightened thought of this new age. "Not warfare, but perfect welfare," says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is the aim. The organs of this industrial body must co-relate and, in sympathetic co-operation, function in the utmost unity. The eye of man does not see because the liver arises with force to compel. Rather, under such conditions, the vision becomes impaired and the whole body poisoned. On the contrary, in the healthy body each assists the other, each draws necessary aid from the other, and each contributes harmoniously to the highest functioning of the other.

Therefore, force and violence are seen to be the handmaids of the contingent world, not the divine agencies of happiness. The rich and the powerful ones among us must voluntarily and through recognition of this great industrial truth, give a full measure of justice to the noble place of labour freely consenting to a fundamental law which recognizes the industrial body of unity. For Bahá'u'lláh has exalted labour denoting it even a worship to God, and [X:16:301] has said to the wealthy ones of earth, "The poor among ye are My trust. Therefore guard My trust and be not wholly occupied with your own ease."

Next, is the great law of the tithe or income tax. In this, a new and wonderful principle has been disclosed by Bahá'u'lláh as interpreted by the Centre of the Covenant. A trust principal, a great trust fund and a beneficiary of that fund has been created by him. For the first time in the history of the world, a Prophet of God has dealt in a comprehensive way with the economic question, and revealed a law for its solution. As he says:

"We have heard the midnight sighing of the poor."

His Holiness Christ said:

"Blessed are the poor for theirs shall be the Kingdom of Heaven."

And His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, explaining this, says:

"Blessed are the nameless and traceless poor, for they are the leaders of mankind."

In the Qur'án it is written:

"We desire to bestow our gifts upon those who have become weak on the face of the earth, and make them a nation and the heirs (of spiritual truth)."

This is interpreted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to mean.

“We wish to grant a favour to the impotent souls and suffer them to become the *inheritors* of the Messengers and the Prophets.”

Thus, it is seen that, in this day of restitution of all things, the divine promises respecting the poor are fulfilled. The divine justice establishes that which mankind in its selfish absorption, has forgotten. And this establishment, being inclusive of all classes, preserves the rights of the rich, as well. Under this law, a portion of the surplus income of every soul must be diverted to this trust fund which will be administered by the wise men of every community, to be put into effect first with the farmer. Agriculture will receive a great impetus and from this the plan will be extended into the other industrial fields. For the first time the poor are assured the right to the necessities of life. Let it be understood clearly that to be entitled to this right, one must not have failed in conscientious effort according to his ability.

“God has provided for all,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us. “His rain showers upon all, His sun shines upon all.” There is ample food for all, there is ample provision in this expanse of earth for everyone for their necessities. The principle underlying this trust is this,—that every child born into the world has a right to the necessities of life, and this is a Bahá’í principle, praise be to God!

Now, without going into the details of the tithe or income tax, it is sufficient to indicate that it is levied upon the surplus income in a progressive measure; according to the size of one’s surplus, one must pay a certain increased proportion. It still leaves each soul an ample incentive, making his own the true balance of that surplus, to do with as he wishes, protecting his individual rights; it does not aim at private property as some socialist philosophy would advocate, converting the substantial part of all wealth into a collectivism governmentally controlled and owned; but it protects both extremes, protecting the individual even as it protects the common need. This will result in preventing so called swollen fortunes. It will be found to be the greatest means of raising up the poor to the place to which they are rightfully entitled, a position of self-respect. It does away forever with the humiliation of pauperism and assures necessities. It casts off the industrial shackles, opening the door to comfort and well-being. Can the Kingdom of God find existence while industrial serfdom continues, while humanity made in the image of God dwells in constant fear of becoming the objects of almsgiving, destroying self-respect, extinguishing the light of hope, blunting the finer qualities of the soul?

Applying this trust principal, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that if a man who has not failed in endeavour fails to raise a crop,—we will say he is a farmer—because of the difficulties of the weather or pests, so that he and his family are without means of provision, then that man has a right to go to the storehouse, i.e., the trust fund, in that village and secure the necessities of life. This is a divine principle. It may be, of course, and frequently is the case, that through previous savings, accumulated property, or outside income, etc., one whose income in a given year falls below necessary expenditure, is enabled to meet his annual deficit. My understanding is that the right to necessities from the common storehouse would not accrue to one in this position, since no need arises.

The principle of taxation must be here considered. If a man has only earned enough to supply the necessities of his family, then no tax shall be levied against him. Is it just that we levy a tax on a man who earns five hundred dollars a year who needs every cent for the actual necessities of life, and only levy the same degree of tax upon a man whose income is one hundred thousand dollars? Again, just what is the duty of such a needy one to the community in respect to taxation? Taxation, briefly, is the charge laid by the sovereign power upon the property of its subjects. By its essential nature it is an enforced contribution for the support of government and for all *public needs*. Under the common law, there was no liability of the public authorities to render aid to the unfortunate class commonly denominated as paupers.

Up to recent times, and the enactment of the Poor Laws, these wretched ones had no recourse from their misery and destitution. Imprisonment for debt, precarious individual almsgiving, or downright beggary, were their sole guarantees of continued existence. But statutory enactments in most of the states now require assistance to be given such a man, when applied for and received with a full knowledge of the nature of the charity. A man may thus become a pauper in the legal sense if he accepts aid from his municipality, even though he is actually providing partial support for his family. Such a man in that event becomes a pauper. But the aid given him is not given him as a matter of right, and the price he pays is the pauper cognomen.¹

Applying this to the illustration. Our subject, A__, we will say, has earned just enough for the bare necessities of his family and himself. Had his income been any less, then he must subject his family to deprivation and consequent suffering, turn to friends for temporary relief, which is usually impossible, or apply to the public authorities. We have seen the consequences of this latter step. It is impossible to exaggerate the loss of self-respect, the intensity of anguish and utter humiliation which lays hold upon a human soul—we must consider the average type—obliged even to contemplate this step.

We have already seen that under such deplorable conditions a right is created, under the trust principal stated, which would encircle such a family with its protection. But these considerations are also important in analyzing the relation to taxation of the man who has broken even in income and necessary expenses. Suppose A__'s income was of that kind. He must necessarily deduct, under present conditions, the amount of his tax from his naked necessities. By this levy the state is not only theoretically but often actually forcing that family across the dead-line into the forsaken abode of pauperism. Unless new credits can be found, he has no alternative. Whether or not pauperism results, a deadly blow has been dealt and the psychology of that family has been rudely shaken. This is the industrial and social serfdom of the age, the cult of the blacksmith [X:16:303] applied to the delicate mechanism of the human soul.

Now, it is proved that taxes are levied, among other objects, for "all public needs". Even at present, a portion of the tax levy in the town of B__, we will say, is used in the care of paupers. This, then, even under the existing laws, is one of the "public needs" for which the taxing power is exercised. It follows that A__, having been driven another step down the ladder by reason of the enforced contribution of the tax, and compelled thereby to apply for and accept public aid, has to a certain definite extent been proceeding in a circle. He has to the extent of the tax paid thrown the scales of income and expenditure against him, and now to that extent again he restores the balance by receiving from the community, this time as a pauper, the amount necessary to complete his necessities, which, theoretically, is the exact sum he was taxed.

This, of course, is a technical example, but it illustrates the principle and to a greater or less degree may be found in operation among the masses of humanity. In this connection, one well known axiom of our English law is that nothing need be done which must, in the nature of things, be immediately reversed. Merely circuitous action is or should be as absurd and unnecessary in the case of taxation, as in other social adjustments. *A fortiori*,² when, as a consequence, degraded status results.

So the divine justice, whose voice is now heard in the world, is rending asunder our so-called human justice, exposing its weakness, remedying its inequalities. Pauperism must succumb to the sanction of right. The beneficiary of a trust possesses something he can claim without humiliation or shame. That same self-respect, which he thereby retains and fosters,

¹ A nickname.

² *a fortiori* (Latin): more conclusively.

serves a two-fold purpose as his protector against his invoking that right without a sound reason. To apply this concretely is the crying need of the hour. The order of the world will be thus promoted, revolutionary, and desperate demands set aside, force and violence seen to be a satanic instrumentality, and the great law of unity and co-operation enthroned in the hearts of rich and poor alike. The differentiation of capacities in individuals is preserved, fruitless attempts to level humanity to mean averages are rebuked, and the respective functions of the body politic are witnessed as divinely bestowed. Since it is the function of the eye to see, and any means of impairment of that vision is a menace to the welfare of the whole body, so it is understood that those men and women who, in the community, correspond to that function must be encouraged to fullest activity, not hampered and made ineffective by the jealousy and ignorance of the other branches of the body politic. Under this law, such men and women become in truth servants of the whole body. Under this law, they must, and gladly will, render their full measure of obligation to the needs of the needy. They are themselves equally bound with all others, by the necessities of the trust principal, as outlined.

Similarly, the function or capacity of these individuals corresponding to other organs and parts of the body of the race, must be unimpaired. There must be freedom also in this. What restraining force is necessary has been provided for, as has been seen. Because a given capacity is apparently less brilliant, less compelling than another does not make it inferior or less important. The skin and the nails, the bones and the joints of society are a part of the body, and without them health is impossible. Up to now, these and other important functions have been degraded, unjustly oppressed and diseased, whereas in reality they are of the noblest of capacities. Hence, the present outcry of labour, the anguished protests of the poor. We must consequently realize that the happiness of each depends upon its full co- [X:16:304] operation and the recognition of its rights. The stomach, if called upon to see, would make a miserable failure. But can the eye perform the Work of digestion? These are the teachings of unity.

In closing, meditate upon this paragraph from the utterances of His Holiness, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on this subject, a most significant utterance given in Montreal, 3 September 1912:

"Although the body politic is one family yet because of lack of harmonious relations some members are comfortable and some in direst misery, some members are satisfied and some are hungry, some members are clothed in most costly garments and some families are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family lacks the necessary reciprocity and symmetry. This household is not well arranged. This household is not living under a perfect law. All the laws which are legislated do not ensure happiness. They do not provide comfort. Therefore a law must be given to this family by means of which all the members of this family will enjoy equal well-being and happiness.

"Is it possible for one member of a family to be subjected to the utmost misery and to abject poverty and for the rest of the family to be comfortable? It is impossible unless those members of the family be senseless, atrophied, inhospitable, unkind. Then they would say, "Though these members do belong to our family—let them alone. Let us look after ourselves. Let them die. So long as I am comfortable, I am honoured, I am happy—this my brother—let him die. If he be in misery let him remain in misery, so long as I am comfortable. If he is hungry let him remain so; I am satisfied. If he is without clothes, so long as I am clothed, let him remain as he is. If he is shelterless, homeless, so long as I have a home, let him remain in the wilderness.'

"Such utter indifference in the human family is due to lack of control, to lack of a working law, to lack of kindness in its midst. If kindness had been shown to the members of this family

surely all the members thereof would have enjoyed comfort and happiness.”¹

“The purport is this that we are all inhabiting one globe of earth. In reality we are one family and each one of us is a member of this family. We must all be in the greatest happiness and comfort, under a just rule and regulation which is according to the good pleasure of God, thus causing us to be happy, for this life is fleeting.

“If man were to care for himself only he would be nothing but an animal for only the animals are thus egoistic. ... Nay, rather, man should be willing to accept hardships for himself in order that others may enjoy wealth; he should enjoy trouble for himself that others may enjoy happiness and well-being. This is the attribute of man. This is becoming of man. Otherwise man is not man—he is less than the animal.”²

“Man is he who forgets his own interests for the sake of others. His own comfort he forfeits for the well-being of all. ... Such a man is the honour of the world of humanity. Such a man is the glory of the world of mankind. Such a man is the one who wins eternal bliss. Such a man is near to the threshold of God. Such a man is the very manifestation of eternal happiness.”³

“We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity.”⁴

Alláh-u-Abhá!

X:17, 19 January 1920 [X:17:312]

News from Haifa, Palestine

Letter from Mrs Corinne True

Cairo, Egypt.

6 November 1919.

To the Editors of the *Star of the West*:

We spent eleven heavenly days in Haifa with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Two weeks ago this morning (2 November) we reached there after pushing through many difficulties. None of the countries have recovered from the war. Travelling is really filled with discomforts, and the innumerable official signatures necessary to enter or leave a country is most annoying. We were held up for three weeks in Paris getting our British visa to enter Egypt. Fugeta wrote me from Naples that he was held up indefinitely there for the same reason. Of course we could not go to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá without first going to find out just how Fugeta was situated. This necessitated our sailing for Egypt via Italy. We had to leave him in Naples, greatly to our regret, but there was a service we could render him in Cairo by hastening the sending on of his British visa that the consul had cabled for. We had a beautiful steamer from Brindisi, Italy, to Alexandria, and the trip was lovely in every way.

Let me go back to tell you that in Paris, Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán and his charming wife were adorable to us, and perfect lifesavers. They were the only two Bahá’ís we could find at that time in Paris, Mr and Mrs Scott having gone to the country on a protracted stay. The afternoon we were leaving Paris for Italy, Mr Randall and George Latimer came to our hotel to

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 38–39.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 42.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 42.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 43.

see us, and at six o'clock we had dinner with the five members of their party. It was so good to see them.

In Brindisi we found Dr Esslemont at our hotel, waiting for his ship. He sailed in the afternoon and we in the [X:17:313] morning of the same day, but our ship was the fastest ship we could get to Egypt, and then we proceeded to Haifa by rail. The railroad in Palestine was built and is run by the military, therefore we required a military permit to ride on it. Getting this permit required us to come to Cairo, military headquarters. This also took time, so Edna made good use of every moment for sightseeing, as we did not expect to return to Cairo. Finally arrangements were perfected for us to take the train Saturday evening at 6:15 and we reached Haifa Sunday morning about 11 o'clock. It was the most difficult part of the journey, no comforts whatever on the train, only a bunk to wrap oneself in a steamer rug and stretch out for the night. It was quite thrilling to find oneself riding through that territory which Moses led the children of Israel through in his journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

Our struggles to attain the goal of reaching Haifa so soon after a world war, in which all the countries we passed through had been vital factors, were indeed great compared to the ease with which Arna¹ and I had made the journey twelve years ago, but this very struggle made the joy of arrival so great that we were almost stunned to find ourselves actually in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and in Haifa.

In one of his talks he has said that it will be impossible for us to realize his fatherhood for us while we are in the body. I think this is in *Divine Philosophy*. Upon reaching Haifa the first thing was an expression of his divine fatherhood for his spiritual children. He had prepared a pilgrim house for the American Bahá'ís, even hiring a European housemaid (a deaf German woman from their colony). One must pass through the many struggles of travel through broken down war countries, still tied up with military red tape, to fully realize what the joy was first to actually be in his holy presence again and partake of his fatherly care awaiting our arrival. His welcome was all the heart needed to wipe away every trace of the struggle, and count every discomfort as the greatest comfort. Eleven days were spent in that Holy Spot. Beginning the morning by meeting with the holy family in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's living room at 6:30, where chanting was done and those far-famed cups of tea were served, which seem like veritable draughts of life. Sometimes we asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá questions and sometimes he talked to us without questions. Always was that marvellous flow of divine knowledge and wisdom. We usually went back to the American pilgrim house after chatting with the Greatest Holy Leaf or the Holy Mother or the daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

One of the sweetest things happened early one morning that I must tell you about. The daughter, Ṭúbá Khánum, her husband, Mírzá Muḥsin, and their little child, a boy of three years, were in Beirut when we arrived, but returned in a day or so. The first morning after their return, when the little three-year-old grandson came into the family gathering, he went to 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the deepest sense of reverence, and picking up the hem of his garment, which was a white 'abá that morning, he kissed it and buried his little head in its folds. It was a picture never to be forgotten. The act of the child was clearly spontaneous, one could see. From the Orient the Occident must learn the real lesson of reverence. This is a spiritual quality she has to impart to us, while on the other hand the Occident has some qualities to reciprocate—it is give and take—the two embracing as two lovers.

A beautiful part of the day was after we had returned to the pilgrim house and been served a European breakfast, and some piece of work was taken up which we could do on the front balcony. Seeing us free the Oriental pilgrims would come on this balcony and visit with us, and from them we learned much of the early history of the Cause in Persia, and also the

¹ Mrs Corinne True's daughter, Arna True Perrin. Arna is a shortened form (from Hebrew) of Arnína, fem. of Aaron.

present methods by which it is being spread. I am bringing [X:17:314] a photo containing the faces of all the dear pilgrims, and when I see you will talk to you for hours about them.

At 4 o'clock again we went to the holy family for tea and a visit. Then at 6:30 we American women were permitted to meet with the men believers, who gather every evening with 'Abdu'l-Bahá for an hour. The evening dinner was one of the most wonderful times. Seated on his left was Edna, and on his right this servant, and at the table about a dozen of these wonderful Oriental pilgrims, who are mostly the great Bahá'í teachers. That is another long chapter, but I must close.

Lovingly in His Name,

Corinne True. [X:17:314]

Letter from George Latimer

On board *S.S. Canopic.*

19 December 1919.

To the *Star of the West*

After twelve wonderful days at Haifa, on the "Mountain of God" with 'Abdu'l-Bahá our boat arrived three days ahead of time to bring us back to America. At first the news of its sudden arrival saddened us, but we soon realized that our cup of capacity had already been filled to the brim and our greatest joy was to carry back the love and fragrances of that holy spot to the friends in America.

Now that all the doors of communication have been opened, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is extremely busy welcoming the pilgrims from all parts of the world and sending out his teachings and instructions everywhere. Often he works many hours into the night correcting Tablets and answering letters. His power, energy and activity was an inspiration to us all, and his supreme joy is the news of unity and the progress of the Cause.

On 19 November, when he came to the Pilgrim House, prepared for Western friends, to have lunch with us, it was remarked that upon our return to America the first question the friends would ask is: "When will the Master return to America?" His face lighted up with a beaming smile as he said [X:17:315]

"We will see what God wants. If America becomes illumined, its illumination like a magnet, will draw me there. If America will become the America I want it to become, I will surely come and I will go to all parts, to every state."

These words were still ringing in our ears and hearts when on 27 November, the time of parting came. Before our departure, 'Abdu'l-Bahá again expressed the greatest longing of his heart, saying:

"You must all do your best to increase love among the friends, that really and sincerely the friends may all love one another—so that faith in the Kingdom may give forth good results, because life in this world depends upon love. The illumination of the world of man depends upon love, the splendour of God depends upon love, tranquillity of heart and soul both depend upon love. Any thing beside that is personified imagination. If a friend arrives from another city or state, friends must show him the utmost love so that he may be pleased with coming to the city and meeting the friends."

Will not this call of the Centre of the Covenant, the call which pulsates through all the arteries of the world of humanity, awaken within us that love and unity of purpose which will become the torch of illumination that will once more attract him to our shores?

With Bahá'í love and greetings,

George Latimer

NOTE: Those returning from this pilgrimage are Mr and Mrs Randall, their daughter Bahá'íyyih, Albert Vail, Arthur Hathaway and myself.

X:17, 19 January 1920 [X:17:315]

“Universal peace is one of the principles of Bahá'u'lláh”

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Hon. William Sulzer

To the Honourable William Sulzer, ex-Governor, New York—Greetings!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art the well-wisher of humanity—felicitations!

Your epistle concerning the League of Nations has been received and read with great joy. I am hopeful that the members of the League of Nations, especially President Woodrow Wilson, the well-wisher of the world, shall be confirmed in this, that in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh there shall soon be established a great tribunal, the members of which shall be composed of the best men and women from all the governments of the earth. This great tribunal must be the guarantor of universal peace.

The present is the beginning of the dawn of universal peace. The hope of the world is this: That the sun of universal peace may rise with a supremacy that shall entirely dispel the darkness of war and its infamous disgrace.

The question of universal peace is one of the principles of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. These teachings have other principles that make them complete, such as: The oneness of humanity; the investigation of truth and reality and the abandonment of old superstitions; unity and religious amity; that religion must be the cause of concord; that all religions must conform with science and reason; that there must be no religious, racial or national prejudices; that there must be a oneness of language—that is, the adoption of a universal auxiliary language, so that every mind shall know two languages, one the national tongue and the other the universal language; that there must be a solution of social problems and economic questions based on justice to all; that there must be equality of the rights of women and men, that righteousness and justice must prevail, and that [X:17:316] there must be education and freedom for all the sons and daughters of mother earth.

With the efforts of your President the matter of universal peace has come forth as expounded in the League of Nations.

Through the favour of the True One, and by the Word of God, I pray the League of Nations shall soon become a fact; that universal peace shall thenceforth be established; that then the brotherhood of man shall then be recognized, and that your honour and the people of your country, may continue a manifestation of their confirmation.

Praise be to God!

Love and benediction.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Revealed 18 June 1919, Haifa, Syria. Translated by Dr Díyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago.

X:17, 19 January 1920 [X:17:316]

Recent tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to American Bahá'ís

Viola Kluge

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Viola Kluge, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou radiant child!

The letter thou hast written in the utmost sweetness has been perused. It evidenced and indicated thy brilliant capacity, thy wit and thy understanding. The epistle was clear and consummate and I therefore became hopeful of thee, as thou attainest maturity, thou mayest become a radiant, merciful and Godly maiden, freed and sanctified from the impurities of the world of nature, partaker and participator of the illumination of the divine reality and the cause of the glorification of the world of humanity.

Convey to thy father and thy mother my greetings and my kindness and likewise to thy acquaintances.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has endured for your sake all these calamities and trials, that the light of guidance may illuminate your hearts. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has passed his days in confinement, in exile and under a drawn sword; not for a single hour did he ever entertain the hope of deliverance until the present time when an equitable government has pitched its tent over these regions. Now the means of assurance have been provided. In fine, all my intentions centre around this: that radiant children may be trained by divine education and become the blazing candles of the world of humanity.

Upon thee and upon thy father and mother be greetings and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Haifa, Palestine, 1 February 1919.

[X:17:317]

Jessie Revell

To the maid-servant of God, Jessie Revell, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy detailed letters were received. Although the pressure of occupation is extreme and excessive, leaving no time for a short letter and particularly for a detailed one, yet I am affectionately attached to thee. Notwithstanding the lack of time, I write thee this letter that thou mayest know how dear thou art to me. As thou art brilliant and pure and hast no wish but to serve the Cause of God and promulgate the divine teachings, I pray and entreat at the threshold of God and beg for thee limitless assistance and bounty.

Convey on my behalf greeting and kindness to Grace van Sciver and Joline Ruestle. On their behalf, I pray that they may be reared in the arms of the kind father, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and may become the cause of illumination of mankind.

On behalf of Effie Dixon I beg pardon and forgiveness from the compassionate Lord that she may be immersed in the ocean of forgiveness and may become in the Divine Kingdom the recipient of favour and bounty.

Convey on my behalf respectful greeting to Mrs Rorer and say: "If thou art the lover of mankind, strive to promote the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh for these teachings are the essence of love, of kindness and of the unity of mankind."

Convey on my behalf the utmost love and respect and favour to the favoured and attracted maid-servants of God, Mrs Brittingham and Mrs Nourse. I beg for them eternal happiness and unbounded glory.

As to thy presence in these days at the Holy Land, it is not in accordance with wisdom.

Thou must engage in those regions, day and night in service.

As to the marriage of the maid-servant of God, Badí'ih,¹ to Laurie Culver, it is a blessed one. I pray God that this marriage may be eternal, spiritual and merciful.

As to the new name thou hadst requested, let it be "Naerman".²

The Assembly of Philadelphia is indeed worthy of praise. I supplicate from the bounties of God that that assembly may become a heavenly rose-garden and may receive everyday a share from the Lord's Supper.

Thyself and thy sister are striving to learn Spanish; this is highly acceptable, that, God willing, after its acquisition, thou mayest promote heavenly teachings.

As to the appearance of Christ after war and commotion, by this is meant the promulgation of divine teachings, that throughout all regions the teachings of God will be promoted and the result will be universal peace. For universal peace is unachievable save through the power of the Word of God.

Convey on my behalf to the maidservant of God, Ruth Lerman, the utmost kindness and say: "How fortunate thou wert that this supreme glad-tiding hast attained thine ears and thou hast been awakened by the call of the divine Kingdom."

Convey to thy respected mother my greeting and say to her to strive with heart and mind in order to cause the coloured group to enter the Kingdom, to illumine their hearts, to help them to acquire heavenly characteristics and to cause them to attain unto everlasting glory.

As to your residence in Philadelphia or Ohio, wherever the means of comfort are forthcoming therein reside.

Impart to the maid-servant of God, Ethel, the glad-tiding of the divine bestowals. I pray that Mr Elliott, Miss Brooks, Miss Thompson, Mr Ellwood and his wife may illumine their sight with the resplendent light that shines from the Kingdom of Abhá. [X:17:318]

The two gatherings which ye had held in Philadelphia wherein the friends of God have been present as well as newcomers to the Cause, these two meetings are highly acceptable in the divine Kingdom and have been praised and extolled. The hope is entertained that advantageous results may be derived, that is to say, whenever a favourable occasion presents itself, such meetings may be again held.

As to the children with whom thou are speaking, thy pure breath will undoubtedly exert its influence upon them.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 16 July 1919.

Maria Rebecca Robertson

To the maid-servant of God, Maria Rebecca Robertson, New York City—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Formerly I have met thee and have given thee certain admonitions with the utmost kindness. Undoubtedly thou bearest them in mind. At present, moreover, I

¹ Badí'a[h or t] (fem. of Badí').

² Narímán?, name of a famous hero of Persia; a very brave and courageous man.

am writing thee an answer. Consider how kind I am that I desire thee to become related to the Kingdom, lordly, merciful, illumined and one of the heavenly angels. Such are my admonitions. Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 16 July 1919.

Edgar Waite

To his honour, Mr Edgar Waite, Los Angeles, California—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art turning thy face to the divine Kingdom!

Thy respected wife has written a letter and has praised thy character and thy conduct; thou hast become lordly, illumined, attracted to the Kingdom, hast secured a share and portion from the breaths of the Holy Spirit, hast attained unto everlasting life, and hast been gladdened and filled with joy. She has also sent the poem which she composed in praise of the Convention. Verily, the verses were in the utmost eloquence and sweetness, and were the cause of the gladness of their hearers. I hope that through the bounties of God [X:17:319] both of you may pass your days in the utmost joy and fragrance and become the cause of the promulgation of the divine teachings.

Convey on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to thy respected wife my wonderful Abhá greetings, and say: "The kindness, the training and the education extended to prisoners is an exceedingly important matter. As thou hast therefore exerted an effort along that line and hast awakened some of them, and hast been the cause of the turning of their faces to the divine Kingdom, this praiseworthy deed is highly acceptable. Persevere assuredly along this line. Convey on my behalf to the two prisoners at San Quentin the utmost kindness, and tell them, "That prison in the sight of the wise souls is the school of training and development. Ye must strive with heart and soul that ye may become famous in character and knowledge."

Upon thee and upon them be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 18 July 1919.

Ollie James Watts and J. E. Gilligan

To their honours, Messrs Ollie James Watts and J. E. Gilligan, through Mrs Louise R. Waite, Los Angeles, California—Upon them be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two servants of the Kingdom!

Your letter was received. It was conducive evidence that, praise be to God, ye have been freed from the darkness of superstitions, have attained to the centre of Truth, have been emancipated from the old imitations that indicate antiquity of the world, and are investigating Truth. This undoubtedly is due to the bounty of God and is indicative of the lordly bestowals.

Consider how the people of the world are immersed in a sea of imitations, they lack perception and hold fast to what they hear. Although they have been immersed for thousands of years in the ocean of superstitions and have acquired no results, yet they are still sleeping.

Praise be to God, therefore, that your inner sight has been opened, that ye have discovered the Truth, and have attained unto that which is the cause of heavenly glory and everlasting life.

Upon you be greeting and praise

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 18 July 1919.

Ruth Klos

To the maid-servant of God, Ruth Klos, Atchison, Kansas—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou seeker of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written that "I am not worthy." Who is worthier than thee? Hadst thou not been worthy, thou wouldst not have turned to God and wouldst not have wished to enter the Kingdom.

Thy worthiness has guided thee until this blessing and bounty have encompassed thee.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 25 July 1919.

Peter Maus

To his honour, Mr Peter Maus, Helena, Montana—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou faithful servant of God!

Thy letter diffused a musk-scented perfume—the perfume of the flowers and fragrant herbs of the love of God. The nostrils were perfumed and the heart was gladdened, that, praise be to God, that firm and steadfast soul has become the cause of the illumination of two other ones and has led them to the [X:17:320] fountain of life, that each of them may, in the divine orchard, become a fruitful tree, may cast an extensive shade and may extend their branches and leaves to the divine Kingdom. I pray God that both may be illumined, assisted and confirmed.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

Emily Olsen

To the maid-servant of God, Emily Olsen, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou pure leaf of the Blessed Tree!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast written thou hadst translated some epistles and Tablets into Danish and sent them to Europe during the war. So far nothing has been heard of them. As war was going on, answer from Europe was delayed. But now as war has given way to peace it is hoped that the translation of these Tablets and epistles may be disseminated throughout Denmark.

As to the teachings thou hast arranged for children, God willing, they will be enforced.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

James Morton

To his honour, Mr James Morton, New York City, N.Y.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dignified personage!

Thy letter was received. Its terms were most eloquent and its significances in the utmost perfection. Praise be to God, thou hast harkened to the call of the Kingdom, hast secured a share and portion of the divine teachings, hast been freed from the world of imitations, hast investigated Truth and hast comprehended the mysteries of heavenly books. At present thy wish is to become the cause of the illumination of the world of mankind, to promulgate the principle of universal peace, to awake the slumbering and to cause the heedless to become heedful; so that they may be freed from ignorant prejudices, may secure rest and comfort under the shade of the pavilion of the oneness of mankind, may partake of divine bestowals and may become the centre of merciful susceptibilities. There is no purpose higher than this. My hope is that thou mayest be confirmed therein.

Thou art thinking of travelling to Persia. The project is a blessed one. I hope that after visiting the Holy Land thou mayest be confirmed in that voyage.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

Racine Assembly

The members of the Bahá'í Assembly, Racine, Wisconsin, care of his honour, Mr Andrew Nelson—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O illumined Assemblage!

Praise be to God, that ye have been confirmed in establishing that Assembly and that your aim centres around the promulgation of universal peace, the establishment of the oneness of mankind and the investigation of Truth.

I pray to God that heavenly assistance may encompass that Assembly, that it may daily progress so that it may become the centre of merciful susceptibilities and radiate all around the rays of supreme guidance.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

X:18, 7 February 1920 [X:18:323]

The resurrection of Christ after “three days”

Instructions from a letter written many years ago by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl on the meaning of the “three days” Christ is said to have lain in the grave before His resurrection. Selected and condensed by Marie A. Watson.

Concerning the resurrection of His Holiness Christ after three days and nights: The term “day” is applied to many meanings; the first is the ordinary one of twenty-four hours. According to this meaning 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the “three days” before Christ's resurrection thus:

After the ascension, departure of Christ, on account of the tyranny of the Jews, for three

days and nights His blessed Name was not mentioned among the disciples. The wicked Jews were sure that they had uprooted that blessed tree, and the disciples of His Holiness repaired to solitude and seclusion through fear. Thus the Sun of Truth was outwardly concealed in the darkness of disappearance, and Peter, the apostle, who was the shining moon in the heaven of divine Religion, was veiled, depressed.

After three days and nights Mary Magdalene, whose valour, courage, perseverance and efforts caused her name to be written in the book of perpetual honour, for she gave her utmost energy, called each one of the disciples from the places of concealment and led them into the presence of Peter. She called forth a new spirit within them through the heat of her encouragement and explanation. Then again they arose to assist and serve the Cause of Christ, revived and spread the name of His Holiness in the world, which name was considered by the Jews to be concealed in the grave of disappearance.

According to this explanation the meaning is in the utmost exaltation and in the highest simplicity and plainness, and it is true to say that His Holiness Christ arose from the grave after three days, for the purpose of His manifestation was the spread of His holy Name and penetration of His Word throughout the world, and this point was realized three days after His departure, for by the rising of His noble disciples the lights of His brilliant Cause shone forth through the East and the West, and His blessed Name was promulgated in the extensive parts of Europe, Asia and Africa.

The second application of the word “day” denotes the duration of a spiritual leadership, or individual reign; as it is said, the “day” of the reign of David, the “day” of the reign of Solomon. This duration is determined by the term “day”, though it lasted forty years; or, as is said in America, the “day” of the presidency of Washington or McKinley, and the like, although the presidency of each lasted some years.

According to this standard, the “day” of each one of the Manifestations of God signifies the interval of the time between His rise and the appearance of a subsequent Manifestation—a second coming, or rising of the Sun of Truth. During this interval the laws, regulations and ordinances of that Manifestation continue effective and lead to the development and salvation of men. According to the terminology of the proph- [X:18:324] ets this day has a daytime and a night-time. Its daytime signifies the days during which the Sun of Truth is manifest among people and with whose meeting is identical with the meeting of God, and can be attained while in the body of flesh. Its night-time means the duration of the time in which the Sun of Truth is hidden in the veils of concealment, and the Manifestation of God in human form is absent from among nations, and has ascended to the supreme horizon.

According to this meaning, if it be said that the “day” of Moses was the interval of the time between His rise in Egypt and the appearance of His Holiness Christ in the Holy Land, it is true. During this time the laws enacted in the Pentateuch were effective in securing the glory and felicity of the Jews, providing they complied with those laws. But after the appearance of Christ, nay, even after the arising of John the Baptist, this manifest efficacy was removed from the Mosaic laws, which led to the effacement of the felicity of the Jews.

Consider the 16th and 17th verses of the 9th chapter of Matthew, and the 11th, 12th and 13th verses of the 11th chapter of the same book for further elucidation of this subtle point and you will realize how the mysteries of the seals of the book are opened in this Manifestation of the Lord of Lords.

According to the standard of the term “day”, the time between the appearance of Christ and the rising of the ideal Sun from the horizon of the East was 622 years; consequently, this number denotes the real “day” of His Holiness Christ, during which the laws revealed in the Gospels continued effective. In multiplying the 622 by three the result is 1,866. This shows

clearly the mystery of the hidden point concerning the meaning of the three days. For in the year CE 1866, which corresponds to AH 1283, the mention of the declaration of the most holy Beauty of Abhá in the city of Adrianople, was spread through different lands; the divine call was raised, and then the real meaning of the second descending of the Spirit of God from the heaven of divine command became manifest and realized. In those very days of the blessed person of the orb of the horizons, the Centre of the Covenant, His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—May the life of all the creatures be a sacrifice to Him!—was in His verdancy of age, and in the prime of youth, and His blessed Name was spread in the world with the titles, “The most great Branch” and “The most excellent and perfect Mystery of God”. Then the meanings of the words in the 8th and 9th verses of the 3rd chapter of Zechariah and the 12th and 13th verses of the 6th chapter became fulfilled and evident.

Accordingly, the essence of the meaning of the resurrection after “three days” is this: that after the lapse of three periods of 622 years, which was the time of the manifestations of the lights of Christianity, the most great Spirit of God resurrected in the Name of Bahá’u’lláh from among the slumbering nations and the dead of the world, and the beauty of the Branch extended from that Ancient Root dawned forth and appeared in that day. By this “resurrection” the prophecies of the prophets and saints were all fulfilled.

As to the third meaning of “day”, in the terminology of the Jewish doctors, each “day” is applied to a year. This application is termed by the Jewish learned men *Youm Leshan*¹ in Hebrew, that is, “a day for a year”. Most of the Christian scholars have also relied upon this application in their commentaries on the Old and New Testaments. They have derived this point from the 34th verse of the 14th chapter of Numbers and 6th verse of the 4th chapter of Ezekiel. Most of the Christian scholars and all the Jewish learned men have based their interpretations of [X:18:325] the symbolical dates in the 8th and 12th chapter in Daniel and the 11th and 12th chapter in Revelation upon this point, that is, have taken each day for a year. But this meaning has nothing to do with the “resurrection after three days” spoken of by His Holiness Christ.

As the fourth meaning of the word “day”, it is applied to one thousand years, and is called the “Lordly Day”. This point is alluded to in the 8th verse of the 3rd chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter the Apostle.

It is clearly revealed in some of the holy books thus: “Verily, one day with the Lord is as a thousand years of those which ye compute.” To this application the Millennium of Christ spoken of in Revelation has reference; for the spiritually minded believe that in every one thousand years the world is renewed and the Sun of Truth dawns. The laws, cycles and conditions, even languages, undergo a manifest change. This application of the word “day” has likewise no connection with the resurrection of Christ after “three days”.

X:18, 7 February 1920 [X:18:329]

Recent tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Alfred E. Lunt

To his honour, Mr Alfred Lunt, Boston, Massachusetts—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Rest thou assured in the bounty of the Merciful, and be hopeful for the blessings of the Abhá Kingdom, for thou dost exert the utmost effort in service for Truth and this magnet attracts assistance and confirmation. The addresses thou hast delivered with reference to

¹ Day-year principle (Hebrew yom l’shanah, “day to year”). See Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6; *Some Answered Questions*, 2nd edn, pp. 53–4.

economic problems are highly suitable. The essence of the Bahá'í economic teachings is this, that immense riches far beyond what is necessary should not be accumulated. For instance, the well-known Morgan, who possessed a sum of three hundred mil- [X:18:330] lions, and was day and night restless and agitated, did not partake of the divine bestowals save a little broth. This wealth was for him a vicissitude and not the cause of comfort.

He invited me to his library and to his home, that I might visit the former and have dinner at his house. I went to the library in order to look at the Oriental books, but did not go to his house, and did not accept his invitation. In short, he eagerly desired that I should visit him in the library but meanwhile important financial problems arose which prevented him from being present, and thus he was deprived of this bounty. Now, had he not such an excessive amount of wealth, he might have been able to present himself.

As to the events that had been predicted—Praise be to God!—all of them have come to pass, and all that had been the explicit and irrefutable declarations of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, and had been incorporated in the addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America and Europe, all of them, word by word, have been fulfilled. These explicit declarations of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh were revealed fifty years ago by the Supreme Pen, and at present they have been made evident and manifest.

At present, thou hast a lofty aspiration, and hast the desire to engage in every service. My hope is, that through a heavenly power, and a Lordly influence, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit thou mayst be confirmed in distinguished services—a service which thou dost think advisable and its success assured.

Thou hadst inquired that if a person owned a piece of land and is not able to develop it, and his revenues are less than his expenditures, is it permissible that he sell a portion of that land and mortgage it? Undoubtedly, it is permissible. Concerning the case of profit-sharing by the employers among the workers, which thou hadst written about, undoubtedly the workers must secure their daily salary, and in addition, must have shares with the employers so that they may engage with the utmost effort in that work. For example, a capitalist has a thousand employees, he must give them a moderate salary every day, that they may not remain hungry and naked, and also assign a definite share of the profit to the workers so that at the beginning of each year it may be distributed among them, that this may cause the workers to exert the utmost care and effort in their job.

Embrace on my behalf thy sweet children, and name the son Ḥusayn, for it is a portion of the name of the Blessed Beauty, and call the daughter Zohreh.¹ The letter thou hast written to the Boston paper is highly pleasing and favourable.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

X:18, 7 February 1920 [X:18:336]

Spiritual communication

A talk with 'Abdu'l-Bahá by Mrs Stannard

Notes sent by Mrs J. Stannard to Mrs Louise R. Waite

I asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning the state of all those young men souls who have fallen so suddenly and tragically during our world war. Could they affect our present living conditions in any way?

¹ Zuhrah.

His reply ran as follows: “God treats these people with His mercy, not with His justice, since God is against war. But as many did not will the war, but were obliged to go to the battle field by force of circumstances, therefore God has mercy for they suffered much and they lost their lives. These deserve the forgiveness of God. As they suffered in the world and were afflicted by great calamities and their blood was shed and in reality they were treated unjustly and thus died unwillingly, therefore God will have mercy and forgive their shortcomings and will reward them. He will compensate them for loss. Is it just to be so afflicted and killed and suffer and have no reward? This is contrary to the Kingdom of God. We supplicate God that these murdered ones will become and stay alive in His Kingdom and be submerged in the sea of His mercy and be happy.”

I then asked whether such a great collective soul consciousness could in any way affect the world of men. Could any get into communication?

To the first part of the question he answered: “No. They have no power to influence the world of men and only those who in life had been among the spiritually regenerated ones, those who had been re-born or baptized of the Holy Spirit, only such souls could consciously communicate or have knowledge of things in this world.”

When I asked about the station of the very wicked, he said:

“They are in a state of dark consciousness, deprived of the mercy of God, but were not annihilated.”

From Shoghi’s Diary, on the same subject, we may read as follows:

“6 June. Yesterday afternoon, at 3 pm, two enlightened officers, one British and the other Irish, Col. Cash and Major Fitzgerald, called on the Master. They were hurrying back on their way to Egypt and were leaving by the evening train for Kantarah.¹ They managed to spare two hours in order to secure an interview with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and among the questions was the following:

“Is it at all possible for those who have sacrificed their lives so freely on the battle field to communicate with their relatives and kindred from the world beyond?”

The epitome of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s reply was as follows:

This spiritual communication and mutual exchange of thoughts is conditioned upon certain facts that prepare the person in this world to communicate with the spirit of his departed ones. A clear mind, a pure heart and a concentrated attention are the requisites for that spiritual inter-communication. Like unto a mirror, man’s heart and mind must be purified, clarified and polished. Any dust or rust that may be on it such as attachment to this nether world, the turning of man’s face away from God, sin or lust, animosity and rancour—all these must be removed that the rays of the Sun of Truth may shine upon it in full splendour and may be reflected therefrom with full effulgence. If such state or condition is attained, communication with the world above will be made possible. Purity of purpose and concentration with prayer are the essential requisites.

X:19, 2 March 1920 [X:19:339]

Recent tablets from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to American Bahá’ís

Mr and Mrs Beckett

To their honours, Mr and Mrs Beckett, Glendale, California—Upon them be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

¹ The north eastern Egyptian city of al-Qanṭara.

O ye two faithful and assured souls!

The letter was received. Praise be to God, it imparted good tidings. California is ready for the promulgation of the Teachings of God. My hope is that ye may strive with heart and soul that the sweet scent may perfume the nostrils.¹

Miss Anna Greig, Mrs Alice Blackman, Mrs Katherine Tizzard and Dr Ruth Newland were blessed souls and, praise be to God, they passed away firm and steadfast. They flew away from a narrow and gloomy world to a spacious and illumined realm. They have been freed from every pain and affliction and have attained unto everlasting joy and gladness.

Convey on my behalf to Mrs Chase respectful greetings and say: 'Mr Chase is a twinkling star above the horizon of Truth, but at present it is still behind the clouds; soon these shall be dispersed and the radiance of that star shall illumine the state of California. Appreciate thou this bounty that thou hast been his wife and companion in life.'

Every year on the anniversary of the ascension² of that blessed soul the friends must visit his tomb on behalf of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and in the utmost lowliness and humility should with all respect lay on his grave wreaths of flowers and spend all the day in quiet prayer, while turning their faces toward the Kingdom of Signs and mentioning and praising the attributes of that illustrious person.³

Those souls who during the war have served the poor and have been in the [X:19:340] Red Cross Mission work, their services are accepted at the Kingdom of God and are the cause of their everlasting life. Convey to them this glad-tidings.

Upon ye be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 23 July 1919.

Mrs Rasmussen

Through the maid-servant of God, Mrs Ella G. Cooper—Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Rasmussen—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved maid-servant of God!

Although the loss of a son is indeed heart-breaking and beyond the limits of human endurance, yet the heedful and observing person is assured that the son has not been lost but, instead, has stepped from this world into another, and he will find him in the Divine Realm. That meeting shall be eternal, whereas in this world separation is inevitable, and this in its turn entails its consuming fire.

Praise be unto God, thou hast faith, are turning thy face toward the everlasting Kingdom and believing in the existence of a heavenly world. Therefore, be thou not disconsolate, do not languish, do not sigh, and refrain from wailing and bemoaning; for agitation and moaning deeply affect his soul in the divine realm. That beloved child addresses thee from the hidden world, thus: "O thou kind mother! Thank divine Providence that I have been freed from the narrow and gloomy cage and, like unto the birds of the meadows, have soared to the divine world:—a world spacious, illumined, and ever gay and jubilant. Therefore, lament not, O mother, and be not grieved; I am not of the lost ones and have not been exterminated and destroyed. I have shaken off the mortal form and have raised the banner in this spiritual

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selected Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 196.

² 30 September 1912.

³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selected Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 196. [Last two paragraphs.]

world. Following this separation is everlasting association. Thou shalt find me in the heaven of the Lord, immersed in an ocean of light.”

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá?

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 8 January 1919. [X:19:341]

Edna Bellora Belmont

Through the maid-servant of God, Mrs Parsons, Washington, D.C.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—to the maid-servant of God, Edna Bellora (Belmont)—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art tested with calamities and ordeals!

Verily, I became exceedingly saddened for thy sadness, because of the affliction with a calamity which thou art unable to bear. This is the condition of the world. Therefore, be thou not distressed, neither be in despair of the mercy of God, because in this suffering there is a great wisdom concealed from thee. Thou shalt learn of this wisdom when thou wilt look at their faces (the departed children) in the everlasting Kingdom. Then rest thou assured that, verily, thou hast not lost them and their death was only the departure from the restrictions of the nether world to the Supreme Heights. Thou shalt see their faces in the sublime heavens, for the Merciful Gardener, if He loves a young tree, takes it out from among the others and carries it from the restrictions of narrowness to a large farm and a beautiful, flourishing garden, in order that the young tree may develop, its branches grow high, its flowers open, its fruits appear and its shadow expand. But the rest of the trees do not know this, because this is a hidden mystery which becomes unfolded to us in the eternal Kingdom.

O thou maid-servant of God! Grieve not and do not lament, consolation will come to thee from God. Have thou serene patience for therein is an abundant recompense. Think not that the girls have waded in the waters of death, nay, rather, they have flown from the mortal world to the realm immortal. Thou shalt behold their faces in the Supreme Aviary.

In regard to thy particular question: Whereas, the revered Mrs Parsons desires that thou remainest with her as her companion, therefore, this is easier for thee than to be a nurse enduring great hardships. Nevertheless, the good is in that which thou chooseth for thyself; should the revered lady come to these regions thou mayest accompany her on the journey, so that thou mayest be honoured by visiting the blessed and white spot and we see thee patient in calamity and thankful in difficulties and sufferings. It behoveth one like unto thee to thank thy Lord while thou art submerged in the seas of anguish. This is the quality of every maid-servant who is meek and humble before God, and is desirous of the eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Diyá' M. Baghdádí, Chicago, Illinois, 11 July 1919. Revealed 21 May 1919.

[X:19:342]

Mr and Mrs Gift

To their honour, Mr and Mrs Gift, Peoria, Illinois—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two guiding souls!

Your letter was received. It was indicative of your being devoted in the path of the Kingdom and of your detachment and self-effacement. Ye have no wish save the good

pleasure of God, and entertain no hope except in divine Providence. Ye strive for the guidance of souls and become the cause of the illumination of hearts. This is a supreme bounty. Arise in gratitude to it for its consequences and advantages are innumerable. From among these is the establishment of one's remembrance and the attainment unto supreme bounty in the Abhá Kingdom.

Convey on my behalf to the souls that have been attracted by the divine teachings, Mrs ____ Miss ____ Mr ____ and Mrs ____, greeting, love and kindness.

Extend my greeting to Mrs ____ and say: "Be not grieved, be not disconsolate, be not depressed and do not lament, for this world is a mortal abode and we shall all be transferred from this world to another. Thy dear daughter is accepted at the Threshold of the Almighty, is immersed in the ocean of pardon and forgiveness and is drowned in a sea of light in the world of mysteries."

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 26 July 1919.

Flora Clark

To the maid-servant of God, Flora Clark, care of the maid-servant of God, Mrs True—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received. From its contents prayer and supplication to the Kingdom of God were noted. No matter how strenuously man may strive in this world, ultimately no result will be attained. Naked has he stepped into this world and naked shall he get out of it—except if he turns unto God, supplicates to His Kingdom, strives in His path, serves the Almighty and acquires a pure heart, a seeing eye, a responsive ear and a spirit that is gladdened by the glad-tidings of God. This has a result and gives forth good fruit.

Otherwise man shall not gather any advantage from life.

Praise thou God, that thou hast been confirmed by such a bounty and hast attained unto heavenly illumination.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Effendi, Haifa, Palestine, 13 October 1919.

X:19, 2 March 1920 [X:19:342]

Obituary [X:19:343]

Mrs A. M. Bryant

...

The Centre of the Covenant placed upon her head a glorious crown in the following short Tablet received by her in 1901:

To the maid-servant of God Mrs A. M. Bryant—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art attracted by the fragrance of God!

Beloved art thou, for thou hast lighted the lamp of the love of God in the glass of America,

called out in His Name among the people, and guided them to the Kingdom of Abhá.

O maid-servant of God! Fly away with joy, for God hath strengthened thee in this great gift, which is a glorious crown, the gems of which are scintillating with the light of guidance. Blessed is thy head, for it is decorated with this crown. Verily, this is better for thee than the dominion of the word.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated at Chicago, by Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán, 24 December 1901. [X:19:350]

Sanford Kinney

...

Extract from recent Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Charles Mason Remey:

“I have been greatly affected by the death of Mr Sandy Kinney. What a lovely child he was. On my behalf tell Mr and Mrs Kinney: ‘Do not grieve and do not lament. That tender and lovely shrub has been transferred from this world to the rose garden of the Kingdom, and that longing dove has flown to the divine nest. That candle has been extinguished in this nether world that it may be rekindled in the Supreme Concourse. Ye shall assuredly meet him face to face in the world of mysteries at the Assemblage of Light.’”

Recent Tablet revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí Sanford Kinney after his departure:

For ‘Abdu’l-‘Alí Sanford Kinney—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O Thou divine Providence!

Sanford was a child of the Kingdom and, like unto a tender shrub, was in the utmost freshness and grace in the Abhá Paradise. He has ascended to the world of the Kingdom, that in the everlasting rose-garden he may grow and thrive on the banks of the river of Everlasting Life and may blossom and attain fruition.

O Thou divine Providence! Rear him by the outpouring of the cloud of mercy and nourish him through the heat of the sun of pardon and of forgiveness. Stir him by the breeze of bounty and bestow patience and forbearance upon his kind father and mother, that they may not deplore his separation, and may rest assured in meeting their son in the everlasting kingdom. Thou art the Forgiver and the Compassionate!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 23 November 1919. Brought by Mrs Wm. H. Randall to Şafá and Vafá Kinney.

X:19, 2 March 1920 [X:19:344]

Editorial—psychic forces

...

The following is a copy of a tablet written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on “psychic forces”:

“To tamper with the psychic forces while in this world interferes with the condition of the soul in the world to come. These forces are real, but are not be active upon this plane.

“The child in the womb has its eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc., but these powers are not in activity. The whole purpose of the womb life is the coming forth into this world. So the whole purpose of this matrix world life is the coming forth into the world of Reality, where all these

forces will be active. They belong to that world.”

I don't think anything could be clearer than that.

Anna Mason Hoar

XI:1, 21 March 1920 [XI:1:4]

Twelve basic Bahá'í principles compiled from the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

These twelve basic Bahá'í principles were laid down by Bahá'u'lláh over sixty years ago and are to be found in his published writings of that time.

1. The oneness of the world of humanity
2. Independent investigation of truth
3. The foundation of all religions is one
4. Religion must be the cause of unity
5. Religion must be in accord with science and reason
6. Equality between men and women
7. Prejudice of all kinds must be forgotten
8. Universal peace
9. Universal education
10. Solution of the economic problem
11. A universal language
12. An international tribunal

1. The oneness of the world of humanity

Bahá'u'lláh addresses to the world of man saying, “Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one harbour.” That is, the world of existence is no other than one tree, and the nations or peoples are like unto the different branches or limbs thereof, and human individuals are similar to the fruits and blossoms thereof ... while in all past religious books and epistles, the world of humanity has been divided into two parts: one called the “people of the Book”, or the “pure tree”, and the other, the “evil tree”. One-half of the people of the world were looked upon as belonging to the faithful, and the other as belonging to the irreligious and the infidel; one-half of the people were consigned to the mercy of the Creator, and the other half were considered as objects of the wrath of their Maker. But Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed the oneness of the world of humanity—he submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity.

2. Independent investigation of truth

No man should follow blindly his ancestors and forefathers. Nay, each must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, and investigate truth in order that he may find the Truth; whereas the religion of forefathers and ancestors is based upon blind imitation—man should investigate the truth.

3. The foundation of all religions is one

The foundation underlying all the divine precept is one reality. It must needs be reality, and reality is one, not multiple. Therefore the foundation of the divine religions is one. But we can see that certain forms have come in, certain imitations of forms and ceremonials have crept in. They are heretical, they are accidental, because they differ; hence they cause differences among religions. But if we set aside these imitations and seek the reality of the foundation we shall all agree, because religion is one and not multiple.

4. Religion must be the cause of unity among mankind

Every religion is the greatest divine effulgence, the cause of life amongst men, the cause of the honour of humanity, and is productive of life everlasting amongst humankind. Religion is

not for enmity or hatred. It is not for tyranny or injustice. If religion be the cause of enmity and rancour, if it should prove the cause of alienating men, assuredly non-religion would be better. For religion and the teachings which appertain to it are a course of treatment. What is the object of any course of treatment? It is cure and beating. But if the outcome of a course of treatment should be productive of mere diagnosis and discussion of symptoms, the abolition of it is evidently preferable. In this sense, abandoning religion would be a step toward unity.

5. Religion must be in accord with science and reason

Religion must be reasonable; it must agree perfectly with science, so that science shall sanction religion and religion sanction science. The two must be brought together indissolubly, in reality. Down to the present day it has been customary for men to accept a thing because it was called religion, even though it were not in accord with human reason. [XI:1:5]

6. Equality between men and women

This is peculiar to the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, for all former religious systems placed men above women. Daughters and sons must follow the same form of study and the same education. Having one course of education promotes unity among mankind.

7. Abandonment of all prejudices

It is established that all the prophets of God have come to unite the children of men and not to disperse them, and to put in action the law of love and not enmity. Consequently we must throw aside all these prejudices—the racial prejudice, the patriotic prejudice, the religious and political prejudices. We must become the cause of unity of the human race.

8. Universal peace

All men and nations shall make peace. There shall be universal peace amongst governments, universal peace amongst religions, universal peace amongst races, universal peace amongst the denizens of all religions. Today in the world of humanity the most important matter in the question of universal peace. The realization of principle is the crying need of the time.

9. Universal education

All mankind should partake of both knowledge and education, and this partaking of knowledge and of education is one of the necessities of religion. The education of each child is obligatory. If there are no parents, the community must look after the child.

10. Solution of the economic question

No religious books of the past prophets speak of the economic question, while this problem has been thoroughly solved in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Certain regulations are revealed which insure the welfare and well being of all humanity. Just as the rich man enjoys his rest and his pleasures surrounded by luxuries, the poor man must likewise have a home, be provided with sustenance, and not be in want. Until this is effected happiness is impossible. All are equal in the estimation of God; their rights are one and there is no distinction for any soul; all are protected beneath the justice of God.

11. A universal language

A universal language shall be adopted which shall be taught by all the schools and academics of the world. A committee appointed by national bodies shall select a suitable language to be used as a means of international communication, and that language shall be taught in all the schools of the world in order that everyone shall need but two languages, his national tongue and the universal language. All will acquire the international language.

12. An international tribunal

A universal tribunal under the power of God, under the protection of all men, shall be established. Each one must obey the decisions of this tribunal, in order to arrange the difficulties of every nation.

About fifty years ago Bahá'u'lláh commanded the people to establish universal peace and summoned all the nations to the "divine banquet of international arbitration" so that the questions of boundaries, of national honour and property and of vital interests between nations might be decided by an arbitral court of justice.

Remember, these precepts were given more than half a century ago. At that moment no one spoke of universal peace, nor of any of these principles; but Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed them to all the sovereigns of the world. They are the spirit of this age, the light of this age; they are the well being of this age.

The Bahá'í Revelation is the spirit of this age. It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahá'í Cause is an inclusive movement: the teachings of all religions and societies are found here. Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, *et al.*, find their highest aims in this Cause. Socialists and Philosophers find their theories fully developed in this Revelation.

The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is the same as the Cause of Christ. It is the same temple and the same foundation. In the coming of Christ the divine teachings were given in accordance with the infancy of the human race. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh have the same basic principles, but are according to the stage of the maturity of the world and the requirements of this illumined age.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

XI:1, 21 March 1920 [XI:1:9]

Bahá'í—A revelation of the spring-time of God

From *The Progressive Thinker*, 10 May 1919.

Albert Vail

Bahá'í is but another word for spring-time—the spring-time of God upon this earth-world. The Bahá'í Gospel is the proclamation of a new age, a new cycle of spiritual realization and universal brotherhood now breaking upon our consciousness. The signs of the coming of this springtime appeared over sixty years ago in Persia, that home of ancient seers and mighty inspiration. There the great Bahá'í teacher, Bahá'u'lláh, was born in the town of Núr, which being interpreted means "the city of Light". He was a prince of the royal Persian family, a prince of earth, but when the inspiration of the spiritual world poured its glory through his pen, his face, his pure and selfless life, he became the prince of spiritual, of heavenly revelation.

The Persian government and the priests, the church and the vested interests could not tolerate his universal and progressive teachings, and, although "the common people heard him gladly", perhaps because the common people came to him by the thousands to be taught the wonderful new truths which would free them from oppression and ignorance, the rulers of Persia drove him with his family and a little band of followers from prison to prison, and at last, discovering what they believed to be the most pestilential and wretched spot on the earth, they carried Bahá'u'lláh to the town of Akká, Palestine, and there chained him to the stone floor of a tower cell. They could not believe that there was any power in heaven or earth strong enough to survive such conditions as they there imposed upon him.

But Bahá'u'lláh, triumphant and glorious, in a little cell, wrote volumes of Tablets with

tempestuous eloquence sustained by a mighty flood of divine inspiration from the unseen oceans of light. From this prison, fifty years ago, he wrote letters, called Tablets, summoning the kings of the world to a League of Nations, the law of mutual disarmament and to universal peace.

He wrote in 1868 to Louis Napoleon predicting his overthrow, and telling him that because of his injustice an enemy would come upon him from over the Rhine, would defeat him in battle, and Louis Napoleon would lose his throne. This prophecy was fulfilled to the letter in the Franco-Prussian war.

In that tortuous prison cell of 'Akká the doors of the divine and unseen spheres were wide open before the pure spiritual vision of Bahá'u'lláh. Wondrous beings from the highest heavens visited him in garments of light. He describes it thus: "The gales of the All-Knowing, the All-Glorious, passed by me and taught me the knowledge of what hath been and is and is to be. I have not studied these sciences which men possess, nor have I entered the col-[XI:1:10] leges. This (Bahá'u'lláh) is a leaf which the breezes of the will of thy Lord the Mighty, the Extolled, have stirred. Can it be still when the rushing winds blow? Verily, I was not save as one dead in the presence of His command, the hand of thy Lord, the Merciful, turning me." The inspiration was so rapid, perfect, glorious, that sometimes he wrote in a night a book of a hundred or two hundred pages, each sentence as beautiful as though infinite pains had been spent upon its literary perfection.

In 1873 he wrote to the Emperor of Germany: "Remember! Where is he who was greater than thou and of more honour and dignity (Napoleon III), and where are his possessions? Awake, and be not of those who sleep. Consider his condition and remember those who in past times subdued the countries and governed the people. Verily, God hath made them descend from palaces to graves." "O banks of the River Rhine! We have seen ye drenched in gore, because the swords of retribution were drawn against ye; and ye shall have another trouble. And we hear the lamentation of Berlin, though it be today in manifest glory."

For the next fifty years Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá foretold the coming of the great universal war, when a spark left over from the Balkans would ignite the arsenals of all Europe and would produce the greatest conflagration in human history. In fact, Bahá'u'lláh prophesied one long succession of historical events. He also foretold, nineteen years before it came to pass in 1892, the year of his ascension into the heavenly world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, his son and successor in spiritual guidance and servitude to the new cycle, possesses the same marvellous gifts. Continually Bahá'u'lláh has sent him messages from the unseen world, and also a perfect glory of spiritual light which has made him celebrated through western Asia for knowledge and divine illumination. Scholars and sages of many sects and religion have journeyed to his prison door to hear his wonderful inspiration and his forecasts of the new world-order of universal brotherhood, spiritual illumination and the most great peace.

When the prison doors of 'Akká were opened in 1908 by the revolution of the Young Turks, 'Abdu'l-Bahá came forth from fifty-four years of prison and exile. His face was furrowed with the lines of humanity's sorrows, yet radiant with universal love; his hair and beard were silver white, but his step majestic and rhythmic with the vigour of eternal youth; his voice was melodious with the melody of the heavenly worlds where his spirit had dwelt in glory. When he visited Europe and America in 1911 and 1912, his message was found to be so modern, so prophetic of the new age, so brilliantly stated, so luminous with the Holy Spirit, that he was immediately asked to speak in the great City Temple, London, and at St. John's Westminster, and in a long succession of churches, synagogues, peace societies, universities, meetings for progressive religion. For three years he travelled, giving public addresses and receiving hundreds of callers daily. In all his addresses he proclaimed the foundation principles of the

new Jerusalem, the universal city of God which he and his father, Bahá'u'lláh had, with their pure spiritual vision, seen descending from the heavens of light into this world of confusion, a glorious Sun of Truth with healing on its wings for all the nations and also light to flood the world with new knowledge, new physical and heavenly sciences, a new hope, a new love, a new and holy power.

“Praise be to God,” says ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a letter to the *Asiatic Quarterly* of London, England, “that the Sun of Reality has shone forth with the utmost brilliancy from the eastern horizon. The regions of the world are flooded with its glorious light. There are many rays to this Sun: [XI:1:11]

“The first ray is heavenly teachings.

“The second ray is the oneness of the world of humanity.

“The third ray is the establishment of universal peace.

“The fourth ray is the investigation of reality.

“The fifth ray is the promulgation of universal fellowship.

“The sixth ray is the inculcation of divine love through the power of religion.

“The seventh ray is the conformity of religion with science and reason.

“The eighth ray is the abandonment of religious, racial, patriotic and political prejudices.

“The ninth ray is the universal spread of education.

“The tenth ray is the organization of the arbitral court of justice, or Parliament of Man, before the members of which all the international and inter-governmental problems are arbitrated.

“The eleventh ray is the equality of the sexes—the giving of the same educational facilities to women as to men, so that they may become adorned with all the virtues of humanity.

“The twelfth ray is the solution of all the economic problems of the world so that each individual member of humanity may enjoy the utmost comfort and well-being.

“The thirteenth ray is the spread of an auxiliary world language.

“Just as the rays of the phenomenal sun are infinite, likewise the rays of the Sun of Reality are infinite. The above summary only contains a few of its rays.

“The spreading of these rays will deliver the world of humanity from the darkness of ignorance, strangeness and narrowness, and will guide it to the centre of all these rays. Then the foundation of warfare and strife, animosity and hatred, will be destroyed from amongst the people, and the misunderstandings existing among the religions will be dispelled. The foundation of the religions of God is one and that is the oneness of the world of humanity.”

When some of us met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America, and beheld the brightness of the spiritual light in his face, felt the glorious vibration of divine power from his presence which swept the room, heard him answer questions on economics, politics, physics, history, philosophy, we felt his heart and mind were a veritable fountain of light. He talked with chemists about chemistry, with electricians about electrical engineering, with Elbert Hubbard about the American poets, with politicians about politics, with little children about their games, all with matchless ease. But he always threw the material knowledge into the divine light, turned it all toward the service of humanity, the pressing call for social and spiritual reconstruction to meet the new and diviner age.

Moreover, he is in his own life a manifestation of the full-orbed light of the new day. He not only reflects its pure, perfected knowledge in words and addresses clear as crystal, universal

as humanity, luminous with the knowledge of earth and the diviner planes beyond our seeing; he lives his gospel in a life of marvellous perfection, pure love and triumphant joy. For years he slept on the damp, earth-covered floor of a cellar room. His food was of the poorest. Yet every morning when he awoke he praised God that another day was before him. Every night when he went to sleep he thanked God he had been permitted to serve Him another day in prison. "I was in prison for forty years," he said, with a smile bright as heaven's own light, "but every day was a day of perfect joy." His body was in prison, but his spirit traversed the glorious worlds of God. As Bahá'u'lláh says of the great masters, the "Mirrors of Unity", "While walking among the servants, they soar in the skies of Nearness. They journey in the land of spirit without motion of foot, and fly [XI:1:12] upward to the summit of oneness without wing. In every moment they traverse the world of creation east and west, and in every moment pass through the kingdom of the seen and the unseen."

Behind 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words shines this divine experience, this exalted consciousness, this resplendent joy, this heroic will and a love which will often melt a heart of stone. For twenty-four years, when he was in the prison city of 'Akká, a fanatical Muslim fakir cursed, persecuted, reviled him. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá poured out upon him love and kindness, sent him a physician when he was ill, food when he was too poor to buy for himself. But the man always refused to speak to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and showered upon him his fanatical curses and abuse. The love of "the Master of 'Akká" never varied in its divine sweetness and holy power. At last the fakir came to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's door, threw himself at his feet, and said: "Forgive me, Sir! For twenty-four years I have done evil to you. For twenty-four years you have done good to me. Now I know I have been in the wrong."

It is this love and victorious spiritual power shining through the spoken and written words of both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá which makes them so powerful in transforming hearts and minds. Through their writings and spiritual radiance thousands of lives have been raised from the graves of materialism and prejudice and selfishness into the glorious consciousness of God's new day. Through their words they put one into connection with their spirit, which is simply the life of God shining from the mirrors of their minds with the full-orbed glory of the new cycle. This new light shining from their spirits has lifted a multitude of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Pársís, Buddhists, Hindus, of many lands and races, into the open plains of the most universal spiritual brotherhood the world has ever seen. It has so endowed these many souls with heroic love and the spiritual vision which looks through martyrdom into the heavenly glory beyond the transparent screen called death, that twenty thousand men, women and children have joyously laid down their lives for this great and universal movement toward religious rebirth, world unity and peace.

In a word, the Bahá'í movement is a proclamation of the principles of the spiritual springtime soon to sweep over the earth. "The Bahá'í Movement is the spirit of the age. It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahá'í Cause is an inclusive movement; the teachings of all religions and societies are found here. Christians; Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, et al., find their highest aims in this Cause."

The Bahá'í Movement is transforming and uniting peoples of so many races and religions because it states these universal principles in universal terms and reinforces them by the lives of great masters who not only proclaim the truth but are "the life, the truth, the way". "Guidance hath ever been by words, but at this time it is by deeds." "The truth of words is tested by deeds and dependent upon life. Deeds reveal the station of a man." (*The Hidden Words* of Bahá'u'lláh.)

The Bahá'í Cause is a new tree of life growing in the orchard of the old, very old trees of the historic world-religions. These trees were once young and beautiful, and they yielded

heavenly fruits. Now a new tree, vital, glorious in spiritual perfection, “with world-wide growing capacity”, is the need of the hour. The Bahá’ís believe that in the universal teachings and spirit of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá they have found that tree of life whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations.

XI:1, 21 March 1920 [XI:1:14]

The Mashriqu’l-Adhkár

The first erected on Mt. Carmel, Palestine; the second in ‘Ishqábád, Russia, and the one to be built in Chicago, USA.

Two excerpts referring to the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár to be built in Chicago.

Through his honour, Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán, and the maid-servant of God, Mrs Helen S. Goodall, to Miss Angeline Haste, San Francisco, California.

O thou lover of truth!

O thou beloved maid-servant of God! The two stars thou didst behold were wonderful signs, for they were shining above Lake Michigan; and now the ground for the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is located there. This was a spiritual revelation and those two stars were two heavenly orbs which were manifested to thy eyes, indicating that the Bahá’í luminary will dawn above Lake Michigan, which will illumine all parts. This means that the power of God shall find a wonderful penetration and by the rays of the kingdom enlighten all directions. ...

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 22 November 1909.

The following extract is contained in a compilation of incidents and short sayings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, sent out by Mrs Henrietta Clark Wagner, in 1912:

“Miss Boylan said that while in Thonon (Switzerland), last summer, she asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá about the work of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, feeling that it was extremely necessary to push this work and get the Temple built as rapidly as possible, and that he must come to build it, in fulfilment of the prophecy that the Lord would come to rebuild the Temple which had been torn down.

“Miss Boylan said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá re- [XI:1:15] plied that he had fulfilled that prophecy by building the Tomb of the Báb. He said the Tomb of the Báb on Mount Carmel was the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, and that Temple is already built. The one in ‘Ishqábád is a radiation from that first one. The one in Chicago will be another radiation. In future there will be many all over the world, all radiating from the central Mashriqu’l-Adhkár.”

From Shoghi Rabbani’s Diary, 8 June 1919

The eternal edifice of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, of ‘Ishqábád, Russia, its perfection, its importance and its unique role was the sole absorbing theme of our conversation and the subject of our thoughts.

This imposing monument is nearing perfection, its dome, large and brilliant, looms from afar. The Greatest Name, carved in gold and in large conspicuous characters, reflects the rays of the sun; while all of its accessories have been provided and many of its branches, such as schools for girls, orphanage, reception rooms, and hospital are nearing completion. Its nine attractive gardens completely encircle the Temple, intercepted by nine spacious walks and having each at their central portion a magnificent fountain with beautiful jets of water that add much to the beauty and charm of the place. Electric lights flash amid the trees that cover with their extended branches these fountains and in such a cool and lovely place the friends

gather and offer to Almighty God their prayers and their praise. Although the public park in that city is wide and imposing, yet comparatively speaking, it is forlorn and forsaken—the attraction and charm of the gardens encircling the Temple by far surpassing the beauty of the park.

Not a visitor, not a passer-by, not a resident comes to that city without visiting this matchless spot, none without expressing his admiration and astonishment at such an exceptional set of buildings, so strongly built, so magnificently designed, and so richly provided. Many have made the following remark: “He who erected this edifice and laid the foundation of such a monument is assuredly divine.”

Often it is the case that the construction of the Temple, its lovely gardens, its completeness and thoroughness in material, intellectual and spiritual equipments, the character of its occupants and owners, their hospitality, their fervour and their conduct—often these awaken the minds of the people and attract them to the Cause.

Such was the description given by Áqá Mírzá Mihdí as he with the friends in ‘Akká gathered this afternoon around ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, at the Tomb of Bahá’u’lláh for the Sunday afternoon visit.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inquired the condition and the association of the friends, it was intimated that unlike the days gone by the friends are intimately associating with all the people of every shade and opinion, of every sect, and social standing. He said: “Such is the way that must be adopted, for only through intimate association will the friends be able to teach and sow a seed in the heart of a seeker. The flower must be brought close and near in order to inhale its scent and fragrance.”

Then referring to the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “The Temple of ‘Ishqábád is unique in that it is the first temple of the kind that has been erected. Many such temples shall be constructed in the future, but this one will ever enjoy this unique privilege and preference. When its accessories are completed and its full machinery starts running, when the melody of vocal and instrumental music arises and bursts upon the air with its joyous trends, when the prayers and supplications addressed at dawn and at sunrise ascend to the Throne of the Almighty, then will the effect of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár be made [XI:1:19] evident and manifest. The Temple that is going to be erected in the United States will be an important and magnificent one, its influence and reaction upon the Cause will be tremendous, and the impetus it shall give to the movement, irresistible.”

Soon shall the city of Tīhrán, Persia, witness the laying of the foundation of the Temple of Worship, for restrictions have been removed and hindrances eliminated.

It will be of interest to note that a hearty invitation has been extended to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by the friends of ‘Ishqábád, in writing and through an oral message, supplicating him to come to ‘Ishqábád and thus rejoice those expectant friends.

XI:1, 21 March 1920 [XI:1:17]

Editorial note¹

Through a misunderstanding the Bahá’ís of the Occident believed that the “blessed days”, foreseen by Daniel (12:12), began in the year 73 of the Bahá’í dispensation, which corresponds to the year 1917 of the Christian calendar, or 100 years after the birth of Bahá’u’lláh, but this error on our part has been corrected by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a recent tablet to Farazu’Allah Zaki El-Curdi,² as follows:

“As to the question thou hast asked in connection with the verse in Daniel’s book, namely:

¹ Refer to *Some Answered Questions*, p. 43 (2nd edn p. 50); and *Lights of Guidance*, No. 1414, p. 432.

² *Shaykh* Faraju’lláh *Dhakí* al-Kurdí, Bahá’í, editor and publisher in Cairo.

'Blessed is he who cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.' This year should be taken as a solar year and not a lunar one, for in accordance with this calculation one century will have elapsed from the rising of the Sun of Truth, when the teachings of God will have been firmly established, when the lights will have flooded all the regions in the East as well as the West. On that day will the believing souls rejoice. ..."

This indicates that there are over thirty years more of storm and sunshine, of difficulty and happiness before the beginning of the blessed millennial summer time of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Let us appreciate the value of the springtime.

Alláh-u-Abhá!—The *Editors*.

XI:1, 21 March 1920 [XI:1:20]

"Before choosing a wife a man must think soberly"

Talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab on 22 December 1918, the day before his departure from the Holy Land.

Now that thou art returning to America thou must think of taking unto thyself a wife. Do thou choose a girl who may be suitable to thy intellectual and spiritual ideals. She must be wise, intelligent, and a symbol of aspiring perfection. She must take an interest in all the problems pertaining to thy life, and be thy companion and partner in every phase of thy existence. She must be sympathetic, kind-hearted, happy and endowed with a joyful disposition. Then thou must devote thy self to her happiness and love her with a glorious, spiritual love.

Before choosing a wife a man must think soberly and seriously that this girl will be his friend throughout all his life. It is not a temporary matter. She is a soul with whom he must associate all the days of his life; she will be his mate and his intimate confidant; therefore, day by day their love and their attachment to each other must increase.

The greatest bond that will unite the hearts of man and wife is faithfulness and loyalty. Both must exercise toward each other the utmost faithfulness and loyalty and not let any trace of jealousy creep between them; for this thing like unto poison vitiates the very foundation of love.

The man and wife must dedicate their knowledge, their talents, their fortunes, their titles, their bodies and their spirits, first to Bahá'u'lláh and then to each other. Their thoughts must be lofty, their ideals luminous, their hearts spiritual, and their souls the dawning-places of the rays of the Sun of Reality. They must not become ill-disposed toward each other on account of the ephemeral incidents and accidents of this changeful life. Their hearts must be spacious, as spacious as the universe of God. In case any difference of opinion should arise between them, they must do their utmost to settle it by themselves, and not let its knowledge go out of the family; for people are apt to change a speck into a mountain. Again, in case a circumstance causes a real offence between the two, they must not keep it in their hearts, but rather explain its nature to each other and try to remove it as soon as possible. They must prefer fellowship and amity to jealousy and hypocrisy, and be like two pure mirrors reflecting the light of the stars of love and beauty to each other.

You must tell to each other all your noble and heavenly conceptions. Have no secrets between you. Make your home a haven of rest and peace. Be ye hospitable and let the doors of your home be open to the faces of friends and strangers. Welcome everyone with a smiling face and let them all feel that they are in *my home*.

God has created such union and harmony between man and wife that no one can conceive

in this world a greater plane of union. You must irrigate continually the tree of your union with the water of love and affection, so that it may remain green and verdant throughout all the seasons, producing the most luscious fruits for the healing of the nations.

In short, you two must live such a life that your home may become a vision of the paradise of Abhá; so that whosoever enters therein may feel the essence of purity and cleanliness, and may cry out unconsciously: “Here is the home of love, here is the palace of love, here is the nest of love, here is the garden of love;” and you two, like unto two sweet-singing birds, must be [XI:1:21] perched on the highest branches of the tree of life, filling the air with songs of love and happiness.

Endeavour as far as you are able to lay the foundation of your love in the very centre of your spiritual being, in the very heart of your consciousness, and do not let this foundation of love be shaken in the least.

And when God gives you sweet and lovely children, exert yourselves in their education and training, so that they may become the imperishable flowers of the divine rose-garden, the nightingales of the ideal paradise, the servants of the world of humanity and the fruits of the Tree of Life.

Live ye in such a manner that others may take your life as an example, and may say to each other: “Look! How they live like unto two doves in one nest with perfect love, affinity and harmony. It is as though God had kneaded from eternity the very essence of their beings for the love of each other.”

When such conditions exist and such ideals hold sway, then you have taken a large portion from the everlasting life, have quaffed deeply from the fountain of Truth, and have spent your days in the paradise of glory gathering the immortelles¹ of divine mysteries.

Be ye to each other as heavenly lovers and divine beloved ones. Spend your life in the paradise of love. Build your nest on the leafy branches of the tree of love. Soar ye in the clear atmosphere of love. Swim ye in the shoreless sea of love. Walk ye in the eternal rose-garden of love. Move ye in the shining rays of the sun of love. Be ye firm and steadfast in the path of love. Perfume your nostrils with the sweet fragrance of the flowers of love. Familiarize your ears with the soul-entrancing melodies of love. Be ye intoxicated with the wine of love. Drink we deeply of the elixir of love. Let your ideals be the bouquet of love, and your conversation the white pearls of the ocean of love.

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 6 December 1919, Sebastopol, California.

XI:2, 9 April 1920 [XI:2:25]

Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

We do not look at the evil deeds of the people. We do not consider the race, the religion, or nationality. We do our utmost to help everyone. The inhabitants of these parts know this and, therefore, whenever they are in difficulties, or have had business reverses they come to us and we will never send them away unaided or deprived. This is the quality of the Bahá’ís. This is the conduct of the believers. This is the path of the kingdom of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 24 January 1914.

XI:2, 9 April 1920 [XI:2:27]

The coming of the Promised One

Address by Howard C. Ives of New York City, delivered at the Eighth Session of the Bahá’í Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Wednesday afternoon, 30 April 1919.

¹ French: Everlasting.

Did you ever stand upon a high point and see the sun rise? I have stood among the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and watched the dawn break over the hills, the morning star gradually dimming in its glory, the faint first rosy light creeping up the horizon, and then gradually, above the mountains, the first rim of the radiant glory of the orb; then lifting, and lifting, and flooding the earth with its glory. Not in all nature is there such a sight; nothing will compare with that wonderful miracle. I have heard it said that if it happened only once a year people would be on their knees for days before, longing, searching, for the first sign, hoping for that coming. Imagine, friends, if it only happened once every thousand years. Stretch the wings of your imagination and think of the legends that would be handed down from father to son, and son to son, from generation to generation and think how they would watch the constellations of the sky—for praise be to God, even in the darkest night, there are stars in the sky—and think how the traditions would have mentioned that, before the dawning, a morning star would appear, and when that morning star arose above the horizon and gradually found its way toward the zenith, think how men's hearts would leap with joy, and they would say, "He is coming! He is coming! I have seen his sign in the sky!" And then think what a dawning that would be when the sunrise came once only every thousand years. You could not stand and wait for it. The father would see the first faint gleam upon the horizon, and the sons would see it gradually grow and grow, and the grandsons would see the first faint roseate tinge upon the mountain tops, and the great-grandsons would look and long for the orb to appear, and the great-great-grandsons would see it gradually rise above the horizon.

My friends, there is not one single thing in all this world that is not a symbol of the spiritual reality, and what I have just painted in words for you is an actual fact. The Sun of Reality rises only once every thousand years or so, the stars in the heaven precede his dawning, the hearts of men become weary through the night as they watch the stars in the sky and long for the coming of that which the stars promise. Throughout the ages it has been said that in the time of the coming of the Sun of Truth there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. What does that mean? Certainly not that this sky shall be changed and this earth beneath our feet altered. No! The sky that we see and the earth beneath our feet are but symbols again, just as the sun is a symbol and the stars are symbols. The sky is a symbol of the heaven of religion and the earth is a symbol of the hearts that are softened for the springtime.

Many thousand years ago a Sun appeared—we call his name Abraham—a [XI:2:28] Sun of Reality rose gradually according to the promise; and the star—I don't mean the material star, I mean the heart and the longing thoughts of men, longing just then as we do now—and the constellations, arose with him, thus a new heaven appeared. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Ezekiel were the stars of that heaven, they were the constellations appearing with that promised One.

And then Moses came, bringing with him his own group.

Then Jesus Christ came. Think of the stars that rose with him. John, Stephen, Paul, Timothy, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary and Martha the sisters, Luke the physician, Matthew the publican, Peter the fisherman! Ah, they are the illuminating lights that come with that promised One, they are the stars of his heaven, and they, after the sun has set, illuminate the dark sky throughout the age, then gradually dwindling in glory until the sun again rises. But when the sun appears from the horizon of the vernal equinox, on the twenty-first of March, it brings the glory of the springtime; so when the Sun of Reality rises, He brings healing on His wings, and a new springtime comes to the human heart.

Just as the farmer goes out and ploughs and harrows the hard soil, so the Spirit of God moves upon the hearts, and pain, sorrow and suffering plough the hearts. Nations tremble because of starvation, famine, agonies and tears! That is why the earth is filled with woe—woe, woe, woe—when the promised One appears. Praise be to God, for without that woe our

hearts would still be hard, just as the ground is hard until with the softening of the rain and the warmth of the sun and the plough and the harrow, it is broken to pieces, in order that the seed may fall and fructify and grow and bring forth a hundred fold.

My friends, praise be to God, the promised One hath come again. We have waited long throughout the centuries; our hearts have grown into stone, our hearts have become frozen, our hearts have fallen low in woe and weeping. Praise be to God, he hath come again! He hath come again! The Sun of Reality hath risen. O that isn't all, for there is a new heaven, and there is also a new earth. What good would the sun be? What good would the crossing of the equinox be in the early spring were there not an earth to feel its rays? Of what earthly use is it, if the promised One, the Sun of Reality, dawns and there are no hearts to receive the light? Praise be to God, there are always hearts to receive the light. We are His creatures, the children of His hand, the offspring of His love. We long for Him and He longs for us. Now in this great Day of God the hearts are turning unto Him.

Was it yesterday that our dear sister, Mrs Maxwell, quoted the beautiful words from Daniel that "the wise shall shine as the sun and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." There is your perfect symbol. That is the ancient version, the old version, but the revised version has it much more beautiful: "They that be teachers shall shine as the sun; they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, forever and ever." Bahá'u'lláh glorified God in his wonderful Book, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*: "At that time the signs of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens." That is, the promised Beauty and substance of life shall come from the court of the invisible into the visible world. That is the coming of the promised One; that is the coming of the Son of Man; that is the dawning of the signs in the heavens. "The appearance", as he says again in another passage, "when the face of the promised One and the beauty of the adored One shall descend from heaven riding upon a cloud." That is, the divine Beauty will appear from the heavens of the Supreme Will in the human temple.

So my friends, change your point of [XI:2:29] view for a moment from thinking of the heavens above and the rising of the sun and its glory; change your point of view to the divine Beauty appearing in the human form here on earth. Imagine the divine Beauty descending from heaven "riding on a cloud", that is the human form, the cloud hiding him from our eyes, nevertheless dwelling in the human temple, seeing with human eyes, walking with human feet, eating, drinking, suffering, longing—the divine Beauty nevertheless, the promised Beauty and substance of life! Think of those words, the promised Beauty, the very substance of life, appearing in a human temple. This is the Sun of Reality I am talking about, shining upon the human earth, the earth of human hearts.

Ah, my friends, make the picture, for his human temple is the Sun of Reality, and within that human temple, which is nothing but a cloud, the Sun is shining to those whose eyes can see it. Shall he shine in our hearts? Shall he bring forth fruits meet for repentance, as Jesus said? Shall the wheat of divine love grow? Shall the fruits of glorious perfection appear? Shall the clouds of mercy from the divine heaven pour upon ready hearts the drops of his mercy and the fire of his love? Shall there appear from this earth the great and glorious results worthy of such a Sun from such a heaven? Praise be to God, I don't even have to ask, for the new earth has come.

When the sun rises in the springtime, when the sun gradually crosses the line, what do we see? Do we see all at once the earth burst into beauty and perfection? Do we see all at once the fruits of the harvest appear? Oh, no, we see a blade of grass here and there, a little green leaf, then the rest; we see a tree just beginning to show its buds—but these are the new earth. All the cold and hard world does not exist. I don't care how many millions of dead leaves there are, the one blade of grass, the one green leaf is the new earth. And so, show me one soul responding to the new Sun; show me one life ready to lay itself down in self-abnegation

and perfect renunciation; show me one martyr to the Sun of Truth; show me one who is placing heart and soul on the altar of self-sacrifice, purity and love that is the new earth! That is all the earth there is. Let the rest go, it doesn't exist. It is dark and cold, it is dead.

Does it exist? Do you say that the dead bodies in the graves exist in comparison with the people walking on the street? I tell you, my friends, all those who do not know Bahá'u'lláh, and his glory, all those who do not turn to him in this new age, simply do not exist. On the other hand, verily, they are in their graves and they know it not. Arise, arise, O earth of human hearts! Arise, burst the prison bars, come out from the cage! Be ye resurrected from the dead bodies of self and desire and ascend to that station for which ye were created! When the Sun of Reality arises in the human temple, it creates effects upon the human hearts just as the sun does upon the material earth, and results appear. He speaks, and it is done.

My friends, think, think of these last four days you and I have been listening—don't let us lose the figure—you and I have been seeing the rays of the Sun of Truth shining upon the earth and results appearing. Go ye into all the world, shine as the Sun of Truth, carry to all the world the news that rays of the Sun of Reality shining upon the world shall transform it, proclaim to them that the Prince of Peace hath come, that never again shall there be war amongst nations, never again shall there be war between creeds and classes and sects, never again shall labour and capital be arrayed against each other, never again shall there be loveless homes and divorce courts, never again shall there be strife between children in the streets, never again shall there be anything that shall mar the beauty of the love of God in the human heart. That is the procla- [XI:2:30] mation—and it is done. What difference does it make if it doesn't come at once? Does that alter the fact? We who see the sun rise and cross the equinox every springtime, do we say, because the whole world does not burst into beauty and harvest at once, that it won't come? I tell you the first blade of grass is the whole thing, to anyone who sees. And so when the Word of God goes forth, the thing is done.

Arise! Arise! O ye chosen of the world, and be ye the divine helpers of God, says Bahá'u'lláh. How? Praise be to God, the command not only goes forth but the way of development is shown not only in words but in example. Bahá'u'lláh says, "Though ye cut off my limbs, yet shall the love of God not depart out of my heart. Verily, I was created for sacrifice, therefore do I glory over the world." Do you want then to know how you shall glory over the world, how you shall establish the Kingdom of God in hearts, how you shall carry out the teachings of these blessed Tablets that we are listening to? Here is the recipe, "Though they cut off my limbs, yet shall the love of God not depart out of my heart. I was created for sacrifice, therefore do I glory over the world!" Those who believe in Bahá'u'lláh, those who have turned their hearts to the Centre of His Covenant, those who love the Blessed Perfection, were created by the Sun of Reality in the human temple for sacrifice, and by sacrifice shall they glory over the world as He did and establish the Kingdom of the promised One in the hearts and souls.

"The blessed person of the promised One is interpreted in the holy books as the Lord of Hosts, i.e., the heavenly armies! By heavenly armies those souls are intended who are free from the human world, transformed into celestial spirits and have become divine angels." There are your celestial armies. They who shall become divine angels, are those who have turned their backs upon the world, who were created by the love of God and His Blessed Beauty for sacrifice.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

XI:2, 9 April 1920 [XI:2:30]

The most great characteristic: The Centre of the Covenant

Address by Dr Diyá' M. Baghdádí of Chicago, delivered at the Eighth Session of the Bahá'í

Congress at Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Wednesday afternoon, 30 April 1919.

As I have been quite ill for the last three days, I did not expect to be here this afternoon, but memory recalled a beautiful afternoon, in the year 1912, when our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant, commanded his Persian party, including this servant, to address the friends in New York on the same subject that we have this afternoon, "The Centre of the Covenant", and therefore I was strengthened to come to this blessed gathering.

Why is it that the most great characteristic of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh concerns the Centre of the Covenant? Why this greatness or extreme importance? Because the Covenant is the one power that preserves unity among mankind, prevents sectarianism and protects all the principles of Bahá'u'lláh. For example: The investigation of reality is a principle of Bahá'u'lláh. If one were to say, "I can interpret that. It has another meaning. It does not mean that we must investigate reality." The power of the Covenant is the one weapon that would stop such an interpreter. If one were to say, regarding the principle of Bahá'u'lláh to do away with racial and all other prejudices, "I understand it differently, racial differences must exist", the only weapon with which you could overpower such an interpreter is the Covenant. In other words, the only interpreter is the beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Should one in most eloquent language [XI:2:31] try to prove the inequality of the sexes, reply to such a one that the only interpreter is His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant, and the power of the Covenant will prevent wrong interpretation. Should one try to convince the world that universal peace was not right, we would know, by the power of the Covenant, that such interpretation was wrong, and that would be the only way to stop such false interpretation.

So, you see, all the other principles of Bahá'u'lláh are protected, too, by that power of the Covenant. The progress of the religions of the past depended upon the unity of the believers, and the failure thereof was caused by the disunity and differences of the believers. Consider the essence of history. Take the Jewish religion. Its founder, Moses, delivered the people of Israel, who were enslaved and persecuted by the Pharaohs, and saved them from bondage in Egypt. Under him all became free in the Land of Promise. For four hundred and fifty years they were ruled by four hundred judges, a congress, in the Holy Land. They progressed day by day because they were united. Through the power of the prophet Samuel, Saul, the first king, was placed on the throne and became the ruler of the Jews. They were united upon the text and teachings of Moses. Saul died and was succeeded by David. Still that religion was progressing. David died and his son Solomon was made king. That period was the highest of the Jewish civilization. The kingdom extended to the Euphrates and the Red Sea. They became the teachers of the then known world. Many of the philosophers of the Romans, the Greeks and other nations went to learn from them and to be educated. The downfall of the Jews began when, after the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam became king, the Jews splitting into two factions or kingdoms, one of which, the kingdom of Judah remained loyal and offered allegiance to Rehoboam, while the other, the Kingdom of Israel, elected for its sovereign Jeroboam from the descendants of Joseph who lived in Mesopotamia.

This first split divided their power, creating enmity, suspicion and hate, and wars resulted to the extent that Jeroboam declared that it was just as good to worship a bull as to go to Jerusalem, the holy city, and worship God, because he did not want his people to go and become acquainted with the other king, the son of Solomon. When that discord took place and wars had begun between the two factions, other nations attacked and crushed them. Then the Romans, Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians came and destroyed them, the Jews falling into degeneration and slavery. The Assyrians annihilated the kingdom of Israel, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia, attacked Judea, taking captive and burning Jerusalem. The kingdom of Israel was utterly annihilated and the remnants of the kingdom of Judea were saved by the mercy of the Persian kingdom. Later the Jews were divided into the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Publicans, etc.

At such time Jesus Christ appeared. He came to unite them and to guide all the people. Instead of receiving and following him, they crucified him. After his departure Christianity was a target of persecution for seventy years. Titus, the Emperor of the Romans, then became interested in the Christian religion. He killed more than a million of the Jews, scattered the rest and destroyed Jerusalem. To the Christians he gave freedom—that is, seventy years after the birth of Jesus Christ and the Christians were given an opportunity to go forth and teach the Romans. That freedom, however, was later taken from them and Nero, the Roman Emperor, persecuted them severely. While intoxicated, Nero burned the city of Rome and in the morning [XI:2:37] wanted to know who had done it. The enemies of the Christians told him that Paul, Peter and the Christians, to whom he had given freedom, were the cause of the burning of the city of Rome, the most beautiful capital of the world at that time. He immediately became their oppressor and put to death those two great martyrs, Paul and Peter. Thus not only did the Jews, but the Romans as well take part in the persecution. Briefly, for three hundred years the Christians were oppressed.

Then Constantine, the brave Emperor of Rome, became a Christian. He spread Christianity throughout the world and it began to progress from that time. He moved from Rome and made his capital in Constantinople, that city being named in his honour. It was the glory of Christianity when Constantine was the Emperor. What else did [XI:2:38] Constantine do? Christianity was at the zenith of its prosperity, when he did something that marked the beginning of its fall. When he moved from Rome to Constantinople he wanted to have a democracy among the leaders of all the churches. Every church had a bishop, but they were all under the bishop of Rome, who was called or known as the Pope. Constantine said: “No, we must have a democracy. The power should not be in the hands of the Pope.” Thus the first split took place in Christianity, half becoming Orthodox and the other half Catholics. Those who wanted all the power to be in the hands of the Pope were called Catholics and those who believed that the power should be divided and every bishop should have equal freedom were called Orthodox.

During the third and fourth centuries another division took place in Christianity, the subject of contention this time being that of the doctrine of the Trinity. There were those who believed in the union of God, the Son and the Holy Ghost—the three in one—and those who believed it could not be done; those who believed that Jesus Christ had two natures, the divine and the human, and those who said: “No, God is above mentioning. No one can comprehend Him. Jesus Christ is the Manifestation of God and that is all.” Thus was another division created, this time on account of the doctrine of the Trinity, and every time a division took place, wars resulted and blood was shed.

In the year CE 325, Constantine called the first general council at Nicaea, in Bithynia,¹ in order to settle the differences, but that could not be done. Arius, the eloquent priest, who interpreted the Trinity and who became the cause of the controversy, was excommunicated by the Orthodox church.

In the fifth century, another sect, the Nestorians, was created by Nestorius, a brilliant priest. At that time the Christians believed that Jesus Christ had two natures, divine and human, and, therefore, it mattered not whether Mary was called “the mother of the Lord” or “the mother of Jesus”. But Nestorius and his followers taught that Mary must be called only “the mother of Jesus” and not “the mother of the Lord”. Briefly, these arguments ended in bloody battles. Then general councils were held. Nestorius was excommunicated, but the sect remains in Persia to this day.

Another sect came into existence and that was the Jacobites, founded by Jacobus

¹ Nicaea is south of modern Izmit, and Bithynia, Asia Minor, is a region that is now northern Turkey.

Baradaeus, a priest. They promulgated the belief that Jesus Christ had one divine nature only and they tried to promote unity.

In the sixth century Christianity was spread in the west of Europe as far as Britain and Saxony, and in the east to the shores of the Black Sea and the Danube.

In the seventh century the Islamic religion appeared and the Muslims had terrific clashes with the Christians.

In the eighth century another division took place and this was the last division. And what caused that? Pictures! Those who believed in having pictures in the church, and those who said: "This means that we are like the heathen. If we put a picture before us, what is the difference between us and those who worship idols?"

This controversy created another sect. There was another war and another general council or convention, but with no result. If you travel in the Orient you will find the Nestorians and the Jacobites as well as many other sects. These various sects have been separating themselves from the rest of the world and living in ignorance on account of one person who interpreted something for his own desire and his own selfishness.

In the ninth and tenth centuries there were continuous wars among the various sects—two centuries of bloodshed—but they conquered in Hungary, Russia, and other places. [XI:2:39]

The eleventh century began with the greatest and longest war the world had ever witnessed. It started with the organization of 800,000 soldiers in Europe, who proceeded to the Holy Land to take it from the Muslims. That was the war of the Crusaders.

The eleventh century, the twelfth, the thirteenth and the fourteenth saw nothing but wars and struggle between the European Christians and the Muslims, resulting in nothing but failure and manifest loss.

In the fifteenth century the Pope proclaimed himself as an absolute power.

In the sixteenth century Luther arose against the Pope and the result was the establishment of the Protestant sect.

If we follow carefully this brief outline of the history of the Jews and the Christian church, we come to the conclusion that had the Divine Will appointed a Centre, through Moses or through Jesus Christ, these divisions would not have occurred.

It is not necessary to mention the divisions in the Islamic religion because they were similar to the other religions.

Therefore, the most great characteristic of the religion of Bahá'u'lláh is, The Centre of the Covenant—that which the previous divine Manifestations did not bring. This will fortify the Cause from now until at least one thousand years, and perhaps until thousands of years have passed away. Through the power of the Covenant no one can create a sect or division in the Bahá'í Cause.

In 1891, Bahá'u'lláh referred to his departure thus: "In my appearance there was a wisdom, and in my disappearance there is another wisdom." All who heard him felt that the day of his departure was near. It came in 1892. The believers who were gathered in 'Akká and who numbered not more than 600 people, in one week became divided into twenty-three sects. In other words, in one week they had twenty-three opinions as to what would be done in the future, now that Bahá'u'lláh had departed. Each one had an opinion and each thought his opinion was the best. On the ninth day a little satchel that had belonged to Bahá'u'lláh and which had been sealed with His blessed seal, was brought by His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá and placed before the twenty-three divisions or sects if you wish to so call them. It was opened and, behold, it contained the *Book of the Covenant*, in which it was written: "All must obey and

turn to the one whom God has chosen.” In the Tablets and in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Bahá’u’lláh says: “The purpose is the Greatest Branch. He is the explainer of the Books. He is my interpreter. He is the Branch of Holiness. He is the greatest favour and blessing for mankind and the protection of all. He is the Mystery of God. He is the one around whom all the names and attributes of God revolve.” Even He (Bahá’u’lláh) asks all the divine blessings for all those who turn to him, and woe for all those who turn away from him.

That Book was read. All the faces brightened. All bowed down in the spirit of acceptance.

But certain prophecy had to be fulfilled, namely, “From the East and the West they will come and enter into the Kingdom of God, but the children of the Kingdom will be cast out.” A few, however, with veiled spiritual vision, such as Mírzá Muḥammad ‘Alí, rejected it and turned away, as the owls and the night birds who flee from the light of the sun. The fire of jealousy and envy took such hold on them that they preferred to be known as náqidín—meaning violators of the Covenant. Those who turned away simply destroyed their own lives, here, there and everywhere, as did Judas Iscariot. Those who took hold of “The Branch” grew and produced fruit, becoming as shining stars in the horizons.

The beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in order to [XI:2:40] have us all united, accepted the station of servitude, calling himself, “The Servant of Bahá”, that we might all learn a lesson from that humbleness—not because his station is lower than the rest. The qualities of the sun are manifest; the eyes behold them and it is not necessary to try to convince us that they are there.

We should carefully study the religion of Bahá’u’lláh and obey it. See with what names, what attributes Bahá’u’lláh has clothed His Greatest Branch. Study the *Tablet of the Branch* and see how the Blessed Tree described its Branch. The title of “‘Abdu’l-Bahá” should be our mirror into which we should look every day to learn the lesson of humbleness and servitude. The title which he chose for himself, namely, “The Servant”, should be a lesson to us to try to overcome our arrogance and selfishness, because the ego is the only enemy of the Bahá’í. The Bahá’í has no enemy except his own ego and that ego often makes him lower than the animals, Jesus Christ taught the same lesson to the world when he said: “Why callest thou me good? None is good save One, that is, God.” That was a lesson to his disciples to teach them humbleness and reverence.

In Persia the Cause is firm and on a solid foundation. If anyone comes to them with an idea that would seemingly destroy rather than build the Cause, they ask him in a gentle manner: “Is this your own opinion or that of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá?” If he answers: “This is my opinion,” they say: “Barak-Allah (God bless you).¹ This may be a good opinion, but keep it for yourself. How do we know? Today you praise this one and tomorrow you hate him. Today you hate this one and tomorrow you praise him. How do we know which one you are going to take?” In this manner they close the door of differences. This does not mean, however, that if the believers want to build up the work, lending their influence and their opinions which are harmonious to the Cause of God, being willing to even sacrifice their lives if necessary, that we should suspect them. God forbid! There should be no such misunderstanding. But if there be anything contrary to the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, then ask such an one to produce a written statement proving his authority.

Differences are of two kinds, constructive and destructive. If one should come and say, “I want to help you build this house,” you reply, “Welcome.” But should he say, “I do not agree with you. Build it this way. I want to destroy this building. Build it somewhere else”—that difference, my friends, would be destructive. If, therefore, there are differences of opinion among the believers which are conducive to the promulgation of the Cause, there is no harm

¹ Barakatu’lláh.

in such differences; but ideas or statements that are contrary to the teachings must be authenticated, must be shown, must be proven.

Therefore, the Bahá'ís who would keep the Cause clean and strong, should, like unto a wise and careful gardener who guards the young trees, plant seeds that will grow and which the winds of doubt will not blow away, the heat of envy and jealousy will not burn, the thief will not steal and the fire of desire will not consume; and should protect them from the contrary winds of conflicting and confusing opinions that are conducive to separation rather than to unity.

Our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that, in the future, even the rulers, the kings of the world, will tremble if they try to deviate one hair's breadth from this great Covenant. There is no doubt about it, because the religion of Bahá'u'lláh is protected and fortified. That oneness, which is the foundation of the religion of Bahá'u'lláh, cannot be shaken when the banner of the mighty Covenant is waving over the heads.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

XI:3, 28 April 1920 [XI:3:43]

“The doors of the Kingdom are open”

Address by William H. Randall, of Boston, delivered at the Ninth Session of the Bahá'í Congress, held in Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Wednesday evening, 30 April 1919.

'Abdu'l-Bahá once said, “Never talk about God to a man with an empty stomach. Feed him first.” Surely in the past three days he has fed us, and in this hour that draws this wonderful and marvellous Convention and Congress to a close, it certainly seems befitting that we should turn our hearts to the Kingdom of the Covenant, and with the deepest reverence for this great opportunity and great service that is before us in giving his methods to the whole world of humanity.

For nineteen centuries the Kingdom of Heaven has been largely considered by man merely a parable, but this seed of the Kingdom, unobserved by mankind, has been growing and growing through the centuries until in this day it has become a tree of fruitage, and through these wonderful Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the fruit of this Kingdom is offered to you now in the heavenly banquet that he has served during these four days, and its life, its sustenance, its strength are eternal. This is the hour of faith, the day of miracles, the century of light, and in this wonderful epoch two worlds have met and embraced in the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the world of God and the world of humanity; and how glorious, how wonderful that he should come to us in the station of servitude and call to the whole world, “Come, ye people, unto the Kingdom of God, for today the doors are open, and the station of servitude is the highway thereto.”

Someone asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá once why the rivers and the streams all flowed into the ocean, and he replied, “Attraction, because the ocean places itself lower than all else in the world.” This is the supreme quality of the station of servitude, and I think if we lift our eyes to the portals we shall find written above in letters of light, “radiant acquiescence”. Who can fail to make every effort to reach this doorway, which is the pathway unto the Kingdom of Glory?

Kingdom naturally implies organization. How is it that there can be organization in a kingdom that we call the kingdom of the Spirit? In the world of affairs, organization in itself is power, yet disharmony flows from it; but in the world of the Kingdom, where love is the law of organization, unity radiates from its power. In the world of hearts, the heart is an organ, but when the breath wings its flight with love, the organic heart turns its way back to the mineral kingdom. The heart that seeks only the centre of self has never left the kingdom of nature, but the heart that is enkindled with the love of humanity is already on its way to the worlds of

God.

This Kingdom that draws us, and irresistibly draws us on through the ages, what is its power? With man, power is effort; but with God power is attraction. It holds atoms and worlds in one embrace and impels them through the great universe of search, search for the centre of that attraction. It draws forth from the common soil and clothes with the [XI:3:44] substance of light the form of flowers and fruit. As love, it persuades man through the various courts of attraction until his soul reaches the court of the placeless, drawn in by the Centre of the Covenant, and therein does man find the heaven and the paradise of the preordained command of God that is the potential unfolding of his greatest capacity, his greatest happiness, his greatest service, that makes him one of the drops in the ocean of the unity of God's love.

My dearest, dearest friends: We have had revealed to us in these sublime Tablets, a whole new world order of life. We have had presented to us with its great opportunity the chance to rise and to serve God in His world. I believe in this day that disciples choose themselves, that all may be disciples, that we are all called to the station of discipleship in this new and glorious kingdom; that God Himself has incarnated in the world, and founded the great Spiritual Magna Carta and its laws, its joys and its happiness, and has placed them in the hands of the friends of America. He has given to America the station of the illumination of the world, and now, we must build deep that it may be high, we must build outside of time that it may withstand time. Peter and Paul built beyond the empire of Rome, they built beyond the time of the life of all emperors because they built deep and they built high. It is our greatest privilege, it is our greatest joy, it is the supreme happiness now of our lives to dedicate them to this service to the Kingdom.

Do not think I am too solemn—I never was happier in my life; but the magnitude of this vision is so great that I seem almost lost even in the contemplation of it. We must arise, we must become organized through that organizing power of love which is the magnet of the spirit and we must go forth with heart and mind illumined with the living light, with the substance of these great and universal Tablets. A few years longer, and eternity beyond; God calls at this very hour. Can we fail? Have we any choice but to obey?

To love is a wondrous thing; to be loved is a miracle. Sometimes we falter when we love, but it seems to me when we know we are loved our steps are firm; and 'Abdu'l-Bahá loves us, every soul, his eye is upon every soul gathered in this Convention tonight and he loves us with the encircling burning power of love. Can we fail to respond to that love? Can we when he has spent every hour from childhood to the present moment, forty years of it in prison, in hardships, going through the pathway of every possible self-denial, surrendering the human spirit with which he contacts with the world, can we feel that at this hour we can do greater than to turn our eyes to the call of this Kingdom and to arise and to serve and follow in the pathway of his blessed feet?

Oh, my dear friends, I know you feel the urge; I know that you realize the magnitude of the task, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said to us that he who will arise to be the herald of the glad-tidings of this day will be sustained by the Holy Spirit, will be received with an acclamation of joy into the Kingdom of God. We will arise to this commanding spirit, and go forth as the heralds of light; we will spread this wondrous message of glad-tidings throughout the whole world, until every heart is touched, until every ear has heard, and every mind enkindled with the Supreme Spirit which composes the world in the harmony of living.

There is one splendour of the spirit that unites mankind in the service of brotherhood. There is another glory that is celestial that transforms the heart from the image of the earthly into the image of the heavenly. This is the pathway, the severed highway to the portals of light and His Word is the sign: "The love of the Word of God is the magnet of heavenly beauty

and glory.”

Alláh-u-Abhá!

XI:3, 28 April 1920 [XI:3:45]

The servant of God

Address by Albert Vail, of Chicago, delivered at the Ninth Session of the Bahá'í Congress, held in Hotel McAlpin, New York City, Wednesday evening, 30 April 1919.

The doors of the Kingdom are open; the Sun of Truth is shining upon the world; the day-springs of mercy have appeared.” What does this mean? Evidently it means that this little world in which we live, in the sight of God is like a tiny ball floating in a universe of infinitely wonderful light. In the sight of God, this handful of dust, the world, is but one home and all the prayer of the eternal world is that this world may be in unity. Now when the darkness and the storm spread over the earth, it seems very dark to us who are underneath the clouds. But if we can rise a little in the altitude of the spirit and see the Sun of Truth eternally shining from the heaven of God's presence, no cloud which ever came over the world would be more than a temporary passing mist.

The God who made this little world also made all the heavenly and divine worlds. He evidently has a clear purpose for this world on which we dwell, and that purpose is that, after the thousands of years of war, it should enter into a millennium of peace. The world could have no other meaning than that this strife and confusion would at last prepare the hearts of men for the sweetness of the kingdom of universal peace.

Now, when the King begins to send His light into the world the people catch only a few rays of the dawning Sun of Reality as it rises over the horizon of man's limitation and breaks through the clouds of his suspicion, his ignorance and his prejudice. The first few rays in this new day, are the desire for a League of Nations, the longing for democracy; the prayer for woman's suffrage, for equality between men and women, the longing for universal education, for science, for civilization, for new arts, that great yearning that touches the hearts of all men all over the world and, stirring in their hearts, tells them that the new day is here, the divine world is breaking into the human world.

What we want to know is the next step toward the realization of this universal prayer. Is there a soul on this globe today who is not praying in his heart for the dawn of the Most Great Peace amongst the nations? How can it be brought about? That is the one problem around which all other problems revolve. Politically, the League of Nations is the first great step. We need a society of nations, a democracy of the world. We also need woman's suffrage so that women, tender, loving and intuitive, may more completely direct the operations of the nation. But the fundamental problem goes deeper than any political, democratic, economic or educational organization. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his classic story has put the world situation like this: He says that the governments of the world are much in the state of three men who went out sailing in a boat. One was a Christian, one was a Muslim and one was a Jew. The Muslim bowed down as a storm approached over the water and he said, “O Alláh, drown in the depths of the water this infidel of a Christian.” The Christian said, “O God, sink in the depths of the sea this infidel of a Muslim.” The Jew remained silent. They said, “Are you not praying in this moment of calamity?” He replied, “Oh yes, I was praying that both of your prayers might be answered.” (Laughter.)

That is the world situation which we need to transform today. That is the [XI:3:46] world's heart which needs to be made into a new heart. Now, how is this to be done? The only way is to teach these people who look at each other so bitterly to see something in each other which is supremely beautiful and glorious. If that Christian there in the boat could have looked into the Muslim's heart and seen that he was worshipping the same God as he, only under another

name, the Muslim and the Christian could have become brothers; and if the Jew could have looked into both of their hearts and said, "O blessed Christ, you made the Torah celebrated all over the world; you made Moses celebrated, you made all Hebrews celebrated; you are the prophet of Israel," then there could be peace. If the Muslim could see the good in the Christian, if the Christian could see the good in the Muslim, if the Jew could see that every great prophet in the world is one of God's messengers; if all could look into each other's hearts and see there the love of the Eternal Father, then there would begin on earth the Most Great Peace.

When you meet a stranger, says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, say, "Yonder is coming to me a letter sent me by God." The outside of the envelope may be dirty, and torn and broken, but if we could open the envelope of the life that comes before us and look within the envelope and learn to read the writing, we would find in every human soul which crosses our threshold or which is yonder over the man-made national border, a message from God, and if we could understand the message it would be God's benediction to us. There is only one hope for humanity today and that is to see all human beings as rays of the one divine sun which is God, as pearls of the one ocean which is God, flowers of the one garden whose Gardener is God, and to see all as potentially the light of the one sun which shall be diffused, waves of the one sea which shall overflow the world. This is the foundation of peace upon the earth, to realize, as Paul said from Mars Hill, that "God made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from any one of us." 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that God, the divine Gardener, looking over the garden of humanity, sees that it would be a monotonous garden if He made us all white, like white roses, and so, in His love of beauty and variety He made some of the roses yellow like the Mongolians and some brown like the Hindus and others red like the red men and others black like the coloured people. God in His universal vision loves all the varieties, and for this reason He put these different coloured roses, His children, in the garden of humanity. If we could see that they all come from one garden and they all diffuse one fragrance and they are all under the sun of one God, then would these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars pass away and upon this little planet the Most Great Peace of God would come.

How can we gain a belief in God vivid enough really to make this come about? There is only one way and that is to find someone who manifests all that our divinest spirit wants to see of God. Now when we look within ourselves we find our divine nature is like a tiny flickering candle. When we look at the faces of most of our neighbours we know that their faces are sometimes dark and sometimes bright, like the passing of clouds and of sunshine, and we are never quite sure of our neighbour, whether he will be on his good behaviour today, or tomorrow. We all vacillate and the divine side comes and goes. How can we be sure that the divine is the real thing in the world, in ourselves and in our neighbour? The only way is to know some being in whom the light of God's life is always shining, in whom the glory of God's presence is always resplendent, on the altar of whose sacrificed human self the eternal fire of God is always [XI:3:47] burning. There are human beings who are more than beings. There are human beings who are simply temples of flesh in which is manifest the eternal glory of God.

Jesus said, "Have I been so long a time with you, yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, show me the Father?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá says that God in His boundless mercy wishing the Kingdom on earth to be established sends these Messengers, these Manifestations of the Kingdom that in a temple of human flesh the glory of God may be made manifest and in the human heart the love of the Eternal Father may shine with all its sweetness and its beauty. By sending the many Manifestations of His light does God make manifest within our scope and our horizon His eternal love, His being, His reality and His glory. When Jesus shone forth from the horizon of

Palestine reflecting, like a mirror, the Sun of Reality, he united many nations for a time. Then the mirror was obscured by traditions, clouds and darkness, and men no longer saw the Father in His pure glory shining in the heart of this Messenger and Manifestation. God had to send another Manifestation to make His truth apparent, for we forget, in this world, Oh, so easily, we forget about God. We forget what God is like. He had to send a long succession of Messengers to India. He had to send Zoroaster to Persia, and then Muḥammad to the Arabian villages. And in this twentieth century, when the world is ready at last for the descent of the full splendour of the Kingdom, it is necessary, if we are to have a vision of God in the world, that there should appear again One in whom God's spirit can be seen so clearly that all the veils are stripped away, that all the doubts are burned away, and then we shall see face to face.

This has been the promise of the centuries: "Behold there will come a great Messenger, a Manifestation of the Eternal, the promised One at the end of the age." The Bible translators called this "the end of the world". And it *is* the end of the old world of prejudice, of war, of confusion. Then the Sun of the eternal Word will appear. The light of God will become manifest again and, shining from the horizon of a human heart there will dawn this bright light of God's love and His truth so that all can see and no one can doubt, so that all over the world men can behold His glory and enter into the consciousness of God.

Bahá'u'lláh brought this great revelation to the world, but it came in him with such sublime light that people were almost dazzled by its splendour. His splendour is so bright we can hardly look upon it. And so the next great Herald of the Kingdom takes the form of a servant, the humblest form a human being can assume. He lays aside his title; he calls himself simply, The Servant of the Glory of God.

He comes down right into the midst of men, living their life. He plants his garden; he cooks the meals for the sick people; he makes them broth in the prison; he goes up and down the country like a ministering angel of God's mercy; he is the tenderest, the simplest, the lowliest of beings in the world. When he is put in prison for teaching universal peace and universal brotherhood he counts this imprisonment the joy of his life. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us how when he was one day in the streets of 'Akká and the chains were around his waist and his neck, the jailer, his tender-hearted jailer, said, "Why don't you put a robe over those chains so the boys won't throw stones at you?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá, turning to him, replied: "These chains are my badges of honour, my badges of glory, I could not conceal them."

Now it is this quality of service, in annihilation of self, that makes God's [XI:3:55] Holy Spirit manifest. When we visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Chicago and he met us there with all the freshness and joy of this eternal morning shining through his human spirit in its brightness and its beauty, and our hearts were thrilled with the consciousness that here was one who saw God face to face, nay, that made God's love manifest right in our midst. And he said to us, "You know it doesn't make any difference what happens to one in the physical world. I was a prisoner in a Turkish prison for forty years." Then he told us how he slept upon the ground or upon the stone floor, how he was starved and chained and put into dungeons. "And yet," he said, "every day when I awoke in the morning I praised God that another day was before me in which I could serve Him in His prison. And every night when I lay down on the stone floor of the prison I thanked God that He had allowed me to serve His Kingdom one more day in His prison."

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá, turning to us with a light in his face and a joy that was almost overwhelmingly beautiful said, "I was in prison for forty years, and every day was a day of perfect joy." As he said "joy" his spirit shone so bright that in our hearts we thought we had never before known what joy and happiness meant. The people who were in the room said, "Isn't it amazing; when we are talking here with this Servant of God, all we can think of is God;

we do not even see 'Abdu'l-Bahá." And one woman said: "I do not even know he is here; all I see is the Spirit of God shining in him as in a crystal or a diamond." When she went away she did not think anything about 'Abdu'l-Bahá the human personality; all she knew was that for one-half hour she had been in the presence of the eternal world. Like a door into the Kingdom was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, transmitting the light of eternity. As she left his presence she said for the first time in her life she knew that God was King, and that there was no God but the God of this universe, and we could trust our lives to Him, our fortunes to Him, everything to Him because God is the Reality of realities.

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá brings to us is this consciousness of God. Some people are troubled about the thought of his personality. Those who see 'Abdu'l-Bahá's spirit cannot understand why they are troubled, for they never see his personality as a limitation. It is just a mirror reflecting the light, and the light of God's presence shines so beautifully that after a while they do not even see the mirror. They see only the light which is the Sun of Truth shining into this world, made manifest through this human Manifestation.

This, then, is the station of servitude and this is the station also of transfiguration. "He took the form of a servant: wherefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a Name that is above every name." That is the way in which this Manifestation comes into the world today. The wonderful thing, however, is this, that when we see the great Servant of God, the perfect One, then we are inspired with a new and irresistible power to walk in his pathway. 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the sweetest humility can say, "Look at me; be as I am; take no thought for yourself, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, whether ye shall sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all these things must ye care not at all. Look at me and be as I am, and so shall ye die, to yourself and to the world, and be born again into the Kingdom of God." [XI:3:56]

The great Servant, the great Messenger, the promised One brings to us so vivid a consciousness of God that this consciousness begins to dominate and sway our life, makes us know that these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and the Kingdom of Peace shall come. He conveys his certainty to us by contagion, he conveys his humility to us, he conveys to us his purity, he conveys to us his holiness, he conveys to us his love, he becomes like the mirror of the eternal One reflecting into our receptive hearts the love, the light, the holiness of God. When we turn our faces toward that eternal Sun, then petty, selfish things are melted away and the lower nature is burned away, and we say, "How little have we to give up, a few human ambitions and comforts and the things of this transitory earth—how little, if we may reflect just a few rays of this Kingdom into the hearts of the men and the women of this nation and the world."

In a word, God is again sending forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they are calling: "Arise ye! O ye people, arise ye from the graves of your bodies, the graves of yourselves, the graves of limitation, of fear, of hatred; arise, O ye people. Lo! the light of life hath come, the Beloved of the heart hath come, the most great Servant of God hath come, and His is the trumpet of the resurrection ringing through the world. He has really come upon this planet; the Twentieth Century is the great resurrection day for all nations, and peoples and races of the world.

"The spirit of Christ is risen again. The trumpet of resurrection calling today from Palestine is the voice of this wondrous Servant of God, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, humble, lowly, nothing in his outward personality, just the Voice through which the eternal God speaks. O ye people, the hour of reconciliation is here, the hour of the most great federation of nations is here, the hour when all races are to become as one race has dawned, the hour when religions will become one religion, has now struck upon the clock of the eternal world."

And with his divine voice calling, crying, pleading and triumphantly urging, this Centre of

the Covenant, this Centre of light is able to raise a multitude of people from all lands and races. Think of us, here in America, on the other side of the world, hearing that voice raised in Palestine and finding in that voice the melody of God and in that heart the love of God! Think of the people in India, in Burma, in Persia, in Russia, in Egypt, in China, in Japan—from all over the world—they are rising from the graves of their limitations and of their bodies because the trumpet of unity, the trumpet of universal light, the trumpet of the Kingdom has sounded from Palestine. There again, the voice of God rings with a clear, bell-like tone summoning all nations to climb the mountain which is above the valleys of their separation, above the vales of exclusiveness and sectarianism, and ascends to the bell that is ringing there on the top of the mountain. And as they draw near to the summit of transfiguration all the people, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and all religions, look into each other's faces and there on the mountain top of unity behold they are one, as their God is one!

Now God's great message, which is so clear that every one of us hears it and feels it in his heart, is this, that those who know the glad tidings of the light made manifest must go forth through this country and through the world and proclaim the news of its manifestations. The people are perishing for lack of this Water of Life. They are dying of thirst; and the fountain of the Water of Life eternal is now flowing. Whoever has the cup, whoever has found the fountain and whoever dips the cup into the crystal fountain he becomes the cup-bearer of unity, he becomes a servant of the oneness of the human world.

XI:3, 28 April 1920 [XI:3:48]

Diary letters of Shoghi Rabbani¹

Written to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab in America

Haifa, Palestine
12 February 1919

Dear Ahmad,

This morning, some of the recently arrived supplications were answered in the form of short yet effective Tablets. The second supplication from India is signed by a certain influential person, a *khwāja*,² who has been recently attracted to the Movement and is craving to attain the court of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence. As emanating from a soul that has been entangled in superstition and prejudice and immersed in a sea of imagination, his words embodied in his supplication are indeed significant: "Thy generosity is the elixir and thy bounty the solace for the weak heart of this humble servant, and the near prospect of attaining to the holy presence sustains his breath. O most beloved Lord, look not at the failings, short comings and weakness of this humble beseecher and entreater, but towards the boundless ocean of thy love, mercy, bounty and grace. Grant the fervent prayer of this humble one to approach thy holy self, keep him not far away and separate from thee and confer upon him the high privilege of viewing thy beautiful, illumined face." The prayer of this soul has been answered for soon he shall present himself at the Holy Land, shall view the beautiful face of his beloved Lord and shall quaff from the inexhaustible fountain of his love. The Tablet revealed to this friend this morning is a model of the sweetest and most gentle expressions that a beloved can reveal to his loving ones.

News reaches us to the effect that the friends of God in the different parts of Persia, devastated by famine, pestilence and internecine war, have been miraculously protected and saved. With this gratitude is coupled the sense of extreme rejoicing and heartfelt gratitude for

¹ Continued from Vol. X:11, p. 220.

² Persian "master", "lord"; honorific title, particularly for Sufi teachers. A man of distinction; a rich merchant; a doctor, professor, teacher, preceptor, school-master; a pedant; a venerable old man; lord, master, owner; honorific title of a wazir or other great dignitary; a eunuch; the master of a family; heart, soul.

the news of peace, for the restoration of communications and for the possibility of a long awaited pilgrimage to the land of desire. Letters have been received so far from Ṭihrán, Shíráz, and [XI:3:49] tonight from Najafábád, in the province of Işfahán, Persia, the same note is sounded as it was written just at the time when the armistice bells were ringing. It expressed the anticipation of the friends of God to see universal peace, as forecast so many years ago by Bahá'u'lláh, firmly and securely established. However, one thing brought gloom and depression into this lively and clear atmosphere. One incident, revealing the still prevailing grudge and antipathy of the 'ulamás and mullás for the friends of God, was the cause of grief. A certain friend, buried with respect and ceremony by his beloved and relatives, was disinterred, his coffin was smashed to pieces, his corpse was taken out and buried directly with no wooden case whatever, this being counter to the creed and law of their faith. From what may be judged and inferred, such sad incidents are still prevailing and causing more or less trouble and complication. One thing is sure, however, that as the Sun of Truth gains in splendour and brilliancy, the bats and owls proportionately double their vain and fruitless activities until they are assured of their helplessness and incompetence.

13 February 1919

My dear Ahmad,

The call of 'Abdu'l-Bahá bidding the friends of God to arise in one accord, to fling away, the garb of concealment and to deliver the divine message has resounded throughout all regions and has propagated its waves to countries hitherto the bulwark of conservatism. The city of Damascus, upon which a new era has dawned has shaken off her somnolence and, thanks to the activity of a few enthusiastic friends, has awakened to the spirit of the new age. The prominent figure among its friends has attained the court of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence and has brought with him many a good news. When the permission to visit the holy sites was granted to our eager visitor, Hájí Muḥammad Yazdí the means of facility were miraculously provided. Within an exceptionally short period of time he secured his pass, was assigned a comfortable and uncrowded compartment in the train, enjoyed splendid weather and sunshine all throughout his travel, the latter lasting only ten hours—an exceptionally swift and comfortable journey.

This morning he was ushered into 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence and the first thing he did was to offer a supplication from an erudite Arab, a native of Medina, an influential and responsible personage in Damascus, an authority in the Muslim creed, who had been attracted and moved to write to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a result of the interview and discussions with Shaykh 'Alí 'Askar, that seemingly cold, indifferent and powerless soul. The believers are stirred with this appeal to spread the message and to be engaged in the diffusion of divine fragrances. The able and well-versed sons of Shaykh Murád who has had the matchless honour to visit the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh), are all well and busily engaged in the furtherance of the Cause of God. Shaykh Badru'd-Dín and 'Abdu'l-Hájí in Homs, and Shaykh Sa'íd, the eldest, in the function of deputy-assistant of the governor of the village of Zabádáníh,¹ not far from Damascus, are each in their respective spheres trying to promote the ideals of the Kingdom.

In short, the news of our dear visitor, Áqá Hájí Muḥammad-i-Yazdí, was refreshing, numerous and significant. With a smile and a nod of appreciation 'Abdu'l-Bahá greeted every bit of news and was glad to know that a reaction from the passiveness and inactivity of the past had set in. "Deliver the divine message with prudence and wisdom", was his recommendation to the teachers who are serving in these regions. Having said this he arose, again welcomed our guest and regained his room to correct [XI:3:50] the Tablets that had been

¹ City in Syria, hence should be the Arabic form, Zabádání.

revealed, leaving us with our friend whose source of news and glad tidings seemed inexhaustible.

'Abdu'l-Bahá remained in doors until 3 pm, when Major Nott came and motored him to the house of the Commander-in-chief, Sir Edmund Allenby. This was the second time 'Abdu'l-Bahá had called on the General and this time the conversation centred around the Cause and its progress. Interest seems to have been stimulated and eagerness to learn more of the Truth intensified. This time, as well as last, was particularly noted for the warmth, the reserve and the respect which characterized the conversation of General Allenby with the Master. He is a very gentle, modest and striking figure, warm in affection, yet imposing in his manners.

Tonight a telegram received from Ahmad Lafonat in Jerusalem, fixing Major Tudor-Pole's arrival at Jerusalem on the 14th and his departure the 17th. We will be delighted to meet again this young and active friend who is doing what he can to bring about the comfort and the satisfaction of the Beloved.

14 February 1919.

Dear Ahmad,

'Abdu'l-Bahá spent the whole forenoon in correcting and signing the sixty Tablets that had been made ready during the past days and as I am dropping you these lines he is having his fortnightly hot bath which ameliorates so much his health and strengthens his physical constitution.

Tonight we had another concrete evidence of the merit and value of Major Tudor-Pole's article in the *Palestine News*. Indeed, inquirers and seekers multiply with astonishing rapidity, a keen interest is aroused and a wide demand is being pressed more and more. The contributor of the article, Miss Hiscox in Cairo and Miss Rosenberg in London, are in correspondence with many souls, most of them in active service, who desire to learn more about the Cause than this introductory article of Major Tudor-Pole presents. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was weary, tired and sleepy as a result of the heat of his bath and was intending to sleep when a slight knock at the door revealed the presence of a non-commissioned officer at the door seeking an interview. Admittance was cordially granted and there was Private Sinclair, an Englishman, working as an assistant at the Red Cross Egyptian hospital in Haifa. During his sojourn in Cairo, when visiting its reading room, he had come across Bahá'í literature and had thereby caught the first glimpse of the Cause. The perusal of Major Tudor-Pole's article raised his interest to its highest pitch and henceforth he became an ardent inquirer. From what could be gathered from his countenance, he was so lowly, so respectful, so gentle and so modest that the first words of the Beloved were to this effect: "I am glad to meet thee for thy face is illumined, thy brow is pure, thy heart is clear and thy purpose is right." He then took from his pocket a letter of introduction from Major Tudor-Pole, referring him to Miss Hiscox for information about Bahá'í literature and giving the address of Miss Rosenberg in London, inviting him to quaff from the fountain-head. A search so sincere, an interest so lively, an earnestness of tone so genuine has hardly been remarked in any of the previous callers and inquirers. In view of his earnest inquiry and his lack of any preconception, the Master spoke in detail of the main purpose of the Bahá'í teachings, the idea of peace and reconciliation, the most immediate need of mankind. He told him the futility of men's effort to establish a lasting peace, resting on secure foundations, through material means. Whenever such efforts have been exerted they were doomed to failure. History affords a striking illustration. "From what I can gather from the events during my life", said 'Abdu'l- [XI:3:51] Bahá, "history clearly shows the wars that have been waged, the peace measures that were subsequently adopted, have proved inevitable failures. The Crimean war and the Treaty of Paris in 1856, the Austro-Italian war of 1859; the Danish war of 1864; the Austro-Prussian war of 1866; the Franco-Prussian war

of 1870; the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 and the Congress of Berlin, the Balkan war and subsequently this world war with its present Universal Peace Conference. Wars will succeed, peace measures and pacific documents will remain dead letters unless the Word of God and His supreme power comes to exercise its influence. Not until this is attained may lasting peace be realized.”

Our attentive visitor listened and was absorbed. He was glad to listen to this remarkable talk and was furthermore grateful to receive a copy of Mr Remey’s *Some Vital Bahá’í Principles* which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá put in his hands. When he retired, he was inwardly moved and outwardly satisfied and assured.

15 February 1919

My dear Ahmad,

My head is in a whirl so busy and so eventful was the day. No less than a score of callers from prince and páshá to a simple private soldier have sought interview with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Tonight again, our attracted friend, Private Sinclair of the Red Cross hospital, called. His eyes sparkled as he shook hands with the Beloved. He had read the pamphlet which had been given to him and was glad to receive another different one, published and edited by Mr Remey, entitled *The Message of Unity*. He expressed his firm intention to correspond with the different booksellers in London, as soon as he is demobilized and thus to be able to gather more detailed information. When he rose to take his leave, he seemed full of the spirit of Bahá’u’lláh, absorbed in meditation, and ablaze with His love. “Thou art my son, my dear son, I love thee, and I pray for thee,” were the farewell words as the Beloved embraced him and patted him on his shoulders.

Letters, or rather parcels, were today received from Port Said, London and America. Enclosed in Mr Luṭfu’lláh’s letter from London, were two supplications that had been received last year from Ṭihrán. They contained good news. The Bahá’í school in Ṭihrán is advancing by leaps and bounds. The Jewish Bahá’ís have established schools which are rapidly widening. The school of Tarbíyat in Ṭihrán, Miss Kappes describes as by far the greatest establishment among the 430 schools in Ṭihrán; their public exercises were unequalled by any that have been so far held. A pavilion was pitched and everybody, high and low, nearby and distant, heard of its fame and responded to its call. In Yazd meetings of different character, each of no less than 60 to 70 attendants were organized. A great deal of effort has been expended of late to help the descendants and relatives of the glorious martyrs of Yazd. Vast contributions have been gathered and the tombs of the martyred are being beautifully erected, immune from any further aggression or danger and becoming the object of the pilgrimage of many a soul. In Yazd also the maid-servants of God have risen and are overshadowing (or rather have foreshadowed) the men in their spiritual activities. Of Káshán, the writer relates, “I had thought of it a mount of snow but later on I found it an active volcano. The friends were aflame with the fire of the Word of God.”

From Jaffa has come a devoted friend, by the name of ‘Alí Afandí, who brings with him the news of the welfare of ‘Abdu’ş-Şamad who has moved to Jaffa and is now settled. Both of them are enkindled and both are favoured by the Beloved.

Tonight, around the Master’s table for supper sat Messrs Aḥmad Yazdí, [XI:3:52] Ḥájí Muḥammad Yazdí, Mírzá Ḥusayn Yazdí, Áqá Muḥammad Taqí, three of the Pársí friends of Adasiyyih who have recently arrived, Badí’ Afandí and my father. The Master was tired and did not converse long.

Major Tudor-Pole, due to a slight indisposition has had to postpone his departure from

Cairo, but, thank God, his illness is accidental and not at all serious.

16 February 1919

My dear Ahmad,

From among the supplications recently received is one that is most significant and of particular interest as it emanates from a Greek friend who is one of the few, if not the only of her race, that has responded to the call of the Kingdom. Let me share with you its contents: "Our father, I am very, glad because I am the first of the Greeks to believe in your name. Many years ago my heart was broken because my life was full of bitterness. I don't know why fortune is so sad for me. Perhaps sometimes I am very whimsical, and of course the good Father sends punishment; however, I think otherwise with so much bitterness that I have every day. But I make my sweet prayers and then my feelings are at rest. I love God and I believe in the Father and I believe in the Apostles of God. O dear Father, how could I do otherwise than believe in you because many times my mind is so tired, but when I take your picture, and I read one of your prayers, I feel just like a bird when it rains, and its feathers are wet and it cannot fly, but when the sun's rays come out, is happy and flies from tree to tree—exactly [as] I feel every minute when I make my prayers in your name. I shall not stop all my life, until I am an apostle for your name, to my people. (Signed) Aspasia Diamesis, Chicago."

Behind this broken language and this urbane style is revealed a heart loving, compassionate and full with the joy of faith and the gratitude of assurance. She begs enlightenment and guidance for her people and appreciates the supreme favour that divine Providence has bestowed upon her. What the response of the Beloved will be, or rather how far the Lord's favour and blessing will surround her, is one that we can hardly venture to forecast, but one thing is sure, that the Tablet that will be revealed to this soul will act as a mighty impetus in awakening the Greek people to this call.

This morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá went out for a long walk and returned an hour before noon, when he resumed his work which consisted mainly of the perusal of detailed supplications from Persia. I had a long interview this morning with Áqá Muḥammad Taqí covering a wide range of topics which were mostly related to the activity of the Egyptian friends and the news he had received from abroad during the war. From Ishqábád, in Russian Turkistán, letters had come which revealed the safety of the friends in that tumultuous region. He had been in constant correspondence with the Indian friends whose activity he highly commented upon and whose services he praised. It was on the whole a very profitable and interesting hour.

17 February 1919

My dear Ahmad,

A day of jubilee is ahead of us. The arrival of a group of the Pársí friends of 'Adasiyyih, including men and women, has not been without a definite purpose. Another marriage festivity is to take place between Shahrey,¹ the son of Jamshid the Pársí, and the daughter (the eldest) of a Tamal,² who has been living for many years in the vicinity of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The circle of the Adasiyyih friends is ever widening and the experiences along such lines has proved to be of great value and benefit. Preparations are now being made for that day and everybody is looking forward to the [XI:3:53] celebration, the first of that kind since the extinction of the fire of war.

This morning Áqá Ahmad Yazdí, his elder brother and Áqá Muḥammad Taqí Işfahání were

¹ Shahri?

² Tamil?

called to the Beloved's presence. Tea was served and everybody assumed almost an uninterrupted silence for 'Abdu'l-Bahá was all throughout perusing the supplications of the Egyptian friends, which had recently arrived. Supplications from every corner of the globe, of different length and character, written in different languages, enclosing clippings of papers, pamphlets, typewritten reports, petitions, etc., are ceaselessly pouring in and the time for their perusal is sufficient to exhaust all the time that one might possibly have at his disposal. Although the ways have not yet fully opened and communication with all parts has not yet been restored, one is baffled at the amount of letters, books and magazines that the post office daily delivers.

A joint supplication from a group of the Alexandria friends has been received today. The same note is struck and the same chorus is repeated—namely, rejoicing at the news from the Beloved and begging his confirmation. Although these friends have not multiplied as fast as their fellow brethren in Port Said yet they have maintained all throughout these trying times an *esprit de corps* necessary to give them the initiative in their future activities.

A letter from Mírzá Maḥmúd Zarqání from Bombay to Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar 'Alí reveals the great longing of the Pársí friends to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whether this takes place in the Holy Land or in India. The writer, who has been recently granted the permission to visit the holy sites, and has been journeying throughout the centre of India, had been in Rangoon and was there confirmed in manifold services to the Kingdom of Abhá. His letter, however, contained sad and unexpected news, namely, the passing away of Áqá Siyyid Miḥdí of Rangoon and his son, who were both active and tireless workers in the Cause. Assuredly their station in the realm beyond is a lofty one and their reward abundant and glorious.

Bahjí, 'Akká
18 February 1919.

My dear Ahmad,

Greetings with sweetest remembrances to you, my far-off friend, from this hallowed spot! From this solitary plain of Bahjí, in this solemn solitude, away from life's tumult and bustle, I take the pen in remembrance of a friend with whom I passed many days in this quiet, yet inspiring region. The Beloved has again decided to tarry for a time at the vicinity of the tomb of his father. Here he is, in the adjoining room, sitting by the candle light, viewing from his window the solitude from afar, the silent surroundings, which nothing breaks save the distant roar of the waves which die away in the immensity of space. He is engaged in his meditations, absorbed in his prayers, thinking of his friends across the seas, remembering their prayers and their supplications and communing with his heavenly Father on behalf of such souls. What a vivid contrast does this vicinity of the Holy Tomb represent with the increasing activity of the life in Haifa. The air over there was filled with gases and vapours which steam and motor engines continuously discharge, while the atmosphere here is as pure, as clear and as fragrant as it can be. The traffic accompanied with its deafening noise and bustle, gives way here to a stillness, a calmness and a quietude which nothing interrupts but the stillness of nature. The dazzling lights of the city are gone and nothing but a flickering taper's light cheers this cold and starless night. The constant movement and circulation witnessed in the Beloved's house has stopped, and tonight everything is at a stand still, everything quiet and at rest. The morning hour of prayer is maintained and even length- [XI:3:54] ened for twice a day, the Beloved visits the holy shrine, kneels in reverence and devotion, orders communes to be chanted and often spends an hour or more in silent prayer. His attendants, friends and relatives are absent and no one save Khusraw, Isfandíyár and myself, the two vigilant

guardians of the Tomb, and Ali Eff,¹ a friend who will leave tomorrow for Beirut, form his small retinue.

Everything, the environment, the atmosphere, the view, the stillness, all are uplifting, elevating and inspiring. One feels to have forgotten his cares and his concerns, his mind is refreshed and his burden alleviated. No matter how long the Master will tarry in this sanctified place, no feeling of monotony, and ennui overcomes the soul. It is the Spot which so many souls crave to attain and long to visit. Particularly is it magnificent at such a time when nature is smiling, the sky above is no more gloomy and threatening with clouds but serene and blue, the plains and meadows as if covered with a multi-coloured carpet, the shrubs sparkling with roses, jasmines, lilies, narcissus embalming the pure and refreshing air; the grass growing luxuriantly everywhere and the breeze wafting in every direction. Often is the Beloved seen in the open air, majestically walking to and fro upon the verdant plains and amid the wild flowers that abound in this gifted region. He treads the same ground that the blessed feet of his heavenly Father have trodden, circumambulate the shrine where for many years He has lived, waters the flowers and plants, many of which have been blessed by His hands and lives and moves and has his being in an atmosphere which fully reminds him of His manners and His conduct. What a dear and blessed spot to be privileged to live in!

Shoghi Rabbani.

XI:3, 28 April 1920 [XI:3:54]

Recent tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Jean Masson

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Jean Masson, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou faithful maid-servant of the Blessed Beauty!

The article thou hadst previously sent was highly acceptable, accomplished, well prepared and well presented. Verily, it was a very eloquent article. At present whoever among the friends may write an article and may wish to publish it, it is better that he should submit it to the Executive Board and, after its approval, give it publicity. Assuredly, the articles thou writest are suitable, correct and valuable for publication, but nevertheless the purpose of the approval of the Executive Board is to preserve order, for, otherwise, others may print and publish articles which may be not conforming with truth. That is why I write that articles should be first submitted and approved by the Executive Board and then be published.

Dr Wilson, the missionary in Persia, is heedless and detests the Cause of God, and has written a book in order to lead the people to error. His book is likened to those books that have been written, during the time of Christ and subsequent to him, by the Pharisees and the Roman philosophers, in order to refute his truth. He has published that book and it is preferable that at present thou shouldst write, print and publish a refutatory book written in the utmost eloquence and perfection.

Exercise thou, in my behalf, the utmost kindness to thy sister. I ask for her—healing.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

¹ 'Alí 'Iffa?

XI:5, 5 June 1920 [XI:5:83]

(From the *New York American*, 23 May 1920.)

Bahá'í Temple strikes new art note

Louis Bourgeois' model for \$1,500,000 structure combines essence of all architectural systems.

By Peyton Boswell

On the shore of Lake Michigan, just a little ways north of Chicago, the Bahá'í Movement is soon to begin the erection of a Temple of Peace. Many persons who have seen the model for this building, which is the work of the architect and sculptor, Louis Bourgeois, say that the great Temple will be the most beautiful modern structure in the world. Some go so far as to say that it will be the most beautiful structure ever erected. A large model of the Temple, filling almost an entire room, is now on exhibition at the Kevorkian Galleries, No. 40 West Fifty-seventh Street.

The Bahá'í Temple of Peace, whose doors will never close, day or night, and in which every person may worship, will cost about \$1,500,000. Its outer covering will be of cream coloured terra cotta. It will be 225 feet in diameter and 180 feet high.

Mr Bourgeois' model was selected by a committee of forty-nine. This committee was ready to approve the design, but because the structure differed from any other building that had ever been erected, they felt that they needed guidance, before making the formal acceptance, from an architect who could tell them whether it was practical.

They called in Mr H. Van Buren Magonigle, president of the Architectural League. Without being apprised of the preference of the committee, Mr Magonigle studied all the models submitted and quickly selected that of Mr Bourgeois. His verdict was: "It is the first new idea in architecture since the thirteenth century. I want to see it erected."

The Bahá'í Temple of Peace combines within itself all the lovely elements of all the types of architecture that man has ever devised. This may at first sound rather discouraging to students of art who know how inspirationless eclectic works usually are. If a painter tries to combine all the good points of all the schools of painting he invariably gets a picture that is tame and uninteresting. It is the individual method that counts.

But, after looking at Mr Bourgeois' model for his beautiful Temple, listen to him explain, in a voice trembling with enthusiasm, just how he came to combine all styles of architecture in his design

"The Bahá'í Movement," says Mr Bourgeois, "is a fusing of the essential spiritual elements of all religions and all philosophies. Stripped of the personalities of their founders and subsequent leaders, all sects are found to have very much the same divine basis. All the teachings that have held the minds of men and ennobled them are [XI:5:84] found to be very much alike in essence. The doctrines of Christ, of Buddha and of Muḥammad greatly resemble each other. As with religions so it is with architecture. If you resolve the different architectural systems to their idealistic basis, laying aside all extreme forms, you will see that they harmonize so perfectly that they can be blended without one discordant note. That is what I have tried to do in the Temple of Peace—to combine all architectural modes into a symbol of the Bahá'í Movement."

With a burst of enthusiasm the sculptor-architect declares: "It is Bahá'u'lláh's Temple. I am only the channel through which it came!"

In its general shape the Temple gives one the feeling of a spiritual symbol arising with an inevitable fitness, from the very earth.

The first story breathes the spirit of welcome. It is in the form of a nine-pointed star. Nine

circular exedras¹ curve into the building, with a great doorway in the centre of each, so that from whatever side one approaches, the structure seems to extend its arms in welcome and embrace. The first story in its simplicity suggests the Greek and Egyptian temples, while the treatment of the doors and windows is Romanesque in form, and the intricacy and beauty of the ornamentation suggests the Gothic and the Arabic.

The second story, beautiful in its windowed elegance, is renaissance in line, but purely Gothic in the interlaced arches of its openings.

The third story is renaissance in feeling, restful and quiet. Above it rises the lovely dome, which suggest the Byzantine, while above the closed top is a unique feature—the beams of the dome arising like hands clasped in prayer, so as to give the feeling of ascension and aspiration found only in Gothic towers.

An intricate system of ornamentation covers the columns, surrounds the windows and doors and comprises the dome itself, and in this one deciphers symbols of all the religions of the world, interlacing and blending perfectly.

Here are the swastika cross, most ancient of all; the circle; the triangle; the double triangle, known as Solomon's seal, the symbol of the sun, the five-pointed star representing the Man-Saviour,² be He called Christ, Buddha or Muḥammad; the Christian cross; the Greek cross, and finally, the Bahá'í symbol of the nine-pointed star.³

There is a very human side to the modelling of the Temple of Peace. Mr Bourgeois has had the Temple in mind for nine years, but it never began to take definite form until four years ago, after he had attended the convention of the Bahá'í Movement in Boston. Then, suddenly, in an hour's time, the architect sketched the lower story of the Temple. At first he thought he could model the structure in three months, but he found that, so colossal was the task, that it took three years.

Now the architect is not rich, and he realized that if he worked at his model the family income would cease. His wife is also an artist, but, sympathizing with his work, she bought a little store in West Englewood, New Jersey, where they live, and while he worked with the plaster, she sold ice cream and candy and other wares to the people of the community.

When he needed plaster for his first carving and was out of money, he went into the garden, filled his wife's clothes basket with Dorothy Perkins roses, which covered the arbour, carried them to New York and sold them for five dollars, with which he bought the needed material.

He says his wife is really the "Temple builder"; for, had it not been for her sympathy and cheerful sacrifice, he never would have carried to completion the gigantic work.

The Bahá'í Movement will surround the great Temple with a community that will [XI:5:85] conform with it in spirit, for on the shore of Lake Michigan, around the beautiful grounds, will be erected a series of buildings devoted to the application of true religion to life—a hospital, an orphan asylum, a hospice or house of hospitality, a guild house and a university, among other enterprises.

XI:5, 5 June 1920 [XI:5:85]

Persian-Indian style of architecture

As explained by Charles Mason Remey, who submitted a model at the Twelfth Annual

¹ *Exedra*: in ancient Greece, a room, building, or outdoor area with seats, where conversations were held.

² The nine-pointed star is also symbolic of unity (nine).

³ "... Strictly speaking the five-pointed star is the symbol of our Faith, as used by the Báb and explained by Him." Shoghi Effendi cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 110.

Convention of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

As one becomes familiar with the Bahá'í Teaching and its principles and as one seeks to apply these in his life it is the most natural thing in the world that he should desire to express these principles and religious ideals in the terms and language of his own art, craft or profession. As with countless others such was my own experience. Since my connection with the Bahá'í Cause, during the past twenty years, in the pursuance of my study of architecture at home and abroad in many parts of the world, I have had constantly in mind the great Bahá'í Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the first of its kind to be erected in America, my desire being that I might be able to express in terms of architecture an offering toward this great temple.

This absorbing interest has led me, during the past twelve years to make a series of architectural studies and preliminary designs for this edifice showing treatments of varying dimensions in nine different styles of architecture. These were offered to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the hope that this work might be of some service when the time arrived for the formulation of a building design for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

When the word was received from 'Abdu'l-Bahá that a choice of designs submitted for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was to be made by the delegates seated in this Twelfth Annual Convention of Bahá'ís in America held in New York, 26–28 April 1920, I felt moved to make, in addition to the drawings already mentioned, a set of models of the one of my designs which was done in the Persian-Indian style in order to present to the Convention in as graphic and as concrete a manner as possible the salient features of this design, which, in my estimation, so far as I now understand the matter as viewed from points both practical and spiritual, is, I feel, the best suited of my preliminary studies to meet this present problem. With the exception of this design in the Persian-Indian style, which is of quite modest dimensions, each of my other eight designs are too large in size and of too costly construction to be considered. Moreover, with the exception of the Arabian, Moorish and Persian designs, the others were not sufficiently oriental in character to satisfy the requirements of the problem in hand. Therefore between these practical and aesthetic conditions there seemed to us to be but this one of my designs to feature.

Since 'Abdu'l-Bahá ordered the Convention to choose one from among the designs which had been offered for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, I did not deem it advisable to prepare any new designs, nor to alter those which I had previously made. The models and the large drawings of this Persian-Indian design, which I am offering together with my first drawings, are merely enlargements and developments of the original design. There have been no changes in the style of the design, its treatment or dimensions.

While engaged in this work my concept of an architectural treatment for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár underwent many changes and modifications. In considering a style for the first design made, the Byzantine then suggested itself to [XI:5:86] me as combining in one complete and developed style of architecture, the characters of both the orient and the occident. Later on in the work I made studies in various other styles from the classic to the ultra-modern which work included some of the styles of the orient. Toward the close of this study I received an excerpt from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's addressed to Mrs Kate Ives in which he mentioned the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as follows:

“That Divine Form manifested itself in America and entered the great Temple which shall soon be constructed therein. This glorious Temple resembles the oriental edifices and soon you will see it erected there with a most solid foundation and strongest basis.”

Furthermore, I learned it was reported that 'Abdu'l-Bahá showed a picture of the Taj Mahal to Mr P__ W__, suggesting that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár have a similar entrance.

These words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá quite revolutionized my thought regarding the style for this

first great Bahá'í Temple to be erected here in the west. With time and more study the architecture of the orient has made its appeal more and more to me as being the best suited of all styles as a foundation for, and a first step toward, the universal style of world architecture eventually to find its perfect development in the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of future generations. I have been pleased to note latterly that the majority of the people who have seen my preliminary drawings have expressed a preference for the Persian and the Persian-Indian styles.

The Persian style of architecture was developed under the influence brought into Persia by the early Muslim civilization. Some of its grandest applications are found in the mosques of Iṣfahán, Qum, Káshán, and Qazvín, while the same style is found in these and other cities, successfully applied to such buildings as bazaars, caravansaries, palaces, colleges, gateways, bridges, and other civic structures.

The lower wall surfaces of the more elegant of these buildings are often revetted with slabs of marble, while the main walls and upper parts are usually in stone, brick, terra cotta, and brightly coloured tiles. Though some of these buildings have stood for centuries, the colouring in many instances remains quite fresh and even brilliant.

The richness in colour decoration of the domes and minarets of the Persian mosques, rising from a foreground of gardens and silhouetted against a cloudless sky, is memorable and very beautiful. This style of decoration, so in harmony with its oriental environment, [XI:5:87] has a charm of its own, to which many Persian writers, as well as foreigners travelling in that country, have testified.

The Indian style of architecture, which is an adaptation of the Persian style, had its development during the Mogul rule in India. Some of the finest examples of this style are found in the vicinity of Delhi, India's ancient capital, while the world-famous Taj Mahal near the city of Agra, is without doubt the best known and by many the most admired building of the epoch.

The Taj Mahal is finished within and without with white marble inlaid with jasper, lapis lazuli, and other semi-precious stones. It is surrounded by a garden intersected by waterways separated by richly coloured flowers and foliage, and produces an effect of beauty beyond the power of words to describe.

XI:5, 5 June 1920 [XI:5:87]

Recent tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

To his honour, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, New York City—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of the Holy Threshold! Praise be to God, that the events of the Cause from the East and the West are conducive to the utmost rejoicing. The fame of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh has encircled the orient and the occident, and the voice of the promotion of the Cause has reached the Supreme Concourse.

According to what they have written from California, you have become fully confirmed in service in that region. This is the result of the promise that I have made to thee. Today, whosoever is a herald of the Covenant, he becomes triumphant and victorious by the cohorts of the Orb of Regions and is honoured and the object of the glances of mercifulness. God willing, the event of your wedding, ere long, will likewise come to pass. In Convention this year it must be unquestionably solemnized.

The School of Tarbíyat used to receive some assistance from the American friends. Undoubtedly, you have this matter in mind. If a contribution could be forwarded through the

Convention, it would be very acceptable.

Thou hast written that if a Persian teacher could come to those states and travel for awhile, it would be most timely; therefore we have written to Persia and ere long a ripened soul with an interpreter will be forwarded, so that for a time he may make a tour throughout America and then return. Undoubtedly in their reception you will demonstrate the utmost magnanimity.

Likewise, yourself, at the opportune time, travel throughout all the states and with the utmost exhilaration and tumult raise the call of the Covenant, thus the favours of the Orb of Regions may encircle the globe.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 27 March 1920, Washington, D.C.

[Portion of a Tablet received by Mrs Ella G. Cooper of San Francisco, California, in regard to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab's trip in the West]

HE IS GOD!

O thou beloved daughter!

Thy detailed letter, dated 7 December 1919, written to Shoghi Effendi, was received. Its contents produced the utmost rejoicing for it was indicative of the promotion of the divine teachings and the attraction of the hearts to the Kingdom of the Lord of Hosts. Likewise, the power and might which became manifest from Áqá Mirza Ahmad in the diffusion of the teachings and the promulgation of the Word of God. This is purely through the confirmations of God and the help and assistance of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh.

Consider ye, that a youth from Persia, [XI:5:88] who has not studied sciences and arts, nor is he informed of the political, economic and social problems, nor is he acquainted with all the conditions of the east and the west—notwithstanding this, he delivers irrefutable lectures before vast audiences and imparts exhilaration and motion to the souls. This is no other save through the confirmations of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh. This is evident and manifest. No soul can deny it. For the bestowals of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh, and the power of His Covenant, will make a drop an ocean, the mosquito the eagle soaring toward the Supreme Concourse, the tender plant the blessed tree, the weak child the powerful man, the mustard seed the towering mountain, and the unknown well known throughout all the regions. In short, all these are through the outpourings of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh, and the power of the Covenant, otherwise what existence have we?

Praise be to God, that California is in motion and attraction and the souls enamoured with the Kingdom of Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

To his honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab and his respected wife—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye son and daughter of the Kingdom!

According to what you have written, spiritual connections are established between you, and you are contemplating to enter the world of matrimony and become each other's associate. It is my hope that this union become eternal; both of you harmonized on the

physical and spiritual planes and become one in the exoteric and esoteric¹ realms;—so that you may spend your days together [XI:5:89] with the utmost joy and happiness and be engaged in the glorification of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh, because He has brought into perfect mutual affiliation both the East and the West and has established such a divine communication between Persia and America, that a Persian and an American have become the expression of one soul.

In brief, I supplicate for you confirmation and assistance so that ideal affinity be unveiled between you, both of you be occupied with the services of the Cause of God and be aided and confirmed. You must strive to establish between yourselves such an affinity and love that you may become the object of envy to all mankind and your wedding may serve as an example, so that similar unions may come to pass very frequently.

Recite ye together the following prayer:

O God! O God! We are married for the love of Thy beauty, longing for the fulfilment of Thy good pleasure and yearning to devote our lives to Thy service. O Lord! Suffer our bodies to become one body, our spirits the expression of one spirit and assist us with Thy confirmations—so that we may arise wholly to perform Thy services, be detached from aught else save Thee, firm in Thy Covenant and Testament and freed from all else save Thy love. O Lord! Assist us with all these Thy favours.

Verily Thou art the Confirmer, the Powerful, the Mighty and the Omnipresent!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 7 May 1920, New York City.

XI:5, 5 June 1920 [XI:5:90]

Recent tablet to Pauline Hannen

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in eulogy of and supplication for Joseph H. Hannen.

To the beloved daughter, Mrs Hannen, Washington, D.C.—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O Thou Compassionate Lord!

Thou knowest the magnitude of my sorrow as I engage in this following supplication. The favoured servant of the Kingdom, Mr Hannen, that pure and spotless soul, was the first self-sacrificing person in the path of the Merciful One. At night he was restless and during the day he was untiring. Not a moment did he rest and all his lifetime was consecrated to the service of the Kingdom. In the assemblage of Thy friends he was an active member and in the gathering [XI:5:91] of Thy favoured ones an enkindled torch. In the horizon of guidance he twinkled like a radiant star and in the Abhá Paradise he appeared a magnificent palm. He was an illumined soul, merciful, kingly, lordly.

At present that bright candle has been extinguished in the globe of this mortal world that thereby it may shine resplendently in the globe of the Kingdom. That radiant star has set from this world below that it may rise effulgently from the Supreme Horizon.

O Thou Forgiving Lord!

Set up this esteemed soul in Thy glorious Kingdom upon the thrones of everlasting sovereignty and make him a heavenly prince. Help him to soar in the limitless realm and draw him unto the close companionship of heavenly birds in the hidden world. Immerse him in the ocean of Light, and make him the prince over the Realm of Mysteries. Bring him unto the effulgent concourse and help him to attain his object in the realm of Thy presence and the

¹ Exoteric: that can be understood by the public; popular.

heights of the Supreme Concourse.

Thou art the Forgiver, the Pardoner, and the Compassionate!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

This calamity is overwhelming and painful, and undoubtedly its effects are most severe. A thousand times alas, that like unto a star, that glorious personage disappeared from the horizon of the immensity of space. He has arisen from a horizon that knows no setting and has hastened unto a realm that is infinite. He has been detached from this world below and has attained unto Everlasting Life. He has ascended from this gloomy world and hastened to the Centre of Light.

Grieve not therefore and be not despondent. Enkindle his lamp and strive that the orchard of his highest wish may abound with fruitful trees. Rest thou assured in the bounties of the Lord of Hosts and endeavour to be confirmed by the favours of the glorious Lord. If he has disappeared from this plane, grieve not, for thou shalt find him in the divine realm. Be not sad at this temporary separation, thou shalt enjoy eternal companionship in the realm above. Be thou therefore patient and forbearing, firm and assured.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 19 March 1920.

XI:5, 5 June 1920 [XI:5:91]

Recent tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to American Bahá'ís

Dr Charles Hall

To his honour, Dr Charles Hall, Chicago, Illinois—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of God!

Thy letter was received. Its contents were lofty and sublime and its aim was high and wide-reaching. The world of humanity is in need of a great amelioration for it is a material jungle wherein fruitless trees are flourishing and useless weeds are abounding. If there is at all a fruitful tree, it is overshadowed by the fruitless ones and if a flower grows in its midst it is hidden and concealed. The world of mankind is in need of expert gardeners that they may convert those forests into delectable rose-gardens, may substitute for these fruitless trees, trees that yield fruit and may replace these useless weeds by roses and fragrant herbs. Thus active souls and vigilant people are day and night restless. They strive until they are closely attached to the divine Kingdom and thereby become the manifestations of infinite bounties and the ideal gardeners of these forests. Thus the world of humanity will be wholly transformed and the merciful bounties become manifest.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 26 July 1919. [XI:5:92]

Louis G. Gregory

To his honour, Mr Louis Gregory, care of his honour, Mr Hannen, Washington, D.C.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letters were received. Verily, thou hast laboured hard in this year's Convention and hast served beyond thine own endurance. Thou hast moreover, travelled before and subsequent to the sittings of the Convention, hast served by other ways and means, art ever restless and active and hast, with thy respected wife, consecrated thy life to the service of the Kingdom. Undoubtedly thou shalt be confirmed and assisted.

Strive with heart and soul in order to bring about union and harmony among the white and the coloured and prove thereby the unity of the Bahá'í world wherein distinction of colour finds no place, but where hearts only are considered. Praise be to God, the hearts of the friends are united and linked together, whether they be from the orient or the occident, from north or from south, whether they be German, French, Japanese, American, and whether they pertain to the white, the black, the red, the yellow or the brown race. Variations of colour, of land and of race are of no importance in the Bahá'í Movement; on the contrary, Bahá'í unity overcomes them all and does away with all these fancies and imaginations.

Convey on my behalf to thy fellow-traveller, Mr Roy Williams, the utmost kindness. I am greatly pleased with him and my hope is that in the future he may be greatly confirmed. Extend on my behalf much kindness to thy respected wife. I never forget her and she is ever in my memory.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 24 July 1919.

XI:6, 24 June 1920 [XI:6:104]

Recent tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Fruitport Assembly

To the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful, Fruitport, Michigan, care of his honour Mr Nels Peterson—Upon them by Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye who are firm in the Covenant!

Today whatever assembly is established that has for its purpose the welfare of mankind and is attached to the invocation of God, that gathering is a celestial one. Undoubtedly, it shall become the recipient of the blessings and bounty of Divine Providence. It is under the protection of the Lord of the Kingdom, the confirmations and assistance shall encircle it from every side and it shall grow more illumined day by day.

This, however, is conditioned upon firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant and the Testament, that it should not fall short in its duties, should not fail to live up to its standard and should display a powerful will and perfect steadfastness.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

XI:7, 13 July 1920 [XI:7:105]

Extract of a tablet to an Assembly

O ye who are firm in the Covenant of the Self-Subsistent, Eternal God! Praise God with glad faces, for the favours ye have received and for the gifts which have come successively to ye; for the mercy which has preceded ye, for the blessings which have been fulfilled, and for the gifts which have been assigned unto ye. Verily, ye have attained unto that for which holy men and spiritual women have earnestly longed. Seize the opportunity and use your utmost

energy to kindle the fire of the love of God, to publish the knowledge of God, to diffuse the Spirit of God, and the fragrances of the breaths of God, to cause the penetration of the Word of God.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Extract from Tablet revealed for Hoboken Assembly of Bahá'ís, New Jersey.

XI:7, 13 July 1920 [XI:7:107]

A Bahá'í pilgrimage to south America

Compiled from letters written by Miss Martha Root while enroute.

Feeling the urge to go to South America to spread the Bahá'í Message, Miss Martha Root, of Cambridge Springs, Pa., rose up to obey. Coming to New York, the second evening at a home where she talked on the Bahá'í Cause, the head of a newspaper syndicate met her and asked her to sell him her articles from South America. This syndicate sends out its stories to over one hundred newspapers. As a courtesy they, at the same time, sent broadcast a short article of three hundred words on the Bahá'í Revelation.

Expecting to sail 21 June 1919, it was 22 July when the ship finally sailed, some Chinese sailors being brought out to take the place of striking American seamen. The ship had stood out at the Statue of Liberty eight days.

After real illness from intense fatigue, the strain of the strike and the knowledge that many of the passengers spoke a different language spiritually—smoking, drinking, bridge and poker—Miss Root did not try to solve her problem of giving the Message for two days. Her thought was that she of all people was the least fitted to meet such a group. She did not dance or play cards, neither was she an enthusiastic sportswoman.

Reading the Creative Word, every line seemed a path for her to follow:

“Let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people from other countries—be kind to the strangers ... help them to feel at home ... ask if you may render them any service ... try to make their lives a little happier ... let those who meet you know without your proclaiming the fact that you are indeed a Bahá'í.” Again, “If we are true Bahá'ís, speech is not needed ... our actions will help on the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause the arts to develop ... it is not by lip service only that the elect of God have attained to holiness, but by patient lives of active service they have brought the Light into the world.”

Many of the Bahá'í friends had given gifts to Miss Root. These were distributed for the comfort of others. The passengers represented inhabitants from Bahia, Argentina, Pará, Uruguay, Paraguay¹ and business men from Great Britain, Denmark and the United States. Probably a third were Catholics, there was one bishop of a Protestant church commissioned to use a million and a half dollars in spreading his work; there were four Christian Scientists, some other people of various faiths, but the majority were not visibly interested in the life of the Spirit.

Miss Root, after serving everybody and praying for capacity to serve more intelligently and lovingly, received her first opportunity about in this way: All the men had put up money to buy prizes for the sports. She took the best small article in her apparel, did it up as nearly as she could in the artistic fashion in which the Japanese present gifts, and took it to the sports committee to be used as a prize. It was the only wom- [XI:7:108] an's gift. She explained too, that she did not know much about sports, but would join the “family party” and go in for all but the heavy weight contest. [Miss Root is of small and slender stature.]

¹ Bahia and Pará are states of Brazil.

The next day being the first Sunday at sea, Miss Root asked the captain's permission to speak in the evening on the Bahá'í Cause. The purser put up a large notice on the bulletin board. No person aboard had heard of the Bahá'í Movement. The men on the sports committee were the first ones to enter the music room; they helped to make it popular, and every one invited everyone else. All came except a few Catholics and one other young man.

This "one other man" had received a blue booklet¹ the first day. Once he talked for five hours and another time four hours about the Cause. Drawing the blue booklet from his pocket he said: "I have read this not once or twice, but three times, and it is too Utopian, it will never work out." This man has many men under him, he has tried to inaugurate equality systems and every time the men took advantage, giving him poorer work, so he has gone back to his old stern way with them. He is so near the Kingdom: so fine in his sterling qualities, but just now he doubts people and movements. At the end of every talk he said, "O, I wish I could believe in this as you do. I wish people lived this way."

The captain, purser and several officers came to the talk. The ship pitched so that Miss Root had to hold on to a pillar with one hand while she spoke. After the talk of over an hour, the purser made a little speech of thanks. Then after dismissal the bishop took the floor and spoke against the Bahá'í Cause. Not that he had ever heard of it before, but he said one could never be a Christian and believe in these other religions too. Miss Root replied to him point by point and from that evening they became friendly. His very arguments against the Movement later made friends for it. Some young men students also began asking intelligent questions. A little group of onlookers at the discussion said, "When you folk have any more interesting explanations like this, be sure and let us in on them."

This evening lecture so early in the voyage opened the way for many quiet talks on deck. The next morning one Christian Scientist said, "Your talk make a great impression, even the 'beer bums' say it is a good kind of religion." The drinking of this ship is extraordinary. "The grave diggers" and "gentlemen drunkards", as the girls call them congregate around the bar at intervals from 6 am to 2 am. Miss Root's room was right across from the bar, this and the fact that her delightful happy-go-lucky roommate had two monkeys, made her understand what 'Abdu'l-Bahá meant in her Tablet,² "That thou mayest forget rest and composure." These men were bright and represented some of the largest business concerns in the world; they could carry the Message to over fifty millions of people in South America. In talks on deck one learned some of them had religious parents, one or two had been started in ministerial schools, but had broken away from their religion. All had good qualities and manifested some fine traits.

Next morning following the Bahá'í talk, Miss Root just in fun, read a passenger's hand. Everybody rushed over and wanted their palms read. The captain lined them up to take their turns and held out his own hand first. All day the palm reading continued, even every steward had his turn, and last of all, Snowball, the dear little Barbados boy bugler, came and held out his [XI:7:109] chubby black hands. Miss Root had studied palmistry a little before she was a Bahá'í and while there is not much in it, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that the lines of the hands undoubtedly do show something of the character of the individual. Anyway it helped her to get acquainted quickly, and three days later the captain challenged her before the crowd: "I bet you cannot read my hand exactly the same a second time. If you prove you can I will put it on the records of the ship among the distinguished passengers that you are the first Bahá'í ever to ride over these lines, and that they can find out all about what a Bahá'í is by reading the book (Thornton Chase's *The Bahá'í Revelation*) you put in the ship's library. Miss Root called his bluff and read his palm exactly the same in the second instance.

¹ Containing an outline of the history and principles of the Bahá'í Movement.

² See Tablet to Martha Root, *Star of the West*, X:2, p. 30, para. 1. *The Editors*.

Some of the passengers were agnostics. The Christian Scientist said, "My belief is so precious to me, I would not profane it by talking it over with people who would not appreciate it." Even aboard this ship, the conversation with all types of passengers showed that people were ready to hear. Often the ones that the Bahá'í would expect to accept it, fell back to sleep, and the ones that appeared to be fast asleep, woke up. If one can forget one's own poor capacity and stand evanescent Bahá'u'lláh can speak. It may help other Bahá'í teachers to use the prayer revealed for Abu'l-Faḍl: "I pray Thee by the effulgence of the sun of Thy beneficence and by the waves of the sea of Thy generosity, to put into my words and utterances a trace of the traces of Thy Supreme Word, so that the reality of all things may be attracted and drawn."

The words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the *Divine Plan* came to Miss Root every day of the journey: "O how I long that it would be made possible for me to travel through these parts, even if necessary on foot, and with the utmost of poverty and while passing through the cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, cry at the top of my voice, 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!' and promote the divine teachings. But now this is not feasible for me, therefore I live in great regret. Perchance, God willing, ye may become assisted therein."

The blue booklets were not given out that first Sunday evening. It seemed better to wait for friends to ask for them. A young Western business woman going to Paraguay for a second period of three years' work took several Bahá'í books and an Esperanto book which Miss Root gave her. Some Bahia Catholics read the booklet. A young man from Montevideo, Uruguay, said Uruguay had made the most progress of any country in South America, and one of the principal causes was that the people had become free thinkers. Passengers from Bahia and Montevideo asked her to be their guest. Every soul proved a friend.

It was indeed a family party. The chief steward said: "Why do you not tell our help about this religion?"—and he complimented it. These stewards were told about the Cause, and the Chinese sailors had the Message sent to them. At the fancy dress ball Miss Root went as a Persian and the captain asked her to present the prizes.

Pará¹ was the first city in South America sighted after a voyage of two weeks. It is situated at the mouth of the great Amazon River and has a population of 175,000 inhabitants. It rains every day in this city on the equator and people make all their appointments for "after the rain", which usually comes about 3 pm. Passengers had one day ashore. Starting out at 9 am the conventional automobile ride was taken.

They say that in South America a woman should never walk out alone, but in the afternoon, "after the rain", when the other passengers were getting on street cars to ride around the city, Miss Root left them saying that she was going to hunt for some newspaper office. After several inquiries among newsboys, pointing to their journals one of the boys took her to a newspaper office. It proved to [XI:7:110] be the largest newspaper in Pará. Fifteen men sat writing. No one spoke English. She was ushered into a newspaper "parlour" and one of the older editors talked with her in French. She tried to explain the Bahá'í Cause and Esperanto. He asked her to write one thousand words for their Journal. She had to write it in English, but just as she finished, a man came in and all the others jumped up in excitement for this man could speak English. He is the best lawyer in Pará and proved to be the lawyer for the Steamship Company. He said: "If you speak English very slowly, I reply in my bad English. I am a friend of this paper." He translated her article on the Bahá'í Cause into Portuguese for that paper and brought her down to the ship in his motor car. Nine booklets were given to the newspaper men and the friendship begun with the lawyer may be the means of splendid,

¹ Belém is the capital city of the state of Pará on the mouth of the Amazon River.

spiritual opportunities. So far as is known no one in Pará had ever heard of the Bahá'í Revelation.

Pernambuco,¹ the third largest city in South America, in commercial importance, was reached on 11 August 1919. Bahia,² which had been closed on account of yellow fever, lay several hundred miles below, en route to Rio de Janeiro.

Then began the inner drama leading to what was best for Miss Root to do. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his recent Tablets had particularly mentioned the importance of Bahia, and that Bahá'ís should travel there. On the other hand, yellow fever had been ranging in Bahia and the recent rains had only begun to abate in violence. To go to Bahia might mean a long delay and a quarantine of two weeks outside of port Rio de Janeiro when the journey was continued. It meant the loss of the ticket on the ship from Pernambuco to Rio, and every one strongly urged her not to take the risk. From a business standpoint the new Consul General just appointed by the United States Government was to travel on the boat and the days on ship board might mean several articles for the New York syndicate. Added to all this, four cases of yellow fever had developed that day in Pernambuco, and a revolution started in which several were killed, street cars burned, bridges bombed, so the safest outlook seemed to be to keep aboard and journey safely to Rio. Four American business men who had intended to remain in Pernambuco, gave up their plans and returned aboard the ship. Throwing herself down on the bunk in the stateroom after this perplexing day, she looked through the porthole into the darkness where all alone Jupiter shone brightly, steadily unmoved in his course. She rose up, ordered her bags ashore where she had made reservations with two steamship companies, in hope of getting a passage to Bahia on some Brazilian ship. She took the chance, insane as it looked to the other passengers.

There is almost no English spoken in Pernambuco. Portuguese is heard everywhere. Hearing there was an American business woman at the Hotel do Parque Miss Root went there to try to see her and engage a room in the same hotel until a ship would come. The two Bahia people she had met on shipboard were being entertained on a houseboat. The American woman was in. Almost immediately Miss Root said, "I am a Bahá'í," and the American woman replied "Did you ever know my cousin, Lua Getsinger?"³ Through the bounty of the Holy Spirit these two American women, over seven thousand miles away from home, each found a friend in the other! This American business woman, Mrs Lillyan Vegas, loved Lua Getsinger devotedly. They were favourite cousins, the same age, they had played [XI:7:111] together, worked together but after their early marriages they did not see each other much. Mrs Vegas never met Lua after the latter became a Bahá'í, but she heard of this wonderful new religion from Lua's mother.

Mrs Vegas has made eighteen trips to South America. She speaks Portuguese, French and Spanish as fluently as English. It was she who established milk stations for poor mothers and babies in Brazil; she took charge of supplies during a famine in the interior of Brazil, and in New York City she was one of the most brilliant speakers in the Third and Fourth Liberty Loan drives. At present she is in Brazil as a representative of one of the largest American business houses and has been at the Hotel do Parque for seven months. As there was "no room in the inn" she had a cot put in her room for Miss Root. Business men abroad the ship had heard of Mrs Vegas' ability and when Miss Root went back to say good-bye and told them who her companion was, it certainly made an impression. The captain and others asked for more blue

¹ Recife is the capital city of the state of Pernambuco.

² Salvador is the capital city of the state of Bahia.

³ Lua Getsinger was one of the first in America to accept and serve the Bahá'í Cause. See *Star of the West*, VII:4, pp. 29-30; and VII:19, pp. 193-194. *The Editors*.

booklets. Some of the passengers sent Mrs Vegas some American candy and came with Miss Root to the hotel—along empty streets guarded by soldiers and dully resounding with explosives of dynamite and in the churches people were gathered praying that the revolution would cease. Next morning Mrs Vegas received a cablegram making it possible for her to travel to Bahia and Rio, in the interest of her firm. Her agents were able to guarantee steamship passage to Bahia, 16 August.

Miss Root had been to the editor of the largest newspaper in Pernambuco and after speaking to him in French, she wrote an article on the Bahá'í Movement and Esperanto. Mrs Vegas took her next morning to every one of the five large newspapers in the city and explained in detail the Bahá'í Cause and Esperanto, acting as interpreter for her. The editors listened with great interest.

Articles appeared, and before leaving the city, Mrs Vegas and Miss Root followed the usual custom of going to see the editors again to thank them and to say good-bye.

Going aboard the Brazilian ship *Itapuhy*, bound from Pernambuco to Bahia, 16 August, in two days Miss Root gave the Message as follows: Hearing Arabic chanting she later spoke to the passenger through an interpreter. She found he lived in 'Akká and knew 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He described the majestic presence of the Centre of the Covenant with the greatest enthusiasm, his face was full of light as he talked; he said he had often eaten meals in 'Abbás Afandí's house. "My father knew Bahá'u'lláh," he exclaimed. This man has been away from 'Akká seventeen years and is just returning. He is a Muslim; he took a blue booklet and is carrying a little gift from Miss Root to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This Syrian presented her with a very delicious little Arabian cake and was kind to her on this stormy trip when everybody was seasick. The boats are so small they roll like barrels, compared of course to the great ocean liners.

A custom house official from Pernambuco heard the Message as did also a captain from Denmark, a man from Beirut, a first officer from Africa, a superintendent of schools in Brazil, a young man just leaving with twenty-nine other young men sent out by the Brazilian government to the United States to study for two years.

The next morning the boat stopped for six hours in Maceio, a city of 70,000. A merchant who knew Mrs Vegas came out with a sailboat and took Mrs Vegas and Miss Root to see his city. After a motor ride, he drove to all the newspaper offices. When the editors were not in he took his guests to their homes. The editor and owner of the Journal Alagoas, Mr Jose Magathaes da Silveira, a delightful man said: "I should like to [XI:7:113] see a movement that would bring unity in religions; it is good." He also was in favour of Esperanto, explaining that Esperanto had several followers in Maceio. Another editor said Esperanto had flourished there but that now it had died down again. The Message was given to nine men prominent in newspaper and business circles in Maceio. After breakfast at noon in the home of a pleasant Catholic family, the two Americans returned to the *Itapuhy*.

Nearing Bahia, so much was said about the yellow fever, and ships from Bahia to Rio de Janeiro were so uncertain, that Mrs Vegas decided to remain on the *Itapuhy* and go on to Rio. It was high sea, raining torrents, stomachs were seasick, but when the little boats came out to get the passengers the only two men on board who spoke English were Americans and both offered to take Miss Root up to the hotel. She came with a young man who is coming to Bahia to be a Baptist missionary in the interior of Brazil. He was met by two big strapping young men, one a doctor, who are also in Bahia as missionaries. It was rather thrilling to see them out in this far away place of the earth where 80 per cent of the inhabitants are Africans, to give their lives to improve conditions.

Miss Root was ill as the result of the storm and had a high fever. How vividly the words

came to her, "Let one not call himself a captain until he stands before the opposing army, nor a Bahá'í until he meets the tests." The words in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* and the prayers were her healing.

Bahia is a city of 280,000 inhabitants.

The word Bahia means, Bay of All Saints. It was founded in April 1549, by Thomas Souza, a noble, accompanied by six Jesuits. The present popular man who will probably be re-elected governor, Dr Jose Joaquim Seabra says: "Bahia first sent out the rays of civilization of Brazil. God placed in its founders the best gifts of the Spirit—and in its soil riches of all kinds." The State of Bahia—the state and city are called by the same name—is one of the richest in Brazil. It produces everything that the other states have but is noted principally for its cocoa, tobacco, coffee, diamonds, sugar, hides. It will in time become one of the greatest world seaports because its natural harbour is good and it is nearer United States, Europe and Africa than Rio de Janeiro.

There are 365 churches in the city of Bahia. One who has made a study of Brazil told Miss Root that many Brazilians are changing their faith. The higher classes among the men do not care much for any religion. The tendency among the literate is to become rationalists, not altogether atheists. Many of them have been educated in France and their literature consists of French philosophy and French novels. Several of the distinguished public men of Brazil are rationalists, but it is said that the women and lower classes are devout Catholics.

Miss Root found the "thinkers" of Brazil much interested in a universal religion, and nowhere did she find antagonism. She visited the Catholic churches and approached the Bahá'í Cause from the Catholic standpoint. If Bahá'ís come to Brazil they must learn [XI:7:114] the Portuguese language (not hard to learn) and learn the customs of these Latin peoples. South Americans meet strangers socially before they do any business. "Paciencia amanha" (patience, tomorrow) is the first lesson to be learned. Brazilians do everything slowly and with ceremony. The Portuguese and Brazilians are born aristocrats.

At the Sul Americano hotel Miss Root met Mr Miguel P. Shelley, an American who had been doing business in Brazil for the past thirty years; he was the best business man she met in South America. He is also a thinker, a writer, and a man loved by both North and South Americans. She frankly explained to him the purpose of her visit and how she had approached newspapers. He said: "You could not get the Bahá'í Cause (he had never heard of it) and Esperanto better known in South America than to do exactly as you are doing; bring them to the attention of the editors and have them written in all the newspapers." He also was kind enough to say that a woman could travel alone in South America and that she would be shown respect if she is a good woman—"that is what the people of South America want, good men and good women from the United States to come here and do business," were his words.

Mrs R___, a woman of influence, gave her time each day to take Miss Root to meet the most distinguished people of that seaport. Mr Shelley accompanied Miss Root and Mrs R___ to the newspaper offices where he had previously made appointments, and interpreted for her. First, one makes a friendly call, and then the editors ask questions. Two of the editors have been educated in Europe and speak English. There are eight daily newspapers in Bahia. It is better to go to two or three of the most important ones and give the Message and then call later or write to the others—papers in South America, as elsewhere, like a "scoop", that is, to get a story exclusively. All the newspapers used good articles, illustrated with photographs of Miss Root.

One editor said: "I am interested in this religion. If you have put a book about it in the English section of the public library, I will get it and read it. Many Brazilians are beginning to

learn English and they will like English books.” Miss Root placed Thornton Chase’s book *The Bahá’í Revelation*, into the city library and promised six more English books on the Bahá’í Cause, to be sent from the United States. The head of the library and his assistants were most polite. A beautiful new large library building is just being completed. If any reader wishes to send Bahá’í books to that great library, the address is Bibliotheca Publica do Estado da Bahia, South America.

To the Secretary of Agriculture, Dr Joaquim Arthur Pedreina France, to the business people of several countries, an American captain from California just starting for England, missionaries, people of the interior, down to the poorest Africans, the Bahá’í Cause was explained. People were wonderfully kind. The very fact that Miss Root was a woman travelling alone, not knowing their language touched their hearts. One Portuguese business man and his wife at the hotel, came to her and said in French: “We offer ourselves to serve your religion. If you send us literature, we also shall explain it and give it to the people to read.” These same friends gave her a dinner and a large bouquet of roses and put her aboard the ship when she left.

Miss Root had no idea when she could get a ship out of Bahia or what the quarantine regulations would be. Even Bahia people were astonished that she was able to get a ship so easily. The *Itassuce*, a Brazilian boat, came up unexpectedly from Rio with a cargo. After unloading at the docks, this ship put out to harbour, had the strongest kind of disinfection used and the passengers went out to this boat before the disin- [XI:7:115] fection was over and had their baggage disinfected too. It was heroic—quite brimstone enough for this world and the next. Doctors examined the passengers and a doctor on board took temperatures each day. (It is important to carry a thermometer and simple remedies.)

Thus Miss Root, whom everybody predicted would be delayed for several months in Bahia, voyaged on safely after a six-day stay in Bahia—the city of which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Visit ye especially Bahia, on the eastern shore of Brazil. Because in the past years this city was christened with the name of Bahia, there is no doubt that it has been through the inspiration of God.”

The journey from Bahia to Rio is four days. All boats were pleasant but so small they rolled interminably and some of the most seasoned sailors were seasick. No other woman aboard was able to go into the dining room once during the voyage. Only two persons spoke English on the *Itassuce*, but several could talk in French, and with so much practice Miss Root now gave the Message in French. One man going to his home in Curitiba, the capital of the state of Paraná, took the book, *Tablet of Tarázát*, etc., and will place it in the city library there. The Message was also given to a man who acts as a guide and interpreter in South American hotels. He is a Roumanian who speaks seven languages; also some rationalists, who had seen the articles in the papers, asked about the Cause.

Rio de Janeiro harbour is called the most beautiful in the world. It is eighteen miles long and sixteen miles wide—a magnificent “bowl” with its edges stupendous mountains whose slender pinnacles are capped with graceful, restless palm trees; those companionable trees that legend tells cannot live beyond the sound of the human voice. In this “bowl” are a hundred lovely islands. Rio, one of the greatest show places on the earth, is remembered always for its scenery. Miss Root arrived in the best time of all, the glorious sunset hour. It was at six o’clock 27 August 1919. She went to eight hotels finding them all crowded and at the ninth place took a room in a Portuguese hotel where no other language is spoken. She found her way around Rio by writing her address and showing the paper to policemen and street car conductors.

She gave the Bahá’í Message about as follows: Interviewing the American Consul-General

the first day, he introduced her to the editor of the *Journal do Commercio*, who was calling at the consulate. This is the largest paper in Brazil and Miss Root learned later that it is one of the influential papers in the world; its news is copied by papers in other cities and small towns throughout the twenty-one states. The editor invited her to call at his office. He was interested in the Bahá'í Cause and gave it about three-fourths of a column, an excellent article, outlining the vital principles. He also gave her addresses to an Esperanto writer and to the President of the Esperanto Society of Brazil.

After that call Miss Root went out to Copacabana, a fashionable residence section by the sea, to call upon Mr Miguel Shelly's wife and sister, Mrs Bertha Thomas—Americans who have lived many years in Brazil. The Bahá'í Cause was the theme of the conversation and the spiritual friendship has proved beautiful. The sister has the little prayer book, several Bahá'í booklets and a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The following day she came and took Miss Root to the second largest newspaper, *Journal do Brazil*, and interpreted the Message. They met the owner as well as the editor, and a good article appeared in the Sunday paper. The next call was to Mr Manoel Cicero, Director of the Bibliotheca do Rio de Janeiro, in the Avenida Rio do Branco. This is the finest library in Brazil and is stacked with 400,000 volumes. The Director received *Some Answered Questions*, *What [XI:7:116] went ye out to see*, *Dynamic Power of the Bahá'í Revelation*, a blue booklet and the compilation on Peace and War. The director said he would be very glad to have other books on the Bahá'í Cause. Many Brazilians are now learning English and frequent the English section of the library as do also the Americans and British. There are over 500 in the American colony in Rio at present.

Exceedingly delightful was the visit to the Esperantists where Miss Root and Mrs Thomas went after lunch. Dr Everdo Backheuser, an Esperanto writer, took them to an Esperanto social reception. On the way she presented the doctor with Mr Esslemont's Esperanto article, "Science and Religion". Miss Root gave them the Message. The President of the Esperanto Society of Brazil, Mr Alberto Conto Fernandes, knew about the Bahá'í Movement and showed her Esperanto articles about Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Mr Fernandes is an engineer, a distinguished man in business and one of the great Esperantists of the world. He has taught Esperanto to one thousand people in Brazil, and he, as well as Dr Backheuser, has written several Esperanto books. He reads some English, and speaks and reads French fluently. Esperanto is taught in the normal and primary schools in Rio, classes are held in the fire engine-house departments and in the telegraph offices. A street has just been named, "Dr Zamenhof". Five National Esperanto Congresses have been held in Brazil. There is constant communication between Esperantists of the different cities, and every two weeks Rio Esperantists meet at their rooms and have programs of Esperanto plays, lectures and songs followed by a social hour. The Esperanto library here is the most complete Miss Root has seen anywhere in the world.

The Young Men's Christian Association in Rio has an Esperanto class and an Esperanto library. She placed 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *London Talks* in that library. The *Brazil Esperantisto*, a monthly magazine, published in Rio, is using an article about the Bahá'í Cause. Rio newspapers, not only in the interviews but later in reporting the Esperanto meetings and when the books were put in Rio library, spoke again of the Bahá'í Cause. These articles are often copied in other cities. The best introduction for the Bahá'í Cause anywhere is through the newspapers.

Miss Root spoke, of the Cause in the Consulate, at the American Embassy, Brazilian School of Naval Aviation, Brazilian Army School of Aviation, the American Chamber of Commerce in Rio, to several Brazilian families, a cocoa plantation owner and to the United States, British, French and Brazilian business men whom she met.

Miss Root left Rio de Janeiro, 5 September, at 7 am for Sao Paulo. On the train only two persons could speak English, they only riding for an hour later in the day. She gave them the Message, one a young married man from New Jersey out there for thirteen years, the other a young married woman from Kent, England. The journey, scenically, is like riding twelve hours in Paradise, whose wealth is not yet discovered by the world at large.

Sao Paulo is more like the “Chicago” of Brazil, as it is the place where many of the industries are. Raw materials from the heart of Brazil are poured into Sao Paulo, some to be made up there and more passing down to Santos port and thence shipped. Unlike Chicago, Sao Paulo was created from the beginning with a wonderful love of the beautiful. Its station de luxe is beside a famous park. Its business blocks are nestled amid splendid gardens, its houses “grow” amid tropical palms, Parana pines, yellow roses climbing to the deep red roofs, orchids, calla lilies, night blooming cereus, and most of the rarest flowers, growing in everybody’s yard. Miss Root heard a band concert in mid-afternoon in a small park in the crowded business district and violin [XI:7:117] playing in a large grocery store. Sao Paulo in climate, beauty and business, is ideal.

Miss Root went to four hotels before she could find a place, then paid as high as the prices in New York, had a room on the fifth floor and no elevator. The owners were Italians but could speak French, though no English. Sao Paulo with her population of 500,000 has as much hotel accommodations as has an American town of 5,000. It is destined, however, to be one of the greatest centres of the business world, perhaps within a century.

Going to the largest newspaper, *Estado do Sao Paulo*, to meet the editor and explain the Bahá’í Cause, Miss Root, at the same time, met a Syrian lawyer from Mt. Lebanon. He was educated in Beirut College and has resided in Sao Paulo twenty years. His name is Assad Bechara; his passionate aim and ideal is the liberation of his country and that the United States shall be “its brother’s keeper” until Syria like Cuba can be independent. She gave him the Message, seeing him each day, and as the 15,000 Syrians in Sao Paulo, some of whom are from Beirut, have a semi-public library, presented them with Mons. Dreyfus’ book, *The Bahai Revelation*. There are 100,000 Syrians in Brazil.

The Director of the Rockefeller Foundation, Dr S. F. Darling, who has been in Sao Paulo for five years making a demonstration for the Brazilian Government, listened to the Message, and the book, *Divine Philosophy*, was presented to the Faculada de Madicina library. Dr Darling is one of the renowned men of the world. He made the famous hookworm demonstration (under the Rockefeller Foundation) in Africa, Panama, Java and Fiji Islands and is making a similar demonstration in Brazil. He said he would read the Bahá’í literature. This great new institution is going to play a leading part in the medical profession in Brazil. The United States or any other country, would be proud of an institution such as this is going to be. It is one and one-half years old now, housed in the palace of a former coffee baron, and attended by hundreds of medical students, who came to work in the laboratories and to attend Dr Darling’s lectures. It is the most advanced institution Miss Root saw in Brazil. The Brazilian Government invited the Rockefeller Foundation to come and the two are working together. Bahá’í books on social lines would be very good for this library.

Taking the train, 10 September, from Sao Paulo for Santos, a two-hour’s ride, Miss Root saw probably the richest short railroad in the world, and most perfect. An American railroad president when asked what could be done to improve it said he knew of nothing unless to set its rails with diamonds. The train hovers like a bird around the mountain sides, and one is thrilled, awed by the grandeur of millions of forest trees, above and below. Eleven tunnels are blasted through solid rock and there are mountains of granite. Arriving in Santos she left her bags at the station and walked half a mile to a small Brazilian Hotel which proved to be a very

good one. The population of Santos is 200,000. During the first six months of 1919, Brazilian exports were \$274,304,000, of which \$147,526,000 passed through the port of Santos.

The next morning, Miss Root looked up the library; it is not a city library, but one for all people employed in the business world of Santos. Its name explains it: Sociadade Humanitaria des Empregades, no Comercio. There are five thousand volumes and newspapers and magazines from all Brazil. The Director, who speaks English, was not in, but it was an easy matter to turn to their files and show them articles about the Bahá'í Cause in a dozen papers. They seemed delighted with the books she left there: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *London Talks, Table Talks with Abdul-Baha* (the Winterburn's book) and the blue [XI:7:118] booklet. The Library though small had a delightful atmosphere.

In the evening, Miss Root went to see the editor of the principal newspaper, *A Tribuna*, and on the following evening, Theosophists, seeing the Bahá'í article in the paper, called and invited her to address their society. As she was sailing the next day they appointed a "commission" to meet at her hotel in the morning.

Sometimes the most glorious events in life come upon one unaware and this was one of them. Three men came, the president of the Theosophical Society, Mr Guido Gnocchi, a great worker since its beginning five years ago, and two other distinguished Theosophists. Miss Root at first asked them about their society and said she would write about it in the North American papers. The president, through an interpreter (one of their own number), explained that he had come to learn more about the Bahá'í Cause. He had articles in his home about Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and believed that they are the World Teachers today; he spoke of them at a Theosophical Conference in Sao Paulo recently. He said he wished to write about them in the different newspapers throughout Brazil, just as he had written to help Theosophy.

Miss Root had a number of Portuguese newspaper clippings explaining the Cause and its principles. The young man—who is an Italian by birth, an artist, and very psychological—said immediately that he would translate the blue booklet into Portuguese and get its thoughts into the newspapers of Brazil. He said: "I will work for this Bahá'í Cause in Brazil. I will try to learn English to propagate it further and I have a great longing to travel around the world to spread its Teachings." This man had never heard of travelling Bahá'í teachers. He had only glimpsed the principles, but like Paul he had the vision. They talked for hours and she gave them Thornton Chase's *The Bahai Revelation*, Abu'l-Faḍl's *Bahá'í Proofs*, the *Divine Plan*, and several booklets. One of the other men is from Fiume, though all three have been in Brazil many years. He had a vision of "the oneness of the world of humanity", and wrote a book on this subject which is in its second edition. He is much interested in the Bahá'í Cause and can read English.

When the Santos friends came to bring Miss Root to the ship outward bound for Buenos Aires, Mr Guido Gnocchi had with him a friend from Sao Paulo to whom he had spoken of the Bahá'í Cause. This man, J. R. Goncalves da Silva, who for many years has been a free thinker, occultist and scholar said he had come to ask for literature. He will tell others in the state and city of Sao Paulo of this Bahá'í Revelation.

Mr Gnocchi read to the group a long article which he had just finished for a Brazilian paper, giving the history of the Bahá'í Cause; it would appear that week.

Brazilians of the better classes in the large cities have much broader views and are much more refined than people in the United States realize. They are not specialists but have a general and very real culture. Many of them have been educated in Europe and all have centuries of refinement back of them. Their manners are so perfect and pleasing, one cannot help wishing other countries had ways as gentle and as truly polite. They are not creed-bound

and the very broadness of the Bahá'í Movement makes it appeal to them. Within a century there will be Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs in Brazil. The wonderful souls, the good articles in the newspapers, the books in the libraries will be enveloped in the clouds of the Holy Spirit, and the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant, will be known in every city and hamlet. "Verily, He is the Powerful over all that He wisheth."

(Continued in *Star of the West*, XXI:12, pp. 206–207, 211–216.)

XI:7, 13 July 1920 [XI:7:112]

Recent tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mr A. W. Randall

To his honour Mr A. W. Randall—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!—O thou who art attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá!

Thy letter has been received. Its perusal imparted greatest joy, because that truthful servant of Bahá'u'lláh, together with his honourable wife, have really, with perfect love, arisen in the service of the Kingdom. The happiness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is confined to this fact: that some souls may, with the utmost purity and severance from aught else save God, become attracted spirit (unmixed spirit) and, wholly submerged in the ocean of mindfulness and piety, dedicate their time, day and night, to the service of the Cause of God.

His honour Fáḍil-i-Mázindaránī is from those souls who have dedicated their lives to the service of the Cause of God. It is my hope that his pure breath may be the cause of the union and harmony of the friends.

The papers of Mr Hearst are verily striving for the protection of the rights of the public. I am supplicating that they may become the first papers serving the good of the world of humanity, so that they may keep alive the blessed name of Mrs Hearst and that this name (Hearst) may live permanently till eternity.

The model of Mr Bourgeois, praise be to God, has become acceptable to the friends, especially that it has proved approvable to his honour, Mr Remey. [XI:7:113]

Convey on my behalf the utmost kindness to all the friends of God. Upon thee be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh, Mt. Carmel, Palestine, 25 June 1920.

XI:8, 1 August 1920 [XI:8:121]

Extract from a talk given at the home of Mr and Mrs Kinney, New York, 1 December 1912

Know this for a certainty that today the penetrative power in the arteries and the nerves of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant. The body of the world will not be moved through any power except through the power of the Covenant. There is no other power like unto this. Consider what a transformation has been effected since my first visit. This has been made possible through the power of the Covenant.

XI:8, 1 August 1920 [XI:8:122]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Charles Mason Remey

To his honour, Mr Remey, Washington, D.C.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou son of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Its contents were in the utmost sweetness, for it was indicative that with the utmost power thou hast arisen in order to link together the hearts of souls that are in America with those who are in Europe. This is of utmost importance, for the first divine teaching is that communities must be freed from racial, political and even patriotic prejudice, that all men are of one race and the whole universe one land. Consider how unwise and short-sighted are the leaders, the politicians and the philosophers of the present age! The American continent and Europe, that is, Germany and France, are a small portion of the terrestrial globe. What is the importance of this globe?—for it commands no importance when compared to these infinite bodies that abound in this limitless space; it is like unto an insignificant spot on the surface of the wide ocean. No importance should be attached to the terrestrial globe, how much less to one of the countries of the globe. The inhabitants of countries are so immersed in their imaginations that they have carved for themselves statues of imagination, which they worship, when actually they are naught but fantastic images, yet in spite of that they are worshipped by everyone. How heedless, unintelligent and unwise are the leaders and philosophers of today!

In short, the divine teachings constitute the uni-coloured pavilion of the oneness of the world of humanity. All the peoples of the world shall not attain unto rest except under its shadow, and in accordance with these teachings, the Turk as well as the Tajik, the European as well as the American, the Asiatic as well as the African—all shall rest under the shadow of this pavilion. The friends of God must therefore deal with all the communities of the world with the utmost truthfulness and friendship without any distinction of race, so that all may embrace one another and with the utmost harmony and love may engage in the glorification of the Lord of the Kingdom.

I have delivered an address at the university of the coloured men at Washington on the subject of the coloured and the white. Refer to it and act accordingly.

In brief, I am greatly pleased with thy conduct and thy behaviour. Praise be to God, thou are freed from these limitations and imaginations, hast no purpose save the diffusion of the divine fragrances and art ever restless and active. Thou art day and night striving to hoist the resplendent banner and to cause the shining morn to illumine all regions. From the Abhá Kingdom I ever beg confirmation for thee, for without it the smallest things cannot be performed, how much less this important question.

Convey on my behalf to all the friends of God, greeting.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 11 October 1919.

XI:8, 1 August 1920 [XI:8:123]

To the Central Organization for a Durable Peace¹

[Translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Letter and Tablet sent to the General Secretary of The Hague.

Received by the *Star of the West*, 24 July 1920.—*Editors.*]

[XI:8:130]

... This is the truth about the situation, which has been stated.

Consider how powerful are the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. At a time when His Holiness was in the prison of 'Akká and was under the restrictions and threats of two blood-thirsty kings, notwithstanding this fact, his teachings spread with all power in Persia and other countries. Should any teaching, or any principle, or any community fall under the threat

¹ Pages 123–127, 129 and part of page 130 can be found in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 296–307.

of a powerful and blood-thirsty monarch it will be annihilated within a short space of time. At present for fifty years the Bahá'ís in Persia and most regions have been under severe restrictions and the threat of sword and spear. Thousands of souls have given their lives in the arena of sacrifice and have fallen as victims under the swords of oppression and cruelty. Thousands of esteemed families have been uprooted and destroyed. Thousands of children have been made fatherless. Thousands of fathers have been bereft of their sons. Thousands [XI:8:131] of mothers have wept and lamented for their boys who have been beheaded. All this oppression and cruelty, rapacity and blood-thirstiness did not hinder or prevent the spread of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They spread more and more every day, and power and might became more evident.

It may be that some foolish person among the Persians will affix his name to the contents of the Tablets of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh or to the explanations given in the letters [Tablets] of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and send it to that esteemed Assembly. Ye must be aware of this fact, for any Persian who seeks fame or has some other intention will take the entire contents of the Tablets of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and publish them in his own name or in that of his community, just as happened at the Universal Races Congress in London before the war. A Persian took the substance of the Epistles of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, entered that Congress, gave them forth in his own name and published them, whereas the wording was exactly that of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. Some such souls have gone to Europe and have caused confusion in the minds of the people of Europe and have disturbed the thoughts of some Orientalists. Ye must bear this fact in mind, for not a word of these teachings was heard in Persia before the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh. Investigate this matter so that it may become to you evident and manifest. Some souls are like parrots. They learn any note which they may hear, and sing it, but they themselves are unaware of what they utter. There is a sect in Persia at present made up of a few souls who are called Bábís, who claim to be followers of His Holiness the Báb, whereas they are utterly unaware of His Holiness. They have some secret teachings which are entirely opposed to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and in Persia people know this. But when these souls come to Europe, they conceal their own teachings and utter those of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, for they know that the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh are powerful and they therefore declare publicly those teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in their own name. As to their secret teachings, they say that they are taken from the *Book of Bayán*, and the *Book of Bayán* is from His Holiness the Báb. When ye get hold of the translation of the *Book of Bayán*, which has been translated in Persia, ye will discover the truth that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are utterly opposed to the teachings of this sect. Beware lest ye disregard this fact. Should ye desire to investigate the matter further, enquire from Persia.

In fine, when travelling and journeying throughout the world, wherever one finds construction, it is the result of fellowship and love, while everything that is in ruin shows the effect of enmity and hatred. Notwithstanding this, the world of humanity has not become aware and has not awakened from the sleep of heedlessness. Again it engages in differences, in disputes and wrangling, that it may set up ranks of war and may run to and fro in the arena of battle and strife.

So is it with regard to the universe and its corruption, existence and non-existence. Every contingent being is made up of different and numerous elements and the existence of everything is a result of composition. That is to say, when between simple elements a composition takes place a being arises; the creation of beings comes about in this way. And when that composition is upset, it is followed by decomposition, the elements disintegrate, and that being becomes annihilated. That is to say, the annihilation of everything consists in the decomposition and the separation of elements. Therefore every union and [XI:8:132] colour, of leaves, of flowers and of fruits, each will contribute to the beauty and charm of the others and will make an admirable garden, and will appear in the utmost loveliness, freshness

and sweetness. Likewise, when difference and variety of thoughts, forms, opinions, characters and morals of the world of mankind come under the control of one Supreme Power and the influence of the composition among the elements is the cause of life, while dissociation and separation is the cause of death. In short, attraction and harmony of things are the cause of the production of fruits and useful results, while repulsion and disharmony of things are the cause of disturbance and annihilation. From harmony and attraction, all living contingent beings, such as plant, animal and man, are realized, and from disharmony and repulsion decay sets in and annihilation becomes manifest. Therefore whatever is the cause of harmony, attraction and union among men is the life of the world of humanity, and whatever is the cause of difference, of repulsion and of separation is the cause of the death of mankind. And when thou passest by a garden wherein vegetable beds and plants, flowers and fragrant herbs are all combined so as to form a harmonious whole, this is an evidence that this plantation and this rose garden have been cultivated and arranged by the care of a perfect gardener, while when thou seest a garden in disorder, lacking arrangement and confused, this indicates that it has been deprived of the care of a skilful gardener, nay, rather, it is nothing but a mass of weeds. It has therefore been made evident that fellowship and harmony are indicative of the training of the real Educator, while separation and dispersion prove wildness and deprivation of Divine Training.

Should anyone object that, since the communities and nations and races and peoples of the world have different formalities, customs, tastes, temperaments and morals and varied thoughts, minds and opinions, it is therefore impossible for ideal unity to be made manifest, and complete union among men to be realized, we say that differences are of two kinds. One leads to destruction, and that is like the difference between warring peoples and competing nations who destroy one another, uproot each other's families, do away with rest and comfort and engage in bloodshed and rapacity. That is blameworthy. But the other difference consists in variation. This is perfection itself and the cause of the appearance of Divine bounty. Consider the flowers of the rose garden. Although they are of different kinds, various colours and diverse forms and appearances, yet as they drink from one water, are swayed by one breeze and grow by the warmth and light of one sun, this variation and this difference cause each to enhance the beauty and splendour of the others. The differences in manners, in customs, in habits, in thoughts and opinions and in temperaments is the cause of the adornment of the world of mankind. This is praiseworthy. Likewise this difference and this variation, like the difference and variation of the parts and members of the human body, are the cause of the appearance of beauty and perfection. As these different parts and members are under the control of the dominant spirit, and the spirit permeates all the organs and members, and rules all the arteries and veins, this difference and this variation strengthen love and harmony and this multiplicity is the greatest aid to unity. If in a garden the flowers and fragrant herbs, the blossoms and fruits, the leaves, branches and trees are of one kind, of one form, of one colour and of one arrangement, there is no beauty or sweetness, but when there is variety of [XI:8:133] world of oneness, they will appear and be displayed in the most perfect glory, beauty, exaltation and perfection. Today nothing but the power of the Word of God which encompasses the realities of things can bring the thoughts, the minds, the hearts and the spirits under the shade of One Tree. He is the Potent in all things, the Vivifier of souls, the Preserver and the Controller of the world of mankind. Praise be to God, in this day the light of the Word of God has shone forth upon all regions, and from all sects, communities, nations, tribes, peoples, religions and denominations, souls have gathered under the shadow of the Word of Oneness and have in the most intimate fellowship united and harmonized!

Some time ago, during the war, a letter [Tablet] was written regarding the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh which may appropriately be appended to this epistle.

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

HE IS GOD!

O people of the world!

The dawn of the Sun of Reality is assuredly for the illumination of the world and for the manifestation of mercy. In the assemblage of the family of Adam results and fruits are praiseworthy, and the holy bestowals of every bounty are abundant. It is an absolute mercy and a complete bounty, the illumination of the world, fellowship and harmony, love and union; nay, rather, mercifulness and oneness, the elimination of discord and the unity of whomsoever are on the earth in the utmost of freedom and dignity. The Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] said; “All are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch”. He likened the world of existence to one tree and all the souls to leaves, blossoms and fruits. Therefore all the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits must be in the utmost of freshness, and the bringing about of this delicacy and sweetness depends upon union and fellowship. Therefore they must assist each other with all their power and seek everlasting life. Thus the friends of God must manifest the mercy of the Compassionate Lord in the world of existence and must show forth the bounty of the visible and invisible King. They must purify their sight, and look upon mankind as the leaves, blossoms and fruits of the tree of creation, and must always be thinking of doing good to some one, of love, consideration, affection and assistance to somebody. They must see no enemy and count no one as an ill wisher. They must consider everyone on the earth as a friend; regard the stranger as an intimate, and the alien as a companion. They must not be bound by any tie, nay, rather, they should be free from every bond. In this day the one who is favoured in the threshold of grandeur is the one who offers the cup of faithfulness and bestows the pearl of gift to the enemies, even to the fallen oppressor, lends a helping hand, and considers every bitter foe as an affectionate friend.

These are the commands of the Blessed Beauty, these are the counsels of the Greatest Name. O ye dear friends! The world is engaged in war and struggle, and mankind is in the utmost conflict and danger. The darkness of unfaithfulness has enshrouded the earth and the illumination of faithfulness has become concealed. All nations and tribes of the world have sharpened their [XI:8:134] claws and are warring and fighting with each other. The edifice of man is shattered. Thousands of families are wandering disconsolate. Thousands of thousands of souls are besmeared with dust and blood in the arena of battle and struggle every year, and the tent of happiness and life is overthrown. The prominent men become commanders and boast of bloodshed, and glory in destruction. One says: “I have severed with my sword the necks of a nation”, and one: “I have levelled a kingdom to the dust”; and another: “I have overthrown the foundation of a government.” This is the pivot around which the pride and glory of mankind are revolving. In all regions friendship and uprightness are denounced and reconciliation and regard for truth are despised. The herald of peace, reformation, love and reconciliation is the Religion of the Blessed Beauty which has pitched its tent on the apex of the world and proclaimed its summons to the people.

Then, O ye friends of God! Appreciate the value of this precious Revelation, move and act in accordance with it and walk in the straight path and the right way. Show it to the people. Raise the melody of the Kingdom and spread abroad the teachings and ordinances of the loving Lord so that the world may become another world, the darkened earth may become illumined and the dead body of the people may obtain new life. Every soul may seek everlasting life through the breath of the Merciful. Life in this mortal world will quickly come to an end, and this earthly glory, wealth, comfort and happiness will soon vanish and be no more. Summon ye the people to God and call the souls to the manners and conduct of the Supreme Concourse. To the orphans be ye kind fathers, and to the unfortunate a refuge and

shelter. To the poor be a treasure of wealth, and to the sick a remedy and healing. Be a helper of every oppressed one, the protector of every destitute one, be ye ever mindful to serve any soul of mankind. Attach no importance to self-seeking, rejection, arrogance, oppression and enmity. Heed them not. Deal in the contrary way. Be kind in truth, not only in appearance and outwardly. Every soul of the friends of God must concentrate his mind on this, that he may manifest the mercy of God and the bounty of the Forgiving One. He must do good to every soul whom he encounters, and render benefit to him, becoming the cause of improving the morals and correcting the thoughts so that the light of guidance may shine forth and the bounty of His Holiness the Merciful One may encompass. Love is light in whatsoever house it may shine and enmity is darkness in whatsoever abode it dwell.

O friends of God! Strive ye so that this darkness may be utterly dispelled and the Hidden Mystery may be revealed and the realities of things made evident and manifest.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by: Shoghi Rabbani, Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí, Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím, and Dr J. E. Esslemont.

Haifa, Palestine, 17 December 1919.

XI:9, 20 August 1920 [XI:9:139]

Recent Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mrs Corinne True

To the dear daughter of the Kingdom, Mrs Corinne True, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be the light of God, the Most Luminous!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter has been received and the proceedings of the Convention understood. Thanks be unto God that this Convention was supported by the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá and as thou didst wish it was formed and ended.

Praise be unto God, that the model of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár made by Mr Bourgeois was approved by his honour, Mr Remey, and selected by the Convention. His honour, Mr Remey is, verily, of perfect sincerity. He is like unto transparent water, filtered, lucid and without any impurity. He worked earnestly for several years, but he did not have any personal motive. He has not attachment to anything except to the Cause of God. This is the spirit of the firm and this is the characteristic of the sincere.

The model of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is, however, too big. It needs several millions of dollars for the cost (of construction). If possible, Mr Bourgeois may reproduce the same model on a smaller scale, so that one million dollars may suffice for its construction. This should be reconsidered only if possible.

Thy services to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár are accepted at the Threshold of the Most Great One.

Convey on my behalf the most wonderful Abhá greetings to all the friends, especially to the House of Spirituality and other Assemblies. Practice utmost affection towards thy dear daughters on my behalf. I have no opportunity to write more than this.

Upon thee be the light of the Most Luminous!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, 12 June 1920, Haifa, Palestine.

The model for the Bahá'í temple, Chicago

Louis J. Bourgeois, Architect

By J. R. Reid

[Paper from *The Architectural Record*, June 1920, pp. 501–505.]

The model designed by Louis J. Bourgeois for the great Bahá'í Temple to be built in Chicago is attracting much attention from architects. It is of unusual interest from several points of view. The Temple is a new and original form in architecture—"the first new idea in architecture since the thirteenth century", according to Mr H. Van Buren Magonigle. Beautiful in the harmony of its proportions, it has in addition a singular charm in its symbolism; and to the psychologist it is noteworthy, because the creator declares: "It is Bahá'u'lláh's temple. I am only the channel through which it came."

In form the temple is a nonagon, or nine-sided structure, and its lower story offers a complete innovation in architecture in the use of nine inverted half circles, with a great doorway in the centre of each, so that from whatsoever side one approaches the edifice it seems to extend its arms in welcome. From dome to foundation it is a unique creation and unlike any building in existence, yet one reads in its curving beauty the story of the architecture of the world. The first floor in its simplicity of line suggests the Greek and Egyptian temples; while the treatment of the doors and windows is Romanesque in form, and both Gothic and Arabic in the intricacy and beauty of ornamentation. The second story is Renaissance in line and Gothic in the interlaced arches of its openings. The third is restful, quiet and Renaissance in treatment. Above it rises a lovely dome, suggestive of Byzantine forms; but above the closed top rise other beams of the dome itself like hands clasped in prayer, so that the dome gives the feeling of ascension and aspiration found previously in the Gothic towers alone.

In the geometric forms of the ornamentation covering the columns and surrounding windows and doors of the temple, one deciphers all the religious symbols of the world. Here are the swastika cross, the circle, the triangle, the double triangle or six pointed star (or Solomon's seal, the magic symbol of necromancers of old); but more than this, the noble symbol of the spiritual Orb, or Sun behind the Saviour of mankind; the five pointed star, representing the man saviour—Christ or Buddha or Muḥammad: the Greek Cross, the Roman [XI:9:141] or Christian Cross; and, supreme above all, the wonderful nine pointed star, figured in the structure of the temple itself, and appearing again and again in its ornamentation, as significant of the Spiritual Glory in the world today.

The nine pointed star reappears in the formation of the windows and doors, which are all topped by this magnificent allegory of spiritual glory, from which extend gilded rays covering the lower surfaces, and illustrating, in this vivid and artistic limning, the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Curiously enough this *Descent* of the Holy Spirit was the first thing Louis J. Bourgeois pictured in his drawing of the temple. He said, "I did the doors and windows of the lower story first, and then I got the entire form."

The numbers 9 and 19 recur again and again in the structure of the temple, illustrating its basic principle of Unity—9 being the number of perfection, containing in itself the completion of each perfect number cycle, and 19 representing the Union of God and man, as manifested in life, civilization and all things.

His description of how he made the model is as interesting as the structure itself; but in reading it one must remember that Bourgeois is an architect of long and wide experience. He built Gothic churches in France; then he built them in Canada. His buildings are found in

Chicago, in California, where he erected and planned the well known house and garden of Paul de Longpré, the flower painter, and also in New York.

Twenty-five years ago he had a remarkable spiritual experience, through which he came into a knowledge of his spiritual self, as well as his physical man. Then he was told that some day he would build a great temple, and he made a sketch of a circular twelve sided building, at that time. Henceforth he dreamed of his temple, and tried to make a drawing of it, but could not. He became interested in the Bahá'í Movement, and nine years ago made an architectural drawing of a temple, in order that he might be represented in the competition spoken of at that time for the erection of a Bahá'í temple in Chicago; but he said then, "This is not my temple, I am only putting it in to get a chance in the competition. If I win, I can draw the real temple."

But the competition never materialized, and four years ago, when he returned from the Bahá'í convention in Boston, Bourgeois suddenly, in an hour's time, sketched the lower story of his temple. But he could get no further, and half dazed by the ornate splendour of this fragment realized that he must model it, because he could never express on a flat surface the many-faced beauty of its plan. He endeavoured to cut into the plaster the intricate tracery of ornament he saw; but he had never done such work, and he was obliged to ask the help of a friend skilled in the art, and after half a day's training he went at his task successfully. He did each successive story in this way, modelling the beauty in plaster as it was revealed to him, never seeing the whole, yet saying to himself constantly, "How do I dare go on? Because this is so wonderful; and how can I make a dome wonderful enough to complete it?" And then always the thought would come, "The Power that is giving you this will give you a dome the most wonderful of all!"

So he did the first story with its welcoming arms, and the second with its Gothic elegance, and the third with its Renaissance quiet and beauty. One morning he wakened suddenly at three o'clock and knew that he was to draw the dome. He was very happy; and as his fingers flew on for a rich hour, he knew that the dome was the most wonderful of all. That is why he says, "It is Bahá'u'lláh's temple. It is not mine!"

There is another side to this temple story, which is both human and appealing. It has to do with love and comprehension and faithful service. The architect is not rich, and he realized that if he worked at his model the family income would cease, and perhaps no one would ever build his mighty temple. His wife is also an artist, but she bought a little notion store in West Englewood; and while he worked on the model, she sold ice cream and candy. When he needed [XI:9:142] clay for his first modelling he was out of money, so he went into the garden, filled his wife's clothes basket with Dorothy Perkins roses, which covered the arbour. He took them to New York and sold them for five dollars, with which he bought his clay.

He thought he could make the model in three months, but it took him three years, and he says his wife is really the temple builder, for had it not been for her sympathy and cheerful sacrifice he never could have carried to completion the gigantic work.

The model is now on exhibition at the Kevorkian gallery in New York City. It was chosen for erection in Chicago by the delegates to the Bahá'í Convention, held recently in New York. Its original plan demands a building 360 feet in height, and 450 feet in diameter; but these figures will be halved for the Chicago structure, making a dimension of 180 by 225. The building constructed in this size will cost somewhere near a million and a half dollars.

One naturally asks what is behind such a conception and what it means for humanity. The Bahá'í Movement, which is planning this stupendous creation, is the great international movement of Unity and Brotherhood, which arose in Persia in 1844 and extends its branches and its influence everywhere at the present time. It was first taught by 'Alí Muḥammad, who

was presently given the title of Báb or Gate, meaning a door opened between heaven and earth. He foretold the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, who he said would appear in nineteen years, and would be the Glory of God for all mankind through the nobility of his life and teachings. Bahá'u'lláh means the Glory of God, and his influence, penetrating all mankind in the Glory shining through him, will at length unite all religions, all nations, all races—banishing hatred, rancour, partisanship in the great love which rises through realization of the Fatherhood of God and the true brotherhood of mankind.

Bahá'u'lláh died in 1892 in the prison town of 'Akká, Syria, to which he had been sent by those persecutors who, as in the case of all the Prophets, could not distinguish light from darkness. He left [XI:9:143] the leadership of the movement in the hands of his son, 'Abbás, also a prisoner, saying, "I have established a new covenant between God and Man, and my son is the centre of that covenant."

His son took the title of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or *The Servant of God*, literally, the *Slave of the Glory*, and the name of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has already become known everywhere, the synonym for service, love and wisdom. He was freed from imprisonment in 1908, through the action of the constitutional revolution in Turkey, and since then has travelled in western countries, visiting America in 1912.

The Bahá'í Revelation, as it is sometimes called, inspires a movement, not a sect. It has a very slight organization embodied in a *Unity Board*, which manages the Temple fund. The temple will be a great place of worship for all mankind. Its doors will never be closed; no priesthood will ever officiate within its walls; about it will be gardens and fountains; and beyond these, a series of buildings devoted to the application of true religion to life, a hospital, an orphan asylum, a hospice or house of hospitality, a guild house, a university, etc. Only worship can be voiced in the temple itself; but the results of such worship are to be evidenced in these surrounding buildings, where all activities of the community will meet in the comradeship inspired by mutual counsel from which criticism and politics shall have been banished.

XI:10, 8 September 1920 [XI:10:159]

Tablets received by American Bahá'ís in 1919

...

Mr and Mrs Latimer

To their honours, Mr James and Rúḥaniyyih Latimer, Portland, Oregon—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two faithful and assured souls!

Praise be to God, your son, George Latimer, is enkindled with the fire of the love of God, and is with all his [XI:10:163] power engaged in service. This youth shall be confirmed and shall plant for you a tree that shall eternally yield fresh fruits.

The meeting which ye prepared at the home of Mr and Mrs Nash, on the day of Naw-Rúz, was an illumined assemblage and the recipient of merciful blessings. Such gatherings are pregnant with remarkable results and their importance shall, in the future, be made evident and manifest. During the autumn season the seed is sown and its significance is veiled, but when springtime approaches and causes it to thrive, then its importance is revealed.

At present the principle of the Oneness of Mankind resembles a seed which is sown and which at first commands no importance, but when the springtime of Universal Peace draws near, then it shall grow and its importance be made known.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

Sophie Loeding

To the maid-servant of God, Sophie Loeding, Chicago, Illinois,—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Praise be to God, thou hast attended the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár Convention at New York, hast witnessed that great stir and celebration, hast associated with the friends and joined them in their songs, hast been animated and quickened and with a new spirit hast returned to Chicago. Associate intimately with the class of young friends and join them in their activities. Convey to them my respectful greeting and say: "O class of young people! Praise be to God, ye are strong in body and are gladdened in spirit by the divine glad-tidings. Ye must exert an effort and must labour hard. The light of the oneness of the world of humanity and of universal peace must radiate from your class to the surrounding regions, ye must be the cause of the promulgation of heavenly teachings and must summon the souls to merciful characteristics that they may acquire a Bahá'í training and may be confirmed by divine assistance."

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

Mabel Rice-Wray

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Mabel Rice-Wray, Detroit, Michigan—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá! [XI:10:164]

HE IS GOD!

O thou pure leaf of the Blessed Tree!

Thy letter was received and its contents noted. From lack of time a short answer is given, for letters pour down like unto rain from the East as well as from the West. I have no time for a detailed answer. In brief it is this:

It is not permissible to hang the sacred picture on the walls of rooms; but to hang the Greatest Name, or the picture of the sacred tomb, or the picture of a spot where His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has been, is permitted.

I pray to God that ye may ever be enkindled with the fire of the love of God, attracted by the fragrances of God, assisted in benevolent deeds, in good and faithful conduct and firm in the Covenant and Testament. Whatever thou deemest advisable for the promulgation of the Cause, it is acceptable.

As to the election of women, this is a political question. I avoid all politics, but I say this much, that men and women are both parts of the human branch, and for mankind two wings are necessary. If either one is weak the bird will not fly, but if both are strong mankind will soar to the exalted summit.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 22 July 1919.

[NOTE: Mrs Rice-Wray sends the above Tablet to the *Star of the West* with the following

word of explanation: "I am enclosing the copy of a Tablet received recently and which I feel is not intended for me but for someone who asked the questions which it answers. And someone may have my Tablet. Perhaps you have heard of someone who has a Tablet plainly not for them. Someone surely is looking for this one."—*Editors.*]

Edward Struven

To his honour, Mr Edward Struven, Beverly, Massachusetts—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast mentioned in it the name of the attracted maid-servant of God, Lua.¹ Lua pertained to the Kingdom, was lordly, was merciful and was attracted by the divine fragrances. That blessed leaf has been the cause of the guidance of many a soul for she was endowed with a heart that was attracted, a tongue that was eloquent and spent her time day and night in teaching. At present she is calling ye from the Abhá Kingdom saying: "O ye my children! Are ye aware of what bounty I have attained? If so, ye would cast behind this earthly body and would hasten and fly to this Divine Realm." In fine, Lua has acquired an everlasting fame and an eternal bounty.

Thou hast written concerning the difficulties arising between Labour and Capital, ye may discuss this question at Green Acre. When I was in America, I delivered different addresses on that subject; get those speeches and discuss the topic in accordance with them.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919. [XI:10:165]

Kawkab MacCutcheon

To the maid-servant of God, Kawkab MacCutcheon, Chicago, Illinois, care of the maid-servant of God, Mrs True, Chicago, Illinois—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou resplendent Kawkab!

Thy letter was received. Associate as before with Mrs True and contribute to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár as much as possible. Strive for unity among the white and the coloured so that colour may no more be taken into consideration but instead the hearts be considered. The hearts must be illumined, must be pure and white and not the body of man. Many are the coloured ones who, in the field of faith, have surpassed the white and won the goal, and many are the white who in view of a darkened heart have been deprived of the bounties of God.

In short, five races exist upon the surface of the globe: the white, black, brown, yellow and red races. This resembles the different species and colours of doves, but, on the other hand, there is no distinction of colour among them, on the contrary the white, black, yellow, blue, red and purple doves, all associate together in the utmost love and harmony. How can man who is endowed with reason and intelligence be limited by these considerations of colour? This is nothing but heedlessness, ignorance and counter to human laws.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 24 July 1919.

¹ Lua Getsinger.

Oscar Hanko

To his honour Mr Oscar Hanko, Newark, New Jersey—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of the Divine Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Its contents indicated that at a time when, due to war, the world was in confusion and commotion, thou wert in utmost tranquillity and composure, engaged in servitude to the threshold of the Lord of Hosts, wert serving the Kingdom, wert wishing nothing save the illumination of the world of mankind and had no object but the exaltation of the Word of God and the promulgation of heavenly teachings. Thus thou hast been confirmed and assisted.

Convey on my behalf to Dr Guthrie and Mr LeDoux the utmost kindness and respect. On their behalf, at the midnight hour, I pray and entreat at the Threshold of the All-Knowing God and beg assistance, bounty and everlasting blessings. Undoubtedly they shall be [XI:10:166] confirmed by the heavenly legions and assisted by the Divine Spirit.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 26 July 1919.

Mrs Jennie Anderson

Through his honour, Dr Baghdádí—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—to the maid-servant of God, Mrs Jennie Anderson.

HE IS GOD!

O thou leaf of the Tree of Life!

Your letter has been received. Because you are exceedingly worthy of an answer, therefore this epistle has been written.

Happy is thy condition for the thickly condensed clouds did not prevent thee from seeing the Sun of Reality. With thine own ear thou hast heard the call of the Kingdom of God and with thine eye thou hast witnessed the lights of guidance. Rest thou assured that thou art under the protection of the Lord of Hosts and art considered one of the daughters of the Kingdom. Appreciate thou this station because this is a great station.

Convey thou, on my behalf, to thy revered husband the utmost kindness. Likewise, to the children.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Ḍíyá' M. Baghdádí, 10 November 1919, revealed 20 September 1919.

Mrs Carpenter

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Carpenter, the Secretary of the Spiritual Assembly, at Santa Paula, California—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou wooer of the love of God!

For a long time I have desired to correspond with thee, but I had no time whatever. At present as the respected maid-servant of God, Mrs True, is returning to those regions, I am writing thee in brief that thou mayest know that thou art ever within sight and present before me.

I beg for thee from the bounties of God advancement in the Kingdom and nearness to His Highness the Merciful One. Thy services in the Spiritual Assembly are accepted in the sight of the Almighty and are well known to the friends. I supplicate thy reward from His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 12 November 1919.

James Simpson

To his honour, Mr James Simpson, Washington, D.C.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of God!

Thy letter and thy poems arrived. From their contents it became known that, praise be to God, thou art ablaze with the burning fire of the love of God, hast secured a share and portion from the bounty of the Spirit and hast purposed to render a distinguished service to the divine Kingdom and to be the cause of the promulgation of the oneness of mankind.

If it is possible and easy, undertake a journey to North Africa and enkindle there the fire of the love of God and summon the souls to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and to the unity of mankind, so that religious, racial, sectarian and worldly prejudice may not remain and all may be brought to a full realization of the Truth. If thou goest, assuredly the confirmations of God shall assist thee. [XI:10:167]

I pray on your behalf that the light of guidance may shine in the hearts, divine bestowals may be extended and heavenly bounty may shine in full radiance.

In this world whatever thou doest is ultimately fruitless save service to the Kingdom of God and to all mankind.

Upon, thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

Charles Mason Remey¹

To Mr Remey—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter was received! It became the cause of the utmost happiness and rejoicing; for it contained the news that the white and the coloured are gathered in one meeting in America and are associating with each other with infinite love and kindness. Consider thou the power of the Word of God which has brought together those who were against each other. To bring the white and the coloured together is considered impossible and improbable, but the breaths of the Holy Spirit will accomplish this fact.

The world of America must be very thankful for this realization; for this enmity and hatred which exist between the white and the coloured races is very dangerous and there is no doubt that it will end in bloodshed unless the penetration of the Word of God, the breaths of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are diffused amongst them and love instead of hatred is established between the two races.

¹ Note: This Tablet written nine years ago, has just been received: It was delayed in transmitting. 28 February 1920.—C. M. R.

They must destroy the foundation of enmity and rancour and lay the basis of love and affinity. The power of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh will cause the disappearance of this danger from America.

But if Mr M__ was completely attracted to the Kingdom of Abhá these difficulties would not have appeared.

Now he must become a real Bahá'í so that the heavenly army may assist and these troubles may be entirely wiped away. Write to him to read the supplications and implore toward the Kingdom of Abhá! He must rest assured that these difficulties will be cleared.

Convey to all the friends of God the wonderful Abhá greeting.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 27 November 1911, Paris, France. [XI:10:168]

Dr Hills Cole

Through his honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—to his honour Dr Hills Cole—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

The friends of God are most pleased with thee. They have loosened their tongues in thy praise that thou art firm in the Covenant and Testament and art self-sacrificing in the Path of God.

I hope from the bestowals of the True One that thou mayst advance in the Kingdom of God and become conducive to the guidance of souls.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 28 October 1919, at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Elizabeth Stevens

To the maid-servant of God, Elizabeth Stevens—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Two letters have been received from thee, one from New York and another from Bermuda. Verily, thy letter was eloquent and from it the purpose was quite manifest. Thou didst well to undertake such a good voyage to Bermuda. I entreat and supplicate to the divine Kingdom and beg for thee the confirmations of the Kingdom. Rest thou assured, thou shalt be confirmed. Engage with all the power of thy heart in the promulgation of divine teachings in those islands, and be certain that the doors will be wide opened.

After this war, all men are thirsty for universal peace, and the Divine Teachings lay the foundation of universal peace and promulgate the oneness of the world of humanity. Praise thou God, that He hast made thee of the chosen and has selected thee for the promulgation of heavenly teachings. Be assured that thou shalt be confirmed.

Convey on my behalf the utmost love and kindness to the maid-servants of God, Maud Gaudreaux and Agnes Alexander.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, ‘Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

XI:10, 8 September 1920 [XI:10:161]

Recent tablet to the House of Spirituality,¹ Chicago

To the members of the House of Spirituality, Chicago—Upon them be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O ye dear friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!

The letter which ye had written to the Central States was perused. My hope is that this Convention for Teaching will remain firm and permanent and that its honourable members will serve the Kingdom of God with utmost unison and harmony, so that the effulgent light of the Sun of Reality may illumine the horizons of America, and the call of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh may reach everywhere. The teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, like unto the breaths of the Holy Spirit, revives the people. The favours of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh will encompass all mankind.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá feels great attachment towards the Chicago friends, for the call of the Kingdom of God, first of all, reached Chicago and made some souls in that city attracted to the Heavenly Kingdom. As in the beginning they did before all attain to the Spirit of Life, so should ye now try to preserve this bounty to the end. Resist ye like unto a firm foundation every violent storm. Withstand ye like unto a strongly-rooted tree the severe winds. Be ye released from every thought save that of the Kingdom of God. Be ye freed from every bond. Have ye no attachment save that to His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. Strive ye day and night with heart and soul so that ye may render some service to the Kingdom of God. These are virtues which bear fruits, otherwise rootless trees fall to earth by furious winds; weak lamps are extinguished through a breeze; languid bodies become overwhelmed by the slightest attack (accident) and the superficial people run away from Reality, as it is plainly mentioned in the Gospels. [XI:10:162]

At all events, O ye friends of God, the tests are verily severe.

It needs a heavenly power so that man may remain firm.

Convey, on my behalf, longing greetings to all the friends of God, one by one.

I intended to go to Chicago by way of the Pacific Ocean, but obstacles appeared, so (at present) I have given up the idea, waiting to see what the will of God will be and what confirmation His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh bestoweth.

Upon ye be the Glory of Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh Khán S. Bahádur, Mt. Carmel, Palestine, 1 August 1920.

XI:11, 27 September 1920 [XI:11:171]

Report of Twelfth Annual Mashriqu’l-Adhkár Convention

[Fragment]

... [XI:11:197]

[Mr. Windust] ... read a further Tablet revealed 27 June 1919, to the Bahá’í of Persia which we reproduce in full:

¹ Now called a Local Spiritual Assembly.

“To the members of the Spiritual Committee, Tīhrán—Upon them be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

“HE IS GOD!

“O friends of God!

“The magazine of the *Star of the West*, notwithstanding great difficulties during the days of the war, has continued until these days of quietness and tranquillity which have come. Although it had been cut off entirely from Persia, yet it managed to sustain its existence. Therefore financial hardships obtained.

“But now that war has ended in peace, there must be given regularity to the *Star of the West*, so that it may circulate throughout the East and the West. And this is conditioned upon the increase in number of the subscribers. Therefore the friends in all the provinces of Persia must subscribe to this blessed matter. Strive ye in the promulgation of this growing magazine only for service to the Cause of God, in order that it may become the means of the stimulation of its editors and for the best regularity of, the institution.

“Likewise, if possible, some of the friends may subscribe to the newspaper *Chehreh Nema*¹ in Egypt and pay the subscriptions in advance.

“Upon ye be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

“(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”

XI:12, 16 October 1920 [XI:12:206]

A Bahá’í pilgrimage to south America (continued)²

Compiled from letters written by Miss Martha Root while enroute.

On shipboard, in the six-day voyage from Santos to Buenos Aires, there was a great storm. The cold, the sleet, the general discomfort of nearly every one seasick, tended to make one a little laggard in giving the Message. Also, these people had been journeying together for four weeks from France and had made their friendships before Miss Martha Root came aboard. The first one to whom she gave the Message was a young man from the state of Minas Geraes, who is going to engage in commerce between the United States and Brazil, after he completes his language studies. After reading the Bahá’í books three days he said: “This is the best of all the religions I have known.” One [XI:12:207] Frenchman seeing the “Greatest Name” in Persian on the book, *The Divine Plan*, asked her what she was reading. He knew Arabic and was attracted. Then there was a young Frenchman, son of the owner of the largest telegraph bureau in Paris, who spoke a little English (only two persons spoke even a little English), and to him she explained the Cause.

Two days later Miss Root suggested they have a “conference” in the dining-room for all the passengers and he interpreted for her the Bahá’í Cause. It took two days to prepare. First she explained it to him in halted French, sentence by sentence, the history and vital principles, the young Frenchman repeated it in slow English and then told it in Spanish to a young man who was with him; the Frenchman then wrote it sentence by sentence in his own English, but afterwards wrote it in the most brilliant French. Almost every one came to the “conference” announced by the Captain for four o’clock, immediately after tea. The Frenchman read the address, then as friends asked questions, Miss Root begging them to pardon her French, replied. There were twenty aviators in the audience and all asked for literature. Later when these aviators disembarked, Buenos Aires met them at the pier with flowers and beautiful

¹ *Chihra-Namá*. Could be translated as “Face view”, “portrait painter” or “real face of people”. Iranian newspaper first published (possibly 1890s) in Alexandria and then Cairo. It acted as a conduit of ideas (unable to be published in Iran) between Egypt and Iran in the campaigns of political, social, and cultural reform.

² First part is in *Star of the West*, Vol. XI:7, pp. 107–111, 113–118.

ceremonies. The commandant who is from Argentina was carried off the ship on the shoulders of his countrymen and marched through the principal thoroughfares. The young Frenchman in saying good-bye added, "I have not always understood well the words you speak, but I understood the life you have, and it is for that I am interested."

September 19th, Miss Root spent in Montevideo, Uruguay, where the French ship stopped for twelve hours. Her roommate on the ship out from New York lived there. The latter was an American girl who had married an Uruguayan. The father-in-law had also been a passenger on the ship. Miss Root went to their wholesale business house where they took her in a touring car to their beautiful home. They are people of wealth and distinction. After lunch and a drive they put a Bahá'í book in the English Club, another was taken to the National Biblioteca which is a part of Montevideo University, an excellent library where other Bahá'í books can be sent. Then they called upon the editor of the leading paper, *El Dia*, and he used an article. Returning to the store, the hostess explained the Bahá'í Cause to the four brothers and a noted physician.

Montevideo has a population of 400,000. There are 300 journals in Uruguay but they are principally small papers as Montevideo is the capital and is the only large city in this country. Uruguay is small; its population is 1,400,000—the majority being of Spanish and Italian origin. The standard of living is very high and the people are broad in their religious views. International headquarters for much religious and philanthropic work for South America is in Montevideo.

Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina, South America, with its more than a million and a half population, the largest Spanish city in the world, the largest city in South America, and the fourth largest in the western hemisphere, was the scene of Miss Martha Root's pilgrimage for two weeks. From 20 September to 4 October 1919, this is what occurred:

She did not know one soul in Argentina, but had several letters of introduction, three from the United States, the others gathered along the way. A chambermaid, by telephone, made an appointment for her to go to the home of Dr Frederico de Valles Vargas, general secretary of the Theosophical Societies of Argentina, at one o'clock. Dr Vargas and his family had not heard of the Bahá'í Movement, but as soon as [XI:12:211] it was explained, they were deeply impressed. The doctor and their friends, Mrs Maria Hersch, of Alsace-Lorraine, took Miss Root that afternoon to a Theosophical hall, where arrangements were made for her to address that society in Spanish, through an interpreter, the next Sunday afternoon. All conversation with the doctor and the Theosophists was in French, as he does not speak Spanish nor they English. Dr Vargas also arranged for her to meet another group of Theosophists in his home Monday night. Mrs Maria Hersch, who speaks English well, interpreted.

The doctor saw that Miss Root was properly introduced to the Spanish newspaper and magazine editors. His friend, a magazine editor, took her to the journals. One paper, *La Prensa*, is one of the largest world newspapers. No other newspaper anywhere is housed so palatially. It is one of the two most powerful and admirable organs in South America. Judged by its advertisement spaces it stands on a level with the first of London publications. Its advertising rates are high so it can do things undreamed by our papers. Its building, in addition to the splendid plant, contains also a concert hall, lecture rooms, reading rooms, baths, cafes, music rooms, apartments where visitors are entertained, a free dispensary for those who are too poor to pay for a physician and the services of a lawyer are furnished free.

Another paper visited, almost of equally high rank, was the *Nacion*, famous for its literary articles and said to be the most independent paper in South America. The *Caras y Caretas*, whose editor took Miss Root to call upon the director of the *Nacion*, is said by Argentina

authorities to be one of the best magazine publications in all South America. The visits to newspaper offices were made during two days of torrential, unceasing downpour of rain. The magazine editor offered to go to the Italian newspapers and magazines in Buenos Aires—there were none that did not use a Bahá'í article sometime during the two weeks. The *Herald* had an article each day and several papers sent reporters to each lecture.

Mrs C. G. de Bischoff, a normal school teacher and translator, who had heard of the Bahá'í Cause and had attended a Bahá'í meeting when visiting New York, gave her days and nights to interpreting for Miss Root. She arranged for an address before the Woman's Club of Short Story Writers at the Phoenix Hotel, Thursday morning. The owner of the hotel offered a hall and himself paid its rental for a talk Saturday evening on "The Economic Solution of World Problems through the Bahá'í Revelation". The only advertisement of this meeting was through the newspapers. It was attended by a most cosmopolitan audience, representing almost every country and religion. Three magazine editors were present, three reporters, several heads of world firms and teachers from normal schools. Almost every man in the audience had a clipping of the Bahá'í principles in his pocket. The whole event showed that the trend of thought in Argentina is towards spiritual freedom.

Wednesday evening, Miss Root addressed the Esperantists. They have a membership of 400, with two correspondence schools for the provinces. Their magazine, *Argentina Esperantista*, is using an article on the Bahá'í Cause.

Thursday evening, Dr and Mrs Vargas gave a dinner for Miss Root and later at a Theosophical meeting in their home, they read aloud the Bahá'í principles in Spanish. A celebrated New York inventor, a guest at the dinner, said in an aside to her, "I have travelled up and down South America and I as- [XI:12:212] sure you, you have met the finest people in this country in knowing Dr and Mrs Vargas." Their hospitality was genuinely delightful, their love for this Bahá'í Cause so great that they not only did all the big things, but all the little ones, too. They are studying English and will come to the United States in February. Mrs Hersch will accompany them. They will visit the Bahá'í Assemblies in North America during their journey across the continent.

The Bahá'í Message was presented to the president of the Single Tag society through the courtesy of the Phoenix Hotel owner. There are three Suffrage parties in Buenos Aires. Miss Root met with them four times and spoke for a few minutes at three events. Her subjects were, "Equality of Men and Women", "Economic Problems" and "Universal Education". At the first informal meeting when she spoke, they all arose during the Bahá'í talk, as a mark of respect. Mrs de Bischoff interpreted. Men as well as women attend the suffrage meetings in Argentina. Madam Elvira Rawson de Dellepiane, president of the Suffrage Society called "Association Pro-Derechos de la Mujur", gave a tea for Miss Root, and the organization as a whole gave a tea for her later in one of their fashionable clubs. At the latter tea she met several newspaper women and women authors. The Bahá'í Revelation was presented at each gathering. Newspaper reporters and photographers were present at both meetings.

An editor of a Syrian magazine, who attended the Saturday evening lecture, later showed Miss Root an article which he had written ten years ago on the Bahá'í Cause and had never published it. He is using an article now. Another prominent Syrian, decorated with the cross of honour recently by the French Government, is editor of *La Nota*. He used a two-page article giving a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and outlining the vital principles of the Bahá'í teachings. The magazine is in Spanish.

Still another magazine, *Caras y Caretas*, used a long article with two photographs. The *Theosophical Magazine*, published in Buenos Aires and sent to all countries in South America, used an article with photographs.

Unlike other South American cities, Miss Root found that a few people had heard of the Bahá'í Cause. An artist there had heard it from Miss Watson in Paris and later Juliet Thompson, of New York, had sent her many Tablets. Mrs de Bischoff had heard the name through this artist and later had met Mr Pauli and Mr and Mrs MacNutt in New York and attended a Bahá'í meeting in the MacNutt home. A Frenchman, who attended the lectures, had seen 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris. It was this Frenchman who volunteered to translate Miss Root's history of the Bahá'í Cause into Spanish for the *Theosophical Magazine*. He has five books on the Cause written in French, and is loaning these to Dr Vargas to read. A school girl had heard of this religion while travelling in Switzerland and through the head of her school Miss Root was invited to come there. A young man came who said he had known of Mr Urbain LeDoux' kindness at the Bowery Stepping Stone in New York.

The trip to South America has convinced Miss Root that while Esperanto is excellent and to be ardently supported, it will only bear its best fruits in the next generation. Bahá'ís for the decades just ahead must master as many languages as possible. In order to meet these South Americans half-way, she started in to learn from them Spanish pronunciation and first principles. One can only do one's best, but every hour spent by a Bahá'í on language study will help some.

The plan was to cross the Andes and come up the west coast to Panama. As this trans-Andean trip seemed extremely hazardous some of the friends tried to dissuade Miss Root from attempting it. [XI:12:213] The week before she had talked with some who had frozen faces and feet, and some were ill from coming over, and a new storm had stopped all traffic since their arrival. One American said in a newspaper article published the day before she started: "If you would consider riding around the edge of the Woolworth building, when it is covered with ice and snow, on a gentle mule, a safe pastime, then have no fears regarding the inconveniences in crossing the Andes in winter." He told about riding around the cliffs within an inch of a precipice some hundreds of feet high. He said he wore three suits of woollen underwear, a sweater, a bath robe, overcoat, ponchos, had his feet wrapped with pieces of sack and then nearly froze to death.

Miss Root realized that to return via the Atlantic Ocean meant not to give the Bahá'í Message up the west coast and in Panama, the place 'Abdu'l-Bahá had especially mentioned. Dr Vargas who knows South America well, assured her she would get through, and she bought her ticket. She started amid gifts of books, flowers, fruits, candy and lunches. Mrs de Bischoff brought her own very heavy coat and woollen underwear telling Miss Root to use them and then pass them on to a sister in New York. She also brought food, sweets, and port wine. Mrs Vargas said in her new English, so carefully studied: "I have prepared chicken sandwiches for you myself." Dr and Mrs Vargas and Madame Hersch brought delights for the spirit, mind and body. The artist came with another lunch, and other friends with offerings were Theosophists, a Belgian girl, a German, a Scotch woman and a Peruvian.

A New York business diplomat, partner in one of the largest exporting houses, was crossing and had said he would do anything he could for Miss Root. Her roommate in the "camorata", sleeper of the train, was a charming Italian girl, well educated and fluent in French. The American looked after both of them with the same efficiency and irresistible manners that have made his business such a success.

Dr Vargas had written and telegraphed the number of the car and camorata to the President of the Theosophical Society in Mendoza, and next morning this stately man (who looks exactly like Tagore) came with a little group of friends. The wait there was two hours, and they took Miss Root and the Italian girl to breakfast and for a drive. The Italian girl spoke Spanish and interpreted. Mendoza is a city of 200,000. There was time to explain the Bahá'í

Message, give them Spanish booklets and Spanish papers explaining the Revelation, and they said they would put articles into the Mendoza newspapers.

The trip by mule-back over the “top of the world”, for the Andes are among the highest ranges, the Aconcagua rising to a height of 23,300 feet, was thrilling enough for the most sensational. To pray the “Greatest Name” among these minarets of God was to glimpse the glory of the Eternal, Unknowable. The ancient trail led 10,400 feet above sea level. The people on mule back were infinitesimal specks clinging to mighty terraces—as “ants in an endless and boundless forest”—they huddled on the edge of jagged peaks, frozen chasms, and stiffened mountain torrents. Everybody felt very small and a wonderful feeling of “camaraderie” sprang up. Fortunately the sun shone brightly, and the acute cold was not so terrible as all had expected. The Italian girl being an expert horsewoman, generously gave Miss Root the man she had engaged by telegram to walk beside her mule. (She had made this journey before and knew very well what to do.)

A detour through one dark tunnel took over an hour in stumbling, slipping blackness in which the frightened mules shied and fell. Miss Root, as her mule plunged downward into the mouth of the tunnel, gripped the pommel, threw her body far back, closed her eyes, and [XI:12:214] prayed the “Yá Alláhu'l-Mustagháth” for all. Over and over again in that black uncertainty, the clear, vibrant voice of the Italian girl would ring down the line of mules: “Mademoiselle, are you all right?” Tears of deepest tenderness spring to the eyes at the thought of such a friend. The New Yorker’s mule was not a good one and he was so far behind Miss Root did not see him before she entered the tunnel. All started together, but it was not possible to keep together—one does not drive the mule but leaves the sure footed little carrier of destiny to choose his own path.

Later, out from the tunnel, when the procession came to precipitous downward slopes toward Chile, Miss Root could not even see the one inch margin that had been promised by the man in his newspaper account. To her this was by far the most dangerous part of the journey. And so it was with great joy that she saw the men getting off their mules and walking farther in down the mountain side. She did the same for the mules would sometimes slip a yard in this perpendicular path and they were frightened too. Taking the guide’s hand they made the descent together, and when they could not walk they could run! The warm sun had melted the crisp ice just enough that they could get a foothold. They stopped every few minutes to breathe as one’s breath is very short in this altitude. Some fainted, some had “puna”, which is bleeding of the nose and ears. Everything given Miss Root was passed along to those who needed it.

The train journey later ended in tropical gardens and orchards of divinely fragrant orange blossoms. The Italian girl, Miss Root and the New Yorker said they would remember the trip as one of the happiest of incidents. The custom house inspector at Los Andes has a Bahá’í booklet in Spanish, as has also the mule driver.

The New Yorker’s firm in Valparaiso treated Miss Root as a sister. They put her bags through the customs, had them taken by their own porters to the ship, called a messenger boy to escort her to the Theosophists, later took her to lunch with the New York guest of honour, and all three men took her in a launch to her ship. She explained the Bahá’í Cause.

Dr Vargas had given her a note of introduction to the President of the Theosophical Society in Valparaiso who speaks both English and Esperanto. He promised to get articles into Valparaiso papers and to tell the friends in Santiago. (The train was delayed by storm and Miss Root did not get to Santiago, a city of 300,000 and eleven daily papers.) Valparaiso has a population of 250,000. Instead of staying four days in Valparaiso, she only stayed four hours, owing to the Andes storm.

The trip up the west coast on a Chilean ship was immensely interesting. Grippe had to be the shadow to make one appreciate the sunshine, so the first few places are but memories of trying to get ashore to newspaper offices to explain the Bahá'í Message, then leaning against the friendly lamp posts for strength to drag one's self back to the boat. An engineer and his wife, who have been in Chile two years and spoke Spanish, went ashore with Miss Root at Coquimbo and Antafogasta and interpreted.

In Iquique, a soldier boy who spoke English, took Miss Root to all four newspapers, but as it was Sunday and Columbus Day, only one was open, but she gave the Message to a small group there. The editor used an article. In Africa, the editorial writer of the paper was a woman. She was much interested in the Bahá'í idea's about women. She said she would use an article and would be glad to use others later. As Miss Root left she said in English the one word, "sister!"

During the voyage it was not possible to give a lecture, as most of the people were travelling short distances and the [XI:12:215] passenger list changed frequently; also several different languages were spoken. Miss Root spoke individually and copies of vital principles of the Bahá'í Cause were later sent by passengers to Australia, New Zealand, Venezuela, Mexico, Panama and Spain. Some of the passengers came to Miss Root and said: "We wish to get a booklet about this religion, why did you leave us out?" The truth was the literature was all gone except a few newspaper and magazine clippings. (Miss Root bought \$50 worth of magazines and daily papers containing the Bahá'í Principles in order to use them in distribution after the 500 booklets were given out.) On this ship one passenger would tell another, and they came to ask questions so that by the end of the two weeks the Bahá'í Message was well circulated. One young man, when hearing her tell about the Bahá'í Convention in New York, said: "Will the Cause grow as rapidly as that in South America? In twenty-six years will we have a convention like that?" Others were very much interested in the Temple to be built in Chicago.

Lima, in Peru, the seat of the old Inca civilization, was the most important city visited after leaving Valparaiso. Its population is 250,000. Dr Vargas had given Miss Root letters of introduction to nineteen cities and towns and four were to his friends in Lima which is his native city—one was to a newspaper owner, one to a senator, and two to physicians. As Lima is a half-hour's ride from the port Callao, and the ship only stopped three hours in the early morning, it was a problem how to get there, find these men, and get back on time. On the electric tram Miss Root met two young men from the ship who spoke English and Spanish. They took her to the leading hotel to inquire from the manager how to reach these people. He was an old man and wonderfully kind. He told Miss Root to sit down and write her message to each man and he would take them with her letters of introduction, Bahá'í booklets and magazine clippings to each man. He assured her the newspaper owner would use an article and volunteered to translate it into Spanish. It was all done so easily and quickly, and the two young men from the ship, getting interested, mailed to their sisters in Australia and New Zealand, Bahá'í booklets from that hotel. After Callao no more letters of introduction could be used as the ship was not allowed to stop at any more ports owing to fever conditions.

On the last day of the voyage the passengers asked Miss Root to give a lecture on the Bahá'í Cause in the music room. It was announced to be given in English, but when the friends came some asked to have it in Spanish, so a Mexican gentleman interpreted, and it was given in both English and Spanish. There was such a warmth of interest and everybody seemed happy. Some of those present were en route to Japan, Spain, France, Germany, Panama, Venezuela, Iona, California, Oklahoma and New York. Each one was given a clipping or something which

explained a little of the Cause.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said in regard to the Panama Canal Zone: "Likewise, ye must give great attention to the Panama Canal Zone, for in that point the Occident and Orient find each other united through the Panama Canal, and it is also situated between the two great oceans. That place will become very important in the future. The teachings once established there, will unite the East and the West, the North and the South."

Miss Root spent one week in the Canal Zone. Arriving in Panama Saturday noon, 25 October, the first visit was to the *Star and Herald* office, the oldest newspaper. It is printed one-half in English and one-half in Spanish. The editor, a young man who had heard of the Bahá'í Movement in California, used [XI:12:216] a column and a half about the Cause, giving it a prominent place. Miss Root asked if there were any clubs or churches where she could speak. He told her of a big event which was to be given that evening in the fashionable Ancon Club house for the Roosevelt Memorial fund and suggested the men to see. As a result, a ten-minute talk was given there where Miss Root explained what 'Abdu'l-Bahá had said about the Canal Zone and she gave the vital principles. Four hundred people were present.

There is a Union Church in Balboa (the American city which adjoins Panama, the older city of the Republic of Panama). One can only see where one city ends and the other begins by the architecture and the beautiful grounds of the American part. Everything that the United States has built in the Zone has been high in standard. The place may well be considered a demonstration of ideals in living for the world, coming and going, to see and learn. This Union Church is composed of people of all denominations of the Protestant faith. They gave Miss Root twenty minutes at their evening service and the editor of their church magazine said he would use a column about the Bahá'í Cause in his journal bringing in what 'Abdu'l-Bahá said about the Canal Zone.

The Cause was explained to the editor of the *Despatch*, a newspaper for the coloured people, and he used a story.

An attempt was made to visit the Leper Colony at Palesaco, near Panama, but the winds were so high that in attempting to land in the little boats, two men in the launch ahead fell into the sea, so the Doctor ordered Miss Root's launch back, but she explained the Bahá'í Revelation to the Doctor and to the wife of the Superintendent, and sent the lepers Thornton Chase's leaflet, *Before Abraham Was*, and *Unity Through Love*, by Mr MacNutt, and four boxes of candy. There are seventy lepers there, seven of them children.

The Message was also given to the doctors of the Canal Zone ports, to the British Minister, and to several of the American Government officials. In a journalistic way, Miss Root met the heads of all the Government works.

In the Canal Zone there are opportunities to get excellent positions clerking, stenography, nearly every kind of work one would find in the States. The climate is warm and the life extremely pleasant. It is said that the Panama Canal Zone within a decade or two will be quite as popular as Palm Beach as a winter resort. The Bahá'í who settles there and builds up an assembly will be doing a work that will influence every part of the globe. It is the most central place in the world, where in the centuries just ahead the long lines of commerce and travel will pour up and down, back and forth. The old Roman philosopher who said if he had only had a place on which to stand he would take a lever and move the world, would find that place today in the Panama Canal Zone. Some day someone will build a great university on the heights of the Panama Canal Zone; how glorious if it could be a Bahá'í seat of learning!

Leaving Colon for Havana, a five-day trip, Miss Root went to the captain of the ship, showed her credentials and explained the Bahá'í Cause, asking him for permission to give a talk. He arranged for her to speak on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. Nearly every one came. The

passengers were principally from the Southern States and Havana. It was the only event that took place in the social hall during the journey and the people came promptly.

If any one feels timid about asking opportunities to speak, let him remember that no day comes twice to any servant in the Cause, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said to "roar like a lion the Words of God", and "sing like a bird the Melodies of the Kingdom". The Great Heart will not falter and the world is ready!

Alláh-u-Abhá!

XI:13, 4 November 1920 [XI:13:224]

Messages from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to all the friends

Given to Mrs A. J. Parsons, at Haifa, 15 February 1920.

"You must think now of spiritual affairs. Try to enlighten the morals and try to spread the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, so that this fire of dissension which is burning in the world may be extinguished. It is impossible for the different nations and parties which exist now—such as socialists, Bolshevists, the extremists or radicals, strikers and those who wish for absolute authority, to leave these dissensions and be united—save through Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are like the sun and these dissensions are like the darkness. This darkness cannot be dispelled except through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The snow of disagreement has covered all the world and this snow cannot be melted except through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh declare the unity of the world. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are a shining reality. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh will dispel all national disunion, all racial disunion, and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh will conquer the economic difficulties. This is the essence of questions. You must all try to give life to the dead people, to make the blind see, the deaf hear, and to give all the help you can to the poor. This is what attracts heavenly assistance."

"Now you are going on your way home. For each one you must have a message. Convey to all my greetings and tell them that they are all my friends, my very dear friends and the servants of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, and for this reason they are dear to me. I am always thinking of them and I am constantly praying for them in the Kingdom of Abhá, so that they may become lighted candles, so that the light of guidance may radiate from them, so that they may become shining stars in the Heaven of Truth, that the light of Truth [XI:13:225] may shine in this world, so that they may be the comforters of the people, so that they may live in accord with one another, so that they may sacrifice their own souls in the service of one another, so that they may be the consolers of the poor, so that they may be the kind parents of the orphans and so that they may relieve the sick. Convey this message."

XI:13, 4 November 1920 [XI:13:229]

Recent tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Chas. Mason Remey

Through the faithful soul, Ṭáhirih, the wife of his honour Consul Schwarz, Stuttgart, Germany, to his honour, Mr (Charles Mason) Remey—Unto him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou enlightened beloved son!

Praise be unto God, that thou didst arrive at Leipzig safe and sound; didst [XI:13:230] see the brilliant faces of the friends of God, and didst enjoy the spirituality and love of the German friends. Verily, verily, the German friends are luminous, spiritual and heavenly. They are spreading the oneness of humanity, they are in peace with all the nations of the world, and practice love and kindness towards all the religions of the world. They are self-sacrificing in

the path of the Kingdom, and are firm and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament. Thou art unquestionably in the utmost joy and rapture now that thou art mingling and associating with those blessed souls.

It is my hope that thy present trip will give rise to great results. Convey on my behalf, love and affection to all the friends, the servants and the maidservants of God!

Unto thee be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, 20 August 1920, Mount Carmel, Palestine.

XI:13, 4 November 1920 [XI:13:230]

Recent tablets to the Bahá'ís of Germany

Tablet to Stuttgart

Through his honour Áqá Mírzá 'Azízu'lláh Khán Bahádur—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!—to the friends of God and the maidservants of the Merciful, Stuttgart, Germany—Upon them be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

...

HE IS GOD!

O ye real friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

The letter of Miss Doring was perused. Praise be to God, it had the glad-tidings of your firmness and steadfastness; of your attraction to the divine breathings and enkindlement with the fire of the love of God. Praise be to God, that ye are all brilliant candles and trees of the Paradise of Abhá.

'Abdu'l-Bahá feels great attachment to the Stuttgart friends. His nostrils are perfumed with the fragrance of those flowers and his heart is exceedingly delighted with the lustre of those blessed souls. Therefore it is certain that the teachings of the Most High, Bahá'u'lláh, will, in that region and country, spread to the utmost and souls from Germany will like unto the candles enkindle and radiate streaming beams in all directions.

Therefore I am giving ye the glad-tidings that the glance of favour is directed upon ye, and the rays of the Sun of Reality are the adornment of your hearts. There is no confirmation greater than this. This is because the distasteful smell of violation has not, up to this time, reached that blessed region.

Some Persian enemies, however, from the followers of Yaḥyá (Azal) are in the region of Berlin, who in various underhand ways are striving to penetrate into [XI:13:231] the community of the friends and deposit like unto the snake their poison and give false impressions. Ye should be very watchful of this, not admitting these souls in your meetings and assemblies.

Everyone who has in his hand a letter of permission to associate with the friends, written and signed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá ye may associate with him, else ye should avoid and abstain. No individual of ye is permitted to associate with them because the diseases of the spirit are like unto the diseases of the body and like unto plague, cholera and cancer will infest.

Ye should be in the utmost union and harmony with the formal community of the friends, that is the "Bahai Bund" and communicate with it with love so that in Germany there may exist but one ardour, one feeling, one attachment and union in order that this may penetrate throughout the world.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, 9 April 1920, Haifa, Palestine. Received by Mrs Consul Schwarz.

Tablet to Alma Knobloch

Through Áqá Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh Khán Bahádur—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!—to the maid-servant of God, Miss Alma Knobloch, Stuttgart, Germany—Upon her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou maid-servant of the Kingdom of God!

Thy letter has been received. Its contents indicated that thou didst desire to go to Leipzig so that thou mightest spread the divine breath there, but there appeared some obstacle. Now no obstacle hath remained.

Before going to America thou shouldst busy thyself with the service so that the love of God in Leipzig may effervesce with enthusiasm.

...

I beseech the Most High Bahá’u’lláh that through His grace, He may endear these souls both in this world and that of the Kingdom, so that they may become the emblems of guidance.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, 30 January 1920, Haifa, Palestine.

XI:13, 4 November 1920 [XI:13:232]

Tablets from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Bahá’ís in America

Louise Smith

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Louise Smith, Cleveland, Ohio—Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Two letters have been received from thee. Thou hast a highly praiseworthy wish and that is service to the Kingdom of God, service to the oneness of the world of humanity, the training of children at the home of Mrs Kibby and the promotion of the question of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár. All these intentions are acceptable at the Threshold of the Almighty. I therefore pray God that thou mayest be confirmed in service, so that these children may be trained by a divine education and may each become aware of the inner realities and significances.

Convey, on my behalf, to the friends in Cleveland, longing greeting. I hope that the love of God may become the cause of their union and harmony and the power of the Covenant may do away with this difference. Today, no power can do away with this difference save the power of the Covenant of the Blessed Beauty, for a specially appointed Centre has been appointed by the Supreme Pen to which all differences must be submitted and which settles all differences. Whatever he says is right, for, in accordance with the explicit command, all are ordered to turn their faces toward that Centre, and he is the expounder of the Book. Thus it is made evident and manifest that the power of the Covenant is the power which solves all difficulties.

...

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 2 August 1919.

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

Through Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, New York City—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!—to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of the Holy Threshold!

Thy cablegram was received, and immediately a cablegram of congratulation and felicitation was sent. Undoubtedly it has reached thee. This news became conducive to exceeding rejoicing. It is strongly hoped from the favour of the Blessed Perfection that it may be consummated in the most perfect manner. Rest thou assured that there will arise no obstacle and no impediment. Give thou importance to this matter, and manifest thou magnanimity in its regard.

In all those regions exercise thou the utmost vigilance and caution—so that nostrils may be protected from the evil odour, and eternal death may not creep over souls. Give thou importance to this fundamental principle; for, if a thousand able-bodied, healthy souls, with utmost freshness and elegance, associate with a sick consumptive the health of those thousand souls will not affect the consumptive, but the illness of that consumptive will be communicated in a short time to those healthy bodies. Therefore, do thou protect the souls as far as thou art able. Send away the sickly looking consumptive. There is no other recourse. According to the texts of the Sacred Verses, one must refrain from associating with the wicked.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Denver, Colorado, 12 February 1920.

XI:14, 23 November 1920 [XI:14:235]

His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

From The Bahá’í Proofs, by Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl.

As to the birth and life of His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—Glorified is his Name!—he was born, in Ṭihrán, on the 5th day of the month Jamádyu’l-Avval, AH 1260 (23 May 1844), the same day in which the “First Point” (the Báb)—Exalted is his Supreme Name!—had declared himself. He was reared in that city under the training of Bahá’u’lláh. The author has heard from his own blessed lips, as well as from many others, that he very often suffered persecution and execrations, while yet a child, from the fanatics of Ṭihrán, during the disasters which followed the appearance of the Báb. When Bahá’u’lláh was in chains in the prison of Ṭihrán, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited him. During the time Bahá’u’lláh resided at Baghdád by command of the Persian Government, AH 1269 (1852–1853), His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was in his service and constantly in his presence.

Although he had not studied in any school, yet, from his youth, fountains of knowledge flowed in his fluent explanations. The first trace which emanated from his Holy Being in the world of knowledge was the treatise he wrote in his early youth at Baghdád. This was a commentary upon the holy tradition: “I was an invisible Treasury; as I loved to be known, therefore I created men to know Me.” He wrote this commentary in answer to the request of one of the Páshás. The author was present at a meeting, when some one asked Ḥájí Siyyid Javád-i-Karbilá concerning the life of Bahá’u’lláh. The great Siyyid answered: “That holy being must be a shining Light whose great son hath written such a treatise during his

childhood.” By this the learned Siyyid meant that while it is impossible even for a scholar to show forth such great knowledge, how much more impossible would it be for a person to write such a treatise in his childhood without having studied. Therefore, such knowledge is heavenly and not earthly; it is Divine wisdom, not human, and it owes its origin to the Holy Spirit of God.

Thus, even in his childhood, the signs of grandeur and dignity were manifest from his brow and he showed forth phenomenal intelligence and wisdom. His wonderful speech in explaining abstruse points astonished men of intelligence, and his marvellous eloquence everywhere attracted hearts and souls. His acute judgement was a brilliant lamp in elucidating intricate obscurities and his penetrative discernment in managing and deciding different affairs improved the condition of young and old. He was the companion of Bahá'u'lláh and the sharer of his afflictions during his successive banishments from Baghdád to Constantinople, thence to Adrianople, and finally to 'Akká. All the people of Bahá resorted to him in their difficulties and obeyed his decision. More especially during the twenty-four years of Bahá'u'lláh's residence at 'Akká, the troubles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were so great that no one but himself could have endured such calamities. The very fact that 'Akká was a place of exile for Turkish suspects and prisoners, meriting the name “Great Prison”, given to it by the Supreme Pen, is a sufficient testimony of the tribulations and vicissitudes which [XI:14:236] 'Abdu'l-Bahá has suffered. For, as we have formerly remarked, Bahá'u'lláh, during his residence at 'Akká, would not, as a rule, converse with any save the Bahá'ís, unless some one especially asked permission to visit him. His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, however, held intercourse with all the men of different religions, aims, tastes, characters, and degrees, and each one would submit to him his individual wishes. Consequently, different classes and nationalities of Muslims, Christians, Bahá'ís, Arabs and Turks, as well as Persians belonging to the governing and learned classes, likewise great merchants and people of the lower orders, visited him from early morning until midnight. Some of them sought his presence for the benefit of his spiritual explanation; others for their personal affairs and requests. Any one informed upon the manners of oriental governments, and thoroughly acquainted with the conditions of the inhabitants of those countries, will realize the great difficulties which surrounded that holy being. He, under all circumstances, would receive the people with a cheerful face, and endeavour as far as possible to grant their wishes and assist them. Even in the present day, His Holiness is the resort of the people of that land, and all refer their wishes and hopes to him. He is a physician to every invalid, a shelter to every exile, a refuge to every seeker for help, and a dispeller of sorrow to every grieved soul. As God knows and witnesses, the author, during the ten months he stayed as guest in his beneficent shelter, can testify that even those fettered in the jail and deprived of seeing the daylight, received his benefits and favours; and exiles forsaken in the cells of oblivion were visited by him. These excellent characteristics were inborn in him, and no one can show forth such virtues through imitation or pretence. Even the greatest men in the world could not manifest their like.

There is an old proverb: “Nothing manufactured is like unto the natural.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá was named Mírzá 'Abbás after his grandfather, but subsequent to their arrival at Baghdád, he was called “His Holiness, the Master”. After the declaration of the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh], he was given several lofty titles by him, such as “Sirru'lláh” (Mystery of God), “Ghuṣnu'lláhu'l-A'zam” (Greatest Branch of God). By these titles he was addressed verbally and in writing by Bahá'u'lláh and all the believers.

In the earlier days of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration, the blessed *Book of Aqdas* was revealed. This is considered the greatest Book of the Bahá'ís, and contains all the Divine Laws and Ordinances. The following irrefutable command was revealed therein:

“When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn

your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.”¹ Likewise it is recorded in another part of the same Book: “When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.”²

Thus all the people of Bahá were informed of the One who would be the “Centre of the Cause of God” and their resource, after the disappearance of the Sun of Truth and the departure of the Beauty of Oneness. Thus they have hope in and rely upon this providence shown forth by God, the Exalted, to them. They recognize in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the expounder of the Divine Book and the solver of the intricate points of the Heavenly Revelation; whose decision is conclusive; through whose explanation every discord and divergence is removed, and the seekers are brought to perfect realization, accord and affinity. They thank and praise God, the Exalted, and manifest the utmost joy and happiness at his appointing the resort of the Cause of God.

To the people of Faith, the clear ap- [XI:14:237] pointment of the Centre of the Cause, after the departure of the Manifestation, is considered the most important point in religious matters, as it is the greatest channel which connects the servants of God with Holy and Divine Truth. For it is only through his explanation and decision that all discord is removed. Consequently the Bahá’ís appreciate the determining of the “Appointed Centre” as the greatest of the Divine Providences, and account his blessed being as an impregnable fortress which protects the Divine Religion from the doubts of the sceptic and fanciful imaginations of men. They were all sure and convinced that the purpose of God, the Exalted, in these two blessed verses, has been no other than His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; for, apart from the Divine signs that were manifest in him, Bahá’u’lláh clearly and implicitly, verbally and in writing, directed all of his servants to the blessed person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and, under all circumstances, clearly showed that he was far distinguished above others, in order that all the servants should look unto him alone, and follow his commands. But notwithstanding all this, as Bahá’u’lláh foresaw, that when his beauty of Oneness was concealed under the veils of disappearance, the people of desire, through jealousy, would hold to groundless doubts and suspicions, and, disregarding the prohibition to interpret the Book, would divert the real meaning of the two verses above quoted, away from the “Appointed Centre”. He, therefore, prior to his departure, revealed the blessed *Kitáb-i-Ahd* (Book of the Covenant, the Will of Bahá’u’lláh). This he wrote, and sealed it with his own blessed hand and seal, in order that the darkness of discord might not again obscure the brilliant horizon of the Cause of God, and the calamities and disasters which afflicted other religions might not overtake this movement. In this Book (His Covenant) he clearly indicated that the purpose of the “Branch extended from the Ancient Root”, revealed in the blessed verse of *Aqdas*, was the Centre of the Circle of Names, the Exalted Branch of the Blessed Tree of Abhá, His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then he, for the second time, enjoined, through an unchangeable and irrefutable command, all his “branches”, “twigs”, “relatives” and the people of Bahá without exception, to look unto that dawning-place of Divine Light, and to know him as the source and origin of the commands and prohibitions of the Heavenly Religion. He desired, by this clear elucidation, to counteract the imaginations of the ignorant, extinguish the world-consuming flame of the jealousy and hatred of people of error, and guard the Divine Religion from divisions and sects which are, according to the judgement of common-sense and the clear texts of the holy Tablets of God, the most deplorable for religion and humanity. By this he sought to preserve the Divine Word from human doubts, suspicions and artifices.

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 63.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 82.

But alas! All these clear texts of God, commanding people to turn to the day-spring of the Light of the Covenant, did not check the evil thoughts of the people of discord; and his repeated exhortations and advices did not soften the hard hearts of the men of hostility, nor prevent them from ruinous discords and divisions, for when, in May CE 1892 (2nd *Dhí'l-Qa'dih*, AH 1309), Bahá'u'lláh ascended to His Most Holy Station, and nine days after his departure, the *Book of the Covenant* of God was chanted in the Holy Tomb in the assembly of believers, the gloom of animosity and disappointment became instantly manifest upon the faces of those who had groundless pride and desire for leadership, and who sought to raise discord and contradiction. On the other hand, cheerfulness and joy were manifest in the shining faces of those who had no desire but that of seeking the Truth and telling the Truth. Some were seated upon the right hand of certainty, firmness and steadfastness in the solid [XI:14:238] Covenant of God, and some stood upon the left hand of unhappiness, in their impossible desire and erroneous thoughts. The former became distinguished for their firmness and inflexibility; noted for the effectiveness of their word; their good name and success in assisting the Cause, while the latter were distinguished by their instability, degradation and shame. From that day, the thorn of violating the Covenant of God grew in the Garden of the Bahá'í community and the signs of senseless hatred and hostility proceeded from a limited number of persons who are known as the "náqidín" (violators of the Covenant). ...

Although these people who violated the Covenant received, during the life of Bahá'u'lláh and after his departure, every kindness and favour from His Holiness, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who considered their welfare and prosperity before his own and that of the faithful believers, yet, on account of jealousy and selfishness, they violated the Cause of God. Thus came to pass that which was prophesied by the prophets—especially Christ—concerning the people of the right hand and the people of the left hand; and each will receive the reward of his deeds according to the justice of God. Two important points increased the flame of the fire of jealousy in the hearts of these náqidín, whose number does not exceed thirty. One was that the Bahá'ís of all countries refused to accept the seditious books and pamphlets forwarded to them by the náqidín. According to the command of Bahá'u'lláh they unanimously determined not to pay any attention to these intrigues and temptations, but took shelter, with the utmost union and harmony, under the banner of the Centre of the Covenant. Another point was that during a short space of time the Cause of God became far more widely spread than before, through the fluent pen and brilliant explanations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; so the number of the Bahá'ís became enormously multiplied since the departure of Bahá'u'lláh. The fame of the dawning-place of the Light of the Covenant spread throughout all regions, and his holy Tablets became scattered as rose-petals throughout all countries. His great name filled the world with awe and the renown of his glorious deeds reached all in the East and West.

XI:14, 23 November 1920 [XI:14:238]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's supplication and declaration of his servitude

HE IS GOD!

My God, my God! I ask thee to forgive everything save my servitude to Thy Supreme Threshold, and I declare myself innocent of any announcement or praise save my adoration in Thy Merciful Presence. I isolate myself from every garment save that of humiliation and contrition of my evanescence to Thy Lordly Oneness. I flee from every station save the arrival to the Court of Thy Lordly Everlastingness. By Thy Power, verily, the sweetness of servitude is the food of my spirit, with the fragrance of servitude my breast will be dilated, my being will be refreshed, my mind will be quickened, my heart will be delighted, my eyes cleansed, my nostrils will be perfumed, and in it the healing of my disease, the allaying of my burning thirst, the soothing of my pain.

Immerse me, O my God, in this most bounteous, rolling ocean, give me to drink of this

sweet, abundant water, cause me to enter this gateway of righteousness, ordain me for this praiseworthy station, cause me to obtain this cup which is over-flowing with the pouring water, light in the crystal of my heart this lamp which is giving forth its illuminating, brilliant radiance and strengthen me for the service of Thy Cause, O my Lord, the Forgiver! Accept my servitude in the Court of Thy Holy Oneness, O Thou, the Manifestor [XI:14:239] of Mount Sinai! Assist me to abide in its conditions, O Thou, the Authority of Manifestation. Aid me to assist Thy Cause in the eastern and western parts of the earth, O Thou, the Possessor of the Day of Resurrection. I ask Thee, by Thy written Book, dispersed writings; by Thy Hidden Mystery, and Thy defended allusions, to cause me to be firm to Thy servitude, O my Lord, the Forgiver! Verily, Thou art the Powerful, above what Thou wishest, and verily, Thou are the Merciful and Most Compassionate!

O thou who art calling by the Testament, in the Pivot of the horizons!

This servant, according to the clear statements in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, and the unambiguous texts of the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd*, is the Commentator, and the Explainer of the texts of God. All the faithful ones, who are assured and firm in the Testament and Covenant of God, must neither overreach the clear explanation of this servant, nor the unambiguous interpretation of this slave. If anyone overreaches, he follows his own suppositions. This servant gives the real meaning, and the meaning of the real also. The Mystery of mysteries of the texts, words and lines, is servitude to the Holy Presence of the Beauty of Abhá, and effacement, evanescence and perfect dispersion before the Blessed Threshold. This is my brilliant diadem, and my glorious crown. With this I will be glorious in the Heavenly Kingdom, and the earthly. And with it, I will vie with the beauty among the nearest ones to God, and no one is allowed to interpret other than this, and this is the perspicuous truth.

O thou, who are proclaiming the mentioning of God! The indicated Commentator is the Interpreter of the Words, and this servant is aside from praise, qualities, names, characteristics, virtues, peculiarities, eulogies and honours; but my name, being, reality and personality are servitude to the Beauty of Abhá, and I am not worthy to be considered as having the shadow of arising. As the Manifestation (Bahá'u'lláh) said: "Plant this Branch in the ground of the hearts, and make it holy from shadow and arising."

XI:14, 23 November 1920 [XI:14:240]

Tablet to Mr and Mrs Howard MacNutt

To their honours Mr and Mrs Howard MacNutt, Brooklyn, N.Y.—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two blessed souls!

Your letter was received. Praise be to God! ye are glad, ye are full of joy and fragrance, and are safe and protected under the shelter of the Merciful One. Today those who are firm in the Covenant are soaring by the Bounties of the Holy Spirit in lofty regions, while the wavering ones are depressed, dejected and afflicted with a thousand pains and calamities. This is because the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom have been cut off from them. They have been deprived of the Light of the Sun of Truth and have had no share from the breezes of the Holy Spirit. They resemble those souls who arose to agitate the minds of men after the time of Christ. Each one, by every subtle means, gathered around himself a group of souls, but all were eventually led to face disappointment, loss and failure. This was because the result of their principles was like unto a tree destitute of roots, or like the ocean foam. A rootless tree, no matter how tall and hardy it may seem, will ultimately wither away, and the ocean foam, however formidable it may appear, shall at last vanish and disappear.

Arius, the patriarch at Constantinople, gathered around himself a million and a half followers. He even secured the adherence of the Emperor, but as [XI:14:241] his basis was not secure, he vanished and was exterminated. What then will the violators do who are only a small number of feeble and insignificant souls? For thirty years they have endeavoured and at last they succeeded in drawing around them a few thoughtless persons and some unbalanced and undignified women. Soon ye shall see that even this small group will scatter.

How strange it is in America! When I went to Green Acre, I saw an idolatrous East Indian, insignificant, unpleasant and offensive in appearance—whom even animals would avoid; he had gathered around himself a group of people, had chosen a distant tree, and every morning before sunrise would run and hasten barefooted toward it, accompanied by a number of women. They would reach it tired and exhausted, and there would fall upon the ground as if they were worshipping an idol from among the idols of India. After several days had elapsed, by subtle methods he begged a few dollars from those persons and then returned to India.

In brief, my purpose is to show that whatever call is raised or proclaimed in America, a group will doubtless gather around it; while, on the other hand, the Oriental Friends (Bahá'ís) are firm like unto the immovable mountains. For thirty years have the violators striven to undermine the Cause, but they have failed even to attract to their side their own kindred and relatives. That is why, undoubtedly, in Persia, twenty thousand Bahá'ís have been martyred and severe tests have been brought about. Yet, praise be to God! not even a single soul among the Friends wavered. The violators in America do nothing but flatter, seduce and show a love that is insincere. Consider what they did to poor Lua (Getsinger) and how unfaithful they have been to her!

In short, take into consideration the outcomes and not the beginning. Every follower of error mentions the name of Truth, and even the enemies of Christ have declared in the name of God that Christ was a liar and an infidel—that He destroyed the foundation of honour, that He was the breaker of the Sabbath day and the associate of immoral persons. Although outwardly this charge was upholding the Cause of the Old Testament, and took into consideration the Religion of God, yet the underlying purpose was nothing but to overthrow the Divine Structure and to debase the exalted Christ. Although on the surface they seemed to defend the Cause of God, yet inwardly their purpose was manifest error.

Finally, ye know how considerate I have been with some souls—how much love and kindness I have shown them and at last found out that the Cause of God would be disgraced. I refused the three thousand pounds which ye gathered for the expense of my travel to America, and during my sojourn in that land did not accept anything from any person. Then I saw that secretly and for varied motives, unworthy actions were being manifested. Consider my feelings! My purpose was to demonstrate the independence and contentment of the Servants of God. Ye know that I did not accept anything from any person and acted in accordance with the admonition of Christ, who said that whenever ye leave a city, shake off even its dust from your shoes. Notwithstanding that unworthy behaviour, I was still patient. All were my guests. I daily paid their expenses, showed them the utmost loving consideration and then paid fully to all of them their entire expenses. Up to the present time, after all this assistance and love, this has been my reward. What will be the recompense of those who have not shown this love and consideration?

In brief: The Covenant is like unto the ocean which preserves Bahá'í Unity, and these souls are like unto the foam upon it. They manifest a temporary activity, but soon, like unto Judas Iscariot and his associates and those who approved of his conduct, they shall be completely forgotten. The ocean of the Covenant, on the other hand, is eternally surging, for it preserves Bahá'í Unity.

At present arise ye with all your power to promulgate the Covenant and expound these

matters to those who are weak and feeble and tell them that communities after Christ have opposed this clear and explicit declaration when He said to Peter: “Thou art the rock and upon this rock I shall build My Temple”, and have thus been wholly deprived of the breaths of the Holy Spirit and have been ruined and exterminated.

Today, the Lord of Hosts is the defender of the Covenant, the forces of the Kingdom protect it, heavenly souls tender their services, and heavenly angels promulgate and spread it broadcast. If it is considered with insight, it will be seen that all the forces of the Universe, in the last analysis serve the Covenant. In the future it shall be made evident and manifest. In view of this fact, what can these weak and feeble souls achieve? Hardy plants that are destitute of roots and are deprived of the outpourings of the cloud of mercy will not last. What then may be expected from the young weeds?

Consider what a commotion the Theosophists have produced in Europe and America. At present their influence is waning, for their foundation was not as strong as it should be. What then will the violators do?

The days I spent as a guest at your home will never be forgotten, for through the Divine Bestowals and the breaths of the Holy Spirit, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was so stirred that the effect will not pass from memory. I pray God that those days may be renewed. Strive as much as ye are able not to sell that house; let it remain permanently a sign (or memorial) of yourselves.¹ I often think of you and desire that you become a hotly enkindled flame, bestowing heat and light upon the surrounding regions. Not until the power of heat is intensified in the body of man, will growth and development take place as they should.

I supplicate and entreat to the Abhá Kingdom and beg again for ye a fresh confirmation. I beseech for Mr MacNutt the fluency of Peter and the eloquence of Paul.

Convey on my behalf the utmost love and kindness to the two respected souls, Victor Harvell and Roy Herrick. My hope is that they may be confirmed in service to the Kingdom of God and may secure every day a new power.

Upon ye be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

P.S.—Thy last letter, dated 21 July 1919, has been received. It imparted the glad tidings of the promulgation of the Word of God in those regions. For ‘Abdu’l-Bahá no joy and pleasure remain save in the glad tidings of the exaltation of the Word of God. Therefore as thou hast written of the efforts put forth by the friends for the diffusion of the Divine Fragrance and hast mentioned that thy time is confined to raising the Call of the Kingdom and consecrated in service to the Cause of God, this news was considered as glad tidings, and my hope is that thou mayest attain remarkable confirma- [XI:14:243] tions and mighty assistance. He says that whosoever draws a span nearer to God, Divine Providence will approach a metre toward him. Assuredly if man rises as he ought to in service to the Kingdom, the Spirit of the Divine Kingdom will encompass him.

Concerning the book about which thou hast written in thy letter: It is highly suitable for thee to write such a book, and if this effort is realized, it is highly acceptable. Convey on my behalf to the respected maid-servant of God, Mrs MacNutt, the utmost love and kindness. If the principle of amity and unity, which is one of the principles of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, is strengthened among the friends—and if firmness in the Covenant renders the breakers of the Covenant hopeless and at a loss,—this like unto a magnetic power will attract ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to America.

¹ Translation: *An* (that) *Khaneh* [*Kháníh*] (house) *tátaváníd* (as much as ye are able) *naforúshíd* (do not sell) *biguzárid* (allow or let) *an* (that) *asár* (a sign) *az shumá* (of yourselves) *báqí* (permanent) *bimánd* (remain).

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 24 July 1919.

XI:14, 23 November 1920 [XI:14:239]

Some important commands from the Centre of the Covenant

[XI:14:243]

“That which has come forth from the Centre of the Covenant you must take fast hold of. That which issues from my lips and that which is written with my pen is the Reality. With this you can irrigate the vineyard of God. With this you can make the tree of the Cause of God become verdant. Through this the Name of the Kingdom of God will be spread all over the world. Through this the Sun of Reality will shine. Through this the clouds of Mercy will pour down. Whosoever utters a word you must ask: ‘Where is the authority of the Centre of the Covenant? Show it.’ Without this you must not listen to him. If an angel comes down from heaven and has no authority from the Centre of the Covenant, you must require his authority. Otherwise the vineyard will become withered and dry. This is the reality.”

In New York City, July 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to several believers: “Any one quoting me must have authority written either with my own hand, or Tablets signed with my seal. Otherwise these statements do not belong to me. Every instruction, every teaching that I desire to spread I will write with my own hand. You must know this generally. Never accept any statement without my writing which is signed and sealed—*any* statement.”

(Signed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá)

In Egypt, in August 1913, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated (Mirza Ahmad Sohrab interpreting): “When in America I repeatedly said that no one must believe one word said by another regarding any commands, teachings or statements made by me unless they can produce the same in writing over my signature.”

XI:15, 12 December 1920 [XI:15:251]

The Bahá’í revelation

Address by Jináb-i-Fáḍil-i-Mázindarání, delivered at the Third Session of the Bahá’í Congress, New York City, 27 April 1920.

Manúchih Abhá, Interpreter.

There is no doubt that there are two powers in the world, the power of spirituality and the power of materiality. There is no doubt that the advancement of man is in the world of morality. Man’s honour depends upon his soul and upon his morality. If man lacks spirituality and morality he is nothing but a mere animal and is in common with animals. There is no doubt that man needs a teacher for the education of his morality and the education of his soul. History proves to us that without a teacher for these two phases, morality and soul, and without education, man cannot be supreme. The greatest morality in the world is love. Love and morality are the foundations of this world. Love in the world of humanity is the cause of its salvation. Love and unity are the honour and progress of this world. Love and unity are the foundations of its life; love and unity are the cause of man’s entrance into the Kingdom of God; love and unity are the cause of eternal life.

All the Manifestations of God appeared in this world only that love and unity should prevail among mankind. The prophets of the world had no other aim except love and unity amongst humankind. When we look into the heavenly books we see the same thing, that all the aims have been this aim and nothing else. We see that in those spiritual books and in those Divine books, every corruption is forbidden; we see only inimical passions have been prohibited in those Divine books, and they have united the people in love and harmony. When we look into and consider the Divine books, we see all the aims of all the prophets have been to perfect

man's morality and to establish love and unity among all mankind. They have no other aims besides these.

When we look into the history of every religion, we see that in their own cycle and in their own time they established their aims and objectives. You know that in their own time they did good work; that is to say, they established love and unity as far as it was possible in their own time. In the time of Moses, as much as it was possible in that time, and when the time of Jesus came as much as it was possible in his time. But by and by superstitions crept into those pure religions and caused dissensions, and some blind imitations made it so that the people shunned religion. Today we see in every nation that some people run away from religion entirely. No sooner do you say a word about religion than they run away from you and say, "We are not ready to hear anything about religion."

Now, let us see why they are shunning and turning away from religion. [XI:15:252] These people see only the superstitions which are among the people but do not see the reality and the significance of the religions; they see only the misunderstandings. They see only the blind imitations. Religions are like mirrors which are covered with dust and their brilliance is entirely dull now. The dust that has covered the mirrors is nothing but these blind imitations or superstitions. It is because of these superstitions and ignorances, which have caused dissensions among the religions of the world, that they are inimical to each other, and hatred has arisen among them. Great wars and bloodshed have been brought about by these same blind imitations. But when we look to see the essential principles of all the religions we see that their aims have been one. Jesus had the same aim as Moses and Abraham and the other prophets, and they had no other aim and no other purpose except love and unity among humankind. All these differences and dissensions were brought about by the aforementioned superstitions and men's ignorance. The primary principles are unchangeable, but, of course, the secondary principles and branches are changeable according to the exigencies of time. We know that as time passes everything is changed; as you say nowadays, everything is changing. The laws of commerce and of other transient things are changing with the exigencies of time. The only differences that occur in religions is in the outer and secondary laws, not in the essential principles. There is nothing important about those transient things, they change with the exigencies of time. The point to be considered is the principles only. The people of the world do not look at the principles and the important points but they adhere to the trifling things, so of course there is dissension among them. These differences in religions have caused the very destruction of the whole world. If a wise man peruses the situation of the world today, will he deny that in this time and cycle there is need of unity among religions? Can all these differences and dissensions remain as they are? How long should there be differences in the world, and when is the perfection of the world to come?

Bahá'u'lláh has dawned from the horizon of Persia, and has established laws for the unification of all religions, and he has made the world understand that the reality and the principles of all religions have been the same. He has brought to light the foundation of all religions, and these principles have been published in his book. They are the same things, but with new explanations which are very effective and influential, so that those commands renew the world of soul and the world of heart. We see that with Divine power he is dispelling those differences. This is what we see with our own eyes. What can be seen with the eyes and felt with the heart cannot be denied. If a mason claims he can build a beautiful building and he builds it right before our eyes, can that be denied? Such a fact cannot be denied. This is what Bahá'u'lláh claims. He said his aim was to bring unity and harmony among humankind. There is unity among people who come under his standard, and he is pointing out to the people the real qualities of religion and is dispelling superstition and ignorance. This was his declaration and claim, and he attained to his aim.

We have come from the East. Now, the East was the centre of fanaticism. The people of the

East were immersed in such superstition and fanaticism that they were very inimical to each other; they even considered each other as filthy and infidels, and they would not communicate with each other, would not [XI:15:253] talk to each other. They thought it praiseworthy to murder each other, and not only did they think this action praiseworthy but they thought if they murdered one of their friends they would be nearer to God!

There were many followers of this belief in Persia, that is, those who thought that if they should kill each other they would be nearer to God. This was not according to the Holy Book at all. The Holy Book invited the people to love and harmony, while all of this emanated from superstition and ignorance. But since the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, people of different religions and different nations have entered under its banner, and they now manifest the utmost love and unity towards each other.

For instance, the Jews were very superstitious and very fanatical. In the time of Christ they did not believe in Christ and they did not accept Christ, but now hundreds and hundreds of them have entered under this standard; and also the other older nations that did not believe in any of the new religions. When you enter one of the Bahá'í meetings, you see men from different races and from different nations. You cannot distinguish the Jew from those of other religions. You see a large number of people with great harmony and love towards each other, whereas each was formerly under a separate religion. This unity of religion has been established and brought about only by the Words of Bahá'u'lláh.

This is the greatest power that reveals itself in the human world. This is the aim of all the Divine Manifestations; this is that which is prophesied in the Holy Book, that the "last" day will come and there will be perfect unity among the people; that the day will come when the "wolf" and the "lamb" will graze in the same pasture, and the day will come when all differences will be removed. Now, we see that by this Revelation and this Manifestation all the differences are removed. Can such a tangible case be denied? Since the declaration of the Manifestation thousands and thousands of the Bahá'ís have been killed. This tree has been watered by the martyrdom of hundreds and hundreds of people. From the beginning of this Manifestation up to this present time, about fifty or sixty thousand have been murdered. They were murdered by the ignorant—killed and tortured in all sorts of ways. The history of this Cause is very long indeed. Whatever happened or took place in former religions, and former Manifestations, appeared in this Manifestation also. The holy aim of the Bahá'ís cannot be denied by anybody. In this time, which is a luminous time, we see that it needs such a great Manifestation, and it needs the unity of the people. Of course, it necessitates that all the secrets of the religious Books should appear; and this is essential that all the shining hearts from God should again be near to God.

Now, we can feel perfectly sure that if it were not for the Bahá'í Cause the whole world would be running away from religion; that is to say, people would see only superstitions of religion then and turn away. This period necessitates a great Manifestation, more than any other period. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh appeared to mankind and said: "Ye are all the branches of one tree and the fruits of one tree; ye are all of one race; ye are all created by the same God." Put aside all your blind imitations and adhere to the principles of religion and then you will all be united. My hope is that we endeavour every day to spread this Cause as much as we can, because the progress of the world and the attraction of the attention of people to religion is not realized by any other way except this way.

XI:15, 12 December 1920 [XI:15:254]

The investigation of truth

Address by Jináb-i-Fáḍil-i-Mázandarání, delivered at the Fourth Session of the Bahá'í Congress, New York City, 28 April 1920.

Manúchih Abhá, Interpreter.

... We ask God for His assistance and confirmation, that He may guide us in His path, and that He may lead the whole of humanity in that path. I see that this meeting is spiritual and I could not keep still. I feel very much as if the spirit is waving all over this place.

There are plenty of meetings of different sorts and everywhere, for different purposes, reunions and dances are held in different places, but there are few meetings which are organized for the sake of God. The Bahá'í reunions and assemblies are for this aim, that is to say, for the sake of God. This meeting has no other intention except the investigation of truth and to discuss and speak about truth. All the people have been waiting so long that I am sure that they have no other aim except the investigation of truth. The investigation of truth is the first aim and the first principle that Bahá'u'lláh has commanded the people to do—it should be the aim of all the people of the world. Bahá'u'lláh has told the people that every man should investigate truth, because man's opinion is divided into two kinds. One belief and one opinion exists in man because of inheritance and blind imitation. Most of his opinions and beliefs in the world are of this sort. It is not necessary to mention it further and to take more time in explaining it because you know it already. You know all the existent religions of the world are nothing but blind imitation or inheritance. There is no doubt about it, and you know it. When a father is a Christian, the son also becomes a Christian; if the parents are Jews, the son will become a Jew; if the father is a Zoroastrian, the son will become a Zoroastrian, and if he is a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Muslim, the son will accept the religion of his father. We must not expect that the son of a Jew will be anything but a Jew. They are trained in that religion and, of course, when they are grown up they have not been trained in any other religion than that. They perpetuate their own beliefs and opinions in the hearts of their children, and they sow the seeds of animosity in the hearts of their children against other religions. All the existing beliefs are no better than the ones mentioned. These are blind imitations, and I am sure they are not the cause of man's salvation. Belief in blind opinion is the cause of all the dissension in the world. All these differences of religion have sprung from blind opinion. This sort of religion which exists in the world is not praised by God, because they have believed in these opinions without any proof or demonstration. All these beliefs are the sources of dissension and the root of all differences.

There is one sort of belief that has very few followers and that is the belief in the investigation of truth. The unity of the Bahá'ís which has been brought about in the world is from this source; that is to say, they have investigated the truth and have found the truth. There is no doubt that people would not give up their religion unless it were founded on valid proof; beliefs and opinions are something very dear and very precious to humankind, and they have some reason for changing their opinion or else they would not do it. This proof is brought about by knowledge and investigation of the truth; [XI:15:255] there is no doubt about that. Now, as I said before, this meeting has assembled to investigate the truth. I want every one of you, if you have any difficulty about the Cause, to come to the Bahá'í Centre and ask me and I will gladly tell you about it. These meetings that you see, and such gatherings as this, they have all over the world.

This is the time of the Ridván feast of the Bahá'ís and Conventions are held by the Bahá'ís in different parts of the world. At this time, Bahá'u'lláh was exiled from Baghdád at the instigation of the high priests and by the help and support of the governments of Turkey and Persia. Two powerful governments like Turkey and Persia, with the influence of their high priests, leaders and governors, tried to exile Bahá'u'lláh. What did they mean by this banishment? They were not opposing Bahá'u'lláh personally, but they opposed his words and they were inimical to his teachings. At this time of Ridván, Bahá'u'lláh declared his mission and called the people to perfect unity and to remove dissension; in such a time the banner of the standard of peace was uplifted. At such a time this religion was started. This was why all the people of Persia and Turkey arose against his teachings. They thought by this opposition

that they could eradicate his teachings and they would not spread over the world, but they did not know that some purposes and some intentions are supported by God's confirmation.

For instance, a man arranges according to his own ways, and everything outwardly is all right, but he never attains to his aim and objective. He feels from the very beginning that he is not supported by God's confirmation. He appeals to everything to attain to his objective, but he cannot attain it. Some people arise and put into effect some sacred intention, some holy intention, and it is done. By the outward appearance of things, I can tell from the beginning whether you are assisted by God or not, and whether you are supported by God's confirmation or not. The Manifestations of God were assisted by the confirmations of God. No means and no implements do they possess. Everything and every outward appearance and everything was against them. In spite of this opposition they put into effect their aims and their intentions. Although they undertook to banish—although the Muslim priests and kings undertook to banish Bahá'u'lláh—they did not know that they were in reality assisting him in every possible way. It was for his sake that all the glad tidings and the prophecies of the Holy Book were fulfilled. It is written, it is prophesied in the Old Testament, that the greatest Manifestation would manifest himself, and would appear from the Holy Land. You are well informed of the Holy Books and it is unnecessary to remind you of them. The light of God would appear on the Mount of Carmel and 'Akká should be the place, the destination, the hope of the people, and the Holy Land should be the centre of the attraction of the whole world. These prophecies were fulfilled by the enemies of Bahá'u'lláh. Thus, every man who caused his banishment put into effect and fulfilled those promises and those prophecies. That is why those who go to Haifa and 'Akká see the truth and fulfilment of those prophecies. I have seen with my own eyes how Haifa and 'Akká are the centre of attraction of the people of the world: how people from the east and west and north and south go to the presence of the Master.

XI:15, 12 December 1920 [XI:15:256]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

To his honour, Mirza Ahmad Sohrab,—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of the Threshold of the Blessed Perfection!

The maid-servant of God, Mrs Hoagg, and the maid-servant of God, Miss Culver, arrived. They brought your photograph with green turban and that, of your respected wife; likewise the photograph of his honour Fáḍil with white turban and luminous face. It was conducive to great rejoicing. His honour Fáḍil, in reality, is perfect in all the grades—in knowledge and virtue, in sincerity of intention, in beauty of character, in severance from aught else save God and attraction with the fragrances of God. Truly I say, he is the [XI:15:257] manifestation of this blessed verse: "I do not ask ye any reward. Verily my reward is with God, the Lord of the two worlds. It is written: 'If for the sake of thy self-sacrifice thou desirest a compensation, the compensation which is given by His Holiness the Almighty is the best of all.'"

The plan of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was observed. Importance lies in its building. It is my hope that this foundation may be built.

Convey longing greeting to all the friends.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Received July 1920.

XI:15, 12 December 1920 [XI:15:257]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Roy C. Wilhelm

To his honour, Mr Roy C. Wilhelm, New York City,—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou my dear affectionate son!

Two letters from thee have arrived. Exercise thou the utmost love and kindness towards Petrus Darakhshaní! He should continue the work which he has already undertaken.

His honour Fáḍíl is a revered person. He has been growing for a long time in the Cause. Next to his honour, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, he is the best informed of his contemporaries. He has no aspiration save service to the Cause of God. He is a scholar, he is appreciative and grateful to thee.

Thou hast written that the House of Spirituality of New York is splendidly confirmed and consequently the number of the friends is increasing. This news imparted great joy. My hope is that New York may become the centre of this great Cause: the glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God may encompass (it); the banner of the oneness of the world of humanity may be raised, and the divine teachings may pitch their pavilion in that city. In my trip to America I spent a long time in New York. I went to Washington and returned to New York: I went to Boston and returned to New York. I went to Chicago and came back to New York. I visited California and went back to New York. From this it becomes evident that I feel the utmost attachment to New York.

Well, thou and all the friends should encourage the souls (people) to become firm in attachment to the Testament and Covenant, for the power of the Covenant brings together and makes them united and harmonious; otherwise every ambitious soul arises to bring about their separation, in order to draw a few souls around himself. The souls who were crying in all the assemblies and meetings (of the friends), that everybody who did not adhere to the Covenant and Testament of God, was excommunicated, wicked, expelled from the threshold of the Blessed Beauty and was hopeless of the mercy of God, yielded then to ambition, sought for fame and arose to violate the Covenant. Thou observest now how abject and miserable they have become. In every age many such people appeared, but in the end they fell into manifest misery.

Thou observest that after His Holiness Christ,—May my soul be sacrificed for Him,—how many different sects appeared. Read thou the book of his honour, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl! In the history of the Church this is written and, recorded. Of them was the Patriarch of Alexandria who attempted to give false impressions. One million and a half people became his adherents. Even the Emperor of Constantinople (followed him). He produced a great [XI:15:258] disturbance in the nation of Christ. But ultimately he was vanquished and thrown into most striking misery. Now these people, whose number is small, it is already known what their end will be.

I hope that the friends will give the utmost importance to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. A cablegram from Mr Randall has lately been received, indicating that they will begin its construction. Through this news I became immensely delighted. The American friends are greatly endeared. Therefore I desire that they may be confirmed in great achievements and become the factors of the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

All the people of the world are, as thou observest, in the sleep of negligence. They have forgotten God altogether. They are all busy in war and strife. They are undergoing misery and destruction. They are like unto loathsome worms trying to lodge in the depth of the

ground, while a single flood of rain sweeps all their nest and lodging away. Nevertheless, they do not come to their senses. Where is the majesty of the Emperor of Russia! Where is the might of the German Emperor! Where is the greatness of the Emperor of Austria! In a short time all these palaces were turned into ruins and all these pretentious edifices (empires) underwent destruction. They left no fruit and no trace, save eternal ruin.

The souls who have been enlightened with the Light of the Kingdom, however, have founded eternal sovereignty. They shine like unto the stars upon the horizon of everlasting glory. The Apostles (of Christ) were fishers. Consider thou to what a high station they did rise! and to what a great sovereignty they did attain; whose duration and permanence runs to eternity. Mary Magdalene was a peasant woman. She was without any name and fame or consequence, but her candle is in the assemblage of the world, lighted till eternity.

Upon thee be the glory of Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, 9 August 1920, Mount Carmel, Palestine.

XI:15, 12 December 1920 [XI:15:258]

Tablets to Bahá'ís in America received in 1919 and 1920

To the children of the Kingdom

To the children of the Kingdom—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—care of the daughter of the Kingdom, Bahá'íyyih Randall—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye children of the Kingdom!

Praise ye God that in the days of childhood ye have entered the divine kingdom and have been encompassed by the bounty and favour of God. At a time when ye were young He has chosen and selected ye and has made ye intimates with the mysteries, while the mature and full-grown have been deprived. This is to be attributed only to the bounty of God. Praise ye God therefore and say:

“O Thou compassionate Lord! O Lord of Hosts! Praise be unto Thee, that thou hast preferred these young children to the full-grown and the matured, hast endowed them with Thy special bounty, hast guided them, hast bestowed upon them Thy light and hast given them spirituality. Confirm us that when we attain maturity we may be enabled to serve Thy Kingdom, may train the souls, may become ignited candles and may glitter like unto stars. Thou art the Giver, the Bestower and the Kind!”

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 26 November 1919. [XI:15:259]

Mr and Mrs Death

To their honours, Mr and Mrs Death—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

-care of his honour, Mr Albert Vail Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two servants of the Kingdom of God!

His honour, Mr Vail, has arrived and with an eloquent tongue and a brilliant language has been praising you very highly; that these two respected souls are indeed two truthful servants of the Word of God and are day and night roaring and surging like unto the sea. They have no purpose save the promulgation of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and seek nothing save the

guidance of souls. They have established a magazine¹ which promotes the Bahá'í ideals, which declares the oneness of mankind, which sets forth the inner meanings and the realities of things, which expounds the mysteries of God and the words of which glitter like unto pearls. This figure is an oriental figure by which eloquent and significant words are compared to pearls. But these pearls are of two kinds, one is the versified language and that is called poetry and the other is the ordinary language called prose. Now I pray to God that ye may both in prose as well as poetry set forth glittering gems and may be so confirmed that all your publications may be favourable to every sound intellect and suitable to all praiseworthy characters, and that no one will be able to criticize them or make the slightest objections.

In the utmost supplication, I beseech divine providence that He may bestow His favours upon you in this world and in the next.

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Supplication

O God! Make this magazine a mirror of Truth that therein the divine significances may be reflected, the mysteries of the Kingdom may be revealed, and that it may appear effulgent and resplendent to the eyes of men. Thou art the promulgator of publications that serve the world of humanity!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 25 November 1919.

Charles Mason Remey

To his honour, Mr Charles Mason Remey—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou herald of the Covenant!

Thy letters have been received and an answer has been written. Verily, thou art firm in the Covenant, art self-sacrificing, art the son of the Kingdom and dost deserve the confirmations of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. Consequently, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is highly pleased with thee and begs for thee from His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh limitless bounties. As a result of this glad-tiding fly on the wings of joy and raise thou the melody: "Happy am I, blessed am I!"

Mr and Mrs Death are, in the sight of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, favoured and esteemed. Verily, they are engaged in service. Day and night they strive that they may awaken the souls, they write articles in a moderate tone, they do not rend the veils asunder, and thus they are praised and esteemed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Convey on my behalf to Richard Mayer respectful greeting. I supplicate for this enlightened soul the bounty of the Merciful.

O thou who art firm in the Covenant! If possible, convey to thy parents my greeting and my respect and give them this message: "Do not be disturbed. All is in the hands of God, and He is [XI:15:260] the kind Father. Rest assured in His bounty and assistance."

The friends in Boston are indeed arising in service. I am pleased with them, am glad of their activities and ever thinking of them and beg for them all from the bounties of God's assistance and confirmation. Their names are preserved and recorded in the Book of the lordly ones in the Abhá Kingdom. They may rest assured in the bounty of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, that confirmations shall uninterruptedly descend upon them.

I have been greatly affected by the death of Mr Sandy Kinney. What a lovely child he was.

¹ Refers to the magazine *Reality*, edited and published by them in New York City.—*The Editors*.

On my behalf say to Mr and Mrs Kinney: "Do not grieve, and do not lament. That tender and lovely shrub has been transferred from this world to the rose-garden of the Kingdom and that longing dove has flown to the divine nest. That candle has been extinguished in this nether world that it may be rekindled in the Supreme Concourse. Ye shall assuredly meet him face to face in the world of mysteries at the assemblage of Light."

At present, wisdom does not permit that the teachers should apply to the government for half-rate fares or should have the property of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* exempt from government taxes. Wisdom does not permit that at present. Its time will come.

Concerning thy travel, if during the spring season thou goest to Germany and thence proceed to the Holy Land it will be highly advisable. Thou art permitted.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 24 December 1919.

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

To his honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou wanderer over mountain and desert in the Path of the kind Beloved!

Thy letter, after thy return from California to New York, was received. Praise be to God, that in accord with the promise of 'Abdu'l-Bahá thou didst behold the bestowal and favour of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh manifest and clear in all the states of America! This is the fulfilment of what I have said: Every soul who in this day is firm in the Covenant will become the brilliant sign of the Kingdom of Effulgence. Do thou move and live in accord with the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; then thou wilt observe that all the doors are open, all the paths straightened, help and assistance becoming one's companion and the cohorts of confirmation descending uninterruptedly. Today whosoever is the servant of the Kingdom of Abhá will be established upon the throne of everlasting sovereignty. Praise be to God, that thou didst observe with thine own eyes and listened with thine own ears that today the power of the Covenant is the pulsating artery in the body of the world. Whosoever becomes one of the people of divine association, he is the candle of splendour and whosoever is an associate of the people of sedition he is established and has his dwelling in the lowest abyss of hell.

In the middle of nights, like 'Abdu'l-Bahá, supplicate at the Threshold of the Blessed Perfection and cry and lament: "O Thou kind God! I am a weak ant, bestow upon me the sovereignty of Solomon! I am an ephemeral atom, suffer me to appear in the flow of the rays of the Sun of Reality! I am a drop, bestow upon me the waves of the Most Great Sea! I am a mosquito, make me the eagle of the Apex of Glory. I am lowly, endear me in Thy Kingdom! I am unknown and signless, grant me the visible token of confirmation!"

The pilgrims returning from this land, God willing, from now on will [XI:15:261] become the cause of union and harmony.

The Bahá'í Library in New York, truly I say is engaged in service and Mr and Mrs Death are in reality self-sacrificing and are the object of the favour of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; but the believers must as much as possible assist this library and the magazine *Reality*. Mr and Mrs Death are unable to bear all the expenses.

Praise be to God, that *Shahnáz* (Mrs Waite) is full of song and melody and like unto the flute-player is singing the notes of the divine musician.

It is hoped that ere long the Convention this year will be inaugurated in a [XI:15:262] befitting and behoving manner and the maid-servant of God, Mrs Maxwell, Mr Randall, Mr

Mills, Mrs Marjorie Morton and Mrs Zoraya¹ Chamberlain have undoubtedly become confirmed in rendering great services.

Doctor Grant and Rev. Guthrie unquestionably have delivered detailed speeches. These two revered souls, truly I say, are worthy of respect and honour. I pray in their behalf that they may become assisted to render services to the Kingdom of God; each one of them may walk in the footsteps of the Apostles and become the lighted candles in the assemblage of Reality. In short, I hope that [XI:15:263] in this Convention the matter of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* may obtain a new importance. Undoubtedly your wedding is likewise solemnized. It is divine and blessed. I have given recommendations regarding your affairs to some of the pilgrims. It is assured that you will spend your life with joy and composure.

His Excellency, the ideal sage, Fádíl-i-Mazandarani, is the essence of humility and submission. God willing, with Manúchihr Khán, he has reached the United States under the protection of the Almighty. This respected soul is evanescent in the Cause of the Blessed Perfection. He is wise, well informed [XI:15:264] and a thinker. There is no doubt that he will become the cause of the exhilaration, rejoicing and the guidance of others. You must exercise toward him the utmost respect and consideration, and placing your hands in each other's, become ye engaged in the promotion of the Word of God.

Convey on my behalf, my love and affection to the favoured maid-servant of God, thy respected wife and her mother.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 28 June 1920, New York City.

XI:16, 31 December 1920 [XI:16:267]

'Abdu'l-Bahá on Mt. Carmel

Notes by Mabel Paine, of Urbana, Illinois, on her visit to Haifa, Palestine, with a party of pilgrims, September 1920.

The experience of being in Haifa and meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá is so great that it cannot be contained in the narrow bounds of the few days spent there. After the pilgrimage is over new beauties are revealed, new strength is derived. Every scene, event, and circumstance partakes of the eternal world and so continues to grow and develop in our hearts. The sojourn there is like being on a spiritual mountain top where broader, more spiritual views are spread before us. Or better, it is like having the water of life flow with its penetrating, life-giving, cleansing power into every last part of one's heart and life.

In some place, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said that everything in the outer material world is a sign, symbol or counterpart of a reality in the spiritual world. This truth one realizes intensely at Haifa. The physical surroundings there are outer expressions of the spiritual life. The Psalmist wrote "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion." And this description may now be applied to Mount Carmel. Rugged mountain, blue sea, wide plain, all glowing in brilliant sunshine, combine to make a scene of great beauty, more beautiful complete and varied, it seems to many, than any other scene. So, one learns while at Haifa, is the spiritual life more beautiful than any other life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá himself is the Living Word, the very embodiment of the spiritual life. His whole bearing, his every attitude of body and expression of face mirror forth spiritual truth. How precious are the mental pictures of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which remain with the returned pilgrim! I see him standing a little apart from the rest and in his bearing is absolute

¹ A Persian "variant" of *Thurayyá* and *Thurayyah*.

independence and majesty. It is evident that he can stand alone against the whole world. It comes to me that this great power and independence of aught save God is with him because he is so entirely selfless. It is a part of his station, the wonderful station of servitude.

Again I see him, I can't tell when, but it is in the day time, so that I see his face most clearly. He is walking. The head is a little bent. The eyes are full of that wonderful compassion which all spiritual artists have tried to portray in paintings of great spiritual beings. There is a great freshness and youth in those eyes, the freshness of early dawn, the purity of the child, a look of wonder as of one sojourning in a strange and foreign world. Such a look may have been in Christ's eyes when he said to his disciples, "How is it that you have so little faith?" But a look too of great compassion, such compassion as must have existed from the beginning which hath no beginning and which will endure to the end which hath no end. Then what compelling, active power in those eyes when sometimes they flash a summons from this world to the other!

What a blessing comes to the pilgrim to Haifa from being able to watch the [XI:16:268] daily life which is the active counterpart of these heavenly pictures! The following incident related by M. 'Azízu'lláh Khán Bahádúr illustrates the unfailing kindness which 'Abdu'l-Bahá showers so freely on every one with whom he comes in contact. M. 'Azízu'lláh spoke in some such way as this:

"One morning I was in Haifa with the Master. We entered a store. Here we found a group of people and among them a German missionary, a resident of Haifa. At first this man was talking in such a way as to display his knowledge of classical Arabic literature. Then the subject of his conversation changed. He spoke of his personal affairs. He was no longer receiving remittances from the missionary board in Germany. This was during the war. He was in need of money. When the Master heard the man speak of his need, he promptly gave him a generous sum of money."

Mírzá 'Azízu'lláh continued: "All the time I was feeling critical of the Master and at the same time blaming myself for feeling critical. This missionary I knew had no love for the Master. He had opposed the Master and would oppose him again. 'Still,' I said to myself, 'if that is not the Master, I don't know who is.'"

How often while in Haifa were we sharply confronted with this contrast between the human and divine way of thinking! "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." One morning some pilgrims were sitting in a small room on the ground floor of the Master's house. One of the pilgrims, a Muslim, was pouring over the pages of the Bible. He had recently become a Bahá'í and since that time could not read the Bible enough. Soon Dr Luţfu'lláh Ḥakím entered. He brought a message from the Master to the Muslim pilgrim. It directed him to go to the hospital. He had not been well for several days and the Master, like a kind father, was watching over him and advising him for his best welfare. But the pilgrim answered that he had not seen the Master for three days and that he would not go to the hospital until he had again seen the Master. In the mind of one of the pilgrims who was watching this little scene, sprang up a feeling of disapproval, a feeling a little critical and consequently a little hostile to this Oriental brother. (Why was he not obeying 'Abdu'l-Bahá?) But we were soon to see the Divine way of regarding the man. Dr Luţfu'lláh carried the man's message to the Master and returned immediately with directions to the man to step outside. He did so, the rest of us following. We went by the gravel path around to the front of the house. Soon 'Abdu'l-Bahá appeared on the porch just above us. He looked down on the sick man with laughing kindly eyes and his beautiful musical voice fairly rippled with laughter as he again advised him to go to the hospital. The

man's face beamed with pleasure and he went off to the hospital satisfied.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's answer to a question regarding Church attendance

It is well to worship in any place where the thought is turned to God. Whether the place is home, church, or mosque, the object is to turn to God. But if there is a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár it is better to worship there. In the other worshipping places the hearts are not engaged in worshipping God. They are turned to the world. Therefore in those places the breaths of the Merciful are not inhaled. But if there is no Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, there is no harm in going to other worshipping places.

When I was in America I used to go to churches to speak. When I entered they were engaged in worshipping. I also used to stand up and turn to the Kingdom of God. After they had finished their prayer I used to give the Divine Glad Tidings. I used to give the proofs and evidences of God. I gave the teachings of the Blessed Beauty. All listened. There was no opposition. In truth I turned to God when I entered the churches. When they were in the congregation of God and were singing songs I enjoyed it. When they were shouting, "My God, my God!" I was happy.

When His Holiness Christ gathered his disciples together on that last night, it was not in a church, it was in a room. On that night they had the Last Supper. It was in a room. The idea is that the heart should be attracted, the spirit filled with Divine Glad Tidings and the soul turned to God. This is the object. Other things are secondary.

Tuesday, 7 September, Western Pilgrim House Haifa, after breakfast

Question: "Just before the Master came in we were talking about how to train children to be thoughtful of others and unselfish. Will the Master speak to us on this subject?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The body of man is from the world of nature. His body is akin to that of the animal. He has animal tendencies. But the Divine power in him is great. His spirit is pure, sanctified and heavenly. His body is satanic. If his spiritual qualities overcome his animal qualities he becomes illumined, full of activities and good qualities. But if the animal qualities overcome the spiritual, the spiritual will be entirely extinguished. All the qualities will be animalistic. In such a state the love of self is found; man is immersed in passion; darkness succeeds darkness. Man becomes negligent of God. No sign of his spirituality remains. This is why His Holiness Christ says that we must be born again. When man is born from the womb of the mother he is freed from material darkness. In the same way he must be born from the world of nature so that he may become free from the darkness of the world of nature. This is the second birth. Man must always strive to have his spirit overcome his body. When his spirit overcomes his body, the second birth takes place and he becomes freed from imperfections. He becomes filled with virtues. He becomes nearer the Divine and follows the Divine teachings. He becomes like a lighted candle. This is the reality of the subject. But when he is immersed in the world of nature he is like an animal, a fierce animal. He displays all the worst qualities."

Sunday afternoon, 5 September Mt. Carmel, near the Tomb of the Báb

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Do you like it here? Do you like the view here?"

Miss Coy: "Yes. It is most beautiful."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The truth is that this place has a spiritual atmosphere. There are many beautiful views, but they have no spiritual atmosphere. All the prophets have been on Mt. Carmel, but in the mountains of Lebanon there were no prophets. It is strange that all the world is one, yet this part has become especially blessed. Palestine has been mentioned by God continually. But Sumal, Lebanon, and Damascus have never been mentioned. There was a magnificent temple of the sun at Baalbek. Its ruins still exist. It is written in the Qur'án:

“God gives His bounty and favour to whomsoever He willeth.” So it is with this land.

“The heart is attracted here. His Holiness Elijah dwelt in a cave below this spot. At that time all the children of Israel were opposed to the religion of God. They were engaged in their own passions and pursuits. Only their name indicated that they were the people of His Holiness Moses. If His Holiness Moses had come among them at that time he would not have recognized them. He would have said: ‘I do not consider them as my own, for they have entirely forsaken the religion of God. They are [XI:16:270] deprived of the law of God. There is no light at all remaining in them. They are like a Negro servant whose name is Diamond. His name is Diamond but he is a black servant. Such was their condition.

“Then His Holiness Elijah educated certain souls in this cave. He educated pure and sincere souls as they ought to be and sent them among the children of Israel. They began to teach and call the children of Israel back to God. They called them back again to the law of God. His Holiness Elijah gathered all their chief men together and brought them to the top of this mountain. There were three hundred and sixty of these chief men. But however much he taught and counselled them he obtained no result. He tried to guide them, but it was no use. For several years he worked to educate them. At the end no result was apparent. He realized that they would corrupt other souls. Then he had these three hundred and sixty men put to death. Then the rest of the children of Israel returned to their original spiritual morals and behaviour. Then they regained their spiritual life. The everlasting glory again became apparent. They overcame the neighbouring tribes. They rebuilt the Holy Temple. The laws of God were put into effect.

“Then when His Holiness Elijah had finished his work he left it and went away. He retired. They thought he had ascended to Heaven. But no, having accomplished his work, he retired. He had no attachment to the world. When his object was accomplished he retired from the world. When he realized that his work was done he devoted himself to his own development.

“The sincerity of a pure person is apparent in his deeds and activities. His Holiness Elijah tried very much and laboured very hard. Then when the way became smooth and the time of comfort and ease came he went away. He had no attachment to this world. All the thoughts of man, every trace which he leaves behind him must be heavenly. He must have no attachment to this world. This world is like the waves of the sea. It does not last. The wise person does not attach his heart to waves.”

Sunday, 5 September, at the supper table in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s house

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “I hope the health of the friends is good. Today you went to visit the Shrine of the Báb. Are you happy?”

“His Holiness Christ was once eating grapes. He said, ‘I will not eat grapes again until I eat them anew with you in the Kingdom.’ But the grapes of the Kingdom are not like these grapes (referring to the grapes on the table). In the Kingdom there are no grapes like these. Now also, I say to you all. We will eat together of the Divine Bounty, that is Divine food, God willing, in the Kingdom. Its taste is everlasting. Its strength and power is everlasting. God willing, we will eat together there of that heavenly food.”

Mabel Paine

XI:16, 31 December 1920 [XI:16:272]

Two important Tablets to the Bahá’ís of America, just received

To the friends of God—America—Unto them be the glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS THE MOST GLORIOUS!

O ye friends of God!

The world is still filled with tribulations and agitation, and the nations of the world are in fact in competition, strife and war with one another. In some countries there is also open warfare, and strife. The world of humanity is sick and unawakened and the physicians of morality are in conflict more than all other people: they have not yet discovered the cause of the sickness (of world), nay rather, they are utterly ignorant. In reality the physicians themselves are sicker, weaker and more avaricious than all. In spite of this, all the nations of the world are neglecting and disregarding the fact that, except the Divine Physician, who is well aware of the constitution of the world of humanity, no one can remedy these diseases and bestow the most effective antidote. Various diseases have so permeated the body of the world that the sick, together with the nurse and the physician, have become utterly helpless and are suffering great calamities.

Today the only community which has no prejudice and is not in conflict with any other community, and besides this wishes the good health, ease, comfort and harmony of the world of humanity, is this oppressed (Bahá'í) community. Notwithstanding this the peoples of the Orient are practicing the utmost oppression towards this persecuted community. In Persia every day they create some new disturbances and take recourse in false charges as a new [XI:16:273] pretext: the chiefs of the old religion instigate the masses in general to attack and wipe out all these persecuted souls.

Then pray ye that the friends in the Orient may remain protected and guarded. The firm and steadfast friends in the Orient in spite of this (persecution) are waving like unto the sea, and their utmost aspiration is to attain to the most great martyrdom. They have attained to complete severance, enkindlement and sincerity and are ready to ascend to the Kingdom of God. Verily, verily they are self-sacrificing and life-giving!

Formerly in Persia divorce was very easily obtained. Among the people of the old nation (Islám) a trifling matter would cause divorce. However, as the light of the Kingdom shone forth souls were quickened by the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh, then they utterly abstained from divorce. In Persia now divorce does not take place among the friends (Bahá'ís) unless something unbearable occurs which makes harmony impossible. Under these rare circumstances some cases of divorce take place.

Now the friends in America must live and conduct themselves in this way. They must strictly refrain from divorce unless something arises which compels them to separate because of their aversion for each other, then with the knowledge of the House of Spirituality they may decide to separate. They must then be patient and wait a year. If during this year harmony is not re-established between them then their divorce may be realized.

As soon as a slight friction or displeasure of the heart appears between the husband and wife, the husband should not think of union with some other woman; or, God forbid, the wife should also think of another husband! This is contrary to heavenly purity and real chastity. The friends of God must live and conduct themselves, exhibit excellence of character and refinement, in such a way as to make others astonished. The love between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it is to divide one single soul! Certainly there will appear great difficulties!

In short the foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony, love, oneness, relationship, union and not upon differences: especially between the husband and the wife. If one of these two becomes the cause of divorce, that one will unquestionably fall into great difficulties, shall become the victim of formidable calamities and shall experience deep remorse.

Unto you be the glory of Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 12 November 1920.

To the friends of God, America.

HE IS THE MOST GLORIOUS!

O ye friends of God!

The foundation of the Kingdom of God is laid upon justice, fairness, mercy, sympathy and kindness to every soul. Then strive ye with heart and soul to practice love and kindness to the world of humanity at large, except to those souls who are selfish and insincere. It is not advisable to show kindness to a person who is a tyrant, a traitor or a thief because kindness encourages him to become worse and does not awaken him. The more kindness you show to a liar the more he is apt to lie, for he thinks that you know not while you do know but extreme kindness keeps you from revealing your knowledge. [XI:16:274]

Then, O ye friends of God! Ye must not only have kind and merciful feelings for mankind, but ye should also exercise the utmost kindness towards every living creature. The physical sensibilities and instincts are common to animal and man. Man is, however, negligent of this reality and imagines that sensibility is peculiar to mankind, therefore he practices cruelty to the animal. In reality what difference is there in physical sensations! Sensibility is the same whether you harm man or animal; there is no difference. Nay rather, cruelty to the animal is more painful because man has a tongue and he sighs, complains and groans when he receives an injury and complains to the government and the government protects him from cruelty, but the poor animal cannot speak, it can neither show its suffering nor is it able to appeal to the government. If it is harmed a thousand times by man it is not able to defend itself in words nor can it seek justice or retaliate. Therefore one must be very considerate towards animals and show greater kindness to them than to man. Educate the children in their infancy in such a way that they may become exceedingly kind and merciful to the animals. If an animal is sick they should endeavour to cure it; if it is hungry they should feed it; if it is thirsty, they should satisfy its thirst; if it is tired they should give it rest.

Man is generally sinful and the animal is innocent; unquestionably one must be more kind and merciful to the innocent. The harmful animals, such as the bloodthirsty wolf, the poisonous snake and other injurious animals are excepted, because mercy towards these is cruelty to man, and other animals. For instance, if you show kindness to a wolf this becomes a tyranny to the sheep, for it (the wolf) may destroy an entire flock of sheep. If you give the opportunity to a mad dog it may be the cause of the destruction of a thousand animals and men. Therefore, sympathy to the ferocious animal is cruelty to the peaceful animal, so they (ferocious animals) should be done away with. To the blessed animals, however, the utmost kindness should be exercised: the more the better it will be. This sympathy and kindness is one of the fundamental principles of the divine kingdom. Ye should pay great attention to this question.

Unto ye be the glory of Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 12 November 1920.

XI:16, 31 December 1920 [XI:16:275]

Recent Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mr Hall

Through Áqá Mírzá Luţfu'lláh—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!—to his honour Mr Hall, Manchester, England.—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art attracted to the Word of God and herald of the Kingdom of God!

Two letters have been received from you. Their contents produced excessive joy, for they were indicative of this, that thou hast arisen in Manchester with a firm purpose, a superior power and a peaceful intention, and desiring to form a luminous meeting so that the friends may gather together. The manna which came from heaven for the disciples, was neither cress, onion, lentil, garlic nor leek. It was bounty and knowledge; it was faith and assurance; it was love and attraction; it was attachment and enkindlement by the fire of the love of God. These spiritual foods were present upon that table. As the disciples ate from these bounties of His Holiness Christ, they became filled with the love of Christ; they hastened to all parts of the world and heralded the Kingdom of God. My hope, from the unlimited grace, is that that gathering may also eat from this manna and bounties.

Convey this message on my behalf to Mr and Mrs Chessel: "O ye two birds of the gardens of the Kingdom, make a nest and dwelling like unto birds upon the Tree of Life, which is the heavenly teachings, and raise in a variety of tunes, melodious songs in the gardens of the Kingdom."

Convey longing greetings to Mr Joseph. Say: "As the Joseph of Egypt possessed real beauty and knowledge, he was in great demand in the Egyptian market. Although he was a stranger and abject, yet, as he had this splendour, he became then the beloved of the divine Egypt: attained eternal glory, and was addressed by his brothers, 'Verily, God hath given thee precedence over us.' Now thou bearest the same name. Strive in the path of the Kingdom so that thou mayest be addressed by all the friends with such a suitable address."

Convey on my behalf the utmost respect to Mr and Mrs Craven, and say:

"O ye two faithful souls! If ye announce the advent of the Kingdom and become the exhibition of divine happiness and heavenly exaltation, no doubt you will become two luminous candles and loved souls in that gathering."

Convey to Mr and Mrs Birch my profound Abhá greeting and say: "This is the century of Lights, and the age of the unfurling of the mysteries. All the existing beings are in growth and progress, and the realities of things sing the songs of praise and glorification to the Lord of Hosts, because the Sun of Reality hath shone in this century at the zenith, and energized all existence. This is why you observe every day some new discovery and superb lights appear on the stage of visibility."

Upon thee and upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Luṭfu'lláh S. Ḥakím, Haifa, Palestine, 12 February 1920.

XI:16, 31 December 1920 [XI:16:276]

Tablets to Bahá'ís in America received in 1919 and 1920

August Rudd

To his honour, Mr August Rudd—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou son of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Thy desire is to return to Sweden, thy home. In the country of Sweden the call of God is not yet raised. God willing, thou mayest be confirmed to raise the divine call in that country and be the cause of guidance unto a large multitude. Let not this

statement look strange to thee, because the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá are powerful. They make the feeble strong, and give feathers and wings to the featherless bird.

The maid-servant of God, Miss Knobloch, went from America to Germany. Of course thou hast heard how she stirred Germany and consequently how many souls were guided! Now I supplicate to God that thou mayst be more (than she) confirmed, so that that dark country of the world of nature may be illumined with the heavenly luminosity. Feel assured that confirmation will reach thee.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa.

Ferdinand Peterson

To his honour Mr Ferdinand Peterson, Racine, Wisconsin—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of the Divine Threshold!

Thy letter was received. Thou hadst written that this year thou hast attended the Convention, hast been present at that illumined assemblage, hast heard those merciful addresses, hast secured a fresh spirit and hast increased in faith, assurance and firmness in the Covenant. Appreciate the value of this lordly bounty and thank God that thou art living in the dispensation of the Covenant, and art attracted to the Sun of the Reality of the Abhá Beauty—May my life be a sacrifice to His friends!

Thou hadst written concerning the piece of land which thou desirest to sell and consecrate its price to the Cause of God. At present do not hurry, and let it remain in your hands.

On behalf of the friends in Racine I supplicate and entreat at the Divine Threshold, and beg for them a new outpouring of the Spirit, so that they may be stirred and quickened, may be animated and enlivened, may promulgate the Divine teachings, strive for the oneness of the world of humanity, and serve the principle of universal peace.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Bahjí, 'Akká, Palestine, 20 July 1919.

Mrs Waite

To the attracted maid-servant of God, Mrs Shahnáz Waite—Upon her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou sweet singing bird!

The new song¹ has been received. Verily, verily art thou raising sweet melodies in the Rose-garden of the love of God. The vibration of this melody will, forever, give pleasure to the ears of the children of the Kingdom.

Upon thee be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, 15 August 1920, Haifa, Palestine. [XI:16:277]

William F. Kyle

To his honour, William F. Kyle; Red Wing, Minnesota—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

¹ Song entitled, "The New Liberty Bell", dedicated to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Bahá'í Juniors.—Shahnáz Waite.

HE IS GOD!

O thou servant of God!

Thy letter was received. On thy behalf I prayed to God and supplicated to the Kingdom of God that thou mayest be detached from this world, may become self-effaced and may be thinking of the everlasting Kingdom. The foundation of this world is not secure and is of no consequence. One should devote his time to it as much as it is necessary [XI:16:278] and the rest of his time he should consecrate to the Kingdom of God, so that eternal illumination may be secured and everlasting existence may be attained.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 'Akká, Palestine, 25 July 1919.

XI:17, 19 January 1921 [XI:17:282]

Tablet to Fanny Knobloch

To the maid-servant of God, Fanny Knobloch, South Africa, the sister of Alma Knobloch, Germany—Upon her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

Thy letter has been received. Verily, thy sister has lighted a lamp in Germany. God willing, thou wilt be to a larger extent confirmed. Thou wilt kindle a luminous lamp. It may be the Government of those regions will check thee. Thou shouldst say:

“I am a Bahá'í and am a friend to all religions and nations. I consider all to be of one race and count them as my relatives. I have divine love and not racial and sectarian love. According to the explicit written Command of Bahá'u'lláh, I do not pronounce a word pertaining to politics, because we are forbidden to interfere in political affairs. We are concerned with affairs which are heavenly. We are servants unto the world of morality. We consider that religious, racial, political and national prejudices are destructive to the world of humanity. We believe that the whole of the surface of the earth constitutes one home and all mankind form one family. With all we associate in the utmost sincerity and kindness.”

Upon thee be the Glory of Abhá!

[Signed] 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 10 August 1920.

XI:17, 19 January 1921 [XI:17:283]

His story

What an Oriental said to an Occidental.

Arthur S. Agnew

One evening in Cairo two gentlemen called upon us at the hotel where we were stopping. They were friends of our interpreter. Both were tall and straight, dressed in long, flowing, spotless robes, and would have been received as men of distinction in any gathering. One of them was a man of the desert and in our rooms at the hotel he seemed as far away from contact with worldly things as if he were out under the stars alone with his God. The vitalized air of the desert seemed to float around and exhale from him. After enjoying a very pleasant visit we noticed he was having quite a lengthy conversation with the interpreter, and as the words of his discourse began to come to us through the interpreter we found ourselves listening to a most profound discourse. Had we known what was coming we would have

taken notes from the beginning, so great was the impression made upon us all. As it was, the words were ended, they had bidden us adieu and were gone before we realized it.

That was many years ago and now it seems fit that this thought should be recorded. But I regret that I shall have to express it in my own way, for I cannot remember his illustrations nor ever hope to produce anything like the wonderful words he used; all I can remember is the great idea he so beautifully set forth.

Before attempting to reproduce his argument, I wish to bear tribute to the wonderful personality of this man of the desert, the winds that cheered him seemed to blow over the desert of self-forgetfulness of his heart and its luminous stars seemed mirrored in his eyes, while his whole being seemed warmed with the spirit of severance from all things save God.

Consider first that little animal or insect whose life consists of less than a day (ephemeral)—of which the morning sun witnesses the birth and the entire life is consummated before the evening sun sets beneath the horizon. If it were an intelligent thinking creature it would assume the world to be eternally bathed in sunlight.

Consider next the annual plants of our gardens. Their life begins with the warm days of spring and under the impelling force of the summer sunlight they burst into bloom and in the chill days of autumn fold their leaves about them and close up their existence. If they were intelligent thinking creatures they would know the sun not only shines in the daytime but drops below the horizon at night to furnish a period of sleep, rest and refreshment, only to arise again on the following day a fiery orb to demand of them new exertion.

Now consider the shrubs and trees which survive the winter and which make a greater growth each year. If they were intelligent thinking creatures they would know that not only day follows night and night follows day, but that another action of the earth and sun caused the sun to rise from a new point [XI:17:284] on the horizon each day, producing the seasons, and that this underlying action of the seasons does not in any way interfere or prevent the sun rising each morning and setting each evening. They would know that here were two apparently independent actions, the one causing the days and nights and the other causing the seasons of the year. These two actions, one complete in twenty-four hours and the other complete in 365 days, operate independently of each other but in perfect accord, the one like the waves on the surface of the ocean, the other like the great tide.

Now let us consider human life. It passes through babyhood, childhood, youth, manhood, middle age and old age. Each life is lived moment by moment; each thought, each decision, is of only a moment's duration, for time moves on imperceptibly in a way impossible to measure; yet the higher the intelligence, and the greater and more important the life, the greater the underlying purpose which moves steadily on from the moment of birth to that of death.

Without using further illustrations, if you examine everything you will find in it the momentary action and underneath the great design, the wave on the surface and the great tidal movement, the thought of the moment and the great underlying purpose.

Man's greatest endeavour is to find his perfect relationship with himself, his family, his neighbours, his country and his God. Only through religion is he able to do this, for without it he cannot find the balance between the personal and the universal. What is universal to man is personal to the neighbourhood. What is universal to the neighbourhood is personal to the nation. That is, to make a united nation each neighbourhood must set aside its own personal wishes in part to become a unit of the government, and each man must set aside his own personal wishes in part and look at things in a universal way to have a good neighbourhood. Religion furnishes this perfect balance between the personal demands and the universal demands, because, when man sets aside his own idea of God and accepts the idea of God as set

forth by the Manifestations of God, he finds unity in idea, and among men the proper appreciation of values becomes realized.

Now let us consider the religions and see if we find in them the solution of the needs of the hour and also the great underlying purpose as we find throughout nature.

The Holy Land has been the centre of religious exposition from the time of our father Abraham. The Mountain of Carmel has seen the manifestation of the will of God to men from Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad and Bahá'u'lláh. Abraham came from Ur of the Chaldees, he journeyed up the Mesopotamian valley, through the fertile crescent at the north of the Arabian Desert till he came to the Holy Land. He met the needs of the hour by setting up a patriarchal form of government and left the promise that sometime all men would become as brothers and that this Covenant God made with him would become established throughout the world.

To this land came Moses from Egypt and he met the needs of the hour by establishing the principle of law, and Moses and the prophets promised a future time when peace should reign supreme, when men would beat their spears into ploughshares and not learn war any more.

To this land also came Jesus, to a land sanctified by the feet of the Holy ones before him, to a land flowing with the milk and honey of spiritual endowment. He taught the needs of the hour in the law of love and forgiveness, and he established the church or sanctuary as a place to keep alive this sacred flame of love lest the feet of the fierce ones of the world stamp it out. It was like the sweet childhood of religion, the manifestation of the Son of God.

And to this land came also Muḥammad. He taught the wild tribes of the [XI:17:285] desert, and he met the needs of the day in his strong denunciation of error and wrong, in his fearless stand for righteousness and justice, and established unity in the statement that "There is no God but God and Muḥammad is his prophet." The teachings of Muḥammad are very little known in the Christian world, and it is only through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh that they can be understood by Christians.

And now comes in this day to the Holy Land the manifestation of God for this day, Bahá'u'lláh. Although this is new and the centuries have not yet accorded their wealth of adoration, it is not necessary to ask whether it is true or not, it is only necessary to take the instructions of Bahá'u'lláh and put them into practice in our lives to realize the warmth in the heart and the spiritual enlightenment which follows. The proof of the sun is to step into the sunshine. No need to ask the little plant whether it receives its warmth from the sun or from the cool dews of the evening. This great revelation was vested in three persons, the Báb, the forerunner; Bahá'u'lláh, the great central figure, revealer of the Words of Life; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the successor, the explainer, the Centre of the Covenant. Bahá'u'lláh, although born in Persia; was transported to the Holy Land through the action of the Persian and Turkish governments. Apparently through no will of his own he followed in a more extended way the journeying of Abraham. Abraham came with his family and his flocks—Bahá'u'lláh came a prisoner and an exile, but he also came in majesty the like of which the world has never before witnessed.

It is not the purpose here to enter into a detailed account of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. It is sufficient to say that he has with divine power opened up the sacred mysteries of all religions, torn away all the barriers which separate mankind into unkind groups, made it possible for all humankind to enter into one body, of one thought and purpose under the banner of love and service, in a way entirely satisfying to the judgement of mind and heart. All this with perfect order, everything provided in the fulfilment of this Covenant, even to the appointing of the Centre of the Covenant in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

It is possible that mankind may reject this wonderful and perfect gift—but then again it is not possible. It is inconceivable that a purpose extending down through the ages from before

Abraham should fail at the appointed time of its consummation through the lack of human minds and hearts to receive it. The Word of God has power to change the heart—history has shown that it can raise up from the stones children to Abraham. The heart of the world is good. Its power for good has been weakened by separation, it has grown up in separate groups, kept apart by lack of understanding which has grown into prejudice. This prejudice will fade away before the divine power of this wonderful unfoldment (revelation) as the mists fade away before the morning sun. Nothing can prevent the consummation of the divine plan throughout the ages. “These ruinous wars, this fruitless strife must cease and all men become as one family.”

So we find religion conforms to the great natural law. The Spirit of God attaches itself from time to time to certain holy souls of such radiant purity that they are able to reflect to mankind the will of God. Each one is a manifestation of the will of God for the needs of humanity in their day, and opens up a new era. From Abraham down through each new manifestation, in Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad, the world has been prepared for the time when the promised Covenant might be fulfilled. And the need of this day in which we are now living is for the establishment of this age-old promised Covenant. For the first time in history the Manifestation of God has come at a time when all parts of the world are in [XI:17:286] daily communication with each other. At no previous Manifestation could the whole world be united, for during the day of Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad the western continents of North and South America had not yet been discovered.

When the people of the world unite in this great idea, set aside their own wills for the will of God (throughout the ages), the Divine Master will prevail and the world become the Paradise of Union, Love and Service, the brotherhood of man will be realized in the fatherhood of God, the Covenant to Abraham will have been fulfilled, the great underlying wave will have reached the surface.

Such was the great idea left with us by this pure-hearted, charming soul of the desert, and I think you will agree with us in the thought we expressed at the time we listened to him—that in his heart the desert had blossomed as a rose. This and kindred thoughts were in our minds on this pleasant evening, meeting with such a delightful personality and listening to such a wonderful story.

XI:17, 19 January 1921 [XI:17:286]

The Bahá'í movement and Esperanto

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, compiled by Rufus W. Powell.

September 1901

'Abdu'l-Bahá said to some pilgrims, “The differences between this Revelation and that of Jesus Christ are, that in this cycle all the inhabitants of the world will be gathered into one nation; universal peace will prevail, bloodshed and war will cease; there will be a universal language; union and harmony will reach its highest state.”

December 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

“All through America I have encouraged the Bahá'ís to study Esperanto and to the extent of my ability I will strive in its spread and promotion.”

Extract from an address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on International Language,¹ given in Edinburgh,

¹ Refer to full article in *Star of the West*, XI:18, pp. 299–303.

Scotland, 7 January 1913, under the auspices of the Edinburgh Esperanto Society, during which he said:

“His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, many years ago, wrote a book called *The Most Holy Book*, one of the fundamental [XI:17:287] principles of which is the necessity of creating an auxiliary language, and he makes clear the good and profit which will come because of its use. Now let us thank the Lord because this language, Esperanto, has been created. We, therefore, have commanded all Bahá’ís in the East to study this language very carefully, and ere long it will be spread through the entire East. I also beg of you all, Esperantists and non-Esperantists, to work energetically for the spread of this language, for it will hasten the coming of that day, that millennial day, foretold by prophets and seers, in which it is said that the wolf and the lamb shall drink from the same fountain, the lion and the deer shall feed in the same pasture. The meaning of this holy writing is that hostile races, warring nations and differing religions shall become united in the spirit of love, and will become bound together, one with the other.”

While on a visit at Clifton, England, 16 January 1913, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed a meeting there, during which he said:

“The tenth principle is the establishment of a universal language so that we will not have to acquire so many languages in the future. In schools they will study two, the mother tongue and the international auxiliary language. The use of an international auxiliary language will become a great means of dispelling the differences between nations.”

Address by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the Esperanto Banquet, given at Hotel Moderne in Paris, France, 12 February 1913:

“In the human world there are two kinds of undertaking, universal and particular. The result of every universal undertaking is infinite, and the outcome of every particular undertaking is finite. In this age all the human problems which create a general interest are universal and their results are likewise universal, for humanity has become interdependent. Today international laws have great influence, international policies are bringing nations nearer to one another. Therefore it is a general axiom that in the human world every universal affair commands attention, and its results and benefits are limitless; therefore let us say that every universal cause is divine and every special matter is human. For instance, the universal light is from the sun, therefore it is divine. Special light which is electric and which has illumined this banquet hall is through the invention of man. By this I mean that all the affairs in the world of humanity which are trying to establish solidarity between nations and infuse the spirit of universalism in the hearts are divine. Consequently we can say that the international auxiliary language is one of the greatest virtues of the world of humanity, for such an instrument will remove misunderstandings from amongst the people, and will cement their hearts together. The universal auxiliary language will be the means for each individual in the world of humanity to become enabled to be informed of the scientific accomplishments of all his fellow men.

“The basis of knowledge and the excellencies of the world are to teach and be taught. To acquire sciences, and to teach them in turn, depends on language; therefore, when the international auxiliary language becomes universal, it is easily conceivable that the acquirement of knowledge and instruction will likewise become universal.

“No doubt you are aware that in the past ages a common language shared by various nations created a spirit of interdependence and solidarity among them. For instance, one thousand three hundred years ago there were very many divergent nationalities in the Orient.

There were Copts in Egypt, Syrians in Syria, Assyrians in Musel,¹ Babylonians in Baghdád along the river Mesopotamia. There existed between these nations di- [XI:17:290] vergence of opinion and hatred, but as they were slowly brought near to one another, finding common interests, they made the Arabic language a common vehicle of speech among them. The study of this common language by all made them as one nation. We know very well today that the Assyrians are not Arabs, that the Copts, Syrians, Chaldeans and Egyptians are not Arabs. Each one of these nations belongs to its own sphere of nationality, but, as they all began to study the Arabic language, making it a vehicle of intercommunication, today, they are all considered as one. They are so united that it is impossible to break this indissoluble bond. Today in Syria there are many religious sects, such as Orthodox, Muslim, the Dorzi,² Nestorians and so on. As they all speak Arabic they are considered as one; if you ask any one of them, he will say: I am an Arab, though in reality he is not. Some of them are Greeks, others are Jews, etc. In short, there are many different nations and religions in the Orient that are united through the benefit of a common language. In the world of existence an international auxiliary language is the greatest bond to unite the people. Today the causes of differences in Europe are the diversities of language. We say, this man is a German, the other is an Italian, then we meet an Englishman and then again a Frenchman. Although they belong to the same race, yet, language is the greatest barrier between them. Were a universal auxiliary language now in operation they would all be considered as one. Just as in the Orient a common language created common interests between the various nations, likewise, in this age a universal auxiliary language would unite all the people of the world. The purpose of my remarks is, that, in the world of humanity, the greatest influence which will work for unity and harmony among the nations is the teaching of a universal language. Every intelligent man will bear testimony to this, and there is no further need of argument or evidence. Therefore His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh wrote about this international language more than forty years ago. He says that as long as an international language is not invented complete union between the various sections of the world will be unrealized, for we observe that misunderstandings keep people from mutual association, and these misunderstandings will not be dispelled except through an international auxiliary language. Generally speaking the whole people of the Orient are not fully informed of the events in the West, neither can the Westerners put themselves in sympathetic touch with the Easterners—their thoughts are enclosed in a casket—the international language will be the master key to open it. Were we in possession of this universal language, the Western books could easily be translated into this language, and the Easterners be informed of their contents. In the same way the books of the East could be translated into that language for the benefit of the Westerners. Thus will the misunderstandings that exist between different religions be dispersed. They bring about warfare and strife, and it is impossible to remove them without this universal language being spread everywhere. I am an Easterner and on this account I know nothing of your thoughts because an international language is not yet in vogue. Likewise you of the West are shut out of my thoughts. If we had a common language both of us would be informed of the other's thoughts. Consequently the strongest means of universal progress towards the union of East and West is this language. It will make the whole world one home and will become the greatest impulse for human advancement. It will upraise the standard of the oneness of the world of humanity, it will make the earth one uni- [XI:17:291] versal commonwealth. It will be the cause of love between the children of men. It will cause good fellowship between the various races. Now, praise be to God, that Dr Zamenhof has invented the Esperanto language. It has all the potential qualities of becoming the international means of communication. All of us must be grateful and thankful to him for this noble effort, for in this way he has served his fellow-men well. He has invented a language which will bestow the greatest benefits on all

¹ al-Maşil, Mosul, Iraq.

² Durzí (Druze).

people. With untiring effort and self sacrifice on the part of its devotees it will become universal. Therefore every one of us must study this language and spread it as far as possible so that day by day it may receive a broader recognition, be accepted by all nations and governments of the world and become a part of the curriculum in all the public schools. I hope that the language of all the future international conferences and congresses will become Esperanto, so that all people may acquire only two languages—one their own tongue and the other the international auxiliary language. Then perfect union will be established between all the people of the world. Consider how difficult it is today to communicate with various nations. If one studies fifty languages one may yet travel through a country and not know the language. I know several languages of the Orient, but do not know the Western tongues. If this international language were in force, having studied it, I should be able to speak it and you would have been directly informed of my thoughts, and a special friendship established between every one of us. The lack of such a language is now a great barrier.

“Therefore I hope that you will make the utmost effort, so that this language of Esperanto may be widely spread. Send some teachers to Persia if you can, so that they may teach it to the young people, and I have written to Persia to tell some of the Persians to come here to study it.

“I hope that this language will be promulgated very quickly and the world of humanity finds eternal peace; that all the nations may associate with one another and become as brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers; then each individual member of the body politic will be fully informed of the thoughts of all.

“I am extremely grateful to you, and thank you for these lofty aims, for you have gathered at this banquet to further this language.

“Your hope is to render a mighty service to the world of humanity, and for this great aim I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart.”

Extract from Address of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Theosophical Society of Paris, France, Thursday evening, 13 February 1913.

“We observe that today the means of unity are brought about. This in itself is an evidence that the divine confirmations are with us. One of the principles of the oneness of the world of humanity is the invention of the universal auxiliary language, Esperanto. We observe that this language is spreading daily, and its advocates are increasing. It is indubitable that the universal auxiliary language will become instrumental in wiping away the present misunderstandings and each individual will be able to be informed of the thought of all humanity.

“Therefore we must all strive to spread among our fellow men this language. This international auxiliary language will be an introduction to the establishment of the oneness of the world of humanity. The greatest efforts must be displayed in this direction.”

Excerpt from Tablet, 10 January 1919:

“My hope is that the Esperantists may become attracted by these epistles and may consider the magnitude of confirmation bestowed upon the Esperanto Language and may endeavour to translate some of the important Tablets of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh and propagate them all around.”

XI:17, 19 January 1921 [XI:17:287]

Second Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to the Committee of Universal Peace at the Hague¹

To the Honourable Executive Committee of Universal Peace.

HE IS GOD!

O ye honourable Members!

Your kind answer to my letter, dated 12 June 1920, has arrived and greatly pleased me. Praise be unto God, that it was indicative of the fact that your motive and purpose is identical with that of ours. Its contents also consisted of spiritual susceptibilities which are expressive of sincere love.

We, Bahá'ís, feel great affection towards that honourable Assembly. Therefore have we sent two honoured persons to that highly esteemed Assembly as a sign of strong relationship.

Today the most important problem in the affairs of the world of humanity is that of the Universal Peace, which is the greatest means contributing to the very life and happiness of mankind. Without this most luminous reality it is impossible for humanity to attain to actual comfort and proficiency. Nay rather, shall it have, day by day, some additional misfortune and tragedy.

This last terrible war has clearly proved that the modern war implements are beyond the endurance of the world of humanity. The future cannot, however, be compared with the past, because the arms and war implements of the past were very simple, while the modern armaments can, in a short time, exterminate the whole of the human world, and so they are beyond the endurance of mankind. [XI:17:289]

Therefore Universal Peace is, in this age, like unto the sun which is the cause of life to all beings. So it is of prime importance and incumbent upon every individual to strive for this most significant end. Now with oneness of goal we, I mean ye and we, will strive with all our strength, sacrificing (in this path) property, life and family.

As ye may no doubt have heard, thousands of souls, (Bahá'ís) have, in Persia, sacrificed their lives in this path and thousands of homes have undergone destruction. Notwithstanding this, we have not yielded to disappointment. Up to the present, we have been striving and every day we are putting forth a new effort. Why? Because peace-loving is not only one of the products of the intellect, but also it is a belief based on faith and it is one of the eternal principles of God. Therefore, we are striving with all our energy; disregarding our self-interests, rest, comfort and even the management of our own affairs of life, because we consider this noble motive as the very foundation of the religions of God. It is a service to the Kingdom of God. It contributes to the attainment of eternal life and is the greatest means for the entrance into the Kingdom of the Merciful.

Today the advantages of Universal Peace are to mankind well proved and the disadvantages of war are similarly unquestioned by all. But in this problem, knowledge alone is not sufficient. An executive force is needed so that it (Universal Peace) may become established throughout the world. Ye should be thinking to draw help from some spiritual executive force so that this lofty ideal may be brought out from the stage of imagination into that of realization. And it is evident that this most great aspiration cannot be attained through the ordinary emotions. Nay rather, it needs intense spiritual feelings to turn it from potentiality to actuality.

¹ The first Tablet is in *Star of the West*, Vol. XI:8, pp. 123-127, 129-134.

Almost all the people of the earth know that amiability of character is praiseworthy and desirable and that badness of character is despised and distasteful. Similarly do they know that justice and fairness is agreeable and attractive and cruelty and tyranny abominable and repulsive. Notwithstanding this, all the people, with the exception of a limited number, are lacking in praiseworthy character and justice.

Therefore, they are in need of a spiritual force and higher sentiments to improve their character. Our firm belief is that the executive power for this great problem is the power of the Word of God and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit.

We feel great relationship, love and union with ye. With heart and soul, we are longing for the day when the pavilion of the oneness of the world of humanity may be pitched in the world and the banner of Universal Peace may wave upon all horizons. Therefore the oneness of the world of humanity should be established in order that the edifice of Universal Peace may be erected.

That honourable Assembly, which is the well-wisher of the world of humanity, is highly honoured by all Bahá'ís. Therefore do we ask ye to kindly accept our highest respects and to keep us always informed of the progress of Universal Peace in Europe. Constant communication should be carried on between us.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh Khan S. Bahádur, Haifa, Mount Carmel, Palestine, 12 July 1920.

XI:18, 7 February 1921 [XI:18:299]

International language

Address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, delivered at Edinburgh on 7 January 1913, under the auspices of the Edinburgh Esperanto Society. Translated into English and Esperanto.

Every movement in the world of humanity bringing on its back unity and accord is good; and every matter which creates discord and disharmony is evil. This century is a radiant century. Its discoveries are many. Its inventions are great. Its undertakings are multitudinous. On account of these great accomplishments, this century is superior to all other centuries. But the greatest undertaking is the unification of language, because it is more beneficial and productive of more pleasure than any other undertaking of this age. The unity of language brings about great fellowship between hearts. The union of language is the cause of the attainment of accord. It brings about the entire sweeping away of misunderstanding between the people; it establishes accord between all the children of men. It gives broader conceptions and greater vision to human minds, and today the greatest undertaking in the world of humanity is to understand and make yourself understood. Every individual member of the body politic, on account of the widespread of an auxiliary international language, will be enabled to put himself in touch with the current events and ethical and scientific discoveries of the age. An auxiliary universal language will give us the key—or the master key—to the understanding of the secrets of the past ages. Through an international language every nation in the future will be enabled to pursue its scientific discoveries very easily and without any difficulty. [XI:18:300]

It is well known to you that the Oriental people, young men coming to the West trying laboriously to study the discoveries of the West, for many years must work hard, so that first they may study the language and then their special branch of learning. At the very least, they must give many years of their life to the study of the language of the country they go to; then they can start on the study of that special branch of science in which they are interested. For example, let us suppose that a young man from India or Persia or Turkistán or Arabia, desiring to study medicine, comes to this country; at the very least he must study the English language for four years, and nothing else; and then he may begin the study of medicine. But if

this international auxiliary language were a part of the curriculum of education in all the schools, in his childhood he would study that language in his own country; and then, no matter to which country he desired to go, he would be enabled to study his special branch of science very easily, without losing any years of his life.

Today, even if each one of us studied languages, yet, if some one desired to travel abroad, he might be handicapped on account of not knowing the special language of a given country. I have studied the Oriental languages very profoundly, knowing the Arabic language more deeply than the Arabians themselves, having studied the Turkish language and the Persian in my own native land, and knowing other languages of the East, yet, when I came to the West, I was obliged to bring a translator with me, and it is as if I know no language whatever. But if there were an international language, well, the Persian language of my own native land and the other one would have been sufficient to carry me along in all the countries of the world. Just think how the international language will facilitate communication between all nations of the world. Let it be said that half of our lives is spent in the acquirement of [XI:18:301] languages; for in this enlightened age every man must study languages, so that if he expects to travel to Asia and Africa and Europe he may be able to converse with the people; but by the time he has studied one language, there is another one to travel to. So you see that his life is spent in the acquirement of these languages, which are a handicap to international communication. Well, this international language will free man from all these problems. In short, to understand and make yourself understood, there must needs be an international instrument. The teacher and the student must know each other's language, so that the teacher may be able to impart his knowledge and the student acquire that knowledge. In the world of humanity there is no greater factor than to make yourself understood to your fellowmen, for civilization itself, the progress of civilization, depends upon this process. To acquire arts and sciences one must know how to speak, make himself understand and understood at the same time. So on this understanding and making yourself understood will depend the acquisition of sciences, and it will make men comprehend all affairs of life; and this process of understanding and making yourself understood depends upon language. Therefore, if this auxiliary language is established, all the members of humanity will then be enabled to understand each other. As I speak now, an episode comes to my mind which happened in Baghdád. There were two friends who did not know each other's language. One of them got sick; the other one called upon him, but he could not express his sympathy, so by making a sign he asked him, "How are you?" By making another sign, the sick man answered "I am almost dying," and the friend who called, thinking that he had told him that he was feeling much better, said, "Thanks be to God." By such incidents you realize that the best thing in this world is to be able to make yourself understood by your friends, and also to [XI:18:302] understand them, and there is nothing worse in this world than not to be able to convey your thoughts. But if there is this auxiliary language, all these difficulties will be removed.

Now, praise to God, this language of Esperanto is invented, and this is one of the special endowments of this brilliant century; this is one of the greatest undertakings of this great age. Up to this time the world of humanity has failed to bring about this invention. This unification of languages had never crossed the minds of the thinkers of the past ages, and in reality it was an impossibility in those times, because then there was no freedom in going and coming, and no travelling and no intercourse between the various countries. Now the means of communication and transport are greatly increased, therefore it is necessary and it is possible to bring about the use of this international language.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh fifty years ago wrote a book; that book is called "The Most Holy Book", and in that book one of the fundamental principles of the Bahá'í movement is that there must be the invention of an auxiliary language; and then he goes on to explain the benefits and profits that will accrue through such a medium. Now, let us thank the Lord

because this Esperanto language has been created. Therefore we have commanded all the Bahá'ís in the Orient to study this language very carefully, and ere long it will spread all over the East. Therefore I request you also, non-Esperantists and fellow-Esperantists, to put your utmost exertion into the spread and promulgation of this language, because it will hasten that day, that millennial day, which has been prophesied by the past prophets and seers, that day in which, it is said, the wolf and lamb will drink from the same fount, the lion and the deer graze in the same meadow. The signification of this Holy Writ is that the contesting races, warring nations, inimical religions, will come to each other in the spirit of love and amity—then, the day-spring of that [XI:18:303] millennium; and every means, every instrument which confers unity and amity upon the children of men, that is love and that is the spirit.

As we said, the greatest affair in this world is the reality of an auxiliary international language. The unification of language will transform the world of humanity into one world; the unification of language will do away with the misunderstandings between religions, and the unification of language will bring together the East and the West in the spirit of fellowship and love. The unification of language will change this world of many families into one family. This auxiliary international language will gather the various races under one cover, as if the five continents of the world had become one continent, because then they can convey their thoughts to each other. The international auxiliary language will do away with ignorance and superstition, for each child, no matter to which race or nation he may belong, will be able to pursue his studies in science and art, because at that time he will be called on to study only two languages—one his own native language, and one the international auxiliary language. Let us hope for that day, when even the boundaries of native languages will be swept away and the world will enjoy one language. What greater bounty is there than this? What more munificent welfare is there than this? Then the world of humanity will become the delectable paradise, just as it is said that in heaven there is one language. The material world will become the expression of the world of the inner. Then the discoveries will be unfolded; inventions will become multiple; sciences will advance by leaps and bounds; scientific agriculture will take a wider sphere of accomplishment, because at that time the nations will be able quickly to assimilate the thoughts which are expressed, and because all these thoughts will be expressed in that universal language. If this international language is a factor in the future, all [XI:18:306] the countries of the East will be enabled to acquire the sciences of the West in no time, because they will be able to read these books and comprehend their meaning; and the Western nations will be enabled to acquire the thoughts and ideas of the East, and through this they will be enabled to improve their condition. In short, on account of the establishment of this international language, the world of humanity will become another world; extraordinary progress will be attained. Take, for example, a family in which the various members speak each a different language; how difficult it is for them to convey their thoughts to one another, and how great and wonderful it is when they are able easily to understand one another's thoughts. For if they know one another's language, they will go on very rapidly; there is no doubt whatever about this. Therefore it is our hope that the Esperanto language will spread universally before long, that it may be promulgated in all the countries, so that all the people may live together in the spirit of amity and love.

XI:18, 7 February 1921 [XI:18:306]

Tablets to Bahá'ís in America received in 1919 and 1920

James Morton, Jr.

Through Mr Wilhelm to Mr James Morton, Jr., New York City—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou firm in the Covenant!

As to thy attendance at the Esperanto Congress at the Hague in the month of August, it is very advisable. Thou shouldst show utmost efficiency thereat, in order to spread the divine teachings, one of which is the oneness of language; and thence thou shouldst proceed to the desired land (Haifa and 'Akká). Then from here thou shouldst hasten to Persia, and return to America, where thou shouldst give lectures, explain what thou hast experienced and give the glad tidings of the greatness of the Cause of God.

Upon thee be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, 27 March 1920, Haifa.

Marie Watson

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Marie Watson—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou Herald of the Covenant!

Thy detailed letters have been re- [XI:18:307] ceived, and have been attentively perused. Praise thou God, that thou art confirmed in service to the Kingdom and art encompassed by the blessings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. Heavenly confirmations are descending upon thee and lordly assistance is encircling thee. Thou art eloquent at every gathering and art responded to at every assemblage. Souls listen in the utmost gladness to thy words and in case a soul objects or antagonizes he will ultimately be awakened and made aware, for the powerful and mighty souls and the ruling potentates have failed to resist the call of the Kingdom. Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh, the Sovereign of Persia, and 'Abdu'l Ḥamíd, the Sultán of Turkey, have tried to resist the call with all their power and might, but the call has been raised higher every day and those two blood-thirsty autocratic sovereigns have been inflicted with a severe loss and disappointment.

In short, engage with all thy power in raising the call of the Kingdom of God and rest thou assured that assistance and confirmation shall descend upon thee. The attracted maid-servant of God, Miss Juliet Thompson, is indeed spiritual, lordly and merciful. Extend to her my greeting. His honour, Mr Wilhelm, exerts his effort under all conditions and contributes extensively for the Bahá'í Cause. Undoubtedly, other souls should join him in promoting the work of teaching. To the believing maid-servant of God, Miss Buskin, convey greeting and congratulation for her marriage.

Souls are still unaware of the power of the Covenant. This testament is neither a tradition or a tale. It has been established through the pen of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh with the utmost firmness and undoubtedly if all the people of the world join in endeavouring to uproot it, they will all eventually fail and be disappointed. What can therefore a handful of people do?

The power of the Covenant is like unto the sun and those who have acted contrary to it are like transparent clouds. The Sun of the Covenant dissipates dense clouds and causes them to vanish. What then will it do to these imaginary mists? Thou dost consider that in all regions the Call of the Covenant is being raised and in the utmost power. His Holiness Christ said to Peter, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." This Word could not be resisted by all the people of the world and eventually it has been made evident and manifest. At present His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has through His sacred pen established this Covenant in the utmost power, perfection and clearness. Consider then what power it yields. At present some superficial souls like unto bats are plotting together in the dark, and say to one another that this Sun of the Covenant shall be eclipsed and the resplendent Moon of the Testament shall be concealed. But the Sun of the Covenant through one effulgence shall disperse and

annihilate these bats.

The poems were in the utmost sweetness and delicacy. My hope from the bounties of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh is that thou mayest become the cause of the awakening, the supplication, the prayer and the guidance of souls.

In case Mr Kelsey will in the utmost longing and desire join thee in thy journey to China, Japan and India, and is able to endure its hardships, and will not give up its responsibilities, it is highly advisable.

Convey to Dr Mullaney on my behalf the utmost kindness and give her this message: "Praise thou God, that in the midst of this darkness that has encompassed this world thou hast been illumined, and hast been guided and hast been made the recipient of bounty. Thou must be eternally grateful to the soul who has been the cause of thy guidance, for that soul hath guided thee." [XI:18:308]

Convey to Dr McMannon on my behalf respectful greeting. My hope is that through the light of the love of God he may become an ignited candle and a flower of the rose-garden. Upon them be Bahá'u'lláh!

Any soul that may like to accompany thee with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction in thy trip and has ability and capacity and will show thee full consideration, thou mayest select and choose to be thy fellow-traveller.

Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine, 24 December 1919.

Mr and Mrs Killius

To Mr and Mrs A. C. Killius, Montana—Upon them be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two who are firm in the Covenant!

Your letter dated 28 January 1920 has been received. Its contents were indicative of heartfelt realities, which were conducive to firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant of God.

Although in the body of the universe there are innumerable nerves, yet the main artery, which pulsates, energizes, and invigorates all beings, is the power of the Covenant. All else is secondary to this. Nobody is assisted and confirmed save that soul who is firm. Consider it well that every soul who is firm in the Covenant is luminous, like unto a candle which emanates its light on those around it. While every wavering soul is an utter failure, frozen, lifeless, dead yet moving. This one proof is sufficient.

Ye should render thanksgiving unto God, that ye are able to travel throughout the states and regions, and like unto the breeze of spring, transmit new spirit to every city through which ye pass.

Praise be unto God, that thy departed father turned his face to the Supreme Aspect. He drank from the Chalice of Guidance, and soared without feather or wing to the Infinite Paradise. I am supplicating unto God that thy honoured mother may also attain to guidance. The date¹ 1335 is not lunar, it is solar, therefore it has not yet arrived.

Praise be unto God, that in Springfield, Illinois, the fragrances of the love of God have been diffused and the call of the Kingdom hath been raised. The photograph of dear son Russell was observed. Verily, the expression of his face indicates great skill. I am beseeching unto

¹ See Chapter 12 of Daniel.

God that the friends of that city may day by day attain unto heavenly progress.

Upon ye both be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 27 March 1920.

Russell Jurgens

Through Mr and Mrs A. C. Killius, of Montana—Upon them be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!—to Russell Jurgens, Springfield, Illinois—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O dear child!

Thanks be unto God, that in thine infancy thou hast entered the divine Kingdom and hast obtained a portion of the graces of the Lord of Hosts. My supplication to God is this, that thou mayest be reared in the bosom of the love of God, and in the utmost attraction attain to thy maturity.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 27 March 1920.

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and

Vol. XIII, Nos 1–8 (21 March 1922—November 1922)

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:315]

Recent tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to J. Isbrucker

To the maid-servant of God, J. Isbrucker, Den Haag, Holland—Unto her be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art searching for truth!

Thy letter has been received. Thou has written that Áqá Mírzá Aḥmad Khán (Yazdání) has given some explanation of the Bahá'í Cause to thee. What thou hast written is right, that the Bahá'í Religion is Truth and other institutions compared to the Bahá'í Religion are not reality and are without any great results. Although in the sight of the people they seem to have a true foundation, yet they are like unto a fruitless tree. There are so many trees that are apparently huge and cast a shadow, yet they are not productive of any fruit and so they will be ultimately uprooted, as thou hast observed and wilt observe. The Divine Institution is, however, a tree whose shadow is extended over the East and the West and every moment brings forth wonderful fruits, as experience has shown.

Thou hast written, "How is it possible that one should obey and submit to an unjust government?" By the government which should be obeyed is meant a just government which protects the rights of all its people. It is a constitutional government which is bound by stringent laws.

Thou has written, "How is it possible to imagine a life after death?" Verily, verily, life after death is not imaginable. But do thou observe that it is evident man has evolved from the

mineral world. As long as he was in the mineral kingdom, he could not imagine the vegetable kingdom. He was transferred to the vegetable kingdom. In the vegetable kingdom he could not imagine the animal kingdom. Before he emerged from the animal kingdom he could not imagine the stage of human reason and intelligence, that is, it was impossible for him, he did not have any knowledge thereof.

Now this earth and these trees have, by no means, any knowledge of the animal and human worlds: they cannot imagine them, they deny existence absolutely. While the human world is helping the animal and assisting the vegetable kingdoms, the vegetable kingdom is ignorant of it. Similarly the human world cannot comprehend the world of the Kingdom: it is absolutely ignorant of it, while the heavenly spirits have influence in the human world.

Do thou observe how clear this point is and yet the professors and philosophers of the world are ignorant of this reality! The mediums are, however, speaking of the world of thought and not of reality. But a heavenly soul who is conscious of the Divine World: whose discerning eye is open: who is detached from the world of nature, and has attained to spiritual power is [XI:19:316] cognizant of the Divine World and those of the spirits. Reality is pure spirit, it is not physical: that is, it does not occupy space.

Ye should esteem Mírzá Aḥmad Khán (Yazdání) highly, because it was he who gave ye this great glad tidings. Through the graces of God do I hope that that country will be enkindled with heavenly Light: that the Divine verses will be chanted, and that such souls may be confirmed as to become like unto Paul and Mary Magdalene.

Unto thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, Mount Carmel, Palestine, 15 October 1920.

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:316]

The final burial of the Báb on Mt. Carmel

Extracts from Mírzá Munír’s letters, ‘Akká, Syria, 22 March 1909.

Sunday morning, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá drove from ‘Akká to Haifa with his family and a few of the old believers. Along the shore, half way between the two cities, there is now a small house which the government has built for the watch of the road. Here, in the middle of the desert, we stopped and had luncheon; then, after an hour and a half, we reached Haifa.

But few of the believers knew that nine years ago the remains of His Holiness, the Báb, had been quietly placed in the (place of) Ḥazíratu’l-Quds on Mount Carmel.

A week before the Feast of Naw-Rúz (21 March) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had sent to Haifa two of the believers that they should prepare everything for the coming ceremonies.

Nine years ago a believer of Rangoon (India) sent to Haifa a large casket made of marble, beautifully worked with the Greatest Name in relief and gilded three times on each side. It was later to hold the remains of the Báb, which had been kept 60 years (CE 59 or solar years) in safety. Now they were to be definitely buried by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

A few weeks before some twenty men [XI:19:317] had pulled this heavy marble casket up the mountain. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave the last necessary instructions and it was slowly slid down into the under part of the Tomb. This must have been performed with the help of the Kingdom of Abhá, for though the work presented great difficulty and was done by inexperienced men, everyone wondered at the ease with which it was done.

The Shrine under the ground was lighted with but one lamp. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá waited until all was well finished. He threw off his turban; he removed his shoes; he took off his coat—but what followed was so impressive that it is useless for me to attempt to picture it! I will simply

relate what happened.

Our Beloved, with his hair waving around his beautiful head, his face shining with light, looking inspired, tragic and majestic, rushed down and threw himself on his knees. He placed the remains of the Báb in the large coffin (in the marble casket) and leaning his blessed head on the border of the coffin, he wept, wept, wept—and all wept with him.

That night the Master did not sleep.

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:317]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Shahnáz Waite¹

To the maid-servant of God, Shahnáz Waite, San Diego, California.—Upon her be the Glory of God the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art the daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter has been received. Due to scarcity of time, I write the answer briefly: The body of man, which has been formed gradually, must similarly be decomposed gradually. This is according to the real and natural order and Divine Law. If it had been better for it to be burned after death, in its very creation it would have been so planned that the body would automatically become ignited after death, be consumed and turned into ashes. But the divine order formulated by the heavenly ordinance is that after death this body shall be transferred from one stage to another different from the preceding one, so that according to the relations which exist in the world, it may gradually combine and mix with other elements, thus going through stages until it arrives in the vegetable kingdom, there turning into plants and flowers, developing into trees of the highest paradise, becoming perfumed and attaining the beauty of colour.

Cremation suppresses it speedily from attainment to these transformations, the elements becoming so quickly decomposed that transformation to these various stages is checked.

Convey on my behalf my utmost love to thy honoured husband! I am supplicating that he may day by day attain to spiritual development. In regard to the meeting which has been formed in that city, it is my hope that that assembly may become illumined and like unto [XI:19:318] a rose-garden it may diffuse sweet fragrance.

Convey on my behalf respectful greetings to Miss Mary Fenn! In reality this dear maid-servant of God has arisen in service, deserving the bestowal of the divine bounties. I should like to write a letter to the friends of San Diego, but owing to the scarcity of opportunity I sufficed with a short supplication for them:

“O Thou the Lord of Hosts! The city of San Diego was like a lifeless body. Now a breath of the Spirit of Life has wafted over those regions. Some souls have arisen from the graves of the world of nature which is the eternal death; they have been revived by the Holy Ghost, and they have started in servitude to Thy threshold.

“O thou affectionate Lord! Bestow upon these featherless and wingless birds two heavenly wings and give unto them spiritual strength, so that they may soar in the limitless space and attain to the apex of the Kingdom of Abhá!

“O Lord! Strengthen these feeble seedlings so that each one may develop into a fruitful

¹ Note: This tablet is in answer to a letter I wrote to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 14 April 1920, in regard to our having formed a Board for the San Diego Assembly, of which Mr Waite is Chairman. I also wrote of the wonderful self-sacrifice and loving service which Mary Fenn has for several years rendered the Cause here, keeping the fire burning under most discouraging circumstances. I also asked for instructions regarding cremation, of which I knew he does not approve, but I wished to have his own words upon the subject.—Shahnáz Waite.

tree, exhibiting the utmost freshness and liveliness. Assist them and make them victorious, so that they may rout and vanquish the army of ignorance and misapprehension; lift up the banner of love and guidance among the people; bestow like unto the spring breeze freshness and life unto the tree of humanity; give greenness and liveliness like unto the spring shower to the meadows of that continent! Verily, Thou art the Able and the Powerful, the Bestower and the Affectionate!”

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 2 June 1920.

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:318]

Prayer for the dead and progress in the after-life

Teaching given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1904 to Ethel J. Rosenberg.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said that through the mercy of God, not through His justice, the condition of those who have died in sin and unbelief can be changed. We are commanded to pray that their condition may be changed. As we have the power to pray for these souls here, so shall we have the same power in the after-life—in the Kingdom.

The power of this prayer of intercession is a special teaching of this religion. To pray for the dead was not given as a special religious command (of the Divine Teacher), until this day of the Blessed Perfection.

The grace of effective intercession is one of the perfections belonging to perfect and advanced souls, as well as to the Manifestations of God. Jesus Christ had the power of interceding for the forgiveness of His enemies when on earth, and He certainly has this power now.

'Abdu'l-Bahá never mentions the name of a dead person without saying, “May God forgive him”, or words to that effect.

Followers of the prophets have also this power of praying for the forgiveness of souls, therefore we may not think that any souls are condemned to a stationary condition of suffering or loss, arising from absolute ignorance of God. The power of effective intercession for them always exists.

All the people in the other world, are they not the creatures of God? Therefore, they can progress in the other world. As they can also receive light by supplicating here, so they can also receive light by supplicating there. The rich in the other world can help the poor, as the rich can help the poor here. In every world all are the creatures of God. They are always dependent on Him. They are not independent, and [XI:19:319] can never be so. While they are needful of God, the more they supplicate, the richer they become.

What is their merchandise, their wealth? In the other world what is help and assistance? It is intercession.

Undeveloped souls must gain progress at first through the supplications of the spiritually rich; afterwards they can progress through their own supplications.

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:319]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Albert R. Windust

To Mr Albert R. Windust, Chicago, Illinois—Upon him be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O Thou Almighty! O Thou Forgiver!

The servant of Thy Threshold, Windust, turns his face toward the Kingdom of Abhá and begs for his father¹ Thy Grace and Bounty. O Thou Omnipotent Lord! In this Great Dispensation Thou dost accept the intercession of the sons in behalf of their fathers. This is one of the special infinite bestowals of this cycle. Therefore, O Thou kind Almighty! Accept the request of this thy servant at the Threshold of Thy Singleness and submerge his father in the ocean of Thy graces—because this son is confirmed in the accomplishment of Thy services and is displaying the utmost of effort at all time in the pathway of Thy love! Verily Thou art the Giver, the Forgiver and the Kind!

O thou divine servant!

Be thou not unhappy on account of the death of thy father. All of us will hasten from this world to another world. This mundane life has no importance whatsoever. It is our hope that in the divine world we shall find eternal union and seek everlasting fellowship. Importance lies in this fact. This station is obtained through faith and self-sacrifice in the path of God. Consequently we must make an effort to obtain happiness and joyousness in the other world.

Convey the wonderful Abhá greeting to the believers. Chicago, in comparison with the cities of America, was in advance and numerically contained more Bahá'ís. But when the stench (vile odour) of the náqidín was spread in that city there was stagnation. The Cause in other cities of America is progressing day unto day, but Chicago is stationary. Therefore, strive that the sweet fragrance of the Testament and the Covenant may become diffused, the nostrils of the spiritual ones become perfumed, the banner of “Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!” be unfurled and the tent of the oneness of the world of humanity be pitched. Then ye shall observe that Chicago will become the Paradise of Abhá. These few náqidín cannot accomplish anything worth while. The utmost is this that they will be the means of the drooping of the believers of God in that city. A person deprived of the spirit of the Covenant is sentenced as dead. The dead surely disintegrate. Therefore, breathe the spirit of the Covenant and the Testament as much as ye can in the hearts so that the souls may progress day unto day and obtain a new exhilaration.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 4 July 1913, Port Said, Egypt.

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:321]

Obituary

Charles H. Greenleaf

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Through his honour Mr Chase to Mr Charles H. Greenleaf—Upon him be Bahá'u'lláh!

HE IS GOD!

O thou member of the Merciful Meeting!

Mr Chase offered the highest praise for you, and while in the Blessed Spot ('Akká) he remembered you always.

Know thou his value, for he is a kind and faithful friend, firm in the Covenant and Testament.

O thou who art firm in the Covenant! Thy services and those of thy revered wife are acceptable in the Kingdom of Abhá, for ye have made your home a nest for the birds of God,

¹ Thomas Windust, printer, was born in London, England, 12 November 1849. Died at Chicago, 21 May 1913, and was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, 23 May.

and have engaged in teaching the Cause of God.

Ye are truthful gardeners of the Garden of God, and two agreeable servants of the Holy Threshold.

This confirmation must become the source of joy to life and repose to the conscience.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated Chicago, 4 August 1907.

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:328]

Some answers regarding the Fast

Words by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in answer to questions. From notes brought by Mrs Ella Goodall Cooper of San Francisco.

Question: "Some of the friends in America say that the Fast is not to be observed now but in the future."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "In places where it will be the cause of trouble, such as in Bukh^hará or Afghanistan, or in some of the towns in Persia, the Fast cannot be kept. In these places if the friends fast it will be the cause of trouble, people will rise against them. But in those places where there is safety and security it should be kept. I fasted sixty years—the first one who fasted was I."

Question: "In a family where it is difficult, should one attempt to keep the Fast?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Difficulty is not a preventative. But if fasting gives rise to disharmony it is injurious."

Question: "If it is not possible to take breakfast before sunrise, should one keep the Fast the best one can?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "If there be a preventative, it should not be kept. As far as one possibly can, yes; but if there be any preventative at any time, no. But after sunrise one cannot eat. I used to Fast from sunset to sunset. Early morning eating was difficult for me, therefore when I ate in the evening I took nothing else until the following evening."

Question: "If one's health does not seem to permit of fasting should one keep the Fast?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "In that case the doctor must decide. The object is not this, that not eating is not forbidden; but eating is forbidden. This is the [XI:19:329] object: not eating is not forbidden, but eating is forbidden."

Question: "When it is difficult or impossible to begin at sunrise is it possible to keep the Fast as much as one can?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "No. After the sunrise nothing should be taken unless the doctor says that fasting would be injurious (to one's health). In that case, one can eat at any time one wishes. But the whole time (of fasting) is only twelve hours—this is nothing."

Question: "Some of the friends think the life is so strenuous in America that it is not possible to work there and keep the Fast."

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "In the Torah the command for fasting is from sunset to sunset for three days. For three days and three nights they, the Jews, take nothing. This is not obligatory. There are Fasts of three days, seven days and nine days. Mr X in Persia did not believe that one could fast for nine days. He brought a Jew and imprisoned him in a room and locked the door, and did not permit anything (food or water) to be taken to him. Indeed, his prisoner

took nothing for nine days, not even water. For six days he slept, then he could not sleep any more, but he was very weak. But now, in this Revelation, it is for only twelve hours—very little.”

Question: “Should those men keep the Fast who are employed in mines, steel mills, etc., where it seems necessary to eat often to keep up their energy?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “This depends upon the advice of an expert doctor. If the doctor says that fasting would be injurious to the health of such people they should not fast.”

Question: “What is the age limit for fasting?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Seventy years.”

Notes taken in Persian by Mírzá Luṭfu’lláh S. Ḥakím at the Pilgrim House, Haifa, 26 October 1920, and translated by Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh Khán Bahádur.

XI:19, 2 March 1921 [XI:19:330]

Prayers revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Prayer revealed and written in the house of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Haifa, Palestine.

He is God!

O God! Make this company of Bahá’í children eternal and everlasting; bestow blessing and profit and make the members successful in excellent administration, in capacity, faithfulness and integrity; in order to preserve the right of the children and to act according to Thy instructions and to form an Assembly of the blessed people so that affairs be conducted by consultation and not like other companies to be short lived.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás.

Prayer revealed for the Societé Nonahalan¹ and all combined groups of children studying Dars Akhláq² [i.e., lessons taken from all Holy Books]:

Through his honour Mírzá Muḥammad Labíb, the pilgrim. Upon him be Bahá’u’lláh al-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O pure God! Refresh and vivify these young shoots of the great river of guidance, and by the breeze from the Garden of Oneness grant them joy, and by the heat of the Sun of Reality bestow upon them new life, so that they may sprout and grow up, progressing day by day; bud and bring forth leaves and fruit.

O Educator! Give to all intelligence, grant strength and power and make them manifestations of helpfulness and favour, so that they may live among the people in the utmost degree of dignity.

Thou art the Powerful! the Mighty!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

XII:1, 21 March 1921 [XII:1:6]

The Day of God

Praise be to Thee, O God of Names and Creator of Heaven! Praise be to Thee, for Thou hast made known unto Thy servants Thy Day wherein the River of Life streamed forth from the finger of Thy Generosity and the Fountain of Revelation and Unity became manifest, by Thy

¹ Shirkát-i-Naw-Nahálán, the Bahá’í Children’s Savings Company, began as a savings vehicle for Bahá’í children in Iran in 1917.

² Dars al-Akhláq or Darsu’l-Akhláq.

Manifestation, to all who are in Thy earth and Heaven.

O God! This is a Day the Light of which Thou hast sanctified above the sun and its effulgence. I testify that this Day is illumined by the Light of Thy Face and by the effulgence of the dawning Lights of Thy Manifestation.

O Thou, my God, and the Beloved of my heart! With the name of this Day Thou hast adorned Thy Tablet, which is known only to Thee. Thou hast called it "The Day of God". Nothing is to be seen therein but Thy Supreme Self, and naught is to be remembered save Thy sweetest Name. Wherefore, when He appeared, the foundation of nations trembled, the learned were bewildered and the wise men were confounded, save those who came near unto Thee took from the hand of Favour the pure wine of Thy inspiration, and drank in Thy Name, saying: "Praise be unto Thee, O Desire of the nations! Praise be to Thee, O Beloved of the hearts of the yearning!"

Supplication revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.

XII:1, 21 March 1921 [XII:1:9]

The Bahá'í Revelation

Louise R. Waite

The Bahá'í Revelation is essentially a message of peace, love, unity and light; the establishment of the oneness of humanity and the consolidation of the whole world into one home. It declares that the visions of prophets, seers, sages and poets are in this "Great Day of God" to be fulfilled; that the dawn of "The Most Great Peace" is breaking over land and sea, and the sun of love, bringing into manifestation the deep realities of life, will soon enlighten the hearts of men. This scientific-social-religious Revelation is rapidly spreading throughout all countries and attracting the interest of scholars, savants and religionists, both of the Occident and the Orient. It offers to the world a teaching applicable to the modern needs of humanity, spiritually, mentally and physically.

In the year CE 1819, in the city of Shíráz, Persia, a child was born named Siyyid 'Alí Muḥammad. He was given the ordinary school education of a Persian youth, but from childhood he was renowned for his innate knowledge, for his deep piety, purity, and the beauty of his person. He possessed a passionate and instinctive belief in freedom. He protested fearlessly against the fanaticism that ruled his country and was a Luther in his denunciation of a blinding, bigoted faith.

In the year 1844, on the 23 May, at the age of 24, he announced publicly that "The Dawn of a New Day was breaking and the Kingdom of God was soon to be established on earth as it was in heaven"; he declared that he had been called by God to be the herald of its appearance and he assumed the title of the Báb, the term signifying "The Gate". He began his mission by opening the minds of the people to the realities of their own religion. Like all great messengers, he did not arise to destroy but to fulfil. He did not tell his Muslim hearers that they had been deluded by a false prophet, but he berated them soundly, as Jesus did the Pharisees, for their hypocrisy and their adulteration and distortion of true religion. He also explained to them from their own sacred books that a Mihdí should come. To quote his own words, "In the past, whenever a prophet or divine teacher was needed on earth, God raised up such an one, bearing a book containing a divine revelation, and He will do the same in the future whenever there is need."

From the moment of the announcement of his mission he obtained a hearing, and in a short time a following, both among the most cultured and learned as well as in the unlettered and poorer classes. He taught his followers that the "Promised One" of all the ages, of whom he was but the herald, would soon appear; and that all of his writings were to give place to the

revelation of this World Teacher, “he whom God should manifest”. He pro- [XII:1:10] claimed that in nineteen years he would “come forth”.

The rapid spread of his teachings alarmed the Persian Muslim teachers and priests, as well as the state, and through their intrigues he was thrown into prison and finally shot at Tabríz, in July 1850. His brief mission of six years was one of heroic endeavour, and his martyrdom one of the supreme tragedies of modern times.

The Báb’s doctrines were simple. He taught a pure faith in the One God; he inculcated a high morality, and declared that women were equal in all respects to men. He appointed eighteen disciples to spread the message of the “coming of the Kingdom”, one of whom was a woman, the far-famed and beautiful Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, who was the Joan of Arc of her age and country, and who was also martyred for her faith.

The Báb had constantly exhorted his followers not to reject this Great One when he appeared, as has been the custom of former religions and peoples upon the advent of a new manifestation or divine teacher. Two years after his martyrdom, in 1852, all of the leading Bábís were seized and imprisoned, and then commenced a terrible outburst of persecution and martyrdom of the Bábís, for which there is scarcely a parallel to be found in history. The number of those martyred for their faith is variously estimated at from thirty to forty thousand men, women and children.

Amongst the leading Bábís imprisoned at this time was one whom the government regarded as the chief leader, Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí, born in Núr, Persia, 12 November 1817; a wealthy Persian nobleman, a descendant of pure Aryan race (called Núrí or “a progeny of light”) During his youth his father died and left him, as the eldest son, at the head of the family. In his home he was instructed in the Persian language, but wisdom and the knowledge of the deepest spiritual mysteries were revealed to him through meditation and inspiration. On account of his good deeds he was called “the father of the poor”. He became afterward universally known as Bahá’u’lláh (“The Glory of God”). During his imprisonment in Ṭíhrán he was confined in a dungeon, with a heavy chain about his neck, attached to five or six other prisoners, for a period of four months.

The government, after a time, being unable to substantiate any charges against him, released him. Having confiscated his property, they exiled him with his family and a few of his followers to Baghdád, outside the borders of Persia and under the Sulṭán’s domain. In this neighbourhood he resided for nearly eleven years, two of which were spent alone among the ‘Iráq mountains, where the light of inspiration and revelation illumined his soul. He worked out a plan of salvation and regeneration for the triune being of humanity. All of the great universal movements of today were conceived and set forth by him through clear revelation years before their echoes reached the minds and hearts of men in general. The basic principles of being are set forth in his writings with power and force; they are living spiritual principles, for they appeal to and satisfy the soul and meet all of the moral, economical, scientific and spiritual needs of life. These truths are the foundation of the Bahá’í Revelation.

In 1863 the mullás, again becoming alarmed at the amazing spread of the Bahá’í faith, through intrigue and misrepresentation persuaded their government to demand of the Sulṭán that he be exiled to Constantinople, and he was accordingly sent there with his family and immediate followers. On this journey Bahá’u’lláh with his people encamped for twelve days in the Garden of Ridván, outside of Baghdád, and there he announced himself, first to his eldest son, ‘Abbás Afandí, who chose the name of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (“the Servant of God”), and then to his followers, as the Mani- [XII:1:11] festation whom the Báb had heralded. After studying the dates, his followers found that he had made his declaration on the last day of the nineteenth year after the Báb had declared his mission.

After some months residence in Constantinople the Ottoman government banished Bahá'u'lláh and his followers to Adrianople. Here he lived and taught for five years, his followers ever increasing and his teachings spreading. The name of the movement was then changed to the Bahá'í Revelation in recognition of Bahá'u'lláh.

The government, unable to crush out the ever growing interest in and conversion to this New Light of Truth, in 1868 exiled these holy souls to 'Akká in Palestine, Syria (the same 'Akká, or Acre, of the Crusades, more anciently known as Ptolemais), its antiquated ramparts and crumbling fortifications, the scenes of some of the bloodiest combats of military history, from the time of the Phoenicians down to the Napoleonic war in Syria, all testifying to an earthly power of the past. Thus 'Akká, so intimately connected with the Bahá'í Revelation today, is most closely associated with constructiveness, spiritual power, unity, love and peace, the glad tidings of which were sent forth to all the world by Bahá'u'lláh from behind its prison walls.

At the time of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival there the fortress of 'Akká was used as a prison and a place of exile, to which criminals of the worst type were sent. The deadly, fever-stricken spot slowly but surely accomplished the destruction of most lives confined within it. The authorities hoped that these poor exiles would not long survive their imprisonment. For two years after their arrival these pure, godlike people, seventy in number, were confined in two rooms, where they suffered incredible hardships.

From 'Akká Bahá'u'lláh sent forth "the call" to the crowned heads of the world, summoning them to "unity and brotherhood", and declaring that the "dawn of The Most Great Peace" had come.

Bahá'u'lláh departed this life in 1892; before which he told all of his followers by word of mouth and in his writings that after his departure they must turn their faces to the Centre of his Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was to be considered as one with him. He declared that his teachings would be built up and carried forward by this son.

The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are the names of spiritual offices in the great world hierarchy, not the names of individuals. Each world race has its spiritual teachers under a different title. These three appear in the heaven of revelation as the Morning Star, the Sun, and the Evening Star, or the Herald, the Revelator, and the Interpreter of Divine Truth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was born 23 May 1844, in the city of Ṭihrán, Persia, on the same day that the Báb arose in Shíráz and declared the coming of the Kingdom of Peace on earth. All his life, from the age of nine, has been one of sorrow, persecution and imprisonment—forty years a prisoner and an outcast. When we consider the persecution and martyrdom of these "men of God", and the world-wide effect upon humanity of their lives and teachings, we find the ever-recurring cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" that has rung down the ages whenever a messenger of truth has appeared. This alone, to an unbiased mind, should prove that their revelations were of God. Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

"Is it possible that a reasonable man would make a declaration rendering him ridiculous to the world unless that man were sustained by God? They have made conjectures that I have had in mind the immortalizing of my name, but is it possible that one uncertain of living until tomorrow would work for nothing but his own glory? I have [XII:1:12] always seen the sword hanging over my head."

The fundamental principle of faith in the Bahá'í teachings is the need of a Divine Teacher, one who comes speaking "with authority". As a garden without the training of a gardener becomes choked with weeds, and the flowers give forth no fragrance, so man, the greatest of all God's handiwork, is in need of an educator, a divine gardener; as he has material and intellectual faculties which need development, so has he latent spiritual faculties, God-given potentialities, which must be quickened and brought forth into expression. Such spiritual

educators were Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ and Muḥammad, of the past, and his followers believe such is Bahá'u'lláh of today. All of these were founders of great religions and revealed sacred books.

Students who have made a study of these religions tell us that what is most striking in their teachings is not that they announced new ideas that had never before been revealed to man, but that they gathered up into one definite whole all the various scattered rays of truth which is ever illuminating the world. Just as a lens or burning-glass gathers together the rays of sunlight into one powerful beam, so these divine teachers become as it were a focused effulgent centre for the diffused rays of truth. Some of the noteworthy and progressive teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are:

First: The oneness of humanity. "Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one arbour."

Second: Independent investigation of truth. "No man should follow blindly his ancestors. Each must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears and investigate truth in order that he may find it."

Third: The foundation of all religions is one. "The foundation of all the divine precepts is one reality. It must needs be reality, and reality is one and not multiple."

Fourth: Religion must be the cause of unity among mankind. "Every religion should be the cause of unity and productive of the life everlasting. It is not for enmity or hatred, tyranny or injustice. If religion be the cause of enmity and rancour, if it be the cause of alienating men, then assuredly its non-being were better than its being."

Fifth: Religion must be in accord with science and reason. "Religion must be reasonable; it must agree with science perfectly, so that science shall sanction religion, and religion sanction science. Down to the present day man has accepted a thing because it was called religion, even though it were not in accord with human judgement and reason."

Sixth: The equality of men and women. This is peculiar to Bahá'u'lláh, for all other religions have placed men above women. "Daughters and sons must follow the same form of study and the same education alike."

Seventh: The abolishment of all prejudices of whatever nature. "All the prophets of God have come to unite the children of men and not to disperse them; consequently we must throw away all racial, patriotic and religious prejudices. We must become the cause of unity of the human race."

Eighth: Universal peace. "That all men shall make peace; that there be universal peace amongst governments, races, religions and the denizens of all regions."

Ninth: All mankind should partake of knowledge and education. "The education of each child is obligatory."

Tenth: The solution of the economic question. No religious books of past prophets speak of the economic question, while this problem has been thoroughly solved in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Certain regulations are revealed which insure the welfare and well-being of all humanity.

Eleventh: A universal language. "A universal language shall be adopted which shall be taught in all the schools and academies of the world." Thus everyone shall need but two languages, his national tongue and the universal one.

Twelfth: A universal tribunal. "A tribunal which shall be under the protection of God and under the protection of all men. Each nation must obey the decisions of this tribunal."

In the year 1908, at the re-establishment of the Turkish Constitution, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with

many other prisoners and exiles, was declared free, and is now no longer under military surveillance. Since his release he has made two tours, the first to Europe, in 1911, and later a return trip to Europe and [then to] America. He came forth from prison with whitened hair and face furrowed with the lines of many sorrows, yet brilliant with the light of love.

Wherever he goes he spreads the gospel of love and light, of unity and peace. It is not so much the crystalline purity and reasonableness of his ideas, founded upon his father's teachings, that affect the listener, but the wonderful spirituality of his personality.

Today, amid all the suffering of his people, he lives in his own home on Mount Carmel, the "holy mountain of God". Famine, war and pestilence surrounded him on all sides, yet he did not flee. Amid all the devastation of the world war, when his heart was broken by "man's inhumanity to man", he still held aloft the torch of assurance and divine Love. He says: "The foundation of all religions is One; now is the time that all of us may embrace the law of peace, and treat each other with honesty and straightforwardness. Let all racial supremacy be done away with; let political expediencies be discontinued, and let the love of country be superseded by the love of the world."

XII:1, 21 March 1921 [XII:1:13]

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to five American Christian missionaries

From the Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

'Abdu'l-Bahá to five young American teachers attending a Missionary Conference in the vicinity of Mt. Lebanon, and who came to see him, said, when asked his opinion of the United States: "The true, liberal, religious spirit is more in evidence in America than in Europe; from an ethical standpoint they are far ahead of European nations. The American people are as a whole, a religious people. They investigate the Reality, and are free from the fetters of prejudice. The Europeans are not deeply religious, and they have their prejudices. The American are an inventive nation. In the light of their manifold inventions, their services to the world of humanity are considered as incalculable."

Question: "Is there any leader or head in the Bahá'í Religion?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The Bahá'ís are a community of co-operative servants, they have no leader. Their only leader is God. They have no ordained ministers or priests. Whosoever hears and believes in the principles of this Cause, it is required of him to convey this Mes- [XII:1:14] sage to others. The Bahá'ís have no organized missionary headquarters. Because their cardinal creed is the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, they have no theological wrangles and no metaphysical speculations."

Question: "Do the Bahá'í teachings renovate the individual private life? Or are they only a set of principles for the adjustment of general relations between men, without the necessary requirement of personal regeneration?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the breaths of the Holy Spirit which create men anew. Personal amity, both in private and public, is emphasized and insisted upon."

Question: "What do the Bahá'ís believe?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "They believe that mankind must love mankind, that universal amity must be practised; that dead dogmas must be thrown away; that we are at the threshold of the Era of Independence; that we must forget prejudice and that universal love must, become the dominant note of the Twentieth Century."

Question: "What do the Bahá'ís teach?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "They teach that the internal, spiritual idea is the same in all the religions; that a unique general plan underlies the foundation of the past faiths; that priest-craft has

discredited the Religions of God; that the active, divine idea is hidden under the encrustation of dead ecclesiasticism; that religion must shuffle off its tattered garments of medieval ages and put on the robe of the Universal Precepts of God.”

Question: “What is the Bahá’í Faith!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Trust in God. Be kind to their fellow-men, fill the world with the spirit of love. The spirit of faith in a Bahá’í is very strong. His trust is in the grace of the Holy Spirit.”

Later, about the history and teachings of the Cause, etc., they said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “We (the Missionary World) are watching with great interest the progress of this movement, for it seems to us it is advancing with great rapidity without the usual organization, which to us hard-headed Americans is so essential and necessary. We are watching to see what will be the objective aim of this Cause.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, replied: “The objective aims are: The Oneness of the world of humanity, Universal Peace, Universal Love, International Co-operation and reciprocity; the promotion of the principles of human consanguinity and solidarity, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, first, in the hearts of man and then upon earth. These are the noble objective aims. Are you not in sympathy with them? Will you not also do your utmost to hasten that day? What harm is there in this? We are working day and night for the realization of these ideas and purposes. God and His servants are also pleased with these souls who are serving under a different flag and in a different camp to actualize these principles of humanity.”

After several questions ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to them: “The doors of colleges and universities must be wide open to the adherents of all religions and the members of all nationalities, so that these people from widely scattered countries may meet and associate with each other in those educational institutions, learn each other’s customs and habits, interchange their ideas and discard their purposeless prejudices. In this way these young men and women will grow up with the ideas of world patriotism. There are a number of Missionary Colleges in the East that are dogmatically sectarian, trying all the time to teach the students the falsity of their parents’ religions and the grandeur and sublimity of Christianity. The net result has been a woeful failure, for generally the students turn out of the college with no religion. Thus it has been witnessed [XII:1:15] that when a missionary teacher tries to undermine, either with bitter antipathy or indirect references, the religions of the students in which they have been brought up, he is unconsciously undermining the religion of Christianity.

“In short, in this Radiant Century, the Sun of Reality has dawned, scattering its bright rays upon all humanity. We are beginning to realize that this globe is one home and all men are brothers and sisters, the members of one family, the stars of one heaven, the tents of one camp, the pearls of one necklace, the trees of one garden and the signs of the mercy of the Almighty.

“Creationally there are no bad people; they are all good. It is only when we subvert the original plan concerning our progress that the outcome is a distorted, abnormal state of being. The tree of humanity is one and is planted by God. The origin is one and the end must also be one.”

XII:1, 21 March 1921 [XII:1:27]

Tablets to Bahá’ís in America received in 1919

Maud Thompson

To the maid-servant of God, Mrs Maud Thompson, Baltimore, Maryland.—Upon her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou daughter of the Kingdom!

Thy letter was received. Thou hast praised the Convention of this year (1919). This Convention in future shall acquire a great importance. It shall reach a point that all the Conventions of the world shall assume a lowly and submissive attitude toward this Convention, for its basis is the oneness of the world of humanity, universal peace, love and harmony among all men, equality in rights among all people, benevolent deeds and the shining forth of the light of Truth. Undoubtedly it shall increase daily in power.

Praise ye God, therefore, that He has assisted in the establishment of such a Convention. ...

I hope that through the infinite bounties of God all thy family may be illumined and assisted.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, Haifa, Palestine; 16 July 1919.

Maud Gaudreaux

To the maid-servant of God, Maud Gaudreaux, Yonkers, New York—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant! Thy letter dated 26 November 1918, was received with the divine assistance. I hope your gathering will widen from day to day, and will increase in union and harmony; will draw to itself the bounty of the Kingdom; will be the cause of the appearance of the oneness of the world of humanity; will be kind to all religions and the well-wisher of all races. If in this coming summer thou goest to Green Acre it will be highly favourable [XII:1:28] and if thou art confirmed in contributing to the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, it will be greatly praiseworthy. I pray God that thy respected husband, the children, and thy relatives will be guided under the divine protection and will be kept safe and glad in this world as well as in the realm of the Kingdom.

Convey on my behalf the utmost kindness to the friends Helen Whelock, Nellie Lowes, Elise Weil, Elizabeth L. Stevens, and Ethel Adams. My hope is that ye may unanimously be confirmed in service to the world of humanity. There is not time to write more.

Upon ye be greeting and praise

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Rabbani, 9 February 1919, Haifa, Palestine.

Mr and Mrs Latimer

A prayer for Mr James and Rúḥání Latimer, care of his honour, Mr George Latimer—Upon them be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O ye two souls of the Kingdom!

Turn your faces to the Kingdom of the merciful One and address this prayer:

Prayer

O thou Compassionate God! We were heedless, Thou hast made us heedful. We were slumbering and Thou hast awakened us. We were thoughtless, Thou hast made us thoughtful. We had no share and portion from the supreme bounty, Thou hast given us full share therefrom. We were wanderers, Thou hast shown us the right path. We were thirsty, Thou hast quenched our thirst. We were deprived, Thou hast made us intimates with Thy

mysteries.

Praise be unto Thee, that such a bounty has been realized and such a guidance has been made possible. Confirm us in firmness and steadfastness that we may be self-sacrificing in service to the Kingdom and may attain our loftiest aim.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Haifa, Palestine, 26 November 1919.

XII:3, 28 April 1921 [XII:3:51]

The latter days of Bahá'u'lláh

George Latimer

“Blessed is the one who has visited 'Akká, and blessed is the one who has visited the Visitor of 'Akká. From the *Traditions of Muḥammad*.

Late one September afternoon in the year 1868 the entire population of the little city of 'Akká, on the coast of Palestine, gathered on the shore to witness the arrival of several small sail boats containing some seventy or more prisoners of the Turkish government. Little did they realize, as these victims of Muslim oppression were led through their jeering midst to the prison barracks, that this event would be far-reaching and world-affecting in its results—so momentous in its consequences that the former historic events which marked 'Akká, the battle-ground of the Crusades, would well-nigh disappear in comparison. 'Akká, once the seat of war and bloodshed, the goal of conquest of such mighty warriors as Richard Cœur de Lion, Philippe Auguste, Napoleon, Sir Sydney Smith and Ibráhím Páshá, was suddenly transformed to become the home of the Prince of Peace.

In more recent years, with its fortifications in ruins, 'Akká had become the depository for thieves, cut-throats, suspects and the religious and political prisoners of the Ottoman government, because of its well-known foul and unsanitary conditions and death-dealing diseases. But with the arrival of this little band of exiles, who preferred anything rather than separation from their leader, Bahá'u'lláh, this ancient and ruined town became the centre of world destiny, a Mecca to the Orient and Occident alike, mirroring forth such splendour and light as to make it appear as the “New Jerusalem”.

The Star of Bethlehem shines from age to age over the haven longed for by the tried and persecuted pilgrim in his search for the pathway to the Kingdom of God. The inspiration of the weary traveller is the faith and certainty that this star shines for all mankind. The city over which it appears changes from cycle to cycle, but the light it reflects is always the same. The city in its splendour becomes a veritable paradise and refuge for the searcher.

The same intense longing that impelled the three Wise Men two thousand years ago, later manifesting itself again in the pilgrimage to the Kaaba, has one more returned to possess the heart of the sincere seeker, drawing him to 'Akká, the prison home of Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

How strange the working of fate! The effort of man is ever exerted to prevent the shining of the star and the spreading of the Light of God by His chosen ones; yet these same efforts become the means of the fulfilment of prophecy and the establishment of the Cause of God in the world. Thus, as the crucifixion of Christ became his everlasting sovereignty, the defeat of Muḥammad his undying renown, likewise the exile and incarceration of Bahá'u'lláh have become his majestic splendour and eternal glory.

As the colour of the leaves announce [XII:3:52] the change of seasons, so the colour of man's thoughts mark the progress of his soul. The divine palette with its variegated hues is ever found in the city of the star, and the star always shines over the Holy Land, the home of the

prophets. The soul of the pilgrim is the canvas prepared for the handiwork of the Creator.

It is difficult to describe the effect produced by the matchless blending of colours in the masterpiece of the artist; it is even more difficult to portray the emotions and sensations of the heart of the pilgrim when he visits the sacred abode of the Manifestation of God. As the pilgrim enters 'Akká he feels his soul transcending the earthly ties to the realm of spiritual susceptibilities. The framework of the picture, such as the life and customs of centuries gone by, vanishes and the design itself commences to unfold.

Passing over a moat, the traveller suddenly finds himself in the courtyard of the prison barracks. His pulse quickens, his whole being attunes itself to higher vibrations. The first glance discloses the horse stalls where the little band of exiles were crowded together. Then the small room, now in ruins, where Bahá'u'lláh was cast that first night of his arrival, is seen. The detail of the picture becomes clearer as he mounts a steep and narrow stairway to the room of stone flags without bed and chair, where Bahá'u'lláh, was confined for two years. What lofty thoughts must have surged here! Glancing across the inner court, a barred window is noticed. Here Bahá'u'lláh was wont to stand that the foot-sore and weary pilgrims from distant Persia might catch a fleeting glimpse of him from the plain of 'Akká, now called "the worshipping place of God". The masterpiece has expanded but the work is not yet finished.

The pilgrim leaves the city and travels over the desert plain to the Riḍván Garden. Here Bahá'u'lláh spent the latter years of his life perfecting the design of the Creator. Again the wanderer sees prophecy literally fulfilled, for "the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose". The Riḍván, rich in foliage and myriad blossoms, breathes [XII:1:53] forth the glad-tidings of a New Day. The picture now assumes colour and feeling, yet the final expression, the finishing touches which added the soul-stirring qualities are yet to come.

After a short journey, the pilgrim enters the Bahjí Palace, the last resting place of Bahá'u'lláh on earth, and continues on to the sacred shrine. All thought of time and place vanishes as the seeker reaches the Place of Visitation, and enters into communion with his Lord. The masterpiece in all its matchless beauty is imprinted with glowing radiance on the canvas of his soul. The Holy Grail has been attained, the design completed; a heavenly vista is revealed. New emotions and new aspirations are created, great love expands the heart, knowledge and certainty take the place of doubt and fear, the great longing has been satisfied, the search rewarded and the pilgrimage ended—the transformation is complete.

The pilgrim departs with the intense desire of finding other souls upon which this masterpiece can be reproduced; the imprint of the Spirit is eternal.

Amid such surroundings it is wonderful to hear 'Abdu'l-Bahá relate some of the graphic events which marked the latter days of Bahá'u'lláh's life as unique and peerless in the annals of history. It is the lot of every prisoner to be meek and oppressed, yet Bahá'u'lláh, under the yoke of two powerful and despotic rulers, shows forth the utmost majesty, while yet their prisoner, proving that the only prison is the prison of the self. Such was his majesty that for five years the Governor of 'Akká, his jailer and keeper, begged for admittance to His Holy Presence without avail. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells the story to the pilgrim:

"For nine years, the first two of which were passed in strict confinement in those barracks, the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) did not leave the gates of the building and for quite a long time he did not leave his room. Seventy of his followers, men and women, healthy and sick, old and young, were confined in those barracks, at the gate of which stood ten or twelve gendarmes, while two of them accompanied one of the friends who left the gates every morning in order to provide the daily means of subsistence (for the friends).

"It was toward the end of this period of nine years that His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh made the

following remark: 'I have not gazed at verdure for a long (period of) time.' This remark reaching my ears indirectly, I started immediately outside the city gates, notwithstanding the repeated prohibitive declarations that had been made in successive farmáns¹ (orders) with respect to [XII:3:54] our trespassing the limits of the city walls.

"The next day with some friends and officials, I went out again, unmolested and unopposed, although the guards and sentinels stood on both sides of the city gates. The third day I arranged a sumptuous banquet, stretched a royal table under the pine trees of Bahjí, and gathered around it the notables and officials of the town. I then arranged a sort of landau [this was the first carriage to be seen in 'Akká] and prepared the house Mazra'ih, which lies a couple of miles north of Bahjí. This house was nearly in ruins, but I arranged with its proprietor, who was one of our deadly enemies, to expend its rent for its restoration. Gardens, a courtyard, a grove of fruitful trees were soon arranged and the whole site looked as if it were a Paradise of Eden.

"Then I solicited the Blessed Beauty to move to that place for I knew every barrier would break down, every resistance would be destroyed, every obstacle removed as soon as his divine will passed a certain decision. The sure and determined answer that I received to my repeated appeals was this: 'I am a prisoner; I am confined.' At last I arranged for a certain muftí, a clever, humorous and kind-hearted person, who was greatly favoured by Bahá'u'lláh, to intercede, to fall on his knees, to grasp his blessed hand, to take hold firmly of the hem of his garment and not to leave until he would secure the blessed consent. He did this and his earnest solicitations made him at last successful. He then gave to me joyfully the news of His Holiness' consent. In spite of the strict farmán of 'Abdu'l-'Azíz, which prohibited my meeting and association with the Blessed Perfection, and our residence was in the same house, I drove with him in that closed carriage with no one to approach or raise a word of objection, until we reached the palace of Mazra'ih.

"Two years elapsed in a charming, lovely and highly contrasting environment until it was decided to move to Bahjí. This palace was thickly occupied, the upper story reserved for the proprietor's household and the lower rooms crowded with the inhabitants of 'Akká who streamed out to pass the warm season beyond the hot, oppressive and nauseating atmosphere of the city. It was indeed providential that a disease, highly contagious, broke out in the midst of these people and soon the palace was evacuated, the proprietor himself fleeing in distress and ready to offer the house free of charge to any applicant. When we moved to the palace after having fixed an exceptionally low rent, the doors of majesty and of ideal, eternal [XII:3:55] sovereignty were flung wide open to our face.

"Outwardly a prisoner, once enchained and once under the drawn sword, yet in reality wielding an influence and exerting a power over his friends and entourage, whether foes or followers, that kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain! Governors and mayors, generals and local officials would repeatedly request the favour of attaining the court of His Presence, but this favour would not be granted. At last the governor-general of the city implored this favour on the ground of his being ordered from higher authorities to meet, in company with a certain general, the Blessed Perfection. The request being granted, the general, who was a corpulent, fleshy person, was so humbled and struck by the majestic, awe-inspiring presence of His Holiness that he remained kneeling on the ground very close to the door, although that posture was unbearably difficult for him. It was only after repeated insistence of Bahá'u'lláh that the General complied with the blessed wish and accepted the nargileh² [pipe or hubble-bubble] that was offered him, and then he only touched it with his lips, put it aside, crossed his arms, dropped his head and sat in silence close to his companion.

¹ Farmán, pl. farámán.

² Nárájíl, fem. nárájíla (Pers. also nárjíl, nárjíl).

“Other and numerous instances go to show that it was not confinement but sovereignty which was exhibited by the Blessed Beauty’s conduct and activities. The conduct of friends, the humbleness and sense of reverence and awe which they manifested, the officials and notables, the bustle that reigned outside and around the place of Bahá’u’lláh’s residence, the influx of pilgrims and outsiders, the spirit of devotion and service that was manifest everywhere; the majestic and royal countenance of the Blessed Perfection, the effectiveness of his words, the power of his command, the extent of his retinue, the number of his zealous devotees—all these assured beyond the shadow of a doubt, a certain Muslim orderly of a Bahá’í pilgrim who had come from Persia to meet Bahá’u’lláh. He thought, assuredly this person wields a prestige parallel to if not surpassing that of Náṣiri’-Din Sháh. He was at least convinced that this mighty personage was not a king but a prisoner in exile.

“This is why it has at repeated instances been stated by His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh that ‘Verily, verily, the most wretched prison has been converted into a Paradise of Eden.’”

This talk of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was taken from Shoghi’s diary, dated 13 June 1919.

XII:3, 28 April 1921 [XII:3:57]

Recent tablets to Bahá’ís in America

Arthur S. Agnew

His honour, Mr Agnew—Upon him be the Light of God, the Most Luminous!—through his honour, Mr Albert R. Windust, Chicago.

HE IS GOD!

O thou spiritual person!

As far as thou art able, do thou practice self-sacrifice in the path of His Holiness, Bahá’u’lláh—May my soul be sacrificed for His friends—and this self-sacrifice is the greatest cause of success (prosperity), because today every soul who approaches His Holiness, Bahá’u’lláh, one step, verily doeth he rear up his flag on the zenith of the Kingdom, and like unto a star shineth he from the horizon of Reality.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 15 June 1924.

Albert R. Windust

To his honour, Mr Albert R. Windust—Upon him be the Light of God, the Most Luminous!

HE IS GOD!

O thou true friend!

Through the graces of the Sun of Reality do I supplicate that rays of assistance and favour be projected upon then, and that thou together with his honour, Mr Agnew, may live in utmost attachment, love, firmness and steadfastness.

But as regards the writer of the Persian section of the *Star of the West*. I have this in mind, Whenever somebody is found, I shall send him. I am beseeching a new confirmation and especial grace and favour for thee.

Upon thee be the Light of the Most Luminous!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 15 June 1920.

George Latimer

To Mr George Latimer, Portland—Unto him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Praise be unto God, that thou wert confirmed to visit many of the Assemblies and see the attractive faces of the friends.

His honour Fáḍil is verily of the utmost sincerity, without any desire save service to the Cause of God. Miss Martha Root is a loved maid-servant of God. My hope is that Miss Martha Root and Mrs Lucy Wilson will be assisted and confirmed to attain to perfect spirituality and enlightenment. Mr Agnew is a truthful servant of God and Mr Wilhelm self-sacrificial. Of course you see how they are, at every assembly, confirmed to deliver eloquent speeches.

Do thou always keep up thy correspondence with the friends in Germany, Japan and Australia. I am praying to God to enable some active teachers to arise and give light unto the horizons of America. The erection of the monument to the memory of his honour Áqá Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl is very appropriate and advisable. [XII:3:58]

Convey the utmost love, on my behalf, to Mr and Mrs Weed and family. Verily they have done their best, with the utmost sincerity, in the formation of meetings. This service has been accepted in the Kingdom of Abhá.

His honour Mr Remey, that luminous person and heavenly man, is occupied in service in Germany and Holland. He does not rest for a moment and does not breathe but to raise the call to the Kingdom of God.

Unto thee be the Glory of Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, 17 September 1920.

O. O. Wolcott

O. O. Wolcott, Spokane, Washington—Upon him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art confirmed by the grace of the Kingdom!

Thy long letter has been perused. Thou hast given convincing answers to the questions of the lawyer. The souls who are free from every tie and are baptized with the Holy Spirit, while speaking, are inspired with divine inspirations. This is why it is said that (when) you are speaking you should not think: you should speak what the heart is inspired to.

The teachings are from His Most High, The Father. The Son is the Expounder of the teachings of the Father. Therefore, the teachings of both are one. As to the line of poem which is mentioned in the *Seven Valleys*, it is from His Highness 'Alí, "Dost thou imagine that thou art an insignificant molecule, while in thee is enwrapped the Great Universe (Macrocosm)?"

He says, "Thou shouldst not look at the smallness of thy body which is cast out of the dust and is simply a handful of earth; nay, rather shouldst thou look at that pure spirit. which is inclusive of all the lofty attributes, and has some affinity to this body." Because that pure spirit is one of the graces of God and is inclusive of all the virtues of humanity. This pure spirit is like unto the light which is potential and in the candle and gets enflamed with the fire of the love of God, then streams its light in the stage of visibility.

The Jewish doctors have interpreted the Bible according to their own selfish desires, and not that they have discovered the Truth.

But regarding the word Israel, this is the title of Jacob himself and not that of his children. Then from the word of “Baní Israel” Baní (descendants) was dropped and they sufficed with the word “Israel”. In encyclopaedia there are many such examples. The descendants of Ham, for example, are called “Ham”,¹ the descendants of Yáfis² are called “Yáfis”. The descendants of the Turks are named “Turks”, and those of Ya’rab³ are called “Arab”. Examples such as these are many. Afterward the word Israel was used to denote the “people of God” as it is mentioned in the Bible, i.e., the nations of God. Thus it was gradually generalized as to denote all the souls who accepted the religion of God.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 4 June 1920.

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

To his honour Mirza Ahmad Sohrab—Upon him be Bahá’u’lláh!

HE IS GOD!

Thy letter written 19 May 1920, duly received. Notwithstanding the lack of time I answer the matters referred therein.

His honour Fáḍil—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!—whenever he finds an opportunity, if he writes an article for the *Star of the West*, unquest- [XII:3:59] ionable it will be good, nay rather effective; likewise whenever you find an opportunity you write also articles. The duty of his honour Fáḍil, is to travel in all parts of America and raise the call of the Kingdom of Abhá in all the meetings, churches and gatherings. If he finds time and an occasional opportunity he may write an article.

A cablegram was forwarded to you that if possible on important occasions and cities you must become the associate and intimate of his honour Fáḍil; especially at the time of his meeting with the scholars, philosophers and professors, unquestionably you must be present.

His honour Manúchih Khán, must strive by day and night so that he may obtain the utmost proficiency in the English language.

Regarding the Bahá’í Library and the magazine *Reality*, truly I say they have great expenses. No matter how much Mr Death may show self-sacrifice he cannot meet all the expenses. Therefore the believers of God from amongst the rich, must show magnanimity regarding ‘this matter; so that this library and this magazine may continue forever. It is my hope that a heavenly blessing may be vouchsafed.

In Green Acre, unquestionably, you must be the associate of his honour Fáḍil.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

XII:4, 17 May 1921 [XII:4:67]

The temple of universal religion—the fundamental oneness of all existing faiths

Address of Jináb-i-Fáḍil, delivered at the Bahá’í Congress, at Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, Sunday afternoon, 24 April 1921. Interpreted by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Praise be to God, that we are today living in an age, in a cycle, in which the mysteries of

¹ Ḥámí: a son or descendant of Ḥám (Ham), Hamitic.

² Yáfiṯh (Japheth), a son of Noah.

³ Ya’rab is the son (or grandson) of Qaḥṭán, who is the legendary ancestor of the south Arabians. ‘Arabí: Arab, Arabic, Arabian; truly Arabic; an Arab.

God, the secrets of nature, are exposed and revealed so that man may study these laws and gain wisdom. Such mysteries and secrets which have been known to man from time immemorial, these divine, intellectual, spiritual, artistic secrets of the world of God are all exposed by God so that we may gain benefit and attain to perfection.

When, seventy years ago, Bahá'u'lláh, in Persia, laid the foundation of the oneness of religion and declared the possibility, nay, the realization of a universal religion, people who were doctrinaires scoffed at such an idea and thought it was impossible, but today through the diffusion of the light of knowledge and education every forward-looking man and woman has come to the conclusion that the greatest need of the world of humanity is universal religion, and no other.

In those past ages when people lived in the obscurity of ignorance and narrow-mindedness, not becoming acquainted with the contents of each other's sacred book, not realizing that their prophets have all come to teach them the law of love and unity, they looked upon one another with the eyes of a stranger, they anathematized one another, they thought that they were the peculiar, the sacred, the divine race while the rest of mankind were barbarians, savages, and deprived of the mercy of God.

His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, even long before he declared his spiritual mission to mankind in 1863, in all his writings, in all his utterances, likened the religions of the world to so many pure mirrors reflecting the rays of the Sun of Reality. He proved beyond a shadow of doubt through his divine power and spiritual words, creative and inspiring, that all the seven religions of the world were originally like unto pure, crystalline, limpid rivers which were flowing from the heart of God, from the heart of His manifestations through the deserts of human concepts, but as they flowed on and on they gathered the mud, the refuse, they were discoloured by human creeds and human imaginations and human fanaticism, and by the time they reached the ocean they were no more the pure water coming out of the Rock of Ages, but they were flowing mud.

Again Bahá'u'lláh likened the world unto a university, the prophets being the teachers and the professors of this college or school, and as it is the aim and [XII:4:68] the desire of the teachers to raise the intellectual, the spiritual, the artistic minds of the pupils through the various degrees of accomplishment till they attain to a time when they get their diplomas, so likewise the prophets had one divine plan before them toward which they were working, and for the attainment of which they were educating the children of men, and that was the brotherhood and the unity of mankind.

Bahá'u'lláh planted the seeds of world citizenship and the oneness of the world of humanity in the hearts of his friends, and he irrigated and flooded these fields to such an extent that these Bahá'ís began to study the sacred books of all the religions, collecting and drawing out of this vast treasure house of sacred ideals those principles which agreed with one another, putting them side by side, writing a textbook, and thus proving that the quintessence, the original teachings of all the teachers and prophets of the past had been one ideal, and these books are being taught to our children in our schools so that they grow up with that universal consciousness and international mind.

Not only have the Bahá'ís been working in this field of investigation but even the scholars and the sages of this country, many of whom I met in the universities and colleges throughout this land, have been working along similar lines, writing textbooks on comparative religions, and showing in the most dramatic, in the most spiritual, convincing manner, that, these great teachers of humanity throughout successive ages have taught one universal ideal.

From a philosophic standpoint we can divide the contents of the sacred books of the world into five parts. The first part is in regard to the principle of cosmogony or genesis, the

creation of the world, and just as you have in the book of Genesis an account of creation, likewise other religions, Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Muslims have similar allegorical stories about the creation of the world. This first historical part of the religious textbooks of the world, if we read them with the eyes of orthodoxy and literalization, are all unreasonable, not in accord with science or reason, not intellectual; they are like fairy-stories that we relate to our children; but if we interpret them with the eye of spiritual symbology and realize that the writers have been teaching humanity in this manner we gain the most spiritual and heavenly knowledge.

The Hindus have a myth that when God created the globe it was in a fluid state and it was moving through space with such velocity that there was no time for the creation of creatures, so Juernath, who was one of the gods, offered his services to the Almighty that he would take hold of this globe and keep it in order, giving time enough to God to create the rest of the creatures, but he took hold of the globe and it was so heavy that his two hands fell off. The Hindus have the statue of this Juernath in all their temples as a god without two hands. Now if you give spiritual interpretation to this story you have a beautiful lesson; otherwise it is the most unreasonable, fanciful story of the primitive races.

In the Zoroastrian religious books they have similar stories about the stellar globes in the universe, stating that each one of these stars was an intelligent being, controlling, governing and dominating the agencies of the world for a long time.

In the book of Genesis we read that on a certain day the sun was created. Now the day is the result of the motion of the earth in relation to the sun. Inasmuch as the sun was not created up to the third or the fourth day, how could there be any days? Hence these contexts of the religious books of the world must be all interpreted with the modern conception of today and thus put them in line with the universal ideal of our time, and bring them within the harmonious institutions of the concepts of our age. [XII:4:69]

The second part of the texts of the religious books are all about supernatural things, about spiritual phenomena, belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, in the angel or devil, heaven or hell, resurrection and various other ideas with which we are familiar. This second part is shared in common in all the religious books, and those ideals belonging to the second part, if they are not in accord with reason and science, are superstitions and must be thrown away.

The third part are the miracles or extraordinary events attributed to the prophets by their followers. All the prophets of the past have achieved certain miracles, have performed extraordinary things, but the strange part of this fact is that although the followers of one prophet believe in all the miracles that their own has performed, they negate and deny similar miracles performed by another prophet.

The fourth part are the ceremonies, the rituals, the ecclesiastical rites which are existent more or less in different religions, in different languages. They may speak in various tongues, but they all mean the same thing. Now if these rituals are conducive to the purification of the soul, to the making of citizenship, of manhood, if they give spirituality and independence and responsibility to the worshipper, they are all good, and are rendering their service in their own place, but if they do not do that they are just useless impedimenta, intellectual and spiritual.

The fifth and most important part, which is the kernel of the religions, are the moral and the ethical teachings which are alike and identical in all the religions. If you place side by side the religious books of the world, study them impartially, you will gain this deep insight that they are all teaching the same lesson, they are all inculcating the same fundamental norms. Their lessons consist in spiritual unity of mankind, in the refinement of character, in the etherealization of the soul so that we may learn common sense and live side by side with the

spirit of fellowship, kindness and comradeship.

To illustrate, Moses says, you must love your neighbour. Christ explains the same idea only a step higher, that it is not a great thing for you to love your friend, you must love your enemy; should some one strike you on your right cheek, show him the left also. Confucius declares the same ideal by saying, do not like anything to be done to others that you would not like it to be done to you. Muḥammad says, if you are walking along the street and some one comes and curses you, do not seem to hear it, but continue to walk, but if he persists; in cursing, you should turn to him and say, "Peace be upon you" (laughter and applause). Again he says, the real believer is that soul from whose tongue and whose hand the people are safe. Thus has the golden rule been explained or taught in different ages, in various languages, with the hope that humanity would practise them.

Zoroaster, the prophet of Persia, takes men to a higher plane when he teaches that it is not your merit to love humanity, because you have to love your own kind, but your merit consists in your love for the animal kingdom. Do not harm an ant which is such a tiny creature because the ant has life and life is precious and sweet. Therefore, all the sacrifices, all the persecutions, all the contumely that the prophets of the past went through was for this one, chief aim, to teach humanity how to act and live peacefully and avoid and shun misunderstandings.

I was speaking with an individual about the prophethood of Muḥammad and when I explained to him that Muḥammad was also the prophet of Arabia and had come to teach the sons of the desert the knowledge of God he said "I have read the Qur'án from beginning to end and I have not found there one word about God, but always Muḥammad says [XII:4:70] 'Alláh, Alláh.'" (laughter) He said, "Now, what kind of a prophet is he that he never says God?" I said, "Well, I am very sorry he did not live in America. The English language had not penetrated into the Arabian peninsula while he was living, so he had to use his own language for the same ideal." The prophets did not come to teach a name, they came to inculcate an ideal, and that ideal they had to explain and utter in their own language according to the conception of their own people, and, therefore, according to the spirit of the age in which they lived.

It has been through the sheer ignorance of men that they have looked upon the prophets are so many generals, as so many commanders leading armies into battlefields and fighting against each other. Do you think if the prophets were to come today, Muḥammad and Christ and Moses and Buddha, that they would teach their followers to go and fight and kill, or would they teach them to associate with one another, to set aside all their narrow-mindedness and suspicions and bigotry and backbiting and live in accordance with the ideal of love, harmony and unity? That is, were it possible to have a conference of the prophets of the past they would have no other thought, they would discuss no other theme but to purify the religions of the past from man-made dogmas and creeds and bring them back to that original source of divine contemplation and spiritual realization.

His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, appeared in this age for the revealing of this great ideal and he has uncovered this divine mystery and has brought a universal religion but not a new religion, a religion which is the sum total, which is the consummation, which is the gathering together of all the past fragments of truth into one scintillating whole. The precious jewels and gems of realities which were hidden and the thorns and thistles of human misunderstandings are again exposed and revealed to the sight of men.

Universal religion, therefore, is in need of a universal temple, not a temple where only rites and ceremonies are performed but a temple which is the home of universal love and service dedicating all energies to the work of human salvation. The real temple is the heart of man. When we build this temple in the centre of the heart we have the greatest divine temple. The outward temple must be a symbol, an outward expression of that spiritual temple in the heart

of humanity. The real temple where God dwells, the abode where the Almighty resides all through eternity is the heart, provided we get hold of the broom of the love of God, and sweep from the chambers of this inner temple all the cobwebs, all the dust of the past ages of ignorance, of superstition and imitation. What are the cobwebs and the dust with which the heart of humanity are covered today? They are greed, passion, lust, transgression, sin, all these things are the devils standing at the gateway of the human temple and not letting the angels of self-sacrifice and of self-renunciation and of divine emotions enter into the abode of the Almighty. When the temple of the heart is cleansed with this spiritual broom and all the dust and superstitions are scattered, then man will worship in that sacred shekinah, in that inner sanctuary without the need of outward walls, or using the temporal temple.

One of the great prophets of the orient has uttered a wonderful truth when he said that God told him that, "The heavens and the earth have not a place for Me, they are too small to hold Me, but the heart of a sincere lover, the heart of a believer, is the spacious kingdom of My presence." When the horizon of the heart is broadened, when the intellect of man is expanded, thus allowing the infiltration of the lights of divinity, then those inner temples will become the home of universal conscience and international mind. [XII:4:71]

Bahá'u'lláh came to lay the foundation of a universal temple in the hearts of humanity, and because this universal temple is in need of an outward symbol, has instituted this great law of having a physical temple (the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*) where all humanity may worship God in accord with their conscience, an exterior, outward temple, the ideals and the aims of which may tally and correspond with that inner, interior temple of the heart. The inner temple universal is a temple where God resides, the outer temple, which is also universal, is a place where there are no priests, where there are no rites, where there are no ceremonies but purely God who is the universal Father of all humanity and is worshipped with the utmost simplicity.

Just as Bahá'u'lláh has opened the door of this inner universal temple so that out of it universal love may issue forth, likewise the door of the physical universal temple must be opened for all and out of its gates the lights of universal love must be scattered to all parts of the globe. Consequently, we hope that through the institution of these two temples always going and advancing side by side the inner temple of the heart, the outer temple of the world, thus through the co-operation of these two universal temples the world of humanity may be freed from the claws of the ferocious beasts of superstition and fanaticism, the temple of brotherhood, the temple of unity, the temple of spirituality and co-operation to be built in the heart and out of the heart, this outer symbol, thus they may work harmoniously and make this world as one home, the children of men as one flock and God as the universal Shepherd.

In truth, when we listen with the ear of the spirit today we hear the people of all religions crying at the top of their voices that the spirit has left their temples. What was the cause of the banishment of the Spirit from these temples? Because the leaders of the church wanted to organize the Spirit, they wanted to institutionalize the Holy Ghost, and thus they lost the great boon of spiritual spontaneity and unification. God, therefore, has a great gift for the world of humanity today. He has freed the spirit of worship from the chains and fetters of ecclesiasticism so that mankind may grow in this immensity of God's love with the greatest freedom, with the greatest liberty and with the greatest joy and happiness (applause).

XII:4, 17 May 1921 [XII:4:82]

Religion must be the cause of love and unity

Address of Jináb-i-Fáḍil, delivered at the Bahá'í Congress, held in the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, Monday evening, 25 April 1921. Interpreted by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

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There is no other discussion more [XII:4:83] profitable today than the discussion of universal love, no other ideal conducive to the betterment of the world of mankind than those ideals which bring happiness and joy. This is indeed one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Bahá'í meetings that when we enter therein we feel their humanity, their love, their happiness. They have no other subject except the subject of love, no other law to put in execution but the law of friendship and whenever and wherever they talk, no matter on what subject, they will always somehow bring it to the conclusion and that conclusion is universal love and universal amity.

In oriental countries whenever the people enter a Bahá'í meeting or talk with an individual Bahá'í they, after a few moments, realize either consciously or unconsciously that they are amongst the angels of heaven, because these Bahá'ís in all their talks, in all their conversations, have no other aim but this great universal aim of universal love. Is there, indeed, a greater reality in the world of humanity than love? A thousand times no. Love is the spirit of this universe. Love is the cause of the creation of phenomena. Love is the foundation of all our social and ethical activities. God has created His world through love, He has kept it in cohesion through love and He is creating constantly all things through the law of love.

As a person travels from one end of the globe to another, wherever he observes civilization, progress, achievement, development, he realizes that all these things have come through the law of affinity and association, and whenever he observes destruction, chaos, disorder, he immediately realizes that they have been brought about through hatred, animosity, and internecine war. The progress, the glory, the majesty and the sublimity of the world of humanity are dependent upon love and affinity. Love is the magnet that draws unto man all the favours, all the bounties of God. It is the spiritual electricity that illumines the hearts and the minds of the world of mankind. In brief, love is the panacea for all the diseases of mankind, it is the greatest and the most effective remedy that you can find in the divine pharmacopoeia. Love is the seed out of which grows the fruit of justice. Love is the seed out of which develops unity and agreement and personal contact with God. God is love, and He has sent all His prophets to teach love, and all the lessons that they gave to their followers consisted of the lessons of love.

The prophets would not only teach love but with their creative word created love in the hearts of humanity. Through the creation of love, through the emanation of that supernatural power which God had deposited in them they evolved that unity amongst the children of men. When we study the history of the religions, for example, the Mosaic dispensation, and become acquainted with its various historical facts, we come to realize that Moses created love and unity amongst the children of Israel. Similarly Christ, unaided and alone, unfurled the banner of love amongst his disciples, his apostles and his followers. The same illustration is true of the coming of all the other prophets who established the law of love.

Unquestionably when people come together they can bring about the law of love through the ties of the family. They can likewise establish the law of love through scientific achievements. Patriotism is another instrument for bringing about the law of love, but all these various means to realize the law of love are limited and ephemeral. They can be brought to us through certain accidents of life, but the providence of God, the Manifestations of the Almighty came to establish that divine love upon the Rock of Ages which is eternal, everlasting and age abiding.

The foundation of the religions was love and amity. The result, the spirit, the working, the law and the sum total of law given by the prophets has been [XII:4:84] no other than the execution of the law of love. It is, however, most regrettable that when these great Manifestations appeared in the world and established the law of love, after a period of time from their departure, out of the dark well of human imaginations and bigotry, smoke and

clouds of intolerance and narrow-mindedness arose toward heaven and prevented the shining of the Sun of Love. These clouds were the result of the evaporation of the seas of human desires, greed and passion, and they were so impenetrable, so dense that for many ages they kept the Sun of Reality behind their thick veils.

The angel of love left the audience of humanity and on the throne was established the satan of hate. The principles of amity, of fellowship and concord which were the results or the objects of the Manifestations of God, departed from this world and in their place came the policies and the exigencies of human conditions and human notions which were no other than destructive, than humiliating, for that divine nature deposited in the heart of man by the hand of God.

Who were the centres and the mainsprings of these clouds of superstition, this smoke of human imaginations? They were the religious leaders, self-seeking, self-centred men, who had no other thought but to advance their own ideas. They were filled with spiritual pride, they were haughty, they were the satans of their age, and thus they brought into the world all these calamities and catastrophes. No doubt the simple-minded and the simple-hearted, who form the mass of humanity, looked upon these dark clouds as though they contained the heavenly rays, and they looked toward these mirages as though they were the salubrious waters.

These people with their selfish aims and purposes divided the religion of God into so many parts, you might call them butchers. They cut the body of the spiritual religion into so many pieces that no spirit was left in it (laughter). Hence we can assure ourselves without any contradiction that the foundation of religion, the essence of religion, the perfume of religion, was love and amity, and anything aside from these primal laws was the emanation of the egos of these self-seeking leaders. (applause)

His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, appeared in Persia, and through his dynamic, divine power, polished and cleansed the surfaces of the mirrors of religion from the dust of imagination. The body of religion, which was covered with all these ideas of human notions and traditions, was washed and purified. He taught humanity a most wonderful lesson, and this was that religion is the essence of love, religion is love, and anything beside it is superstition. He unstopped the ears, he opened the eyes, he enlarged the hearts and expanded the souls. He explained that religion is amity, religion is friendship, religion is concord, and if any form of religion brings about hatred, strangeness and alienation amongst men, it is better not to have religion but to have love and amity.

It is perfectly plain that a harmful substance is not good to have around us and it is better to keep ourselves away from it as much as possible. He likewise explained that religion is the remedy, it is the medicine for the diseases of humanity, and if the taking of this medicine aggravates the disease it is better not to take it.

They tell a story in Persia that there was a sick man lying on a bed, and they brought for him a physician. The physician took the pulse, diagnosed the disease, and wrote the prescription. When he went out the nurses came around and began to discuss with one another whether this doctor was an allopath, or a homeopath, or an osteopath, or some other kind of path (laughter) or whether he had diagnosed the disease rightly, whether they should give the patient the medicine when he was sitting in his bed or when he was sitting in his [XII:4:85] chair. They talked so much that finally one of them said, "Let me go and find out how the patient is", and when he went there the patient had already passed away. (laughter)

The religions of God are the medicines, the remedies for the removal of the diseases of humanity, but the followers of these divine physicians instead of taking the medicines that they had prescribed, sit around tables in conventions and conferences and councils, talking

about the stations, the sublimity of these great physicians, and they never thought that the time had come for them to take the medicine. Thus His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, has warned us that the age has come in which humanity must avoid all theological wrangles and metaphysical discussions with which the past ages were afflicted, and has revealed to us the quintessence of the religions of the world, which is harmony, love and unity.

When Bahá'u'lláh, through his heavenly power, manifested to the world of humanity this great truth, immediately the clouds were dispersed and the Sun of Reality shone forth with the utmost brilliancy. He pitched a tent, a tabernacle of unity, on the top of Mount Carmel, in the Holy Land, the branches of which have spread to all parts of the globe. He constructed a home of love in the rooms and the galleries and the chambers of which all the races, all the nations and all the religions may live with the greatest fellowship and association. This is the century of international justice. This is the era of love. This is the cycle of friendship. This is the time in which the power of universal religion must be revealed. This is the hour in which all the children of men must forget their past differences and live peacefully under the tent of universal love, being the members of one family, the stars of one heaven, the fingers of one hand, and the flowers of one rose-garden (applause).

XII:5, 5 June 1921
[XI:5:99]

The conformity of science and religion —the universal education of the future

Address of Jináb-i-Fáḍil, delivered at the Bahá'í Congress, held in the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, Tuesday evening, 26 April 1921. Interpreted by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

The cause of His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, is a movement, a dispensation which includes in it the dreams, the visions, the aspirations and the hopes of the past seers, prophets, thinkers and philosophers, impartially, and with an eye of justice and equanimity.

If a student studies and investigates the realities and the principles of the religion of Bahá'u'lláh, he will find therein all the truth, all the realities, which are for the betterment and the refinement of character and the development of humanity.

One of the cardinal principles of this blessed dispensation is the conformity of all religious ideals with scientific deductions. If a person ponders over this great principle, he will realize that it has solved one of the greatest problems of the age; it has eradicated the source of many misunderstandings and confusions which were the causes of war and struggle in former ages.

There is no doubt whatsoever that in this universal scheme of things, in this laboratory of nature, there is no more complete, and intricate, and subtle faculty created by God than the brain and its manifold convolutions. The categories, psychological and spiritual, belong to the manifestations of the brain. No matter how you may locate it, whether in the cerebrum or cerebellum, whether in the lower or upper part of the brain—these categories are the most wonderful, the most perfect realization of this great phenomenon called mind or brain.

The sublimity, the grandeur, and the all comprehending powers of man emanate from the mind. If man were minus the functioning powers of the mind, he would be less than the animals, or anything in the animal kingdom, save certain kinds, who manifest greater powers of instinct or characteristics than man.

The intellectual function in man is like a brilliant star or lamp deposited by the hand of the Almighty in the very centre of the human being, which functioning power has the quality of revealing and discovering all the secret laws of nature and creation.

It is the manifesting of that mental power which has made possible the revelation of the mysteries of the laws of nature. It is through that intellectual power that sciences, arts, crafts,

industries, and all the other instruments and channels of modern civilization, have transformed the world, and have brought to them those elements which have made life liveable and comfortable in our modern civilization.

We can liken this intellectual power to a mine in the depths of which there are infinite gems and jewels. From the beginning of creation the world of humanity has been digging and digging so that these jewels and gems, hidden in [XII:5:100] the mine of intellect may be displayed. But, how much of it have we brought into display? Only, very, very little. What we have is only a drop, and what is hidden, still, and which we must develop and explore, is like a great infinite, depthless, boundless ocean.

It is beyond a shadow of doubt, that these powers of the mind were undergoing from time immemorial great changes and transformations, and these transformations and metamorphosis lead to the expansion of the intellect, the extension of the domain of knowledge, the bringing into the world of reality those invisible laws of creation.

If we overlook the mind and its manifestations, the results, and the outcomes issuing from the activity of this intelligence, what would be man? What will we be? Only a conglomeration of flesh, muscles, bones and other materials—nothing more.

Consequently this intellectual force is a guide and an unerring companion, an inner prophet, an interior saviour deposited in the nature of man by the hand of God, that leads man from the path of wrong into the highway of righteousness, that teaches him to shun evil and hasten toward good.

In the world of science and knowledge, if we go back into the Dark Ages, medieval history, we find many seemingly scientific hypothesis and theories which were looked upon as realities in those ages; but they are today exploded through new discoveries. How are we going to explain those phenomena? We can explain it by this fact, that those theories, looked upon as realities by our forefathers, were simply efforts of the mind, assertions of man to explain certain unexplained laws, and as man is a curious animal and he desires to know things these were his efforts to find out, and when the time passed and the necessity for those laws was obviated, greater and more perfect laws were born into the world.

The science of astronomy is the greatest illustration. Because, there was a time when the Ptolemaic system was taught in Egypt, later on adopted by the Greeks, and then introduced into Europe—that the earth was the centre of the universe and the sun, the stars, the planets, all revolve around this infinitesimal globe of ours. How ridiculous this theory seems to modern mind! And yet, for ages and ages it was taught, and anyone who departed one hair's breadth from this theory was looked upon as a heretic and a dangerous man.

Is there any intelligent being today, who would rise and say that we must still believe in that ancient, exploded theory of astronomy or astrology?

Now, here is one philosophical point that I call your attention to: Just as the sciences of the world evolve and every age has its school of science and philosophy, likewise, hand in hand with science and philosophy goes the development and the evolution of religion. Religion is an index to the science of the day, and science is an index to the religion of the day.

The prophets and the manifestations of God are the teachers in the schools of humanity; just as the teachers in our schools have to teach the children in accord with their receptivity for growth and mental acquisition, likewise, these great prophets taught the children of mankind from age to age in those lessons for which they were adapted, so that they might go through certain classes, receive their certificate, and attain to the higher and the highest classes of perfection.

We are living, today, in a universal age, in an era of universal consciousness, in an age of the

discovery of the sciences, the display of imagination, the perfections and the revealing of the mystic laws, and if we study the contents of the seven books of the religions of the past, we find in them certain statements which are not in accord with the deductions of modern science. What are we going to do with them? [XII:5:101]

Because the priests of religions, the teachers of these sacred books, assert dogmatically that these statements must be taken literally, and not otherwise, and that their outward meanings must be accepted by the people, without any interpretation, we find an increasing number of men and women leaving their churches and religious organizations, disappointed with the kind of teachings that these teachers give and thus avoiding all religions and anything that savours of religion.

To make this matter plain—the students of religions in the past, from certain statements in their books, gained a conception of Deity which is anthropomorphic, that is, a human being sitting on a throne with a long white beard, with thousands and thousands of angels bowing down before him doing his biddings and singing songs and hallelujahs. This conception is based upon the theocratic or rather despotic Oriental idea that the king was that type, the highest in the government, with all the ministers and courtiers doing obedience or prostrating before him in every way. They got their conception of God from their idea of government.

Now, it is very well, and very good for our ancestors to have believed in this theory, because the signs of the creation inculcated and developed such thought; but what can we do today, when modern sciences have exploded that idea of heaven, that locality where this so-called God was residing? Where is that place? Science comes and tells us that this is an infinite expanse of ether; the more you ascend the more infinite it becomes and thus the place and the position of the ancient heavens are all obliterated.

Similarly, in regard to the question of the creation. It was taught that God created this world in six days; that the time will come when He will repent of His creation and He will destroy it, and all the world must come to an end. Now, the story of geology, and other similar sciences, tells us that this world has been created millions and millions of years; that it will run according to normal life many more millions of years. How are we going to conform these two principles or ideas?

The ancient theologians tried to find out, or locate, hell. So after much discussion, they came to this conclusion: That it was in the centre of the earth—very hot—and it was a square plane, rectangular, all its angles equal to each other and that all the evil souls were thrown in the depth of that fiery lake. Geology has come and exploded this theory.

Now, these material or physical facts of nature, misinterpreted, are miraculous religious ideas without conformity with science and reason. Both these ideas are against scientific principles and must somehow, in this age, be squared, before religion can advance in the consciousness of man.

When an intelligent person presented himself before a priest and asked him questions similar to those we have propounded in the lecture, about these matters, and asked him to explain the meaning of these things, that they were unreasonable and unscientific—all that that priest or minister had to tell them was, “You have to believe in these things blindly. Faith is the law. You must not search, you must not investigate. These are beyond your conception; just continue to believe and somehow, some day you will find it out.” (Laughter) A rather weak consolation.

This had two evil results: Firstly, a scientific mind would never believe in these metaphysical theological dogmas; and secondly, it drove away many thousands of students who were open minded and ready to believe, but they could not be convinced because these ministers of religions were unable to explain these ideas and give to these men that religious

consolation and trust which are the foundation of life.

You have only to read the development of the history of the religions and find [XII:5:102] throughout various ages and cycles that there have been great prophets and great philosophers and scholars who tried to conform religious laws with scientific postulates; but these religious ministers, who were engrained in their fanaticism and dogmatism arose against them and ostracized them, looked upon them as heretics, burned them at the stake and thus throttled the voice of freedom and the development of conscience.

This struggle between science and religion, this conflict between faith and science went on and on, till in the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, seventy years ago, he through his divine power, through his supernal majesty, evolved that heavenly plan for the unification of science and religion which will continue throughout all the succeeding ages, with increasing blessings upon mankind.

He stated that God is reality. Religion is likewise reality, and this reality is not against science. If religious idea is against scientific ideas, it is superstition and must be thrown away.

His greatest divine service was to write spiritual interpretations of the religious books of the world explaining their meanings so that they are today in conformity with the scientific conscience of the time.

Poetically and spiritually he said, "the soul of man is like unto a bird". Just as the bird cannot soar toward the apex of heaven, likewise, the bird of the soul cannot soar or fly in the atmosphere of knowledge without two wings—the wing of science and the wing of religion.

Science without religion is similar unto a jewel which is covered with soiled and tattered cloths, or it is like unto a light which is shining through a dark, sooty, glass. Science without religion is likened unto a very beautiful, perfect body, but lifeless; like unto a very clear glass, but lightless.

Here comes in his system of education which is based upon the development of the mind and the heart, of the intellect, of the emotions, so that side by side these two powers, religion and science, may work and advance along the highway of humanity.

Science and religion are likened unto two eyes for the body of mankind; likened unto two pillars for the erection of the palace of human brotherhood and solidarity.

Almost all the differences and dissensions existing among the religions of the world were based upon ignorance and misunderstanding of the realities of their books and when Bahá'u'lláh explained those facts to them and corresponded their religious ideals with scientific or intellectual principles all the differences were removed and a great urge or surge of spiritual life appeared.

Bahá'u'lláh, consequently, brought to us the essence of religion which is the reality of science and he gave to us the quintessence of signs which is the jewel of religion and thus united and harmonized the religions of the world and removed all signs and theories of conflicts and turmoils.

This is the age of illumination, this is the cycle of light, this is the era of human brotherhood, this is the time for universal peace, and we cannot—and will never—have the realities of these principles until all of us will arise and conform all our religious ideas to scientific principles. Thus these two blessings of God will transform the surface of the earth into the paradise of glory.

XII:5, 5 June 1921 [XII:5:103]

The removal of race prejudice

Excerpts from the Holy Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Compiled by M. H. and M. M.

[Passages available in the Writings have been omitted.]

From a Tablet to Mr Louis G. Gregory, Washington, D.C.

O thou wooer of Truth!

Thy letter was received. Its contents indicated thy attainment to the Most Great Guidance. Thank thou God that thou hast attained to such a bounty, discovered the faith of the Kingdom and received the glad-tidings of the universe of the Most High. This divine bestowal is conducive to thy everlasting glory in both worlds.

I hope that thou mayest become the herald of the Kingdom; become the means whereby the white and coloured people shall close their eyes to racial differences and behold the reality of humanity—that is the universal unity which is the oneness of the kingdom of the human race, the basic harmony of the world and the appearance of the bounty of the Almighty.

In brief, do thou not look upon thy weak body and thy limited capacity; look thou upon the bounties of the Lord of the Kingdom, for His confirmation is great and His power unparalleled and [XII:5:106] incomparable. Rely as much as thou canst upon the True One, and be thou resigned to the Will of God, so that like unto a candle thou mayest be enkindled in the world of humanity, and like unto a star thou mayest shine and gleam from the horizon of Reality and become the cause of the guidance of both races.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 17 November 1909.

From a Tablet to Mr J. H. Hannan, Washington, D.C., received at the same time as the foregoing one to Mr L. G. Gregory.

Ye have written that the coloured Bahá'ís have gathered in one meeting with the white believers, destroying the foundation of racial differences and the barriers of colour. When a gathering of these two races is brought about, that assemblage will become the magnet of the Supreme Concourse and the confirmation of the Blessed Perfection will surround it.

From a Tablet to Mrs Louis Washington of New York City.

O thou beloved maid-servant of God!

In thy letter thou hast intimated that thou art coloured. In the Kingdom of God no distinction is made as to the colour of the skin, whether it be black or white; nay, rather the heart and soul are considered. If the spirit is pure, the face is illumined, although it be black. If the heart is stained, the face is dark and depressed, although it may be of the utmost beauty. The colour of the pupils of the eye is black, yet they are the fountains of light.

Although the white colour is apparent, yet in it is hidden and concealed seven colours. Therefore whiteness and blackness have no importance; nay, rather the circle of distinction is based upon soul and heart.

From a Tablet to Mrs J. H. Hannan.

Praise be to God, that the doors of the Kingdom are opened, the voice of God is raised; no differences remain between the white and the coloured races. All of them are favoured at the

Threshold of the Almighty and all are beloved in the sight of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

From a Tablet to Robert Ferrell.

O thou who art awakened by the Light of Guidance!

Praise be to God, that through Mr and Mrs Kinney thou didst hear the glad-tidings of the Kingdom of God and found eternal life through the breaths of the Holy Spirit. It is hoped that the ensign of the Lord of Hosts may be [XII:5:107] raised and unfurled among the coloured race and through the effort of the friends the lights of guidance be diffused, so that the accomplishments of the black race may equal those of the white race.

Convey the wonderful Abhá greeting to the maid-servant of God, Mrs Marie Botay, and work with her in the guidance of thy race, and endeavour thou so that thy respected wife may be led by the light of guidance.

Upon thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 19 April 1910.

From a Tablet to Charles Mason Remey

O dear friend!

You have written that there were several meetings of joy and happiness, one for white and another for coloured people. Praise be to God! As both races are under the protection of the All-Knowing God, therefore the lamps of unity must be lighted in such a manner in these meetings that no distinction be perceived between the white and coloured. Colours are phenomenal, but the realities of men are essence. When there exists unity of the essence what power has the phenomenal? When the light of reality is shining what power has the darkness of the unreal? If it be possible, gather together these two races, black and white, into one Assembly, and put such love into their hearts that they shall not only unite but even intermarry. Be sure that the result of this will abolish differences and disputes between black and white. Moreover, by the Will of God, may it be so. This is a great service to humanity.¹

Mr Gregory is at present in great happiness. He went to 'Akká and visited the Holy Threshold and the Supreme Court. He is now, day and night, mingling with the friends of God and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in joy and gladness. He will return to America very soon, and you, the white people, should then honour and welcome this shining coloured man in such a way that all the people will be astonished.

Upon you be the Glory of God!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá copied from notes taken at 'Akká by Mr and Mrs Hannen, February 1909.

There should be no differentiation between the blacks and the whites. All are the creatures of God. All are created by one God. There is no black and white in the Kingdom of God. The purest heart is the best whether white or black. I had a servant—Isfandíyár by name—he was

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 359.

better than a hundred whites. He was so good tempered, so faithful and trustworthy. One would be amazed at his intelligence.

The question of the races is one which is extremely regrettable. For the blacks hate the whites, while the whites distrust the blacks. You must overcome this by showing them that you make no distinction. The end will be very unfortunate for both if the differences are not removed. [XII:5:108]

Copied from Ahmad's diary letter, 28 September 1913.

I can never forget the day in Washington when our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá called on the Ambassador of Turkey. He was sitting near the window, watching the number of men and women passing by. At the time a young Negro as black as coal passed by. "Did you see that young black Negro?" he asked. "Yes," I answered. "I declare by Bahá'u'lláh that I wish him to become as radiant as the shining sun which is flooding the world with its glorious lights," he said earnestly.

This example will show you how our Beloved is anxious, and how he is working day and night so that all mankind may advance daily along the degrees of spiritual and intellectual activities of the ever marching upward till it attains to the highest station of perfection.

Copy of a message from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mrs Botay, sent through Mrs Carrie Kinney, 'Akká, 1909

Give Mrs Botay my greetings and love and tell her she must greatly endeavour through the assistance of heaven to cast light among the coloured people so that they may become as our brothers; no blacks, no whites; both as one. By this means you shall free Americans from all prejudice. Because in the Kingdom of God all are the same, whether black or white. The greater the faith of either, the more acceptable is he in the Kingdom. A faithful coloured believer is a child of the Kingdom; while a white unbeliever is deprived. God looks upon hearts; not upon colours. He looks upon qualities; not upon bodies.

Some words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Mrs Botay. This is not a verbatim report, but written at once from memory.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said to me that the affiliation of the white with the coloured people was a great work in the Cause of God; that I must strive, strive to affiliate the hearts. My services were accepted, and that I was assisted and would be assisted. He said the hearts were not affiliated yet, and if this condition between the white and coloured people continued much longer, there was great danger.

From notes of Mrs Botay from a private interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York City, 17 June 1912.

I asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá if he meant by telling me to affiliate the hearts of the white and coloured people, that I must strive to have them meet together in love and fellowship in one meeting place. He replied: "Yes, that is what I mean." [XII:5:121]

From a Tablet to Mrs Antoinette Crump Cone, Chicago.

O thou well-wisher of humanity!

Thy letter was received. Utmost sorrow and sadness was produced, owing to the prejudices and enmity which exist between the white and coloured races. If this matter

remains without change, enmity will be increased day by day and the final result will be hardship and may end in bloodshed.

The most important teaching of His Highness, Bahá'u'lláh, is to leave behind racial, political, religious, and patriotic prejudices. Until these prejudices are entirely removed from the people of the world, the realm of humanity will not find rest. Nay, rather, discord and bloodshed will be increased day by day, and the foundation of the prosperity of the world of man will be destroyed.

It is impossible to strike at the root of these racial, political, religious and patriotic prejudices unless the inhabitants of the world come under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh. This fact is demonstrated and has become evident in the Orient; for we can see that through the effect of this Word Jews, Zoroastrians, Christians, Brahmins, and Buddhists, are associated with each other with the utmost love and affinity, to such an extent that they are considered one race. Their different names are forgotten; for instance, one often sees sitting at the same table the Muslim, the Jew, the Christian, the Turk, the European, the Kurd, the Persian—associating and living with each other with utmost concord and harmony. This wonderful spirit is realized to such an extent that it seems as though all of them are both Occidental and Oriental.

Therefore, if thou seekest a remedy [XII:5:122] for solving all of these problems—*there is no remedy except faith and assurance. Faith is the cause of harmony; faith is the cause of love; faith is the cause of unity and concord.*

It is my hope that this race question may be considered like unto the colours of the doves and other birds. They do not allow differences of colour to be the cause of hatred and animosity among them. One flock of birds is white, another grey, another yellow, another red, another black. They soar in the air with each other with the utmost love and do not fight with each other on account of their difference of colour. Man must, likewise, attain to this degree of harmony, so that there may be no differences or disharmony among the children of men on account of colour, for all of them are human beings.

Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, Washington, D.C., 24 February 1912.

XII:6, 24 June 1921 [XII:6:115]

Convention for amity between the coloured and white races

Louis G. Gregory [XII:6:119]

...

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, presenting the subject, "Bible Prophecies of Universal Brotherhood", said, "I will not discuss prophecies in detail, but try to convey their spirit. The Bible is the book of brotherhood and universality. Take the opening teaching, 'Let there be light!' This does not refer to the light of the physical sun, but rather, let there be the light of intelligence, understanding, sympathy. These will bring into one's life regeneration and the uplift for which humanity strives. All the prophets taught the law of brotherhood. They were heralds of the Message of God. They were the Light of God. The points of difference among men are far less than the points upon which they agree. If we give proper emphasis to the points of contact, it will be the means of ushering in the Kingdom of God upon earth." [XII:6:123]

...

Jináb-i-Fáḍil was the last speaker. ... [XII:6:124] ... The aims of all the Prophets of God, while they underwent persecution, was the establishment of peace among the people of the world.

It is evident that racial prejudice has long been a disease attacking the body of humanity. There are many blots on the pages of history due to prejudices and misunderstandings. However, there has always been a ray of light through the gloom of tyranny and injustice. The law of progress is due to this. Now again it is in our midst.

“In my country, Persia, racial misunderstandings were very strong, much more so than in the United States. Although racial prejudice played a great part, there were other prejudices, such as religious and sectarian, each one playing havoc. Each of the races had its own language and religion; and so they fought, causing much spoliation, destruction and carnage. Muslims persecuted Jews, withholding from them the just administration of the laws.

“There are not many coloured people in Persia, yet they appear in the records of the poets and scientists. One of them was known as Lokman the Wise.¹ His sayings are on the lips of thousands. When dying he told his son, if ever unhappy, to find the shirt of a man who has never been sad, put it on, and his own sadness would vanish. When difficulties came in the life of the son he searched in vain for such a man, and thus realized that sorrows were the common lot. One of the kings of Persia had a coloured son. In his youth he proved himself so clever and capable that he was chosen by his father over another son as his successor. He became one of the wisest and most sagacious kings of Persia, gathering around him many scholars. He had the Greek books translated into Persian and his court became famous for wisdom and learning.

“Racial and religious prejudice lately became much intensified in Persia until a great spiritual movement appeared. The doors of the Kingdom were opened. The Divine Bounty rained down and thousands of people were filled with the power of God. The Divine love brought a community of interest. All antagonistic elements gathered around the standard of unity and agreement. Liberal ideas were introduced among the children in the schools. The children being simple and coming from God without prejudices, grew up knowing God and His laws. In reality, children enter the world without bigotry and fanaticism, but are taught these things by their elders. My only race is the human race. My only religion is that of God. My country is the whole world. We must put aside narrow and limited notions, for we see the harm they have done others. It is now the age of Divine justice and universal service. All tears must be wiped away!

“Leaders of humanity, teachers, editors, preachers, must take the lead in developing these ideals. The Sun of Reality has dawned from the horizon of the world. The Breeze of Generosity is wafting and the Call of the Kingdom has reached the ends of the earth! Ere long there will be great waves of love. The banner of Universal Peace will be hoisted! Gloom will be dispelled. We shall all be as the leaves of one tree and the flowers of one rose-garden, and all the friends of God will embrace each other.”

XII:6, 24 June 1921 [XII:6:120]

Interview with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Reported in a letter written by Dr Dīyá’ M. Baghdádí to Mr Alfred Lunt, Secretary of the Bahá’í Temple Unity, Chicago, 10 June 1921.²

... I hope that all the Bahá’ís in America will attach great importance to the racial problem in order that everyone shall realize the seriousness of this matter. I will state to you in brief, an interview I had with the beloved Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, on 6 April 1920, at Haifa, Palestine, in which he referred to this matter.

After inquiring after my health with his usual charming and inspiring words of love and

¹ Luqmán.

² Extracts.

affection and giving me a cup of tea, he handed me a clipping from a newspaper, saying, "Read this." After glancing at the contents, I said, "My Lord, this is an article written by Miss Martha Root which appeared in a Cleveland newspaper; it contains a Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the contents of which are to the effect that unless the white and coloured races become united, there will be bloodshed; that through the Bahá'í teachings only can racial, political and religious prejudices pass away; that the Bahá'í teachings are the only means that shall bring about love and unity."

'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "Yes, this is the truth. If the races do not come to an agreement, there can be no question or doubt of bloodshed. When I was in America, I told the white and coloured people that it was incumbent upon them to be united or else there would be the shedding of blood. I did not say more than this so that they might not be saddened. But, indeed, there is a greater danger than only the shedding of blood. It is the destruction of America. [XII:6:121] Because aside from the racial prejudice there is another agitating factor. It is that of America's enemies. These enemies are agitating both sides, that is, they are stirring up the white race against the coloured race and the coloured race against the white race. But of this the Americans are submerged in the sea of ignorance. They will regret it. But of what use will their regret be after the destruction of America? Will it be of any use then?"

I told him of a letter which I had received from Chicago during the week, stating that two houses belonging to coloured Bahá'ís had been bombed with dynamite. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: *"I foretell things before they happen and I write about them before they occur. The destruction of two or three houses is of no importance, but the importance lies in what is coming, which is the destruction of America. The Arabs have many proverbs. For instance, 'Heavy rains begin with drops before it pours,' and 'The dancer starts with shaking the shoulder, then the whole body.'* Now is the time for the Americans to take up this matter and unite both the white and the coloured races. Otherwise, hasten ye towards destruction! Hasten ye toward devastation!"

On other occasions the Master said he hoped that the race problem would be solved by the American government.

...

Faithfully yours,

Ḍíyá' M. Baghdádí.

XII:7, 13 July 1921 [XII:7:131]

The dawn of the Sun of Reality and the power of the influence of Bahá'u'lláh

Address of Jináb-i-Fáḍil, delivered at the Bahá'í Congress, held in the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, Wednesday evening, 27 April 1921. Interpreted by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

It is indeed a source of great pleasure and joy that again we find ourselves in this splendid audience tonight to speak on the principles of peace, love, and amity which have come to encircle the globe.

It is an incontrovertible fact that the world of humanity today is sick, and the greatest need of this sickness is to have a Divine physician so that He may diagnose the disease and prescribe the medicine.

This disease, however, is not characteristic of our age—the further we advance toward the primitive ages the more we find the traces and the signs of this disease handed to us from age to age, cycle to cycle.

As we study universal history, and scan the pages of those ancient records, we find that the world of humanity in all ages and cycles, has been afflicted with the satan of war, struggle,

vicissitude, and carnage.

Long before mankind began to develop sociological groups, and various nation and state feelings—when men were living in the trees and the eaves and the rivers, in those primitive ages, still this satan of hatred, animosity and ill feeling held its rein over the minds and hearts of men; but today it has made its appearance under other names, such as, racial, patriotic, and religious distinctions.

Even when the people of the world grew in intelligence and intellectual faith, and began to establish the foundations of states and governments, thinking that these states and governments would protect the people from the ravages of the satanic suggestions of each other—lo and behold, these very governments became the farmers or the sowers of the seeds of suspicion, discontent and ill feeling amongst their own subjects and amongst the subjects of each other.

No one can compute the millions of innocent souls that were killed in order to advance the rapacity and the greed of these governments—except the earth which was crimsoned with the blood of these people and the stars rolling in the immensity of heaven, looking down with wonder and astonishment at the intolerance, ignorance and rapacity of man.

The more science advanced, the greater the display of human intelligence and genius became manifest, the wider became the circle of human bloodshed, carnage, and spoilation.

Science brought into the arena of activity its deadly engines of warfare. Whereas, formerly, in the Dark Ages, in a few years or in a few months only a few thousand people were killed by the two combatants—today, with these [XII:7:132] perfected instruments of carnage, in a few days millions of men can be dispatched into the Unknown.

From a philological standpoint, if we compare the conditions of those people, whom we call savages and barbarians, and our own people, especially in this age, calling ourselves civilized and enlightened—the only difference between us is that whereas formerly we killed the people with those primitive instruments, with javelins, darts and others; today we kill them with these perfected scientific instruments and we call ourselves civilized (laughter and applause).

This is, therefore, self-evident that intellectual accomplishments, scientific achievements, by themselves, and through themselves, will not bring about human felicity and prosperity—nay, rather, they increase discontent, turmoil, and conflict; setting class against class and bringing havoc and disorder.

The last world war is the greatest demonstration of this fact; that this war in itself was the result of the human, so-called, enlightenment and civilization.

Can we imagine that we are through with war! Or we are through forever with human greed, passion and conflict! Any man, studying with seeing eyes and intelligent mind the conditions before his eyes and the events transpiring in different parts of the world—any man, I say, coming to such a conclusion is devoid of intelligence.

Having already travelled for one year throughout the various cities of the United States and Canada and speaking before ever so many clubs, schools, colleges, universities and churches, I have come to a rather startling conclusion; that, nationalism, which is the cause of all warfare, is today more active in the schools and in the colleges of this country than ever before, and we call this country the home of peace, the most progressive, and the most liberal democratic government on the face of the earth.

In many of these so-called common schools I observed with my own eyes that the teachers sowed the seeds of national superiority, or what we call prejudices, in the pure, virgin soil of the minds and the hearts of these children who have to grow in this age with an international

mind and a universal conscience. But, they grow up under the present conditions with narrow-minded ideas, with simple thoughts concerning the almost perfection of the conditions of their own country and environment.

The remedy for these diseases is to extricate the very root of these prejudices from the minds and the hearts of the people of the world (applause).

No matter how far we may go back into the dim history of the past, we find spiritual teachers, divine prophets, heavenly poets, who are shining in the heavens of human consciousness like scintillating stars, leading and guiding men to the fountain head of peace, brotherhood, and solidarity.

These holy souls were those who, though surrounded by many difficulties and persecutions and sufferings, stood firm and steadfast, and called the attention of their fellow men to the practice of those primal laws of fellowship and comradeship, and heavenly association.

Although in those ages it was impossible for these inspired teachers to practically lay the foundation of universal peace, yet they did not sleep, they did not rest; they worked and taught, day in and day out, and sowed the seeds of brotherhood, of unity and love in the hearts of men.

Some of these prophets were exiled from their homes through the ignorance of men, others were cut into pieces by the swords of intolerance, some were put on the cross, like His Holiness, Christ—notwithstanding all these insurmountable difficulties they arose to the situation and spread the light and the rays of the Sun of Oneness and Truth.

Then this new age dawned. The breezes of Providence wafted; the nightingales of the love of God sang; the sun [XII:7:133] of universal consciousness dawned; and the highway of the Kingdom of God was paved and His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, appeared in the land of Tíhrán.

When this divine super-human being appeared in that ancient country, then and not till then did the Sun of Reality shine forth; then and not till then did universal peace become the most important problem before the face of the people.

His divine teachings, his spiritual principles, his celestial instructions, shining like unto the refulgent rays of the sun, were spread throughout the East and the West, the North and the South like the leaping forth of the sun from the eastern horizon.

First, through his spiritual power and divine life, Bahá'u'lláh removed from amongst the religions of the Orient religious prejudice and hatred which had been expressed toward one another for ages.

It is almost impossible for the Western, American, people, who are accustomed to live in a liberal country with practically no religious prejudice, to conceive of that hatred, of that religious intolerance exercised in Oriental countries.

Their fanaticism and dogmatic narrow-mindedness went to such an extent that they did not associate with one another; they thought that they were contaminated if they even shook hands with a man who belonged to a contrary faith. They would not even go into the streets when it was raining for the fear that their wet clothing might come in contact with the clothing of another man walking there who did not belong to their own faith (laughter).

This is not an exaggeration. It happened often in the Orient that if a man was sick, lying in bed, thirsty for a cup of water and some one would come and offer him a cup, he would open his eyes and ask him, "To what religion do you belong?" And if the answer was not to his liking he would rather die, and he actually would die by not drinking the water, because this man did not belong to his own religion (laughter).

Only the power of God could transform the hearts of these people, and throw away these

prejudices, which had poisoned the very fountain of their lives for many thousand years.

Through the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh these people were so united, so well-knit together, their hearts and minds were cemented to one another to such an extent that if a stranger entered in a meeting where these people were, while formerly they belonged to different religions, at that time, their love, their amity, their friendship toward one another was so genuine and so manifest that he could not distinguish them and he could not find out to what religion they belonged in former days.

When, last year, I arrived in this country, I heard that a large number of Christian ministers had arisen to unite to bring together the various sects and denominations of Christianity under the name of the Inter-Allied Church Movement. It made me extremely happy, because any attempt to bring about unity is indeed praiseworthy.

But, when I investigated the matter a little more, I found that these worthy gentlemen had very interesting conventions, they had banquets, they sat around decorated tables, they ate chicken salad (laughter) and ice cream, they gave very eloquent speeches on the necessity of unity, and agreed; but once they left those halls, they left, likewise, their talks, with the withered flowers on the tables, and thus they continued to practice the same old dogmas, creeds, and traditions, as though there was no attempt whatsoever to unite the churches. Nay, rather, we added another denomination to the Christian churches under the name Inter-Allied Church Movement (laughter and applause).

It is as evident as sunlight, that these denominations and sects are the results of dogmas and creeds. As long as the [XII:7:134] leaders of the churches hold fast to these dogmas and creeds, and think they are the essential foundations of their churches, there shall never be unity or agreement.

What did Bahá'u'lláh accomplish? He simply washed the slate of the religions of the world clean from all caste, creeds and dogmas. He attracted the attention of mankind from exterior sanctimony to interior devotion and worship. He suggested to them to ascend on the top of the mountain where he had given his divine sermons, and once the people of the world gather on the summit of that mountain with those beatitudes, there are no differences, there are no creeds, there are no traditions; but, here, deep in the valley, in the shadow of the mountain there are all kinds of misunderstandings, sorrows and miseries.

Bahá'u'lláh brought into this world the Water of Life from the Paradise of the Kingdom, and with that Water of Life he washed from the hearts all traces of religious, racial and national prejudices—these hearts which were created by God pure and translucent in the beginning but that became filled with these dark clouds and vapours, he caused to return to their original state.

He baptized the hearts and the souls of men with the fire of the love of God and with the spirit of the Word of God. As long as this eternal idea of universal peace is not planted in the hearts of men, no matter how many thousand Leagues of Nations we may have, how many Parliaments of Man we may establish, they will be used simply as in the play of checkers; these various nations will be used as excuses and pretexts, and these various organizations for no other purpose but to further the schemes and machinations of the plotting governments.

His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, planted the seeds of love, fraternity, brotherhood, humanity and kindness in the field of the universe, and day by day, we see with our own eyes that these seeds are being watered with the heavenly rain; they are growing and sprouting, little by little, till some day a great harvest will be gathered.

This is, therefore, the glorious cycle in which these universal ideals must be fully practised; this is the age in which the hopes, the dreams, of all the prophets must come to pass; this is

the time in which the flowers of intelligence must spread their perfumes throughout the world, making the world of humanity one home; the people as the members of one family and the growing plants of one garden.

XII:7, 13 July 1921 [XII:7:134]

“In this Dispensation consultation with expert doctors is highly advisable”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on physical health

One of the pilgrims to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sends the following to the *Star of the West*: “ I am enclosing a most remarkable message of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to my mother about her physical health. It seems that during my two interviews with him, I neglected to speak about her condition, so when I left I wrote Shoghi Rabbani and explained fully that the doctors disagreed as to what was her trouble, how some advised an operation while others did not. She did not know what to do. Shoghi has just sent me a letter saying he has explained fully mother’s case to the Master and his answer is this:

“I ever pray on her behalf and beg from God His divine remedy and healing. As in this Dispensation consultation with expert doctors is highly advisable and acting in accordance with their prescriptions obligatory, it is well for her to undergo an operation if deemed necessary by such doctors.”

XII:7, 13 July 1921 [XII:7:135]

Pen pictures of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America

From *The Diary of Juliet Thompson*

...

The day after I arrived, Tuesday, 23 April 1912, I met the Master at luncheon at the Embassy. The table was strewn with rose-leaves, as it always is in ‘Akká, and Oriental dishes were served. ... There had been a long conversation about material and spiritual diseases, their separate origins and separate cures. Consumption had a spiritual cause; it often originated in grief. The cure, therefore, must be spiritual. The cause of insanity was spiritual. A dear woman present brought up some theories of spiritual causation. Just at that moment they were serving salad.

“If all the spirits in the air,” laughed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “were to congregate together they could not create a salad! Nevertheless the spirit of man is powerful; for the spirit of man can soar in the firmament of knowledge, can discover realities, can confer life, can receive the divine Glad-tidings. Is not this greater than making a salad?” (with another bright laugh).

... [XII:7:137]

...

The Turkish ambassador made an address. He called him “the Unique One [XII:7:138] of the age”, “who had come to spread his glory and perfection amongst us.”

“I am not worthy of this,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá simply.

Oh, the meekness! I used to hate that word meekness, especially in connection with Christ, until I saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! Then I realized this: that it is one of the essential attributes of God’s Manifestations, and is a ray of unique power; of such power indeed that I have seen it change the atmosphere. I am not speaking at random. This happened at ‘Akká when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “Jesus was the bread that came down from Heaven, but I am the food prepared by the Blessed Beauty Bahá’u’lláh.” A something celestial, affecting me like silver light, filled the room. Perhaps I should put it in this way, that it is one of the attributes of the Servant, and when the Manifestation in the station of the Servant shows forth this attribute, which is

identical with self-effacement, and all traces of the Servant disappear, then the station of the Glory atone is seen. "There was God and there was nothing with Him." ...

"Nothing save the love of God endures!" said 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as he drove in the park one day with Mrs ____ and myself. "Look at these trees all in blossom now!" And in words which I will not attempt to quote he described the inevitable coming of autumn. "This is a symbol of the human life," he said. "Remember Babylon." He drew vividly for us a picture of the former Babylon, its pomp and splendour; then of Babylon today, the ruins of today, "empty save for the hyena prowling among its crumbling stones, silent except for the voice of the owl at night or the song of the lark in the lonely day." "Remember Tyre," he continued. "Here, too, was beauty and splendour and pomp. Think of Tyre now! I have been there. I have seen." ...

One day I stayed after the meeting to see Edna Belmont, who was serving 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the telephone upstairs.

While we were talking, suddenly the Master came into the room.

"I am just going out for a drive," he said, "but stay till I return, Edna, and you, too, Juliet, stay. I will see you when I return."

So I waited; I waited and waited. Half-past six came; seven! Our dinner was to be at half-past seven, and where I was going was a long way off, rather indirect on the car line and I had not kept the motor!

"Go, Juliet, I will explain," urged Edna. But I could not. He had told me to stay.

And now I am going to digress and tell you what seems another story! I was certainly no more than ten years old when a very presumptuous aspiration took possession of my infant mind. I began to dream of some day painting the Christ. I even prayed for it! Child though I was I violently hated the accepted conceptions of the Christ—sweet, effeminate, ineffectual. "I will paint a King!" I said, "the King of Love."

And I never lost this hope till I saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then I knew that no one could ever paint the Christ! The life of the Spirit of Life, that animation, the endless revealing, the glory! How could these be captured in material? Can you paint the lightning?

It was a little after seven when the Master came back. Entering the room where he had left me and where of course I was still waiting, he said:

"Ah, Juliet! For your sake I returned. Mrs Hemmick wanted to keep me, but I had asked you to wait; therefore I returned." After a slight pause he added, "Would you like to come up and paint me tomorrow?"

So I learned the reward of obedience. Once in Haifa he said to me: "Keep my words; obey my commands and you will marvel at the results."

By a miracle I was not late for the dinner.

The next morning I went to him early with my box of pastels, but though it [XII:7:139] was only eight o'clock, quite a crowd had gathered already and I felt that our morning was doomed to be a broken one. Not only that, but the light in all the rooms I saw was very poor and weak; and the delicate wallpapers with bunches of flowers on them you could not think of putting behind his head! For a while I was in despair, for I dared not offer the suggestion that was in my mind. In the end, however, the artist overcame the disciple in me and, begging 'Abdu'l-Bahá to forgive me if I were doing a wrong thing, I asked if he would pose in New York instead. This he consented to do so freely and sweetly that I had no more qualms about it.

The next day, while I was waiting in the hall to be announced, a door opened and there stood 'Abdu'l-Bahá, beckoning to me. He was alone, so we had to fall back on his English and

my Persian. A precious little talk it was!

Then the translator arrived.

"Tell Juliet," began 'Abdu'l-Bahá at once, "that she teaches well." (I repeat this praise only because it is his!) "I have met many people who have been affected by you, Juliet. You are not eloquent, you are not fluent, but your heart teaches. You speak with an emotion, a feeling which makes people ask, 'What is this that she has?' Then they inquire! they seek and find. It is so, too, with Lua. You never find Lua speaking with dry eyes. You will be confirmed; a great bounty will descend upon you. You will become eloquent. Your tongue will be loosed. Teach, always teach. The confirmations of the Holy Spirit will descend upon those who teach constantly. *Never feel fear.* The Holy Spirit will give you the words to say. *Never fear.* You will grow stronger and stronger."

His vibrant power as he spoke thrilled me and fear was banished forever from my mind. The grand courage of that erect head and uplifted hand, the absolute confidence in God for me—I am sure I shall always see this when in the future I begin to speak.

New York

...

On 13 May a meeting of the Peace Conference was held at the Hotel Astor, at which 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the guest of honour and the chief speaker.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was really too exhausted to have gone to that meeting. He had been in bed all day.

"Must you go to the Hotel Astor when you are so ill?" I asked him. [XII:7:140]

"I work by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit," he answered, "I do not work by hygienic laws. If I did I would get nothing done!"

...

On the 21 May, also before 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to Boston, Mrs Tatum had a reception to which he came. The people who were there were of the fashionable world, with a sprinkling of artists and the literary set.

Suddenly there was a stir among the people, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in our midst. He walked over to a big yellow couch in the bay-window and sat down. I think I must tell you how he looked there. His surroundings were all white; sunlight streamed in; the shadows on his face were translucent; his profile was outlined with a luminous pencilling; his background was the crystal of the wide central window pane, the sky beyond. Behind him stood the Persians.

Soon he began to speak.

He was very happy, he said, to be with us. Think of the contrast! His outlook for years had been a prison window and he had been confined within the limits of a fortress; now he found himself in spacious homes.

His talk, at first apparently desultory, gradually shaped itself toward some distinct point, which, however, he kept veiled until the end. I wondered what was coming. When it came it was like a thunderclap.

"Think of it!" he said. "Two kings were dethroned in order that I might be freed! This is naught but pure destiny!"

"And now," ended the Master, rising to his feet with the action of a king, "you here in America must work with me for the peace of the world and the oneness of humanity."

And with this he left us, the room seeming strangely empty after he had gone.

I must paint one a word-picture, a morning in—how curious, I started to say “The Riḍván”, I mean—Riverside Drive, in that hallowed little strip of a park which we all love to call “his garden” into which he escaped so often to rest, which is holy with his prayers, or where we sometimes walked with him in the evenings, or he took his daily exercise. Just a gravel path, some benches and young trees and a low stone wall shutting off the slope to the river far below, but unspeakably beautiful forever to me. Morning, as I started to say, in our Riḍván; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the sunlight, his turban glistening white in it, pouring attar of rose on our hands and heads, pouring it out lavishly and with an incense of universal love breathing from him as he did it which it is impossible to describe, as though love indeed were the one delectable thing in the universe and the source of all joy. Oh that love! The pale, sparkling early morning sunshine, the perfume, that figure in the graceful flowing robes and the glistening turban, the centre of a force which made everyone around him as non-existent!

There is something almost miraculous in the way ‘Abdu’l-Bahá takes the sunlight. No one else looks so bright in it. It makes him translucent, like a shining mirror.

XII:8, 1 August 1921 [XII:8:145]

Pen pictures of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America (continued)

From The Diary of Juliet Thompson

Yesterday morning, 12 June 1913, I went up early to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s house, that house whose door opened about eight in the morning and kept open (with no one to guard it) until midnight!

He had been away and I had not seen him for three days. I had brought my pastels, thinking he might want to sit for me, but I found him looking utterly spent. He was in the lower reception room, or hall, the English basement of the house, and Valíyu’lláh Khán was with him. He looked up with brilliant eyes.

“What do you want of us, Juliet?” he smiled.

“Only to be near you!” (I had hidden my pastels.)

“You must excuse me from sitting for the portrait today. I am not able today.”

Then he talked to us a little, but soon went out alone, to “the garden”, leaving Ruth, Valíyu’lláh and me together.

“It is wonderful,” said Ruth as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went, “to see how the world is quickened today in all directions.”

“And to know,” I added, “that the voice that is quickening it, so powerfully quickening it, is that tender voice that spoke to us just now.”

Today (12 June) I went up early to his house, but not early enough. As I turned into 78th Street, I saw him at the other end of the block on his way to the garden, his turban a dazzling spot in the sunlight, his robes floating out with great grace as he walked.

Later he returned. Miss Buckton had arrived by that time and a poor little waif of humanity, a Jewess. She was all in black, this poor child, with a little pale face, careworn and tearworn.

I had been in the kitchen with Lua. I came out upon a scene dominated by the Master. He was sitting, as usual, at the window, the strong carving of his face thrown into high relief by masses of shadow, his turban and white ‘abá bright in the sunlight. On one side sat Miss Buckton, on the other, this poor stricken child. While the biggest tears I had ever seen splashed from her eyes she told him her hopelessly dismal story.

“Don’t grieve now, don’t grieve,” he said. He was very, very still, and I think he was calming

her.

“My brother has been in prison for three years. He was imprisoned unjustly. It was not his fault; he was led; he was weak, a victim of others. He has four more years to serve. My father and mother are depressed all the time. My brother-in-law, who was our support, has just died.”

There it was, the sum of human misery: poverty, weakness, disgrace, sorrow, despair and the maddening pall of gloom.

“You must trust in God,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

“But the more I trust the worse things become!” she sobbed.

“You have never trusted.”

“But my mother is reading the psalms all the time. She does not deserve that God should desert her so! I read the psalms myself, the ninety-first psalm [XII:8:146] and the twenty-third psalm every night before I go to bed. I pray, too.”

“To pray is not to read psalms. To pray is to trust in God and to be submissive in all things to Him. Be submissive, then things will change for you. Put your family in God’s hands. Love God’s will. Strong ships are not conquered by the sea; they ride the waves! Now be a strong ship, not a battered one.”

At noon I took Mr ____ to him. As we sat alone in the library, waiting for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to return from the garden, I said:

“I think what he said at Mr Gifford Pinchot’s last week was very interesting, that the people were rising like a great tide, wave upon wave, and unless the capitalists realized soon, they would be driven out with violence; that the people in the future would not work for wages, but for an interest in the concerns.”

Just then Lua appeared at the door of the room where she had been sitting, bending toward the stairway with beautiful reverence.

“He is coming?” I asked.

“Yes, he is coming, Juliet.”

He came into the room with both hands extended, and in a voice like a chime from his heart he said:

“Oh-h, Mr ____, Mr ____!”

Such love, such gladness, such sweetness, such welcome!

Then I slipped out.

When I re-entered the room ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was signing a photograph for Mr ____, rather, writing a prayer on it.

“And now,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said as he presented it, “you must give me your photograph. I want your face. I have given you mine, now you must give me yours.”

“I will pray for you,” he added, as he said farewell to Mr _____. “I will mention you daily in my prayers.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá detained me a moment.

As I rejoined Mr ____, Valíyu’lláh Khán was entering the house. We (Mr ____ and I) were both out in an automobile.

“Do you see that young man going into the house?” I asked. “That is Valíyu’lláh Khán. His

father was cut into pieces alive while his own little son (Valíyú'lláh Khán's youngest brother) was forced to look on at the butchery."

"If you will deny Bahá'u'lláh,' the executioners said to the child, 'we will take you to the palace of the Sháh and honours and wealth will be heaped upon you.'

"But I do not want these things,' the little fellow answered.

"Then, if you do not deny him,' they continued, 'we will kill you worse than your father.' (I am expressing this just as Valíyú'lláh Khán did, in his English.)

"You may kill me a thousand times worse,' was the reply. 'Is my blood of more value than my father's? To die in the path of Bahá'u'lláh is my supreme desire.' Then they fell on the child and choked him.

"A day or two ago," I continued, "Valíyú'lláh Khán asked me about the portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahá—how it was getting on. 'One should paint the soul in a portrait, I think,' he said.

"But who can paint the soul of 'Abdu'l-Bahá?' I asked.

"We can paint it with our blood.' He replied, very gently, but with kindling eyes."

The next day, Wednesday, 13 June, as usual I went very early to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's, so early that no one was there, that is, no callers. Some of the Persians, of course, were with him—Valíyú'lláh Khán and Mírzá 'Alí Akbar. I found them in the lower reception hall, the English basement. The Master was sitting in the big chair in the corner by the window.

After a while he went out. When he returned, after he had given some private interviews to those waiting, he talked to people, on the first floor, sit- [XII:8:147] ting at the far end of the room, his back to the window, into which the sun poured. The strongest image in my memory is this luminous one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá sitting by the window, the majestic head dominating the holy figure, teaching us with smiles and gestures divine.

The meeting over, a few of us went upstairs. 'Abdu'l-Bahá looked in, calling Juliet!" whereupon I joyously ran out to him.

"Bring your things in here and paint now," he said, pointing to the front room, the library.

Oh, these sittings, so wonderful, yet so difficult! We move from room to room, from background to background, light to light. He has given me three half hours, each time in a different room. And—'Abdu'l-Bahá, who could paint him? ...

The next morning, Thursday, I went up very early to the house, but did not see the Master. But Lua and I had a wonderful talk with Valíyú'lláh Khán.

"My father," said Valíyú'lláh Khán, "was much with Bahá'u'lláh. One night Bahá'u'lláh, as he strode back and forth in his room, said to my father:

"At stated periods souls are sent to earth by the Mighty God with what we call the power of the great ether. And those who possess this power can do anything; they have all power. Even this walk of mine,' said Bahá'u'lláh, 'has an effect in the world. Jesus Christ had this power. The people thought him a poor young man whom they had crucified; but he possessed the power of the great ether, therefore he could not remain underground. This ethereal power rose and quickened the world. And now look to the Master,' said Bahá'u'lláh, 'for this power is his!'

"Bahá'u'lláh," added Valíyú'lláh Khán, "taught my father much about Áqá. Áqá (Master) you know is one of the titles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the Greatest Mystery of God is another, and the Greatest Branch is another. By all these we call him in Persia. The Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, revealed the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to my father. And my father wrote many

poems to the Master, though the Master would scold him and say, 'You must not write such things to me!' But the heart of my father could not keep quiet. Once he wrote:

“O Dawning-Place of the Beauty of God! I know Thee!

Though Thou wrappest Thyself in ten thousand veils—I know Thee!

Though Thou shouldst wear the tatters of a beggar—still would I know Thee!”

In the afternoon I returned with my mother. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá received us in his room, full of lilies and carnations and roses.

“A-h-h, Mrs Thompson! Marhabá! Marhabá!” (“Welcome”.)

The intonation of that “Marhabá!”—a welcome from a heart deeper than any human heart; a welcome indeed! Only this generation may know it on earth, but it is before all the world in the future at the threshold of Heaven!

The next morning I saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá alone and we spoke of a friend, who had failed to understand ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s meaning the other day, thinking he meant to teach asceticism, that the spirit and the flesh were two separate things.

“That is not what I said,” replied ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “I said that the spiritual man and the materialist were two different beings. The spirit is in the flesh,” he added.

“Yes, I know,” I answered, beaming at the beauty of this and its deep significance, for there it all was—everything was said in those six words.

Those precious sittings, so few, with dear May and Lua praying beside me while I worked, perceiving and encouraging while I painted with a breathless and blind speed, lifted up on a wave of inspiration, only feeling! [XII:8:150]

“The Holy Spirit, alone, can paint this portrait,” I said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “All confirmation comes from the Centre of the Covenant. Oh, inspire me!”

“You will be inspired,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “for you are painting only for the sake of God.”

Then I let go, relying on his promise and on the prayers of May and Lua; and then a great wave of inspiration came, lifting me to unimagined heights of confidence, endowing me with clear, sure perception, above all, filling, thrilling me with feeling, so profound and immense that my hand, strangely certain, as direct as though guided by a more powerful one, trembled so it could scarcely execute. In five half-hours the portrait was done (all except a sitting for the last touches)—each day in a different light and environment.¹

To be painting from the face that mirrors the Face of God and realizing this! Oh, artists of the future, think what that means, and forgive the inadequate expression I have left to you. Because of these great difficulties I could not make a studied portrait, it is only a sketch. The light was unspeakably weak and poor, everything external was against me. But they say it is really like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—he, himself, says so. He said, “It is the very nature.” But nothing is like him to me. That immortal flash of the eyes, that mouth superhumanly mobile, the piercing sweetness and brilliancy of the look, the celestial light of the ever-changing face—who could paint? An emanation of holiness that is almost visible, I can find no words for it. You will have to wait, oh people who are to come! till you see him in the Supreme Concourse.

There was that other day, when in his address to the believers ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declared himself the Centre of the Covenant. The words are on record, though not all, some he himself struck out when the notes were presented to him, so that the record is less strong, more

¹ A portrait this size normally takes at least forty hours. An advertisement for copies of this portrait in *Star of the West*, XIV:8, p. 254, states that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took this portrait back with him to Haifa where it remained.

guarded than the spoken words were. They were uttered with a great calm. That day was the 19 June. ...

XII:9, 20 August 1921 [XII:9:156]

Pen pictures of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America (continued)

From The Diary of Juliet Thompson

21 June, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to Montclair. Two days later Lua Getsinger, Georgie Ralston and I were with him in Montclair.

He served at the table that day. I shall never forget his look of mystery as he entered with a dish of fruit. It was a glass bowl, filled with golden peaches. Without turning his head—his face was set straight before him and was strangely and majestically still in expression—he turned a piercing glance on Lua and myself. It was a glance like a sword, strangely watchful as it flashed from the corners of his eyes while his face was turned almost profile.

Before lunch, having banished Lua, Georgia and me to the back porch, he joined us there, striding up and down and talking to us. As he walked he shook us with his power. I felt myself renewed in the current of life eddying from him. I felt myself sparkle with this vivification, this exhilaration.

His eyes—those eyes of light, which seem to be, and are, ever looking into heaven, into that mysterious plane hidden from our sight, and when they alight for an instant upon earth glance away at once, back to the mysteries—were more than ever brilliantly restless that day; his whole being indeed was restless with a strange force. It seemed as though the lightning of the Spirit could scarcely endure to remain harnessed to the body. His whole bearing was unusually foreign to earth. He seemed almost out of the body.

While we were sitting around him on the porch I told him that a woman I knew, who had seen him once but knew nothing of him, had said she would like to “live near him”.

He laughed. “She does not want to live near me. She only wants a good time!”

Then he grew serious. “To live near me,” he said, “one must have my aims and objects. Do you remember the rich young man who wanted to live near Christ and when he found out what it cost to live near him—that it meant to give away all his possessions, and to take up a cross and follow Christ—then,” 'Abdu'l-Bahá laughed, “he fled away!”

“Among the disciples of the Báb,” continued 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “were two, his amanuensis and a firm believer. On the eve of the Báb's martyrdom, the believer prayed, ‘Oh, let me die with you!’

“The amanuensis said, ‘What shall I do?’

“‘What shall I do!’ laughed the Master, in gentle mockery, ‘What do you want me to do?’

“The Báb said, ‘Protect yourself.’

“The disciple died with the Báb, his head upon the breast of the Báb, and their bodies were mingled in death. The amanuensis died in prison anyway, but think of the difference in their stations! [XII:9:157]

“There was another martyr,” continued 'Abdu'l-Bahá after a moment.

“Mírzá ___ of Shíráz. He saw Bahá'u'lláh only once, but he so loved the Blessed Beauty that he could not help but follow him to Tīhrán, though Bahá'u'lláh had told him to remain with his aged parents, who had also become believers.

“Still he followed! And when he reached Tīhrán, it was just at the time that a great persecution had fallen upon the Bahá'ís because of the attempt on the life of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh

by two fanatical believers; and Bahá'u'lláh had been cast into a dungeon; and it was in the dungeon that Mírzá ___ Shírází found the Blessed Perfection again, when, asking for Bahá'u'lláh, he was led to the dungeon to be chained, with other disciples, to his Master! So he found him again! The disciples were all bound by the same chain to Bahá'u'lláh. Set into the chain were iron collars which were fastened by iron pins around the neck, and each day a believer was unchained and killed, until Bahá'u'lláh alone was left; and none knew whose turn would be next. The first intimation they received that their time had come was when the jailer took out the pin from the collar. This was the sign.

“And one day the pin was taken out from Mírzá ___ Shírází's collar. Then Mírzá ___ Shírází stepped joyfully forward. First he kissed the feet of the Blessed Beauty and then—“

Suddenly 'Abdu'l-Bahá's whole aspect changed. It was as though the spirit of the martyr had entered into him, or as though—the thought stabbed my heart—as though his prophetic spirit was enacting the tragedy to come, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself, the Centre of the Covenant of God, would go forth in ecstasy to his own martyrdom.

When that day comes, that day of tears for heaven and shame for earth, I shall see 'Abdu'l-Bahá as he was at Montclair. With his head thrillingly erect, snapping his fingers high in the air, beating on the porch with his foot till we could scarcely endure the vibrations set up,—such electric power radiated from him—he sang the martyr's song—ecstatic and tragic beyond anything I had ever heard.

This was what the Cause meant, then! This was what it meant to “live near him!” Another realm opened to me, the realm of divine tragedy.

“And thus,” ended 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “singing and dancing Mírzá ___ Shírází went to his death and a hundred executioners fell on him! Later his old parents came to Bahá'u'lláh praising God that their son had given his life in the path of God!”

He sank back into his chair. Tears swelled in my eyes, blurring everything. When they cleared, I saw a yet stranger look in his face. His eyes were unmistakably fixed on the Invisible. They were as brilliant as jewels and so filled with delight that they almost made his vision real to us. A smile of exultation played on his lips. Very low, so that it sounded like an echo, he hummed the martyr's song.

“See!” he exclaimed, “the effect that the death of a martyr has in the world. It has changed my condition.”

There was a moment of silence, then he asked:

“What is it, Juliet, that you are pondering so deeply?”

“I was thinking of the look in your face when you said your condition had been changed. I was thinking I had seen a flash of the joy of God over those who die happily for humanity.”

Soon he spoke of Mary Magdalene.

“There was one name,” he said, “that always brought joy to the face of Bahá'u'lláh. His expression would change at the mention of it. It was Mary Magdalene.” ...

I did not see 'Abdu'l-Bahá again till the day of the feast, the 29 June, at [XII:9:158] West Englewood. Then I entered his presence in Roy Wilhelm's house.

I had gone to West Englewood with Silvia. We walked up from the little station, through the sweet, wild country, past the grove where the tables were set for the feast, a great circle cleared of underbrush, shady and fragrant with tall pine-trees, in the midst of tangled woods; then on up to the house where he was, he whose presence filled our eyes with light and

without whom our days had been very dim and lifeless!

Ah, there he was again! There on a corner of the porch that unique figure in the flowing garments, which meant the Heavenly Garment to us! We sat on the porch with him for a while. Later he led us to the grove. There he talked to the people, sitting beneath a great tree, with a poor old woman on one side, very poor and humble, but with the most shining faith, and on the other Mrs Krug, with her radiant prettiness and rich clothes. His words have been preserved, I will not repeat them; I remember them, besides, very imperfectly. But he said one thing which woke all my being: "This is a New Day, a New Hour!" I could not take notes—it was so beautiful, so life-bestowing to watch him, as he sat beneath that great tree, the people grouped in circles around him, teaching them as Jesus used to do in the open—rustling leaves and sky above his head!

XII:10, 8 September 1921 [XII:10:167]

Pen pictures of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America (continued)

From The Diary of Juliet Thompson

At the end of the divine talk the feast was ready; but no sooner had this been announced than a sudden storm blew up. There was a peal of thunder, the clouds rolled very low. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stepped out into the road and went to the extreme end of it, where there was a crossroad. There a chair had been left, and, as I watched him from a distance, I saw him sit down while the Persians stood around him. I then saw him lift his face to the sky. He had gone very far from the house; the thunder was still threatening and the clouds were ominously black. Suddenly a change came with the wind. The clouds began to flee across the sky, blue patches appeared, the sun came out! Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá rejoined us in the grove. This I saw.

Later as we sat at the tables, he anointed us with rose-water. I was not at a table, but sitting on the ground beneath a tree, with one or two believers.

"Friends here!" smiled 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In his voice was a deep and thrilling joy, the union of hearts gives him such rest.

But the wonderful, the indescribably wonderful time came later. 'Abdu'l-Bahá went out alone and remained for hours. When he returned it was dark. A few of us were sitting on the porch. Below us on the grass sat the people, that is, those who had lingered. Their white clothes in the dusk were as soft as moth wings. In their hands they held burning tapers, really to keep off mosquitoes! but the effect was of tiny wands tipped with red stars and the incense was like some Eastern temple. It was a fairy-like picture.

'Abdu'l-Bahá took a chair in the centre of the step, and delicately holding a taper himself, he spoke in words of flame. I can see it all vividly still—and shall through my life—those trembling [XII:10:171] red stars among the dim white figures on the grass, behind them a wonderful tall tree, luxuriant with rolling outlines, now a great black cloud against the silver stars.

'Abdu'l-Bahá I could not see, as I was at his back, but his words were all the more powerful for that. Often I lose the words in gazing at his face. He had turned before beginning to speak and given me a long and unfathomable look.

That speech, thank God, is recorded—otherwise the words could never be remembered. It was a reverberating call to his disciples to rise in this Day of the Great Resurrection out of the tomb of self and revivify the world with him.

Before he had finished, he rose from his chair and started down the path, passing between the white figures, now risen to their feet, with their trembling red stars.

“Peace be with you,” he said, as he receded into the darkness, the rich, liquid Persian and the quivering translation floating back to us from his invisibility—“I will pray for you.”

Ah, the Divine Figure growing dimmer and dimmer till at last the darkness engulfed it! Ah, the voice that came back even when the figure was out of sight! May I remember this in the future; nay, how could I forget it? ...

“On the Fourth of July three years ago,” I remarked to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on that day, “Mrs Kinney and I were with you in ‘Akká. You took us to the Tomb of Bahá’u’lláh. I never dreamed I would keep an anniversary with you in New York!”

At another time that evening he spoke of tests. “Even the sword,” he said, “is no test to the Persian believers. They are given a chance to recant; they cry out instead, ‘Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!’ Then the sword is raised; they cry out all the more, ‘Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!’” ...

I write words, but nothing can convey the subtle influence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—the fragrance of his love, falling on our hearts like balm, exhilarating our spirits, changing even our physical aspect, brightening the eyes, bringing colour to pale faces, freshening all with joy. The fragrance of his love, the power of his peace, the currents of life streaming out from that strong Centre—that calm and glowing Centre. In his presence we are in Heaven.

“And a man shall be as a shelter from the wind, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land!” ...

On Monday, 9 July, I went with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the little band of Persians to the Natural History Museum. It was a very hot day. When we reached the Ninth Avenue corner of the Museum, where the employees’ entrance is located, there was still a long stretch of sun between us and the main door and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was evidently so weary that I felt we must find some nearer [the] entrance for him. So, while he sat down to rest on a ledge of the embankment, I went ahead to look for one. The employees’ door was locked, so I hurried on farther, even venturing past a sign marked “No thoroughfare”. But just as I succeeded in passing this I was stopped by a whistle and turned to face the watchman. He was a little old Jew with a kind face. I explained why I was breaking the rules and asked if he could lead us to a door nearer than the main one. He turned and looked at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, at that figure from the East, from the past—not of this world or this time at all, sitting so quiet, on the ledge of the embankment; and his face softened curiously.

“Come with me,” he said. Then, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the rest of us followed him: “Is he a Jew?”

“No,” I said. “He is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá of Persia.”

The old Jew asked nothing more, [XII:10:172] though I sensed that he wished to, but I did not feel at liberty to speak. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, himself, was there to speak.

We went through the Museum, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá being quite amused with the big whale, saying: “He could hold seventy Jonahs.”

In the Mexican exhibit, which interested him very much, he remarked on the close resemblance of the sculpture to what had been found in Egypt. “Only, this is better,” he said.

“There is a tradition,” I ventured, “of a connection between this country and Asia in the far past?”

“Assuredly,” he answered, “before a great catastrophe there was connection between Asia and America.”

Though ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had already rested in the Museum, he sat down again outside, on a

soft little curve of ground beneath a young tree. He sat some little time there, we standing behind him on the flags of the walk. Was he waiting for some one?

Bye and bye the old watchman stole up to us.

"Is he tired?" he whispered softly to me. "Who is he; he looks like a great man."

Divining that the Jew was a socialist, I replied that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a great sufferer for the cause of brotherhood. Then I told him something of the story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sufferings.

"I should like to speak to him," said the watchman, so I led him to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'Abdu'l-Bahá looked up, his brilliant eyes full of sweetness.

"Come and sit by me," he said.

"No, I must not," answered the watchman.

"Is it against the rules for me to sit on the grass?" asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

"No—you may sit there all day!"

"You didn't see the whole of the Museum," continued the old watchman. "Would you like to go back after you have rested? There are the fossils and the birds."

"No," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá, smiling. "I am tired of going about looking at the things of this world. I want to go above and travel and see in the spiritual worlds. What do you think about that?" he asked suddenly, with another luminous smile.

The old watchman looked puzzled and scratched his head.

"Which would you rather possess?" pursued 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "the material or the spiritual world?"

"Well, I guess the material," the watchman answered seriously. "You know you have that, anyway!"

"But you do not lose it when you attain the spiritual. When you go upstairs in a house, you do not leave the house. The lower floor is under you."

"Oh, yes!" All of a sudden the light broke from the old man's face.

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá rose and, standing beneath that young tree, the sun shining on his robes, taught the old Jew, with his irrefutable logic, yet with irresistible smiles and charm, of the spiritual agreement of Christ and Moses. Oh, if only I could make you see that picture, call it into life again for you!—the old Jew and his unrecognized Messiah, this one of whom he had asked, "Is he a Jew?" who so strangely magnetized him and inspired him with tenderness and awe—the touched, questioning face of the Jew, and, the Radiant Stranger, like the vision of some long-past prophet, the "Ancient of Days" and "the Divine Youth" in one, by some strange alchemy of spirit. Surely, the Jew must have felt something. Christians had said of this visitor from the East: "That Figure makes me think of the plains of Judea"; "I seemed to be talking with Moses, or Isaiah". Race-instinct, deep race-hopes, must have stirred within the Jew.

(I returned a number of times to the Museum to try to find the old watchman, but I never saw his face again. He must have been called very soon "upstairs in the house".)

XII:8, 1 August 1921 [XII:8:148]

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Portion of a Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the spring of 1904 for Mrs I. D. Brittingham, New York City, America.

Thou hast written regarding the tests and trials to be manifested in the American countries.

Know this, that hardships and misfortune shall increase day by day, and the people will be distressed. The doors of joy and happiness shall be closed upon all sides; terrible wars shall happen. Disappointment and the frustration of hopes shall surround the people from every direction, until they are obliged to turn to God. Then the Lights of great happiness will enlighten the horizons, so that the cry of 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!' may arise upon all sides. This will happen!"

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

XII:9, 20 August 1921 [XII:9:153]

Bahá'í organization

Notes from memory written at the request of several friends, from a talk given at the home of Herr and Frau Kommerzinrat¹ Schwarz, in reply to questions of Herr Jaeger, Saturday, 20 November 1920.

Charles Mason Remey

Spiritual consultation is one of the fundamental principles of the Bahá'í organization. As the work of the Cause increases it is found to be necessary that such consultation be established for the guidance, well-being, and stability of the work. For this end in various assemblies of Bahá'ís, according to the instructions of the Centre of the Covenant, boards of spiritual consultation have been established for the organization and direction of the activities of the Cause.

When the friends assemble for spiritual consultation, it has been found to be good to read prayers and Tablets in order that all human thoughts in the minds of those present be changed to divine thoughts, that the spirit of the Kingdom penetrate into the souls of all present, thus a spiritual harmony is established which is the most necessary element of Bahá'í consultation.

After reading of the holy Utterances the various subjects to be considered may be presented. It has been found best to consider each matter in turn, all present concentrating upon one question until that question is settled—then proceeding to the next matter. With this procedure there is no confusion of thought nor diffusion of energies.

In meetings of consultation it has been found to be important that each member present should speak freely and without constraint, always with great gentleness and consideration for the happiness of all present. It is good for each one of the people of the board of consultation to express himself in turn. When the circuit of all present has been made, it will often be found that the thoughts expressed by the friends give rise to other thoughts in the minds, and then it is well to have a second or a third opportunity for each to express himself. With this full expression of thoughts, when these thoughts are in harmony with the principles and the spirit of the Cause, the condition is made for decisions based upon the spiritual instructions and methods of the kingdom.

In consultation the best results can not be attained when the people do not express the convictions and thoughts which lie deep in their hearts, for when they feel constrained the heart is distressed, and cannot function spiritually with the hearts of the others present, and when the hearts are constrained perfect consultation is not attained.

When the heart is expressing itself freely it is in joy and happiness, and this is an essential element in consultation; without it true spiritual guidance is not attainable, therefore great care should be taken that each one present should express himself fully in all spiritual joy and gladness of heart.

¹ Kommerzienrat, Commercial Council.

With a good knowledge of the teachings, upon which basis of the revealed Word all Bahá'í considerations should be based, and with an exaltation of the spirit of the Covenant, the friends in consultation are of one spirit, and of one thought, and there is a unity of [XII:9:154] thought. This is only attainable with knowledge of the teachings when the hearts of all present are in the utmost state of severance and humbleness before the threshold of the Covenant. When this ideal condition exists, the right solutions of all questions are found, and there are no doubts in the hearts of the consultors. However, at times ideal conditions may not exist, and there may be a division of opinion among the members of the assembly. Under these conditions the beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá has instructed the believers to cast a vote, and for those in the minority to abide by the will of the majority. It has been found by adhering to this command that a harmony is maintained which bridges over, as it were, the times when opinions are divided—then later, when the people have a better knowledge of the teachings, and a more abundant confirmation of the Spirit, their difference of opinion will cease to exist, and eventually they will unite in support of the reality of the Covenant.

Some of the friends of the Bahá'í Cause have been a little confused regarding the organization of the holy Cause because of the wide circulation of some words, to the effect that this Cause should never be organized—thus some have imagined that no form of Bahá'í organization should exist. Now of late we are informed by pilgrims returning to their homes from Palestine that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained that these words circulated to the effect that the Cause should never be organized, give an impression very different from that of the reality of his teachings. Experience in the Bahá'í Cause shows us that when special questions arise, it is always well to gather together all of the holy Words treating of the subject, for when studying all of the divine teachings treating of any one subject we obtain an all around and a comprehensive conception of the truth of the matter. From one short excerpt from the holy Words, separated from its context, erroneous meanings may be obtained. This danger does not exist when we study the particular statement in its rightful relation with the entire teaching.

Applying this principle of the relation of any one statement contained in the holy Words to the instructions in the entire teaching to this statement that “the Bahá'í Cause can never be organized”, we see immediately that there is a discrepancy, for in the principles of the Cause we find the foundation for a very highly developed spiritual organization which will centre about the establishment of the Bahá'í House of Justice. Ample provision for this institution is found in the revealed Word. The House of Justice will be the organic centre of the Bahá'í Cause. Its duties will be so important as to be the central point of all Bahá'í matters in this world, even to the explanation and amplification of the holy way Words. This will be a spiritual organization.

Let us consider these two kinds of organization, namely, human and divine, or organizations *spiritually inorganic* and *spiritually organic*. In a spiritually organic institution there is life and growth, the organization ministering to the growth of the activities of the institution and in no way cramping nor obstructing its life and development. However, it is quite the opposite with a spiritually inorganic institution—one in which the workings are so lifeless, crystallized and inflexible as to preclude all possibility of life, growth and development, [or of] following the principles of divine organization. In the spiritually inorganic realm there is no movement and no change, and consequently no growth nor development. In other words, there is crystallization but no life. For example, compare a living plant with a fossil. In one we have organization and life, whereas in the other we have crystallization or fossilization and death. Applying this principle to religion, we see that the Manifestations of God have [XII:9:155] brought divine life and have established spiritual organizations in the world, but with the passage of time, as these organizations have lost their spiritual power and become crystallized forms of human thought, the spiritual life of religion

becomes extinguished, and, as with the fossil, only the external form remains. The spiritual organization of the Bahá'í Cause is based upon divine doctrines, and the living principles of God's Kingdom, and not upon external or human forms and principles. In other words, the Bahá'í Cause is not an inflexible organization, for it has life in it, and consequently its details are ever changing and moving, allowing growth and development. Thus it may be truly said that the Bahá'í Cause is not crystallized, but that it is organized.

In carrying on the Bahá'í work, it is necessary that we should organize our institutions upon the divine plan outlined in the teaching, rather than according to the standards of men. When the work is thus spiritually organized, the forms of organization are so supple as to admit of limitless expansion and development; thus this spiritual organization is ever ministering to the life and growth of the Cause. However, if methods of human organization creep into the Bahá'í work, the growth of the Cause is hampered, and troubles ensue, and such continue until the cause is removed. When an iron band is placed around a living tree one of two things happen; if the band remains intact it kills the tree or seriously impairs its life; or the growth of the tree bursts asunder the band. So it is with the Bahá'í Cause and the limitations of human thought. The life of the Cause will be impaired unless these human fetters give way, allowing the Cause to grow and develop after the divine plan of the Kingdom. The revealed utterances of the Revelation are the basis of all activities amongst the Bahá'ís. A careful study of these principles is necessary in order that they be put into effect in the working of the Cause.

As explained in the revealed Words, the duty of a spiritual board of consultation is to meet in the spirit of the Kingdom in order to apply the divine principles of the Abhá Kingdom to the various problems which are continually arising in the administration of the Cause. In order to attain the best results in consultation, each of the members of the board should be well informed regarding the divine commands in order that with love and oneness of spirit they may unite in carrying out these holy instructions in the workings of the assembly.

For example, when any special problem presents itself for solution, it is well to make a study of the holy Words pertaining to the question. Then, when these words are familiar to all the friends of the consultation body and their hearts are freed from the self, they will be spiritually guided in their consultations and deliberations, and the result will be good for the well-being and the growth of the Cause.

According to the Bahá'í standard, the first requisite for the board of spiritual consultation in an assembly of friends, is that the members should be firm in the Covenant and well versed and strong in the teachings and in the principles of the Bahá'í Cause, and that they should have proved themselves worthy of the responsibility of membership on this board by a record of steadfastness and service to the Covenant. For this reason it has been found better to place people on the bodies of spiritual consultation who have had such experience in the Cause and whose record of service and steadfastness is well known and established beyond a doubt.

The second requisite for membership on these spiritual boards is that the members should be able to work together and to co-operate in service. That is to say, for example, they should be [XII:9:158] those who are able to attend the meetings of consultation, and who have time for the performance of their spiritual duties as members of the meeting of consultation.

Several months ago a board of spiritual consultation was organized in the Washington assembly, in America, according to the following procedure: A general meeting of the entire assembly was held at which a committee of five was appointed to make a selection of nine candidates for the assembly of spiritual consultation. This committee of five met several times and, after much prayer and consultation, they selected nine people. Four of these were of their own number. Then the general assembly met, and the result of the work of the committee was made known. The general assembly then unanimously elected these nine

candidates. It was found much better to select the candidates in a committee of five rather than in an open meeting with all the assembly present, for there were many matters and details to be minutely discussed, and this discussion might not have been feasible in a large gathering. The meetings of this body of consultation were arranged at a time most generally convenient to all, when the friends were not hurried, but could remain as long as necessary for the pursuance of the spiritual work.

This Committee of Consultation is now the centre of administration and direction of the Bahá'í work in Washington. Its first work was to appoint several working committees from among the people of the assembly who were not members of this central body. From time to time, as conditions required it, these various committees met with the Committee of Consultation, by special appointment, to talk over and arrange the many activities of the Cause. The Committee of Consultation recognizing the necessity of keeping all the friends actively engaged in serving the Cause, a special effort was made to interest the new and the young believers in the service of the Cause, in order that all might have the blessing of engaging actively in the pathway of the Covenant.

Charles Mason Remey.

XII:10, 8 September 1921 [XII:10:163]

A week in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home

1-8 September 1920.

The four pilgrims who made this glorious journey together were: Mabel Paine, Sylvia Paine, Cora Grey and Genevieve Coy.

Genevieve L. Coy

“We have beheld the King in His Beauty; we have seen the land that is very far off.”

1 September 1920.

Our party of four American pilgrims had left Cairo on the evening of 31 August. Three of the Egyptian Bahá'ís had come to the train to bid us farewell, and to give us messages to take to Haifa. One of the group was an Armenian, who brought a basket of fruit for the Master. Another was Mírzá Tawfíq, a young man of twenty-one or -two years of age, who is a student in the college in Beirut. He interpreted for us often during our five days in Cairo, and also served as a most pleasant and helpful guide in some of our trips about the city. The third person to bid us God-speed was Muḥammad-Taqí Iṣfahání, in whose home we had spent some of our happiest hours in Cairo. He speaks no English, but he gave us many sweet thoughts, through Mírzá Tawfíq's interpretation, and his smile was a benediction. We loved him so much that we could not have borne parting from him had it not been that the goal of our journey was Haifa and the Master! His parting gift to us was a tray of delicious pastry, and a lovely bouquet of roses. Through all the next day's ride the flowers kept fresh, and on the day after that there were two or three buds that were fresh enough to be given to the Master, when Mírzá Muḥammad Taqí's message of love was told him. The Master wore them in his girdle all the rest of that day, and said that he always was happy when he thought of the loving heart of the Bahá'í who had given us the flowers.

When we woke on the morning of September first, the train was running through the desert country of southern Palestine. For mile after mile the rolling sand dunes stretched into the distance. Long lines of camels were passed; and occasionally acres of date palms, loaded with green dates, showed where a little moisture was held in the sand below the dry surface. For hours we looked out of the window, watching, with an intense fascination, those long miles of desert. Some one in our party said that she could quite understand why the children of Israel murmured in the wilderness, if that was the kind of country that they had to travel

through! We wondered whether Joseph and Mary, and the infant Jesus, had travelled so hard a road when they went down into Egypt. But later, in Haifa, we were told that the tradition of the country says that they went to the port at the foot of Mt. Carmel, and from there continued their journey to Egypt by boat.

During the middle of the day, the train passed from the desert into the pasture land. That is as different from [XII:10:164] our green American meadows as one can imagine. The pastures are brown and dry, and we wondered how the many herds of goats and sheep that we saw could find enough food to keep them alive. We saw almost no cows, and in Haifa we found that it is very difficult to obtain milk; we did not see any butter while we were in Palestine. Instead of butter, a white, salty cheese made from goat's milk is served.

In the afternoon we rode through the beautiful valley near Jaffa, with its thousands and thousands of fruit trees. The fields have to be irrigated, but when that is done they "blossom abundantly", and the trees are loaded with oranges and lemons, which were green at that season of the year. A little farther north is the valley of Sharon, and we tried to remember some of the beautiful words of the Old Testament with regard to that valley. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the *glory of the Lord* and the excellency of our God."

The last part of the journey was very beautiful. The train ran close to the edge of the seashore, and we saw the sun drop down through fleecy clouds and sink in the blue waters of the Mediterranean. On the right a low range of hills rose,—rocky, and sparsely covered with vegetation. Beyond them appeared line after line of hills, until, far in the distance, high blue mountains towered in to the sky. We thought that they must be the Lebanons,¹ and we wondered whether we should soon see the valley of 'Akká. After a time the lowest range of hills rose so close that all the others were blotted out. Cora suggested that perhaps the termination of this range was Mt. Carmel, and so it proved to be, for suddenly we rounded a point of land, and Haifa appeared to the east, with Mt. Carmel above.

Haifa lies on a narrow plain at the foot of the mountain, but there are buildings scattered part way up the slope. A long white road traverses the length of the hill, and reaches the top near its western extremity. I looked for the Tomb of the Báb, but I am not sure whether I saw it then. The train runs through a considerable part of the town, before reaching the station, and our eyes were very eager in their search for the various places of which we had heard so much. Suddenly I remembered that we should now be able to see 'Akká across the bay, and hurrying to the other side of the car, I looked out—and across the water I glimpsed the city of the Lord, the "door of hope". We were so happy to be so near our journey's end, we were so full of expectation, that it seemed as if the train would never reach the station. But at last we did pull up in front of it! Cora went out to look for a porter, and I was ready to pass baggage out of the window to her. But almost immediately a hand was reached in to shake mine, and we were welcomed by a young man, whom we later learned was Rúhí Afandí, one of the Master's grandsons. Soon a familiar figure appeared in the car, Fugeta, whom we had last seen in New York. He helped pass out bundles, and soon we were all on the platform with our numerous parcels and bags beside us. We shook hands with several young men, Bahá'ís from the Master's household, and then we four American pilgrims were in the auto, with the driver, Rúhí Afandí, and some of our baggage. Sa'íd Afandí, who had just arrived from Alexandria, Fugeta, and the other friends waited for the car to return for them.

The car ran through several streets, going steadily upwards,—and I was too happy and too

¹ The Mount Lebanon range.

far from ordinary speech to be able to say a word. Suddenly we turned a corner, and after going less than a hundred yards the car stopped. [XII:10:165] I recognized the Pilgrim House, from the picture of it in *The Light of the World*.¹ On the other side of the road was the wall of the Master's garden, and rising above it, the little room, like a watch-tower, in which the Master often stays.

During our ride from the station, Rúhí Afandí told us that the Master was staying on the mountain for a few days, to rest from the many demands made on his time when he is in his house in the town. We would not see him until the next day. Perhaps we were disappointed for a moment, but here one knows that all that the Master does is wisely done. And next morning we were sure that it was well that we should have time to rest, and drink in the exquisite peace of the place, before meeting him.

At the door of the Pilgrim House we were met by two Americans, Mrs Hoagg and Malcolm McGillavrey. Malcolm had been in Haifa a week, but Mrs Hoagg had been there since early in the summer. She acted as hostess for the Pilgrim House; she showed us to our rooms,—one for Cora and me, another for Mabel and Sylvia. Simple, clean, and filled with a faint fragrance as of incense, is our place of rest, the place the Master has provided for those who come from the West. Every hour I wonder more at the love and kindness which has so provided for our comfort! Whenever we sit down to a meal, I think, "This is the meal the *Master* has given us!" The material food has come now, but the spiritual food had reached us in America!

Fugeta cares for the house; he gets the breakfast; he serves the lunch, the food for which is brought over from the Master's house; he washes the dishes, he cleans the lamps, he is always busy in serving us. In the evening he helps wait on table, at dinner in the Master's house. The other boy who serves at dinner is Khusraw, who came from Burma when he was very young, to serve the Master.

After our arrival at the Pilgrim House we sat on the porch for a while. The night was beautiful,—a full moon, and yet the stars were very bright. At about half past seven, Mrs Hoagg took us over to the Master's house to meet the ladies of the household. We entered a gate that is covered with a luxuriant growth of vines, and walked under an arbour to the entrance of the house. It was hard to believe that we were really there! We had seen pictures of the house often and it was so very like the pictures! (That is true of everything here. The pictures we have seen have been very good, I think, for one recognizes places and people immediately.)

We went up a rather long, broad flight of steps, turned to the left, and were in a high-ceilinged room of moderate size. There were many chairs and divans against the wall and at the end of the room was a big wicker chair which one knew at once was the Master's. Immediately the ladies came in they greeted us with the Greatest Name, they inquired about our health, our journey, about the believers in America. Rúhí Afandí translated for those who did not speak English. There were present the Holy Mother, the Greatest Holy Leaf, two of the daughters, Túbá Khánum and Rúhá Khánum; two or three young girls, granddaughters of the Master, and Fu'ád, the adorable four-year-old grandson, whose picture I had seen in Mr Latimer's notebook.

The Holy Mother spoke about Bahá'u'lláh's commands about education. The two daughters talked with us about the friends in America. Little Fu'ád ran in and out on a very sturdy pair of legs. I cannot remember much of what was said. We knew that we were very welcome. We knew that we were at home as never before! I could not but try to realize that *these* were the women who had been for years prisoners in 'Akká, who had undergone unspeakable hard-[XII:10:166] ships, these women with smiling faces who welcomed us so cordially.

¹ George Latimer's 1919 pilgrimage notes.

After a time, how long I cannot tell,—someone came and announced dinner. The ladies said “good night”, for they do not come to the table where the men pilgrims are. We were taken out into a big, big room, which had a long table down the centre. Many men came filing in and seated themselves. There were probably twenty or thirty at the table. Later we learned that five religions, and six or seven nationalities were represented. Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Jews—were met in love and unity at the table of our Master. Egyptian, Persian, Arab, Burmese, Japanese, American, Pársí, Turk,—and perhaps other nationalities were infinitely happy because they had found the joy that passeth understanding, because they were the guests of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! One does not remember words here, but the atmosphere of joy and peace is unforgettable.

As we were leaving the house, Rúhí Afandí, who had just come down from the mountain, brought word that the Master would either come down, or send for us the next day.

At the Pilgrim House we sat out on the porch in the moonlight and talked until almost ten o’clock, and then went to our rooms to pass our first night in the Holy Land! I slept peacefully, and the night was all the more beautiful because I woke several times for a few minutes of happy realization that we were at last in Haifa,—in the “land of heart’s desire!”

2 September 1920.

To waken in the Pilgrim House in Haifa is a very, very happy experience! From our west windows we could catch a glimpse of the Tomb of the Báb, and how eagerly we looked up at it, knowing that there the Master was dwelling; there was the memorial to the wonderful young herald of our Faith, the Supreme Báb.

Breakfast in the Pilgrim House comes at seven o’clock. It is a simple, friendly meal. The food consisted of tea, toast, poached eggs, honey and cheese. And the lovely companionship of the friends! There were the seven of us who slept in the House, and Sa’íd Afandí and Mírzá Luṭfu’lláh always came in and had breakfast with us. Mírzá Luṭfu’lláh came down from the mountain each morning, bringing handfuls of jasmine blossoms from the garden of the Tomb, and these he strewed on the table. They were a lovely reminder of the spiritual fragrance of that spot!

After breakfast on that morning I was sitting in our room praying. Cora was writing at the table, the door into the living-room was open and the various sounds of the household drifted in to us. I was having a very happy time reading some of the prayers in the little prayer-book, and also in praying for the friends who were not there with us. I found myself bathed in a wonderful atmosphere of love and peace. It was like nothing I had ever experienced! It was not supernatural, in the sense of seeming queer or strange. It was simply an all-pervading peace and calm that seemed to fill my whole heart and spirit. I seemed to be at one with all the beauty and joy and light in the universe. Thus, I think, some ray of love from the Master’s thought prepared me for meeting him that day.

At lunch Rúhí Afandí brought word that we were to go up to the Tomb at about four in the afternoon, to see the Master! After lunch we all went and rested for an hour and a half. That is part of the day’s programme always. At three o’clock came tea, another invariable occurrence.

As the hour drew near when we were to go up the “Mountain of the Lord”, to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, I remembered one evening we had spent with [XII:10:167] Juliet Thompson not long before we had left New York. She had said with deep earnestness, “When you are in the Master’s presence do not be self-conscious, if you can help it. Do not be afraid. There is nothing to fear. He is all love and kindness. Pray, pray, all the way on your journey, that your hearts may be freed from all self-consciousness. Go to him freely, gladly!”

I had tried to remember that, I had prayed for purity of heart that I might learn the lessons the Master will teach those who are ready to learn. And yet as we rode up the steep road toward the Tomb, there was a strange mixture of love and dread and longing in my heart. The way seemed very long! And yet it was very beautiful. We saw the valley of 'Akká, with the river Kishon winding through it down to the sea. Across the bay, 'Akká shone brightly in the afternoon sunlight,—that "White Spot", which so many, many pilgrims have sought because the Glory of God had lived there.

Finally we turned off from the main road, and the carriage drove down a steep incline toward the Musáfir Kháníh,—the Persian Hospice for men. There we alighted and Mrs Hoagg led us along a wide path, which is bordered with cypress trees on one side and with fig trees on the other. We passed the house of the care-taker, with the little room on top where the Master sometimes sleeps when He is on the mountain, and walked around to the front of the Tomb.

XII:11, 27 September 1921 [XII:11:179]

A week in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home (continued)

Genevieve L. Coy

In front of the tomb of the Báb we found perhaps thirty of the men pilgrims sitting. One of the most majestic was a tall man, dressed in a long black robe,—one of the Bahá'í teachers from 'Ishqábád. And with all his dignity, he had the most beautiful laughter-wrinkles around his eyes! One soon realized the cause of the latter, for he smiled almost all the time!

We were shown to seats in front of the Tomb, on the edge of the beautiful garden of the terrace. We were told that the Master would come soon. During the last few days I had prayed so much for the ability to learn to serve the many children of the Father. I had found myself trying to imagine what the Master's presence would be like,—and then had tried *not* to do that for fear I would be hindering my realization of his actual presence! And so I had tried to go to him with only the thought of the love of God in my heart.

Suddenly all of the believers rose and faced the East. Then, from around the corner of the Tomb came the Master with two of the young men walking a little behind him. He came slowly toward us,—and said, "Welcome, welcome!" in English; and then, "Sit down, sit down!" Sylvia sat next him; then Mabel Paine, myself, Cora, and Mrs Hoagg. The other friends were beyond her, in two rows.

When the Master had walked toward us, it seemed to me that I had seen him come just that way at some previous time. He seemed to be so beautifully familiar to me! I suppose it must have seemed so because of the pictures I have seen of him, and the stories I have heard other pilgrims tell. It was a moment that one would prolong if one could, that one would never forget!

The Master began to speak in Persian, and Rúhí Afandí translated into English. He asked several questions; he talked of principles of living. Sometimes he would be silent for several minutes,—with his eyes looking far, far away. It is very difficult to remember much of what he said. Indeed, it was almost difficult to listen!

I wished only to look and look at the beauty of his face! For that was what impressed me first, the exquisite beauty of the Master. It was like the most beautiful pictures we have of him, with life and colour added. His is a face of living silver—the wonderful silver of hair and beard, and the blue of his eyes. The side face is majestic and sweet and loving. It was that which we saw most of the time. The full face is more dignified; to me it seemed more awe-inspiring. And yet, when he smiled, it was most exquisitely friendly, and human!

But he looked very, very tired. And one of the secretaries had said in the morning that he

looked more rested than when he had gone up to the Tomb a few days before. It hurt poignantly that any face of such beauty should be so weary. We had brought letters from friends in America to give to him, but when we saw the weariness of his face, we could not bear to add at all to the burdens he has to carry.

And yet the weariness was not, I think, a weariness of spirit. I cannot tell why I felt that way, partly because he can reach, as no one else can, the infinite sources of spiritual strength.

I had no desire to speak to the Master; there was nothing that I could say. I do not know what happened in my mind and heart. There was no shock, no surprise, no sadness, no thought of my own faulty past. But I came to understand that for one who has been long in his presence, there can be no desire except to serve him; that one's life would be happy only as one pleased him; that one would be sad only as one grieved him. I felt then that I had begun to learn,—that the will to serve was becoming greater, as I had prayed that it might. Having seen the Master but once, I could make no promise to myself that that longing would carry me through and beyond all my selfish habits of the past. But I knew that to be in his presence would mean that I must love him, that I must do his will.

After a time, perhaps half an hour, some English visitors came; the Master begged to be excused; we rose and watched him until he disappeared from sight. Afterward we walked about the garden at the front of the Tomb. We saw the big reservoir for rain-water, built into the terrace, which supplies water for the garden and for many of the people of the neighbourhood. Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh brought us figs from one of the trees in the garden. We looked across the beautiful blue waters of the bay, to 'Akká, shining in the distance. We caught a suggestion of luxuriant growth of trees, and were told that it marked the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh. The sun sank behind the mountain, and finally Mrs Hoagg said it was time for us to be going down but that first we might see the interior of the Tomb.

The care-taker opened a door at the south-west corner of the Tomb, and spread a piece of matting in front of it. Mrs Hoagg went with us to show us the custom used in entering the Tomb. We removed our shoes, and then the caretaker poured rose-water on our hands, from a little glass cruet. We followed Mrs Hoagg into the first room. It was perhaps fifteen feet square, and the floor was covered with a beautiful dark Persian carpet. There was no furniture of any kind. Directly in line with the outer door was a second door that led into an inner room. That was also covered with beautiful rugs. Standing on the floor were exquisite glass vases with candles burning in them. They were in groups, perhaps of three, and they gave [XII:11:181] the impression of flowers of living flame. I think there must have been other objects, a few, in the room. But the whole impression was one of exquisite beauty, simplicity and peace. The inner room was raised several inches above the outer, and the raised threshold was covered with an embroidered cloth.

Mrs Hoagg walked slowly up to the threshold, knelt there a moment in prayer and then came back to a corner of the room. Cora followed her, and then came my turn. I had heard of the custom of prostrating oneself at the threshold of the Tomb, and I had wondered whether it would not seem stilted and formal. But it did not in the least! Perhaps it was the dignity and majesty of the Tomb, perhaps it was because we had been with the Master so recently. I was filled with a feeling of humility, with a longing to be "evanescent at His threshold", and the kneeling in prayer seemed the most natural thing in the world! After that moment at the threshold, I walked to the back of the room while Sylvia and Mabel in turn went forward. We knelt in prayer a long time. I cannot guess what was in the hearts of the others, but my own was filled with a great longing to lose my old selfish self, and to acquire the unselfishness of service. It was a wonderful time. I thought of that "radiant youth called the Báb", who had given everything,—friends, family, life itself, to prepare the way of the Lord. I thought of the Master and the years of imprisonment and hardship that he had spent in the service of the

Blessed Beauty. For the first time, since coming to Haifa, I was almost ready to weep, not from sorrow, but from the sense of the greatness of the power of God.

No thought of *death* entered my mind while I was there. It was not a place of *mourning*! When I thought of the Báb, it was to be happy that one so pure of heart had lived and served. The only grief was for my own faults and failures; and the *future*, with the hope of service, was much more vivid than the past!

Finally Mrs Hoagg, Cora and I had left the Tomb. Mabel and Sylvia had not yet come out. We were about to put on our shoes, when suddenly the Master came around the corner! He smiled at us, and took up the cruet of rose-water. He held it out toward us, and I realized in a few moments that he wished to pour some on our hands. But I did not dream of going into the Tomb again, and so I did not realize what he meant! So he poured some on his own hands, put some on his face, and again held out the rose-water, giving us a glorious smile as he did so. That time we understood that he was waiting to anoint our hands,—and we gladly held them out for the fragrant drops. Mrs Hoagg whispered, “We will go in again,”—and just then the men believers came in a long line from the front of the Tomb. The Master anointed the hands of each, and they passed into the Tomb. Each knelt at the inner threshold a moment, until all had risen, and stood in a circle about [XII:11:182] the room. Then the Master spoke to Rúhí Afandí, who began to chant a long prayer, one of the Prayers of Visitation. His chanting was the sweetest, the most melodious of any I have ever heard. After the prayer the believers knelt at the threshold, and then passed quietly out. We four Americans were the last to leave, and as soon as we had left the Tomb, Mrs Hoagg came to say that the Master was waiting to say good-bye to us. He stood at the north east corner of the Tomb, and as we passed he shook hands with each of us, adding a caress for Sylvia. We turned and watched him as he walked back to the Tomb, waiting for the last glimpse! Then we walked down the mountain in the gathering dusk, and we were very happy. On the way down Mírzá Luṭfu’lláh told us interesting stories of the spread of the Cause in Persia, of the self-sacrifice and patience of the believers in trying to bring others to see the Light of this day.

Of the Master’s talk on that first afternoon I can remember the following: He said that we were very welcome, and inquired whether we were well. Then almost immediately he asked about Mr Vail. Mrs Paine said, “He sends his love and longing. He wishes to do the Master’s will.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Mr Vail is a good man, a sincere man. He is very illumined.”

Cora Gray: “It is through his teaching that we are here.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “You must be very grateful to him. He has been the cause of your life. He has educated you. He has no aim save to serve the Kingdom.

“Some people are ready for education. They are like the fertile ground. Some have not capacity, they are like the barren or salty ground. His Holiness Christ has told a story of the seed that fell on stony ground and so it could not grow. Other seeds fell in the shallow earth, and they soon withered away. But some fell on the good fertile earth, and grew and produced fruit. So it is with my words. Some fall on hearts that have no capacity; they do not take effect at all. Those people do not understand. Others hear and seem to understand, but they forget my words and do not live in accordance with them. But others have great capacity; they [XII:11:183] hear my words; they understand; they live accordingly.

“Have you seen Jináb-i-Fáḍil in America?”

Cora Gray: “Yes, twice, just before we left New York.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “He is a very pure-hearted man. He is a real Bahá’í. He is confirmed in service. He who is confirmed is confirmed in all things. Of the Persians who have gone to

America only two have been fully confirmed Bahá'ís—his honour, Abu'l-Faḍl, and his honour, Fāḍil. They are both very good."

Then the Master told the story of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, and the English ladies who insisted on seeing him! Finally, when they had knocked very persistently and continuously, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl became tired of hearing it, so he went to the door, and said, "Abu'l-Faḍl is not here." Up to this point in the story, the Master had been speaking in Persian or Arabic, and Rúḥí Afandí had been interpreting, but when the Master came to this part, he spoke in English, very distinctly, and then repeated it, "Abu'l-Faḍl is not here!" and then he smiled the most adorable smile!

When we first saw the Master, he asked whether we had had any troubles or difficulties on the way. Cora replied that if we had had any, we had now forgotten all of them.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "There is a Persian poet who says that when one has attained to the goal of one's journey, the end of one's search, he forgets all that has happened on the way."

Cora said that the friends in Alexandria and Cairo had been so kind to us, and had helped us so much.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "That is the duty of any Bahá'í. He is greater who serves most. That is the way to progress. Some flowers have colour and no fragrance. Some have both fragrance and colour; some have neither. So it is with the hearts of men."

3 September 1920.

On 3 September we did not see the Master at all, for he was still up on Mt. Carmel. I was very, very happy, with a calm peace. During the morning I wrote in my diary. In the afternoon we had tea with the ladies at the Master's house. Some one told Mrs Paine to sit in the big wicker chair at the end of the room, and she was happy to sit in the Master's chair. I talked to Ṭúbá Khánum for a time, mostly about education. Her daughter, Thurayyá, is to go to Cairo, to the Protestant School for Girls this year, and Ṭúbá Khánum was saying how much they disliked to have to send their children away from home. But the schools in Haifa are not advanced enough for study beyond the age of fourteen or fifteen. She said, "We like to have our children at home in the evening in order that we may give them some spiritual teaching ourselves." I could faintly imagine the loss to those children from separation from the lovely daughters of the Master! Ṭúbá Khánum said that the previous year Thurayyá had been in a girl's school in Beirut. She had been eager to go, for [XII:11:186] evidently life is a very restricted affair for a girl in Haifa! But this fall Thurayyá was not quite so eager to go to Cairo. Perhaps she had begun to realize how different her home in the Master's household is from the ordinary places of living!

We told the ladies that we hoped some of their children would come to America to study. But of course they think that a very long way from home to send them. Shoghi Effendi is now in England, just ready to enter Oxford, and Rúḥángíz, his sister, is to enter some college for girls there.

Ṭúbá Khánum, and, on another day, Rúḥá Khánum, spoke of their hope of the founding of a Bahá'í School on Mt. Carmel. They are so sweetly appreciative and kind; they act as though the person to whom they are talking had all beautiful characteristics,—and one longs to arise to meet that faith with deeds! Ṭúbá Khánum made me feel that way, when in speaking of a future Bahá'í school on Mt. Carmel, she said, "When such a school is founded I hope you may come and teach in it." What could be more wonderful! But one would have to "live the life" perfectly in order to be worthy to teach in such a school.

After a time Mrs Paine told me to come over to sit in the wicker chair. That brought me

near dear Rúḥá Khánum and the Holy Mother. They talked to me about education. The Holy Mother said that when I was teaching my classes I could show forth Bahá'í love and kindness, even though I could not directly give the Bahá'í teachings. Besides, she said, there were many of the Bahá'í teachings that I could mention in class, even though I did not label them "Bahá'í".

The Holy Mother is very, very sweet. She is quiet, calm, giving one the impression that no disturbance ever ruffles the evenness of her life. Her voice is low, and yet assured. There is a "sweet reasonableness" in it that seems to say, "Why be impatient? All will be well in God's good time!" She makes me think of the verse in the *Hidden Words*, "Be contented with what we have ordained for thy sake. This is for thy good if thou art content with it." The Holy Mother is content with His will. She was not in the group of prisoners who were exiled to 'Akká in 1868, but came from Persia with her brother. The journey was very hard. Much of the time she had to sleep at night in the same room with several men, and therefore she had to wear a veil at night, as well as in the daytime. Imagine the faith and courage of a young woman, who would come all that journey of months, through wild countries, in order that she might enter the Prison City, and marry—a Prisoner! When she reached 'Akká, the Bahá'ís had been removed from the barracks, and were living in a small house, one we saw when we visited 'Akká. One can only faintly imagine the warmth of the greeting she must have received when she came to be the wife of the beloved Greatest Branch! At that time the Master must have been twenty-seven or [XII:11:187] eight years old. We know that even then he was the comfort and joy of the whole Bahá'í colony!

One of the ladies apologized because they had not been over to the Pilgrim House to call on us, for they had been unusually busy. There is much to be done in that big household, and in addition, two or three of the children had been quite ill. I think it was Rúḥá Khánum who was saying that they wanted to see more of us, and she continued, "One should go and call on one's guests—and yet we do not!" Then she smiled and said, "But you are not our guests! you are members of our family!" What sweeter hospitality could one desire!

I have mentioned the big wicker chair at the end of the room. However I never saw the Master sit in it! Whenever we saw him in that room, he sat in a corner of one of the divans,—always in the same place.

I think it was this same afternoon that the ladies took us out and showed us the garden. The whole plot of ground upon which the house stands is from one-third to one-half an acre in size, and all of it is a beautifully cared-for garden, except for the parts where buildings actually stand. (There is nothing comparable in it to our American lawns of grass!)

The garden has all been made since 1911 or 1912, by one faithful Bahá'í who loves to serve the Master in that way. I think many of the seeds, cuttings, etc., have been sent by Bahá'ís from various parts of the world. The result of the gardener's work is a lovely place. Flowers, fruits and vegetables of many varieties grow there. We saw peaches, lemons and pomegranates hanging on the trees. The pomegranates were just ripening and one of the ladies picked some for us to taste. There were two varieties, a sweet kind, that every one likes, and a rather sour kind which reminded us of our red currants. Cora and I liked its sharp tartness, but most of the others did not care for it. The pomegranates are a beautiful fruit, with their dozens and dozens of bright red drops, crowded together within the reddish-yellow rind.

The Greatest Holy Leaf walked about several of the garden paths, looking at all the plants and trees. Some one told us that that was the first time in months that she had been in the garden! Apparently the ladies seldom go into the garden, because there are always men about who do not belong to the immediate family! And the Master says it is still not the time for the Bahá'í women in Haifa to go contrary to the custom of the country with regard to veiling when strange men are about. The ladies are longing for the time to come when they can lay aside

the warm black veil!

To return to the garden: Several of the paths have trellises over them, with vines which make them very lovely. Above the main gateway there is a big bougainvillea plant which was covered with many blossoms when we were there. Beneath one of the arbours, against the house, and just below the Master's window, was a garden-bench, where the friends often sat and talked. Cora and I went over there and sat for an hour two or three times, drinking in the beauty and peace. I had heard much of the Master's garden, and I was so happy to see it with my own eyes!

At dinner that Friday evening the friends were very merry. There was a constant chatter, laughter and teasing! Mírzá Badí' (who is interpreter for the English governor) sat next [to] Mrs Hoagg, and they carried on a gay conversation. He has the nicest face, and his eyes twinkle with fun all the time

We had watermelon for dessert. When the Master is not there to give the signal for leaving the table, it is the custom for all to watch until every one has finished eating; then all rise at once. But that evening, Malcolm and Mírzá [XII:11:188] Luṭfu'lláh lingered over their watermelon longer than the others!—I *think* Mrs Hoagg and Mírzá Badí' were responsible for flashing a signal down the table, that we should rise and leave them there! So some twenty-three people rose and looked on while Malcolm and Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh finished their watermelon, while everyone laughed at them! We were all like the simplest children who had played a prank on two playmates!

All day Friday we had been wondering when the Master would come down from the mountain. We were eager for him to come because we knew that we should see more of him then. And yet, remembering how tired he had looked, I could not help but wish he might stay longer in the quiet peace near the Tomb, in the hope that he might become more rested.

All that day I had been very happy and content not to see him, but as the evening came on I began to long to see his beautiful face again! And so I could not help but be happy when we heard that he was coming down the next morning—that Isfandiyár was to go up for him sometime between six and seven! And so I went to sleep in our quiet room in the Pilgrim House, rejoicing that on the morrow we should see him again.

4 September 1920.

On Saturday morning, Cora and I rose in the darkness of 4:30 am, dressed, and by 5:15 we were on our way up the mountain toward the Tomb of the Báb. That early hour was a bit too late, for even then we found the climb warm, and the sun rose before we had reached the Tomb. We stopped to watch its glorious arising from behind the Lebanon hills. There were enough clouds to make a really beautiful sunrise. The valley of 'Akká was radiant, and the river winding through it gleamed silver! It looked, in its outward physical seeming, "a door of hope!" We continued up the hillside to the Tomb. As we passed the caretaker's house, he saw us, and by a gesture, asked whether we wished to enter his house. Perhaps he thought we had come up to see the Master, whom we knew was either in the house or at the Tomb. But we motioned toward the Tomb. He smiled, and preceding us, opened the west door into the room where we had been on Thursday. Then he quietly departed.

The candles were not lighted and the central room was not quite so beautiful on that account. But a soft light filtered in through the doors,—and the exquisite peace filled our hearts. We stayed for perhaps an hour, in meditation and prayer.

A week in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home (continued)

Genevieve L. Coy

It must have been after seven when we went out into the garden. We walked about a bit, and then Rúhí Afandí and Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh came out to wish us good-morning. On the previous evening we had told Rúhí Afandí that we were going up to the Tomb early in the morning. But when he saw us there, he said, "You really came! I didn't think you would! Americans never get up early!" At which we laughed much! Rúhí Afandí's English is very good, but sometimes a phrase or some slang expression is used which he does not understand. He looks courteously questioning, half surprised, and waits for some one to explain!

The two young men talked to us for a few minutes, and then asked whether we would like to see the circle of cypress trees where Bahá'u'lláh used to sit. Of course we wanted to see them, and so Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh went with us, while Rúhí Afandí went to the caretaker's house. I wondered whether the Master had already gone down the mountain, and decided that he probably had, because it was after seven.

Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh led us up a path, onto a terrace back of the Tomb, and there we saw the circle of cypress trees. There are ten of them, planted quite close together so that their boughs interlace, forming an almost solid wall. They are on a bit of ground which is raised about three feet from the surrounding field, and is held up by a stone wall. We went up into the circle of ground between the trees. Above our heads was a small circle of blue sky. The ground was brown with needles from the trees. I thought of the Blessed Beauty, and was glad that at one time in His storm-tossed life He had been able to withdraw to that quiet green spot. But we had been there only a few minutes, when Rúhí Afandí came toward us, calling that the Master wished to see us! And we went on eager feet, following Rúhí Afandí to 'Abbás Qulí's house.¹

Cora was ahead of me, and she told me afterward that when she entered the room where the Master was sitting on a divan, she was not sure what to do! He bade her welcome, but still she stood in the doorway! Then he rose, held out his hands and motioned her to a chair. She went and sat down. Just then I came in, and the Master motioned me to a chair beside Cora. I cannot remember whether he shook hands with us or not. (Usually he shook hands with us when we left him, but not when we came into his presence.) Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh and Rúhí Afandí sat by the door, and a tall Persian or Turkish man sat near us.

The room we were in had a north window, which looked out over the Bay of 'Akká. Like all windows in the eastern houses, it had several iron bars across it to keep out intruders. The house is high on the hillside and there was a wonderful view across the bay. The Master sat on a divan in front of the window, and occasionally arranged some letters and other small objects, which [XII:12:196] he finally put into a small handbag. As he did this, he talked to us. He said, "This location here by the Tomb is very beautiful."

We said, "Yes, we enjoy it greatly."

Then he talked to us a little about the Báb. He said, "After the Báb was martyred, his body was kept in Persia for several years. It was never kept in the same place for more than a few years. Not many of the friends, even, knew where it was at any one time. After a long time it was brought here to Haifa, and placed in the Tomb on Mt. Carmel."

Cora asked how long ago it was brought here. I *think* the Master's reply was, about twenty-four or five years ago.

¹ Caretaker of the Shrine of the Báb.

Cora asked Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh to say that we hoped that the Master was feeling more rested.

He replied, No, he was not rested, but that did not matter. And his expression implied that physical weariness was a matter of small concern.

'Abbás Qulí brought to the Master a little tray with a teapot full of what looked like tea. The Master poured out some and drank it, explaining that it was a kind of herb drink. Then 'Abbás Qulí brought us tea in the lovely little Persian glasses. Afterward he came in with a tray full of things to eat and placed it on a chair in front of us. The Master told us to eat. "He says you must eat your breakfast here," Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh interpreted. We did not really want to eat—when we could be looking at the Master—but at his command we ate a little. The tray had on it ripe figs, ripe olives, honey, and slices of white bread,—and the latter were the only slices of white bread we saw on our whole journey! I ate one or two figs, and a few olives. After a time the tray was passed to the tall Oriental next us. Thus we had breakfast with the Master at the Tomb of the Báb! As we ate he was silent, looking out of the window upon the sea of 'Akká. His beautiful profile was outlined against the window; his gaze seemed to dwell on distant 'Akká,—and I could not but think of those long years of imprisonment that he had spent in barred 'Akká. Some slight vision of all he had suffered swept over me. I knew then, beyond all question, that I had found him as the Master. My spirit knelt in humility at his feet.

After a while he gave the bag he had been arranging to Rúḥí Afandí, and said that he was ready to go down the mountain. We followed him from the house to where Isfandíyár was waiting with the carriage. We had expected to walk down the mountain, but after the Master had ascended to the middle seat, he motioned to us to get in the back seat. And so Cora and I rode down Mt. Carmel with the Lord of our hearts. No word was said, but we were very happy. At the gate of his house he alighted, and, saluting us with uplifted hand, he left us and entered his home!

At the Pilgrim House we found Rúḥí Afandí and Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh, who had walked down and were there before us. Then we ate of the breakfast that Fugeta had prepared!

5 September 1920.

This morning all of us had finished breakfast at about 7:45 and were sitting at the table talking. No, Mírzá Muḥammad Sa'íd had not finished; he had just come in, and was waiting for Fugeta to bring him some tea. Suddenly Mrs Hoagg said, "The Master is coming!" She had seen him pass the window! We all rose, just as he entered the door. He came in like a ray of light and life. He sat down at the end of the table, bade us be seated; told Fugeta to give Sa'íd Afandí his breakfast. But Sa'íd Afandí did not eat! He drank the tea Fugeta brought, because, as he said later—that was not so hard to do, but he could not eat toast and eggs while the Master was speaking! We quite [XII:12:197] understood his feeling, as we remembered our experience at the Tomb yesterday morning!

The Master said that he hoped we were well and very happy. Then he asked again if we were well.

Mrs Paine said, "We are all very well except Sylvia, who was a little ill in the night, but that is not serious."

'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "I hope she will soon be well."

Sylvia smiled and nodded and the Master said, "That will soon pass away and you will be well again." Then he continued, "Your food and rooms are very simple here, but your purpose in coming here makes them seem good to you. When a man is good, all things about him are good. When a man is bad, all things about him are bad. It is necessary that man be very good."

After a pause the Master said, "You have come here, and every day you try to improve. You

try to improve more each day. You must become pure in heart. Then when you return to America, you must carry spirituality and inspiration with you. You must be like Jacob, who inhaled the fragrance of the garment of Joseph from a distance: But more than that, you must be one who carries the garment, who spreads the fragrances of the Spirit."

Turning to Mrs Hoagg, the Master told her to take us to church this morning. Then he continued by saying, "The purpose of going to the church should be to worship. Turn your hearts to God and worship Him. One can worship God anywhere, in a church, in a mosque, in all places. But here I hope that you will go to the church."

Then he rose, smiled on us, said, "Good-bye," and walked from the room, and down the steps. We went to the door, and watched him till he disappeared behind the wall.

I think that neither Cora nor myself had said a word all the time he was with us. I do not know how she felt, but for me, there simply was nothing that I could say. To be in his presence, to look on the beauty of his face, to listen to his voice, was all I wished to do. I do not know how or why, but in his presence, all life is *lifted* higher; it acquires freshness and beauty.

Mírzá Luṭṭu'lláh translated the Master's words in this talk.

Following the Master's request, we attended the little Episcopal chapel which is near the Pilgrim House. After our return from there we called on Rúḥá Khánum for almost an hour, and such a happy time as we had! Her house is just next the Master's, so that she can easily help entertain the Master's guests, and yet look after her own household. She and her two sisters talked with us often, giving us wonderful stories about the Cause and instructing us in many ways. That day she told us about the Master's life during the Great War; how he gave food, money and encouragement to all those who sought his help, no matter what their race or religion. The people of the household lived on the simplest food in order that they might have food to share with the hundreds who came begging for bread. She told us, too, how few letters and papers came from the friends all over the world, and how they longed for news of the welfare of the Bahá'ís in the different countries.

That afternoon after tea, we went over to the Master's house and talked with the ladies for a short time. Then word came that the carriage was ready to take us up the mountain, for the regular Sunday afternoon meeting. Ṭúbá Khánum, and one of her sons, Suhayl, went with us. In front of the Tomb many of the friends were gathered; more than forty, I think. For a time we talked with the people near us. Then Mírzá Luṭṭu'lláh brought out the large guest book, and asked us to write in it our names, addresses, the date of our arrival in Haifa, and some word of greeting. Cora wrote, [XII:12:198] "The valley of Achor shall be unto them for a door of hope." Mrs Paine wrote, "Beautiful beyond compare is Mount Carmel, the joy of the whole earth." And I added the sentence from the *Hidden Words* which I love so much, "Lift up thy heart with delight." On that mountain one learns so much about why one should "lift up one's heart with delight".

In a short time the Master came from around the eastern corner of the Tomb, followed by little Fu'ád. The Master was radiantly beautiful. He wore a dove-coloured overcoat or wrap, for the wind was cool on the mountain-side. Fu'ád was dressed in a stiffly starched white dress, and made a staunch little body-guard for the Master. (Some one told us that one night Fu'ád went up to the Master after supper and said, "You go to bed now and rest. I will take my gun and lie across the threshold. If any thieves come, I will scare them away!")

The Master gave us the talk about Elijah, which Mírzá Luṭṭu'lláh took down in Persian, and later translated into English, so that we might have a copy of it. At the Tomb that day Mírzá 'Azízu'lláh interpreted for us.

As always the beauty of the Master's face, its power and majesty, held my attention so that it was difficult to listen to what he said. After the talk, the door at the west end of the Tomb was opened, and we all filed past the Master, who anointed our hands with rose-water. Never again will we be able to inhale that special rose fragrance, without the memory of that western entrance and the Master at the door, coming to our minds!

The candles were burning in the glass vases; there was utter stillness except when the Tablet was being chanted; and, as on the previous afternoon, my heart was won by the peace and glory of the place. While the tall, black-robed Bahá'í from 'Ishqábád chanted the prayer of Visitation in Persian, the Master stood in the doorway, and the room was filled with a divine radiance of Love. At the threshold of that Tomb one may lay all burdens down. Life becomes simple and straight because one feels surrounded with Divine Love.

After the meeting in the Tomb the carriage took us back down to the Pilgrim House, and then returned to bring the Master. Cora and I watched for his return for a long time, while the quick twilight faded into darkness. Soon above us, on the mountain, there shone out the light in front of the Tomb, which is lighted every night unless there is very brilliant moonlight. At last, the carriage drew up before the door of the Master's house, and we caught a glimpse of white as he swept down from the high seat, and we heard the murmur of his greeting to the men who were sitting in front of the gate, waiting for the call to go in to dinner. So do all the pilgrims linger near his house, hoping that they may but glimpse his face as he passes by them.

That night at dinner, the Master said, "I hope the health of the friends is good. Today you went to visit the shrine (the Tomb of the Báb). Are you happy?" His smile, his care for our happiness and comfort, would have made any one happy, and our smiles of reply must have been bright enough to show him a little of how happy we were!

For dessert that night we had grapes, although on every other night we had watermelon. While we were eating the grapes, he said, "His Holiness Christ once was eating grapes. He said, 'I will not eat of the fruit of the vine again until I eat it with you in the Kingdom.' But the grape of the Kingdom is other than these grapes. In the Kingdom there is no bread like this. Now also, I say to you all, we will eat together of the divine bounties, God willing, in the Kingdom, that is, divine food, heavenly food. Its taste is everlasting. Its sustenance is everlasting. God willing, there we all together will eat of that heavenly food." [XII:12:199]

6 September 1920.

On Sunday afternoon the Master said to us, "Tomorrow, I am sending you to 'Akká!" and his smile was light itself.

We left the Pilgrim House at about 8:00 am, D́iyá'íyyih Khánum, Mihrángíz, Riyáḍ, of the Master's household and Isfandíyár, called for us. Mrs Hoagg and we four people added five more to the group. With joy in our hearts we began the two hours' drive to 'Akká. Down through the narrow streets we rode, and then eastward past the railway station. We passed through a grove of tall palm trees, and down to the shore. At last! that beautiful "way of the sea", toward the Holy City, 'Akká! How often we had read of the journey along the white sand, where the horses' hoofs play in and out of the water, as they follow the hard-packed sand at the sea's very edge. We watched the waves rush up and then back, sweeping with them tiny sea animals. We passed trains of camels and donkeys, all on that universal highway "not made with hands".

We thought of all the happy, longing pilgrims who have gone to 'Akká by that same "way". Doubly happy were we that our Master was living safely in his own house in Haifa, and not as a prisoner in 'Akká!

Always ahead of us was a glimpse of 'Akká, which shone more clearly as our three horses trotted along the shore. To the East, the hills of Lebanon were purple in the distance.

As we neared 'Akká, Mrs Hoagg pointed out the walls, the gate, the cemetery where some of the Bahá'ís of that group of exiles are buried. Finally Dīyá'íyyih Khánum pointed out the tower of the barracks.

Outside the gate we halted, for one of our horses had lost a shoe. The blacksmith was sitting under a tree, with his tools about him. But at Isfandíyár's request he came and put on the needed shoe. While we waited, we looked at the high wall of the city, which showed how much a prison city it had been. The walls were high and thick; the gate was small, and beyond the outer wall was a second inner wall. A long train of camels passed us, going into the city, and one tiny donkey, heavily loaded, came out! People in oriental garb drifted by us, and glanced at us curiously, but not in unfriendly fashion. I remembered the showers of stones from small boys with which the Bahá'í pilgrims to 'Akká used to be greeted, and I meditated on the changes that time brings!

We entered the gate, passed between the two walls for a distance, and on into the town. Isfandíyár stopped the horses at the foot of a long flight of steps. It was the way to the barracks. At the head of the stairway a soldier met us, and conducted us about, for the barracks are now occupied by a few soldiers. This man looked like an Arab, but he was under British orders, I think. He led us through many winding passages, showing us several places in which we had no special interest. But finally he led the way to the tower on the west side of the court, the tower where Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned for two long years. Dīyá'íyyih Khánum told us of the various places associated with Bahá'í history. She showed us the room where Bahá'u'lláh had lived, the window from which He had looked out upon the plain of 'Akká. She showed us the rooms where the immediate family had lived, and the roof from which the Purest Branch fell. The rooms were small, rude; a sad exchange for the royal palaces of Persia, as far as physical comfort was concerned. Yet joy was there, because they might suffer hardship in the service of God. To have been there in the days of Bahá'u'lláh—for that privilege one might have been able to bear much!

Afterwards we crossed the large court, [XII:12:203] and saw the pool, or reservoir, in the centre, from which the exiles obtained the slimy water which was their only drink during the first twenty-four hours of their imprisonment! On the south side of the court we saw the rooms where most of the exiles were imprisoned. They are like rather wide and long corridors. At present they are quite well lighted, but Mrs Hoagg said that the British have changed them a great deal, and have let in much more light. When she first saw them, they were very dark and gloomy. And in the days of the Turkish rule, they must have been very dirty, unwholesome and dark. Here, amid all manner of privations and sufferings, the band of exiles praised God for having led them to believe in His greatest and newest Manifestation. As we walked about the barracks, Dīyá'íyyih Khánum told us stories of those early days, making them live again, for our instruction.

After we left the barracks, a few moments' drive brought us to another house where the Bahá'ís had been imprisoned. Bahá'í families live in it now, and they welcomed us with sweet kindness. We saw the little room where Bahá'u'lláh lived for seven years. In an adjoining house, which now seems to be a part of the first house, the holy family lived for many years more. There Bahá'u'lláh's room has been left as it was when He used it. The windows overlook the sea; to the south there is a view of distant Haifa; to the north, the plain of 'Akká. I think Bahá'u'lláh practically never left the house while they lived there. We hear of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's caring for the physical needs of the friends, as well as it could be done under the very difficult conditions; engaging in trade that he might have money with which to equip a bath; in all ways constantly serving his father!

It was to the smaller of these two houses that the wife of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came from Persia. I am not sure, but I think that some of the daughters were born there.

In the family of Bahá’ís who care for these two houses, we met a woman. Sakíniḥ Sulṭán, whose husband, at the age of twenty, was a martyr in Persia! When we were there she was probably over fifty years of age. A few years ago her daughter died leaving a baby boy, Labíb, for whom she is now caring.

Whenever one is with these Bahá’ís who have been intimately associated with Bahá’u’lláh or ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, one marvels at the spirit of service and self-sacrifice they show. We longed to acquire in its fullness that attitude of evanescent service.

It was after eleven when we left the city of ‘Akká behind us, and drove toward the Riḍván. We went north of the city wall, toward the east. By strange track-like roads we drove, past gardens walled with cactus plants. It was perhaps a mile and a half or two miles before we came to the Garden,—the Riḍván. Just before we reached it we turned to the south, and the road followed a little stream. We passed a water-wheel, turned by a small donkey, and later we saw the water he had pumped, as it fell from a fountain in the garden.

At the gate we left the carriage, and Isfandíyár unharnessed the horses that they might have a well-earned rest.

How I had longed to see the Riḍván at ‘Akká! That spot between “the two rivers”, that garden on an island! It is a place of beauty and peace. Tall palm trees, pomegranate trees loaded with ripe fruit, beautiful vines bearing many-coloured blossoms,—all add to the beauty of the Riḍván. From the fountain, streams of water run to the north, south, east and west, watering the plants.

But the place of most wonderful asso- [XII:12:204] ciations is the spot on the side of the stream, where the two great mulberry trees form the “tent not made with hands”, “over land and water”. There, in the later days, the Blessed Beauty used to sit beneath the trees. It is a place of rest and peace. The troublous world seems very far away. Love and peace are in the wind, in the soft rustling of leaves, and the murmur of the water.

Our lunch was spread on a rug beneath one of the mulberry trees. We ate of the Persian foods from the Master’s household, of the fruits from the Riḍván. We were utterly content to sit in that heavenly place and watch Riyáḍ, and another small boy who had come with us from ‘Akká, sail boats down the tiny stream from the fountain.

After lunch we all rested for an hour or more, after which we had tea. It was too sweet a place to leave, but the hours were passing, and the supreme goal of our day was still ahead of us, the visit to the Tomb of Bahá’u’lláh. And so we left the Riḍván, with the prayer in our hearts that we might come again to that lovely garden of our Lord.

We drove to the north, across the rolling ‘Akká plain, till the Bahjí appeared before us. Here Bahá’u’lláh lived after He left ‘Akká, still technically a prisoner, but permitted to live among trees and flowers, instead of being shut in by the dark prison walls. At the Bahjí we turned westward, and soon rounded the corner of a long, low building, where the caretaker of the Tomb lives, Siyyid Abu’l-Qásim. There we alighted, and Ḍíyá’íyyih Khánum indicated a small gate into the garden. Slowly, with wonder in our hearts, we followed the path through the garden to the door of the Tomb. In the little outer room we removed our shoes. A short flight of steps brought us into the large room of the Tomb.

We found ourselves in a large room, with a garden in the centre. At the west end were several windows, and floods of light poured down upon us from the glass windows in the roof. In the north west corner of the room, a curtained door led into the Tomb itself.

Ḍíyá’íyyih Khánum drew aside the curtain but the door was closed. We knelt in the space

before the door, and Dīyá'íyyih Khánum chanted the prayer of Visitation. I tried to remember the words of the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, "Cause me to drink of the cup of evanescence, clothe me in its mantle and immerse me in its sea", but my mind seemed almost a blank. I remember the promise that the prayer one prays in all sincerity at the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh shall be answered. With my whole heart I prayed for "evanescence" at His Threshold, and for the power to serve His Cause. Then I prayed for various people I knew, who were in need of a vision of the greatness of God's love. And then for the Bahá'í friends in America. ...

And how I longed to enter that closed door, into the Tomb itself! I remembered that ____ and ____ had been inside and that they had been somewhat surprised at being led in, for they knew that people were not always permitted to enter there. I realized how very far short I fell of the purity of heart of that party of pilgrims. I knew that the Master gives to each one what he most needs. And so it was as though the Master said to me, "You have not yet learned enough to appreciate the atmosphere of that inner room. Live the life; serve the Cause; achieve purity of heart. Then perhaps if you return here, the rewards of the pure in heart will be yours!" And with my whole mind and spirit I pledged myself to the accomplishment of that task.

XII:13, 4 November 1921 [XII:13:211]

A week in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Home (continued)

Genevieve L. Coy

We were in prayer at the threshold of the Holy Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh for a long time. Finally Dīyá'íyyih Khánum went out toward the outer door. We followed her, ready to leave that place of light. But she returned, went to the front of the room, and opened the curtained door. I do not know why she did it; perhaps Mrs Hoagg reminded her that it was our visit to the Tomb. But I am sure that in some way, the Master's will entered into it. When I fully accepted his will for me as my guide, "acquiesced", then my desire was granted.

The heavy curtains at some of the windows were pulled back, and the setting sun poured a radiant glory of light into the room. "His resting-place shall be glorious"—with torrents of physical light, as well as with spiritual glory. I do not know how long we knelt there. Time's passing ceased for us. My very breathing was a dedication of myself to our glorious leader, Bahá'u'lláh.

Our drive home was a silent one. I think we were all rather weary, physically, from our long day. But the spiritual significance of all we had seen filled us with so much to think about, that we had no desire for speech.

The sun set in the blue waters of the Mediterranean, in a majesty of colour. Darkness came down and shut us in on that crescent sea-shore. The horses sped along through the darkness, toward the distant lights of Haifa. We were eager to be again in the Master's presence.

We reached Haifa a short time before the dinner-hour, weary, but happy. At dinner that evening the Master said, "Did you have a happy day in 'Akká?" And we replied, "Oh, yes, it is a day we shall always remember!"

He replied, "You *must* always remember it! It must be like images cut in tablets of stone!"

That evening as he bade us goodnight, after dinner, he said in his dear, measured English, "Go—and rest! Go—and rest!"

By the Master's love for us, we know something of the love of Bahá'u'lláh. And from the love of Bahá'u'lláh we know of the Love of the Infinite Father, whose voice comes to us through the Supreme Pen: "I knew My Love in thee, therefore I created thee; upon thee I laid My Image, and to thee revealed My Beauty. ... I loved thy creation, therefore I created thee.

Wherefore love Me that I may acknowledge thee and in the Spirit of Life confirm thee.”

8 September.

On the morning of 8 September, I went alone to the Tomb of the Báb at sunrise. Cora had not been sleeping well, and so she did not feel like rising at 4:30 that day. But I woke, dressed and was almost to the Tomb before the sun rose. When his full splendour began to loom above the horizon, I sat down on a stone in the field below the Musáfir Khánih (Pilgrim's House), and watched the lord of day east his first light across the valley of 'Akká.

After a time I went on up to the Tomb, [XII:13:212] passing along the path with its beautiful cypress trees. At the Tomb I entered the room on the east side, and stayed there in prayer and meditation for almost an hour. The tall Bahá'í from 'Ishqábád came in and knelt in prayer for some time, and then chanted. After he had gone, a younger man whom I did not know came in and chanted very softly and sweetly. He went out and I was alone for some time. The folds of the long veil I wore fell about my face and shoulders, and seemed to shut me in with God. His radiant Presence was very near.

I tried to fill my heart with the exquisite beauty and peace of that heavenly place, for I knew that was my last morning on the mountain. I knew that many and many would be the times that I would long to be kneeling at that Threshold.

Finally I knew that it was time to be going down the mountain. Just as I was leaving the Tomb, Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh came in. I went out into the garden, and walked about a bit, drinking in the beauty of flowers, hills, water and sky. Soon Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh came out and bade me good-morning. Then he suggested that we gather jasmine blossoms to take down to the Pilgrim House. So we pulled off dozens of the fragrant flowers, and filled our pockets and handkerchiefs with them. Later we strewed them on the breakfast table. Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh said that he used to fill a basket full of blossoms, stripping the bushes each morning. He took the basket to the Master, who scattered them everywhere he went.

About 7:00 am we started down the mountain. Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh had a stone-bruise on his heel, and was wearing a loose slipper and carrying a cane; but never once did I hear him complain about it. Instead he talked of how the Master works, with no thought of physical fatigue. He works all day long, interviewing callers, etc. He goes to bed possibly by 9:00 or 9:30, but often he is up again at midnight, chanting and praying. Then he may correct Tablets for a while, and then sleep two or three hours more. And at perhaps 6:00 am he rises for the day's Work! Apparently he averages not more than four to six hours of sleep a night! So his whole life is given to the service of mankind.

Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh said, "The real Bahá'í activity is not to stay here in the light of the Master's love. It is to go out into the world and spread his message of service. Be happy that you are going out to work for him."

But at another time he said, "Pray for us who live here in the Master's household. We have many temptations to guard against. We must never become impatient or give way to any depression. Not long ago when the Master was speaking to us, he said, 'You must be an example to all who come here. In you they must see what a real Bahá'í should be.' So we need your prayers that we may live up to that work."

We had thought of the great joy of being a member of the Master's family, but then we began to realize that only those of great unselfishness may be his helpers there in Haifa.

On that beautiful morning we entered the Pilgrim House before breakfast was quite ready, and strewed the jasmine blossoms over the table.

The Master came in after breakfast, and stayed only a few minutes. He smiled at us all, and

we were very happy to be near him. He asked especially about Mrs George's health. He said a few words to her, smiled at all of us, and then rose and left us. We all went to the door and watched him as he disappeared through our gate.

After breakfast we went over into the Master's garden, and waited for an opportunity to talk with him for a few moments. After a while Rúḥá Khánum called Mabel and Sylvia in to see him. While they were gone we stood talking with Mrs Hoagg and some of the young men. I shall not forget the [XII:13:213] look on Mrs Hoagg's face when she spoke of the Master's longing for unity among the friends. His only happiness is to know of the increase of unity among the believers, and of their spreading the Cause. His face always becomes sad if he hears of any contention or lack of harmony. "If people in America could see the Master, could realize how he works, they would never do anything to sadden him," she said. When one is in the Master's presence it seems utterly impossible that one should ever do anything that would sadden, or make any heavier the load of work he carries! "In the light of his holy presence, all desire dies save the desire to be like him."

Later in the morning Cora and I were called in to see the Master. Rúḥá Khánum translated for us. We gave the Master the letters we had brought from American friends. We asked him to bless the ringstones and rosaries we had bought at Mírzá 'Ináyatu'lláh's shop. He took them in his hands, said a few words that must have been a prayer, kissed them, and handed them back to us. And so we brought back to America Bahá'í ringstones, made doubly precious by his touch of love.

The Master said that he was sorry not to have seen us more, but that he had been very busy while we were there. "But," he continued, "it is not the length of time that one spends here that is important. Some people stay a short time, and then go and do great service. Other people are here a long time, and they learn nothing. There is some wood that is very dry: it catches fire quickly and burns well. There is other wood that is so wet that it will not burn even though you should try for a whole day. There is no result but smoke. It will not blaze, it will not keep any one warm; it will not even cook anything!" As he said the latter he smiled. But when Rúḥá Khánum translated it, Cora laughed out loud. That seemed to delight the Master, for he laughed very heartily with the most unaffected enjoyment.

Cora asked how one should teach the Bahá'í Movement to our United States southerners, among whom race-prejudice is so strong. He said, "Go slowly at first. Be kind and courageous and patient. Live the Bahá'í life among these people. Do not mind if they oppose you. Their prejudice is so strong. It is like a religion. But when they become Bahá'ís they will be very good and sincere ones. But at first teach the principles and be kind to them. The rest will follow in time."

After this we went and talked with some of the ladies of the household. Soon the Master called for Mabel and Sylvia, and gave Sylvia a Bahá'í name, Badí'a, which means "something new and wonderful". We were not present when he gave her the name, but Mabel said that he walked up and down the room, radiating power and love.

When Sylvia came back with her new name, the Holy Mother brought out a bag of candy, in honour of Sylvia's name-day. The candy was white with a little chocolate centre. Bringing it out in Sylvia's honour was one of the sweetest, kindest acts of simple thoughtfulness that we saw in Haifa. Needless to say, Sylvia Badí'a Paine was a very happy girl that day.

It was on that morning that the Greatest Holy Leaf showed us the pictures of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. We had already seen pictures of the Báb, and so I think most of our attention was centred on the photograph of Bahá'u'lláh. The pictured face was of dignity, power and majesty. But the feeling of the power, the glory, the supreme Reality of Bahá'u'lláh which came to me in Haifa, did not come from seeing His photograph. That Reality is living and

vibrant in the unselfish lives of the friends; it makes radiant the atmosphere of the Tomb on Mt. Carmel and the Tomb at Bahjí; it shines from the Master's eyes. [XII:13:214]

Later in the morning Cora and I were sitting on a bench in the garden, just below the window of the Master's writing-room. Occasionally his voice floated down to us, as he dictated or talked with a caller. Once he came out of the house, and walked to the corner of the garden, where some masonry was being done. Soon he returned, and his voice was again heard from his room. Such brief glimpses made us very happy, for he radiates such life that one is lifted toward supreme joy just to know he is near. In his Essence he is so detached from earthly things, he is so different from all human beings one has ever seen, he is Love incarnate.

Mírzá 'Azízu'lláh came and talked with us for a while, and told us stories about the European Bahá'ís whom he had visited not long ago. Other friends passed and stopped for a word. It was a perfect morning and we were sorry when the lunch-hour called us back to the Pilgrim House.

After dinner that evening Rúhá Khánum took us to receive the Master's farewell. I can remember very little of what he said. He told us that his love and thoughts and prayers would go with us. He sent his love and greetings to all the Bahá'ís in America.

I knew that I should not see him again, but I felt no sadness or grief. His love was too great: it poured in a radiant flood about me, and held me suspended in a priceless moment, when time stood still, and I lived in eternity. His eyes were glorious stars of light and love. No words can express their beauty.

He shook hands with us in parting. When he said good-bye to Sylvia, he smiled down at her and said, "Sylvia!—Badí'a Khánum! Miss Badí'a!"—and his voice was filled with the most affectionate and sweet laughter!

Thus we left the Master's house, that wonderful home, of which he has said, "My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whoever enters through the portals of this home must go out with gladsome heart."

Next morning, before daybreak, we ate our last meal in the Pilgrim House and said farewell to our happy housemates there. Sa'íd Afandí, Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh, Rúhí Afandí, and faithful Isfandíyár and his horses, took us to the train which left at 6:00 am. We had a half-hour's talk with the young men before the train pulled out—but of that time I remember clearly one thing. Mírzá Luṭfu'lláh turned to us as he said good-bye, and added, "Be good! Be good!" Then he smiled and said, "You know what I mean!" And no one who had seen the members of the Master's household for a week could fail to know that "to be good" is love and service and the spreading of the ideals that the Master teaches.

In the *Hidden Words* Bahá'u'lláh has said, "If thou run with all immensity and speed through the space of heaven, thou shalt find no rest save in obedience to Our Command and in devotion before Our Face." In Haifa one learns, as never before, the meaning of that sentence. The will to obey, a longing for devotion, are born in one's heart and spirit.

Since we left the Master's home, the days and weeks and months fly past, and are filled with many duties; many calls to help in the work of the world. But the beauty of the Master's face is with us. "In the light of His Holy Presence all desires die save the desire to be like Him."

Alláh-u-Abhá!

"But I shall go down from this airy space, this swift white peace, this stinging exultation.

And time shall close about me, and my soul stir to the rhythm of the daily round.

Yet, having known, life will not press so close, and always I shall feel time ravel thin about me;

For once I stood

In the white, windy presence of eternity.”

From *The Most Sacred Mountain*, by Eunice Tietiens.

XII:10, 8 September 1921 [XII:10:168]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá regarding spelling of Sacred Name

To the maid-servant of God, Miss Jean Masson (Chicago)—Unto her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!—Care of his honour, Mr Roy Wilhelm (New York):

HE IS GOD!

O thou harbinger of the Kingdom!

Thy letter has been received. Its contents indicate that thou art occupied in writing a book in answer to the one who has written against the Truth. Thou asked as to how ye should spell in English the blessed name of His Holiness, Baha ‘Ullah and also Mashreq ‘Ul-Azkar. Ye should spell them thus Baha ‘Ullah and Mashreq ‘Ul-Azkar.¹

It is my hope that in writing this book thou wilt be confirmed. The language, however, must be very lenient and mild. Thou shouldst write it with the utmost politeness. Thou shouldst not look at the expressions of that hostile person, because he was a man full of prejudice and very impolite. Anybody who is endowed with a slight sense of fairness understands that what this person has written is based on the utmost self-interestedness and enmity. This very fact is a sufficient proof showing his fallacy.

Unto thee be the Glory of Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh Khán S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 29 April 1921.

Haifa, Palestine,
17 May 1921.

Miss Jean Masson,

My dear Bahá’í sister,

I am sorry your letter to the Master was kept so long unanswered. It was due partly to the sickness of the Beloved and partly to his thousand-sided occupation. However, I am glad at last there offered some opportunity when your letter was presented and a Tablet was revealed. [XII:10:169]

As to the spelling of the two names, Baha ‘Ullah and Mashreq ‘Ul-Azkar, the standard is given by the Master in this same Tablet of yours. The explanation is that Bahá’u’lláh is composed of two words, Bahá and Alláh (Glory and God). Baha U’llah means the Glory of God. Now the U signifies of. This vowel, when introduced between these two words, joins them together, but in pronunciation the A of Allah is dropped and replaced by the same U-vowel. We put an apostrophe between the two words in order to show that a letter, i.e., A, is dropped and we capitalize the U because it replaces the A of Alláh which is in capital.

Mashreq ‘Ul-Azkar is also composed of two words, Mashreq and El-Azkar (Mashreq—dawning place; El—the; Azkar—mentions or prayers or communes). Again U signifies of.

¹ Now written as Bahá’u’lláh and Mashriqul-Adhkár.

When we put these two words together the E of El is dropped in pronunciation and so that U-vowel takes its place. We put an apostrophe to show that the letter E is dropped and we capitalize the U-vowel because it replaces the E of El which is in capital.

I had the pleasure of reading your pamphlet on the Mashreq 'Ul-Azkar. I admired the style of your writing and the tactfulness you have exhibited in it. It is sanctioned by the Master. You will kindly send us many copies for distribution. It is written in a way that will not arouse jealousy in the outside readers.

Will you kindly remember me to our revered sisters, Mrs True, Arna True, Dr Appel and Mrs Houser? Also to our dear brother, Dr Baghdádí.

With Bahá'í love and greeting, I remain,

Your brother in the Covenant of God,

Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur.

XII:10, 8 September 1921 [XII:10:170]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Victoria Bedikian¹

To the revered maid-servant of God, Victoria [Bedikian], Montclair, New Jersey—Unto her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

Today, at the Threshold of His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, there is nobody more favoured than thee, because thou art busy in the service of the orphans and in the education of the destitute, helpless children. Thou hast no desire but to please God.

Verily, verily, this service is directly rendered to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh Himself, because these children are His dear children. This is why His Holiness Christ (may my soul be sacrificed to Him) says, that from all parts of the world people will hasten to enter the Kingdom, while the sons of the Kingdom go out of it; and again He says, that children are the residents of the Kingdom of God.

May thou be a hundred thousand times applauded for this service thou art rendering!

Unto thee be the Glory of Abhá!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 9 December 1920.

XII:11, 27 September 1921 [XII:11:177]

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Today the magnetic power that attracts heavenly blessings is teaching the Cause of God. Whoever arises to perform this service the armies of the angels will grant him victory. The three conditions of teaching the Cause of God are the science of sociability, purity of deeds and sweetness of speech. I hope each one of you may become confirmed with these three attributes.

Therefore one must be wholly cleansed from desire and self and passion, be abstracted (drawn apart) from the world of nature, become embodied light and visualized spirit and then be engaged in teaching the Cause of God. Then the fire of the love of God will flame so high as to attract the hearts of all mankind.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Tablet to friends in Denver, 1914. From *Diary of Mirza Ahmad*

¹ "Auntie" Victoria Schnabel (1879–1955) married an Armenian, Dikran Mardiros Bedikian (1866–1945), in 1901.

Sohrab.

XII:11, 27 September 1921 [XII:11:188]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s answer to the question: “Who was Jesus?”

“Jesus was a Manifestation of God. Everything of him pertained to God. To know him was to know God. To have him was to have God. To obey him was to obey God. He was the source of all divine virtues. He was a vision of all divine qualities. In this vision the light of the Sun of Reality was reflected to the world. Through this mirror the Energy of God was transmitted to the world. The whole disk of the Sun of Reality was reflected in him.”

From notes of Mr Mountfort Mills during his visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

XII:12, 16 October 1921 [XII:12:194]

Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“It is the time which His Holiness Christ calls the ‘Days of Marriage’.”

To his honour Mr Alwyn J. Baker, Berkeley, California—Unto him be greeting and praise!—
Care of Mrs Kathryn Frankland.

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art seeking for Truth!

Your letter has been forwarded. I have no opportunity to write a detailed answer, so I am obliged to be brief.

The point is, that the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh is inclusive of all perfections and supplies all the needs of the world of humanity.—But this cannot be accomplished in a short time. Time is needed. This will gradually be realized.

When a divine farmer sows the seed, the crops cannot be immediately gathered in, but it is certain that the seed will develop into a harvest. The seed which His Holiness Christ—May my soul be sacrificed for Him!—sowed, grew into a harvest within three hundred years.

We are now at the commencement of the shining forth of the Sun of Reality. It is the time which His Holiness Christ, calls the “days of marriage”. No doubt the house is not in order, but the time will come when it will come under order.

They put some questions pertaining to wisdom and philosophy to his honour Paul. He said that before he recognized Christ he knew everything; but after he came to know Christ, he forgot everything. He was filled with Christ and so they should ask him about Christ, besides whom he was ignorant of everything whatsoever.

In the Tablets of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, there are many philosophic questions. For example, the *Tablet of Wisdom*, but it has not yet been translated.¹ It may be found that his honour Fāḍil-i-Mázindarán gave this Tablet to a Persian expert to translate into English. In His Tablets He has encouraged and rather urged (the people) to study philosophy. Therefore, in the religion of Bahá’u’lláh philosophy is highly esteemed.

As to life, however, it has had no beginning, nor will it have any end. The eternal grace of God has always been the cause of life. It has had no starting point and it will not approach any end. But concerning the degrees through which the soul has gone, these degrees are spiritual. Consider all the advancement of the word of humanity which is at present manifest and known. This has been realized through the spirit. The manifestation of the will of the Omnipotent, in the universe, means the manifestation of the divine laws and disciplines which

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 135–152.

are essential to the realities of beings, and in the world of the Kingdom they are ideals which in the appearance of the holy Manifestations (of God) are realized.

The fruits of the deeds of man, i.e., the harvest of the reward of man's conduct, is gathered in the heavenly realm.

But as to evolution, it is true of both the body and the spirit. Consider how many sciences, arts, discoveries and achievements have come into existence since the days of Moses till the present time through the progress of the human soul in knowledge and perfections. Similarly, how much the soul has evolved from the moral point of view. From the material standpoint, you can see also how much civilization has progressed.

In short, I wrote the answer in brief. No doubt you will understand realities in detail thereby.

Unto thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Mount Carmel, Palestine, 2 December 1920.

XII:12, 16 October 1921 [XII:12:194]

Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá

“Two Assemblies in one city will not become the cause of spirituality.”

To Mr Charles M. Hanson, Duluth, Minnesota—Unto him be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who hast faith in God!

Thy letter has been forwarded. Treat thy travelling companion in the utmost love, sincerity and faithfulness so that thou mayest attain to the realization of thine end.

Thou hast written that the Call of the Kingdom is in rapid progress in those regions. The flood which is flowing and moving from the realm of Truth can, by no means, be checked and stopped by any unreal force. Certainly the motion of a flood is rapid.

Thou hast also written that it is difficult for the friends to go from one side of the city to the other, and so in the other side of the city a second assembly may be formed. Two assemblies in one city will not become the cause of spirituality. Therefore ye should strive that the oneness of meeting may become the cause of promoting union, harmony and perfect spirituality.

Convey in my behalf great kindness to Mrs J. A. Bauers and say unto her, “Thou shouldst be very grateful to Charles Hanson, for he helped thee to attain to the source of eternal Life. But as to the division of the Red Sea, this is a political question. We are concerned with the affairs of the Kingdom. You should also walk on the same path.”

Forward this message to the dear maid-servant of God, Eva Mary Jahr, “Although thou art a young member, yet I pray to God to enable thee to grow great in His Kingdom.”

Through the grace of God do I hope that the Bahá'í Assembly at Duluth may, day by day, become more and more luminous and that heavenly blessings envelop thee and the assembly.

Unto thee be Abhá Glory!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by 'Azízu'lláh S. Bahádur, Mount Carmel, Palestine, 19 December 1920.

XII:12, 16 October 1921 [XII:12:201]

Tablets from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Bahá’ís in America

Charles M. Hanson

To his honour, Mr Charles M. Hanson.

Duluth, Minnesota—Upon him be the Glory of God the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant.

The glad-tidings of the unity of the friends caused much happiness. No tidings will give so much exhilaration as that of the union of the friends. For unless the union of the Bahá’ís is established how can they become the cause of the oneness of humanity? First, the Bahá’ís should be united with one another in the utmost love and oneness, and then they will be able to raise the banner of the oneness of mankind.

Therefore, I was much delighted with thy news. My hope is that thou mayest travel to the cities of those regions, and spread the Teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’lláh!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, Haifa, Palestine, 27 March 1920.

Annie L. Parmerton

To Mrs Annie L. Parmerton, Washington, D.C.—Unto her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!—Care of the favoured maid-servant of God, Mrs H. Emogene Hoagg—Unto her be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

Thy letter has been received. Praise be unto God, it indicates that through the presence of Jináb-i-Fáḍil a new book has been opened. It is my hope that the friends may receive at every moment a new spirit and so arise to act as they should have to.

I was very glad to learn that after the death of Mr Parmerton thou hast moved forth according to the call of the Teaching Committee; that thou hast severed thyself from the earthly world and those who live thereupon; that thou hast turned thine attention to the Kingdom of Abhá; that thou hast made the whole of the globe of earth thy home, and thou hast been spreading the breaths (teachings).

Offer thanks unto God that thou hast been thus confirmed; that consequently thou hast become favoured by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; that thou art supplicating assistance and confirmation for the friends of God, and thou lovest all of them! Be thou assured that thou wilt be confirmed.

I supplicate God’s blessing upon thy revered sister and all thy family.

Unto thee be the Glory of Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, Mount Carmel, Palestine, 8 December 1920.

XII:13, 4 November 1921 [XII:13:218]

Recent Tablets referring to the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár

To the maid-servant of God, Irene C. Holmes—Unto her be the Glory of God, the Most

Glorious!—Care of Mr Roy C. Wilhelm.

HE IS THE MOST GLORIOUS!

O thou who art heavenly!

If, with the consultation of the Executive Board and its approval, thou shouldst polish the stone I laid in the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* and engrave on it, its story, so that it may become the corner-stone of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*, it would be permissible. On the condition, however, that it would be with the approval of the Executive Board; because I have referred all the affairs of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* to the Convention. I hope that through the bounties of God, Mr Roy Wilhelm, Mr Remey, Mr Latimer, Mrs Corinne True and thou, all will be confirmed in the service of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*.

Unto thee be Abhá Glory!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Rúhí M. Afnán, Haifa, Palestine, 25 June 1921.

Through the revered maid-servant of God, Mrs Corinne True, Chicago—to ____—Unto be greeting and praise!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art a servant at the Threshold of God.

Thy letter has been received. From its flowers of significance the fragrance of truthfulness and straightforwardness was perceived. It is my hope that thou will remain in faith and in the Covenant firm and steadfast.

Thou hast touched upon the question [XII:13:219] of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*. The importance of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* cannot be confined within any measure or limit; because it is the first divine institution in that vast continent, and from this *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* which is now in the process of construction, a hundred-thousand *Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs* will be born in the future. Therefore, it is very important. As its cost of construction, however, will amount to a huge sum of money, its construction cannot be accomplished in a short time.

Every meeting (in the Cause) whose formation is permitted and sanctioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is accepted and favoured by God, otherwise, it produces no result and bears no fruit, nay rather, it gives rise to the distraction of minds. I have no difference with anybody. I am busy in servitude to the Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh. Everybody who agrees with me, I feel attached to him.

Eternal life is characteristic of the human soul. The sacred souls are in the utmost harmony and joy with one another in the world of eternity. ... Strive thou as far as thou art able in the Divine Mine so that thou mayst discover heavenly jewels.

... Thou hast asked about the third Tajallí, which is about sciences, arts and industries. By these sciences and arts are meant those which are useful and are studied in Europe and America, such as geometry, chemistry, geography, all mathematics and other useful sciences.

In Persia, however, in that time such sciences had prevalence which were mere imaginations, but their names were great. They had termed them *Hikmat-i-Ishráqí* (a system of old philosophies). The people would busy themselves in the studying of these sciences and would take pains for thirty to forty years. At the end they would realize that their studies consisted of mere superstition and pure nonsense. Those helpless souls (students) would become disappointed and discouraged.

... I supplicate God to bestow upon thee great assistance and confirmation and to enable

thee to enter the Kingdom of God; to be established in the school of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and to learn wisdom and servitude towards His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. This is the divine school, this is the enlightened school and this is the heavenly school.

Unto thee be greeting and praise!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur, Mount Carmel, Palestine, 12 December 1920.

XII:14, 23 November 1921 [XII:14:232]

Recent cablegrams from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Cable to Roy Wilhelm, 8 November 1921.

“How is situation and health of friends?” (Signed) ‘Abbás.

Mr Wilhelm cabled in reply, 9 November 1921: “Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia agitating violation. Centring Fernald, Dyer, Watson. New York, Boston refused join, standing solidly constructive policy.”

Cable to Roy Wilhelm, 12 November 1921.

“He who sits with leper catches leprosy. He who is with Christ shuns Pharisees and abhors Judas Iscariots. Certainly shun violators. Inform Goodall, True and Parsons telegraphically.” (Signed) ‘Abbás.¹

Second Cable to Roy Wilhelm, 12 November 1921.

“I implore health from divine bounty.” (Signed) ‘Abbás.

XII:14, 23 November 1921 [XII:14:232]

Latest tablet to Dr Dīyá’ M. Baghdádí

To his honour Dr Dīyá’ Afandí Baghdádí—Upon him be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

HE IS GOD!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant:

Your letter has been received. You have written that some of the waverers had written to me letters and that I had written answers to them; that some have taken this as a proof that association with the waverers is permissible. This is the essence of error! For ‘Abdu’l-Bahá corresponds with all the people, even with the enemies. This emanates from his mercy and not for their merit.

One of the women of Chicago² has written me a letter. In the first sentence she asked, “Why do the friends associate with a person who is wicked?” In the second sentence she asked, “Why should the blessed souls shun the wicked souls?” In the first sentence she wrote this and in [XII:14:234] the second she wrote that. In short, an answer has been written and is enclosed in your letter. Read this to the Spiritual Assembly—the House of Spirituality—then give it to her and *know this as the standard*. Undoubtedly the unworthy souls must be shunned otherwise the morals will be entirely corrupted.

Upon thee be Bahá’u’l-Abhá!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Revealed 7 October 1921. Translated by Dr Dīyá’ M. Baghdádí, Chicago, November 1921.

¹ Refer to Shoghi Effendi, *Directives of the Guardian*, No. 44, p. 16.

² Refer to next Tablet to Mrs Mary Hall.

XII:14, 23 November 1921 [XII:14:233]

Recent tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The maid-servant of God, Mrs Mary Hall, Chicago—Upon her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious!

HE IS GOD!

O thou dear maid-servant of God!

Thy letter was received and the contents became known. I ask God to confer upon you new life. Thou hadst asked some questions; that why the blessed and spiritual souls, who are firm and steadfast, shun the company of degenerate persons. This is because, that just as the bodily diseases like consumption and cancer are contagious, likewise the spiritual diseases are also infectious. If a consumptive should associate with a thousand safe and healthy persons, the safety and health of these thousand persons would not affect the consumptive and would not cure him of his consumption. But when this consumptive associates with those thousand souls, in a short time the disease of consumption will infect a number of those healthy persons. This is a clear and self-evident question.

Likewise, if a thousand magnanimous persons associate with a degraded one, the perfection of those souls will not affect this debased person. On the contrary, this mean person will become the cause of their going astray. Therefore His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh says in the Tablets: “Soon will a foul odour be spread, shun it, so commandeth the Omniscient and the Wise. That is, in that [XII:14:234] city a stinking odour will soon be spread. You should avoid it. So are ye commanded by His Holiness the Knower and the Wise.” That foul odour is that of Violation. Also in the Tablet of Advice He says: “Now do not neglect your Sower, Protector and Educator; and do not choose and prefer others to Him, lest foul and poisonous winds should pass over you.”

His Holiness Christ says that the owner of the garden does not leave the dried tree, but certainly cuts it and throws it into the fire, because the dried wood is worthy and deserving of fire.

Again His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh says: “Then, O ye trees of the blessed garden of my bestowal, protect ye yourselves from the poison of the treacherous souls and the stinking winds, which are the association of the polytheist and the negligent ones. So that the trees of existence, through the bounty of the Worshipped (God) be not deprived of the blessed breaths and breezes of love.”

In the Persian *Hidden Words* He says: “O my son! The company of the wicked increaseth sorrow and the fellowship of the righteous removeth the rust of the mind.” And also He says: “Beware O Son of Dust! Walk not with the wicked and confederate not with him, for the companionship of the wicked changeth the light of Life into the fire of remorse.” This is the admonishment of His Holiness Christ and the advisements of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh.

But your other questions are the proofs of this statement, and there is no need of answering. I pray for thee that thou mayest reach to such a condition that it may become the cause of attaining greatest bestowals. Read thou carefully thy first question. Thou seest that it is this same desire—that is why the friends associate with a reproachable person, and do not expel him.

Upon thee be the Glory of the Most Glorious!

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated 7 October 1921, Haifa, Palestine.

XII:14, 23 November 1921 [XII:14:235]

“The candle of the Testament has illuminated all horizons in spite of the people of discord.”

Tablet to one of the Persian Bahá'ís

HE IS ABHÁ!

O thou who art firm in the Covenant!

The radiance of servitude shining from the Candle of the Testament has illumined all horizons in spite of the people of discord; and the renown of the Grandeur of the Blessed Perfection hath caused such an outcry throughout the world that it hath made the limbs of all nations quiver.

All the religions of the world have the loud cry of “Woe unto us” on their lips, and the cry of “Woe to our Faith”, which is raised by the ignorant, is heard in the East and West. The Power of the Blessed Cause has such effulgence that it has become apparent to all peoples, and all the nations and creeds have acknowledged and confessed the greatness of the Cause of God.

Had it not been for the injuries inflicted by the party of conceit (the náqidín), the world of existence would have been in this day an exalted garden. But the people of conceit, being heedless of this Cup of Wine mixed with Káfúr (a fountain intended to be drunk by the true and firm believers), have imagined that they can upset the Standard of the Testament, and that they can disappoint the delivered nations. They have poured forth seditious rumours on the lips and tongues of all people, and they have made calumniating statements, hoping by this means to darken the Light of the Sun of the Divine Covenant, and to mingle the contents of the Pre-Existent Cup of the Testament with the bitterness of Violation.

Far, far distant be it from them to do this!

Jesus Christ—May my soul be a sacrifice to Him!—had only a few followers at the time of His departure. Then, after His departure, all the kings of the world, philosophers of all nations, learned men of all races and wise men of all creeds, arose to suppress and degrade His Cause; but, finally, all the standards hoisted by those numerous nations were upset, and the Banner of Jesus Christ was fluttering on the loftiest mountain.

Now, praise be to God! that hundreds of thousands of souls have assembled under the Standard of the Covenant through the assistance of the Blessed Perfection. I declare by the Educator of the visible and invisible, it will be evidently witnessed that the descendants of the violators will think their descent as a disgrace, and will disown their fathers and forefathers, just as Akrama, the son of Abú-Jahl, kept clear of his father; and Khálid, the son of al-Walíd, left his father.

As these darkened souls (náqidín) have imagined that the Power of the Divine Testament is but a power of man, and that the Edifice of the Covenant is as one of the baseless foundations of the material world, they are plotting to destroy this Divine Edifice with all intrigues and machinations.

Praise be to God! that the power of Nero, the great Roman emperor, proved impotent to withstand the Cause of Christ; while these weak souls are plotting to resist the Power of the Covenant of God. “Wherefore, take example from them, O ye who have eyes.”

The final result of all the influence, insolence, deception, intrigue and machinations planned by the people of conceit (náqidín) will be this: to cause the few drops of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s blood to be shed, and thus be delivered from this narrow and degraded world, to soar up to the Court of the Greatest Mercy in the Shadow of the Kingdom of Abhá!

O my God! Let this draw nigh unto me and give me to drink from this cup [XII:14:236] which is overflowing with Thine Ancient Choice Wine; cause me to taste of the sweetness of this manifest prosperity, and crown me with the diadem of this great Favour. I yearn for this state! I thirst after this Fountain of Life! And “they who act unjustly shall know hereafter with what treatment they shall be treated.” They desire to cause my death, although the endurance of the material body, of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is a strongly fortified fortress for their protection, and every knowing man testifies of this.

(Signed) ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Translated 1905

XII:14, 23 November 1921 [XII:14:228]

Unity through firmness in the Covenant—the only path to Bahá’í unity

From Notes taken at ‘Akká, 26 February 1899, by Miss Pearson.

... [XII:14:236]

“One thing I ask of you for your own good, and that you must do if you wish to gain the blessing. It is this: To stand firm in the faith, without any wavering. Whatever troubles may come to you or to any of the believers, do not let your faith be affected by them in the slightest degree, but stand as firm as a rock. Be like Mary Magdalene, whose faith was so strong that it was never shaken, even for a moment, when Christ was put to death; but with steadfast faith in him she went to his discouraged disciples and renewed and rekindled in their hearts the wavering light of their faith by reminding them of the promise their Lord had made to them of his constant presence, and showing them that it was really of little consequence whether he was with them in the body or not. She so encouraged and strengthened them by her words that their faith was confirmed; they became strong as lions and went out teaching in all directions, and by the power of God working through them, the knowledge of God spread all over the earth. Now in the eternal Kingdom their names shine as the most brilliant stars. Even here on this earth their names are remembered with love and reverence by millions. So the best thing I can desire of you is to stand firm in the faith, even if you hear of the most great troubles and sorrows—even if you were to hear that I had been killed or crucified, as Christ was 1,900 years ago, let not your faith be in any wise troubled or shaken. Arise for the work of God and His Cause, and you shall see His mighty power working in you, and you will conquer all things; and remember, whether I am on earth or not, my presence will be with you always. But work as if you were all but one soul and one spirit living in different bodies.”

XII:14, 23 November 1921 [XII:14:237]

“The subject of the Covenant is a very important one”

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Verily, the Lord hath manifested Himself in this new and wonderful age with the greatest bounty and mercy, which hath never been preceded and whereof the eye of existence hath never seen the like; and it is His Great Covenant and New Testament, as appointed by the trace of His Supreme Pen, through which, and according to clear ordinances and explicit statements, the matter was plainly shown and the branches (sons), twigs (relations), kinsmen and beloved were commanded to obey the “appointed Centre of the Covenant”. But the Covenant of God and His Testament is a bounty to the righteous and a curse to the wicked. (p. 438.)

Strive so that the odour of violation cease and all come under the protection of the Covenant. (p. 150.)

From the *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*.

The subject of the Covenant is a very important one. It is referred to in all the Holy Books; in the Hindu, in the Zoroastrian, and more clearly found in the Old and New Testament of the Gospels and of the Qur'án.

These Covenants referred to in the Holy Books, focalize in the great Covenant of the Bahá'í dispensation, namely, the Covenant witnessed by Bahá'u'lláh in His day.

How have the Covenants become manifest in the days of Bahá'u'lláh?

To illustrate this we will say that just as a certain tree, even before it bears its particular fruit, is known by its former fruit that it is an apple or a pear, or some other fruit, and when that special fruit appears on its branch, it witnesses thereto. Likewise the Covenants taken in former ages were identified by the one established in the great day of Bahá'u'lláh. Hence Bahá'u'lláh was the witness of the Covenants given in former ages by the Lord. The Centre of these Covenants entered into by the people of former ages with the God of Might and Power and witnessed by Bahá'u'lláh is the beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Therefore all the former statements pertaining to the Covenant including the emphatic utterances of the blessed witness, refer to the Centre, namely 'Abdu'l-Bahá. All references to the Testament or Covenant mean especially the Book of the Covenant.

In this His last book, the blessed Bahá'u'lláh has covenanted with his branches (Aghṣán), twigs (Afnán), and the relatives, as well as all the Bahá'ís in the world, that they must turn to the One "Whom God has willed", that is the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

This is the meaning of the Mystery of God, according to the terminology of the One who has given the Mystery of God, or he whom God has willed; but who, according to himself, is known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the servant of God).

He whom God has willed is the fruit of the tree. Hence Bahá'u'lláh is the trunk, the branches, the root, all except the fruit, which is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The colouring, the shape, the form, taste and all the attributes of the tree are in the fruit.

"Hence in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh the bounties of Bahá'u'lláh, the manifestation of His power, His words, have been spread throughout the world by this great soul. The effects of His words have been realized from this great life. This is the meaning of the statement of Jesus Christ—"I shall come in the glory of my Father!"

From *Flowers from the Rose Garden of Acca*, pp. 31-32.

XII:16, 31 December 1921 [XII:16:250]

"I am with you always"

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

I say unto you that anyone who will rise up in the Cause of God at this time shall be filled with the Spirit of God, and that He will send His hosts from heaven to help you and that nothing shall be impossible to you if you have faith. And now I give you a commandment which shall be for a covenant between you and me—that ye have faith; that your faith be steadfast as a rock that no storms can move, that nothing can disturb, and that it endure through all things even to the end; even should ye hear that your Lord has been crucified, be not shaken in your faith; for I am with you always, whether living or dead, I am with you to the end. As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the standard—this is the standard—this is the standard.

XII:16, 31 December 1921 [XII:16:251]

"Now is the separation, O longing ones!"

Words of Bahá'u'lláh.

Chanted in commemoration of the Ascension of His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

HE IS GOD!

The nightingale of separation (perching) on the branch of the horizon (of the word) is warbling (saying): Verily, this is a separation, O longing ones!

The bird of fidelity is singing from the tree of eternity, saying: Now is the separation, O longing ones!

The dove of parting is cooing from the Sadrat¹ of separation, saying: O longing ones, the separation has come!

Say: Verily, the time of union is over and the separation has come through Divine decree; and this is a separation, O longing ones!

The tears are flowing from the eyes of the people of eternity from among the Supreme Concourse on account of this separation, O longing ones!

The breeze of joy has ceased to blow from the garden of Light on account of this separation, O longing ones!

By God, Verily, the faces of those that are occupying high balconies have turned pale on account of this separation, O longing ones!

The joy of life of everything between the heaven and the earth has changed on account of this separation, O longing ones!

The huris² tinged their eyes with tears of blood, when they heard the announcement of this separation, O longing ones!—and they will not adorn themselves with the robes of eternity when they hear the announcement of this separation, O longing ones!

Verily, this is a sorrow with which no sorrow in the kingdom of spirituality can be compared, for the breezes of separation have blown, O longing ones!

XII:16, 31 December 1921 [XII:16:251]

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to early American Bahá’ís

Farewell words to the first party of American pilgrims, ‘Akká, 1898, from “An early pilgrimage”.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá turned suddenly to us, and raising his voice in a tone so poignant that it pierced every heart, he stretched his hands above us and said: “Now the time has come when we must part, but the separation is only of our bodies, in spirit we are united. Ye are the lights which shall be diffused; ye are the waves of that sea which shall spread and overflow the world. Each wave is precious to me and my nostrils shall be gladdened by your fragrance. Another commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land, but [XII:16:254] on one condition; that their hearts be filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony like one soul in different bodies, *like one soul in different bodies*. If they fail in this condition the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this; look at one another with the eye of perfection; look at me, follow me, be as I am; take no thought for yourselves or your lives, whether ye eat or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all of these things ye must care not at all. Look at me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the kingdom of heaven. Behold a candle how it

¹ Or Sidrat.

² Húríya, pl. húríyát, húr. English houri.

gives light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light. ... The time has come when we must part, but the separation is only of our bodies; in spirit we are united forever.”

From Utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Pilgrims in 1905.

“If you should receive news in America that I have been thrown into the sea or carried away to an unknown place, if you should receive word that I have been tortured and killed—change not, grieve not; nay, rather, be more firm, be more rejoiced, and let your steadfastness grow and increase. For our meeting-place is the Kingdom of God. There shall we meet. I am always in great danger. Perhaps in an hour a telegram may come and everything here be changed. Therefore, hold fast to the Cause of God; be firm, whether I am in this world or not. Wherever I may be—here or in the next world—I will always ask assistance for you.”

Extract from a Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá dated 30 December 1905.

“If thou question regarding the trials and difficulties of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—that is a sea boundless, full of storms and surging. But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is in perfect peace and composure and in complete joy and happiness and tranquillity; nay, it is for him a ready banquet and an adorned feast. I hope that at the end of this feast and banquet the overflowing chalice of martyrdom will come around to him, and then will he be intoxicated by that wine.

“But as to you. You must not look at the catastrophes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Consider power and strength, and withstand the world for the sake of the love of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Bear the persecution of the enemies and the blame of those who oppose. *Under all conditions My soul and My life shall abide with you in this world as well as the world above.*”

XII:16, 31 December 1921 [XII:16:252]

“The Master and his whole family narrowly escaped crucifixion”

Letter from Major W. Tudor-Pole.

London, England,
2 December 1921.

To the *Star of the West*,

We have not cabled to you this week in any official way, as the news from Haifa will have reached you direct by cable as soon as it came here, and our hands have been pretty full in doing all in our power to make the arrangements which are referred to in the enclosed memorandum.¹

The writer, on behalf of the English friends, and on his own behalf, would like to join with the American friends in prayer and praise for a great and noble life wonderfully lived and finally crowned by a peaceful passing into the Wider Realms. Probably there is no one who knows so well as the present writer that the Master and his whole family narrowly escaped crucifixion on the Mount of Carmel two days before we entered Haifa in August 1918. This tragic event was only frustrated by the unexpectedly swift advance of Allenby’s troops, which forced the Turkish authorities out of Haifa before they even had time to carry out their terrible threat, or to take the Master and his family with them into the hills as hostages. Knowing all the facts at first hand, I can join with the friends throughout the world in thanksgiving that the last few years of the Master’s life were spent in comparative peace and tranquillity, and that his passing over was not marred by any tragic or untoward events.

¹ *Star of the West*, XII:16, pp. 253–254. Memorandum passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá included in this document.

Shoghi Rabbani and his sister will be returning to Haifa towards the end of the present month, and they will be accompanied by Lady Blomfield, and by Ḍiyá'u'lláh Aṣgharzádiḥ.

We have not yet received any further details from Haifa beyond the first cablegram, dated 3 pm, 28–11–21, as follows: “His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ascended to Abhá Kingdom. Inform friends. (signed) Greatest Holy Leaf”, but we expect further news hourly and daily, and shall be only too glad to share with you all that is received.

Although it is perhaps early days to discuss the matter, I anticipate that the [XII:16:253] American friends will be considering the production of a Memoir, and if the present writer, or any of the other friends in London who have recently been in the East, can be of service in helping you with the material for this volume, we shall be pleased. We are, of course, not satisfied with the references that have been made in the *Times*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Mail*, and other papers to the event, but we have done the best we could, and so far as the *New York World* was concerned, writer saw their representative here late last night, and he hopes that the cable that was sent out to New York was of an accurate and satisfactory character.

The pressure here is so great that at the moment we cannot enter into further details, much as we should like to do so—this is simply a note to assure the American friends that we are one with them in profound sympathy, as is indeed the case with friends throughout the world. Yours in faith and friendship,

W. Tudor-Pole.

XII:17, 19 January 1922 [XII:17:259]

The Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá¹

Account from newspapers and letters, received and translated by Dr Ḍiyá’ M. Baghdádí, December 1921, Chicago.²

“THE MOST GREAT CALAMITY—THE DEPARTURE OF THE
PERSONIFICATION OF HUMANITARIANISM, ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ ‘ABBÁS.”

His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás departed from this earthly world and ascended to the Most Glorious Abhá Kingdom, 28 November at 1:30 am, 1921, at Haifa, Palestine. The funeral was on Tuesday, 29 November at 9 am.

... [XII:17:260]

...

The funeral procession of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—The momentous hour.

When the clock struck nine, Tuesday morning, 29 November 1921, the wide street, Allenby Road, was congested with the crowds from its starting place to the summit of Mount Carmel. The hearts were throbbing, the breasts heavy, the tongues dumb. Quietness and homage prevailed and the throng was a solid mountain. In the front ranks of those who came to pay the last tribute of love and farewell were Sir Herbert Samuel, the Governor-General of the Holy Land, and the members of his staff, who came from Jerusalem to attend the funeral. Mr Sims, the Governor of Phoenicia, the Consuls of all the Governments, the Mu- [XII:17:261] slim, the Christian and Jewish religious leaders, his relatives and his followers, who were burning with their grief, shedding their tears, throwing themselves on his casket, giving their last kisses to it—those kisses so filled with heat and yearning that they would restore life and

¹ Refer also to:

a) “The passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” by Lady Blomfield and Shoghi Effendi in *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. I, pp. 19–31.

b) Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Chapter 24.

² Article from newspaper *an-Nafir* (“The Horn”), Haifa, 6 December 1921. Accents added and some spelling changes made.

bring back the soul to the stilled body if life could be restored and the soul could be brought back. Then, when they withdrew from that thrilling stand and painful scene, their sobs and moans were raised. Their cries and tears burst forth as the casket, with what it contained of Wisdom, Eloquence and Knowledge, was carried on the palms of the hands of the men.

The casket was of plain white wood covered with precious Persian shawls. The procession moved, surrounded by the crowd of onlookers and encircled by the sorrowful hearts. In the fore ranks was a company of police and their officers; then the Muslim and the Christian Boy Scouts with bands and flags; then the personal guards of the Consuls; then the leaders of the various Muslim sects were in front of the casket, chanting heart-touching hymns. Behind the casket marched the Governor-general and his staff with utmost dignity. The procession proceeded with perfect order until it arrived half way up the summit of Mount Carmel; then all stood silent, immovable, as if birds were perched upon their heads.

Notwithstanding the uphill climb none showed any signs of fatigue until they arrived at the Tomb of the Báb. It was then 10:20 am. The casket was placed on a dais near the high and majestic Tomb which commanded the most beautiful view on Mount Carmel. The Governor-general and his staff, the learned and the leaders of all sects made a ring by standing around the casket. When all the people in the procession had arrived at the Tomb, it made a scene such as Haifa had never witnessed before.

Eulogies given by the leaders and the poets of the Muslims, Christians and Jews of the Holy Land.

Yusúf Afandí al-Khaṭīb, a famous Muslim orator, was the first speaker. He said: “O Arab and Persian gentlemen: Why do I see you gathered here? What are you contemplating and of what are you thinking? Is it of death, or the living dead? Every day caravans of dead men pass before your eyes, yet you do not pay attention to them. Then for whom are you weeping? Is it for the one who was great yesterday and today in his departure is greater? Is it for the one whom you call your guide and philosopher? There should be no weeping for the one who departed to the eternal world. Then weep for the loss of bounty and courtesy! Mourn for the loss of knowledge and generosity! Weep for yourselves because you are the losers! As to him whom you have lost, he is no other than one departed from your mortal world to the immortal and everlasting realm. Weep for one hour for the one who has wept for you for eighty years. Look right and left, East and West, and tell me the true news. What a vacancy has taken place in nobility and dignity; what a pillar of peace has tottered; what a fluent and eloquent tongue has become silent! Ah me! Calamity is devoid of a grief-stricken heart and weeping eye; it has left you young people to mourn your elders, and made you elders to mourn your youth! Woe unto the poor, for charity has left them! Woe unto the orphans, for their merciful father has gone away from them! Would that Sir ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás could be redeemed by precious souls, for then they would be sacrificed to him! But this is the will of God, and nothing can stop it. Which one of his perfect deeds can I mention to you when they are greater than can be mentioned and more than can be counted! It is sufficient to say [XII:17:262] that in every heart he has left a glorious trace and on every tongue a beautiful mention. One who leaves behind him such a glorious history and eternal memory is, indeed, not of the dead! O family of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! Console yourselves with patience, because it is impossible for an oriental or an occidental to comfort you and not find himself in more need of consolation!”

Ibrahim Effendi Nassar¹ (one of the most celebrated Christian writers) was the second speaker. He said: “I wept for the departure of my Master and anyone like me will weep for the departure of his Master.’ For whom is this mourning and shock? What is this weeping and crying? What has happened to the people? Has a mountain sunk into the earth? Or has the

¹ Ibráhím Afandí Naṣṣár.

earth quaked? No; not this, nor that. It is that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the great soul of bestowal, has departed. ‘They took him out and all are weeping. It is like the shock of Moses when Mount Tôr¹ fell.’ O what a calamity is this! It is a national loss and an universal ordeal, for the roots of the heart are cut out and in such a thrilling moment the garments are rent asunder. O my burning heart! In the passing away of the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the mountain of charity and generosity has fallen! The echo of his departure sounds in all parts of the world. Therefore humanity is painfully suffering; the tongues are repeating the mentioning of his abundant bounties; the eyes are weeping, and the hearts are bleeding! Ah me! ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived about eighty years and the miracle of his life was like the lives of the prophets. He has trained, taught, assisted, rescued and guided the souls to the straight path. He brought upon the people great glory. O people, listen: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is not dead, nor is the light of Bahá’u’lláh extinguished. Far from it. His rays will ever remain shining. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the beloved of Bahá’u’lláh, has lived a life from which emanated the significances of the mortal. Therefore, the spiritual took the place of his physical life. And he ascended from this world to the Paradise of the Lord as a pure angel accompanied by his good deeds and his sublime attributes. Yea, O my people! You are taking the body of the great one whom we have lost to its last resting-place, but rest assured that your ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will remain forever living among you in the spirit, in his words, in his sayings, in his qualities and in all the essences of his life. We are bidding farewell to our physical ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as his physical body disappears from our sight, but our spiritual ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will never leave our minds, our thoughts, our hearts, and his mention will never depart from our lives. O ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! O thou great and generous one! Thou art resting now. Thou didst bestow life upon us, guided us and taught us. Thou hast lived among us, great, with all that the word greatness means. Verily, we glory in thy deeds and thy sayings. Thou didst raise the station of the East to the highest pinnacle of glory. Thou didst perform and complete thy efforts. Therefore thou hast gained the crown of Majesty. O ye branches of the Tree of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! I come to you. I am the sorrowful one. I ask my Lord to bestow upon you a beautiful comfort and to console us by protecting you.”

Professor Muḥammad Murád Muftí, Muslim Judge of the Judicial Law and the Muslim Chief of Haifa, was the third speaker. He said: “When nations lose one of their great men, whether he is great in his knowledge or great in his generosity or great in his politics or great in his principles and his benevolence, they comfort themselves in this: that there must come out from among their sons a genius who will become a successor to that great departed man. But the calamity of the world of [XII:17:263] humanity in the loss of the benevolent ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cannot be compared to any other calamity, because his vacancy will never be filled by any of the people. I do not like to exaggerate in praising this great personage, because his generous hands in the path of service to humanity and his philanthropic deeds none can deny, save one whose eyes God has blinded. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was great in all the stages of his life. He was genius itself, high in character and had the best reputation. He was famous in the East of the earth and in the West. He possessed this exalted station through his untiring work and he gained the highest place in the hearts through his help to the helpless, his rescue of the hopeless and his comfort to the afflicted. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a great, learned and remarkable professor. Even if his physical body has disappeared from the eyes, his immortal deeds will never disappear from the minds. Even if the physical ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has passed away, his name will never pass away. O thou benevolent one who art departed! Thou hast lived greatly and thou hast departed great! This big and majestic procession and this overwhelming gathering is only a brilliant proof of thy greatness in life and in death. But who is to help the poor after thee, O thou whom we have lost? Who is to assist the hungry and the distressed? Nay, rather, who is to succour the widows and the orphans after the departure of the one who is the

¹ Jabal al-Lawz (“Almond Mountain”) is known as Jabal Músá (“Mountain of Moses”) and Ṭúr as-Sínín, the mountain (not Mt. Sinai) on which God’s law was given to Moses. Jabal and túr: “mountain”.

embodiment of goodness, kindness and humanitarianism? Then rest thou comfortably in thy resting-place. Thou knowest what is the end of the life of one possessed of such qualities. Verily, he is a miracle in his deeds and eternal in his work. May God inspire thy family and relatives with beautiful patience in this great calamity.”

Professor ‘Abdu’lláh Afandí Mukhlis̄ (one of the distinguished, learned Muslims) was the fourth speaker. He said: “Have you seen the sun set, the disappearance of the moon and the falling of the stars? Have you heard of the crumbling of the thrones, the levelling of the mountains? Have you felt the thrilling and dreadful tragedies that are caused by the accidents that occur in experimental innovations that make the souls and the hearts and the bodies tremble? All such tragedies cannot be mentioned in comparison with our most great calamity for which it behoves us to rend our hearts. ... Yea, the sun of knowledge has set; the moon of virtues has disappeared; the throne of glory has crumbled, and the mountain of kindness is levelled by the departure of this benevolent one from the mortal world to the immortal realm. I do not need to explain the sublimity of the great one whom we have lost or to enumerate his great qualities, for all of you who are just are witnesses and can testify to what has been given him of personal beauty, beauty of his character, greatness of his heart, vastness of the sea of his knowledge and generosity. Alas! who after him will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, rescue the distressed, guide those astray, help the widows, assist the orphans and satisfy those who thirst for knowledge from his pure fountain and beautiful rose-gardens? Nay, rather, who will after him address the meetings, stand in the pulpits, use the pen and paper? All are left without their only banner, their incomparable hero and their shining moon. I beg your pardon if I fail in doing my duty as far as faithfulness is concerned or if I am unable to pay the generous one who has departed what he deserves of the best and highest praise, because what my tongue utters has emanated from a tender memory and broken heart. Indeed, they are wounds and not words; they are tears and not phrases.

And you, O Bahá’í gentlemen! This is [XII:17:265] not your calamity alone. Nay, rather, it is a blow to Islám, and a calamity for the whole world, of the past and the present. The teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are spread in the East of the earth and in the West and the Bahá’ís, who are very numerous, join with us in this commemoration. O, I can well imagine what the Bahá’ís are going through today when they receive the shocking news by cablegrams. O how they are seeking patience, but are not finding it; asking for consolation, but cannot gain it, and looking for comfort, but cannot find the way. Therefore the sacred countries of H̄ijáz, Egypt, Damascus and Persia that have produced this precious jewel and priceless pearl, is sharing with the Holy Land its grief and sorrow for the generous one who has departed and now is resting in the heart of Mount Carmel, the dwelling-place of Elijah and Joshua and the rest of their prophet brethren. May God send upon us and unto you reward and recompense, bestow upon us and unto you patience for this calamity. “This calamity has made all previous calamities to be forgotten. But this calamity will never be forgotten.”

Shaykh Yúnis Afandí al-Khaṭīb (a noted Muslim poet) was the fifth speaker. He recited a poem that he composed: “God has ordained the departure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who is the Lord of virtues, perfections and wisdom. The people are weeping and mourning because of the separation from the one who was the eye of all time. He planted favours in his sublime rose-garden. They grew and bore sweet fruits. The creatures are the collective witnesses of his perfections and deeds that surpassed everything. ...”

His honour Bishop Bassilious (the leader and head of the Greek Catholic Church of Haifa) was the sixth speaker. The Bishop spoke in the praise of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, especially mentioning his remarkable, majestic personality and his matchless philanthropic deeds toward the poor.

Wadí’ Afandí Bustání (one of the brightest Christian youths and poets) was the seventh speaker. He recited a poem that he composed: “In the souls and in the minds thou art

immortal. One like thee, who has all perfections, virtues and honours, is eternal. ... [XII:17:265] For thy departure they are weeping in grief. In their hearts thou art, and thou art their hope. In their eyes thou art ever present, and so is thy father, Bahá'u'lláh. 'Akká has embraced him (Bahá'u'lláh) in its delightful place, Bahjí; and Haifa has opened its bosom for thy tomb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. O 'Abdu'l-Bahá, son of Bahá'u'lláh! Men die, but their names live. O 'Abdu'l-Bahá, O son of Bahá'u'lláh! May my soul be a sacrifice to one like thee. Thou art the all-wise, and all else beside thee are only learned. What can the poets say in thy day? Thou hast dawned in the West—then its morning appeared. They have seen thy light from afar and we are flooded with thy effulgence. O 'Abdu'l-Bahá, O son of Bahá'u'lláh! Thou wert just as God wanted thee to be and not as others wished. Thou hast departed in the Holy Land wherein Christ and the Virgin Mary lived. The land that received Muḥammad; the land the dust of which is blessing and wealth. The land we consecrate, even if it oppresses. Therein is a paradise and a heaven. The tombs of the saints shall not be degraded; the souls will be their sacrifice. We shall be sustained by this Tomb and the One it contains. The covenant of love and devotion will remain forever between us. ...”

Mr Salomon Bouzaglo (one of the most progressive Jewish leaders in Haifa) was the eighth speaker. He spoke in French. He said: “It is very strange in this infidel, faithless and absolutely materialistic age that there should appear such a great philosopher as the one whom we mourn, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is he who speaks to the hearts and consciences, satisfies the thirsty souls with his teachings and principles which are known to be the best foundation for all religions. He knew how to convince, with his words and explanations—the greatest orthodox of the age. As to his life, it was the living example of self-sacrifice, preferring the good and the welfare of others to his own. Blessed are those who were near him, for they have read in him the greatest page of religious and social philosophy. Since the days of Aristotle until this day all philosophers and social reformers have been fanatically using every means to uphold their own sectarian and limited theories, and woe unto whomsoever disagreed with them. But here with 'Abdu'l-Bahá there is no prejudice of any kind. All men are brothers. Here is found the essence of humanitarianism and the best principles of all the religions. The Jewish, Christian and Muslim prophets who were seeking to establish such a spiritual brotherhood are in this day stretching their arms to embrace the Prophet 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his sacred principles. The philosophy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is plain and simple, but it is big and comprehensive. It conforms to every human taste and by its virtues all prejudices and superstitions vanish. ... The philosophy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is original. It is logical, reasonable and scientific. It is clearly evident that the age needs such a philosophy. In spite of our dependence upon the power of inventions, discoveries and scientific researches, human hearts are singing the melodies of universal peace. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and before him Bahá'u'lláh, have carried on their shoulders this glorious work—the establishment of universal peace. There are two factors, two things that always separated or differentiated the East from the West. On one hand you see the West striving to discover the secrets of nature, to bring out the hidden things and make science grow by all that it can, through inventions and discoveries. On the other hand, you see the East as the dawning-place of the great prophets, the founders of religions and law-givers. They spread and grow and the hearts and the souls become filled with their spiritual lights. Therefore the East and the West are rivals. The first is exalted [XII:17:266] by its religions, and the second by its inventions. Both are essential for the life of our body politic. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has departed at Haifa, Palestine, the Holy Land, wherein the prophets appeared throughout centuries and ages, and this fact has been demonstrated today in the departure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We are not the only ones who are weeping for him in whom we take pride. Nay, rather, there are many in Europe and America and in all the world who thirst for his universal principles which are conducive to real brotherhood, who are weeping, too, for missing 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has departed after remaining some forty years in the Turkish prison city 'Akká. Baghdád, the capital city of the 'Abbásid kings, also had

witnessed his and his father's imprisonment. As to Persia, the ancient cradle, it had rejected its children! Does not it seem that there is a divine wisdom in all these affairs in specializing the Holy Land to be, as it always has been and always shall be, the source of higher and more spiritual idealism?"

Shaykh As'ad Shuqayr (a most prominent Muslim scholar and statesman) was the ninth speaker. He said: "The ancient and modern Muslim Arabs have been accustomed to hold ceremonies to eulogize their departed ones for certain purposes: (1) To teach some good lessons to those who are present and can hear; (2) To awaken the heedless and the negligent; as the prophet Muḥammad once said to Omar, 'Death is a sufficient teacher'; (3) To encourage the hearers to follow in the steps of the departed one and to characterize themselves with his excellent morals and good deeds; (4) To comfort his family and his people by mentioning of his sublime qualities; then the hearts will sympathize with them and this will lighten some of the heavy burden of the painful calamity; (5) That every thoughtful soul may gain according to his capacity and insight; it should be evident that every creature voluntarily lives and goes about; thinks, assists, teaches and administers; often, with the assistance of his Creator, he investigates the Manifestations of his perfection. Then the end comes. I am grieved over such eulogies. The Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is considered one of the inhabitants of 'Akká because these inhabitants lived with him for more than forty years. His meetings were meetings of learning wherein he explained all the heavenly books and traditions. His philosophy includes all philosophy, ancient and modern. His philanthropies to the widows and orphans were never interrupted. Whenever a friend of his passed away he never forgot the survivors with his charity and generosity. He had so great a station; yet he never failed to help the distressed! In the winter season he met with the learned and notables of 'Akká at the home of Shaykh 'Alíy-i-Mírí, and in the summer the meetings were held in a court in the Fákúrah¹ (near the home of Bahá'u'lláh). In both of those meetings the attendants found him a book of history, a commentary on all the heavenly Scriptures, a philosophy of the pages of contemporary events that pertain to scientific or artistic topics. Then he moved to Haifa, and then went to Europe and America where he gave comprehensive and eloquent addresses and exhortations. His intention was to bring about unity among religions and sects and to remove the severe strife from their hearts and from their tongues, to urge them to take hold of the essence and let go the nonessential. He did that by presenting his message in a scientific manner. A group of Persians and others criticized him and found fault with his ideals in pamphlets they published and spread. Nevertheless, without paying any attention to their criticism and oppositions, nor being hurt by their hatred and enmity, he [XII:17:267] went forward and proclaimed his teachings. It is the law of God among His creatures—a law which will not be changed—that the originator and declarer of principles must inevitably have those who agree and praise and those who disagree and reject."

Muḥammad Afandí Şafádí (a highly educated Muslim poet) composed and read a poem:

"On Sunday night heaven was opened and the spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá flew with its glory.

It was received and entertained by the prophets.

He was washed by the Water of Paradise.

All the people reverently walked for him, even the Kings and their Governors.

O Mount Carmel, thou art now more proud than the heaven, for thou hast become the holiest mountain.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, thou art now missed by those thou didst care for; thou didst cure their ailments and thou wert their remedy.

¹ al-Fákúrah is a SW quarter of 'Akká—location of the Khán al-'Awámíd ("Inn of Pillars").

I shall weep with tears for thee as long as I am living; how often thou didst wipe them with thy hands;

It is befitting that the creatures should weep for thee, because in thy departure they have lost their moon and intelligence.

God is great: Adam, Moses, Christ and Muḥammad have sung praises to thy soul, yearning for its meeting.

If I could, I would have composed a poem of the jewels of the stars for the praise of the people of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”

XII:18, 7 February 1922 [XII:18:275]

“The beloved Master knew beforehand when he would leave us”

Letter from Munavvar Khánum, daughter of His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to Ruth Wales Randall, Boston.

Haifa, Palestine, 22 December 1921.

My beloved sister,

Though overwhelmed by grief, yet we are confirmed in the Covenant, assured of His nearness and loyal to His blessed Cause and to His Love.

We are spending these wonderful days of our greatest sorrow in utmost resignation to His holy will—for we know death can never separate us from Him nor can it affect our strong faith in Him.

We beg our beloved sisters and brothers and implore them to arise with us in perfect union and love to serve Him—obeying every single command in His Holy Testament with utmost devotion. For, dear sister, today is the day in which we must prove our sincerity, love and loyalty. For I feel *we especially* who have lived with Him, and you who have seen and known Him personally—as well as all the Bahá’ís in general, have a great responsibility now. Therefore we must first throw away the self and sacrifice everything for the sake of His Cause—we must wish for nothing but the welfare of the Cause.

The beloved Master knew exactly beforehand when he would leave us. The reason I know this so certainly is on account of a dream which he had about two weeks before the end (the dream was that Bahá’u’lláh appeared to him and said: “Destroy this room in which you are” the “room” being his blessed body), and also because he requested us to send for Shoghi Effendi to come back from Oxford, England, “for a very great and important reason,” as he said. He also gave us many hints of his approaching departure.

On Saturday, 26 November, he had fever, which left him entirely by the next morning. As soon as he felt the fever he called me and said: “This is very serious. This is the beginning now.” On Sunday (the 27th) he seemed quite natural and at 5 pm received several visitors. The last of these was an Englishman and he gave him a present of Persian handkerchiefs. He retired to rest about 8:30 and at mid-night was resting quietly. At a quarter past one he felt difficulty in breathing and at 1:30 am, Monday morning (the 28th), everything was over. There was not the least agitation or agony. It was so calm that we could not realize that he was going. The funeral took place on Tuesday, the 29th, at 9 am. Everyone who could possibly do so came from ‘Akká and Haifa and walked in the procession. The High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, came up especially from Jerusalem to attend and insisted on walking the whole way to the Tomb of the Báb, where is the present resting place of the body of our Beloved One. The Governor of Jerusalem, the Governor of Haifa and many [XII:18:276] people of all faiths—Muslims, Christians, Jews and Druses—were present, a representative of each of these great faiths gave an address beside the Tomb. These speeches were really the

embodiment of His own teaching. These men spoke so highly of the beloved Master and said so much that there was nothing left for the Bahá'ís to add.

He has written His last instructions enclosed in an envelope addressed to Shoghi Effendi—therefore we cannot open it until he arrives, which will be, we hope, about the end of this month, as he is now on his way here.

Dear sister, we ought to prepare ourselves in order to obey every single word which these instructions contain—and if we are assisted from the Kingdom of Abhá to do this then His departure will be no loss to the Cause but rather a gain, as His spirit will now be free to help us universally!

Best greetings from my aunt, my mother and sisters to you and to all the dear friends, with great appreciation of your letters of condolence and sympathy. Yours affectionately in His Name,

(Signed) Munavvar.

P.S. You can send copies of this letter to friends for they would like to hear about it all and no time to write to each separately now.

XII:18, 7 February 1922 [XII:18:276]

“The shock of his death was indeed as an earthquake”

Letters from Louise Bosch to Ella G. Cooper.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

Haifa, Palestine, 5 December 1921.

Beloved sister in God,

Your cablegram to the holy household was received, and the one to my husband, too. Both were appreciated and later on you will hear more about it.

This is not the moment that I want to engage in writing, but inasmuch as you have cabled my husband saying that you were longing for news, I make an effort to write you. I have not written to Geyserville (California), to Tahiti, or to Switzerland, and I know not what our friends there will think of us for not writing and telling them all about this great occurrence and happening.

As it is, I do not even know what to write you. I can only tell you that with the departure of our Lord our former state of spirit has departed also, and as far as I myself am concerned I feel as though I were a new born babe, in a new world of which I know at present nothing.

Our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed from this earth early Monday morning. It was at half-past one o'clock—that is to say, one and one-half hours after midnight on Sunday. He had no illness in bed. His departure from this world was a rather sudden occurrence. It was half an hour before he closed his benign eyes forever that he said to Rúhâ Khánum [his daughter], who was alone in the room with him, “I am dying.” There was no one else in the room with him, as all were in their respective beds asleep, no one imagining on awakening that such could be the case. Notwithstanding the fact that our blessed 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not so well that day, and in truth had not been well for a long time, but in consideration of his work which he did each day, and the care that he took to carry out his work every day, and the attention which he paid to matters great and small, [XII:18:277] and the visitors which he received up to the last, and his inquiries after the welfare of the pilgrims present and the sick in the village, and the requirements of the holy family—in short, notwithstanding the fever which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had that day and several days previous, which fever would come and go and was designated as malarial—the members of the household were not aware of the approaching

departure.

Oh! our divine Lord went as he came; he went out of the world as he came into it “as a thief in the night”. He made no one any trouble nursing him; he did not wish any soul to give up even one single night’s sleep for him. Rúḥá Khánum, as I said, was all alone in the room with him when he said to her, “I am dying,” and she quickly searched her mind what to do to retain his precious life. Assuredly she could not even lose a single second to go out of the room to call for help, much as she had that impulse, but tried some remedies that were at hand left by some physicians who had been in that day to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The holy family, of course, had often supplicated him to allow them to bring in a physician, which was granted, but merely for *their* sakes, not for *his*! Even on that Sunday (the night on which he left us) when a physician who had been called made an injection of quinine, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said afterward to Rúḥá Khánum, “*I am the physician of the world!*” He did not want that injection, but to please his family he, like a lamb that unto his shearers is dumb, allowed them to do with him what they wanted. What a lesson! His minutest acts were great lessons to the world. So, for instance, when John [Mr Bosch] and I first arrived here I saw that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had a cold. Remembering how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s cold in Montreal became better from a simple remedy (Homeopathic) I had begged him to take, I persuaded him to take a new one I had with me. I spoke several times about it to Rúḥí Afandí and impressed it upon him that it was surely efficacious. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not get better, he sent one day (no doubt urged by Rúḥí through my pleadings) for that remedy. It surely did help his cold, and for several days he was better. Some days after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had deigned to take my medicine, I asked him how much he had taken. His reply, which I did not comprehend then but which I comprehend now, was this: “I took your remedy six times—for *your* sake.” I know now that this means: “Even as I have pleased you and granted your request, so even must you grant the request of others and do their will and wishes.”

After Rúḥá Khánum had given him some medicine, she awakened the holy mother. The others, also Dr Krug, were sent for. He happened to be (as a pilgrim) on the grounds. He and his wife were lodged, and still are at the present time, in the room which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had built for himself as an addition to his house—the room to which a stairway leads, in the garden near the entrance. So Dr Krug was not far and could come quickly; but alas! ‘Abdu’l-Bahá breathed only a few times more and all became still within his holy temple.

At first we were as dumb and speechless, bewildered. We stood or kneeled before the bed. We gazed upon his face and could not trust our eyes. At last the bewilderment subsided and the trust asserted itself. Was it true that his eyes would open no more? Would he not open his eyes to look upon us again? Would he not open his lips to say that he was not dead? We asked the doctors if he was dead. They said yes, the heart had ceased to beat; they said it was useless to try to revive him—it could not be done. Then, after awhile, the [XII:18:278] mosquito netting over the bed was let down, and this covered from our eyes the earthly remains of our Lord. We got up and went into the adjacent room, and the door of the room out of which we came was closed.

But before this, the blood of the wounds of this blow had begun to flow, and the hurt and the pain and the moans increased with every minute. We five European pilgrims were in the room together with the holy family, and the holy mother held my husband’s hand and the Greatest Holy Leaf held mine. After a time we went back to the Pilgrim House, leaving the holy family alone. It was still night—no moon at all. Not long afterward the dawn broke, and at last the sun rose with great effulgence over the scene of this memorable night. Then we went over to the holy household again. We found them nearly exhausted from excessive grief.

After a little more time, many callers came and all wept bitterly. After that new callers came and during the day and night for four or five days. It is an Eastern custom and duty to

receive and see them all, to feed them, and to have them stay over night. It was a painful duty for the holy mother and her four daughters—not to speak of the now very feeble Greatest Holy Leaf—to see and to talk with, and to be embraced, kissed and bewailed by all these visitors. But they went through this, too, the same as through everything else. Throughout the days, Tablets were chanted to the visitors.

The sons-in-law and the grandsons and the six Persian pilgrims from Persia, and all the other Persians who had been like courtiers at the court of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, were all busy and engaged with the preparations for the interment, and how they could walk and talk and see, with their eyes blind from tears, was a miracle. It seemed that so much weeping was never done since the world began.

The holy funeral took place on Tuesday morning, the casket being borne on the shoulders of men, up and up and up Mount Carmel, until the sacred spot of the Tomb of His Holiness the Báb was reached, and there ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was temporarily buried.

I cannot tell and write you everything in this letter—it is too much. You will read elsewhere of the addresses of the clergy and people on Mount Carmel. I could write books on the procession up the way to the Tomb of the Báb. Also photographs were taken by Curtis Kelsey and Dr Krug and you will get some later.

Ella, when those speeches were made at the Tomb of His Holiness the Báb—the casket containing the holy remains of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá being outside, with the bright sunlight shining upon it—and those thousands of souls listening, that was the earthquake of which it speaks in the Holy Scriptures, and that was the rending of the veil in the temple! They said such things of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that the earth of the hearts of the people, which had hitherto been stony, was put in motion, and the veil that was before the eyes of their purely human spirits was rent asunder, and they began to know who it was who had dwelt among them. These speeches were made by Muslims and others who were not believers. There has been since a great demand for literature, and the people are greatly aroused and shaken everywhere. The Holy Spirit descended upon many who had hitherto been purely of the human spirit. All existence has taken on a new garment, for the shock of his death was indeed as an earthquake—it could not be described as anything else.

The grief of the holy family is indescribable. They cannot be consoled at all. They say that nothing can console them except the hearing of the news [XII:18:279] of the *unity* of the believers everywhere. Between their tears they endeavour to explain what unity is. They have, among themselves, and in that portion of the world in which *they* move and live, perfect unity. That word has taken on a new aspect for me since the departure of our Lord. Unity is something else than what I thought before. Now that I know what it is, I hope to be able to carry it out, to execute it. It isn’t to *teach*, as so many think—that’s nothing. A Persian teacher here said yesterday that a time is coming when not any believer would breathe a single breath for himself. That is unity! This wonderful teaching which we have learnt is only now beginning to be understood, and this is that which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá meant when he said that if we knew what would take place after his departure we would pray for his departure every day.

The holy family awaits the arrival of Shoghi Effendi Rabbání from England. Until that time nothing will be undertaken regarding the reading of the Testament of our Lord, the Centre of the Covenant of God. He left a letter addressed to Shoghi Effendi, and this letter he gave for safe-keeping to the holy mother, and gave the order to write to Shoghi to come home. They asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá if they should cable Shoghi to come, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said no, a letter would do. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said this about two weeks before his departure.

Many instances testify to the fact that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knew the date of his departure from this world. Also he had a dream in which the Blessed Perfection [Bahá’u’lláh] told him that

“this house will be destroyed”. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá slept in the addition, in the room before mentioned. When the Krugs came ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave his room to them, and it was made ready for them. When they came ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to them, “I have given you my room.” They felt badly, thinking they had put ‘Abdu’l-Bahá out of his room. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá perceived their apprehension, he consoled them by saying that Bahá’u’lláh had told him in a dream to go out of that room. So then they were satisfied to stay there.

When delicacy seemed to dictate to me to leave here soon after the funeral of our Lord, I mentioned it to the daughters, but the holy mother replied that we should stay until after Shoghi’s arrival and the reading of the Testament, for, she said, a living carrier is better than the dead mails, and the news has to be carried by the one or by the other sooner or later anyway. And so we were glad for this extra permission to stay here, but we expect to leave soon after Shoghi’s arrival. Lady Blomfield will come along, also of course Rúhángíz [Shoghi’s sister], who was in college. They may arrive this week, perhaps on the 10 or 11 December.

O Ella, we did not have much of a visit with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during the thirteen days that John and I were here. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, however, sent once for us and gave us a talk. Praise be to God, that we have that! Then one evening John went to the Persian meeting which our Lord was in the habit of addressing, and, in order to favour John, and because of a remark John made to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had every sentence translated, and so John has that wonderful talk, too.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá could not come every day to meals; it rained several times and the weather was bad. Then the Krugs arrived, and soon afterward requested ‘Abdu’l-Bahá not to trouble himself to come over to meals on account of us all. Doctor Krug presented this request from the purely medical standpoint and wished to save ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s strength, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá granted their request. He said; [XII:18:281] “Very good.” Little did they dream that we would see him no more at all at the Pilgrim House. It was three days before the blessed departure that they made the request, and thus we had no more the pleasure of seeing him come. It was because of the stairway, which apparently was fatiguing to him to climb. Also, he ate so little every time he came.

Tomorrow it will be one week since we carried our blessed Lord’s earthly temple to Mount Carmel. John had the great privilege that day to assist in carrying the coffin into the room in which our Lord lay, and John also assisted in placing the holy body into the coffin. This is John’s everlasting bounty for his services rendered to the Cause, and because of the privilege he had of lifting the holy body of his Lord, John can never be the same being any more. And he is and looks different, too. The holy mother said that we could never in this life appreciate the privilege of having been here at just this time. She said that in our presence here all the other American friends were also present, and in Johanna [Hauf, of Stuttgart] all the German friends were present.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is buried under the floor of the room of the Tomb of the Báb [XII:18:282] which faces the avenue going down to the landing; that room, I mean, which used to be an assembly room. Only two days before, we all had the feast there and were served fine tea and cakes and fruit and candy. It was the feast of the 26 November which is called, I think, the day of the appointment of the Centre of the Covenant, or ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s day. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed at home, and he was not with us in body. Afterward the Krugs went in to call upon the holy family, and thus they saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and he said to them, “I was with you in spirit, though not in body.” No one thought then or conceived the idea that he would pass out of the body that night.

But now I must assuredly close and finish this letter, although there remains so much more to say. We hope to go verbally over all the details if it is our destiny to reach California again.

The holy family says that although the Lord is not here any more except in spirit, yet all are welcome here the same as before. To see the friends and to receive them is one of the joys of their restricted lives here. But I told them that no doubt soon the doors of travel would open to them, and their life's desire to go to Persia may now soon be fulfilled.

Yesterday one of the Persian teachers said that if it were not for the closing of the doors of suicide and the opening of the doors of martyrdom, many Persian believers would now find life unendurable. As the expenditure of life through martyrdom is accepted before God, so we may soon hear of many Persian Bahá'ís killed; they will throw themselves recklessly into the stream of the consequences of fearless open teaching.

We will send you as soon as we can obtain them some of the newspaper articles. All else for the future.

Love to your mother and all the friends.

In Bahá

(Signed) Louise Bosch.

Alláh-u-Abhá!

Haifa, Palestine, 9 December 1921.

Dearest Ella,

Enclosed please find the Arabic newspaper which contains the speeches made at the holy burial of our Lord and Master on 29 November. He was buried at 9 am—that is to say, the procession started from the holy household at 9 am.

This particular newspaper brings all the speeches that were made by the Muslim clergy, as well as a speech made by a Frenchman who is a newspaper correspondent. These speeches are remarkable, inasmuch as the believers had nothing at all to do with these speeches or with any newspaper articles regarding the passing away of our Lord; no, rather all this is the testimony of outsiders and opposers. So you must realize what this means, when even the opposers came and testified to the greatness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to the sublimity of his life, and the purpose of his work, and the magnitude of his aims. The ladies of the holy household were very much pleased with all the speeches when they heard about them, and when they afterward read¹ them [XII:18:283] they said, repeating the Arabic proverb, "The virtue is quite true when it is testified to by the enemy."

Dear Ella, were I to wait until some of the boys had translated this newspaper into English it would no doubt take several years. They have been accustomed to translate tablets and supplications, but that is past now for the present, and they are busy doing other things. So I thought I'd leave it to your brightness of mind to find a way to have it translated, perhaps at the University of California.

As soon as I had mentioned this the other Westerners here thought that they, too, ought to send a copy each one to their respective friends at home to see how best they could have it translated. Mrs Krug will send one to Anne Boylan of New York, and Johanna one to Germany.

The ladies said that the outsiders and the opposers had said and published so much in honour of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that nothing whatever remained for the believers to say. It was as though the Holy Spirit spoke out of those clergymen and people, as though they had received open vision right then and there. And many, many other souls began to know more or less suddenly who it was who had been here and gone. Even one of the daughters said to me that

¹ See *Star of the West*, XII:17, pp.259–267 (English); and pp. 288–284 (Arabic).

it was now as though she had never before known ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (her holy father), as though it were only now that she began to realize who he had been. So you might know what the feelings of others must be if that holy woman feels that way about our Lord. It is sure that I feel as though I had never known or seen him, Mrs Krug is a flaming torch; she is as though intoxicated with the wine of the love of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had always favoured her much, as her heart is pure and clean like that of a child, and she is not at all selfish, but always had much love for everybody. As far as I am concerned, I am not a flame of fire, but rather ill.

The ladies said that by what the outsiders and the opposers had said and published it could be seen what the ascension of our Lord had done for them, how it had affected them, and how they were feeling from it now. They said they hoped that no one would stop coming here now that our Lord is not here any more, but that the friends all over would realize that they are always welcome here, and that it always would be a great happiness to the holy household to receive and welcome them. During their first days of mourning they cried many times for the friends, and wished that all, *all*, could be present, that all, *all* could be here together at the same time, all the friends and believers and near and dear ones, from the Occident and the Orient. They said often”

“O how sorry we feel for the grief of the believers all over the world when they hear the sad news. How disappointed the friends will feel!” From their own sorrow they judged the sorrow of the others. They are holy women, and it is such a privilege for me to learn to know them better every day.

Shoghi sent a cable saying that he cannot be here (on account of passport difficulties) until about Christmas, so we shall not get away from Haifa until the New Year or so, and we do not know when we shall be back home. We shall not endeavour to go to Jerusalem or to Lebanon.

Much love to you and mother and all. More later.

Love,

(Signed) Louise Bosch.

XII:18, 7 February 1922 [XII:18:280]

“You must not injure yourselves or commit suicide”

Letter from Ahmad Tabrízí to Dr Dîyá’ Baghdádí.

Haifa, Palestine,
29 November 1921.

My dear brother,

I am grieved to announce to you in brief that the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, has ascended to the Kingdom by his own will. In some of his writings and Tablets which are not yet made public, he clearly stated in regard to his departure. Also in his talks to the friends, in the meetings and even to the strangers and visitors he made similar remarks. Soon I will write you and send you the details.

His latest advices and admonitions to the friends are to the effect that they must be in perfect unity and harmony.

He said: “There shall not be any separation among the believers because Bahá’u’lláh has appointed the House of Justice to be the authority. In the future many false traditions and untrue statements will appear, but the men of the House of Justice will with great power stop the mouths of the liars. All difficult problems must be referred to the House of Justice.”

Mírzá Abu’l-Ḥasan Afnán (a noble gentleman from the family of the Báb, for many years living near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá), realizing the approach of the most great calamity—the Master’s

ascension—could not wait to see it, and therefore he drowned himself here, in the sea.

The Master, in advising us and all the friends, said: “You must not injure yourselves or commit suicide. ... It is not permissible to do to yourselves what Mírzá Ḥasan Afnán did to himself. Should anyone at any time encounter hard and perplexing times, he must say to himself, ‘This will soon pass.’ Then he will be calm and quiet. In all my calamity and difficulties I used to say to myself, ‘This will pass away.’ Then I became patient. If anyone cannot be patient and cannot endure, and if he wishes to become a martyr, then let him arise in service to the Cause of God. It will be better for him [XII:18:281] if he attains to martyrdom in this path. Arise ye in service to the Cause of God as the Apostles arose after the departure of Christ.”

The Master has left a will which is His Covenant, written with his own blessed hand. As soon as it is read, I shall write to you what it contains. It is the hour of firmness and the moment of steadfastness. Blessed are those who are faithful to the Cause and loyal to the Covenant.

Your brother,

Ahmad.

XII:19, 2 March 1922 [XII:19:291]

“The beauty of the Beloved disappeared and the hearts are melted by this great calamity”

Letter from Muḥammad Sa’íd Adham to the *Star of the West*

Alexandria, Egypt, 1 January 1922.

Dear Bahá’í friends,

You must have heard the sad news of the departure of our beloved ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from this ephemeral world to the Kingdom of Abhá.

The news came to us as a thunderbolt that breaks the mountains and shakes the very fibre of the hearts. We could do nothing but weep—until wearied by weeping the tears stopped flowing. Our hearts are broken, and whenever we meet those who have not yet heard the news, the tears gush forth like a fountain; but the fire of our sorrow cannot be extinguished. Our only hope is that God may confirm us in His Cause and grant us favour and patience in this great calamity. Those who have been privileged to be in His divine presence and in whose hearts His love has grown firm, know that His departure is the greatest loss that can be imagined, and that patience is impossible save through His kindness and bounty. Our sorrow is beyond expression, and as I am a stranger to English, this adds to the difficulty of expressing myself on such a sad occasion.

The friends here all have the same feeling and the fire of sorrow is blazing in their breasts. Since then it is very noticeable that there is more love, more firmness, more unity, more tolerance and more desire for service. All this is observed in the faces of the friends, and the more so as the violators appear and endeavour to play their personal intrigues on the pages of some of the daily papers. The friends here have unanimously agreed not to pay the slightest attention to them, never to associate with them and never to listen to their words, for in reality they are the bitter enemies of our Beloved and of the Cause.

For thirty years the violators have tried to harm the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh and have denied the Centre of the Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—and this denial shall never be forgotten. The violators aspire only to leadership and authority, and try to use the Cause to accomplish their wicked ends, and to them it is not a question of faith and service. Bahá’u’lláh gave an explicit command, which they have absolutely refused to obey. He commanded all to turn to the

Centre of the Covenant, and this they have foolishly and maliciously refused to do, and in so doing they have violated the first and most essential command of Bahá'u'lláh, namely, that after the departure of Bahá'u'lláh they should turn to the Centre of the Covenant, "He whom God hath purposed", 'Abdu'l-Bahá. By the word of Bahá'u'lláh and the very existence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, He ('Abdu'l-Bahá) was a divine being and not only a material son of Bahá'u'lláh. Jesus Christ had brothers and sisters, but no mention of them was recorded in the New Testament. The violators supposed that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a material son [XII:19:292] like unto them. So it lies with you now, in America, who know this question very well, to prevent any communication between the friends and the violators, and not to admit the violators to your meetings.

The departure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá took place at Haifa on Monday, 28 November 1921, at 1:30 am, after an attack of bronchitis lasting about three days, during which time the Master met visitors as usual. In the afternoon of the last day (Sunday, 27 November) three of the notables visited him, remaining with him from 2 to 5 pm. He talked with them in his customary way and walked to the door with them, where they begged him, for the sake of his health, not to tire himself any longer. 'Abdu'l-Bahá then talked to the family about his departure, encouraging them and exhorting them to continue his work.

Among the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was this: *"From this day the Cause has begun, and the friends are now stronger to bear the responsibility of the Cause."* He also said that he had many friends all over the world, while when Jesus Christ departed he had only a few. He spoke up to a few moments before he drew his last breath. Doctor Krug was present when he closed his eyes. Our friend Joseph Hebeqa, who was sent from Alexandria to Haifa on behalf of the friends, relates that Doctor Krug was so affected that he did not speak, but sat by himself meditating and sobbing, and went to the Tomb, where he would kneel and sob, bowing his forehead to the ground, and owing to his illness it was necessary at times for the friends to help him rise again to his feet. This shows how deep is the grief of the friends, when one like Doctor Krug, who was at one time an unbeliever, is thus affected. Surely the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will ever be an inspiration and an example to the friends all over the world.

The burial took place on Tuesday, 29 November, the procession starting at 9 am. Sir Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner of Palestine, accompanied by the high officials, arrived in a special train, starting from Jerusalem at midnight, in order to attend the funeral in time. The funeral, as described in an Arabic paper¹ at Haifa, was miraculous and beyond description. All the people of Haifa attended the funeral and all were bowed in grief and wept all the way from his house to the Tomb on Mount Carmel.

When the casket containing the holy body of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was placed before [XII:19:293] the house, the air was rent with the weeping of the family and friends. The friends then all advanced toward the casket and kissed, with flowing tears, the shawl laid over the casket. When this was over the funeral proceeded with pomp and greatness. Men of all creeds and societies, as well as the great men of the city, without exception, were present and followed the big train of the High Commissioner.

When they reached the Tomb, after walking for one hour and twenty-five minutes, the casket was laid down before the Tomb of the Báb, until the rest of the procession reached that place. Then about nine speakers spoke spontaneously, declaring his greatness and comparing it with the prophets of the past, and testifying to the sorrow and the great loss which they felt in his passing. The speakers were all strangers—not Bahá'ís, as the Bahá'ís could only weep on this occasion. They were representatives of all the religions of the country, Muslims, Christians, Jews, et al. and poets of different creeds. Some of the speakers were heads of their

¹ See *Star of the West*, XII:17, pp.259–267 (English); and pp. 288–284 (Arabic).

religion. I cannot describe how I was affected by the reading of these ovations. Sir Herbert Samuel, after listening to the last speaker, who was a Jew and who spoke in French, shook hands with him as he had understood what he said. The others had spoken in Arabic. When this was over Sir Herbert Samuel, holding his hat in his left hand, knelt down and kissed, for the last time, the shawl that covered the casket, and all those who were present did the same. The burial took place in the central room where the Master used to sit.

As soon as the friends here received the news of the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, telegrams were sent to Haifa, and Joseph Hebeqa, whom the Bahá'ís of Alexandria sent to Haifa, was the first of the friends to arrive from abroad. Upon his return he related to us the details mentioned in this letter. Joseph Hebeqa had not seen 'Abdu'l-Bahá before, although he had made preparations to visit him the week previous to his ascension, but, unfortunately he was detained. He believed in the Cause during the time of the war, and we tried to perfect his faith. The ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his presence in Haifa, on this great occasion, confirmed his faith and has had a wonderful effect upon him. After his visit of five days in Haifa, he was quite another being, and returned to us like a flaming torch, and in his confirmation he has found real consolation.

Since we received the news of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we have been [XII:19:294] animated by a strong spirit, which, during the life-time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, seemed to be chained, but has now been let loose, and we feel a strong spirit urging and inspiring us to greater service. And, too, we have a great secret in our hearts, of which the people of the world have as yet been deprived. I do not mean to convey the impression that we are in a better spiritual condition since the departure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but I mean to say that we feel more keenly His spiritual power and inspiration, and it is overwhelming, and His Holy Spirit is now acting through the firm believers.

The friends in Cairo kept openly three days of mourning, when the learned people of the Muslims and other notables, as well as Persians, who are not believers, called to console the friends.

In Alexandria we had continual meetings at my home for several days, during which time one of the violators knocked at my door, desiring to see me and to console me in my grief for the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, it being an Eastern custom for the people to call, on the occasion of death, and offer their sympathy. The friends who happened to be present at that moment all agreed not to allow him in and insisted that word be sent to him that we would not see him. This, at first, might seem strange, to turn a man away from the door on such an occasion, but any believer who has ever heard of the violators and of their attitude toward the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and who knows the trouble they tried to make for him, will certainly uphold our action in thus turning a violator away. A few days after this we had a telegram from the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in reply to all cables sent from Egypt to Haifa, which read thus:

“The beauty of the Beloved disappeared and the hearts are melted by this great calamity. Our only hope is to raise the banner of the Covenant, and with all righteousness, unity and servitude we serve His sublime threshold.”

A few days later the great violator addressed the Bahá'ís through the columns of the Arabic newspapers, calling upon them to follow him, according, as he stated, to the will of Bahá'u'lláh, pretending, in his call, that although he had been separated from his brother by God's destiny, yet the filial relationship and hearty sensations were strong in his heart, and he tried outwardly to show sorrow for the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. One of his only two followers in Alexandria confirmed his call on a page of the same paper, but the House of [XII:19:295] Spirituality in Cairo replied and contested both statements, stating in effect that this violator is not recognized at all by the Bahá'ís, and since he has violated the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh for

thirty years, he is not considered among the Bahá'ís, and has not the authority to speak in their behalf, for all the affairs of the Bahá'ís are now directed by the Houses of Spirituality, all over the world, whose members are elected and who will come under the control of the House of Justice, and they are the only representatives of the Bahá'ís. And this violator is not a Bahá'í in the true sense of the word and according to the dictates of Bahá'u'lláh. This reply was given especially for the benefit of the public, to give them correct information and to prove to them that the violators are not Bahá'ís and were cut off thirty years ago by their disobedience to the command of Bahá'u'lláh to turn, after His departure, to the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and by their harmful actions to the Cause.

The reply produced the desired effect and we, individually, spread it among the inquirers and thus enlarged the circle of its influence.

Again they wrote an objection to our reply and published it, but after the reply given by the House of Spirituality none of the friends have entered, or will they enter, into any controversy with them through the newspapers. The people must understand and know by their own knowledge that the violators are unfaithful and weak in their reasoning, and this is plainly evident in the writings of the violators.

We, the friends in the East, hope that the friends in the West will give a blow to the violators by totally avoiding them and never associating with them or accepting them in their meetings, because they are the only kind of people who could harm the Cause more than all other people put together, for the simple reason that their aim is to break the unity of the friends by putting doubt in the hearts of those who are not firm in their faith.

We are hoping to hear from the West that which will add confirmation to the friends in the East. This is what is expected from America. We all pray that Bahá'u'lláh may confirm us in raising high the banner of the Covenant at all times and in all regions.

Faithfully in the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh,

Muhammad Sa'íd Adham,

Teacher 'Abbásiyya School, Alexandria, Egypt.

XII:19, 2 March 1922 [XII:19:301]

Letter from 'Abbás Adíb to Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí

Damascus, Syria,

4 January 1922.

My dear uncle,

Oh! what a calamity has befallen us by the departure of our beloved Master. Several times in meetings during the year, up to the time I left Haifa, he said: "I have completed my work and duties in this world and what is left will be done by the friends. I want to rest. The actions of the náqidín and others so injure me that if my heart be pierced with a spear it will be much easier to bear than these actions. Suppressed sorrows will kill a man. If one should relate his sorrows to a friend, [XII:19:302] the sorrow will be removed from his heart and he will be at ease; but if one shall keep it and does not speak it to others it will work in him, make him sick and kill him. You do not know what is happening. I do not say anything." Such words were uttered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá many times.

A certain person was such a great stumbling block in the path of the Beloved that he said to Bahádur: "My soul has reached my lips because of his deeds" He continued: "I want to rest for six months. The doctor does not allow me to work, read and write."

To begin with he dismissed Mírzá 'Azízu'lláh Bahádur and Ibn-i-Aşdaq, the latter to stay in

Shíráz under the care of Mírzá Báqir Khán; next he dismissed Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alí, his son and Siyyid Muṣṭafá of Rangoon. A little later he dismissed Jináb-i-Fáḍil and Şubḥí, the latter was told that when his services would be needed he would be called—meantime to go and teach in Persia. Not a pilgrim was left in Haifa.

On Friday night, 18 November, the Beloved had a cold. That morning Mírzá Abu’l-Ḥasan Afnán dismissed his servant and said he was going away. He wrote a supplication to the Beloved. Then the Afnán went to the seashore, about two hours walk, and threw himself into the sea. Some fisherman nearby took him out and notified the authorities. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent his automobile. I went with the Afnáns and Dr Luṭfu’lláh and helped to bring his body home. The next day when we carried the body from his house, the Beloved approached and assisted in carrying, the casket to the carriage. I am sure the Master told him about His departure from this world and that because of it he threw himself into the sea.

Another incident: Ten days before this a Bahá’í Turk named Dr Sulaymán Ra’fat Bey, whose home is in Beirut, came to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The day after his arrival a telegram came stating his brother had died. The shock overcame him. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá opened the windows, washed the face and head, rubbed the chest of the doctor, gave him some water mixed with spices, patted him on the back, embraced him, and consoled him. During this talk the Beloved said: “Don’t be sorry. My departure from this world is very near.” (Dr Bey did not mention this until after the departure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, not quite a fortnight later.) The next morning the Master sent him to Beirut with Ahmad Bey Yazdí and Munavvar Khánum ...

On the morning of 26 November, I left for Damascus. I arrived that night and communicated the news of the good health of the Master to the friends and my father. On Sunday, at a meeting, we spoke of it. Monday noon a telegram came saying the Beloved had departed from this world. ...

I heard that on Sunday, the 27th, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sat in the garden under the apricot tree. He called Ismá’íl Áqá and asked for some fruit—tangerines, sweet lemons and oranges. He ate some and distributed the others among the friends who were present. He rubbed his hands together and said: “*Finished, finished, finished.*” He arose and went to his room. That night he did not go to the meeting. At midnight he awoke, called the Greatest Holy Leaf, said good-bye to all and at 1:30 am ascended to the Kingdom of Abhá. Immediately, everybody was notified and the weeping and wailing commenced.

A few days after the ascension, a Muslim said to one of the Afnáns: “Sometime ago, His Excellency, saw me and inquired about my work. He paid me a few pounds and said, ‘This will be the last time we meet.’ It did not occur to me that he meant he would ascend so soon ...”

As to the náqidín, they surely gloated over the ascension of our Beloved. Muḥammad ‘Alí came to the house of mourning. Khusraw saw him and told him to wait for permission. The Great- [XII:19:303] est Holy Leaf sent this word to them by Rúḥí Afandí: “Our Beloved does not allow and does not like you to come in, and if you come in you will add to our sorrows.” He went away and wrote an article in the newspapers calling the Bahá’ís to turn to him, quoting extracts from the Covenant of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. The Bahá’í Assembly of Cairo answered him, and exposed his claim to leadership. ...

Kindly give my love and greetings to Zínat Khánum, Parvín and Ḥubúr Khánum. Shaykh ‘Abdu’r-Raḥmán al-Hindí is present and greets you.

Your sincere nephew,

‘Abbás Adíb

Requiem tablet revealed for Lillian Kappes

Tablet Maghfarat (Requiem) for the maid-servant of God, Miss Kappes—Upon her be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

O my God and my Helper!

Verily, I place my forehead in the dust and raise my hands toward heaven and call upon Thee with a heart whose waves surge in Thy remembrance, and with tears that are falling in Thy love, and a spirit which is moving by Thy goodness and favour and a soul that is increasingly thirsty, seeking the wine of Thy forgiveness and Thy pardon, and we are saying:

O Forgiver of sins and O faithful Bestower of pardon and Protector from misfortune and Compassionate to the creatures! Verily Thy maid-servant was a stranger, alone, a unique one in Thy path; and far from her native land in the path of Thy love she was certainly approaching toward Thee and was seeking the glad-tidings of Thy favour and goodness. Then the hearts of Thy friends became saddened by her death.¹ The tears of the pure and of Thy chosen ones were flowing and from the hearts of Thy servants wailing and weeping arose, sympathy was established for Thy maid-servant and consolation for Thy friends whose hearts were burning and whose tears were flowing. The hot fire of sorrow was aflame within their vitals; they were weeping as a mother weeps for her dead child. In this way they were seeking consolation and favour for her, with burning hearts and with breasts filled with the marks of grief for this great calamity.

O my God! Grant to her life immeasurable, excellence and companionship with the birds of Paradise in the eternal world. She is leaving this unreal world and arriving at Thy Holy Presence in the world eternal and she has become purified from the stain of sins, liberated and saved from the world. O God illumine her face with the light of Thy mercy and make fragrant her nostrils with the perfume of the garden of Thy unity and make her eyes radiant by beholding the Divine Face of her Lord, and appoint for her a place in the true station of nearness by Thy mercy; and open the gates unto her, putting her in communication with the Holy Leaves among the maid-servants and companions and aid her to reach the Kingdom of Mysteries in radiant Light.

Verily Thou art the Forgiver and the Kind! Verily Thou art the Lord of Mercy and Forgiveness!

She entered in unto Thee and into the path of Thy favour and goodness. I ask of Thee to bestow upon her a benevolent station; to accept her efforts and grant to her signs of favour and a station of kindness and pardon. O God! she had faith in Thee and in Thy Verses and was attracted by Thy fragrances and was reading Thy Words and Verses and giving the glad-tidings of the dawn of Thy pure unity and she called upon Thy Name in Thy regions.

She left her native land and remained apart from family ties and brothers, enduring every trouble and distress and was content to accept the bitterness of separation for the love of teaching the children. And with enthusiasm educating the girls she lived in distant cities during long years and periods and was patient in every difficulty. Morn and eve she was endeavouring to clarify the intellects of the innocent children of good families and failed not in giving out daily that which was required of her in that distant region. She gave her hand unwearied every night and [XII:19:308] day and at evening-tide and morning-tide to the service of the friends and taught the little ones who drew nourishment from the breast of Thy favour until her body gave out, her strength failed, her body disintegrated and her form dissolved. Then, supported by Thy favour, she returned to Thee, eager to behold Thee near

¹ See *Star of the West*, XI:19, p. 324.

by. Verily Thou art the sublime Refuge, the Faithful, All-sufficient, the Dear and Illustrious, the Most Supreme!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Revealed in Haifa, 1 July 1921. Translated in Tīhrán, Persia, 12 October 1921.

XII:19, 2 March 1922 [XII:19:313]

Dawn prayer of Bahá'u'lláh¹

“O God, verily I ask Thee, by Thy Name, by which Thou hast heard the call of the passionate lovers, the cry of the yearning ones, the loud voices of the near ones, the tender sigh of the sincere, and ordained the hope of the desiring ones and granted them what they desired by Thy Bounty and Benevolence, and by the Names by which the Sea of Forgiveness rolled before Thy Face and the Cloud of Generosity showered upon Thy sincere servants, to write (appoint) for him who advances toward Thee and fasts by Thine order, the recompense of those who speak not save by Thy permission and who give up what they have in Thy Cause and Love.

“Thou seest me, O my God, holding to Thy Name, the Holy, the Shining, the Precious, the Greatest, the Highest, the Abhá! And clinging to the Train of Thy Robe, which is being grasped by all those of the life to come and the present one.”

XIII:1, 21 March 1922 [XIII:1:6]

The New Day

Do you know in what day you are living? Do you realize in what dispensation you are alive? Have you not read in the Holy Scriptures that at the consummation of the ages there shall appear a day which is the sun of all the past days?

This is the day in which the Lord of Hosts has come down from heaven on the clouds of glory! This is the day in which the inhabitants of all the world shall enter under the tent of the Word of God. This is the day whose real sovereign is His Highness, The Almighty. This is the day when the East and the West shall embrace each other like unto two lovers. This is the day in which war and contention shall be forgotten. This is the day in which nations and governments will enter into an eternal bond of amity and conciliation. This century is the *fulfilment* of the Promised Century.

The East shall become illumined, the West perfumed and the children of men shall enter beneath the all-embracing canopy of the oneness of the world of humanity.

The foundation of divine religion is love, affinity and concord. Praise God that this cycle is the period of illumination! Minds have made great progress; intelligences have been unfolded; the means of unity and agreement are brought about; communication between the races of men is rapidly established. Now is the time that all of us may embrace the law of peace and treat each other with honesty and straightforwardness. Let the religious prejudices be wiped away. Let the law of racial supremacy be discontinued. Let political expediencies be done away with. Let the love of country [XIII:1:7] be superseded by the love of the world. Let us all deal with each other with infinite kindness. We are all the servants at the one Divine Threshold. We are all receiving the rays of truth from the same Sun of Reality. We must all believe in all of the prophets. We must all acknowledge the divine authority of all the heavenly books. We must wash our hearts free of all human prejudices. We must serve God. We must propagate the oneness of the realm of humanity. We must be the cause of the appearance of the perfections of the world of man. We must not be like the beasts of prey. We must not allow carnage and bloodshed. We must regard the blood of man as sacred. We must not shed the holy blood of man for the paltry earth. We must all agree upon one

¹ Portion of the prayer to be used at dawn revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.

fundamental principle—that principle is the oneness of the kingdom of humanity.

In this age, Bahá'u'lláh has breathed the Holy Spirit into the dead body of the world. Consequently every weak soul is strengthened by these fresh divine out-breathings. Every poor man will become rich, every darkened soul will become illumined, every ignorant one will become wise, because the confirmations of the Holy Spirit are descending like unto torrents. *A new era of divine consciousness is upon us.* The world of humanity is going through a process of transformation. *A new race is being developed.* The thoughts of human brotherhood are permeating all regions. New ideals are stirring the depths of hearts and a new spirit of universal consciousness is being profoundly felt by all men.

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

XIII:1, 21 March 1922 [XIII:1:9]

The Bahá'í revelation—the religious need of the time

Charles Mason Remey

In this day the religious formulae of the past—superstitions, creeds and dogmas—no longer ease the conscience of the world nor bring satisfaction to the mind of the individual adherent of these systems of thought. Humanity is in need of a spiritual power and knowledge with which to meet and solve the problems and conditions of this new day and age. Hence, the general changing and unsettled condition of the religious world which is causing a large and an increasing number of progressive people to quit thinking within the prescribed limits of the religious thought of the past, and to search diligently for those universal fundamental truths of the spiritual realm of life and being, the knowledge of which truths is the religion of God.

The Bahá'í Movement offers to the world an all-inclusive, universal, spiritual teaching, so broad that people of all races and of all creeds find place therein. It is essentially a religious movement, a spiritual teaching, free from the limitations of sect and “-ism”, and constructive in its building upon the true faith of the individual and upon the pure teachings of the past, thus increasing love and devotion to God and creating within each soul the desire to manifest the light of these divine attributes through brotherly service to one's fellowmen.

Object

The object of the Bahá'í Revelation is the religious unification [uniting] of all people. The teaching has come into the world to fulfil all divine teaching of the past. It stands as the goal toward which truth has always worked, through its appearance in the prophets sent unto various peoples of the past ages, and it is the beginning of that age of divine enlightenment and peace, the coming of which has been the theme of all revelations of the past—The Kingdom of God on earth. Thus the Bahá'í Movement establishes the universal religion which is the foundation of inter-religious, inter-racial and international brotherhood and peace. It offers to mankind a practical basis of unity, one which is in direct line with the great world needs of this age, and it is paving the way for the great universal civilization which will evolve as people of all religions, races and nations [XIII:1:10] unite both spiritually and materially into one great world people.

Divine Revelation

Man, being finite, can not comprehend the essence of the Infinite God, which is beyond any and all human conception. However, through the manifestation of the Spirit of God or “The Word”, that power which has spoken to the world through the prophets and chosen ones of the past, humanity learns of God, knows His attributes, and is quickened by His Spirit.

Mankind needs and seeks spiritual guidance. This divine guidance has come to humanity

through the instrumentality of the Manifestations of God or the prophets or Revelers of Truth. These chosen souls have been the founders of the great religious world-movements. They have manifested the Spirit of God to the people of the world, and through them men have known God and have become quickened by the life of The Kingdom.

The oneness of the Manifestations

Though the personalities of the prophets differed, yet the divine power which spoke through each one was the same in spirit and reality. Each prophet revealed God and the law of the divine kingdom in proportion to the needs of the age to which he ministered, and in terms and parables familiar to its people.

In their purity, all religious teachings are in perfect accord; all teach the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Human differences, imaginations and superstitions have been the causes of religious division, dissension and disintegration, but true spirituality has ever been the source and mainspring of man's unity in religion and advancement in civilization. Each of the great world civilizations has had its conception and birth in a spiritually active religion, and the downfall of civilizations has been brought about by spiritually lifeless religions, shrouded in forms and in superstitions.

The new Revelation

As the former ages have had certain spiritual or religious needs, so this present and coming universal age, upon the threshold of which the world now stands, has its own peculiar spiritual and religious needs. The world is now ready for the spiritual unity and harmony of its people. The universal religion now comes, in order that the universal civilization may be realized.

The prophets of the past foresaw this latter-day religious need, and they also foresaw the coming of two great teachers and prophets who would minister to the whole world, and fulfil the Covenant of God in establishing the universal religion or the Kingdom upon earth.

The Hebrew prophets dwelt at length upon the coming of the "Ancient of Days", and the glory of His epoch; Jesus, the Christ, spoke many times of His second coming and the establishment of His Father's Kingdom upon earth; the prophet Muḥammad taught that the Mihdí would come, followed by the Manifestation of God who would establish the Kingdom; Zoroaster taught of the triumph of light over darkness, of truth over ignorance, and His followers expect the Promised One whom they call Sháh-Bahrám, to accomplish this victory; Gautama, the Buddha, foretold the coming of the great fifth Buddha, who would bring enlightenment to all the world; the Hindu holy books mention another incarnation of Krishna, or the Divine Spirit, whose mission would be universal enlightenment; while the poets and prose writers of all times have depicted the beauty and the perfection of the utopian or millennial age, to be realized when The Great World Master appeared on earth to establish God's rule among the nations. In reality all testified to One who was to come. These [XIII:1:11] promises of the prophets of old are now realized in the coming of the Bahá'í Revelers and in the movement which they have established, the people of the various religions find the fulfilment of the sacred teachings of the past, and also the solution of the great latter day problem of religious unity. The Bahá'í teaching confirms and completes all religious teachings which have gone before, and offers a practical philosophy which meets the present day spiritual needs of humanity.

The Báb

On 23 May 1844, there arose in Shíráz, Persia, a young man, 'Alí Muḥammad by name, who declared Himself to be the Báb, or the forerunner of "He whom God would manifest"—a great teacher, who was soon to appear with manifest signs of divine power, through whose

teachings the religious unity of all peoples would be accomplished.

Through his purity of soul and spiritual wisdom the Báb drew unto himself many followers who in turn promulgated his doctrines with so much fervour that within a short time many believed and joined his ranks.

The Báb was met early in his career of teaching by great opposition on the part of the Muslim clergy and, at their instigation, was placed under military surveillance. In spite of this he continued his teaching, exhorting the people to holiness and sanctity of living, in order that they might be fitted to meet the Promised One, shortly to appear, and to become as mirrors which would reflect his spiritual perfection. Thus the first two years of his ministry passed, at the end of which time, he was seized, by the order of the opposing clerical authorities, and thrust into prison.

The Báb's imprisonment lasted four years, during which time he taught his followers through letters and epistles smuggled by faithful friends past the guards of the prison. This was followed by a trial in which he was condemned to death upon the charge of heresy. With one of his followers, he suffered martyrdom in the cause of Truth in the city of Tabríz, Persia, on 9 July 1850.

The mission of the Báb being that of precursor of "He whom God would manifest", the institutions and ordinances which he established were for the time being only. With the appearance of the Promised One, the followers (Bábís), were commanded to turn their faces unto him, when he, who was to come, would reveal his teachings, divine laws and ordinances, thus completing the foundation of the Kingdom on earth.

The Báb was not alone in being persecuted by the Muslims, for with his martyrdom came upon his followers troubles of the most dire nature. Over twenty thousand of these willingly gave up property, family and life rather than deny or recant their faith. As late as 1901, there were one hundred and seventy souls martyred in this Cause at one time in Persia.

Bahá'u'lláh

During the days of the Báb's ministry, while his cause was being promulgated by his followers throughout Persia, there were many believers who never met with him in person. Among these was Bahá'u'lláh, a young man of noble family, who warmly espoused the Cause, publicly upholding and teaching it in Ṭihrán. In 1852, shortly after the Báb's martyrdom, when the persecution of the Bábís was at its height, Bahá'u'lláh, with others of the new faith, was imprisoned in Ṭihrán, and later on with a number of the followers was sent in exile to Baghdád in 'Iráq, Arabia.

During the exile in Baghdád Bahá'- [XIII:1:12] u'lláh, through his teachings and spiritual insight, gradually brought calmness and assurance to the believers. As the movement gained strength the clerical authorities began to show fear. This led to an international arrangement made between the Turkish and Persian government by which Bahá'u'lláh with a band of the followers was ordered to a more distant exile in Constantinople. In April 1863, on the eve of his departure from the land of 'Iráq, Bahá'u'lláh declared himself to be the One whose coming the Báb had foretold, "He whom God would manifest".

From Constantinople the exiles were sent to Adrianople, where they remained until 1868, when they were finally sent to the fortified town of 'Akká, a penal colony on the Mediterranean just north of Mt. Carmel in Syria. There, in the land of Carmel, where "the coming of the Lord" in this latter day had been foretold by the prophets, Bahá'u'lláh lived and taught; many travelling from great distances to receive instructions from him, while others received teaching through his writings.

With the coming of Bahá'u'lláh the mission and teachings of the Báb were fulfilled and

completed; so from that time on the movement became known as the Bahá'í Movement, and the believers, hitherto called Bábís, became known as Bahá'ís, this new name being a derivative of Bahá. In the spring of 1892 the mission of Bahá'u'lláh being finished, he passed quietly from this world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

During Bahá'u'lláh's ministry his revelation was complete, yet his cause was not explained nor established in the world in general. To this end he, in his testament, as well as in various parts of his teachings, commanded his followers upon his departure to turn their faces toward his eldest son, 'Abbás, more widely known by this title, "'Abdu'l-Bahá", whom he had chosen as their spiritual guide: "The Centre of The Covenant" of God to the people of the world, the expounder of his teachings, the one who would establish this great movement and to explain and demonstrate it before the world—the one upon whose shoulders his mantle would fall.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was born in Ṭihrán, Persia, on the 23 May 1844, the day upon which the Báb first declared his message. During all the trials and vicissitudes of the mission of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was at his right hand promulgating his cause and serving his followers. He was the first of all to recognize Bahá'u'lláh as the Promised One and to voice the mighty message of the coming mission of the "Lord of the ages".

'Abdu'l-Bahá wished to be known as the servant of humanity. He sought no higher station than this, yet when one understands all that this means one realizes the combination of humility and exaltation which it implies. He made but one claim for himself, as to his spiritual station, that of service in the path of God. He signed himself "'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás", which, being translated, is "'Abbás, the Servant of Bahá". 'Abdu'l-Bahá was acknowledged by the Bahá'ís as their spiritual leader, and the one to be emulated in the teaching of this great faith in the world. He, through his example, brought the spiritual life of Bahá'u'lláh within the reach of his followers, the Bahá'ís. He was the first fruit of the consummation of God's Latter Day promise to the world, and he was the centre from which the light was radiated to the world; therefore he in his mission lived and exemplified his title of "The Centre of the Covenant".

'Abdu'l-Bahá's life was one of active service to humanity. There was no element in the daily life of this world too small to receive his attention. The great motive power manifesting through him was not of this world but was of [XIII:1:13] God. He worked to serve God, yet by serving God he served mankind. From his early childhood until his 64th year he was an exile and a prisoner; yet the light of his life and teachings reached and penetrated to the far corners of the earth. For forty years 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a prisoner in the fortress of 'Akká—held there by the Sultán of Turkey for no other reason than that his teaching was bringing enlightenment and freedom of thought to all who came within the radius of its power. With the fall of the old despotic regime of Turkish government and the establishment of a constitutional rule, which occurred in the summer of 1908, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was liberated from prison, and became free to come and go as he willed. During the summer and fall of 1911 he visited England and France, where he spent some months in teaching; and in 1912 he spent eight months in America, travelling and teaching from coast to coast, visiting many cities and towns where he had friends and where there were those to listen to his explanations of religious questions and seeking that vitalizing spiritual force which so characterizes his presence.

Upon this tour, in both America and Europe, the pulpits of many Christian churches of various sects and cults, institutions of learning, and the platforms of philosophical and humanitarian movements of various types sought 'Abdu'l-Bahá and welcomed his message of the Oneness of the World of Humanity. The people who heard him were rejoiced by the spirit which he radiated, and those who came within the field of his spiritual love and power, were strengthened and inspired.

'Abdu'l-Bahá had the power of really penetrating the souls of men, of understanding the needs of each individual soul, and of ministering to them in the most beneficial manner. He was the spiritual physician of humanity. Many beautiful and touching incidents are related in the East of the way in which, through long suffering and kindness, he won the hearts of those who, because of their prejudices, formerly were his enemies. Caring for the sick and protecting the oppressed formed a large part of his daily duties. One of the titles applied to him in the Orient was "father of the poor".

'Abdu'l-Bahá's power was that of love. In going into his presence something within one's soul seemed to respond to his soul. Thus a spiritual bond was made which was most far-reaching, for it was of the nature of divine love and always remained with one. Through his life and example, he taught people the life and the way of the Kingdom. He had a message for every one, and as one met and contacted with him in spirit it was as if a new force were added to one's nature. The power of the love of God was brought very close to those who came in contact with 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

From many countries people of different beliefs went to 'Abdu'l-Bahá to receive spiritual help, and upon leaving him returned to their various homes to share with others the joy and assurance of his spiritual message and to follow in his path of service. He was the perfect life, and as the people contacted with him they found in him the centre of this spiritual light of this new day and age. From that centre was flowing the regenerative Bahá'í spirit, which is making things anew, re-establishing religion, reviving faith in God and uniting humanity in the one universal brotherhood of God's kingdom.

On 28 November 1921, his glorious service finished in the body, he ascended to the Kingdom of Abhá, leaving a Will and Testament—*The Book of the Covenant*—in which he appointed his grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbání [XIII:1:14] Guardian of the Cause and Head of the House of Justice, a body of men to be chosen from the believers because of their spiritual qualifications for wisdom and divine knowledge.

Growth of the movement

The movement under the Báb was practically confined to the Islamic countries. During the ministry of Bahá'u'lláh the message was taken to various other countries of the Orient and under the ministration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá it spread around the world. There are not only centres of Bahá'í teaching in China, Japan, Burma, India, Persia, Turkistán, Caucasia, the Turkish countries and in Egypt, but there are strong Bahá'í centres in Prance, Germany, England and throughout the United States and Canada. This growth has been a comparatively slow but steady one. It is not limited by religious nor racial conditions, which is proven by the many heterogeneous elements which this Cause is assimilating and fusing into one element, which is the world type of man.

The universal principles of Truth, which the Bahá'í Movement is teaching, are already clearly seen in the way in which this teaching appeals to people of all religions, races and nationalities. When a soul becomes touched by the Bahá'í Spirit he becomes a citizen of the world, quite freed from the limitations of his former environment, while his social and religious prejudices inherited from forebears and environment are changed into a desire to do something toward world brotherhood through tangible service to his fellowmen. In the Bahá'í meetings—notably those in the East—one sees Christians, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists mingling as brothers and eating at the same tables. It has been the writer's privilege to travel extensively and to attend many such reunions. He has spent much time in the Oriental countries and has seen the spiritual blending of the Orient and Occident, which process is being brought about by the love and devotion of the Bahá'ís, one for another. These people are really demonstrating the power of divine love, for with them it is so powerful as to overcome all religious and racial antipathy and is producing real brotherhood

and peace.

XIII:2, 9 April 1922 [XIII:2:36]

The Bahá'í Revelation—the religious need of the time (continued)¹

Charles Mason Remey

The Bahá'í Writings

The collective writings of the Báb are known as *The Bayán*.² These treat chiefly of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh, containing exhortations to the people calling them to purify themselves and prepare to meet the Promised One that they might be fitted to serve him.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote many treatises in the form of books and epistles in which He demonstrates the oneness of the spirit of all of the former religious teachings; also treating of the present teachings in its relation to the religions of the past. A number of these writings were in reply to special questions asked by men of learning and were therefore written from various points of thought, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, etc.

The writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are many and are chiefly in the form of letters or Tablets, explanatory of the spirit and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. In 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life of service to humanity is his method of teaching, through which means he gives life, vigour and a penetrative force to his words. His verbal teaching, much of which is reported and circulated in manuscript and in printed form, consists of explanations, given to various inquirers, regarding the Cause and its doctrines, together with exhortations to the followers and certain principles and truths, the pursuance of which is conducive to the best secular as well as spiritual welfare of mankind.

Eternal life

Eternal life is the state of soul of spiritually quickened man. All souls exist as entities after the separation from the material body. However, from the spiritual standpoint, this mere existence is not "life". Only those souls who are awake to the glory of God can be said to be divinely awake and alive and of the life eternal. This spiritual awakening is from God. It is His gift and greatest bounty to man. By virtue of the truth and spirit revealed to humanity through the Prophets and Manifestations, man's soul is awakened from slumber, and, though in the world, yet he lives in a higher realm from which he receives divine strength and force.

According to the Bahá'í teaching heaven and hell are conditions of the soul. The soul which lives in God is in that divine state called heaven, while one not yet awakened to the glory of God is in a state of darkness, or hell. The coming of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth has been the one theme of Christ and the Prophets. All have spoken of this epoch in different terminology, but in reality they all spoke of the one great age of divine enlightenment—a time when faith should replace unbelief, and when divine knowledge should replace ignorance and superstition, and the Bahá'í Cause teaches that the world is now in the early dawn of that new day and age.

Social reforms, laws and ordinances

In addition to the purely spiritual teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, he ordered certain changes in the manners and customs of people, through the observance of which the world in general will be helped both materially and spiritually. He exhorts the Bahá'ís to be tolerant, and in no way to separate themselves from other people, nor denounce those of other beliefs. All men are free to believe as they wish, but all are advised to unite in faith and to lay aside the prejudices and superstitions of past ages. [XIII:2:37] Warfare should be abolished and

¹ Continued from page 14.

² In general, and Bayán-i-'Arabí and Bayán-i-Fársí in particular.

international questions settled by arbitration. A universal language is favoured as a means of bringing people together in unity. Legislation should be representative. The Bahá'ís should be peaceful and law-abiding citizens. Their thought should be humanitarian before all else. Faith without works is not acceptable. One's worship should be supplemented by a pure and useful life in the world. Men and women should marry. Asceticism is discouraged. Monogamy is taught. Harshness and hatred are to be overcome by gentleness and love. Man should not use intoxicants as a beverage. Opium and kindred drug habits are denounced as is also gambling.

Bahá'u'lláh forbade mendacity, slavery, cruelty to animals and many other abuses which our western civilization has already remedied, so it is hardly necessary here to mention them. The following of these ordinances is already producing its good effect in the many Bahá'í centres throughout the world, and good fruits are coming therefrom.

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

Prayer supplemented by a pure and useful life in this world form the elements of true worship. Faith without works is not acceptable. Every man should have an occupation which conduces to the welfare of humanity, the diligent pursuance of which is in itself an act of worship.

In this Cause there is no priesthood nor clergy. Each soul approaches God in prayer without sacred rite nor ceremony. Temples open to all people of all religions are to be provided for reading, meditation and prayer. These are to be surrounded by hospices, hospitals, asylums, schools, universities, etc., the whole group of buildings to be known as a "Mashriqu'l-Adhkár", which translated from the Arabic literally means "The dawning point of the mentions (of God)". In these institutions is symbolized both the spiritual worship and the humanitarian service as taught by Bahá'u'lláh.

A few years ago in the city of Ishaqábád in Russian Turkistán a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár was built. At present the Bahá'ís throughout the world are uniting in the work of building the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in America, which is to be erected upon the shore of Lake Michigan near the city of Chicago.

Of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár to be built in Chicago, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has spoken as follows:

"Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple, shall be erected in America.

"The accessories of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár are numerous. Among them are the school for orphans, the great college for the higher arts, hospital, home for the cripples and hospice. The doors of these places are to be opened to all sects—no differentiations. When these accessories are completed, and, by God's help and aid, the departments fully systematized, it will be proved that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is to human society a great bounty and a great blessing.

"In brief, through the unlimited bounties of God, I am hopeful that the beloved ones of God in America may be aided and confirmed in founding this mighty and solid foundation and gradually annex thereto its accessories.

"When these institutions, college, hospital, hospice and establishments for the incurables, university for the study of higher sciences and giving post-graduate courses, and other philanthropic buildings are built, its doors will be opened to all the nations and religions. There will be absolutely no line of demarcation drawn. Its charities will be dispensed irrespective of colour or race. Its gates will be flung wide open to mankind; prejudice toward none, love for all. The central building will be devoted to the purpose of prayer and worship. Thus, for the first time, religion will become harmonized with science, and [XIII:2:38] science

will be the handmaid of religion, both showering their material and spiritual gifts on all humanity. In this way the people will be lifted out of the quagmires of slothfulness and bigotry.”

Education

Through a broad and liberal education along scientific, material and intellectual lines, balanced by a knowledge of man’s moral and spiritual duties and relation to God, the Bahá’ís believe that the superstitions of the past will disappear and with them the prejudice and ignorance which have always made for man’s limitation. The Bahá’í Movement stands strongly for the freedom and education of women, even going so far as to teach that it is more necessary for parents to educate their girls than their boys. Women being the mothers and the early teachers of the children of the race, it is more necessary that they be educated than men. In the Orient, where the condition of ignorance and general degradation among the women is so widespread, the condition of the Bahá’í women is so far superior to that of the women in general in the countries in which they live as to be one of the clear demonstrations of the awakening of these peoples and their freedom from their former religious institutions which denied educational advantages to women. Particularly in the Muslim countries are the women denied culture and education by the established rule of theology, but now through the dawn of this new day and age all these limitations of the past are disappearing before the light of Truth.

Peace

Religious differences have been the chief cause of warfare, while religious sympathy and understanding have always made for peace and prosperity. Prior to the beginning of the Bahá’í Movement, little or nothing was being taught or written about peace, arbitration, universal language, suffrage nor other universal institutions. During the past three-quarters of a century, however, the world has awakened to the necessity for all of these institutions for which the Bahá’í Cause stands; and now the most enlightened people are realizing that the lack of spiritual or religious understanding, with the accompanying lack of moral perception, is the real cause of our human ills and the cataclysmic conditions through which the world is now passing.

While Bahá’u’lláh’s teaching was ahead of the world of his day, the world of today is realizing more and more the value of that teaching. The supply and the demand are now meeting, from which better conditions will result.

The Bahá’ís believe in a federation of all the nations, both large and small, and the establishment of a world parliament for the judicial settlement of international disputes. In treating of this matter of peace between the nations, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

“A tribunal will be under the power of God, and under the protection of all men. Each one must obey the decisions of this tribunal, in order to arrange the difficulties of every nation.

“About fifty years ago in the *Book of Aqdas*, Bahá’u’lláh commanded the people to establish the Universal Peace and summoned all the nations to the Divine Banquet of international arbitration so that the questions of boundaries, of national honour and property and of vital interests between nations might be decided by an arbitral court of justice.

“Remember these precepts were given more than half a century ago—at that moment no one spoke of universal peace—nor of any of these principles, but Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed them to all the sovereigns of the world. ... They are the spirit of this age; the light of this age; they are the well-being of this age.”

Science and religion

The imaginations and superstitions of the religious systems of the past, are against

common sense and science, for these are but the thoughts of men of the [XIII:2:39] ages. The universal basic spiritual truths of religion, upon the contrary, accord with science. When men understand the true principles of religion no conflict will be found between them and the material sciences.

Evolution of man

According to the Bahá'í teaching, spirit or life force is of five kinds: vegetable, animal, human, and divinely spiritual life of the soul, and the Infinite unknowable Spirit of God. Man was created man, a species apart and above the vegetable and animal conditions. Through the spiritual influences of the Manifestations of God's Word, or the Prophets, man becomes characterized by the divinely spiritual qualities, and adds to his human nature the spiritual nature, or the life eternal.

The Bahá'ís see true religion itself as a scientific fact, for to them the true philosophy of religion is the statement or the science of the higher spiritual laws of that plain of being known as The Kingdom of God. Through the working of these divine laws and a knowledge thereof, humanity arises from the state of spiritual ignorance which characterizes the so-called "natural" or savage man, and becomes quickened by the process of the higher life. Thus, through a knowledge of the basic principles of religion, and through the wisdom which the living spirit of religion instils into the soul, the true religious man is freed from the thralldom of ignorance and superstition, which imprisons the soul, and he finds ample opportunity and scope for the development of the highest and noblest virtues peculiar to that plain of being known as The Kingdom of God.

Oriental-Occidental unity

One of the greatest obstacles to overcome before universal brotherhood and peace can come is the natural lack of confidence and understanding between the Oriental and Occidental peoples. The Orient has always been the source of the world's spiritual inspiration, while in the Occident has appeared the fruition of this inspiration in the form of a highly evolved civilization. Through the Bahá'í teachings this chasm between the East and the West is bridged, and for the first time in history Oriental and Occidental are meeting on a common ground of sympathy and understanding.

Economic questions

Co-operation is the basic principle upon which all institutions should be founded. The co-operation of all for the good of all. Laws should be so regulated that it will be impossible for one man to enrich himself at the expense of another. Through the proper adjustment of political and commercial relations between individuals and nations all will live in harmony, happiness and in plenty.

The House of Justice

Bahá'u'lláh arranged for the guidance and the welfare of his cause by appointing 'Abdu'l-Bahá "The Centre of His Covenant", to whom the people turned for guidance. And 'Abdu'l-Bahá arranged that after him the people should turn to Shoghi Effendi, whom he appointed "The Guardian of the Cause and Head of the House of Justice"—a body of men chosen from the believers because of their spiritual qualifications for wisdom and divine knowledge.

The business affairs of the Bahá'í Movement will then be conducted by these assemblies of consultation. In addition to the local Houses of Justice, there will be a general assembly of consultation composed of representatives from all parts of the world. This will be known as "The Universal House of Justice".

The method of teaching

The teaching is given without money and without price. Teachers are usually self-supporting, giving their time and services, the recompense for which is the joy and satisfaction of serving in the cause of Truth, but in rare instances [XIII:2:45] persons of means have been known to provide travelling and living expenses enabling certain speakers and teachers for a time to extend the field of their labours. Teaching consists of first living the principles of the Cause in one's inner life and then speaking to others. Unless a teacher lives the life of which he preaches his words will have no effect upon the hearts of others.

All Bahá'ís are servants of the Cause and are supposed to promulgate the teachings, each in his own sphere—each working according to his ability. Some are able to go about through the world teaching and preaching, while others carry on their religious work in conjunction with their material affairs. The Bahá'ís in no way form a close[d] sect or cult. They do not separate themselves from other people. Their work is ever outward and in the world where they are diffusing spiritual knowledge and serving humanity.

In the following words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá he instructs teachers how they should teach:

“The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch.

“Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others?

“Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach severance to others?”

XIII:1, 21 March 1922 [XIII:1:18]

The days of divine springtime

A talk by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Shrine of the Báb, Mount Carmel, at a feast given by Áqá Díyá'u'lláh of Ishqábád, 28 November 1920.

... the Master said: “Springtime is the time of buds and blossoms and flowers, but the season of fruits is after the springtime. The days of the Manifestations of God are like the season of the spring.

“In the time of the Manifestation Moses, the buds and flowers which appeared were turned into fruits some time after Moses' departure. Similarly in the days of His Holiness Christ, his words and utterances produced fruit afterwards. At the time of His Holiness the Prophet, (Muḥammad) he planted the tree of Ṭúbá with his own hand, but that tree also produced fruits afterward.

“Now we hope that the fruits of man's existence will appear in these days (or seasons). In the Qur'án it says: ‘Before long God will bring forth people whom He loves and who love Him.’ When they said to His Holiness Christ: ‘Your followers do not behave according to discipline and rules.’ His Holiness Christ answered them: ‘These are the days of marriage and not the days of discipline. The days of rules and discipline will come afterwards.’ This means that the fruit of the trees will be gathered in summer and not in the spring. There were some people who appeared at Khurásán, and in reality revived the religion of His Holiness the Prophet, otherwise his religion would have been utterly destroyed. These people were souls who were severed from all desire save service.

“Now also our hope is that in these days the Holy Cause may yield its fruits. That the friends of God may become so self-sacrificing that the Cause may bring forth much fruit. The days are passing, before long a whirlwind of dust will place everybody in their graves.

“As long as we are living we must be all the time thinking of the promotion of the Word of God, so that the heavenly life may illumine all the world and may change this world of dust into paradise and change this wilderness of thorns into a rose garden.”

Translated by Mírzá ‘Azízu’lláh S. Bahádur. Copied by E. H. S., Tíhrán, Persia.

XIII:1, 21 March 1922 [XIII:1:26]

A glimpse of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the Gardener

Pasadena, California.

15 November 1921.

My Dear Miss Buikema,

I have not forgotten that you accorded to me the great privilege of seeding you some words regarding our recent visit to the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that you might use them perhaps to advantage in the *Star of the West*. I am so happy to be able to share with the friends the wonderful; impressions which we received there and to send you, for publication, the accompanying photograph. This picture was taken in the garden surrounding the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh at Bahjí on the morning of 1 May of this year for Mr French and me.

We had spent two days in the presence of our Master in Bahjí, accompanying him at morn and evening into the Shrine to pray and supplicate at the Holy Threshold. On this particular morning, Sunday, the first of May, as we passed through that beautiful garden brilliant with early spring flowers, I begged the Master to grant us the favour of pausing for a photograph in order that I might bring back to the friends in America this glimpse of him as he stood among his flowers. How near it brings him! To me, no picture¹ which we have ever had is quite so typical. Truly, he is the Gardener, and in the hearts he is planting only seeds of Love.

During the three days which we passed in his presence at Bahjí, the strongest impressions which I received all bore upon the necessity of *Obedience* and *Reverence*. It may be too much to expect that all will be equally reverent, for that only comes with a deeper perception of the station of the Centre of the Covenant. But even those who are attracted superficially to the Bahá’í teachings must recognize the justice of the commands of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and that all human and spiritual welfare must lie in obedience to those commands.

I asked one question which will be of interest to all the Assemblies and the answer an infallible guide. It had distressed me greatly that, in some places I had seen and known of, extraneous matter was being introduced into the regular Bahá’í meetings until these meetings had lost their spiritual illumination, growing thereby into intellectual pastimes rather than into an humble and reverent attitude toward the *Words* of the Messengers. When I mentioned these things to the Master he looked up with that inimitable smile and said: “*Ask them where in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh they find these things.*”

The answer was so sweet, so courteous and so final that I leave it with the friends to ponder upon, hoping that it may bind us more and more closely together in pursuance of the Light which is to be found only in the pure teachings.

Faithfully yours in the service of the Centre of the Covenant of God.

Nellie S. French.

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:101]

Happiness from the Bahá’í viewpoint

Martha Root

¹ *Star of the West*, XIII:1, p. 8.

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The Bahá'í Cause now encircling the world is a movement for unity of religions, universal peace and a universal language. Its founders, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have brought to humanity a message which transforms for its followers this earth world into a spiritual Rose-garden.

To present to you some of their thoughts on happiness is the purpose of this compilation of quotations. Asked the ultimate goal of a human life 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied that it assuredly was not to eat, nor to sleep, nor to dress, nor to repose on the couch of negligence. Rather it is to find one's way to eternity and understand the divine signs; to receive wisdom from the Lord of Lords and to move steadily forward like a great sea.

Speaking with a group of friends he said: "To see the joy of divine gladness on your faces is the cause of my happiness for when I see you happy, I am happy also. The divine messengers come to bring joy to this earth, for this is the planet of tribulation and torment and the mission of the great masters is to turn men away from these anxieties and to infuse life with infinite joy.

"When the divine message is understood all troubles will vanish. Shadows disappear when the universal lamp is lighted, for whosoever becomes illumined thereby no longer knows grief. He realizes that his stay on this planet is temporary and that life is eternal. When once he has found reality he will no longer retreat into darkness.

"Reflect on the tribulations the divine messengers endure in each age—exile, prison, the cross, decapitation; yet they ever remain tranquil.

"Behold the apostles of Christ! They had many trials. The friends of Bahá'u'lláh in Persia have undergone unspeakable calamities. Their possessions were seized and destroyed, their children captured, their lives sacrificed; yet at the hour of martyrdom they danced with joy, for they were completely detached from the life of this world. Trials have never prevented men from knowing the happiness of the beyond. Nay, rather, this is the path." [XIII:5:102]

"The world needs more happiness and illumination. The star of happiness is in every heart, we must remove the clouds so that it may twinkle radiantly. Happiness is an eternal condition. When it is once established, man will ascend to the supreme heights of bliss. A truly happy man will not be subject to the shifting eventualities of time. Like unto an eternal king he will sit upon the throne of fixed realities. He will be impervious to outward, changing circumstances, and through his deeds and actions impart happiness to others. A Bahá'í must be happy, for the blessings of God are bestowed upon him.

"Every soul must strive to impart to mankind that joy and happiness the nature of which is permanent."

"This is the day of happiness. In no time of any manifestation was there the cause for happiness as now. A happy state brings special blessings. When the mind is depressed the blessings are not received."

"Laugh and talk, don't lament and talk. Laugh and speak."

"Laughter is caused by the slackening or relaxation of the nerves. It is an ideal condition and not physical. Laughter is the visible effect of an invisible cause. For example, happiness and misery are super-sensuous phenomena. One cannot hear them with his ears or touch them with his hands. Happiness is a spiritual state. But happiness is caused either by looking at a beautiful picture, or witnessing a delectable panorama, or associating with the person

whom you love, or listening to a good voice, or solving an intellectual problem. All these are the motives of happiness, but the real cause is spiritual.”

“What is necessary is divine joy. Divine happiness is the speaker of the heart. ... The soul of man must be happy no matter where he is. One must attain to that condition of inward beatitude and peace; then outward circumstances will not alter his spiritual calmness and joyfulness.”

From 1868 to 1908 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a prisoner in ‘Akká, Palestine. His teachings of universal peace and brotherhood were too far in advance of his time. But as he said, “Every morning when I awoke I praised God there was another day to serve Him in His prison. Every night I thanked Him that He had permitted me to serve His Kingdom one more day in His prison. I was in a Turkish prison forty years but every day was a day of perfect joy.”

“My happiness,” he said, “comes from the Kingdom of Abhá! My joy is from the Delectable Paradise! My health is gained through the rays of the sun of Reality. My spirituality descends from the world of lights. My enkindlement is obtained from the Fire of the Love of God. My attraction is vouchsafed from the mainspring of all truths. My life is maintained through the fraternization of all mankind, the progress of the Cause of God and the unity of the friends.”

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:101]

A fortune that bestows eternal happiness

Knowledge, purity of thought and love

Talks given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on Mount Carmel to a group of college students during their summer vacation. Recorded and translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

“True happiness is found in purity of thought. Whenever I look into your radiant faces I am made most happy because your thoughts are pure. You must live in such a manner that whenever I think of you I may be made joyous; whenever I behold your shining countenances I may become happy; whenever I hear good news of you my heart may be filled with delight. [XIII:5:103]

“Man must so live that he may become beloved in the sight of God, beloved in the estimation of the righteous ones and beloved and praised by the people. When he reaches this station the feast of eternal happiness is spread before him. His heart is serene and composed because he finds himself accepted at the threshold of His Highness, the One. His soul is in the utmost felicity and bliss even if he be surrounded by mountains of tests and difficulties. He will be like unto a sea on the surface of which one may see huge white waves, but in its deeps it is calm, unruffled and undisturbed. If he trusts his happiness to worldly objects and fluctuating conditions he is doomed to disappointment. Should he gain a fortune and anchor his happiness to that he may hypnotize himself into a state of so-called joy for a few days, and then that very fortune will become a mill-stone around his neck, the cause of his worry and melancholy.

“But if he lives in accordance with the good-pleasure of the Lord he will be favoured at the court of the Almighty. He will be drawn nigh unto the throne of Majesty. He will be respected by all mankind and loved and honoured by the believers. This fortune bestows eternal happiness. The tree of this fortune is ever green. The autumnal wind does not sear its leaves nor does the frost of winter rob it of its perennial freshness. This is a happiness which is not followed by any misery but is always a source of gratefulness and blessedness. The most great, peerless gift of God to the world of humanity is happiness born of love—they are the

twin sisters of the superman; one is the complement of the other. Everything that contributes to the sum total of this human happiness is a gift on the part of God, and that thing which does not add to the aggregate of this ideal felicity must be, little by little or all at once eliminated.

“Therefore, it becomes self-evident that the first bestowal to the world of humanity is happiness, that kind of happiness which is unalterable and ideal. If, by happiness physical enjoyment of material things is meant then the ferocious wolf is made happy because he kills the innocent lamb and satisfies his hunger for a few hours. This is not happiness. Happiness is a psychological condition created in brain, mind and heart, the effect of which works out from the centre to the circumference. For example, after many days and nights of reflection the philosopher unravels a seemingly unsolvable problem. As the result, a wave of supreme happiness surges through his being. The philanthropist comes to the assistance of thousands of half-starved, half-clothed, afflicted people of a nation. In his deed he wins much contentment. An engineer spans a large river with a suspension or cantilever bridge, or an architect makes the design of an edifice. Each finds true enjoyment in his work.

“It is related that Náşirí Ṭúsí was well versed in the science of astronomy. Many nights he walked on the roof of his house watching the stars. Whenever he happened to discover the true position of a planet or to locate the place of a constellation he became so enraptured with the joy of a new idea that he would get up and dance and sing, saying: ‘Where are the kings? Where are the monarchs of the earth? What is true felicity? Let them come and see what real happiness means, what ideal bliss really is.’

“It is for this reason that Bahá’u’lláh in all his Tablets has made it incumbent upon all to study sciences and arts, encouraging everyone in the acquirement of learning and a liberal education for the eternal happiness of mankind lies in these (things).

“Praise be to God that for the present you are all well and happy! I have met you and associated with you this hour. You are living on the slope of Mount Carmel, are near to the Holy Tomb of the Báb, inhaling the fragrance of its rose garden, are looking at the unique [XIII:5:104] panorama and are enjoying the gifts of heaven. This is the ultimate hope of the lovers of truth, to be in the neighbourhood of the Most Eminent Mercy!”

In the evening there was a large meeting. When the Master entered the room he looked over the bright faces of the Bahá’í students and exclaimed with delighted heart:

“God be praised! How wonderful are these students! I am looking forward with great hope to their future. In reality they are beneath the shade of the Blessed Perfection and they are being animated with the spirit of the Holy Land. For this reason they are superior to many other students. Their mettle will become known in the future. They are now in the process of refining; when they come out of the crucible their brightness will become manifest. The word of God is the refining which will polish them, suffering them to become as tested gold.

“Every single assured and firm believer will consider himself the servant of all the friends of God, nay, rather, the servant of the world of humanity. The honour of man depends upon this. The everlasting glory of mankind lies in this. For this reason his holiness Christ says: ‘The last shall be first; the least among you in the Kingdom is the greatest.’ Whosoever desires to walk in the path of the Kingdom, so that he may reach the court of the Almighty, he must be a true servant. The path of God cannot be compared with the paths of men. The humbler man is in the path of God the more exalted is he; the greater his meekness and submissiveness the more beloved is he; the more he is surrounded with tests and trials the vaster the tranquillity and composure of his spirit. Nay, rather, in the path of God humility is honour, trouble is rest, affliction is bestowal, poverty is wealth, indigence is sovereignty and lowliness is nobility. Truly, I say, whosoever is the real servant of the believers of God is their assistant and helper.

We must all walk in this divine path.”

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:104]

The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

Horace Holley

As taught us all in the schools, literature tends to become either a classification according to its form—the novel, drama, essay and poem—or according to its historical continuity. Both methods externalize the reality of literature away from our personal experience. We are inclined to know the author by his work rather than the work by its author. We are inclined even to glorify the work at the expense of the creator from whom it came. The student unconsciously begins to conceive the poem, say, as being the poet refined to the utmost degree, the poet translated temporarily and accidentally to a higher condition, much as though the man were to his own production just as the oyster is to its pearl. Since the poem exists above and beyond our own capacity, we feel that it exists above and beyond the human character of the poet. But any person who has ever actually felt the creative impulse within his own consciousness realizes that the work produced, even at its best, renders only a fraction of the significance that impulse contained. During creation, the author feels an infinite resource opened within him, a resource which the work created never satisfactorily records. The work itself, then, represents merely the author's power of responding to the impulse, not the capacity of the impulse itself. In other words, literature is the record of what the infinite impulse has been able to effect in and through certain limited lives. [XIII:5:105]

This distinction between creative impulse and sensitive instrument is vital. Every literary work is like a telescope which can be held up to the eye at either end. According as we experience literature through the limitations of minds to respond, or the unlimited capacity and appeal of the creative impulse itself, we are led to believe that writing, like a tower, can never rise above a certain height, or we believe that, like a fine musical instrument, its power grows forever with the touch of the hand by which it is played.

It is actually as though the individuals capable of producing literature were themselves each one a definite number of notes on the entire, indefinite scale of the instrument. Authors differ vastly as to what notes sound through their work, and what notes remain silent. In one we have aesthetic sensitiveness without moral discrimination; in another able logic without feeling of beauty. The whole of literature is far from being literature as a whole. The whole of literature, historically, is nothing more than a long series of limited parts, and literature as a whole can no more be imagined from grouping together these parts than could a sound man be imagined by one who knew only different forms of disease.

But to externalize literature is to miss even the ability to perceive this fact. It is to miss even the true humility characteristic of the creator, by which the creator tends to belittle poems even while glorifying poetry. The creative mind is well aware that if somehow the silent notes could be made to sound, all that literature has done in the past would seem by comparison nothing. He is impatient of his own work, knowing that its excellence is merely the power of commanding a small field. But without knowing what literature is in its essence, our reading continually goes astray. We travel the road of experience, but we travel backward. We scale the creative power by what has actually been created, rather than what has been created by the creative power; which is to measure the heavens by the highest visible hill.

Thus it seems to most students that Shakespeare is and must be supreme in literature for all time. Shakespeare, it seems, sounded all the *available* notes on the keyboard of life. One by one he brings every type of man and woman upon the stage, where one by one their inmost secrets are exquisitely, completely told. The gesture of good and evil, power and weakness

alike he rendered in all its deepest significance.

But with the decay of personal experience, the very power of estimating values passes away. We expect nothing *beyond* Shakespeare, because we stand within the superficial completeness of the work and not within the profound incompleteness of the man. We do not even follow Shakespeare himself to his own consummation, his own self-estimation as a mind transcended by power unencompassed on every hand. But I recall that his old age, in the person of Prospero, deliberately broke the wand by which all those dear enchantments had been raised. Even about this mind the darkness fell. Master of motives within the range of his own experience, Shakespeare at last paid reverent homage to motives outside its ken. Breaking the magician's wand seems, to the lesser mind, merely as though the poet withdrew from poetry in the weakness of old age; but to the mind capable of standing beside Shakespeare himself the broken wand signifies nothing less than his recognition that all human drama had begun to crumble away with the perception of a greater and a beyond. Triumph is the glory of the lesser mind; humility is the glory of the great. Shakespeare's old age cannot be taken as the guttered candle, the empty lamp—it was the opening of a weary student's window at dawn, when the rising sun shames the candle to his own gladdened eyes. Shakespeare knew [XIII:5:146] within himself the silent notes, and where he could not invoke masterful music he left the instrument to less sensitive hands.

Not in quantity of work, not even in what the world calls quality, therefore, does the essence of literature lie. Shakespeare surpassed other men merely by combining in himself certain qualities other men share among themselves. There is no one element in Shakespeare not manifested since his time by many poets. He possessed no notes beyond our capacity severally to possess. But where all minds are dumb, he is dumb. What all men seek, he also sought, with an inquiry more poignant, more insistently phrased. The essence of literature consists in its power to reveal. Shakespeare's revelation is the perplexity of human life when actuated by motives resident in the personal, the outer layer of thought.

So much it is desirable to say by way of approach to the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. By minds limited to the customary closed circle of experience, these writings can be read over and over without understanding. The supreme benefit of reading them, indeed, is to learn merely *how* they are to be read. A lifetime might well be spent pondering them word by word, if real understanding came pure and full at the end. For in Bahá'u'lláh we have a mind whose response to the infinite creative impulse begins precisely where the "literary" effort stops. *Apparently*, Bahá'u'lláh has not that masterful intimacy with "life" itself for the revelation of a new dominion over the generations. The truth is, however, that Bahá'u'lláh taking "life" for granted, stands outside "life" itself for the revelation of a new motive. He does not sound the Shakespearian notes, because he sounds the notes that have been silent in us all. No comparison between Bahá'u'lláh and other writers is possible. The closest similarity to Bahá'u'lláh's writings are the utterances of Jesus. By those who love them Jesus' utterances are not comparable with literary productions. They are absorbed into the yearning spirit as from a source deeply hidden within, that the spirit may be re-actuated and transformed.

But there is a subtle distinction even here. Jesus' message was that to the infinite power surrounding our consciousness an infinite response can be made. Jesus made himself the *Way* for human experience to travel—every painful furlong of the *Way*, from the birth of the spiritual child into the indifferent flesh to the resurrection of the spiritual man at the hands of the flesh furious at its own threatened subordination. Thus the words of Jesus are the manifestation of the Christ—the power of men to respond infinitely to the infinite power of God. But Bahá'u'lláh's message does not *repeat* the message of Christ—it *completes* that message. Whereas Christ planted his words as seeds within the soul, Bahá'u'lláh's writing fertilizes those seeds as by the shining of the sun in spring. He manifests the surrounding, controlling Infinite of universal spirit just as Christ manifested the response on the part of

consciousness to that Infinite control. Christ was Religion working up to its source through the painful experience of reluctant humanity; Bahá'u'lláh is Religion self-subsistent, unchanging, the beginning as well as the end of the Way.

Thus in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh there is an influence not dwelling elsewhere in literature or philosophy. That influence permeates and proceeds from a literary and philosophic form, but the power of the influence well-nigh shatters the cup of speech. Here is Truth, in distinction to facts; Reality in distinction to logic; immovable Power in distinction to emotion. Our categories and our systems fail to contain this writing, as engineers would fail to dam the sea. Our critical faculties even prevent us from approaching its outpouring effect, for its very purpose is to create [XIII:5:107] new faculties as standards in the mind. It is a Mystery, but not secretive; a Revelation, but not argumentative; Love, but not enticement. In numberless passages the flame burns visibly forth and the wine intoxicates. It is a spiritual geography for the searching mind, a home for the heart outworn. But alas, even in the abundance of mid-spring, the *dead* tree stands unmoved.

“Revelation is a fire from which proceed two effects: It creates the flame of love within the faithful, but produces the cold of heedlessness within those that hate.”

“The proof of the sun is its light which shines forth encompassing the world; and the evidence of the shower is the bounty renewing the earth at its fall.”

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:107]

The sun of reality becomes truly manifest with the passing of the cloud of the body

A tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the great scholar, Abu'l-Faḍl.

When in 1892 Bahá'u'lláh after fifty years of glorious teaching in Persia, in Baghdád, in the most great prison of 'Akká, passed into the unseen world his disciples were prostrate, even the saintly Abu'l-Faḍl. It seemed as if nothing could console them. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote twice to Abu'l-Faḍl but he was so grief stricken that he sent no answer. The spiritual radiance reflected from the mirror of Bahá'u'lláh's earthly temple was so life-giving even Abu'l-Faḍl was desolate when the physical mirror was broken. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote him the following marvellous tablet. It has a deep significance for all his friends today. Editor.

O thou father, mother and brother of Faḍá'il¹ (virtues)!

It has been a long time since the fragrance of significances from the rose-gardens of the heart of that fountainhead of knowledge has reached the nostrils of the longing ones or the flame of the heat of the vibrations of yearning have reached the meadows of the hearts of the true friends. Although at the commencement of the burning anguish caused by the separation of the Beloved of the Horizons (Bahá'u'lláh), a letter was sent, yet the acknowledgement of its receipt has not appeared, nor has the sign of acceptance been made manifest. It is evident that this distress and depression are due to the severity of the grief for the separation of the Beloved of the Horizons and this inactivity is due to the effect of the great calamity. But the lights of the Sun of Reality have no setting, nor have the waves of the great sea any quiet or calm. The bounties of the Abhá, the most glorious Kingdom are uninterrupted and the splendours of the Empyrean heaven are permanent. The clouds of the April of bestowals are overflowing and the artery of the love of God is pulsating in the body of the world. The confirmations of the most glorious, Abhá companion are incessant and the grace of his holiness the Most High is continuous. Though that most luminous Sun has set in the lower horizon, which is the horizon of beings, yet it has risen and shone forth from the highest

¹ Faḍíla[h or t], pl. faḍá'il.

horizon. Though, until the present time, the eyes of mankind on account of veils have been deprived, blinded and covered, now that veil which in every dispensation and age has been the cause of denial is being removed. For in all dispensations when the Manifestation of His Oneness ap- [XIII:5:108] peared from the horizon of beings the greatest excuse of the people was this: they said, "Thou art only a human being like us." ... "He is only a human being like you." In short, they considered the appearance of those Manifestations of Oneness the cause of falsehood and ground for rejection. But after the ascension (of the Manifestation) they became believers and assured, for then they did not regard the physical, human person; therefore, they became aware of the power, evidences and proofs of God. They became the manifestation of, "Thy sight today is iron-sight."

Thus, should you kindly reflect upon this it would become evident that in all ages the ascendancy of the Word of God has been after the ascension of the Dawning Points of Lights to the supreme horizon. For the people, naturally, are more inclined and more attracted to believe in the invisible. In all times, in the day of the Manifestation they rejected him, evinced pride, found excuses, and in the abode of superstitions they built their nests. When they looked upon Him as a person who had appeared in a human temple and physically resembled them they became veiled from the divine bounty.

When the eyes of Satan looked upon the body of dust and the earthly talisman of his holiness Adam he became deprived of sight and blind to that boundless treasure which is the greatest bestowal of God and the noblest human characteristic. "Thou hast created me from fire and thou hast created him (Adam) from clay," he said. Now, the purpose is this, that in the *Book of Íqán* (Bahá'u'lláh) considered the human temple as a cloud and the Divine Reality as the sun;—"and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." He interpreted and explained the verse from the Gospel in the foregoing manner.

Therefore, now is the time to become ablaze and aflame. This is the hour of proclamation and attraction. This is the hour for you, like unto the sea, to be surging; like unto the clouds, to be flashing with lightning; like unto the dove of the garden of faithfulness to break forth into songs and melodies; like unto the birds of the heaven of eternity to be ever singing and warbling.

O, ye nightingales of the rose-garden of guidance! O, ye messengers¹ of the home of bounty! It is the time of rejoicing and acclamation. It is the hour of songs and anthems. Sit ye not with hearts distressed and sleep ye not with hearts broken. Soar ye to the apex of sublimity. Start ye singing in the rose-garden of guidance. Seek ye the abode of the Merciful and the melodies of the rose-garden of His Holiness, the Beneficent.

If in this Divine spring-time ye do not sing in what season will ye sing and become familiar and well-acquainted with the roses of significances?

O thou Abu'l-Faḍl. Where is the blaze of the fire of thy tree? Where is the effulgence of the light of thy love? Where are the waves of thy knowledge? Where is the breeze of the rose-garden of thy assurance? Where are thy melodies which cheer the ears? Where are thy fragrances which perfume the nostrils of the people of the world? Where is the attraction of thy heart? Where is the expansion (dilation) of thy breast? Where are the glad-tidings of thy spirit? Where is the glow of thy fire and where is the flame of thy torch? Forsake inactivity even though in these days inertness from the graveness of anxieties is commended and praised. Then come out from the corner of oblivion; seek the summit of acceptance; soar in this Abhá, most glorious space; enter into the rose-garden of the Cause of God by thy arising to diffuse the [XIII:5:109] fragrances of His sanctity and to elevate His word with such rising that the pillars of polytheism will totter, the hearts heedless to the Lord of Lords will tremble, the

¹ Literally "lapwings" or Messengers of Solomon.

centres of knowledge will be uplifted, the standards of assurance will be spread abroad, the banners of explanation will wave and the sails of life will be hoisted in the ark of safety on the sea of creation.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Diyá’ M. Baghdádí.

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:109]

Meditation and its effect upon conduct

Mary Hanford Ford

The human being is a creature who is ordinarily governed by impulses which rise within him comparatively unwatched and unguarded. If he feels happy or melancholy, angry or patient, his action reflects the conditions of his being, and if one reproach him for faults which might disappear with a little self-control he is apt to reply—“Well, I am made that way, and I can’t help it.”

He is only conscious of the physical impulse which prompts a certain nervous expression and he has not yet learned that there are two of him and that if he would become acquainted with his greater self, the soul or reality, life might be very different, and the disagreeable elements of his temperamental man could easily disappear.

There is a wave of psychological study passing over the world which has many excellent results and which is causing many persons who never gave much thought previously to the existence of the “inner man” to perceive something of this interesting individual, who presently becomes vastly more important as an element of personality than is indicated by that mysterious and baffling term, “the subconscious”. The subconscious is in fact the true self, the soul, or as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá often calls it, the reality.

There is no part of his wonderful teaching which is more clear and convincing than that relating to the soul in its contact with life, the body, and God. As we follow it we realize that the soul is the avenue through which we know God and receive the Holy Spirit, that it is always a distinct entity becoming more luminous and powerful as we turn to God and control the animal man in us. It often surrounds us like an aureole in our earlier stages of development, but as we progress, and reflect its light, it leaves us free even in our waking hours and carries on its own activity. The subconscious, in other words, is the true thinker and revealer in us, through whom words become real prayer, and impulse becomes intuition and veritable guidance.

But how is this possible? We ask anxiously, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s reply is, through prayer, meditation and deeds, because without the deeds which express the results of meditation and prayer these remain only delightful experiences of the soul, and do not transform life. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says in the great address on meditation in the Paris Talks—the one who cannot meditate is still in the animal kingdom!

Many persons are not aware of the difference between concentration and meditation, which is very positive. Through concentration we enter the psychic or mental world, we hypnotize, we develop the personal will. But in meditation we enter the Abhá kingdom by temporarily eliminating the personal will. In this state we penetrate the consciousness of the reality, and can receive the divine commands through the Holy [XIII:5:110] Spirit, and if we are strong enough to obey the commands we receive our impulses are overcome, we obtain eternal life and become rational beings instead of merely animals who walk erect.

Many believers are only mental believers. They have never taken time to abstract themselves from the turmoil of the outer life and hear the “still, small voice” which is only audible to the inner ear. Bahá’u’lláh says: “We speak one word and by it we intend one and

seventy meanings—each one of them we can explain.”

These one and seventy meanings are not simply shades of mental and spiritual interpretation but often facts of life which we can only understand through prayer and self-control. The individual who is no longer capable of anger, envy, ambition or revenge, who does not feel such impulses, who is made ill by indulgence in gossip and scandal, and therefore no longer tolerates them has entered the spiritual path and is beginning to know eternal life.

These are some of the results of real meditation, when it is sought as a means of purifying the outer man, not merely as a spiritual pleasure and intoxication. The latter is delightful but not educating, and people who form the habit of meditation without deeds sometimes fall into serious nervous trouble. Meditation lights a fire within us which demands fuel, the fuel of growth and thoughtful activity, and if we refuse to feed it with these, it is liable to burn up its own oven! And this, of course, is not particularly agreeable or advantageous for the oven. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says: “The test of existence is motion. An object which has in itself the power of motion lives; if motion is withheld growth ceases. That is mortality. ... If the reality of man is not confirmed by the divine power there is no doubt whatsoever but that it will stop along the path of human progress, and after its stop there will be a fall.”

The confirmation of this divine power comes to us through meditation and its resultant deeds. And one sees the great advance daily among those who are seeking spiritual truth. Sight comes into the eyes, happiness to the heart, and though outward circumstances may not be what one desires, the light and happiness are not diminished. Such light and such happiness are from within and are not dependent upon exterior happenings.

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:113]

Can we change human nature?¹

A Bahá’í conversion.

All programmes for world peace, for economic right and justice depend for their execution upon the creation of a new heart in our race of human beings, “the establishment of the Kingdom of God first in the hearts of men and then upon earth.” To educate this new humanity is the supreme need of the century. Because Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are able to train that new type of men and women by the divine elixir of their life and teachings they have made this century radiant with the hope of a new world-society in which dwelleth righteousness.

An instance of this power is recorded by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab when he was living at Haifa. It is an account of the conversion of a Russian highwayman who visited ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Holy Land in 1914. “Before he accepted this revelation he was well-known in all those parts as a dangerous character whose very name struck terror to the heart of the members of the community. It may be an exaggeration, but I have heard from several persons that, in his former whirlwind desperado life he killed about two hundred people. Physically he is a giant, tall and powerfully built. Well, when this man embraced the Bahá’í Cause and learned of its lofty and spiritual principles a most miracu- [XIII:5:114] lous transformation occurred in his life. It was more than miraculous. We have no word for it in the dictionary. Whereas formerly he was ferocious, he became meek. He was a wolf; now he became more gentle than a lamb. He was a satan; he became a radiant angel. He walked among the people as a standing miracle. They looked at him, rubbed their eyes, and could not believe. Mystery of mysteries! Wonder of wonders! What divine alchemy had changed the base metal of this man into pure gold!

¹ Extract from Editorial.

“By and by they came around and asked the reason—not from him, but from others. He did not have to open his mouth to teach the Cause. This singular and instantaneous transformation of his character was the greatest act of teaching. Then all of a sudden it dawned upon the minds of many citizens of the town what a truly marvellous miracle had transpired in their midst. They became Bahá’ís, and today are the most wonderful body of true, noble Bahá’ís in all Russia. ... Let the agnostics and materialists who deny the religion of God and negate the good it has rendered study the psychology of this case!”

Speaking of such spiritual rebirth, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said: “Ordinarily a moral teacher strives day and night until a person abandons one of his many evil attributes. But as soon as the guidance of God and the faith of God dawn from the horizon of a heart that person is a changed man. All his evil characteristics are transformed into praise-worthy attributes. Whereas formerly he was a coward, he becomes courageous. Whereas before he was debased, he becomes sanctified and holy. Even in his intelligence, his knowledge, his sagacity and his mentality he is a different man.”

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:116]

A visit to Bahjí by the way of the sea

“The spell of the Holy Land.”

Nellie S. French

As I sit at my desk wondering which of the deep and lasting impressions of our visit to the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, during the days of the Ridván in May 1921, I should commit to paper for the good pleasure of the friends, I am so insistently drawn to the incidents of the journey and the arrival in the presence of the Master, that I must begin with those at least, and let the rest take care of itself. Not a thousandth part of what is really implanted and constantly growing in my mind and heart could possibly find expression, for there are no words with which to make those impressions clear to the reader, nor indeed was I myself conscious of all that I was imbibing, nor of the doors of knowledge which were being opened before my face at the time.

Five days of patient waiting in Haifa, for the time when we might go had given us a beautiful insight into the loving service and devotion of the friends there, and were preparation for the crowning event of our pilgrimage. We took the little train at about five-thirty on Friday afternoon, occupying a railway carriage of the most primitive type in company with what might have been a party of labouring “commuters” returning to ‘Akká for the night. The train travelled slowly, but as it ran along the very edge of the Mediterranean the cool sea breeze soon rose, to the discomfort of the other travellers, and one by one the wooden shutters of the car were raised, entirely shutting out all light and air and the fresh sweet breeze of the sea.

We seemed not to be of special interest to our travelling companions, though I confess I was intensely interested in them, to know what they knew of the wonderful story of the ages which had been, and was being, enacted in their very midst, and I would have given much to know the language of the country. We reached the station of ‘Akká, a short distance from the city walls, just as the sun was sending its last horizontal rays across the sea, bathing the valley of “Achor” in its last crimson rays. Starting on foot toward Bahjí, where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was sojourning, in the little house adjoining the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, we left the calm blue sea beating its ceaseless rhythm on the sandy beach behind us, and turned our faces toward the plain. Never shall I forget the sight which lay before us! A light shower had fallen, leaving everything fresh and green, with that indescribable fragrance which only a shower in a dry land can produce. Over the Lebanon mountains there lay the last glow of the sunset and far away in the distance here and there curls of smoke rose to indicate some little hamlet gathering its people for the evening meal. All was still and a peace reigned quite unbroken save for the sound of the waves which grew fainter and fainter as we progressed. Then out of

the twilight came little groups of pilgrims, Persians for the most part, who had travelled for weeks to spend a few hours in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! They were very quiet, walking with the even, slow gait of those eastern peoples: each carrying a small bundle of belongings. They seemed not even to be conversing as we approached them, but when we were near they stopped, and I saw on the faces of those men a joy not of this world, as they greeted us in the name of God, and seemed to impart to us without words the sense of fellowship and sympathy.

Our path led further and further into the country, past the distant walls of the prison town, over the battlefield of the ages. It was rather a rough road in places, and the hour and the still of the night coming down kept each one wrapt in his own thoughts. Finally in the distance there appeared a light; it seemed [XIII:5:117] a long way off, for we were forced to go slowly and to pick our way, but night had entirely closed in when we came to a stop before the low doorway of a little one-story house. One of the young men, secretary of the Master, came out to meet and greet us, and for a few tense moments we were kept waiting in the hall of the house before we were told that we might enter the Master's room.

How strange it seems to be trying to express the sensations of those moments! I cannot say what was most deeply impressed on me at the time for everything was so new and I was so utterly unprepared for all that I was to see, even though I had listened to many accounts of visits of pilgrims before it became my own blessing to go. 'Abdu'l-Bahá rose as we entered the room and stretching out his hands he bade us welcome and seated us beside him quite as if we had always been known to him, removing for us once and for all time the feeling of diffidence which was only natural when stepping into that majestic presence. Here indeed was majesty, but the surroundings were of the simplest that I had ever seen. Here was hospitality, a hospitality which might have been used toward persons of great distinction; and here was dignity, a dignity which is only born of heavenly knowledge and which walks with the Lord of men!

Each phase of the Master's manner sank deeply into my heart as each new impression was born within me, a new sense of how we should be to be worthy to deliver to the world the teachings of the Cause of God which he came to establish and to fulfil.

How small we seemed, how weak and immature, how unworthy and how fruitless! To have been ushered into that presence and to have gone empty-handed, to have been accepted of him, and to have had nothing to offer but our humble willingness! Oh the shame of it! And yet he welcomed us as if we had been deserving children returned for our reward!

As I think of the opportunities which he has made possible for us, of the example which he came to set for us, nothing, with the help of the Power of the Covenant, is impossible. I wonder how we can ever fall short of the greatest reverence of which humanity is capable, of the greatest delicacy for which all things of the Spirit call! It is time that we should be adorning ourselves with those attributes which will make worthy exponents of the Cause. Let these words of his be our constant inspiration and reminders:

"I desire for you distinction. The Bahá'ís must be distinguished from others of humanity. But this distinction must not depend upon wealth—that they should become more affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction that I desire; not scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I desire spiritual distinction; that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity; for unity and accord; for love and justice. In brief, you must become distinguished for all the virtues of the human world; for faithfulness and sincerity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness and steadfastness, for philanthropic deeds and service to the human world, for love toward every human being, for unity and accord with all people, for removing

prejudices and promoting international peace. Finally, you must become distinguished for heavenly illumination and acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction among you.”

This must not be of profession only, but by actually making these words part of our every day life. Upon us depends the greatest of all responsibilities. That we may be worthy!

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:118]

A beautiful message from the Holy Land

Rúhâ Khánum

The Bahá'í Community, Persian Colony,
Haifa, Palestine, Ridván 1922.

Dear sisters and brothers in the Cause of God,

At last I am pleased to be able to answer your very kind letters and to thank those friends, who sent messages of loving sympathy to us in the first days of our crushing sorrow.

Until now I have been broken down with grief, my heart was sore distressed, my eyes were overflowing with bitter tears; I could not collect my thoughts sufficiently, I had no power to write to those dear friends, who had sent such affectionate words of consolation to me in my overwhelming loss.

Now we can comfort our hearts with the assurance that, though our beloved Master is no longer in his mortal body, yet his eternal Spirit is present with us for evermore. Whilst here on earth his humanity was as a cloud, which hid his divine Spirit from us. That veiling cloud is now removed, and we feel the intensity of his spiritual Guidance.

As the Master said after the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh:

“The Light of the Sun of Truth will never set. The waves of the Sea of Truth will surge for all time. The divine rain from the Kingdom of Glory will never fail. Inspiration from the Realm of the Supreme will not cease for evermore.

“Life-giving showers are constantly flowing from the clouds of Mercy. Help is still being poured out from the Heavenly Land, and aid from the Supreme Lord is being given without ceasing. Though that Glorious Sun (Bahá'u'lláh) has set in the horizon of this world, it has risen in radiant splendour in the divine sky of celestial grandeur.

“The eyes of the people were veiled by his earthly body from seeing the Light of the Sun of Truth. ...

“As that veil has been withdrawn, it is now the time to proclaim the Word of God, to send forth the lightnings of the Spirit, to chant the melodies of Faithfulness in the Rose-Garden of God the Beloved.

“Oh Nightingales of the Garden of Virtue! Now is the day to sing the beautiful harmonies of Heaven!

“Let your heart be no longer troubled, neither sit idle in sorrow and mourning, but arise; wing your flight into the Celestial atmosphere, singing the triumphant hymns of holiness in the garden of Love, always with your heart fixed on that Divine Home of the Radiant Beloved, towards which we are all as pilgrims, making our Pilgrimage!

“In this day of the Spiritual Springtime if we do not arise in the glorious work of establishing the Unity of the Kingdom, at what season should we choose to begin? Verily now is the appointed time.”

These words apply equally to our days, when our hearts bear the burden of the agony of

parting with our Beloved Master.

Now my friends, I implore you, let us each and all stand together in a vast army of Light, steadfastly and loyally determined to vanquish the Powers of Darkness on the pitiful battlefield of the World.

Let us remember the disciples of His Holiness the Lord Christ—how after his Ascension they, though few in number, stood faithfully together, united in [XIII:5:119] soul and heart and mind, striving to accomplish that work, for which their Lord had suffered.

Thanks be unto God, that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has left many friends, who are ready to give up all their days, their comfort and earthly happiness, to spread the teachings of the Bahá’í Cause, which, when known and understood by the noble and pure-minded, will change the heart of the world.

We have been consoled and comforted by the visits of many dear friends from all parts of the world. They have been our great support in these sorrowful days. We are very glad to have one of these friends, Lady Blomfield, still with us. She accompanied our beloved Shoghi Effendi and his sister when they returned from England. She was just like a very kind mother to them in the hour of their deepest sorrow; and ever since she has been here, she has been occupied with many useful works, connected with various matters, necessary to the good of the Cause. We are all extremely sorry that she is leaving us in the immediate future, to continue her work in Europe on her return journey to London.

I am sure we shall achieve much more in these days, than in the earth life of the Master, because the agony of the parting has so softened our hearts, that our one aim and desire is to give joy to his blessed Spirit.

When the Shepherd is gone, the sheep must stand closer together to protect each other from the attacks of wolves.

Therefore let us not be depressed. I know that if we turn our whole hearts to God, we shall surely hear the music of the voice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá singing therein. Listen in the night season, we shall hear him say: “I am with you, fear not, neither be cast down by sorrow!”

Hearken at morn: He is saying: “Arise for the service of the Cause of God, and the spreading of His Truth.”

Listen at noontide, you will hear him say: “Faint not, though the flame of your sorrow be burning hot, for soon you shall be refreshed by the cooling breeze of God’s Mercy.”

Listen at twilight—his voice is saying: “Be happy, rest and trust in me, for I love you, and I will never leave you nor forsake you, my children. Be united! Be patient! Be hopeful, be faithful!”

I am sure our Beloved desires for us all, joy, happiness of heart and an abundant baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore let us prepare our souls to receive this great and glorious Gift in these, our wonderful days—which the Prophets and Saints in past ages longed to see! *They* were deprived of this blessing, to which *we* have attained!

I am thankful to say that we have glad tidings from Persia, where the friends are arising in renewed strength and unity to serve the Cause with faithfulness and loyalty.

It is ever thus, when our Beloved passes from earth into the wider world, those, whose sorrow is overwhelming, find relief in striving to accomplish all he would wish to have done.

I am glad to say that our dear Protector of the Cause, Shoghi Effendi, is now resting from the work which was so immense. He felt it necessary to go into retreat, in order to pray, and

concentrate and meditate on the glorious and difficult task entrusted to him, and to gain the strength needed for its fulfilment.

Shoghi Effendi is precious to all the Bahá'í friends, for he is our leader, bequeathed to us by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. [XIII:5:120]

Concerning him a Persian friend has quoted: "When the rose has faded and its garden is destroyed how shall we inhale its fragrance? Nowhere, but from the attar which is its essence!"

I conclude my letter by asking all the dear friends to pray for the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that they may receive power to transmute the agony of the parting into determination to help Shoghi Effendi in his work, for indeed we all miss the Master more and more every day! He was all the world to us, our spiritual and our earthly father, our comfort, our hope, our companion and our guide in all the affairs of our daily life.

The only joy we have is when, from all countries we hear the good news of the unity of the dear friends and the growth of the Divine Cause.

The Greatest Holy Leaf, my mother and my sisters join me in love and Bahá'í greeting to you all, and in assuring you that we always pray at the Holy Shrines for the dear friends, that they may be assisted and strengthened in the path of Servitude so that they may accomplish a great work in the spreading of the Divine Cause in this Day, for "Now is the appointed time".

Ever your loving friend and spiritual sister in the service of the Cause of God.

(Signed) Rúhá.

XIII:5, August 1922 [XIII:5:121]

Miss Genevieve Coy

A record of spiritual experience.¹

...

Miss Coy's experience illustrates the appeal of the Bahá'í teachings to the highly trained university scientist. 'Abdu'l-Bahá so perfectly unites science and religion that the most sceptical modern scholar is won by his heavenly logic and his creative words. Miss Coy first heard of the Bahá'í movement while teaching and studying in one of our great American universities. As a specialist in psychology she thought how delightful it would be to collect material on the psychology of the spiritual transformations effected by the Bahá'í teachings. With this critical spirit of the scientific investigator she began to question the Bahá'ís as to their inner experiences and to read the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'u'lláh which they said were the fountain source of that newness of life which she saw shining so brightly in their lives and faces. The result of this investigation she records in the following bit of spiritual autobiography which she wrote at the request of the present writer:

"For five years before I heard of the [XIII:5:122] Bahá'í movement my whole attitude toward life had been sceptical and materialistic. I thought that I had absolutely no religious faith left in me. The very words, 'God', 'spirit', 'faith', came to have an utterly disagreeable connotation to me. I lost my faith in everything and everyone. The moral standards of my early youth simply vanished, and I was left with no standards of living, save a strangely unavoidable devotion to my work. For the rest—dying seemed better than living; life looked utterly black to me, and I would gladly have disappeared from existence.

"And yet, down under all that black despair there was the faintest suggestion of some voice of hope that would not be utterly silenced by my own selfishness. But it was too faint to help

¹ An extract.

much. And then, when it seemed to me that I had come to the end of the road, and that there was only darkness ahead—then the light came! I heard the story of the lives of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I learned how these teachers had helped ordinary men and women to live beautifully and joyfully, and I was filled with an intense desire to know more of how they would help me to *live* the things I had *dreamed* of doing. All during the following days and nights those two great names rang in my ears, and a glory, as of a new dawn, seemed to fill my heart wherever I went. I read the books they had written. I talked with men and women who had come to love them; and then, like a gift from an unseen hand, came the realization that this glorious new vision was for me, as well as for the others.

“Now I know that there is no true living except as one lives ‘in God, and for God’. Nothing is of any importance save to do God’s will, as it is revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. And the most wonderful thing of all is that through reading and meditation and prayer power comes to one really to make one’s life over, so that one may live joyfully, in service to one’s brothers.

“My attitude toward life has been so changed that I could not possibly go back to the old standards. I know that I am in God’s hands and that no real harm can ever reach me. I know that He will help me to serve Him and His children. I know that I have come into my Father’s home, and that henceforth I must strive to live as one of the children of the Most Glorious. Because of this, the two prayers that I pray most earnestly are these: ‘Strengthen me to serve Thy beloved and to help those who need Thee’, and ‘May my service be acceptable to Thee, and my actions a praise to Thee’.”

Albert Vail.

XII:6, September 1922 [XIII:6:131]

The need of a universal programme

“Universality is of God,” writes ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, “and all limitations are earthly.”

“We know in part and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come that which is in part shall be done away.”

All our human thinking and social programmes, our prescriptions for the world’s illnesses have been partial, fragmentary. Peace conferences find no effective solution. Prejudice, strikes, preparations for war continue to grow and spread. How can civilization be saved?

A universal society of nations with a universal limitation of armaments is a remedy. A universal language is another. But the illness of the world is too serious to be cured by any one remedy. “The world of humanity,” says ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, “will not be transformed into the heavenly paradise through the promotion of one, single principle. Every progressive principle which is the cause of the advancement of the world of humanity is like a simple element. A simple element does not produce a composite life. But when the elements are associated together then a being is brought into existence.

“The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and his heavenly teachings include all the elements and principles of perfection. Among these (principles) are: the highest efficiency in the educational system, the oneness of the world of humanity, the conformity of religion with science and reason, equality of rights among the children of men, the breaths of the Holy Spirit, equality of men and women, the sweeping away of the prejudices existing among the various religions, heavenly morals, the fragrances of the Merciful, universal peace, etc. The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh combines in it all these principles.”¹

¹ From a Tablet of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in the unpublished diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab written during World War I.

A programme outline

Compiled from the Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

The independent investigation of truth.

The promotion of the oneness of the world of humanity.

The instruction of mankind in the knowledge of human brotherhood.

The inculcation of the primordial oneness of all phenomena.

The upraising of the standard of the solidarity of the human race.

The spread of the precepts of spiritual civilization.

The teaching of the synthesis of the heavenly philosophy.

The conformity of religion with science and reason.

The elucidation of the essential oneness of the divine religions.

The explanation of the continuity of prophetic revelation.

The abandonment of racial, denominational, worldly and political prejudices, prejudices which destroy the foundation of mankind.

The readjustment of the economic relations between capital and labour so that each individual member of the world of humanity may enjoy the utmost welfare and prosperity.

The organization of the arbitral court of justice so that all the nations of the world may thus remove all traces of enmity and hatred.

The up-building of the principles of one universal auxiliary language. [XIII:6:132]

The betterment of morals.

The inculcation of divine love through the power of religion.

The essential necessity of the confirmation of the Holy Spirit.

“If a person desires to work for the progress of the world of humanity he must turn his face to the Kingdom of Abhá (the most Glorious). That divine power may then assist him in all his undertakings and the penetration of the word of God will change this nether world into the mirror of the realm on high.” “Every plan is in need of a power for its execution. Today the penetrative power in the world of existence is the confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá. Every plan and system which is assisted by this power will be established in the world of humanity and will be realized among men.

The *Star of the West* will seek to present month by month the great principles of this universal programme and their application to world conditions. These principles and the divine dynamic, the Holy Spirit within and behind them are the Cause of God in the world of today. The *Star of the West* will seek to record the majestic progress of this Cause in all nations and religions and to reflect from the mirror of its pages the rays of that Sun of Righteousness which has arisen with universal healing on its beams.

XIII:6, September 1922 [XIII:6:133]

The spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Horace Holley

Part I

The divine power, in its fullness, penetrates the universe at all times, but each existent being shows forth this power only to its own degree. Stone, plant, animal and man—all are

sustained by the one power, without which nothing could ever exist. In the same degrees that stone, plant and animal receive the power, it is received also by man, for man's physical being is the sum of all that nature contains. So long as man is content with these degrees of existence, man cannot be distinguished from nature either in origin or end; he would be considered merely as nature in the state of self-awareness, a mirror in which for a certain period nature can be seen and known. Man is immersed in nature, though his thought is not confined.

When we stand upon the shore of the sea, and watch the inrolling waves, it seems as though the ocean were moving and advancing upon the shore, but this motion and advancement are illusions of the eye, for each drop of the sea continues ever in the same place. It is a motion we attribute to the sea, which in the sea itself is only agitation. And thus the constant change and movement of life on the surface of nature; it is the illusion of life, not progressiveness of being. For nature as a whole lives, through the divine power, but the existence of each production of nature is merely lent and then withdrawn. The tree lives, but the leaves that are put forth by the tree wither and fall. Today we see a man, and the man shares in the common thought; but tomorrow we see another man in his place, and the actions and thoughts of the first are repeated. The continuity of men is but the continuity of leafage, not the continuousness of the tree from season to season.

But man is immersed in nature as the ship is immersed in the sea, and the force of the wind which produces only agitation in the sea, produces true movement and progress in the ship. But the ship that is deprived of sails, and is rudderless, then shares only the agitation of the sea, the end of which vessel is destruction. So man, when deprived of those faculties that exist above nature, and independent of nature, lives in the agitation of nature and dies like the foam on the wave. By his thought he may perceive this, and become aware of it, but by thought it cannot be prevented or changed.

Now, as when a plant is removed into a dark place, far from the light of the sun, its forces gather dumbly into the roots, and its leaf withers, its flower fades and its fruit is destroyed; and the plant itself, by no effort or exertion of its powers can overcome the lack of the sun; but when placed once more in the light its forces are liberated and the plant seems again to live from within; so are those faculties in man that respond to the divine. Neither will, nor thought, nor desire, which are the forces of man, can move upward from the roots of being in the darkness of nature, for man depends upon his spiritual existence upon the life and light of the divine. Nature is the shadow of God, and in that shadow man is a plant that sleeps. [XIII:6:134]

That which brings the divine light unto the dumb and deeply hidden spiritual forces of man is the Manifestation of God. Into the shadow of nature the Manifestation comes, but of that darkness he has no part, for in the Manifestation of God the spiritual faculties are perfected and mature. The divine light enters his being without shadow or interruption, and from the being of the Manifestation of God it is reflected to all the horizons. Into the darkness of the world of nature the Manifestation of God brings a clear light, as a mirror which has been lowered into a deep pit can reflect the light of the sun and thereby banish the pit's darkness. The light which the Manifestation of God mirrors forth to banish the darkness of nature in man is the Holy Spirit.

Now the Holy Spirit is a force which surpasses in energy and influence any force which man of himself can produce or imagine. As the sun is more powerful than anything upon the earth, and all the forces of the earth are but shadows or emanations of the sun, so the Holy Spirit is more powerful in the world of being than any human faculty. The Holy Spirit is a universal and divine power, which cannot be known by any faculty in its universality. Rather does it awaken and inspire all the faculties of the dormant soul, as the sun in springtime awakens and

inspires the faculties that sleep in the earth.

Just as when, in winter, all the trees of the forest are locked in sleep, and none has leaves or signs of vitality, and in this condition we can judge them only by their relative size or perfection of form; but when the spring comes those that have life hidden in the root put forth leaves and buds and those that have no life remain as they were, so that then we can distinguish the living tree from the dead tree; even so during the spiritual darkness before the coming of the Manifestation of God all the souls are dormant, and we judge the value of people by their outer possessions, their personal activity or their commanding influence over the other dormant souls. But when the power of the Holy Spirit descends, then those souls that have life show forth the quality of life, and those that have no life remain in the death of nature even as they were. That is why John the Baptist cried in the wilderness—that is, the wilderness of spiritual ignorance—“Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!” For he would warn the souls that what they thought was life was in reality the illusion of life, and what they considered the light of existence was in reality the shadow of deprivation. Thus when Christ manifested, bringing the Holy Spirit to mankind, the souls that yearned for the reality knew the Spirit in him, and gave the Spirit entrance into their hearts, while the souls that were wholly immersed in nature remained in the outer darkness that nature is.

Entering the heart wherein it is invited, the Holy Spirit brings life and light; light to discern the true spiritual Self; life that animates and inspires the spiritual faculties to conscious activity. Now the seed is small and inert and apparently dead, yet the tree is hidden within it, and when the tree comes forth it is immense and visibly living and active. And no man can discover the tree that is within the seed, but the sun discovers it and brings it forth; and in this way the Holy Spirit discovers the soul within the body, and brings it forth into the light of the divine. This life which the soul receives through the penetrating energy of the Holy Spirit differs from the life of the body as the life of the tree differs from the life of the seed; received from outside nature, the life of the soul is not subject to nature’s decrees. It is the “new life”, the “second birth”, the “resurrection” which has been recorded in all the Holy Books; and because this life can be acquired only [XIII:6:135] through the Holy Spirit, therefore the coming of the Manifestation of God to the world of men corresponds to the “day of resurrection” of which tradition never quite lets go. Moreover, because all men reveal their inner, spiritual condition by their acceptance or rejection of the Holy Spirit, just as the trees reveal their degrees of vitality in the spring, the time of the Manifestation likewise corresponds to the “day of judgement” so caricatured in the common interpretation. But the spiritual “judgement” is that which the soul renders within and upon itself, through the degrees of its knowledge or ignorance. The sun does not judge the tree, nor does God judge any man.

Now the mystery of the Manifestation of God is this: that the Holy Spirit reveals to men their own true self; so that in heeding and obeying the Manifestation a man heeds and obeys his own spirit which desires to awake and to predominate in him; and in rejecting and persecuting those who reflect the Holy Spirit, a man rejects and persecutes his own reality.

This rejection of the Holy Spirit is due to our being content with the existence we receive as a gift from nature, without effort or thought of our own, and our lives while they endure are as the spending of a treasure we have not earned, and the wasting of a substance we cannot restore. Intent upon the shadow, and habituated to the shadow, we are repelled by the light, and relying upon the being which nature temporarily animates, we permit all our desires to stay imprisoned in this narrow cage. No death is more strait than the false life of the body, and resurrection from this death is resurrection indeed.

Now the power of the Holy Spirit is directly evidenced in the life it establishes within the seeking soul, which power has no likeness, equal or comparison; but the Holy Spirit, through a reflection and an indirect power, also predominates over the world’s material destiny.

For the sun which produces leaves and buds in the living tree, likewise produces decay and consumption in the dead tree; and the Holy Spirit evokes life within the animal soul of man as well as within the spiritual, each man being aroused and stimulated according to the nature of his own predominant desire. Therefore, in the day of the Manifestation, humanity is stirred by invisible forces which penetrate to its very depths. Dormant or slumbering desires awaken and inactive wills become active. Strange, unwonted movements arise among the people, spreading mysteriously like an infection, some for good and some for evil. The observer thinks that each of these movements has a personal leader who is its source and cause, but this is not so. It is the mutual recognition of like minds, and their grouping around the point of greatest influence. Thus those who are slaves suddenly receive a vision of freedom; the downtrodden arise with a new hope; the poor become dissatisfied with their poverty; the rich become dissatisfied with their wealth; the basis of society, which is habit formed by accepted standards of thought and feeling, suddenly being swept utterly away. The consequence is that those who have power, influence, wealth, position and authority begin to feel that this is threatened with destruction. The groping of humanity for the new life and light such people consider to be anarchy, since it overflows the ancient channels of custom and denies the barriers of tradition. Thus, if power, influence, wealth and authority are a man's highest desire, he clings to it all the more frantically the more its position is undermined. During the days when their property, influence and position were secure these same people might have ruled, controlled or taught with a certain apparent benevolence, but this is turned into savage hate and violent oppression through fear [XIII:6:136] of loss. Thus attachment to material things, betraying them, becomes the cause of their rejecting the Holy Spirit; and this applies to those predominant in the accepted religion, art, science and philosophy as well as those predominant in industry and other practical affairs. For the Holy Spirit to be known must be sought above all that is. To prevent the operation of the new forces, the deniers of God direct their violence against one and then another group which they consider to be the source and cause, arriving by a sure instinct at the persecution of those most imbued with the Holy Spirit, and if possible, of Him who is its centre and perfect cause. Thus it was in the day of Christ; and those who understand the genius of history underneath its changing appearances can trace the same character and quality of events in the day of all the prophets and messengers.

But this rejection, increasing violence on the one hand and faith on the other, fails of its purpose from the first, being unwittingly but agents that carry out the mysterious purposes of the Divine Will.

For there appears another mystery in the coming of the Manifestation: that the Holy Spirit both creates and destroys. That which it creates is the life of the inner being; that which it destroys are the veils of attachment to outer being; it destroys the foundation of injustice, ignorance and hate, and this in reality is a divine blessing though in appearance it is hardship and punishment. Had the people in the time of Christ realized the purpose of the Holy Spirit in and through his life and teaching, its power would have expressed its predominance through construction rather than through destruction, for material things are not evil in themselves but are evil only as they attract and delude the soul from its true direction. As a small piece of iron near the compass will deflect the needle from the true pole, so one personal desire retained within the soul diverts the soul's vision downward.

But as the Holy Spirit is brought into the world from outside the world, so is it afterward withdrawn into its own sphere. Then its influence becomes wholly secondary: that is, its spiritualizing effects are measured by the degree in which it was received consciously into the hearts of people. Even though known and accepted consciously by a very few, a certain measure of spirituality, knowledge, justice, kindness and freedom can be observed in the world which previously did not exist. For the power of the Holy Spirit, perfect and unconditioned in itself, becomes imperfect and conditioned in its effects. Religion, which in

the day of the Manifestation is a secret essence distilled in the heart, gradually becomes again a matter of outward things, prescribed thoughts and natural desires. But when religion again becomes a matter pertaining to the world of effects, then the people who had rejected its power in the world of causes willingly participate in the religion, for by now religion has become one with their own capacity and desire. Thus, since they believe in property, they strive to increase the property of the churches; since they believe in laws and prohibitions, for the sake of material stability, they strive to perfect the definitions and limitations of the creeds; since they are animated by personal ambition, they make religion subserve¹ a vast superstructure of offices, titles, honours, functions and positions, and spend their lives mounting from one to another of these rungs of illusion; and since they delight in the intoxication of the senses, hence the elaborate rites, ceremonies, sacraments, observances and festivals of their religion, the wearing of purple and red, the chanting, the burning of incense; and since ambition is essentially competitive, hence the feuds and struggles among the different religions and creeds, poisoning the stream of love and inspiration at its very source, which is the cause [XIII:6:137] of all warfare and strife in the world, as well as the cause of anarchy and atheism; for that which these people consider religion is the worship of the body, and that which they accept as from God is in reality the stupefaction of the spiritual soul. Their triumph is the darkening of the divine light and life, and their victory is in the absence of the Holy Spirit. This is that “darkness” which Christ banished when he came, and this is that “world” which every Manifestation overcomes through the Divine Will.

Now consider the character of this age. It is a sea which is stirred to its depths, and the vessel of every life is tossed by a sudden and violent force. As when, in the rolling of a ship, one object becoming loose falls upon and loosens another object, but the cause of the first object’s movement is not itself but of the ship; so the violent impact of men in this age; those who are shaken ascribe the force to those who move against them, but the initial force, in fact, is not of man. A new life and light has penetrated the body of the world, and nothing that was can remain unchanged. A thousand conflicting winds meet over every wave; there is no escape by retirement, and there is no independence in separation. Each atom of the body of humanity thrills with a new joy or pain, a new hope or a new despair. It is as though a vase had been emptied into the air, and its essence blown to every remotest region. Whatever our interest is, it leads us to a ground of supreme conflict, whether we desire freedom or protection, justice or power, change or absence of change. This is not the result of human thought or will or desire, but the result of a universal force which thought and will and desire have received. So conventions and customs dissolve like ice in the sun; new ideals have put forth leaves and buds like gardens in spring. Among all men, this power is yet not of man; these are the effects we see, the cause is the return of the Holy Spirit whose universal reflection in the life of the world we unknowingly witness.

From the Holy Spirit, a light shining into the mind from above, came those sciences and inventions that have united the material world in this age. From the Holy Spirit, a water poured into the parched and thirsty soul, came those ideals and longings that have broken the rule of the past. Humanity is moving its tents from the desert, seeking the promised land.

Now thoughts and events are but the reflection of the Holy Spirit, its effects and its shadow, and the effects do not give the measure of the cause nor the shadow convey the essence of the light. If we turn from the effects to the cause, from the reflection to the light itself—if we seek for the purpose of this one universal power behind its infinitude of consequences—if we would realize the perfect expression of this power before this power is broken into the division of our myriad minds and hearts—we shall find the purpose and perfect expression of the Holy Spirit in the life and words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

¹ Subserve: to be useful or helpful to (a purpose, cause, etc.); serve; promote; aid.

That is to say, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, though appearing in the image of a man, has in reality been the selfless soul and abstracted mind which the Holy Spirit established as its perfect utterance, expression and centre in this age. All others are of the effects of the Holy Spirit, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is of the source and cause. Through him, as a promise and also as a warning, the Holy Spirit has conveyed its presence and purpose to the world, and in him its predominant spiritual influence, its direct action upon the pure soul has been made utter and complete, its illumination extended to all the horizons. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has revealed the measure of God, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has revealed the measure of man.

Therefore, though in the world of effects we see but the fulfilment of calamity and disaster, in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá we witness the victory of wisdom and love. [XIII:6:138] Whereas men are troubled, or ineffectively seeking something good, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stood serenely illumined behind the shadow of darkness, and was the point of absolute peace within the heart of the storm. If we would admit the Holy Spirit into our souls, we should turn to the Holy Spirit in its direct expression in the life and words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The world intensifies our attachment to the personal desires and changing thoughts which veil the true inner Self; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá releases that attachment, burns the veils, and sets the spirit free. And this is that which Paul intended when he said “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then shall we see face to face”; for the seeing darkly is the seeing the effects of the Holy Spirit in the world, while the seeing face to face is the seeing of the Holy Spirit in its chosen vehicle and perfect, unconditioned expression. By turning to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá we grow conscious of the true purpose of our existence, and as we grow conscious of this purpose it acquires predominance over our personal thoughts and desires. “Wisdom is from above.” Therefore, whoever is concerned about the establishment of peace, he sees forces in the world for and against peace—a vast confusion of efforts and opinions; but in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá he will find, the very essence of peace, the peace maker, an ever-continued inspiration to nobler action, like a tree whose fruits are renewed as often as they are picked. Whoever is concerned about the nature of being, its origin, its expression and activity, its growth, its fulfilment and its end; he finds in the world “wisdoms” that allure and powers that flatter the self he now is; but in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá he will find the Self of all the selves, whose riches can only be expressed in poverty, and whose ecstasy is proved in pain. And it is the same whether one is concerned about these matters or about industrial stability, justice, women’s rights, education, the protection and care of children or the reconciliation of the religions and creeds: there is only one mirror where these matters can be witnessed in their true, universal aspect and significance, and that mirror is the heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Those who can measure the world’s leaders with a true spiritual measure, they will agree.

XIII:7 October 1922 [XIII:7:165]

The spirit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (continued)

Horace Holley

Part II

Now, while wisdom is essentially a state of being, and only secondarily becomes an expression of principles, and wisdom cannot be comprehended in any one principle alone but only in the meeting of all principles in their source and cause, nevertheless, with respect to the world’s capacity and requirements, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in many tablets and addresses gave importance to certain definite principles which are consequently his characteristic impression upon the minds of the age.

Foremost among ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s principles is that of the *independent investigation of truth*.

A key to this principle may be found in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s use of the word “imitation” where we would use such words as “superstition” or “prejudice” or “ignorance”. Looking upon the minds, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá perceived them as merely imitating one another and the past, like those

prisoners who are chained one to another in rows. For the Christian is born a Christian, and merely reflects the prevailing tradition in which he lives. The German or Frenchman is born to his nationality, and imitates in thought and action the necessities to which nationality has ever in the past given rise. Few people ever stand apart from their mental and moral environment and test its standards by any universal truth. What most of us consider "thought" is merely an adapting of the common thinking to our personal advantage. The savage obeys the law of the jungle, and we obey no less blindly the customs of our own day; and consequently, so far as true self-realization is concerned, we are merely that same savage reborn to a jungle of men rather than a jungle of beasts. The spiritual consequences of this only become apparent when we reflect that while none of us would intentionally commit murder, we have made governments machinery for murder on the largest scale; and while none of us would starve the orphan or oppress the widow, we willingly grow rich upon the starvations that competitive industry commits day by day. For we make our swiftly fleeting powers serve that which is also fleeting, and so at the last we have created nothing which is able to endure. True independent investigation of reality leads to the investigation of our own being, and independence of self as passion and desire is the supreme independence.

Another of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's principles is that of the *oneness of mankind*. All that 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed through utterance or action, he expressed from the positive and steadfast realization that mankind, in its origin and its end, is one spiritual Man, whose atoms, so to speak, we are, and that one ray of the divine Self, and not many selves, sustains the spirit within the many souls. Today, as we see and feel the immediate inter-action of events and conditions throughout the world, and how no portion of humanity is independent of any [XIII:7:166] other portion, we begin to realize something of the significance of this Bahá'í teaching. Thus for the first time, one undeviating standard is available for the guidance of religions, governments, industries, education, science and art alike, and that standard is the promotion of the oneness of mankind. Whatever promotes unity is of the universal cause, and will prove fruitful and enduring; but whatever prevents unity is of the limited effects, and will be rejected by the Holy Spirit whose action is predominant over all.

Another principle expressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is that *the foundation of all religions is one*. For by "foundation" 'Abdu'l-Bahá means the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, from which all the religions originally came. The Holy Spirit is at all times one, though like the spring season it comes and goes, for the Holy Spirit is the expression of the will of God, and God is not divided against Himself, but the people of the world are divided. It is this division of the people which causes differences in the effects of the Holy Spirit from age to age, for the Holy Spirit is perfect and complete in itself, but enters the world of humanity only according to the capacity of the time. It is an inexhaustible ocean, while the people are but small vessels that quickly overflow. Thus Moses, Christ, Muḥammad, Buddha seem different beings and founders of different religions; but we see them in the mirror of the world's division and not in the light of the Holy Spirit. In that light they are one being, one essence, one cause, one power and one foundation; and whatever they uttered is the reality, which we have seized and divided (interpreted) for our own gain, as the soldiers seized and divided the garments of Jesus. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said that when representatives of all the world's religions have gathered for a sincere investigation of the foundation of religion, this will become manifest and all the secondary, man-made features of religion will utterly disappear.

'Abdu'l-Bahá himself made no distinction between Jew or Christian, Hindu or Muslim. To all alike his spirit gave of its inspiration, and the acceptance or rejection of his ideal of unity was not of the creed but of the soul.

A fourth principle which 'Abdu'l-Bahá enunciated was that *religion must be in accord with science and reason*.

Now a person who is sick is limited by that sickness both physically and mentally, and he himself cannot overcome those limitations except by attaining health. In the same way there are limitations which fall upon the understanding from sickness of soul. It is spiritual sickness which permits a man to possess a religion at all contrary to science and reason. He may not realize these limitations, but that is part of the disease. These limitations shut out the ray of the spirit, as a wall shuts out the sun. So long as he remains in this condition, the spirit shows forth only its destructive power. Thus irrational religion does not and cannot become truly predominant in human affairs. Even the fanatic does not follow out his religion in all things, but his self-interest or self-gratification is served in devious ways. Without the Holy Spirit a religion cannot awaken the souls, but the irrational religion gains influence over material affairs through being itself material.

But this principle is binding upon science no less than upon religion. 'Abdu'l-Bahá summons the man of science to spiritual religion as he summons the man of religion to an appreciation of science. If in a laboratory, by means of certain elements, an important experiment could be carried out and thereby great human benefits obtained, what would we think of the person who, though refusing to enter the laboratory, nevertheless denied the possibility of the experiment? Yet modern science for [XIII:7:167] the most part takes this very attitude toward religion. For the founders of all religions have indicated the elements and principles for the development of spirituality, and the people of science deny the essence of spirituality while refusing to enter the laboratory of infinity in their own souls.

As a matter of fact, while irrational religion and materialistic science seem outwardly opposed, inwardly they are equally conditions of being that manifest the absence of the Holy Spirit. Both are plants confined in darkness, and both are ships deprived of sails. Where the Holy Spirit obtains, the very words "science" and "religion" are left behind, for there is but one Reality, though this can be cognized by the several faculties on the several planes.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has also expressed as an organic, universal principle the *equality of men and women*. Now man and woman are the dual, inter-acting forces produced from the one unity, life, which still controls their duality so that it cannot ever quite become separateness.

Physical separateness only the more closely binds the bodies of imagination and desire. Man in nature realizes himself by contrast with woman, and woman in nature realizes herself by contrast with man. Thus any extreme development in one produces an extreme development in the other, so that an equilibrium of thought and emotion is always maintained. The combative type of man tends to produce the dependent, undeveloped woman, and the dependent, undeveloped woman tends to produce the combative type of man. In the same manner, the materialistic business man tends to produce the woman parasite, and the reverse is also true. For man in nature sees himself by reflection in woman, and woman in nature sees herself by reflection in man. Thus any imperfection in one is conveyed to the other, whence it returns augmented, and so on without end. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can create the one perfect mirror of reality for these imperfect images of being; for the Holy Spirit turns will and desire upward to a body of consciousness where sex does not exist. In this age, as the spiritual reality becomes more and more evident, the negative and disastrous influences of sex—that is, sex as the end of will and the aim of desire—steadily diminishes; and this is the cause of the freedom of women in this age. Were we conscious of the inner significances of being, we should behold in the freedom of women one of the most obvious evidences of the presence of the Holy Spirit in human affairs, and an evidence of inestimable importance. Without the true freedom of woman there can be no end of war and ignorance and disease, for only by the freedom of woman can man likewise become free.

Another principle laid down by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is that of the *solution of the economic problem*. The solution of the economic problem 'Abdu'l-Bahá has declared to be a distinctive

characteristic of religion in its universal aspect; for no human power or alliance of powers hitherto has been able to work a solution.

Now by the fear that lies in poverty, either actual or prospective, the human soul is ever turned downward into nature, where the predominant law is the struggle for existence; and becoming imbued with this law, and captive to it, the soul's struggles only the more heavily burdens its own chains. For the struggle for existence sets off the powers of one soul against the powers of another, and this mutual division of powers is mutual defeat. Thus in this day the sciences and inventions which shadow forth a universal order, and dumbly signify the existence of a reality whose law is co-operation, through perversion have become the greatest menace to the very existence of mankind.

"The disease which afflicts the body politic is lack of love and absence of altruism," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá in New [XIII:7:168] York City ten years ago. "In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that unless their susceptibilities are awakened by some power so that unity, love and accord develop within them, there can be no healing, no relief among mankind."

A close study of this aspect of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching indicates certain fundamental elements as conditional to the solution of the economic problem. One of these elements is the *universal obligation of useful labour*. Consider how idleness is condemned by physiologist and psychologist today, no less vigorously than by the moralist and the student of economics. Wealth does not exempt any human being from the consequences of idleness or even misdirected activity. These consequences are ill health of mind as well as body, and that disordered condition whose ultimate end is impotence or insanity. Moreover, in avoiding useful labour, the privileged classes and their parasites have deprived themselves of the very capacity for labour, while increasing that capacity in those who cannot or will not avoid work. In this condition we may see perhaps one meaning of Christ's saying: "The meek shall inherit the earth."

But 'Abdu'l-Bahá has also stated that *useful labour, performed in the spirit of service and with the ideal of perfection, is accounted an act of worship and a form of prayer*. Now prayer and worship, in their true signification, are not cries for assistance, nor requests for a gift, nor yet taxes paid to a spiritual overseer, but are expressions of gratitude for the supreme gift of life in the spirit that knows no death. This is the motive that 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares should actuate our daily labour. Moreover, work performed with that motive is creative work, and creativeness is the nature of God, so that it is the worker who shows forth the divine image and likeness on this plane. But consider how many changes must take place in the industrial world before this creative sense can be generally expressed, and before labour is surrounded by those conditions which this conception of labour demands! Nevertheless, even this shall be; for the Holy Spirit is destroying mightily all that intervenes between man and his own reality.

Implicit in this conception of the spiritual value of useful labour, is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching that *the present wage system must be extended so as to include participation in the profits of industry*. For it is evident that the essential purpose of industry is not to produce goods, but to maintain life—and maintain life on the plane of human dignity and refinement. The act of producing goods must therefore coincide, in purpose and result, with the act of ennobling and freeing the producers themselves. This is impossible under present conditions, but perfectly possible when industry is managed by the social engineer in place of the financial expert.

Another fundamental element is that of the *voluntary sharing of wealth*.

Reflect how those who possess other forms of wealth—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—have ever obeyed this universal and wonderful law. Thus those who share their

physical strength with the weak; those who strive incessantly to increase the commonwealth of beauty and of truth; those who devote their lives to the realization of greater political justice; and, above all, those who give love to whosoever are deprived. All the love, beauty, truth, justice and science we have on earth are the result of a voluntary sharing of wealth—a divine principle whose veils grow darker and darker as we approach the lowest degree of wealth, which is gold. But were we to estimate the sum total of all the taxes paid to any government within the past fifty years, and regard this total as being wealth forcibly rather than voluntarily shared, we can perceive how disastrously extravagant material selfishness is, even on its own plane. For [XIII:7:169] a fraction of that sum total, given in the spirit of unity, would have obviated most of those expenses by which taxes are consumed, while in addition increasing vastly the means of producing more wealth by all and for all. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is he who has voluntarily shared wealth in all its forms and degrees, and this spirit is silently but rapidly leavening the world.

Thus when it is more clearly realized how disastrous separateness is, particularly in the larger fields of politics and industry, we shall behold unparalleled examples of self-sacrifice among the great and the small alike; and this essential condition having been fulfilled, relief and comfort will result. For the more powerful arts and sciences are not yet in manifestation, being withheld in the treasury of the spiritual kingdom, which can never be exhausted. Meanwhile, wealth is being forced from those who will not share it, and the old world is everywhere passing away. Yet far from condemning wealth, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes its attainment through useful labour a specific advice; but the object of its possession is the promotion of the unity of mankind. By considering wealth as a talent on the material plane, the principle becomes clear. It is not the inequality of talents or possessions which produces injustice, but the spirit of separateness, in the poor as well as the rich, in the ignorant as well as in the learned. Inequality is the essential foundation of love, for no one can stand alone.

Another principle strongly emphasized by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the *establishment of an international auxiliary language*.

As the nervous system is one throughout the body, and co-ordinates all the organs and limbs, so the body of humanity requires one universal language and writing to be learned by all people in addition to the mother tongue, which shall serve to interpret the needs, unite the interests and consolidate the purposes; and multi-language is the paralysis of the body of mankind. Those who have concern for human welfare and progress will surely give this subject the attention it deserves.

But the principle by which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is most widely known, and for which he has been most extensively quoted, is that of universal peace. The assurance that this is the century of universal peace, the age of the elimination of warfare, the day of the most mighty moving of the spiritual waves and the full illumination of the sun of righteousness—this assurance is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s steadfast covenant with those who follow him.

Today, the disaster of warfare is a net thrown over the whole of humanity, like the net thrown over a gladiator about to be slain. None can emerge from this net until all emerge. But the very fact that there is no escape for one save through escape for all, and the overwhelming danger of the present situation, brings the consciousness of the oneness of humanity nearer day by day. Therefore this enveloping calamity is a result of the presence of the universal Holy Spirit—feared as a net of death by those who view it with personal eyes, yet seen to be a garment of divine protection by those who view all things in their spiritual light.

For the effort to avoid universal warfare is binding the minds and hearts of those who have been separate during all of history’s ten thousand years. It is creating the great agencies and institutions of the future humanity; it is destroying all agencies and institutions whose

purpose is to keep humanity divided and enslaved. Consider how the world's two most powerful kings have lately been overthrown and their empires rent asunder; and the full toll of inveterate ambition and greed has not yet been taken.

Therefore the indifferent are becoming mindful, and the activities of all humanitarians are finding a common channel and a unified expression. But [XIII:7:170] peace, perfect peace, is first of the heart, through the breaths of the Holy Spirit; consequently those among the humanitarians who are wisest, while they strive to produce concrete results and discuss all possible methods, nevertheless have for their great objective the reconciling of the hearts of men. For only that which is established in the heart can ever be established in the world, and peace will never be made real, lasting or secure until the world has recognized the power of the Holy Spirit which alone can conquer and subdue the rebellious hearts or fuse one changeless ideal upon the restless, ever-divided minds. This is the Most Great Peace; this is the Peace of God.

The arch which these social principles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, like pillars, are intended to support—the structure which fulfils their purpose and directs their use—is the principle of an international tribunal.

'Abdu'l-Bahá ever visioned the world federation wherein all men and women have part, and invokes this world federation within the progressive people of all races and nations. Its cement is an international tribunal instituted through democratic selection and given binding authority by mutual agreement and pledge. No portion of the race but will be fairly represented, therefore no portion but will be controlled by its decisions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said that when this tribunal is established, any government which instigated war would be set upon by all nations and, if necessary, abolished. This is the firm basis of peace, and no agreement with reservations can be substituted for it.

It is an inherent part of all 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching on the subject of tribunals and political progress that the spiritual conditions for real justice have not yet been fulfilled. He regards the function of legislation as a function of illumined minds, severed from all considerations save that of justice and truth. The act of making laws he declares to be an aspect of meditation. That is, just as the poet receives his visions, or the scientist his principles, through intense meditation, so will the future legislative body arrive at its structure of civic, national or international law. Order is of the essence of the manifested universe, and that order flows through and inspires the minds that turn to it in unity and for the purpose of creating justice. Thus those who are capable of entering this unity and impersonal abstraction are to be selected by the people from their wisest men. The legislator, in fact, is placed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a high spiritual station, and the evident tendency on the part of our noblest clergy to turn from fruitless theological discussions in order to assist in the solving of great political and economic problems is a reflection of this teaching; for 'Abdu'l-Bahá has also declared that the universal religion of the future will have no professional clergy.

Such, in brief, are some of the principles that characterize the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. They are those beacons he has lighted in the darkness of our world contention and strife, the vital energy he has poured into our apathetic minds and the guidance he has established for our selfish desires. They are the spirit of evolution, the genius of prophecy, the expression of man as a spiritually conscious being in the age of his maturity and strength. That these principles are the fruits of the tree of spiritual tradition is evident also in this further teaching of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that this is the age when the Temple shall be builded, reconciling not merely the religions and creeds, but also religion and science, and science and industry; and that to assist in building the universal Temple is incumbent upon all who are responsive to the divine Will.

These principles are the ark in which whoso enters is secure, and whoso remains outside of

it will perish in the [XIII:7:171] rising waters of trouble that overflow the earth. Let no one confuse that which 'Abdu'l-Bahá utters with the speculations of philosophers and the dreams of poets. He speaks of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit both creates and destroys, and none can resist the power of the Supreme.

For these principles are more than so many channels of useful activity; first and last they are signs and evidences of the return of the Holy Spirit to the world of men. As when a traveller is crossing a barren and desolate land, and he suddenly comes upon a broad highway, lined with luxuriant trees, he will follow that highway to the city of refuge; so those who are travelling the world of righteous endeavour, and are weary and fainting at the oppositions encountered both without and within—when they come upon one of these principles, and behold the power with which it is informed and the majestic grace with which it is offered, they will certainly investigate until they find its source and cause; and the centre to which these principles lead from all the horizons of experience—the city of refuge where these spiritual highways end—is the luminous heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that which has ever been called, and is, the City of God.

XII:6, September 1922 [XIII:6:139]

Some questions about science and religion

Interviews with 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Tiberias and Haifa.

Anna Kunz

The following exquisite picture describes the approach of two very devout Christians, Professor and Mrs Kunz to the Holy Land and their interviews with 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Easter season in 1921. Professor Kunz is a university scientist. His wife is the daughter of a prominent professor of theology. They were sojourning in Switzerland, their homeland, whence they travelled to Palestine in March of 1921. *Editor.*

To approach Haifa by boat is most wonderful. It was just a few minutes before midnight of 22 March 1921, when the *Karlsbad* entered the blessed harbour of Haifa, dropping anchor about a mile off the shore. The full moon stood bright and glorious over Mount Carmel. Along the sea shore, up towards the mountain every house could be seen. There were a few lights only, but the moon illumined the whole country most beautifully. My heart was aching as I stood in silent prayer, but the wonderful spirit of that sacred place and land soon filled my heart and I realized that we had finally reached the Holy Land—holy in the past, holy in this great day of God and holy forever.

Early in the morning my husband and I were met by Dr Luṭṭu'lláh Ḥakím, whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not at Haifa. After a severe illness he had gone to Tiberias for a rest. In his absence, we were beautifully taken care of by his family and friends. Awaiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá's further instructions as to when we should be permitted to meet him, we enjoyed Haifa and 'Akká.

In the pilgrim house, located near 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house, we were given a room with a view up Mount Carmel. It did not take us long to understand why this rather low mountain range was called the Mountain of God. His spirit indeed lingers there. The whole atmosphere seemed laden with a glorious something, with a great peace, with a joy from on high. This mountain, sacred through the memory of past prophets has received a new baptism of the spirit in this dispensation. Shortly after our arrival we were climbing over the rocky path to the Tomb of the Báb. It was a glorious spring morning. The birds were singing, flowers of all kinds were blooming everywhere. Mount Carmel seemed to speak aloud of all the blessings that God had spread there. It is true, we were greatly favoured to be permitted to come to those places during the year's most beautiful season.

But we deeply felt, though the outward beauty of that country was heavenly, that there was

another beauty dominant, a beauty that could never vanish. The beauty of the spirit will always linger there and will be found by the pilgrims of any season. God's spirit surrounds [XIII:6:140] us certainly everywhere, but there it seems to hover in great abundance, as it has pleased God to bless this country above others. This spirit of love and peace, of service and self-forgetfulness, emanating as it were from a great consciousness of God's presence overwhelmed us constantly. This happened again and again as we entered the Tomb of the Báb, while at the Holy Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, and while with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family. And him, through whom in this age this splendour is conveyed to God's creature we finally saw at Tiberias. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Servant of God, we were permitted to see.

As on that beautiful spring morning, so also at other times, once at night with the moon as our guide, we went to the Tomb of the Báb. Oh, that all the Bahá'ís could realize the fragrance of that place! Each time we went there it seemed more beautiful. As one enters that sanctuary one feels at once in union with the higher world. As we knelt there in prayer my heart seemed to melt; there was but one great longing. When we prayed there for the last time, it was in the evening before our departure, it was as if my heart would break. I knew that I loved this place more than any other place in the world. Since we have gone away, during all these past months, there would often come over me a great longing for that holy shrine and again and again my thoughts wander there and I kneel down at this shrine and rest. Now that this building is the resting place of 'Abdu'l-Bahá too, it must be more glorious than ever.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's family keeps open house all the time. The women pilgrims are always welcome among these beautiful women and their children. They live a life of great simplicity; their life is a reflection of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life. Their thoughts are with him always; they love him with a deep abiding love; they serve in his footsteps and for his sake serve all mankind. Many a precious lesson was taught to me while in this household. Often I was surprised to see that in spite of their restricted life, these women uphold a truly broad attitude towards life in general; they are full of the universal spirit; they know no narrowness; they are all-inclusive and therefore heavenly.

On Good Friday, before sunrise, we started for 'Akká and Bahjí. We were a beautiful little group, two grandsons of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, some other young men, the Master's youngest daughter, Munavvar Khánum, Mr Kunz and myself. From the station we walked over the green meadows towards Bahjí. Passing Bahjí palace we soon reached the little house, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá often stayed for days and where all the visiting friends rest before entering the Tomb. When we passed through the blooming garden, which was fragrant like the place around the Tomb of the Báb, after removing our shoes, we entered the court. There we all knelt at the door which leads to the holy shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, while Munavvar Khánum with a sweet voice chanted the Visiting Tablet. Then she opened the door and invited us to follow her. The place was filled with the fragrance of Jasmine blossoms, a heavenly light filled the room. Here we felt at once at rest and were permitted to pray for our friends, for the world, whose saviour had come as a thief in the night. Here heaven and earth seemed to meet. He certainly has made his resting place glorious. Before the onrush of his spirit all human thoughts had to die; there was but one prayer possible,—that all the world would soon be enabled to serve at this holy threshold. This was my great longing and this only had importance before so much glory. Tears were welcome, they brought relief to the heart so overfull. Everybody slowly withdrew, leaving Mr Kunz and myself alone at the Holy Shrine, whence for ages to come people of all classes, races and religions will derive new strength and assurance of God's nearness. When we finally [XIII:6:141] had reached the garden again, we found a few Hindu soldiers there. They were talking with the Tomb keeper and we were told that many of them (not Bahá'ís at all) would often come to the gate of this sacred place, kiss the wall and withdraw again, explaining that they felt and knew that they were standing on

holy ground.

During the afternoon we saw the Riḍván. We also visited the barracks, where the first Bahá'ís with Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá spent their years of imprisonment. Filled with sacred memories we returned in the evening to Haifa. The next morning we were to leave for Tiberias, where the blessed Master expected us.

'Azízu'lláh Bahádur accompanied us to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. From the train we could see Nazareth. We finally reached the Jordan valley and arrived, after three hours' ride, at the southern end of Lake Tiberias, whence we continued by boat to the old and unique little town of Tiberias. So we finally reached the goal of our journey. We were to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

How I wish that I could be worthier to tell of his glory, as he walked among men in human flesh, unknown to most people, and understood by a few only. On the day of our arrival we got only a few glimpses of the Beloved, but they were sufficient to make us realize that his power and authority were not of this world. It was a bright and luminous Easter morning when the Master called us into his room. Oh, that I could picture him to all those who never saw him, could picture him in those simple surroundings at the shores of that same lake where Christ walked and taught. Though I feared to approach him, after his loving words of welcome this fear vanished. Here we sat before our Master, in a little room, with only the most necessary furnishings, on top of the hotel, with a view of that blessed lake. His look seems to go into one's very heart. Yes, he knows his children and their need. As I think of him now, I always love to think, first, of his great simplicity, his marvellous humility which knows of no self-existence, and last, or better, first, of his boundless love. To us his outward appearance seemed similar to that of the old Hebrew Prophets; his humility, his simplicity and love were like the Christ. This boundless love conquered the hearts at once. 'Abdu'l-Bahá talked to us with a ringing, piercing voice which will forever sound in my ears. His words would come forth with that unique simplicity, then he would pause for a while, often closing his eyes. His spirit, it seemed when I dared to look at him, had left his body; he was looking into infinitude, communing with that world for which we long. Having seen him, we could understand well what he meant when he said to us, "The prophet discerns by sight." We came before him, my husband especially, with many, many questions in our minds, but sitting in his presence we seemed to forget them, or better, there did not exist any unsolved problems. He said, "God has created a remedy for every disease," and while in his presence, we tasted of this remedy.

During the days of our stay at the hotel we saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá often. We followed him as he walked peacefully to a nearby garden. Unknown he passed through the crowd. We saw him come back to the hotel, climbing the many steps to his room with a youthfulness that made my husband say "It looks as if he were carried over these flights of steps by unseen hands." Though he was at Tiberias for a rest he received visitors all day long. During those three days spent near him his love would more and more fill our hearts, so that my heart was sad and depressed when on Tuesday morning I realized that he was to say good-bye to us that day. And as he bade us good-bye our [XIII:6:142] hearts were near to breaking. As our tears of love and gratefulness flowed he suddenly left his room, telling us to remain within.

Before leaving Haifa we saw the Master most unexpectedly again. A few beautiful pictures of how he lived and loved in his own home I shall cherish forever. And as we left his glorious earthly home I felt as others, permitted to come into his presence, have felt. I realized that we could in no way comprehend him, we could only love him, follow him, obey him and thereby draw nearer to his beauty.

His words spoken to us we herewith gladly share with all the friends.

Interviews with 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tiberias—Easter morning.

The Master welcomed us heartily and said: "I was very glad to hear of your coming. When all the people are negligent you have been chosen by God. You came to the Holy Land, attained to the pleasure of visiting the Holy Tomb and were able to come and visit me here. How are the friends in America?" We told the Master that the friends are well.

We told the Master of a group of Jews who were on the boat from Brindisi to Palestine. He said: "In their heavenly books the prophets have spoken of the Day of the Lord, the Last Day, and what they have spoken is all being realized in this day. The Blessed Beauty sixty years ago in some of his tablets promised the Jews that they would come back to the Holy Land and what he said will be realized. The pavilion of the Lord will be pitched on the mountain and this was fulfilled. The pavilion of the Blessed Beauty was often pitched on Mount Carmel and the plain and hills around 'Akká while he was a prisoner. He was subject to two despotic kings and he was under severe restrictions. When guards were placed at the gate everybody was forbidden to meet him. But his pavilion was pitched on the hills. He would go and spend some days in them, and yet he was a prisoner."

We told the story of Mr Schneider. (Mr Schneider was a refugee from Russia. He reached the northern boundary of Persia penniless, knowing no one and ignorant of his route. Some people met him and took him to their home where he sojourned for several days and then was taken by his host to the next village and to a home where he was welcomed and entertained. From village to village he was conducted, and cared for, until at last in safety he reached the Persian gulf. On inquiring at last who could be these people who had treated him with such marvellous kindness he learned that they were all Bahá'ís.) He ('Abdu'l-Bahá) said such should be the case with all the Bahá'ís. They should be the mercy of God to all the people of the earth without distinction of race and religion. Bahá'u'lláh's light has shone forth upon all. His rain of mercy has fallen on every spot just as the sun shines upon the pure and the sinner. The rain falls upon good soil and the rocks. The attributes of the Bahá'ís should be the same. They should be the light of guidance to all the people.

We said: "Easter has a new significance for us. Resurrection has a new meaning." 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "It is a good, significant coincidence that we meet at this place where Christ told Peter to become a fisher of men." He pointed out the place, about 150 meters away, where this happened. The Sermon on the Mount was preached on Mount Tabor, which, as an accompanying Jew told us, dominates Galilee.

Monday morning at 7:30.

Looking at our children's picture his beautiful face lighted up and after looking at it for a long while he said: "They have bright faces. They will be real Bahá'ís because they will have a Bahá'í education. They will become good Bahá'ís." [XIII:6:143]

Question: "Science denies immortality. How does the prophet know the contrary?"

The Master said: "Science does not know; but the Manifestation makes discoveries with the power of the Spirit. For instance: a philosopher with induction finds out a way. But the prophet discerns with sight. A blind man has to find his way with a stick from point to point; so a philosopher through arguments from premises goes to conclusions, and not by sight. But the Manifestations see with their inner eye (own eye); they do not go from premises to conclusions. The prophets see many things with their inner eye. They do not need to go by discoveries. The scientist with induction is like a blind man who cannot see two steps ahead of him. The prophet sees a long distance."

Question: "Shall I find my mother again?"

The Master said: "Certainly. Separation is only in the world of bodies."

Question: "Will the day come when all mankind will be able to discern by sight?"

He said: "There will always be some. Only a special number will have this attainment. As Christ said, 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' It will always be so. The transformation depends upon divine bounty. The mineral progresses in its own world. But from the mineral to the vegetable it progresses only by divine bounty. Also transformation from the vegetable to the animal is God's plan. Of itself the transformation cannot take place. In the realm of men transformation is possible only through another person."

Question: "When people deny religion how shall we deal with them?"

Answer: "You must be tolerant and patient, because the station of sight is a station of bounty; it is not based on capacity. They must be educated."

Question: "What are the requisites for a successful meeting?"

Answer: "Before the meeting you must pray and supplicate for divine assistance."

Question: "Shall we devote much time to the study of philosophy?"

Answer: "Everything must be done moderately. Excess is not desirable. Do not go to extremes. Even in thinking do not go to excess but be moderate. If there is too much thinking you will be unable to control your thoughts."

I asked the Master to assist me in the physical sciences, in the solution of problems. He said: "You will be able to solve these problems."

Addressing both of us: "You are confirmed. Another power will help you,"—(besides the power of science).

Question: "Why so much evil in the world?"

Answer: "God has created a remedy for every disease. One must apply the remedy. Now these patients run away from the expert physician. They neglect him. Under inexperienced physicians they get worse. The words of the religious leaders have no influence, no effect. These physicians are more diseased than their patients. The spiritual leaders now have no faith, though they claim to have faith in order to secure their positions."

Monday afternoon at 4 o'clock.

We thanked the Master for the prayer revealed for our children. He said: "It is for your sake that I wrote it."

Question: "What is the best method to spread this Cause?"

Answer: "Explain the teachings, the principles of this Cause. Some of them were revealed fifty years ago, some sixty years ago. Fifty years ago there was no thought of universal peace and arbitration. No one spoke of the oneness of religion and science. Now many [XIII:6:144] spread them in their own ways. I spread them through numerous churches and papers in America; then also in Europe.

"The word of God is powerful. It will come to pass."

Question: "Should these principles be spread under the name of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or without these names?"

Answer: "In the beginning you should mention Bahá'u'lláh. They are his and are spread by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When all the world was in disorder, when warfare was prevailing in the East

and the West, Russia with Turkey, Persia with England and Afghanistan, and Garibaldi was fighting, the East was in intense darkness. There was prejudice of race and religion; national and political prejudice. The East was in intense darkness; the horizon was very dark. And at such a time Bahá'u'lláh arose and spread a set of teachings."

Question: "The students in the schools have to study so many subjects! There are arising more and more sciences. What should be the remedy?"

Answer: "It is too much. One must be moderate in choosing the number of subjects. When there are too many the result is confusion. Moderation is necessary. For instance: if a man has the power to carry a load of three hundred (pounds) he no doubt would fall if we give him one thousand (pounds). He cannot bear it. In the same way, one's brain must not be overburdened. For instance: students should not have more than six hours a day, lessons and preparations included. Otherwise they will not succeed. The brain becomes tired."

Monday afternoon, 28 March 1921.

The Master: "This lake is very blessed. His holiness Christ and the other prophets walked along its shore and were in communion with God all the time and spreading the divine teachings. Now, praise be to God that you reached this land safely and we met one another on the shore of this same lake! You will receive great results from this visit afterwards. You will become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity. You will release the hearts of the people from the intense darkness of different prejudices, so that each soul may love all the people of the world, without distinction. Just like a shepherd who is affectionate to all his sheep, without preference or distinction, you should be affectionate to all. You should not look at their shortcomings. Consider that they are all created by God who loves them all."

Tuesday morning, 29 March.

The Master: "You have been here three days. They are equal to three years. In the Bible in the days of the Lord one day was equal to one year. I hope that these three days are equal to three years. The results of this visit will be equal to the results of three years. Now you should go back in perfect harmony and joy and with supreme glad tidings. You should gladden the hearts with glad tidings of the Beauty of Abhá. Say to the friends: 'The Kingdom of God has been opened to you. The tree of life is yours. Heavenly graces are bestowed upon you. The effulgence of the Sun of Truth is shed on you. God has chosen you. This crown He has placed upon your head. This eternal life has been given you. Therefore you should be very happy. Turn day and night to the Kingdom of Abhá. Supplicate for boundless favours from that Kingdom.'

"I am praying every night and I supplicate and implore. I beg of God to bestow upon you infinite grace so that all of us may attain to the station of servitude, so that we may do as He wishes us to do. We are all His servants, drawing light from the Sun of Abhá."

XIII:6, September 1922 [XIII:6:145]

The coming of the Promised One

The reconciliation of the expectations of religion and the laws of science.

Albert Vail

The whole religious world today is in anticipation of a world-teacher who will take "the broken arcs" of our human efforts, aspirations, philosophies, social programmes and bring them "to a shining circle". More than seventy years ago Emerson the philosopher-poet felt stirring in his heart the longing for such a teacher and he wrote his declaration that should this great leader appear he, Emerson, would sell all his goods and go halfway around the

world to sit at his feet.

Through all the religions today there is shining the glorious anticipation of the coming of a deliverer, a saviour, a messiah. In millions of hearts the good news is ringing that he is right at our doors. "Lift up your gates and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors and the King of Glory shall come in."

In the following talk taken down by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab during the Great War 'Abdu'l-Bahá shows that even our naturalists today believe in the coming of great teachers. And the logic of the theory of evolution, of perpetual change is that today new teachers are due to come and save our world from its manifest calamities. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's analysis is as follows:

"The adherents of all the religions of the world are expecting the coming of a Promised One and they pray for his advent. Even the atheists anticipate the appearance of a wise and sagacious reformer, a renovator of old habits and superstitions. Their expectations, however, are not like those of the religionists whose beliefs are wrapt in fantastic ideas and impossible and unrealizable rules.

"The atheists believe in nature and its manifestations. They state that for nature there are two courses.

"The first is the common, ordinary course, running throughout all the grades of the social structure and organized, animate and inanimate beings, producing stereotyped organisms and definite, agreed ends, decomposing and recomposing variable forms, with resourcefulness and adaptability.

"The second is the extraordinary and unusual course which produces from time to time human beings who are beyond nature, who are super-mundane, the supermen. After many generations of ordinary type, nature, being bored with its own monotony and corresponding resemblances creates an extraordinary individual (a mutation) to show that its fertility is not at an end and that it is capable of exhibiting the signs of activity uncommon in the field of human experience. Thus a powerful, wise, commanding leader is born who is to readjust through his innate forces the disorganized machinery of the civic, intellectual and ethical life of a nation.

"They further state that change is the unchangeable law of nature. One cannot conceive of nature without motion and variability. These two laws are the inherent qualities of all phenomena and [XIII:6:146] for this reason the events of a previous cycle will not correspond with those of a succeeding one. From its hidden, unseen fountain in every century nature brings forth a new set of forces and fits them into the new exigencies and environments which were brought about, by a new generation with larger demands and greater responsibilities.

"For example: ages ago a philosopher, according to the atheist's opinion—an inspired prophet according to the doctrines and ideas held by the religionists—appeared for the education and instruction of mankind. This prophet established certain principles which laid the foundation of a stable and lofty civilization and insured the security and progress of the people. But after the lapse of many centuries that institution became antiquated; the letter took the place of the spirit, hearts grew cold and unresponsive, dynamic life became static and the basis of the edifice shook and trembled under the weight of superstitions and dogma.

"These events in themselves predicate the appearance of another Teacher, the coming of a second Architect. If the sun shines forth this morning from the east and gives light and heat to all the created beings and then sets in the west is it logical to say that we do not need another sunrise, that the world can live without the rays and heat of that life-giving luminary? Our affirmation or negation will not change in the least the course of the sun. The sun will rise in spite of all our denials and acceptance.

“A skilled mason builds a building and families live in it for a number of years. Does any logician reason soundly in concluding that this building will be permanent? The very word ‘construction’ presupposes ‘destruction’. It is obvious that some time, in the course of years the edifice will be demolished and another mason will arise and build in its place another building, either after the first type, or of a better and more permanent one.

“Consequently, we see that even the agnostics (really) believe in the necessity of the appearance of wise and extraordinary teachers whose mission it is to lead their fellowmen to higher altitudes of intelligence and wisdom. In principle they agree with the religionists. But in mode of expression and phraseology they differ from each other.”

The return of Christ—its real meaning

“In the Divine Holy Books there are unmistakable prophecies giving the glad-tidings of a certain Day in which the Promised One of all the Books would appear, a radiant Dispensation would be established, the banner of the most great peace and reconciliation be hoisted and the oneness of the world of humanity proclaimed. Among the various nations and peoples of the world no enmity or hatred would remain. All hearts would be united one with another. These things are recorded in the Taurat,¹ or Old Testament, in the Gospels, in the Qur’án, in the Zend Avesta, in the Books of Buddha and in the Book of Confucius. In brief, all the Holy Books contain these glad-tidings. In all of them it is announced that after the world is surrounded by darkness radiance will appear. For, just as the night when it becomes excessively dark precedes the dawn of a new day so, likewise, when the darkness of religious apathy and heedlessness overtake the world, when human souls become negligent of God, when materialistic ideas overshadow idealism and spirituality, when nations become submerged in the world of matter and forget God—at such a time as this shall the divine Sun shine forth and the Radiant Morn appear.”

In Christian churches this anticipation is popularly called the belief in Christ’s “second coming”. Ever since the world- [XIII:6:147] war books on the “second coming” have been circulated with surprising popularity. In many churches one of the first questions asked a prospective minister is this: has he the right views about Christ’s return? Many are sure that the appearance of Christ and the attendant thousand years of peace are right at our doors. “Millions now living,” says one popular preacher, “will never die.”

Of course this anticipation has shone in the hearts of the Christians at different periods ever since the ascension of our Lord Christ. To all the early Christians, as one of the celebrated liberal theologians has said, Christ’s first appearance on earth was provisional. His real and glorious coming was to be sometime in the future. In the Book of Acts we read that, as the heart-broken disciples after his ascension stood looking steadfastly into heaven, “Behold, two men stood by them in white apparel who also said, ‘Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye behold him going into heaven.’” One of the best attested of early New Testament books, the Book of Revelation, says, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him.” The Book of Revelation and the Gospels both also proclaim that he shall come like a thief in the night. Most of the Book of Revelation is a glorious picture of the coming of the Promised Ones. In the little apocalypse, the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew, Jesus tells of the darkening of the sun, the falling of the stars, “the end of the world”, or “the consummation of the age”, the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds like lightning shining from the east and seen even in the west.

What is the meaning of it all? One party today takes these prophecies literally. The other

¹ Tawra[h or t], pl. tawrát (tawráh). The Law or Torah (Tawráh, Pentateuch), is a part of the Old Testament.

party declares such interpretations to be scientifically impossible. How could Christ ride on a cloud? Where would he come from? Modern astronomy teaches us that above us there is only interstellar space. If Christ came on the clouds in physically visible glory so that every eye could see him how could he also come as a thief in the night?

The difficulties in the interpretation of these prophesies have led many liberals to declare that the coming of Christ is just a general and gradual outpouring of the spirit of truth. They quote the Gospel verses, "The Spirit of Truth shall be in you", "The Kingdom of God is within you". Christ returns in each one of us, they say.

But of course the clear text of the Bible and the whole religious history of mankind proclaim the special outpouring of the divine splendour in great prophets or Manifestations. They are the collective centres around which all religions revolve, from which all draw their dynamic power. And the Gospel of John (sixteenth Chapter) clearly says, "The Spirit of Truth shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever things he shall hear these shall he speak." That is, he is a promised person, the "Prince of the World" (John 14:30) who, because he is pure and perfect like Jesus can receive inspiration, transmit it to the world and lead us into all truth. In fact, after His Spirit has taught us He will also be within us. It is no longer I that live but He that liveth in me.

If then we are to reconcile science and religion, if we are to reconcile the passages of the New Testament themselves we must go beneath the letter and find the spiritual significance of these Bible verses. Jesus, as he himself declared, always spoke in parables.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said, in New York City, "Do not satisfy yourselves with words. Seek to understand the meanings of the scriptures hidden in the heart of the words. It is difficult to comprehend the words of even a philosopher; you can [XIII:6:148] then see how difficult it is for one to understand the word of God."

What, then, is the real spiritual significance of these prophesies about Christ's second coming? The explanations of the great Bahá'í teachers, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are so penetrating, so life-giving that they open a new epoch in the spiritual understanding of the Bible and the sacred books of the world.

Interpretation of the symbols

From the Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahá'u'lláh.

"The announcement of the angels to the people of Galilee that 'this Christ will return in the same way, and that he will descend from heaven' is a spiritual message, for when Christ appeared he came from heaven, although he was outwardly born of Mary. As he said, 'No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven.' 'I have come from heaven, and will likewise go to heaven.' By 'heaven' is not meant the infinite phenomenal space but 'heaven' signifies the world of the divine Kingdom which is the Supreme Station and seat of the Sun of Truth. To be brief: the mysteries of the Holy Books are many and require explanation and elucidation. I hope thine insight will be so opened that the divine mysteries may become manifest and clear."

"O thou who believest in the Spirit of Christ, in the Kingdom of God!

"The body is composed, in truth, of corporeal elements and every composition is necessarily subject to decomposition. But the spirit is an essence simple, pure, spiritual, eternal, perpetual and divine. He who seeks Christ from the point of view of his body has in truth debased him and has gone astray from him. But he who seeks Christ from the point of view of his spirit will grow from day to day in joy, in attraction, in zeal, in nearness, in perception and in vision. You have, then, to seek the Spirit of Christ in this marvellous day.

“The heaven to which Christ ascended is not infinite space. His heaven is the kingdom of his Lord, the Munificent. As he said, ‘The Son of Man is in heaven.’ It is evident, then, that his heaven transcends the boundaries that surround existence and that he is exalted for the people who adore him.

“Pray God that you may ascend to this heaven and taste of this food. And know that the people have not understood even to this day the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures. They believe that Christ was deprived of his heaven when he was in this world, that he had fallen from the heights of his elevation and that later he ascended to this elevated pinnacle, that is to say, toward the heaven which does not exist, for there is only space. They expect that he will descend from this heaven seated upon a cloud. They believe that there is in the heavens a cloud upon which he will be seated and by which he will descend: whereas the clouds are vapours which rise from the earth; they do not descend from the heavens.

“The cloud mentioned in the Holy Scriptures is the human body because it is a veil for them, which, like the cloud prevents them from seeing the Sun of Truth shining in the Horizon of Christ.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Question: “Then you do not mean this phenomenal heaven?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “I mean the heaven from which Christ descended and to which he ascended—the heaven of divine Will, the heaven of spirituality.”

“Said Jesus: ‘I go and I come again.’ And in another place he said: ‘I go and another will come who will tell you all that I have not told you and will finish all that I have said.’ These two state- [XIII:6:149] ments are in reality one, were ye to witness the Manifestations of Oneness with the eye of God. ... If the sun of today says ‘I am the sun of yesterday’, it is true; and yet if according to daily sequence it says ‘I am other than the sun of yesterday’, this is also true. Likewise consider the days: If it be said that all the days are the same, it is correct and true; and if it be said that according to name and designation they differ from each other, this also is true as thou seest. For though they are the same, yet in each one there is a name, quality and designation which is different from the other. By the same method and explanation, understand the station of separation, difference and oneness of the Holy Manifestations.

“As to the words, ‘The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall cease to give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven,’—the purport of sun and moon as mentioned in the words of the prophets is not confined to the phenomenal sun and moon which are seen; nay, rather, they have intended for sun and moon manifold meanings. ... One meaning of the ‘sun’ is Suns of Truth which dawn from the dayspring of Pre-existence and transmit bounty to all the created beings. These Suns of Truth arcs the universal manifestations of Divinity. ... When these Suns arise the world is renewed, the rivers of life flow, the seas of beneficence move, the clouds of grace gather and the breezes of bounty blow upon the temples of beings. ... In the primary sense sun, moon and stars signify the prophets, the saints and their companions through the light of whose knowledge the worlds of the visible and invisible are enlightened and illumined.

“It is certain that during every subsequent Manifestation ... the sun and moon of the teachings and law under which the people of that age are enlightened and guided become darkened, that is, their efficiency and influence vanish.”

“By the darkness of the sun and moon and the falling of the stars is intended the aberration of the divines and the abolition of the laws established in a religion.”

“In like manner understand the meaning of (the new heaven and the new earth). By the

earth is meant the earth of knowledge and wisdom; and by heaven the heavens of religion.

“The purpose of these allegorical words ... is to test the servants as mentioned so that the soil of excellent and shining hearts may be distinguished from barren and mortal soil. This has always been the divine law. ... Shouldst thou make the mirror of the heart pure and clear from the dust of prejudice thou wilt comprehend all the symbols in the sayings of the perfect word of Divinity in every Manifestation and be informed of the mysteries of knowledge. But unless thou destroyest with the fire of severance the veils of learning which are conventional among the servants thou wilt not attain to the brilliant morn of the ideal knowledge.” (Compiled from *The Book of Íqán*.)

For the fuller explanation of these Bible symbols one should read first ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Some Answered Questions* and then Bahá’u’lláh’s *Book of Íqán*. There these universal minds outline in detail the new philosophy of religious history, the succession of the divine Manifestations, the real meaning of the prophesies in the holy books.

XIII:6, September 1922 [XIII:6:150]

From the unpublished diary of Ahmad Sohrab

During his sojourn in Palestine with the Centre of the Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, while the Great War was raging all over the world.

The story of Ismá’íl, the Persian Jew

The carriage was waiting for us at the foot of the mountain. We entered it and started on our way. The road was so muddy and slushy that the wheels sank up to their spokes. In the carriage there was a Persian Jew by the name of Ismá’íl who had been a friend of the Master’s for forty years. He is an orthodox Jew with a strong faith in prophecy, believing firmly that the Messiah will appear in two years. He knows a great deal about the Bahá’í Revelation and has met Bahá’u’lláh. Several times he promised the Master that if the Messiah did not appear at such and such a date he would leave Jewish traditions. But on the grounds that his reckonings were wrong each time he changed the date. Now he swears that this will be the last date and in two years his promised Messiah will appear and will make all the people Jews.

Since our arrival in the Holy Land the Master has seen him many times and helps him always. He is an old man with thin, white beard and he has been in ‘Akká and Haifa for forty-two years. Yesterday he came to Abú-Sínán and this morning the Beloved took him back.

“Now tell me, Ismá’íl,” the Master said, while patting him gently on back and cheeks, “art thou sure that the Messiah will appear in two years? If he does not appear at that time wilt thou continue to believe in the Talmud and the Rabbinical lore? Several times thou hast covenanted with me, and every time thou hast broken the compact. This must be the very last time; otherwise I will punish thee.” Ismá’íl pledged his word that this would be the last time and that he was sure, very sure, that the Promised One would appear in 1916.

Then the Master spoke about the Muslim and Christian calendars, the prophetic dates mentioned in the Book of Daniel, the scattering of the Jews at the time of Titus, and the destruction of Jerusalem. Then he asked me to read aloud, for the benefit of Ismá’íl, the articles published in *Servati-Founun*, especially the translation of his address in the Jewish Synagogue in San Francisco. As we neared ‘Akká he related some funny stories of his experiences in Tiberias in former years.

“O Ismá’íl,” he said at last, “through the power of God I have, been able to prove the divine station of Christ to thousands of Jews in America. ... What can I do with thee? They are the real Israel. They are free from prejudice. But thou art different.”

When we reached ‘Akká we were glad to find ourselves once more under the sheltering

roof of the home of Bahá'u'lláh. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered his room he sat quietly on his divan and said: "Alí! We escaped from Abú-Sínán, did we not? Although the [XIII:6:151] weather there was dry and delightful, I did not feel at home. In this room, the room of the Blessed Perfection, I feel happy and composed. Nowhere else do I feel so joyous and happy as in this room. Here, here I realize the peace of the spirit!"

Luncheon was served and Ismá'íl and I found ourselves at the table. The Master said: "Hast thou read *Vahye Koudek*¹ (the little revelation)? It contains many prophesies concerning events in 'Akká. It is a wonderful book. Mírzá Ya'qúb, who was a good Jewish Bahá'í brought it to me. If you can get this book you will enjoy its contents."

Ismá'íl did not eat the food cooked by the Bahá'ís so the Master with his supreme attention to all details had ordered a dish suitable to his taste. "We let everyone enjoy freedom of conscience," he said. "We have no prejudice."

The story of the miser of Balsora

The Master often tells us stories about the misers of different countries. Here is one of them:

Once upon a time there was a merchant in the city of Balsora.² His name was Riḍá. Although he was very wealthy he was the most close-fisted, narrow-hearted man that ever lived in his town. For avarice and penuriousness he had become a proverb among his countrymen. Through his stinginess he made his family suffer hunger and starvation.

In his office he had a clerk to whom he paid a very small salary. This clerk had a large family and though he practised the greatest economy he could not make both ends meet. Often he dreamed of a raise in salary, but in vain. At last an idea flashed into his mind and gave him hope that surely there would be a raise soon. There was but one more week before New Year's day and the poor clerk thought that if he gave a present to his master he would undoubtedly reciprocate and increase his salary. Hence, on that very day he went to the market, bought the head of a sheep, cooked it in his oven and carried it on a tray to the house of his master. The week passed without any sign and finally, on New Year's day he called at the house of the merchant to wish him happiness. He was most hopeful, and anticipated a bright future.

When he entered the room the merchant greeted him effusively. This made him more hopeful still.

"I thank you very heartily," the master said to his clerk, "for the gift you sent to our house. It saved us a great deal of expense, I assure you. We have been feasting on it for the past week. The first day we ate the ears; the second day, the eyes; the third day, the skin of the head; the fourth day, the tongue; the fifth day, the meat; the sixth day we cleaned the bones and on the seventh day we ate the brains."

The clerk was so disgusted with this exhibition of stinginess that he left him, and left the town, and sought his fortune elsewhere.

After travelling for several years and acquiring experience as well as riches he returned to his native city and opened a business of his own. One day as he was walking through the main street his attention was attracted by a most palatial residence. He peeped through the gate and beheld a most beautiful garden. He finally inquired from one of the many servants lounging about whose house this was.

¹ Wahy al-Kúchak.

² Basrah (Basra) port in southern Iraq.

“Art thou a stranger?” they asked.

“Not exactly.”

“Well, how is it that thou dost not know that this is the house of Kareem,¹ the son of Riḍá?”

“Oh,” gasped the former clerk, “what the father hoarded the son is spending!”—and disappeared through the crowd.

Another incident regarding Ismá‘íl, the Jew

This morning ‘Abdu’l-Bahá called us into his room. Ismá‘íl, the Jew, was also present. The Master was in a jovial mood and asked Ismá‘íl whether bread, [XIII:6:152] tea and olives were “Kosher”. He replied, “They are Kosher.”

“Art thou thyself Kosher or Taref?”² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked him pleasantly.

“I hope I am Kosher. I wish good to everyone. I am not seeking to harm any soul. If a man curse me or beat me I still like him. I am living according to the religion of my father. If these things constitute the condition of being Kosher, then I am Kosher.”

“Well said,” replied the Master, “I know thou art sincere in the profession of thy religion and that is the reason why I love thee so much.”

Ismá‘íl replied: “I know one thing. Any moment I am ready to sacrifice my life for the Master. For the last forty-two years you have ever been kind to me and on several occasions have saved my life. This has nothing to do with faith. This is love. I declare by Jehovah, if you ask me at this very moment I will die for you gladly, knowing well that I have won the good pleasure of Abraham. Jacob and Moses.”

Then the Master asked Ismá‘íl: “How old was Moses?”

“One hundred and twenty years,” he replied. “But the patriarchs, such as Noah and others lived many hundreds of years.”

The Master said. “The age of those ancient prophets as recorded in the Old Testament is symbolic. It has a spiritual interpretation. Wert thou informed of the science of anatomy thou wouldst realize that this human mechanism and these material organs cannot last more than one hundred and twenty years.”

Ismá‘íl inquired: “Where is the seat of thought?”

The Master replied: “It is generally understood that the seat of thought, consciousness and volition is in the brain. The brain is the organ of the intellect and understanding. The heart also plays a part through the central nervous system. Thus the activities of the brain and the heart by means of afferent³ and efferent nerve fibres are linked together. Figuratively speaking, the brain is like a mirror. When it is turned toward any object, whether in the east or in the west, that object will immediately be reflected on its surface and consciousness is realized. In the world of dreams consciousness is awake and works uninterruptedly.”

“Come, come, friends,” the Master said, as we waited at the threshold. “Let us talk tonight of the old times.” He asked me what news I had. I told him I had heard that Badí‘ Afandí’s school in Abú-Sinán had increased in numbers and that it was no more my room but a Bahá‘í

¹ Karím.

² Yiddish *kásh'r* (“fit”, “proper”), kosher. Yiddish *ṭreyf* (*taraf*), derived from Hebrew “torn” (by wild animal), *ṭreyf* or non-kosher.

³ Afferent: physiological—bringing inward to a central part; specifically, designating nerves that transmit impulses to the central nervous system, as to the brain: opposed to efferent.

school. He laughed and said: "What dost thou want with a room of stone and clay? I have prepared for thee glorious rooms the walls, the roofs, the floors, and the furniture of which are of pure deeds and immortal virtues. Therein thou shalt abide forever. Badí' Afandí is a capable, efficient teacher and loves the children. He is striving in service and wishes to perfect the work which he undertakes. Perfection of work is man's greatest reward. When a man sees his work perfected and this perfection is the result of incessant labour and application he is the happiest man in the world. Work is the source of human happiness."

About two hours before sunrise I was called from my bed by one of the two Bahá'ís who spent the night here in the house. The Master was up; the samovar was boiling and tea was prepared for our delectation. It was thirst for the "spiritual tea" which awakened me and I dressed hurriedly and made my way through the darkness to the other house. I opened the door of the blessed room and entered unannounced. The Master was sitting in his accustomed place on a divan in the corner next to the window. Only a candle was burning on the oppo- [XIII:6:153] site table which was strewn over with books. There was a pause and a stillness and the dim light added to the mystery and the magic of those sacred moments.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's eyes were closed, his white beard shone; over his countenance was spread the calm of the deep. His spotless white turban towered above his head and as I looked I beheld his silvery locks flowing beautifully over his broad shoulders.

Out of the unutterable stillness the voice of the Beloved of the hearts was heard.

"Happiness is the ambrosia of the spirit and the nectar of the souls. It confers on man the boon of immortality and the gift of spiritual vision. Happiness is the morning star guiding the wandering to the perennial abode of the blessed. Happiness is the crystalline river flowing from the heavenly mountains through the paradise of the mind and causing to grow upon its banks the imperishable ideals of humanity. Happiness is the cherubim of the Almighty which inspires mankind to perform feats of self-sacrifice and deeds of disinterested philanthropy. Happiness is the melodiously singing nightingale which transforms the darkened world of sorrow into the shining realm of celestial beatitude. Happiness is the surging ocean in the depths of which the diver finds the pearls of resignation and the corals of renunciation. Happiness is the elysium¹ wherein grow the asphodels² of good-will and the amaranths³ of forgiveness. Happiness is the heaven of God, the blue fields of which are studded with the bright rolling orbs of satisfaction and the fixed stars of contentment. Happiness is the scintillating crown of humanity the shining gems of which are the teachings of the past prophets and the principles of his holiness Bahá'u'lláh.

"The happiness of man is not dependent upon outward things such as riches, ornaments and clothes. It is, however, dependent upon the susceptibilities of the heart and the attitude of the mind."

XIII:6, September 1922 [XIII:6:153]

Segments of the circle

Marjory Morten

As a moderating influence in those moments when we, as Bahá'ís, approach the danger zone of dogma; as a solace in days of discouragement and at all times when we would make common effort with our fellows, it is well to be aware of the quickening influence on the world at large in the time of the Manifestation.

¹ Elysium—any place or condition of ideal bliss or complete happiness; paradise.

² Asphodel—any of a genus (*Asphodeline*) of plants of the lily family, having fleshy roots, narrow leaves, and white or yellow, lily-like flowers; especially the classic flower of death.

³ Amaranth—[old poetical] an imaginary flower that never fades or dies.

On the day of a wedding it is not only the bride and bridegroom, their families and their guests who make merry—the servants in the house, the grocer boy at the kitchen door, the very mouse in the pantry cupboard take share in the marriage feast. If we believe in the oneness of humanity, the interdependence of all creatures, the interaction and reaction of all life forces, we must know that the whole planet is quickened and vitalized in this day.

Although the world may seem to lack mighty protagonists in religious fields a thousand voices are raised by ardent men and women who see clearly that aspect of the truth which impinges on their own fields of endeavour and who faintly glimpse the whole truth. On every side we find indications of the spirit; in the average individual who cries for things spiritual in revulsion of discouragement against the meliorist¹ who would right the [XIII:6:154] world through practical efforts; in the economist who realizes our racial interdependence; in the commercial producer who is aware of the pragmatic result of co-operation; in the orthodox churchman who would abandon the old competitive system in spiritual matters, no longer trying to live a holier life than his neighbour but making the greater effort to be good with others. And in the world of fiction and verse we have many writers who are working for a larger unity: Well's vision of a World State or World Federation; John Galsworthy who, calling art the pacifier pleads for a closer artistic understanding among nations and sees in art an international agent in bringing races together; Thomas Hardy who sees pure literature and religion as one in that they modulate into each other and who, alive to the failure of the churches to rouse the spirit in a materialistic age is seeking to link religion and science or rationality through the medium of poetry.

Such men would teach a world which for centuries has played with aesthetic as a relaxation after labour; would show the coming generation that true art is not a thing to beguile the hard way of life, to soften and make lovely the routine, but rather an expression of the super-consciousness, a channel between mind and spirit. All these efforts are good, even if those who make the effort are not fully aware of the spiritual connotation.

And in science it is possible to read great spiritual truths clearly symbolized in terms of scientific formula. Viscount Haldane in *The Reign of Relativity* declares that modern men of science realize the entirety of the world—a single whole in which fall matter and mind alike. And the knowledge of the oneness of the world scientifically is shown in an article on the work of Dr F. B. Sumner in the July *Current Opinion*. “We need to remind ourselves that the organism is not an isolated fact in nature, but is part of a complex system of interacting forces. It is utterly unintelligible, it does not even exist, except in organic relation to the outer world.”

Even in Einstein's disconcerting discovery that light rays experience a curvature in passing through a gravitational field, deviating toward a heavenly body in passing it, we can discover a symbol of the attractional curve we must perform as rays in this day of the Sun of Manifestation!

In this country we find hopeful signs in the trend of our magazines. Such monthlies as *Asia* and the *Geographical Magazine* which gather interesting matter from the earth's far corners, and others such as *Our World* which in covering every phase of world events and activities achieves much more than an assembling of alien facts; makes indeed frank profession of an effort to unite the world.

And there is much food for encouragement in such articles as the very significant editorials of Dr Frank Crane in the July *Current Opinion*, calling the need of a revival of faith, of spiritual enthusiasm, a “revival whose war cry shall be humanity”. And he is aware of the need of a prophet who will “fire the imagination and conscience of the race with the beauty of human

¹ Meliorist—person believing that:

- a) the world naturally tends to get better and, especially, that this tendency can be furthered by human effort
- b) the betterment of society is possible by improving people's health, living conditions, etc.

brotherhood.”

And if we see on every side a growing knowledge of the need to promote solidarity and more or less conscious effort to build a new structure to house the world family, we find too, scattered chips and fragments of raw material ready for the builders. The very language of the day enriched and vitalized by the words, love, brotherhood, co-operation, unity, is an indication of the material at hand. These words have become part of everyone’s daily vocabulary. Old words, to be sure, outgrowths of terms coined perhaps by the first man of vision, but relegated for so long to the word-pouches of the poet, the mystic, [XIII:6:155] the dreamer; only used in general with an apologetic reservation or linked with their foster-sister words utopia, millennium. And if these expressions are in the mouths of all the people of the time—in some cases of course only parrot repetition—the realities they signify must truly be held in the hearts of many men.

These words represent ideals, and ideals whether they are racial memories of past perfections, or dim concepts of a future state are always possible of achievement—and that possibility is near or remote according to the intensity of our desire to achieve. Now with the release of the great force, the cosmic urge through the appearance of the Manifestation the ideal is straightway translated into a working platform for the work-a-day world; made practical rather than poetic—brought into actuality out of the dream consciousness of the race—these great words love, unity, brotherhood.

Furthermore the name of God and such expressions as we have of God, Divine Guidance, The Power of the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, are no longer confined to religious discussion, and are freed from doctrinaire taint. Not so long since, at any rate in our western world the word God was rarely heard outside of religious groups and orders entrenched in a common understanding, except in theological argument.

Recently I came upon a letter from the editor of a venerable American magazine, the *Atlantic Monthly* to Ralph Waldo Emerson. In this letter he tells Emerson that the magazine has agreed to publish a series of articles by Thoreau and asks him to urge Thoreau to behave himself and not write about God!

Heretofore your average man in casual conversation used the name of the Deity timidly, with self-consciousness, often following it up with the eager assurance that the First Cause or Primal Will were acceptable synonyms. And how utterly taboo was “Holy Spirit” or “Holy Ghost”, narrowed in the popular mind to the Apostolic bounty.

All these words for so long cloistered and shut from common life have in this day suffered a re-birth, become newly informed with spirit, and their habitual use in the time of this Revelation is a manifestation of the divine breaths brought into objectivity and given actual form on this plane.

Yes, we must become increasingly aware of all these indications of the quickening of planetary consciousness. But this awareness in no degree lessens our responsibility as Bahá’ís, rather does it emphasize our responsibility to sharpen and focalize this consciousness to the most poignant of realizations, to touch the very heart of the race to a recognition of the source of this new life.

XIII:7, October 1922 [XIII:7:163]

The universal language of the spirit

Talk given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in his home at Haifa, Palestine, 19 November 1921 at the regular six o’clock evening meeting called “The Persian Meeting”. Mr John D. Bosch of Geyserville, California, was the only occidental present among the sixty friends who met at this time, just nine days before the passing away of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In fact, this was the last public talk given

by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Persian meeting when an occidental attended. Interpreted by Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí Afnán.

Taken down in Persian by Dr Luṭfu'lláh Ḥakím.

'Abdu'l-Bahá opened the meeting by saying to Mr Bosch:

"Although you are here with these assembled friends and cannot speak with them nor they with you, yet you can speak with one another through the heart. The language of the heart is even more expressive than the language of the tongue and is more truthful and has a wider reach and a more potent effect."

Mr Bosch said: "This is a wonderful spiritual experience—to be here with the friends."

'Abdu'l-Bahá then said: "When lovers meet it may be that they cannot exchange a single word, yet with their hearts they speak to one another. Thus do the clouds speak to the earth and the rain comes down; the breeze whispers to the trees; the sun speaks to the eyes of men. Although this is not actual speech yet this is the way in which the hearts of the friends talk together. It is the harmony between two persons, and this harmony is of the hearts. For instance, you were in America and I was in the Holy Land. Although our lips were still yet with our hearts we were conversing together. The friends here love you very much. They have a real attachment for you although with the tongue they cannot express it."

Mr Bosch said: "I am very glad. I love them too."

'Abdu'l-Bahá then said: "If this love is real and true, if it is from the heart it will characterize itself by self-sacrifice. When the attachment is superficial friends do not sacrifice themselves even to the extent of a hair's breadth.

"His holiness the Christ loved both his disciples and believers to such an extent that he sacrificed his life for them. His holiness the Supreme (the Báb), loved the friends to such an extent that he gave his life for them. The Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) loved the friends so much that for their sakes he accepted a thousand difficulties and afflictions. Four times he was exiled. He was banished from one place to another. [XIII:7:164] His properties were confiscated. He gave all—his family, his relatives, his possessions. He accepted imprisonment, chains and fetters. His holy person was imprisoned in the fortress of 'Akká until the last moment of his life. He was made to suffer more calamities, afflictions and difficulties than could be enumerated. He had not a moment's rest. He had not an hour's comfort. He was continually under the greatest hardships and ordeals. What great persecutions he endured from his enemies! What great afflictions he bore from his own relatives! He accepted all these trials for our sakes so that he might educate us, so that he might make us illumined, so that he might make us heavenly, so that he might change our character, change our lives, so that he might illumine our inmost self. All these troubles he accepted for our sakes. He did indeed sacrifice his life for us. This love is the real love. This is the inner attachment and the genuine friendship. This is the love which sacrifices one's all, one's life. This is the reality of love. He accepted all these troubles.

"All this, cannot be accomplished by merely talking. It cannot be done by saying. 'I love you', or, 'How is your health', or, 'You are my beloved', or, 'You are esteemed'. This is not love. This is an attachment that will break in the testing. This is why one sees persons associating with one another, appearing to be enwrapped with one another. Each seems to sacrifice himself for the other. But when they part they become as strangers. This is human love. It is not spiritual love; it is not divine love; it has no real foundation and in the time of testing it will fall and disappear.

"If you should go to Persia and mingle with the friends there and should be in the house of any one of the friends, and people should come in to take you to kill you, you would then

witness how the owner of the house would sacrifice himself for you. He would sacrifice himself for you rather than allow even one hair of your head to be hurt. This is love! It has happened often in Persia that the friends have sacrificed themselves for one another. This has happened many times. This love is the love of God.

“The King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs were two souls who were greatly honoured among the people. They were very wealthy. They were extremely comfortable. The people pillaged all their property. They put them in chains. They put them in prison. The Sháh of Persia decreed that they should be killed; that they should either deny their faith or be killed. The notables came to them and advised them to renounce their faith. The friends came and advised them; even the government advised them to recant so that they might save their lives. But they would not deny. They continued to cry aloud, ‘Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!’ (O, Thou Glory of the Most Glorious!) And so they were martyred.

“This is the love of God! This is the love of the heart! This is divine love!”

XIII:7, October 1922 [XIII:7:171]

From the diary of Ahmad Sohrab

Written in Palestine during the Great War

While we were drinking our tea, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came down and sat at the door of the house speaking with an Arab friend, Ahmad Effendi Jerah.¹ He had been to dine with Šálih Muḥammad, and it was late at night when he returned. Khusraw preceded him carrying a lamp to light the way, as it was very dark. Some of the believers were still waiting for him when he came in. He asked them to wait for a moment, as he was longing to see them, and then went upstairs. In a short time he descended, and we were all waiting, many of us sitting on the floor, as there were not enough chairs.

“When people invite me alone to their houses,” he said, “I ask them to prepare only one dish. Simplicity in food is best. But when they invite others beside me, I do not interfere with their arrangements.”

Then he asked whether anyone had come from Abú-Sinán.

“During the days of the Blessed Perfection,” he continued, “when I got up in the morning, the first thing I did was to inquire about the health of all the believers, one by one; and then I called on those who were sick to see how they were. If their indisposition was slight, I cared for them myself; otherwise I sent for the doctor. Then, this duty performed, I went to the school and examined the pupils. To those who were doing well I gave money or gifts; others I encouraged to push forward. Thus all the students who were graduated from that school received much praise, and were given scholarships in Damascus and Constantinople.”

“In every undertaking, constant vigilance and attention are necessary, for, no matter how perfect an organization, if negligence creeps in, it will little by little lose its efficiency. If a piece of farm land is left to take care of itself, [XIII:7:172] or if the supervision of the farmer is slackened, the farm will be either abandoned or it will turn into a thorny patch.”

“I have carried in my mind for some time an educational system, but so far there have been no means for its realization. If that system were once beaten into workable shape, in two years’ time the children would have studied four languages. At the age of ten they would study sciences; and at the age of twelve they would be graduated. I wanted to establish such a trial school of eighty-one pupils, all six years of age, the children to be brought from Persia and ‘Ishqábád, the teachers to be engaged and transported from America. But a number of unforeseen difficulties have prevented me.”

¹ Jerah from Hebrew “moon”, and in Arabic, Qamar. Aḥmad Afandí Qamar.

The Master spoke this morning to Mírzá Badí' about his school for the children. He said: "I know thou art exerting thyself in the instruction of the children. The life of man must be productive of some results, otherwise his non-existence is better than his existence. As I said before, this teaching of the children is a service to the Blessed Perfection. Whosoever serves the world of humanity in this or any other way is serving His holiness Bahá'u'lláh. Your heavenly reward is with him. The education of children is one of the most great services. All these children are mine. If they are educated and illumined, it is as though my own children were so characterized. They will become the servants and the maid-servants of the Cause of God, the gardeners in the vineyard of the Kingdom, and the lights of the assemblage of mankind."

Then he spoke with Shaykh Yúsuf about his ('Abdu'l-Bahá's) own education—of how he was an exile and a prisoner from the time that he was nine years old and consequently never entered even the common school. This is an historical fact, and there are many people still living who bear witness to this fact.

Then he explained in detail the puzzling question of the "Trinity" and demonstrated from both a scientific and religious standpoint that "trinity" not only exists in every religion, but in philosophy as well. In the Mosaic dispensation there was (1) Elohim, the "I AM", (2) the burning bush and (3) Moses; in Christianity, (1) the Father, (2) the Holy Ghost and (3) the Son; in Islám, Alláh, Gabriel and Muḥammad. In philosophy we say, the mover, the motion and the moved; the cause of causes, the cause and the effect; the Illuminator, the illumination and the illuminated; the Creator, the creation, the created; the teacher, the knowledge, the student; the Giver of bounty, the bounty, and the recipient of the bounty. In principle, every religionist believes in this explanation in so far as it applies to the founder of his own faith; but when this same principle is applied to the founder of another religion, he refuses to accept it. Thus, while they are agreed as to reality, they disagree in mere names and historical personalities.

At a quarter past two in the afternoon we left 'Akká in the carriage and started on the never-to-be-forgotten drive along the horseshoe beach toward Haifa. The sea was smooth and the weather was bright and clear—quite transparent.

"Since my return last year," the Master said, "I have not driven along this shore because the train service was so much more comfortable. Now we have returned to our original way of travelling. I judge by the traces of the wheels on the sand that there is already quite a regular schedule established."

On the way we saw many detachments of soldiers going this way or that, and many of them stopped to salute the Master. We proceeded on our drive and finally came upon companies of fishermen who had cast their nets into the sea. Wide-spreading, broad nets they were, [XIII:7:173] and some of the men were drawing in the ropes. But the nets were still far out in the sea. The net of another group could be seen, being brought nearer and nearer to the shore; and still another group had landed their catch and were on the eve of departure. When we reached the second group, the Master asked Isfandíyár to stop the horses so that he might watch the proceedings. The net was at last drawn out upon the beach, and one's heart was touched to see the great mass of palpitating, quivering little fishes. There were actually thousands of them. As I looked I was reminded of the days of Christ and his fishermen disciples. I spoke of the similarity of the scene to the Master. My few simple words suggested the subject, and he delivered a most remarkable talk as the carriage rolled over the hard, white sand. He said:

"His holiness, Christ, because of the vocation of his disciples, gave them the title of 'fishers

of men'; but the Blessed Perfection designated the Bahá'ís as the 'vivifiers of the world'.

"Today this world is like a rolling, tumultuous sea. The Bahá'ís are practised sailors and trained fishermen who, with the net of the Love of God and the strength of the Word of God, deliver the poor fish from the whirlpool of destruction and bring them to the haven of safety and salvation. Although the fish of the sea, when once drawn out of the water, die, yet the fish of humanity, when they rise out of the sea of darkness, passion and lust, are immediately transformed into sweet-singing nightingales soaring in the atmosphere of holiness. They break forth into charming melodies and give joy to many hearts. The fish of the sea of nature are blind, deaf and mute; but when they enter the ocean of God they become seeing; hearing and eloquent. The Bahá'ís are displaying great effort and they manifest far-reaching magnanimity. The confirmation of the Blessed Beauty is their net; unity and concord is their bait; attraction and enkindlement is their trap, service and self-sacrifice is their support. They cast their net into the great, turbulent sea and day by day they deliver new fishes. What delightful service is this to the world of humanity! What fruitful exertion is this in the universe of God! What noble striving is this in the path of the Kingdom! What heavenly privilege is this in the promulgation of truth! What divine splendour in the illumination of the souls of mankind! The apostles of his holiness Christ were very religious; very faithful, very spiritual and severed from all else save God. They were inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit, and laboured with heart and soul for the diffusion of the lights of the Kingdom of the Father. They strove for the progress of their souls, to be characterized with the qualities of loyalty and faithfulness and with whole-hearted sincerity. They fished by day and by night. They took no rest nor did they seek after any comfort. The Bahá'ís must walk in their footsteps, imbue themselves with their endurance and learn their patience and long-suffering. Let them not lose their courage in the face of difficulties. Let them be the fishermen of the sea of spirituality. Let them sail on the ocean of the world of humanity in the swift-moving vessels of assurance and certainty. Let them save the half-famished fish from the sea of doubt and hesitation and instruct them in the teachings and principles of God."

XIII:7, October 1922 [XIII:7:180]

The wisdom of the apostles

From a tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

"In order to spread and teach the cause of God two of the Apostles went to the city of Antioch. No sooner had they arrived than they started to exhort and give counsel to the people. As the inhabitants of the city were totally uninformed of the divine principles they started to censure and arraign them, which finally ended in their persecution and torture and imprisonment. The details of these sad events did not reach the Disciples and thus the way of association and communication was entirely barred.

"But when Peter heard about it he started for that country without delay. Having entered the city he commenced in the beginning to associate and fraternize with the people until, little by little, he became the loving companion and comrade of the nobles and ministers. In a short space of time he became well known for his piety, godliness, virtue, explanations, knowledge, perfections and excellences of the world of humanity. Finally he became acquainted with the king of that country and consorted with him with joy and fragrance. When Peter saw that the king was relying upon him with the utmost confidence, trust and assurance,—one night apropos of some question, he brought in the name of the Apostles. The king told him that some time ago two such ignorant and illiterate souls had entered his city and, having begun to deliver seditious speeches, he had ordered his officers to arrest them and put them under chains and fetters. His holiness Peter expressed a passing wish to meet them. The king commanded his attendants to bring them in to the audience chamber. According to the requirements of the place and time Peter appeared not to recognize them and then asked:

“Who are you? Where do you come from?”

“They answered: ‘We are the servants of his holiness the Spirit of God (Christ), and we come from Jerusalem.’

“Then he asked about his holiness, the Spirit: ‘Who is he?’

“They said: ‘He is the Promised One of the Bible and the Desired One of all the servants.’

“Afterward, in the spirit of the antagonist, he asked them the universal and particular questions and at every step contended with them. Often the very nature of the question gave them a clue as to how to answer.

“In short, one by one, he put the doubts and scruples of the people in the form of questions and they gave convincing answers. Now and then he would accept a number of their explanations, and anon, he would wave aside a set of others bringing forth counter propositions so that the audience might not find out that he also was one of them. In brief, several nights were spent in these interrogations and answers, now in refutation, again in acceptance, then in discussion and anon in controversial contention until all those who were present became fully informed of the fundamental principles of God and all their uncertainties were dispelled. Then, on the last evening he dramatically announced that truly all that (they had) heard conformed with reality; and everyone agreed with him. Then, and not until then everyone realized that this third person was the friend of the first two souls. For this reason it is revealed in the blessed verse: ‘We have glorified them by the appearance of a third person.’

“This story illustrates the meaning of wisdom. Therefore the teacher must speak according to the acceptable standard of the place and the time so that his words may affect the hearts and the people may understand his address. Teaching the Cause of God in this manner will produce fruits. We must not remain stationary and silent. If the thousand-voiced nightingale does not break into musical trills and rapturous melodies it is like a mute sparrow. If the thrush of the rose garden of significances does not sing tuneful lays and sweet airs it is the speechless, wingless jaybird. If the dove of the garden of mysteries does not coo it is the raven of the wretched ash heap. If the peacock of the Paradise of immortality does not display its multi-coloured plumage it is the black raven of the desolate ruin of mortality. Consequently, if ye are of the birds of the gardens of sanctity flutter ye your wings and soar heavenward. If ye are of the nightingales of the Ridván of the Lord of Lords then sing and warble His glorification. If ye are of the lovers of the countenance of the Almighty then raise your voices and demonstrate your sincerity. If ye are of the wooers of the face of the Beloved then cry and weep disconsolately, so that you may throw an earthquake into the pillars of the world, burn the hearts of mankind with the burning fire of God’s conflagration, intoxicate and exhilarate all the lovers and yearning ones with the wine of glory and attain to the ultimate hope of the favoured ones and the highest aspiration of the sincere ones.

Recorded and translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

XIII:7, October 1922 [XIII:7:182]

Ios, the shepherd boy

Some parables concerning the laws of the spiritual life

Ios was a shepherd boy who tended his flocks in the valleys and on the sloping hills of Persia. He was poor and simple, and knew no life but the care of his sheep, but one love he had and one great longing—it was to behold the face of his King. He had never seen this One of whose greatness and goodness he heard wonderful tales, and he felt that he would live content and die happy if he could but once behold his face.

One day Ios heard that the King with his retinue would pass on the highroad not far from his pasture. Shaken with the intensity of his love he left everything and stationed himself on the road. At last the Royal Procession appeared, haught boys on horseback, soldiers and buglers glittering and gorgeous in the sunshine.

Ios' eyes gazed past all this to the royal equipage slowly approaching, with flushed face and throbbing heart he watched for the face he had waited and longed for all his life.

Seeing that the procession was stopped in its progress the King enquired the cause and was informed that a poor shepherd boy stood in the way and begged to see him. The King commanded that the boy be brought, and Ios trembling with joy came to the side of the carriage, and gazed long and steadfastly on the face he adored. The King amazed at this ardent look said "Who art thou I?" "Ios, the shepherd boy, my King," he replied. "What dost thou seek from me?" "Oh my King," he said, "All my life I have longed for thee. The utmost desire of my heart has been to behold thy face. Now I am happy and content, I can return to my humble life forever blest since I have beheld thee."

The King was greatly touched and looking long and earnestly as the boy passed on his way.

But the memory of Ios haunted him—such love he had not known. All those who surrounded him lived by his favours and bounty, but here was one who sought nothing, asked nothing—who could live and die on the memory of his face.

II

The King's yearning for Ios grew so strong that at last he sent for the shepherd boy and had him brought to the palace. Ios came with eager joy and presented himself trembling and radiant, before the royal presence. Then the King was greatly pleased with Ios and made him the guardian of his treasure and reposed in him a high trust.

But those who had lived by the King's favour were filled with jealousy and tried to find some fault in Ios so that they might destroy him in the eyes of the King. They watched day and night and soon they found a flaw. In the silence of the night when all were sleeping they saw Ios creep stealthily forth, wind his way through the palace and enter a small room far up under the roof. "Ah," they said, "He is robbing the treasury and storing away the treasure in a secret place." Then they hastened with the news to the King. That night he watched with them and saw Ios steal away to his secret hiding place. The King followed, threw open the door and entered the [XIII:7:183] room. It was bare and empty, but on the wall hung the shepherd's coat Ios had worn and his crook with which he tended his flock. "What is the meaning of this, Ios," he exclaimed, "That thou dost creep to this room silently in the dead of night, and thus arouse suspicion when I have so trusted thee?" "Oh, my King," replied Ios, "When first I beheld thee I was a poor ignorant shepherd boy, but thou hast raised me to this lofty state through thy pure bounty and generosity, therefore, I never wish to forget from what I came, but to remain ever humble and grateful to thee. Thus I come each night to reflect on what I was and what Thou has made me through Thy bounty, generosity and favour.

III

One day while the King was riding with his courtiers and favourites he opened a wallet in his saddle, and cast handfuls of precious jewels in the road. His friends stopped, dismounted and gathered the gifts scattered by his loving hand. Ios alone remained at his side with his eyes fastened on the beloved face, never glancing away. Then the courtiers murmured saying, "See Ios, he despises the gifts of the King and will not trouble himself to attain them." The King looked at him and smiling said, "How is this, Ios, dost thou despise my gifts?"

"Never have I desired anything from thee, but to behold thy face, this has been and ever shall be sufficient for this servant."

IV

In Persia they have a great variety of delicious melons and it is the custom in this season to hold feasts and serve this abundant fruit to the guests. When the season came and the melons were ripe the King held a feast and invited many people. Ios was absent engaged on some service, but presently the guests saw that there was one melon left uncut. Then they murmured among themselves saying, "You will see that this melon, which is no doubt very sweet and delicious is reserved for the Beloved of the King," and soon the King sent for Ios, and cutting the melon gave him a piece saying "Thou, too, must partake of my feast. I have kept this melon for Thee." The King also took a piece, but when he tasted it he exclaimed "This melon is as bitter as gall, how couldst thou eat it, Ios?" But the boy replied, "All my life I have received sweet from thy hand, now if thou dost give me bitter shall I refuse it? For bitter is sweet from the hands of my King."

V

That which the King valued in all his domains was the Royal Gardens, which were vast and very beautiful with trees and flowers, lakes and fountains, and where every living thing was safe and protected, for it was forbidden therein to kill. And Ios so lived in the King's heart, was so loved and trusted that he made him the guardian and custodian of this Garden of Life and Beauty, which was the highest honour in his Kingdom. Then Ios faithfully guarded his trust.

One day as Ios was walking in the beautiful Gardens, the King's son, who had been jealous of him crept stealthily up behind him and swiftly shot an arrow from his bow and fled. It pierced the breast of a swan and the red blood flowed down the pure white breast into the water, and the swan swayed and drooped and died.

Ios stood aghast with grief and horror, gazing at the swan then at the bow lying in the path at his feet. As he stooped to pick it up a gardener approached and accused Ios of killing the swan. Then the man hastened to the Royal Presence and told what Ios had done. The King summoned him and said "What hast thou done?" Ios bowed his head in silence. "Speak," the King commanded, "Who has slain the swan?" But Ios would not speak. The King's heart was breaking and he exclaimed, "Thy silence condemns thee. If thou dost not speak and justify thyself I shall banish thee forever from my [XIII:7:184] face." Ios lifted his eyes and looked long on the King's face, then meekly bowed his head and went out from his presence and went alone into exile.

Time passed and the Prince's conscience gave him no rest. He saw how his Father grieved for Ios, and at last he heard that Ios was dying of a broken heart in his lonely but far away. Smitten with remorse he threw himself at his Father's feet and confessed to having killed the swan. The King in great grief sprang up and cried out, "Take me to Ios." And when he came in haste to the but he found him dying. He rushed to him, clasped him in his arms, kissed his brow, his lips, while his tears rained on his face. "Oh, Ios, my servant, my Beloved, thou must not leave me; I love thee, thou hast sacrificed thy life for my son." And Ios, lying in his arms, gazing upon his face exclaimed: "I die in Paradise upon Thy Breast, my King!"

(These stories of Ios were told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Lua Getzinger and are here transcribed from memory by May Maxwell.)

XIII:7, October 1922 [XIII:7:184]

The Bahá'í cause and the Chinese people

... [XIII:7:185]

...

The Chinese are just waiting for the universal light of the Bahá'í Glad Tidings. "China, China, China-ward the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh must march," says 'Abdu'l-Bahá. "Where is that

holy, sanctified Bahá'í to become the teacher of China! China has most great capability. The Chinese people are most simple-hearted and truth-seeking. The Bahá'í teacher of the Chinese people must first be imbued with their spirit, know their sacred literature, study their national customs and speak to them from their own standpoint and their own terminologies. He must entertain no thought of his own but ever think of their spiritual welfare. In China one can teach many souls and train and educate such divine personages that each one of them may become the bright candle of the world of humanity. Truly, I say, the Chinese are free from any deceit and hypocrisies and are prompted with ideal motives. Had I been feeling well I would have taken a journey to China myself!"

One day on Mount Carmel 'Abdu'l-Bahá told of his plans to go to China in the days of his imprisonment and exile, of how he longed to travel to all nations in the service of the Kingdom. But for forty years he was a prisoner. He prefaces his story with these words about how Bahá'u'lláh loved to describe the glory of teaching:

"Whenever during his lifetime the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh) desired to signalize anyone with his special favour he encouraged him to go forth and teach the Cause of God. When he spoke to one of the pilgrims or wrote to a far-off Bahá'í concerning the promotion of the Cause, inciting the former and the latter to arise and deliver the message of the Kingdom everyone felt instinctively that these souls were elected, the chosen ones and that the glances of mercifulness had encircled them. It is noteworthy to remark that most of the general epistles of Bahá'u'lláh, embracing comprehensive teachings and principles are revealed in the names of the teachers of the Cause. A number of rare, spiritual souls having consecrated themselves to the promulgation of the glad-tidings of the Kingdom were peculiarly favoured by him. Whenever their names were mentioned in his presence his countenance became all wreathed in smiles. This was the most notable proof and clear evidence of the favour and bestowal of the Blessed Perfection. When he happened to discourse on teaching and teachers he waxed most eloquent, his words inspired the hearts, his face became radiant with the anticipated joy of a humanity instructed in the laws of God and the application of the laws of nature, and his unquestioned; divine authority filled the listeners with such fiery enthusiasm for the promotion of the Cause that they were ready to give up their lives to execute his command. He used to say that the teachers were the Isráfils of God who, with the sound of their trumpets blow the spirit of life into the dead bodies of mankind.

"One day, in the course of his talk, he praised so much the lives and services of the teachers of the Cause and expressed such high appreciation of their unselfish lives that, although I was a prisoner, I said to myself: 'O! That I might be confirmed in this!' Then I thought I might go to Káshghar, one of the provinces of China and a place not visited up to that time by any Bahá'í teacher. I was going to travel alone and with no baggage—only a handbag containing a number of tablets and books and papers and pens. I secured even my passport; the old Muftí stood as my guarantor. When the crafty Mutašarrif, Ibráhím Páshá, heard about this he sent his secretary to me with the message: 'I have heard that your Excellency contemplates taking a long journey. I will [XIII:7:186] not be so disrespectful or discourteous as to thwart your plan or in any way hinder your departure but, as I am the Governor of this province, I am responsible to the central government for everything that happens here. Therefore, it will be but my official duty to send a cable concerning your departure as soon as you set your feet on the steamer.' I was familiar with the fortuitous ways of oriental expression. So I saw that this was a polite way of saying: 'We will not let you go!' Hence I deferred my departure to a more opportune time."

"China is the country of the future. I hope the right kind of teacher will be inspired to go to that vast empire to lay the foundation of the Kingdom of God, to promote the principles of divine, civilization, to unfurl the banner of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and to invite the people to the banquet of the Lord!"

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá recorded and translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

XIII:7, October 1922 [XIII:7:186]

The morn of unity

From the Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

“O ye friends of God! The morn of guidance is radiant and the hearts of the people of faithfulness are like unto a garden. The divine breeze is blowing, the Spirit of God is manifest, the faded hearts are quickened and rejuvenated. ... Turn your faces toward the rose garden of God for, verily, the fragrances of the Holy Spirit are passing by. Gaze ye toward the Kingdom of Abhá for his Ancient Bestowal is descending. Look ye up toward the Supreme Horizon for the Sun of Hope is dawning. This bestowal is one of the most particular gifts of this great cycle for from its beginning to its end it is the dawning place of the penetration of the lights of the Ancient Beauty. Therefore appreciate ye the value of these times and let not the opportunity slip by from your hands, for the zephyr of the morn of unity is blowing and the rays of the Sun of Reality are shining from all horizons of the universe with universal force. This century is the beginning of all future generations. The standards of guidance shall wave over all countries, yet in this period the power of confirmation is most perfect and well nigh inexhaustible and the lights of unity are irradiating from the hearts of men. To take one step in this day is equal to one hundred thousand steps in the future and to inhale one breath in this age is compared to one hundred thousand breaths in the future, for this is the beginning of the age of grace, the time of the downpour of the rain and the season of the heavenly spring.”

[Page 18 from *Japan will Turn Ablaze* has been omitted.] [XIII:7:187]

...

“The germinating and growing trees join the babbling brooks and the sighing pines in the singing of their anthems. May you also resuscitate the dead souls with the wafting of the breeze of divine grace. Praise be to God that the bounty and bestowal of the Blessed Perfection are with us; his confirmation, his spirituality, his advice, his exhortations are with us.

“He has given us an irresistible power which all the nations of the world cannot withstand. May you ever be under the protection of God. May the Almighty Father assist and protect you. I shall never forget you. I shall ever remember you. You will always be in my thoughts. I hope you will not forget me. I trust that the ideal bonds, the spiritual communication may ever become stronger and firmer. These celestial ties are eternal. Whenever I supplicate and entreat toward the Kingdom of Abhá I shall beg for you confirmation and assistance, that the door of all good may be opened before your faces so that each one of you may become a sign of guidance and a flag of peace.

“The portraits which are drawn on the canvas of the world have become very antiquated. Now you must become inspired to paint new life-like portraits in the frame of the universe with the delicate brush of the spirit.”

Recorded and translated by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

XIII:7, October 1922 [XIII:7:187]

Bahá'í notes¹ [XIII:7:188]

Just before his ascension 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to the new friends in Korea to whom Miss Alexander had told the Glad Tidings of Unity these stirring words:

¹ Extract.

“Your heartfelt sincere greetings have reached ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ears and your message gave great spiritual happiness.

“Praise be to God! That celestial light guided and led you to the Sun of Reality, bestowed everlasting life and granted heavenly illumination. Ye are like seedlings which have been planted by the hand of Bestowal in His spiritual rose-garden. It is my hope that through the warmth of the Sun of Reality, the pouring down of the showers of mercy and the wafting of the breezes of bestowal ye may progress day by day so that each one may become a blessed tree full of leaves and flowers and may cast your shade over great multitudes.

“The graces of the Kingdom of Abhá are the rays of the Sun of Reality. It illumines the earth and heavens, makes the star a shining moon, turns the speck into a huge mountain, bestows strength upon the weak, gives everlasting healing to the sick, grants heavenly treasures to the poor, confirms the oppressed ones to (win) everlasting glory and turns the people of darkness into the people of light.

“O heavenly friends! The doors of heaven have been opened, the lights of God have shone forth and the heavenly call has been raised. Summon ye all humanity to listen to this heavenly call and invite them to the celestial world so that they may find a new spirit and attain to a new life. In all conditions my heart and spirit are with you.”

XIII:8, November 1922 [XIII:8:207]

The plain of ‘Akká

Haifa, Palestine, July 1922.

On the afternoon of Thursday 6 July, Fugeta and I went to ‘Akká, or rather to Bahjí. Isfandíyár drove us, and the young man who looks after the electric lights, I think his name is Ḥusayn, went with us because the next day was his day for charging the batteries at Bahjí. We left the Pilgrim House at about five o’clock. That is certainly the ideal time of day to make the drive from Haifa to Bahjí. The trip was beautiful—the sea was so blue, the air so fresh and cool. We talked as we went, sometimes in English, and occasionally Fugeta had a bit of conversation in Persian with the others. Some of that I could understand, and some I could not. At about six-thirty the sun sank, and a mass of great, billowy clouds covered the place where the sun had been. In the east the moon was already quite high, very large and bright.

In ‘Akká we drove through the market, to buy some watermelons, and then out through a break in the city walls. There we could see the different walls very well. First there is a heavy wall, then a very deep moat, forty or fifty feet wide, I should guess; another heavy wall, a second moat; a third wall, and another big ditch. The big ditches or moats are quite dry now, but in ancient times they were filled with water as a protection. As one comes out on to the plain of ‘Akká one can see in the distance the hill from which Napoleon tried to conquer the fortress.

In the twilight the drive from ‘Akká to Bahjí is very lovely, everything is so quiet and peaceful. There are faint sounds of men and animals softened by the distance, a truly pastoral scene. The Roman aqueduct along the road is very interesting. It does not go back to the time of the Romans, but has been built since the time when Bahá’u’lláh first came to ‘Akká. The picturesque old towers are not merely ornamental, as I had supposed, but are for the purpose of lifting the water, and then dropping it with force so that it will go along again for a distance without losing all its momentum. There seems to be a very plentiful supply of water, and the people all along the course of the aqueduct use it, and there is plenty of it for use in ‘Akká. [XIII:8:208]

It must have been seven-thirty or eight o’clock when we reached Bahjí. The friends there were not expecting us, but they gave us a most cordial welcome. We found there the very

pleasant keeper of the Tomb, ‘Abdu’l Kázim, his young helper, and an Arab policeman. We people from Haifa made a group of seven people, and a very good time we had. I cannot find words to describe how fine a man ‘Abdu’l Kázim seems to me. He is so pleasant in manner, so sincere, so cheerful, so devoted to his work there. When I thanked him for things that he did for me he insisted that I must not thank him, for he was the servant of Bahá’u’lláh, and therefore my servant. When I told him how lovely the garden about the Tomb was, he said, “Yes, it is the garden of Bahá’u’lláh, and therefore it must be beautiful!” I shall always remember him as one of the loveliest Bahá’ís I have ever met. I think that ‘Abbás Qulí at the Tomb on Mount Carmel is just as splendid and attractive and loveable, but I cannot speak English with him, and so I cannot get so well acquainted with him. ‘Abdu’l Kázim speaks quite a bit of English.

After we had rested a little while, Fugeta and I went into the Tomb. It was dark by that time, and the lights in the Tomb were lighted. The thing which seemed to me most beautiful about the lighting was that the lights were so placed that they shone out from under a fern in the centre of the little inner garden. The light came out soft and green through the fronds of fern. The lights were not all on when we first went in, and I liked it better with the softer light. We stayed there in prayer for perhaps half an hour. There are so many people, so many causes to pray for, as well as for oneself, that time goes very, very quickly! Afterward, Ḥusayn turned on all the lights so that I might see them. They turn into a blaze of light, and made me think of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comment, when he was in America, that Bahá’u’lláh always loved light; that they might be economical about everything else, but that he always told them to have much light about him. Fugeta also drew my attention to the vase that the American Bahá’ís had sent in memory of the Master’s visit to America. The vase was made by Tiffany, and it is very beautiful. It is of bronze, with insets of jewels and cloisonné¹ work. The latter is of a most exquisite blue, shading off into yellow, as it curves up the slender neck of the vase. It is a very, very lovely thing, as is worthy of such a place.

When we returned to the house supper was not quite ready, and I sat out on the little porch, and talked to Isfandíyár, in a wild mixture of English and Persian. However, I learned several new Persian words, and he learned their English equivalents. I like Isfandíyár very much. He is full of fun, devoted to the Master. He certainly gives himself absolutely in service, now to the family of the Master. He is usually busy from early morning till night, driving the Family or the friends to near and distant places. Fugeta said that taking the two of us to Bahjí, and then to ‘Akká the next morning was quite a vacation for him.

We had a delicious supper, and were very happy at it. We had three lots of food—which we shared together—what Fugeta and I had brought from Haifa, what the policeman had prepared, and what ‘Abdu’l Kázim and his companion had cooked. We had little pats of chopped meat, stewed okra, meat browned in the pan, with tomatoes on top, olives, “mast” (something like Dutch cheese), watermelon, bread, and a “sweet” made of sugar and the ground seeds of some plant. The Arab policeman seemed a very pleasant, friendly fellow. The men say that he is the nicest of the policemen who have been stationed there at the Tomb.

After supper Fugeta and I went for a walk, down through the great pine trees, and beyond. The night was absolutely perfect. The moon was almost full, and shed a soft, clear light down on the fields and orchards. Everything showed clearly, and the view of the Tomb through the trees was beautiful. It was the most calm and quiet of any evening scene I have ever had the joy of seeing. Occasionally some bird would call from a [XIII:8:249] near-by tree. In the distance a shepherd was playing on a pipe, and its notes came to us softly and sweetly. It was so exquisite that it seemed a pity to go in and leave it, for the mere purpose of going to sleep.

¹ Cloisonné: A type of enamel work in which the surface decoration is set in hollows formed by thin strips of wire welded to a metal plate.

I had a nice big room, with three windows, below which there was a wide divan. Before I went off to sleep I sat a little while in the window looking at the soft radiance of the moonlight, and listening to the sweetness of the shepherd's pipes.

I slept so well that I did not waken until five-thirty, which is late as people count rising-hours here! After breakfast Fugeta and I went into the Tomb for a little while. It is very beautiful there in the cool of the morning. Immediately after that Isfandíyár had the carriage ready for us to go to 'Akká. There he drove us directly to the house which I had visited before, in which Bahá'u'lláh had lived for fourteen years—nine of them in one room. It has a beautiful view of the sea and of Haifa in the distance. We met several friends there, and talked to them a few minutes, but did not stay long. Everywhere in 'Akká the friends were the personification of hospitality, asking us to stay to lunch, and if we would not do that, to at least come in long enough to have some tea. From there we walked about the town, first going to see the old Bahá'í Pilgrim House. To reach that one climbs a long flight of steps, and comes out on a wide balcony built about four sides of a large square court-yard. The place is a sort of apartment house! Opening onto the balcony are various "houses", perhaps six or seven on a side. It was one of these that used to be the Pilgrim House. Then many of the other apartments were occupied by Bahá'í families. The Master used to go to the Pilgrim House in the morning, and all the friends from the different houses would come and gather about him there. It is a wonderfully interesting old place. Up till quite recently there have been Bahá'í families there on the court, but now they have all moved away. After we left the balcony we went down onto the wharf, from which we could see the outer wall of the Pilgrim House which has a small balcony on that side overlooking the sea. We then went through the bazaars. They were most interesting, especially one very old one, under a series of high arches. In one shop we met a very old Bahá'í, who had been Bahá'u'lláh's cook, in the time when the friends were in the barracks. I think that he and the Greatest Holy Leaf are almost the only survivors of that group. He was as cordial as all the friends are, and said that he would be very unhappy if we did not come and sit down in the shop a while, and he would make us some tea. I was very glad to see that old man!

From the bazaars we went to the old house within the prison walls, where the Master used to live, the one with the garden in the centre, with the tall date palm, and the long flight of steps leading up to the Master's room. There are houses on three sides of it, and a high wall on the fourth side. The garden in the centre is very well kept, and a Bahá'í friend of 'Akká who had joined us said that the garden had been just like that when the Master was there. And there was the tall date palm that I had seen in the pictures. There are two long flights of steps, in opposite corners of the courtyard. In the corner directly opposite that is another flight of steps, and at the top of that is the door that led directly into the Master's rooms. It is now overgrown with a great bougainvillaea vine which shadows it completely. Apparently that entrance is not now used at all, and the vine is much in need of trimming. We went part way up the stairs, but the door was locked and so we had to content ourselves with looking at the outside of it. The rooms in that corner face the sea. We left the court through a gate in a heavy fortress wall. Outside is another wall, beyond that a narrow opening, then another wall, and then the sea. The friend who was with us pointed out the place under some trees where the Master used to pitch his tent, and receive visitors. It is all just as Mr Chase described it in *In Galilee*.

It was not far from that house until we came to the barracks. This time we entered it from a new entrance that has been made recently. We crossed over [XIII:8:210] one of the great moats, and after getting permission to enter, were let in through a door that opens into the court-yard, quite near the tower in which Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned. The scene in the court-yard was a great change from what we had seen two years ago. All of it except the end at which we entered was cut off by a barb-wire fence, and beyond that was a garden. The great

reservoir in the centre had been whitewashed, and was as white as new snow! Everywhere was cleanliness and order. About the reservoir were planted a circle of eucalyptus trees which were higher than a man. And in the corners were flower gardens in a very flourishing condition. It was a tremendous contrast to what it must have been when the pilgrims and exiles first entered in the sixties. There were a number of soldiers about, resting or looking after the garden. We were not permitted to go inside the wire fence, so we did not see again the rooms at that end of the barracks. The rooms that Bahá'u'lláh and the family occupied are in good condition, clean, and apparently not used by the soldiers. The friend who was with us told us what each one of the rooms was used for, the one the Master had, the one that was used for a kitchen, the one where they used to gather on feast days, etc.

When we entered the carriage we drove directly to the Riḍván. It was good to come in sight of the water-wheel on the end of the island and to see again those narrow, quiet streams of water that cut the Riḍván off from the mainland. In the Riḍván we went directly to the lovely spot under the mulberry trees. How I love that place! I should have liked to stay there for several hours, meditating and dreaming, in that place which is so far out of the world.

At the lower end of the garden we came to the little house in which Bahá'u'lláh had lived while in the garden. We went up a flight of steps to the room Bahá'u'lláh had used, and entered there. It is kept in excellent order, with a number of pieces of furniture Bahá'u'lláh had used. There was the chair he had used, with a wooden chest built about it. Then there was a great table with inlaid-wood top. The top lifted up like the lid of a grand piano and inside were dozens of little pigeon-holes in which he used to keep tablets, manuscripts, etc. In it also were a pile of lovely peacock feathers. The young gardener from Bahjí was with us, and I was utterly astonished when he took out one of them and gave it to me. I love peacock feathers for their beauty of colour, and to have one from the garden of the Riḍván was a most beautiful gift. There were also two or three other pieces of furniture that Bahá'u'lláh had used. After leaving there we went back to the mulberry trees, and I had a few minutes quietly there. It is the most exquisite place!

Riḍváníyyah Khánum told me once about the days there in the garden during the time of Bahá'u'lláh. During the days of the feast of Riḍván the immediate family were there with him all the time. But each day he would invite nine of the friends from 'Akká to spend the day with him. They would come early in the morning, have lunch with him, and not go home till evening. Then on the next day another nine would come and stay. Imagine how the friends must have looked forward to their day in that garden! Riḍváníyyah Khánum said that Bahá'u'lláh was very fond of all beauty, colours, odours, etc. Also that he was very kind to the children. One day he found a number of the little girls playing together, and he asked them what they would like to have. They apparently did not express any wish, but he guessed at what they might like. So he sent a man away and when he came back he brought for each girl a slender gold bracelet, as a gift from Bahá'u'lláh.

Just as we were leaving the Riḍván the gardener brought me a great bunch of flowers which he had picked for me, dahlias, phlox and several kinds of which I did not know the name.

G. L. C.¹

XIII:8, November 1922 [XIII:8:211]

Some questions asked-let us consider them

Dr Frederick W. D'Evelyn

There is a spirit in this age. Men are reacting to its influence. This reaction is shaping

¹ Dr Genevieve Lenore Coy (1886-1963)?

questions, moulding comments and formulating surmises. Our best sympathies are awakened.

The *Times Literary Supplement* (London) recently stated, "There will be changes in the Christian religion;" "What form, no one can say." We advance the claim that Bahá'í elucidation reveals the dawn of a New Cycle comprehensively enough to include all pre-manifested truth and light, thereby establishing a spiritual consummation. Amplify this claim and we find it covers the "change" and the "form" inquired of by the *Times Literary Supplement*.

This article further advances two questions of most commendable conception. The first, one of faith: "What think ye of Christ?" The student of the Bahá'í teaching would ask to have the question read, "What know ye of Christ." The measure is found in *knowing*, not in *thinking*. (We shall return to this later.)

The second question is: "How is the fullness of life to be lived in the narrow way: how is a sincere acceptance of Christianity to be reconciled with a free and generous view of civilization?" This is a great question and when the *Times Literary Supplement* adds as a context, "Neither of these problems will be solved in a generation or a century" we halt, but are neither fearful nor dismayed for the solution is with us today. Our author says, "we need God" and, if Christians—a "Christ". This later he magnificently interprets "as a spiritual and universal Christ who includes but transcends the Jesus of the Gospels."

We are passing the junction, and are now nearing a common highway. The *Times Literary Supplement* uses "Names", conventional and orthodox, and, we almost suspect, unwittingly, with their accepted valuation. The Bahá'í is instructed to consider freedom from "Names"—long since sundered from their birthplace and baptism—as blessed. Dogma helps us in no wise with our responses. Having concreted error its subsequent "teachings" are confusion.

In the world of Divinity, identity and quality are one. "Christ" is a station, an attribute, not a surname. The "Word" is inseparable from the identity and quality of Divinity. *Word* and *God* are one. No duality, perfect unity. The station of the Christ is the station of the Word. The station of the Word is the station of God. The Christ station and the God station are perfect unity, inseparable. The Christ (station) thus dwells in but transcends the mere personality of each and all the Mighty Human Temples through which God (the Word) has spoken. No section of the world of humanity has any monopoly of Divine rights. "The Essence of My Light is Universal."

This station in its comprehensiveness and oneness permits the "knowing" (the knowledge) of Christ, eliminating the doubting of "mere thinking". The *Times Literary Supplement* claims Christianity is not and can not be the same thing as civilization, for "just as it has a supernatural creed, so it has a supernatural life." This estimate is surely a mere ecclesiastical reflex, a product of limitation. [XIII:8:212]

Reverentially we would express the conviction that nothing would be more un-Godlike than to impose a "supernatural" life and creed upon man, compel him to sojourn "upon earth", to do His will, recognize His presence and yet deprive man of all possibilities of compliance, thus reducing his existence to a mere phase of probation, unreality and detachment. We admit full sympathy with the viewpoint of the *Times Literary Supplement* a sympathy which is still more heightened when the writer asks for a "Christianity" which *knows* that one who gives himself wholly to music or astronomy is as fully a Christian as one who gives himself wholly to the service of the altar or to work amongst the poor. We shall not dissect the claim nor cross-examine its ideal. We prefer rather simply to quote from Bahá'í utterance confident that in so doing we shall afford an evaluation and answer and at the same time confirm our sympathy already expressed.

"The Word (Essence) of God is the spirit of Reality. All things owe their existence to it. Its

light when cast upon the mirrors of the wise gives expression to wisdom; reflected from the minds of artists it produces manifestations of new and beautiful arts; when it shines through the minds of students it reveals knowledge and unfolds mysteries.”

Therein is no limitation. “Reality” (Word) is universal; also inexhaustible. Apart from this “Christianity and Civilization” and all the composite conventionality associated therewith become mere terminologies possessing no creative innateness.

The *Times Literary Supplement* modestly asserts, “his paper is to raise questions rather than answer them.” Joining him in the station of the journey—goal-ward—the service of endeavour heralds comfort and assurance to us; we desire his best activities in things that mean so much. His “questions” translated in the “Spirit of Reality” indicate a turning towards the Light (Centre), with a desire and attraction that will ere long solve for him how the “fullness of life is to be lived” in acceptance of knowledge which hath appeared.

In this category of viewpoints we can find “the spirit of this Age” urging Glenn Frank, Editor of *The Century Magazine*, “to certain prophecies” which for us are simply reflexes complimentary of the Reality we have already referred to. Mr Frank claims the advent of a spiritual renaissance of Western Civilization, not so much from a plan to *set* the world right as from a passion to *see* the world right. We have no desire to comment upon this further than to realize a very honest effort to introduce and establish a viewpoint which, however evident to himself, he is doubtful—and to us it seems justly so—if it will be equally so to his readers. He is timorous lest he may be judged as “predicting a mysticism that would sweep the world.” This he in nowise heralds. He concedes “the confusion of titles” when he says, “it is difficult to avoid this impression”, however, if one uses the word “spiritual” for mankind has ever insisted upon a clean-cut distinction between the spiritual and the secular. From us Mr Frank wins consensus of judgement when he adds “a distinction that is in my reasoning altogether false.”

Later, the way to our traveller seems mist-encumbered. We admit ourselves into his group of “certain minds” who find it difficult to grasp the “notion” that a vast spiritual movement can spring from the secular activities of science, industry and politics. The premises claimed in our earlier statements would simply reverse this order of estimates. We are almost persuaded that Mr Frank himself would assess our claim as a readjustment rather than a contradiction for he later concluded that “spiritual redemption must be brought to the morally impossible condition into which our western civilization has drifted.”

Mr Frank’s estimates as to the probable leadership of the “coming renaissance” are fascinating and arresting. Space prohibits detailed analysis. Further, tendering the explanation we do for the “spirit of this Age” the “leadership” is an already solved relation. The pronounced desire for the welfare of humanity quickens the “issue” taken [XIII:8:213] by Mr Frank and exalts his service into one of valued effort and direction.

It is undoubted that the “Secrets of Greatness” are being sincerely, faithfully and persistently sought for and to all thus seeking it is worth while to remember that our outward self, our inward self, must be consecrated in the service and sacrifice and, finally, it is necessary for the soul to prove the message and reach a station of belief through its own power of judgement.

This is indeed a high and noble birthright.

XIII:8, November 1922 [XIII:8:213]

Capacity and spiritual revelation

How often the eye falls unconsciously upon some word or printed page and a lasting impression is gained which is destined to grow stronger and stronger as the years go by!

Some time ago the writer picked up a magazine which seemed to have been published by some religious organization and was of the type of those usually distributed broadcast with the hope of carrying conviction to some searching soul. One of the pages bore an illustration of a granite sarcophagus. Huge blocks of granite formed the foundation, greater slabs the base and above these there rose the receptacle which contained the remains of the deceased, a case of granite cemented together and bound round with great iron bands, but—this was the story which the printing underneath the illustration related:

“The deceased whose tomb is here represented passed from this life an agnostic, denying God and scoffing at the idea of life hereafter. He boasted that he would construct a tomb which should prove impervious in the ‘day of resurrection’, from which his body might not issue to the summons of the ‘Last Trump’. How wise; and yet how unenlightened!

“Into a crevice of those granite slabs some slight breeze, or perhaps some bird of flight had dropped a little seed. Sun and rain had cast their magic spell upon this seed and it had sprouted carrying little by little a pressure which had caused the crevice to widen and widen until at the time of the photograph the iron bands were broken, the granite tomb separated and out of its midst there had grown a tree so lovely and symmetrical that it seemed to say by the very beauty of its presence, ‘What hath God wrought?’”

For those who have found the Bahá’í Revelation it is difficult to picture the time when there was any uncertainty as to life after death or to believe that there ever was a time when we were so far from reconciling science with religion that we could have believed in the resurrection of the physical body in the same form which it had borne when it was the temple of the soul! And yet the world has remained in darkness regarding this great subject and humanity is still struggling with it, save those who have been born into a knowledge of what the spiritual resurrection really means through the breaking of the seals by Bahá’u’lláh and the clear and lucid explanations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. All this puts one in mind of the talk given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá about “Capacity and Readiness”. He said:

“Wherever in the night a lamp is lighted people naturally are attracted to that light and gather around it. When there is a gathering in the evening in any place it is indicative of the fact that a light has there been lighted.

“There are lamps the light of which is limited. There are lamps which illumine the horizons. The lamp of the [XIII:8:214] guidance of God wherever lighted has illumined the horizons. Praise be to God! In this country the lamp of the guidance of God has been lighted and day by day its light is becoming more and more resplendent and this splendour is becoming more and more widespread. Now this is not known but later its traces will become evident.

“Consider how in the days of His Holiness Christ the light of guidance lighted twelve hearts. Twelve hearts were illumined by that light; and how limited it seemed! But how spacious it became, for it illumined the world!

“You are not a great body of people but, because the lamp of guidance has been lighted in your hearts the effects will be wonderful in years to come. It is evident and manifest that the world will be illumined. Therefore you must thank God that, praise be to God! through His favour and grace the lamp of the most great guidance has been ignited in your hearts and He has summoned you to His kingdom. He has caused the call of the Supreme Concurrence to reach your ears. The doors of heaven have been opened unto you. The Sun of Reality has shone upon you. The cloud of Mercy is pouring down and the breezes of Providence have blown toward you.

“Although the bestowal is great and the grace is glorious, yet, capacity and readiness are requisite. Without capacity and readiness the divine bestowals will not become manifest and

evident. No matter how much the cloud may rain, the sun may shine, the breezes blow the land of sterility will give forth no verdure. The ground which is pure and free from thorns and thistles receives and produces through the rain of the cloud of Mercy. No matter how much the sun shines it will have no effect upon the black rock. But in a pure and polished mirror its light becomes resplendent. Therefore we must obtain capacity in order that the signs of the mercy of the Lord may become revealed. We must endeavour to make the soil of the hearts free from these useless weeds and sanctified from the thorns of useless thoughts in order that the cloud of Mercy may bestow its power upon it.

“The doors of God are open, but there is need of readiness.

“The ocean of Providence is surging, but we must be able to swim.

“The bestowals of God are descending from the heaven of Grace, but capacity is necessary.

“The fountain of Providence is gushing forth, but we must have thirst.

“Unless there be thirst the salubrious water will not assuage.

“Unless a soul is hungry the delicious foods of God will not appeal.

“Unless the eyes are perceptive the light of the sun will not be witnessed.

“Unless the nostrils are pure the fragrance of the Rose Garden will not be inhaled.

“Unless the heart be longing the favours of the Lord will not become evident.

“Therefore we must endeavour day and night to purify the hearts from dross, to sanctify the souls from every fetter and to become free from the discords of humanity. Then the divine bestowals in their fullness and glory will become evident. If we do not strive and become sanctified from the defects and evil qualities of human nature we will not partake of the bestowals of God.”

N.S.F.¹

XIII:8, November 1922 [XIII:8:218]

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“All the created phenomena are subject to the law of change and transmutation. Youth is followed by old age, a tender plant becomes an old, decrepit tree, dynasties are born, wax strong, reach to the zenith of glory and then totter to the ground. Likewise every one of the world-religions has been the cause of progress and advancement in its own time, but now they have become like old, very old trees. They do not yield any more luscious fruits. Some people persist in the unscientific belief that these very old trees will again become young, push forth leaves, blossoms and fruits. This is impossible. This age needs a young, vigorous plant with world-wide growing capacity.”

“We do not oppose the religion of any one. We act in accordance with the Gospel. But we must also act in accordance with the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. They are: the oneness of the world of humanity, independent investigation of truth, abandonment of prejudice, universal peace, etc. You must act in accordance with these teachings.”

“In the coming of Christ the Divine teachings were given in accordance with the infancy of the human race. The teachings of Bahá’u’lláh have the same basic principles, but are according to the stage of the maturity of the world and the requirements of this illumined age.”—‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

¹ Helen ‘Nellie’ Steverson French (1868–1954).

XIII:8, November 1922 [XIII:8:220]

The Mount Carmel of the future

A prophesy given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the Shrine of the Báb, Sunday, 4 January 1920

“In this gathering,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “all the friends are assembled together in the utmost freedom, happiness and majesty. Nothing could be better than this. The day will come when this mountain will be resplendent with light,—lights from top to bottom. On one side of it there will be a hotel, a universal hotel. Its door will be open to all the people of the world. Whoever comes will be a guest. On the other side of the mountain there will be a university in which all the higher sciences will be taught. On another part of it there will be a *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*. On another part of it there will be a home for the [XIII:8:221] incurables. In still another part there will be a home for the poor. In still another part there will be a home for orphans. All these will be administered with love. I foresee that this harbour (Haifa) will be full of vessels. And from here to the Blessed Shrine (Bahjí) there will be wide avenues, on both sides of which there will be trees and gardens. On the surrounding land at Bahjí similar institutions to those at Mount Carmel will be established. And from all these places the songs of praise and exaltation will be raised to the Supreme Concourse.”

Regarding the Bahá’í Temple to be built on Mount Carmel ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote to Mr Charles Mason Remey of Washington, D.C., in a tablet dated 7 October 1921: “Some time ago I wrote thee a letter the content of which was that, praise be to God, thou hast become confirmed in drawing a plan for the pilgrim house in Haifa. It is my hope that this pilgrim house may be built under your supervision. Also in the future a *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* will be established on Mount Carmel. Thou wilt be its architect and founder. I give thee this glad tidings.”

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and

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XIII:9, December 1922 [XIII:9:233]

Reminiscences of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

[Original title: The Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]

On the twenty-eighth of November, one year ago, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ascended to the City of Light. The press and magazines all over the world have written of his life and world-wide spiritual influence. Mr Frederic Dean gives, in *The Independent and the Weekly Review*, of 24 December 1921, a personal reminiscence of his meeting with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in New York City in 1912:

“‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whose death was chronicled in the press the other day, was more than a personality—he was an inspiration; an idealist, whose self-devotion breathed new life into dying creeds. His gospel appealed with equal force to Christians, Muslims and Jews; to Buddhists and Hindus, Shintoists and Pársís. His idealism was to many a manifestation of the very source of life, light and love. He came at a time when the soul’s craving for hope and faith was—seemingly—unappeased by any one of the many organized and acknowledged religions.

“I first met the teacher in an uptown church. I had been sent by my paper to report the sermon. The speaker’s likeness to my own father was so startling that, immediately after the service, I entered the anteroom and told him of the remarkable resemblance. Very quietly he answered: ‘I am your father and you are my son. Come and dine with me.’ Another engagement prevented, but I asked if I might take breakfast with him the following morning. ‘Come,’ he said. I went. And after that first meeting followed others. We walked in his garden, and, as we walked, we talked. I told him of his peculiar attraction to me on account of my own

outlook on life; that I was a Buddhist—a Buddhist-Christian. ‘So am I,’ replied the teacher. ‘I am also a Confucian-Christian and a Brahmin-Christian; a Jewish and a Muslim-Christian. I am a brother to all who love truth—truth in whatsoever garb they choose to clothe it.’”

Major W. Tudor-Pole of London, England, who with General Allenby entered Haifa in August 1918 prepared a beautiful memorandum of the expressions of love and appreciation which government officials and the press gave to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá after his ascension. “As I write,” says Major Tudor-Pole, in conclusion, “certain memories come back to me with a strange insistence.

“I remember standing beside the Master in the pulpit of the City Temple, London, watching over five thousand people breathlessly absorbed in listening to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s living spiritual words, and in watching his every smile and movement.

“I remember walking with him through the woods at Clifton, 1911, when he spoke of the coming of a spiritual renaissance within the Christian Churches; or, wandering along the banks of the Seine at sunset, 1913, when the Master spoke of the Great War that was to come, and of the Most Great Peace that would ultimately follow it.

“I have sat beside him at Ramleh, Alexandria, Egypt, beneath the palms, and while he spoke of the essential unity of all mankind. There were Christians, Jews, Muslims, Pársís, Hindus and Freethinkers sitting around him on [XIII:9:234] that occasion, one and all united with the same faith and aspiration.

“I remember walking alone with the Master on Mount Carmel’s slopes, sharing his frugal meals in his Haifa house, listening to his melodious chanting within the Garden Tomb, living as one of the family within Bahá’u’lláh’s house at ‘Akká.

“There is no death. The Master lives on in our midst, and the great spiritual work of human redemption goes forward unceasingly.

“Despite the apparent world tribulations of the present hour, the dawn of a new Day approaches, and it is the privilege of every man and woman alive today to work serenely and faithfully for the coming of world peace and true human brotherhood.”

It is very fitting that in commemoration of the Ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá one year ago we quote some of the immortal sentences from the last will and testament of the Master as they were chosen by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause and Lady Bloomfield in their little book, “The Passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”.¹ We quote also the connecting sentences from this wonderful booklet and, at the close, extracts from two of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s last Tablets.

[Extracts from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Will and Testament* have been omitted.] [XIII:9:236]

...

In one of his last Tablets ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote: “Regard not the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, for he will eventually take his leave of you all; nay, fix your gaze upon the Word of God. Should it rise and be exalted rejoice, be glad and thankful even though ‘Abdu’l-Bahá be under a drawn sword, be imprisoned or be cast into bonds: for that which is of transcendent importance is the Holy Temple of the Cause of God and not the mortal frame of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The loved ones of God must arise with such steadfastness that should hundreds of souls, even as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself, be made a target for the darts of woe, nothing whatsoever shall affect or lessen their firm resolve, their intention, their ardour, their enkindlement, their service to the Cause of God. ... This, O ye beloved of the Lord is my counsel and my exhortation unto you. Well is it with him whom the Lord aideth to do even as bidden in this pure and sanctified Tablet.”

¹ Refer to *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. I, pp. 19–31.

His very last Tablet, graciously revealed for his loved ones in Stuttgart, conveys his reflections upon this transient world, and his counsels to his loved ones that dwell therein:

“O ye beloved of the Lord! In this mortal world, nothing whatsoever endure- [XIII:9:237] eth. The peoples of the earth dwell therein and spend a number of days uselessly, ultimately descending beneath the dust, repairing to the home of eternal silence leaving behind them no achievement, no blessing, no result, no fruit. All the days of their life are thus brought to naught: whereas the children of the Kingdom sow seeds in the fertile soil of Truth that will eventually spring up and bring forth many a harvest and shall forever bestow upon mankind its increase and bountiful grace. They shall obtain eternal life, attain unto the imperishable bounty and shine even as radiant stars in the firmament of the Divine Kingdom. The Glory of Glories rest upon you.”

XIII:9, December 1922 [XIII:9:242]

Two shining lights of Işfahán

The King of the Martyrs and the Beloved of the Martyrs
Jináb-i-Fáḍil Máẓindaránı́

These two celebrated martyrs were pure descendants of Muḥammad in body and soul. They were two fragrant roses, of beautiful colour, from his rose garden and were named after his two grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Their home was in the city of Işfahán, one of the great cities of Persia. They were distinguished from all others in excellence, popularity and wealth and were two shining stars in the heaven of the Cause of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. During the years 1844 and 1845 when dawned the morning of Reality the horizon of their race was illumined with divine lights and was honoured and favoured with the garment of guidance.

In 1846 His Holiness the Báb, because of the uprising of the learned men, was banished by order of the government from his native town, Shíráz to Işfahán. Then those who were thirsty for the water of knowledge and were seeking after the truths of religion in that city, Işfahán, attained to their wish through meeting His Holiness the Báb and were satisfied.

One night Mírzá Ibráhım, the noble father of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, invited the Báb to his house. Thus that place became illumined with the light of his presence and on that night showers from the clouds of grace and bounty poured [XIII:9:243] down incessantly and the heavenly banquet descended without interruption. From that time the light of guidance illumined the court of the consciousness of that entire family and they were renowned for their devotion to this Cause and became graceful and fruit-bearing trees in the divine rose garden.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh was after this banished from Persia by the order of the government. The blessed party arrived in Baghdád in 1852 and that city was thus for eleven years the dawning point of the light of guidance, the centre of the diffusion of truth and the dwelling place of the followers of pure religion and wisdom. During this time it was the privilege of these two brothers to travel from Işfahán to Baghdád. They attained to the meeting and nearness of the Holy Presence (of Bahá'u'lláh) and quaffed for a time from the sweet-flowing, salubrious river of the divine fountain-head. They became intoxicated with the life-giving wine of the love of God, achieved that which they wished and their utmost hopes were realized. They implored the source of favour and bounty that they might attain to the heights of glory and wealth, and this prayer was answered.

When they returned to Işfahán they had become like two falcons with powerful wings soaring to the apex of material and spiritual success. They were as new creations and a wonderful spirit appeared in these holy temples. The light in their faces announced the glad tidings of the bounties and bestowals of God. Their hearts reflected the divine light. Their countenances were radiant and luminous, their characters were like a rose garden, their

words gentle and their utterances were full of the precious gems of knowledge and spiritual susceptibilities. They were rich in the wealth of God and independent of all else save Him. In addition to this they attracted attention because of their material wealth. Their resources were plenteous from the business in which they were engaged and great was their reputation. The range of their business was extensive, they were in continual business relations with other cities and the important affairs of their city were entrusted to them. They associated with the leaders, the learned, the influential and wealthy merchants, with the high officials and were sought out by the needy and dependent. They were a refuge to the poor, a shelter for the orphans and widows, a protection for the failing ones, an ample treasury for the needy, a physician's remedy for every sick one and a help to every hungry traveller. They never refused those who asked of them and were the hope of the hopeless. The door of their generosity was always open to every one. For this reason, during the famine of Işfahán these two brothers gave away their wealth and furnished provision for the starving, caring for and saving them from death.

In those days the antagonism of the people to the Bahá'ís was very great. The scholars of Islám called them infidels and sentenced them to death and the government at that time, willingly or unwillingly executed them. Every day news reached the ears of the people of the various methods used in confiscating the property of the Bahá'ís and in murdering and imprisoning them. In this persecution Işfahán led all the cities, a wealthy and powerful Muslim Mullá there through his influence and authority causing the murder of a great number of Bahá'ís. One by one he attacked these innocent people, with his claws and teeth tearing and biting the harmless sheep and shedding their blood. For this reason he was named Dhi'b, the Wolf, and his son who succeeded him was called The Son of the Wolf. Bahá'u'lláh wrote for the awakening and guidance of this person a long and detailed epistle which is now circulated throughout the world. It is called *The Book of the Shaykh* and *The Epistle of the Son of the Wolf*.

The government of Işfahán was at that time in the hands of a cruel and unjust prince who destroyed many lives, confiscated property and seemed to derive special pleasure from the shedding of the blood of the innocent and oppressed. If the injustice and cruelty of this governor were told the narration thereof would fill a large volume. [XIII:9:244]

At such a time as this these two brothers, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, opened their home to all the Bahá'ís, fully performing their duties, fearing no one, nay, rather, they were the standard bearers of this blessed Cause in that city and the protectors of the oppressed. Whenever an attack was made by the enemies on any of the innocent they used every possible means to save that one. Their house was looked upon as the centre for the Bahá'ís who travelled back and forth and for general meetings. They feared not the hatred of the Mullás nor their public attacks and were so intoxicated with the wine of love and faith that they completely forgot themselves. They seemed not to live on this earth but to be soaring in another, an infinite realm.

When His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád, these two brothers, longing for martyrdom, sent a petition to him asking that their blood might be shed for the succour of the tree of the Cause of God and that they might ascend to the Kingdom. Indeed, in heart and spirit they had already arrived at their goal and had attained to true martyrdom, which is severance from one's own desire and annihilation in the will of God.

Such was the state of affairs until, in 1878, the great tragedy concerning these two brothers, which is here described, took place.

In the city of Işfahán there lived a wealthy Muslim leader. So numerous were his followers and so great was his influence that even the governor, strong and independent though he was, had to defer to him. Bahá'u'lláh called this person The Raqshá, that is, snake of beautiful spots with moles full of poison. Raqshá owed the two brothers more than twenty thousand dollars

and his property was in their control. In this year of 1878 they asked him to settle his account. And then a satanic scheme occurred to him. He determined to do away with them by accusing them of being Bahá'ís. Thus could he escape the paying of his debts and he might, perhaps, even plunder their great possessions. He disclosed, confidentially, this wicked plan to Shaykh Dhi'b, the Wolf, who responded with the utmost hatred and blood-thirstiness and promised his assistance. Together they resolved to carry out their terrible plan and accordingly called upon the governor and, complaining, said:

“These brothers, because of their high positions and many virtues, are gradually drawing the people into the cause of Bahá'u'lláh and are destroying the religion of Islám. Therefore it is your duty to bestir yourself that we may exterminate them.”

The prince at first was delighted, but later he asked to be excused, saying “No one has ever seen them commit any unseemly deed, nay, rather they are adorned with qualities and deeds which are pleasing to God and His creatures. For what crime could they be punished?”

They replied, “There can be no greater crime than to leave the religion of Islám and take shelter under the shadow of a new religion.”

The prince then said, “They are of the descendants of Muḥammad and we will be responsible to God.”

They answered, “We are willing to accept the responsibility as we will be the true murderers.”

Then Raqshá, The Snake, he who was so impatient and so anxious to have them killed, placed his hands upon his own neck thus signifying that the responsibility would fall upon him.

The prince said, “These two brothers are actively engaged in business in many cities and it is certain that if such a tragedy were to happen many merchants would suffer loss, their voices would be raised in protest and the Sháh might perhaps start an investigation.”

They replied, “We assume entire responsibility and will give you a written statement to the effect that we are prepared to answer any question which may be asked by the Sháh or by the merchants.”

They then gave him a statement in their own handwriting and promised him a large portion of the great fortune which they would appropriate. [XIII:9:245]

The prince at last agreed to their plan and decided to act accordingly. He advised them, however, to keep the matter secret for the time being, and not to let anyone know about it.

When the Muslim Christmas, the anniversary of the birthday of the prophet Muḥammad, came round it was customary for the people to call upon the governor and the scholars. This year, a large number, of varying rank, including a group of the governor's supporters, gathered at that time at the meeting-place of Raqshá, The Snake. All their plans were prepared in such fashion that the two brothers upon their arrival would be arrested.

The two younger brothers of the King of the Martyrs went to the meeting. When they were seated and had commenced drinking their tea Raqshá began to rebuke them severely, saying, “You are Bahá'ís, infidels, unclean and are leading the Muslims astray.” Then he gave orders that the teacups be knocked from their hands and the tea spilled. At this the butlers dragged the brothers to the prince, heaping upon them meanwhile the greatest humiliations.

Not knowing where the eldest and most eminent brother, the King of the Martyrs, might be, Raqshá started a search for him. He was at that time at the home of a famous Mullá of the city. This Mullá had the deepest love for him and held in high respect his ideals, his character and his knowledge. The King of the Martyrs on his arrival at the Mullá's home said to him:

“Through the intrigues of Raqshá and just because of his desire for my possessions a terrible tragedy will occur today. He has made full preparations for my martyrdom.”

The Mullá was a near relative of the prince and because of this fact was confident that his home could render protection. Warm-heartedly he said, “I will tell the prince of the intrigues of Raqshá and I will never allow any trouble to occur.”

By this time Raqshá had located the King of the Martyrs and his men, noisily seeking him, had arrived at the Mullá’s home. The Mullá instructed his representative to dismiss the men, whereupon they returned to Raqshá and informed him of the situation. The Mullá’s messenger meanwhile acquainted the prince with what had occurred and insisted that he listen to the advice of the Mullá. Whereupon the prince at once sent his foremost and strongest deputy with more than a hundred heedless ones with strict orders for the arrest of the King of the Martyrs. The deputy gave the Mullá a letter which warned him against protecting the King of the Martyrs and said that dissension among the influential Mullás would lead to terrible results.

When these violent and cruel officers stormed the house the Mullá at last fully realized the state of affairs. Compelled to go to the King of the Martyrs, with the utmost anguish and vehemence he explained the situation, whereupon the King of the Martyrs without grief or agitation but, rather, with supreme joy hastened out of his shelter and to the altar of love. The officers surrounded him as though he were a criminal and dragged him to the governor. While he was being dragged along in that sad and sorrowful state the crowds filled the streets and with their teeth gripped the finger of astonishment and amazement. Some of the people were weeping but the King of the Martyrs was as happy and thankful as though he were about to attend a concert or a delightful musical entertainment.

When the city hall was reached he presented the governor’s agent with his watch and some of his handsome clothing and, apologizing, said, “I am at present unable to give you more than this.”

As he stepped into the presence of the prince he saw his brother. Suddenly the prince with insolent words commenced to chide and insult him because of his religious belief. But the King of the Martyrs with supreme courtesy said, “Your Excellency, if you but knew what I know you would never utter with your tongue such unbecoming statements and falsehoods.” [XIII:9:246]

The prince became very angry at this and with a walking-stick he struck the King of the Martyrs, severely wounding him on head, face and body, insisting the while that he deny and curse the Cause. But the King of the Martyrs held his silence. The Mullá who loved him so much was present and he perceived that his friend’s mouth was very dry. He ordered water to be brought, and with the utmost courtesy and gentleness the King of the Martyrs wet his lips. The prince was exceedingly surprised and said to the Mullá, “Strange it is that even under such circumstances as these he shows a refinement and courtesy which are his essential characteristics.”

In brief, seeing the strength of the edifice of their faith and the firmness of their stand in their religion the prince in a fury ordered that those two brothers be dragged away by their chains and put in prison and that his plundering servants should strip them of their clothes.

Raqshá on his part sent a company of his men to their home. They attacked the women and the little children who were there weeping from fear and distress. They imprisoned them all in one place and for a long time made them to suffer from hunger and thirst. They plundered and confiscated all the money, jewellery and furniture which were in the house. In like manner they went to their store and took everything they could find. The prince also sent a man to the prison to search the pockets of the two brothers and bring him all their checks,

notes and receipts. He took all their investments and everything that was deposited in the banks. On that same day he also claimed all their servants, who were many in number.

Now while the two brothers were in prison many telegrams were sent by merchants from different cities to the prince informing him that this disturbance was causing great material losses and was a severe blow to business. The news also came that the Sháh, even, had dispatched a telegram ordering that the brothers be sent to Tīhrán. But greediness for wealth and fear of Shaykh Dhi'b, the Wolf, and Raqshá, The Snake, finally induced him to put the two brothers to death and let the responsibility fall upon The Wolf and The Snake and falsely to declare that the Sháh's telegram was not received until after they had been killed.

The prince all this time persistently urged these two great souls to deny the Cause of God, declaring that to say, even, "We are not Bahá'ís" would be sufficient to save their lives. But each time those two miracles of steadfastness cried out loudly, "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!" (O Thou Glory of the Most Glorious!) "Our utmost desire is this, that our lives may be a sacrifice in the path of the love of that Manifestation of Reality and in the spreading of His divine teachings."

At last the prince offered to spare their lives if thirteen thousand dollars were paid to him and he gave permission for the youngest brother, Mírzá Ismá'íl, to go and bring the money. But the Shaykh, The Wolf, and Raqshá, The Snake, who were anxious to have them killed, on the eighth day of their imprisonment called a meeting and brought together a large number of Mullás and judges. All demanded and insisted that the prince should pronounce the death sentence and declared that they would assume every responsibility, in this world and in the world to come. Whereupon the prince said, "Then you are the murderers," and he instructed the executioner to carry out all the wishes of those two oppressors, at which they ordered the executioner to kill the two brothers immediately.

The executioner with drawn sword appeared in the prison at a moment when the King of the Martyrs was talking to and admonishing his younger brother thus:

"O brother, the original intention of these persecutors was to kill me only. Just say, 'My brother is a Bahá'í, not I.' Then your life will be spared. After I am killed take care of the family and bring up the wronged little ones."

The Beloved of the Martyrs replied, "O brother, The Beloved One will give [XIII:9:247] the best of protection to those whom we will leave behind and faithfulness requires that you and I be together in all the worlds of God."

The executioner was one of those who for many years had enjoyed the hospitality and generosity of the two brothers. He begged of them, saying, "Just say a word denying your religion. Then your lives will be saved and I shall not commit so terrible a crime."

The King of the Martyrs answered, "You are under orders and it is your duty to execute them."

So that blood-thirsty oppressor took them to the field of the martyrdom of hope and tightly bandaged their eyes. During a period of about an hour each of them hoped that he might be martyred first and might step out of this world before the other.

The Shaykh, The Wolf, and Raqshá, The Snake, meanwhile were strolling upon an elevation, talking to each other exultantly while waiting, watching with cruel hearts that pitiful scene. They signalled the executioner to finish his work; so, as the two brothers embraced one another, calling on the Greatest Name, "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!" and offered thanks to God he cut off their heads and stained their blessed bodies with blood and dust. He then tied their feet with a rope and threw the bodies in a public square that the crowds might see them. After this the bodies were taken to a hollow piece of ground under a great wall which had been wrecked in order to conceal the bodies and place them beyond reach.

But in the middle of the dark night the youngest brother, Mírzá Ismá'íl, with several of the servants rescued the bodies from under the stones and wreckage and carrying them outside the city washed them at the river's brink, wrapped them in winding sheets and then, summoning grave diggers, and unknown to anyone, asked them to dig two graves in the cemetery. But the grave diggers were afraid, lest The Wolf and The Snake might hear of it. So the two bodies were buried there, in that place, and the men returned to their homes in a panic of fear.

Persecutors and disregarders of truth that they were, those people, especially Shaykh Dhi'b, the Wolf, imagined that by the killing of these two great souls the Cause of God would be wiped out and that with the uprooting of these two fruit-bearing trees from the divine rose garden there would remain no trace nor sign of the Eternal Rose Garden. After this tragedy they ordered detectives to watch for and to kill any Bahá'ís who might come into the city and to inform them if any Bahá'í meetings were held. They searched, and in vain, to find the graves of the two martyrs in order that they might destroy the bodies.

The patience and fortitude of these great martyrs while enduring calamities and while losing their possessions and their families in the path of His Holiness the Chosen One and their joyful and willing acceptance of ordeals is the greatest proof of the power, influence, greatness and truth of this Cause. Moreover, the mighty influence of this great Cause upon the spiritual training of mankind became clear and evident manifested as it was in these martyrs through their greatness, their important positions, both material and spiritual, and through their cultivation and their severance. In like manner the wickedness of the leaders of the people, their tyranny and selfishness became apparent to every one. Indeed, this great calamity affected not only the Bahá'ís but many of the fanatical people mourned them and paid tribute to them, chanting poems, of which this is one of the verses: "Heaven, perhaps, had none other arrow than this in its quiver!"

Soon after these happenings relations were broken between Raqshá and the prince. Raqshá fled, and hid himself. After a while, on that place on his neck which he had indicated when he stood before the prince and said, "I am willing to have the responsibility of killing the two brothers fall on my neck", there appeared an abscess, which became so infected and unpleasant that his own [XIII:9:248] family even avoided him and drove him away from the house to a garden out of the city where finally he died.

Shaykh Dhi'b, the Wolf, and The Son of The Wolf suffered humiliation and degradation and became as fruitless and useless trees.

As to the prince, he was driven away by the Sháh and was hated by him. He fell into the depths of abasement and finally, expelled by the Persian government, was forced to live an exile from his country. He returned, once, to Persia, in order to live in his native land according to his own desires on the enormous wealth which he had accumulated. But the people prevented this by throwing him in prison and punishing him very severely. In this connection a story may be related:

During the unjust administration of this prince there lived in Işfahán an oppressed Bahá'í. He was a target for the whip of the Mullás, accused by them of infidelity, and his property was plundered and confiscated. Fearful for his life he concealed himself in places where he could not be found. Once he appealed to the prince, reminding him of the sighs and cries of the oppressed, the broken-hearted and the helpless. He also tried to remind him of his responsibility to God. The prince replied with the greatest arrogance and contempt, saying, "Go to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and accuse me and let him do with me whatever he can." An insult such as this hurt this broken-hearted Bahá'í more than anything else. Later on, when the prince was indicted, despised, imprisoned and expelled and was in utter humiliation that Bahá'í travelled from his distant native town to the prison, met the prince, made himself known to him and

reminded him, saying, “Some years ago I spoke to you of my sufferings due to cruelty and oppression and of how all my possessions had been confiscated and I had no place of safety and rest and how I must needs, through fear of my enemies conceal myself every moment. You said to me, ‘Go to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and accuse me.’ Though orally I did not accuse you in his presence yet the justice of God requires punishment and reward. For this reason His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh said, ‘The tent of the order of the world is supported and upheld by two pillars, punishment and reward.’ Therefore, whatever has happened is inevitable and ordained.”

In a word, those powerful enemies under such conditions passed away from this world and their light became extinguished. But their honours, The King of the Martyrs and The Beloved of the Martyrs, have ignited a light which will shine forever. All the days of their life unto the day of martyrdom the nostrils of the spiritual ones were ever perfumed by their fragrance. During their lifetime they were very prominent, just and happy and were loved by all. Because they held their souls in their hands, sacrificed them in the path of the True Friend and took their stand near to the great mercy in the Abhá, Most Glorious Kingdom numerous tablets were revealed from the pen of Bahá’u’lláh concerning their exalted station and the grief of the Supreme Concourse for their ordeals. Such jewels of divine subtleties and infinite favours were revealed that they will remain throughout the everlastingness of the world and the Kingdom. The spiritual titles, The King of the Martyrs and The Beloved of the Martyrs, were granted them, and now, by these merciful names they are well known in the East and the West.

Translated by Dr Ḍiyá’ M. Baghdádí and Emily Vail.

Note: An evidence of the great love of His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for these holy martyrs is the fact that he was the essence of kindness to the bereaved families and cared for the son of the King of the Martyrs, Mírzá Jalál, in his own home. Later he gave Mírzá Jalál his daughter, Rúhá Khánum, in marriage.

XIII:10, January 1923 [XIII:10:265]

The victory of faith

Horace Holley

Those who live in the depths of a small, narrow valley, and make no effort to climb the lofty mountains by which they are beset—such people never behold the landscape stretching beyond the hills; they know not what the mountains may conceal.

But he who makes the mighty effort, leaving behind him the narrow valley of human selfishness and ease; he who has the supreme courage and strength to gain the summit, for him the invisible becomes visible; for him the infinite divine horizons are unfolded, and that which was hidden behind the mountains is revealed.

One of those recurrent visions that come again and again, whenever selfishness and greed and fear are truly overcome—that landscape which ever greets with its beauty the soul who reaches the highest hill—is the vision of a united humanity, a single faith, one worship, one law, one God. To this every traveller in the world of spirit has testified, and their testimony ever agrees. We find this vision singing in the words of Isaiah; Augustine, in his great work “The City of God” rediscovered it; its perception haunted the great souls in the Middle Ages; today once more the people of magnanimity like Emerson have testified eloquently that the same spiritual landscape still exists. You may search the records of the vision of every people, East and West, North and South—wherever the soul becomes articulate, its speech is the praise of that which it beholds before it, beyond the hills. [XIII:10:266]

To these witnesses, that vision is reality, and the world’s division, suffering and pain is an unreality they have forever left behind. By and for and in that reality they have lived and died.

But their witness is incredible to the people in the darkness of the valley. In the valley, the description of the landscape beyond the hills seems no more than an empty dream, a denial of the plainest facts confronting one on every hand. Here, reality is the struggle for existence, the survival of those who are “fit”, a constant and painful effort to gather fruit from trees on which the sun too seldom shines. That such a fruitful landscape lies on the other side of death, many in the valley will agree; but that it lies on the other side of sacrifice here and now, this they repudiate, this they vehemently deny. And their repudiation and their denial are sanctified by those to whom they are accustomed to turn for authority in matters that pertain to the life of the soul.

That faith has had no visible victory in any era of recorded time, is all too evident; that the vision of human brotherhood never seemed so dim, so unreal, so legendary as in this troubled age, is no less apparent.

Nevertheless, it is well to recall that some hundreds of years ago Leonardo da Vinci drew plans for the construction of a machine that would fly. In his day, even the thought of aviation was inconceivable. The failure of his efforts appeared to his neighbours like the judgement of an offended Providence against one who had attempted to contravene the divine law.

But now that aviation has become a commonplace occurrence in this age of scientific progress, what are we to say of da Vinci?

In the world of thought, da Vinci achieved aviation—in the world of thought he stood abreast of the people of today. It was in the world of material fact, and in this world only, that da Vinci failed. He failed only because certain material conditions had not yet been fulfilled. He had no suitable motive power, no suitable structural elements such as we now have. But the principle of flight was certainly his—and time itself has worked to vindicate his aspiration.

Therefore we see that there, are two worlds—the world of vision and the world of outward fact. Vision ever precedes fact—vision creates fact. For the world of vision is the world of causes; the world of outward fact is the world of effects. That which exists in the world of vision must eventually come to existence also in the world of fact. The world of fact cannot resist the world of vision, any more than the earth can resist the growth of the seed that are sown. For the earth is composed of the very substance of vegetation—and in like manner, the world of effects is composed of the substance of vision. Where the earth is too scanty for vegetation—where the earth resists the growth of the seed, there the stunted vegetation rots and goes back to the earth; and when this has happened season after season, the earth is fertilized by the very vegetation it seemed to resist. So humanity, denying the spiritual world, resisting the growth and development of the life of spirit, is gradually spiritualized by the influences it destroys, or rather seems to destroy.

Thus if we consider once more the recurrent vision of human brotherhood, righteousness and unified faith: since this reality has ever existed in the world of perception, the world of causes, it must also come to existence in the world of outer fact. For the separation of these two worlds is not the eternal separation of life and death, or good and evil, or light and darkness; rather their separation is that of cause and effect. It is a separation which lies in time, and lying in time, is also joined by time. As the tree is the effect of the seed, but the tree and the seed are separated by time, yet connected in time; so also human brotherhood is the effect of the soul, the fruit of the soul, and the long agony of the soul’s sacrifice is not only the measure of the duration of time but also the measure of time’s meaning.

For there must needs be concurrent conditions for the realization of brotherhood, just as there had to be concurrent conditions for the realization of mechanical flight. Just as the thought of flight remained perfect, unchanging in the world of causes until certain conditions had been established in the material [XIII:10:267] world, so the vision of peace on earth has

existed perfect and unchanging, a landscape beyond the hills of sacrifice and endeavour, until little by little those outer conditions might be established of which peace and righteousness are the consummation, the purpose, the motive, the fruit. Never has the man of faith denied the reality of human brotherhood, but in all ages his concern has been to further the inner and outer preparations for its eventual victory.

Let us not be deceived by the apparent predominance of hatred, suspicion and the desire for material conquest in this age.

Nine years ago a child might have travelled from Berlin to Paris in a few hours, without danger, without annoyance. A year later, in 1914, more than a million men attempted to make that journey, and not one man arrived. Why was this? Not one man arrived because they came on conquest, and coming on conquest they raised up forces of opposition that proved mightier than they.

This is a new condition in the world of humanity. Hitherto, no power has existed strong enough to resist empire except the mysterious power of time. Rome was overthrown, overthrown at last, but Rome was overthrown so slowly that people did not perceive the seeds of Rome's downfall were sown by the first legions Rome sent forth to conquer the world. Hence arose, in all past ages, the apparent justification of conquest and the apparent unreality of love: that the effects of ambition and greed were so separated from their causes that the people could not realize that cause and effect are actually one.

But today, cause and effect are no longer mysteriously separated by time, or place, or personality. The material unity of all races and all countries, and their complete interdependence upon one and the same economic organization, has created a condition wherein spiritual motive and material consequence are as inseparable as the heart and the mind of the same man.

There is an old saying about "those who fish in troubled waters" which we can complete by adding the words "*must stand on dry land*". That is, to profit by others' domination one must stand beyond the consequences of their domination. Today no immunity exists or is possible for any individual or group. For men are no longer associated together as self-sustaining groups, but each community has become an essential wheel or lever in the one world machine—an essential organ or limb in the one body of humanity.

In the light of this new condition let us perceive the sequences in which vision, as cause, becomes reality, as effect.

The origin of love, in evolving humanity, is sympathy, and sympathy is the sharing of the same danger, or suffering, or pain. So long as humanity stood divided from itself, in separate races and religions, so long was sympathy confined in its action to the separate community, and the result of sympathy, love, expressed itself as loyalty to the one nation and the one creed. Therefore love ever resisted and overthrew its own desire, since loyalty to the one nation and the one creed involved opposition to other nations and other creeds. Today, just as injury to one part of a body is injury to all parts, so injury to any portion of humanity has its effects upon all other portions. The very universality of suffering in this age has overthrown the foundations of limited loyalty, and the mutual danger we face through warfare or economic disaster is the pledge of a common sympathy as inevitable as the rising of tomorrow's sun.

If we seek for confirmation of this in one another's spiritual limitations, however, we may seek in vain. For just as an imperfect mirror exaggerates every image, so in our imperfection of thought and love do we tend to confirm each other in our selfishness rather than in our aspiration for the common good. Without some source wherein each may find his own perfection steadfastly set forth, we shall continue as it were in the narrow and endless valley

of self, increasing the crisis of modern existence until another and greater war engulf us all.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's spiritual influence alone can overcome the bitterness of suspicion and the habit of hate.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has brought back in its fullness the ancient, the timeless vision of [XIII:10:268] brotherhood, righteousness, peace and love. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has given this vision an expression in word and deed which transcends every limitation of race, of class, of nation and of creed. No community can claim 'Abdu'l-Bahá for their own spiritual leader, and make his inspiration the justification of separateness, as men have done with every spiritual leader of the past. In the divisions of humanity he has arisen as the true centre and point of unity, a mirror reflecting the light of one love and one teaching to every horizon. As each community, seeking relief from its own restrictions and its sufferings, turns to 'Abdu'l-Bahá for guidance, it finds all other communities illumined in the same compassionate love.

When a reporter of the *New York Globe* visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Haifa a few years ago in the course of an investigation of the Zionist movement in Palestine, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave her this message: "Tell my followers that they have no enemies to fear, no foes to hate. *Man's only enemy is himself*".

It means nothing how many or how few 'Abdu'l-Bahá's followers may be at this moment here or in other parts of the world. That message was the expression of the reality emerging from the present era of confusion, of trouble, of unrest, of universal change. To receive that message from the lips of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the time it was uttered is to be forewarned and forearmed; but the message is inescapable, sooner or later, by reason of the actual conditions of the world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá recorded the spiritual evolution that went on behind and within the material evolution of this age. He witnessed for us the victory of faith.

As one considers the strife that is taking place everywhere today, one recalls the ancient story of Atman the king.

One day Atman summoned his four sons to his presence and said:

"My sons, because you expect to share this mighty kingdom after my departure, you are making no effort to develop in yourselves any capacity or any worthiness. As you are my sons I love you, but I also have a duty to my people. Therefore go forth, each of you, into the world, and to him who best proves his worthiness I shall leave the kingdom."

So the four sons went forth, one to the East, one to the West, one to the South, one to the North. And as each had inherited of the father's capacity, so each made a mighty effort to develop worthiness, and each rose to leadership in the country where he lived.

Then having become a leader in his country, each of the four sons remembered his father's promise, and set forth to return to Atman's capital and claim the right of inheritance. So each set forth on the way, bringing with him a mighty following of soldiers and servants that Atman his father might realize how worthy he had become.

Now arriving on the great plain before the gates of the city, each brother beheld the army of the other also arriving, the army of the East with the banner of the dragon, the army of the West with the banner of the eagle, the army of the North with the banner of the bear, and the army of the South with the banner of the palm. But seeing these other banners, each brother thought that hostile armies had gathered to destroy the kingdom of his father Atman, and to defend his father each brother led his army against the other armies on the plain.

By reason of their courage, the four brothers fought at the head of their armies, where the banner was upheld, and in the course of a few hours all the banners were thrown down and the four leaders wounded.

Then the armies, the banners thrown down and the ranks hopelessly intermingled, ceased to fight, and around the four brothers as they lay wounded a circle of mourning soldiers stood in silence.

Then the oldest brother, feeling his heart's blood ebb away, raised his voice in a mighty cry of grief and lamentation:

“O Atman, my father! O my father, Atman the king! Bitter enemies surround thy city, and they shall lay it waste and slay thee in the midst. Gladly have I given life for thee, O my father—alas, that the enemies were too strong and I have died in vain.”

So lamented the eldest brother. And when the other brothers heard him lamenting their father Atman, the king, [XIII:10:269] then they lamented also, and more bitterly even than he, for now they knew that it was no enemy they had fought, but their own brothers they had so blindly attacked and so unwittingly harmed.

Even so the strife in which we are all engaged, even now—strife political, strife economic, strife social, strife religious. This is not an ordinary strife; like the battle of the four brothers, it is the universal combat which precedes mutual recognition and prepares for the Most Great Peace in the *hearts* of men. For there is no recognition possible between the strangeness of our customs and the intensity of our desires, but recognition is in and through the common fatherhood of God, reconciliation is in and through obedience to the one universal Will.

Let us not be dismayed by this frantic confusion of strife. It is the final and complete expression of divine love, compelling humanity to destroy the foundations of its own injustice and greed. Were there to be no such universally disastrous consequences of age-long injustice, the divine compassion would be entirely absent from the arena of human affairs. This period of universally disastrous consequences is that which they have ever warned humanity, the witnesses of God from age to age. All the spiritual witnesses return in this age of fulfilment. They speak in the voice of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

XIII:10, January 1923 [XIII:10:269]

From the diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

Written in Palestine during the Great War

In the evening, when the believers were sitting in his benign presence, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “All the people are sacrificing their lives for the sake of the worthless (valueless) earth. They are not adorers of God, but worshippers of the ground. Were they giving up their lives in the path of God the results would be everlasting. But now what benefits do they receive? If one soul is martyred for the sake of Truth eternally will he shine from the horizon of glory. Yet, during the last six months probably more than one million living, breathing youths have been left on the battlefields, dead, and soon their names will be forgotten! In a few years who will care to know about them as individuals? The historians of each country will no doubt compile the history of the salient events of this tremendous struggle, for the benefit of the reading public, but the public as a mass is indifferent, heedless and forgetful. Only the noble minds of a few will grasp the general meaning of these world-shaking events.

“Our hope is that the differences will be settled soon and friendly relations based upon sound and permanent foundations will be established.”

An old man passed by. The Master called him and asked after his health. Then he put into the palm of his hand an English pound, and prayed for him thus: “May thy body be at peace, thy mind be at peace, thy thoughts be at peace, thy soul be at peace and thy spirit be at peace.”

When he left, the Master said: “The name of this old man is Rustam Effendi. He has served

me in many ways. He has now become very poor. I was looking for an opportunity to help him and this was the proper time.”

While he was talking a carriage stopped in the middle of the street and the stout occupant jumped down and came toward us. He greeted the Master; then, after a few words, he returned to his carriage. [XIII:10:270] The Master said: “This man is As’ad Bey. When we were in ‘Akká years ago he came to me one day and said, ‘Master, I am the most miserable man! I am seeking good fortune but it eludes me at every turn. I long to be prosperous, but ill luck pursues me. If I touch gold it turns into copper. If I hold a green leaf in my hand it becomes sear and yellow. I have lost all my possessions and with them all my faith. Please pray for me that God may help me.’ I gave him some money and, that night, I supplicated at the Holy Threshold of the Blessed Perfection that he might receive assistance. The next day he was offered a government position with a good salary. Then negligence overtook him, and he became so proud that he would not even speak to me. When, later, a Kurdish Mutaşarrif came to ‘Akká he intrigued against us, carried false reports and was even so arrogant as to wish me to offer him a bribe as the price of silence! I did not say anything to him. Later he repented his deeds.”

When we entered the hotel and while we were drinking our coffee the Master spoke about severance *from* and attachment *to* the things of this world.

“The realization of these two opposite attitudes in a single individual is very rare. In the Bahá’í Cause it is taught that we must devote the utmost attention to the pursuit of our worldly affairs but at the same time be severed from all else save God. How can the mind and heart be entirely free, and detached from every pursuit, yet occupied with the solution of material problems? This is a most subtle, psychological question. To be in the water and not to get wet; to go through the fire and not to be burned—these are opposite, irreconcilable conditions. Still, in the spiritual world these two antipodes must meet and the two qualities of severance and attachment must be harmoniously combined.”

On our return home there was quite a large meeting of the believers and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “I went out to return the morning call of the German officer. While I was there the Gaemmagam entered the room. According to what they said hundreds of thousands of people have been killed during the past few months. What cruel minds there are! What demoniacal hearts are found! What diabolical thoughts are portrayed! What devilish engines are at work! What black souls are discovered! What satanic schemes are unearthed! What dark imaginations are brooding over infernal plans! All their demoniacal policies work for the destruction of the conqueror and the conquered. The countries of both sides are laid waste. The people of the opposing nations are butchered. The homes of the governments are ruined and civilization on both sides is annihilated.”

It was still raining when we rode away and picked up Mírzá Muḥsin at the other end of the town. There was a heavy sea rolling and the clean sandy beach was constantly being washed by the huge waves. The sight was sublime. Many Arabs, both men and women were walking along, bare-foot, and carrying on their backs heavy loads. There was one especially interesting, an Amazonian-looking woman who carried a bed on her head, a large mat rolled up and tied to her shoulders and a child in her arms. The Master was amused to see this because the woman was entirely unmindful of her load and trudged along perfectly happy and unconcerned.

The Master said: “There are certain forms of work which are beyond human endurance and others which are within it; and these differ greatly according to the early environment and training of each individual. For example, Mírzá Muḥsin here, could not walk bare-footed,

as these Arabs do, on such a rainy day as this. He would catch cold and be in bed for a month. But the Arabs go through it day after day and grow healthier and stronger. The struggling, winning, successful man is he who accustoms himself to the accomplishment of those things which are considered to be beyond human endurance. Only a soul thus great can stand the tests of life and come out of the crucible pure and unspotted. (But) if one cannot rise to this height he can [XIII:10:271] at least school himself to perform the tasks which are within the range of his endurance. If a man cannot qualify in one of these two classes he becomes a social burden.”

This morning the Master sat for some hours in the delightful warm sunshine. Many stopped and talked with him. He inspired everyone to be firm and calm in these trying days. His cheerful voice went straight to the hearts and caused sad faces to smile and laugh—even while the warship was slowly passing before us. At noon Shaykh Šálih took dinner with us. He says he will not leave ‘Akká until he can take the Master with him to Abú-Sinán.

In the afternoon we were all summoned into the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Meanwhile the Commissioner of Police was ushered into the room also. In the course of the conversation ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “The citizens of a country are like the various members and organs of the body. So long as the brain and the nervous system are co-ordinate in their functions there will be no jar in the constitution. But when they fall out of harmony great disturbances become manifest. In like manner, when the government represents ideals of progress and justice the people will advance and progress in their activities. Ideal co-operation will bind together the hearts and strike at the root of poverty for preventable poverty is a source of all misery and evil. The rulers must be filled with mercy and solicitude for the condition of the unfortunates.”

Because this is Christmas eve I cannot entertain you better than to relate to you some of the charming stories which fell from the lips of the Master this evening:

“When I was in Mázindarán I was a wee bit of a child and enjoyed all the fun and play belonging to that age. In our town we had a man by the name of Áqá Raḥím who was the overseer of our shepherds. One day he came to our house and asked my mother to let him take me to a country barbecue to be given by the shepherds. After some urging on his part permission was granted, and I was glad of the chance to take part in an outdoor entertainment.

“Áqá Raḥím took me with him and soon we were out in the country. He led me through green valleys and beautiful pastures till we reached the foot of a lofty mountain. Here we had to walk through a narrow defile and then by a zig-zag road and with much difficulty slowly to ascend to the summit. When we arrived at the top I was surprised to find myself on a vast, verdant, tableland which was no other than the pastureland of our cattle. I still feel the exhilarating breeze which greeted my cheeks on that clear day!

“Exclusive of horses and cows there were about four thousand head of sheep and goats belonging to us, while a few thousand more were the property of other owners. But all were grazing peacefully on this broad plateau. It was a most charming, ideal, pastoral scene and, from afar, I could see many shepherds and shepherdesses. We rode on a few minutes longer and then, under a spacious bower I was welcomed by some eighty or more shepherds who were clamouring to salute me. They were all dressed in their best clothes for this was a gala day. To me it was a noble and attractive sight.

“On that morning about fifteen sheep had been killed and prepared in the cool-flowing spring near by; then the shepherds had stuck them on long iron rods to be roasted. Huge,

spectacular campfires were burning and while the sheep were roasting the shepherds sang folk songs and danced their charming peasant dances. When noon came they all sat on the green grass and feasted, with extraordinary appetites, upon the well-seasoned, toothsome meat. ...

“When evening drew nigh and the hour of our leave-taking approached all the shepherds gathered around us and in their farewell speeches hinted that they expected me to give them some gifts as is customary with the landlords in these parts. I asked Áqá Raḥím what it was all about and told him that as I was such a little child they should not expect me to make gifts and, moreover, I had brought nothing with me. Áqá Raḥím replied: ‘This will not do. You are the [XIII:10:272] master of all these shepherds and I do not like to think what they will say if you leave this place without giving them something.’

“I was indeed in a dilemma but after thinking a moment the idea came to me to give each shepherd a few sheep from our own flocks. I communicated the idea to the overseer who was rather pleased with it; and it was announced in a solemn tone, and immediately acted upon. When at last we reached home, and my act of generosity was related to the Blessed Perfection, he laughed very much over it and said: ‘We must appoint a guardian to protect Áqá—master—from his own liberality; else, some day, he may give himself away’.”

XIII:10, January 1923 [XIII:10:276]

Spiritual meetings

Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Regarding arrangements for the Bahá’í Sunday meeting for the purpose of worship, this is very suitable that first, prayer should be chanted and supplication made until all gather; then communion should be made. After praying, sacred readings with melodious voices should be read by all together.

Thou hast written concerning the spiritual meeting. The spiritual meeting must be in the utmost state of ecstasy and tumult. The supplications must be perused, the Tablets and Verses be read, eloquent speeches be delivered, divine proofs be explained, the audience be encouraged to enter into the Kingdom of God, news received from different parts be read and in the end they may read all together, a supplication.

The founding of these spiritual meetings is purely for the purpose of teaching; but, as the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is not yet founded, therefore in the spiritual meetings verses are chanted, supplications and communes offered and discourses delivered. However, when the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is organized the spiritual meetings will be devoted especially to teaching, and the place of worship will become focalized in the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár.

This Cause is proclaimed through eloquent, sincere addresses. We must unloose the tongue, spread the fragrances of God, diffuse the words of God. We must present to the public the proofs and evidences of this Cause with a tongue of fire so that souls may be exhilarated, minds become full of tumult and acclamation. With words of love and illumination we must set hearts aglow with the fire of the love of God, enkindle minds with the power of the Kingdom. We must explain the teachings orally so that hearts may become like pure fountains, the invisible inspirations may descend, the bounties of the Holy Spirit may be revealed, the rays of the Sun of Reality may shine; the breezes of the Paradise of Abhá may waft and the glad tidings of the Kingdom of Abhá may be announced.

Exiled from Baghdád

A story from the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

When the Blessed Perfection (Bahá’u’lláh) was exiled from Baghdád the large number of believers who went with him divided the work of the party among them. For example, Darvish Šidq-‘Alí and Hájí Ibráhím acted as equerries, Ustád Muḥammad ‘Alí looked after the baggage, Mírzá Muḥammad Qulí supervised the pitching of the tents and I was, if we may here use a military term, a commissary officer and had to supply the party, including horses, etc., with food and the daily necessities. Often, by day or by night we covered a distance of from twenty-five to thirty miles. No sooner would we reach a caravanserai than from sheer fatigue everyone would lie down and go to sleep: utter exhaustion having overtaken everybody they would be unable even to move.

But Mírzá Maḥmúd and Áqá Riḍá rested not for a moment. After our arrival they would immediately become engaged in cooking for this party of nearly seventy-two people—and this after their arduous work of guiding all day or all night the horses which carried the palanquin of the Blessed Perfection. When the meal was cooked and made ready all those who had slept would wake, eat and go to sleep again. These two men would then wash all the dishes and pack them up. By this time they would be so tired that they could have slept on even a hard boulder.

During the journey when they became utterly weary they would sleep while walking. Now and again I would see one of them take a bound and leap from one point to another. It would then become apparent that he was asleep and had dreamed that he had reached a wide creek—hence the jump.

In a word, from Baghdád to Sámsún they served with rare faithfulness. Indeed no human being had the fortitude to bear cheerfully all this heavy labour. But, because they were kindled (by the spirit of God) they performed all these services with greatest happiness. I remember how, in the early morning, when [XIII:10:278] we wanted to start for another caravanserai, we often saw these two men fast asleep. We would go and shake them and they would wake with much difficulty. While walking they always chanted communes and supplications.

In those days a famine raged all along the road. When we reached a station Mírzá Ja‘far and I would ride from one village to another, from one Arab or Kurdish tent to another trying to get food, straw, barley, etc., for men and animals. Many a time we were out till midnight.

One day we happened to call on a Turk who was harvesting. Seeing his large pile of straw we thought we had come to the end of our search. I approached the Turk politely, and said, “We are your guests and one of the conditions of (religious) Faith is to honour the newly arrived guests. I have heard that you are a very liberal people, very generous, and that whenever you entertain a guest you kill and cook for him a whole sheep. Now, we desire such and such a thing, and are ready to pay any price that you demand. We hope this is sufficiently reasonable.”

He thought for a moment, and then said, “Open your sack.”

Mírzá Ja‘far opened it and he put into it a few handfuls of straw.

I was amused, and said, “Oh, my friend! What can we do with this straw? We have thirty-six animals and we want feed for every one of them!”

In brief, everywhere we encountered many difficulties, until we arrived in Khárpút. Here, we saw that our animals had become lean, and walked with great difficulty. But we could not

get straw and barley for them.

At Khárpút the Acting Governor-General came to call on us—and with him brought ten car-loads of rice, ten sacks of barley, ten sheep, several baskets of rice, several bags of sugar, many pounds of butter, etc. These were sent as gifts by the Governor-General, ‘Izzat Páshá, to the Blessed Perfection.

After our experiences, and knowing how difficult it was to get anything from the farmers along the way—when I looked at these things I knew that they were sent from God, and they were gladly accepted.

At that time Áqá Husayn-i-Áshchí was the assistant cook. He worked day and night and had no time to sleep.

We stayed at Khárpút one week and had a good rest. For two days and nights I did nothing but sleep.

The Governor-General, ‘Izzat Páshá, called on the Blessed Perfection. He was a very good man and showed much love and service.—Recorded by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

XIII:10, January 1923 [XIII:10:282]

On Mount Carmel

“The Garden of God”

Miss Genevieve L. Coy, after a wonderful visit in the Holy Land, in Constantinople and among the Bahá’í groups along the way, and notwithstanding the many rigors of the journey arrived the last of September in Ṭíhrán to begin her work of service there. She writes of the marvellous kindness of the friends in the many cities and of the wonderful bond between the Orient and Occident which has been established by the Bahá’í teachings. Describing her visit in Haifa, Miss Coy writes:

Pilgrim House, Haifa; Palestine.

1 June 1922.

Palestine in the beginning of summer is a very different country from Palestine in late August. Green fields, many flocks of black goats, many herds of black and white cattle, herdsmen in tattered garments, flash past one as the train goes northward. Trees with long green leaves, along some small brook—white melons ripening in the fields—the blue, blue sea breaking in whitest foam on the yellow sand! And then the curve of Mount Carmel, ‘Akká white in a misty distance, and the Tomb of the Báb on the mountainside. It all seems a dream from which I must awaken soon—to be here again in this blessed land! The air is fragrant with many flowers, the breeze is cool and sweet—God’s peace breathes about one.

At the station many people lined the track. Suddenly I saw a hand waved and Mírzá Luṭfu’lláh was at the car-window. It was so good to see him! Outside the train another young Bahá’í, who clerks at the station, joined us for a moment, then went back to his work. We found a carriage—and again I was carried up the steep streets to the beloved Pilgrim House.

To come back to the Pilgrim House is to come back home. Its dear peace and quiet fill one’s heart. I love its high-ceilinged rooms—the faint fragrance that greets one—the cleanliness—the tiled [XIII:10:283] floors, the beautiful rugs. As I sit here writing I can see the top of the Master’s house, above the wall. The two gateways are covered with a riot of bougainvillea, masses of dark-red blossoms, hundreds of them, almost hide the green leaves. If I stand at the window I can look up to the Tomb and the Musáfir Kháníh, halfway up the mountainside.

2 June 1922.

Mírzá Luṭfu’lláh and I left the Pilgrim House at six o’clock, and climbed up the Mountain of

the Lord, to the Tomb. The morning was beautifully fresh and clear. The sun was high in the heavens when we reached the Tomb—but the garden looked delightfully fresh and green and cool.

The caretaker of the Tomb, ‘Abbás Qulí, came and opened the door into the Tomb of the Báb, and then into the room that is the Master’s. We left our shoes at the door, and entered first the Tomb of the Báb. To be again in that place, at that threshold in prayer—what words can tell what it means to one’s heart and spirit? It is so perfectly natural and easy to pray there. One’s prayer knows no weariness. One realizes God so near, that one needs make no effort to find Him. “Love divine, all love excelling” becomes the supreme reality. Prayer for all the friends in America, all the Bahá’ís, prayer with all the devotion of my spirit for the dear ladies of the Master’s household and for Shoghi Effendi, that the divine love may bring them perfect comfort and spiritual joy!

And then we went into that room which I had never before entered—the Master’s shrine. In physical furnishings it is like that of the Báb. The outer room is slightly larger, I think, and the outer door is not directly in line with the inner door. Lovely rugs are on the floor, copies of one or two Tablets are on the walls. I stood at the outer doorway a long time, trying to realize the meaning of the place to which I had come. Then I knelt at the inner threshold a moment—afterwards a little away from it. Mírzá Luṭfu’lláh placed on the threshold the jasmine flowers that he had brought in from the garden. We prayed silently for a long time. The Master’s spirit dwells there in peace and love. What one feels, or how, I do not know. It is the triumph of life. I suppose for those who were here at the Master’s funeral, who saw his body laid in that room, there must be associations of great sadness and loneliness with that spot—but for those who come to Haifa to find his love and his service in the lives of the friends, for those the Tomb of the Master is a place of joy. One knows as never before the victory of life that never ceases, but only changes its form. Words cannot suggest it. It is one of the gifts of God that He sends to those who long for union with the Beloved One.

When we left the Tomb, ‘Abbás Qulí asked us to come to his house for tea. He took us up to the top of the house to the little room that was built especially for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It has windows north, south, and west and a door to the east; from each there is a wonderful view. To the north, the bay and ‘Akká; to the east, the valley of “Achor”; to the south, the slopes of Mount Carmel, where the girls’ school is to be built; to the west, the Tomb. Here, in this little room the Master used to stay; often at night the friends would hear him walking about on the house-top, chanting. Here he used to receive the notables of the town and country. In the room is the bed the Master used to use, and also the chair, in which he used to sit out in front of the Tomb, when meetings were held there. Above the bed are now hung many pictures of the Master, alone, and with groups of friends. ‘Abbás Qulí talked to us for quite a long time about the Master and the days he had spent there near the Tomb. He told about the building of that upper room. The Master had said that he would like a room there near the Tomb. He asked ‘Abbás Qulí if he could not build him one, and the care-taker of the Tomb said, yes, where would the Master like to have it. The Master suggested that he would like to have it on the top of the house. ‘Abbás Qulí said that the walls of the house were not strong enough to have another story built on top of them. Then the Master said that he would like to have it built in the garden, or above the Tomb. ‘Abbás Qulí said that much excavation would be required for that. Finally the [XIII:10:284] Master said, “Never mind; do not trouble about it.” Not long after that one of the friends had built for the Master a little room on top of the stable, at the Master’s house. Then the Master said to ‘Abbás Qulí, “Could you not build a house like that on the roof?” and he said “Oh, yes.” The Master said, “But I thought that you told me you could not build a room on top of your house!” So ‘Abbás Qulí said, “But a small room like that would have thin walls, and that could easily be built.” The Master smiled and said, “Very good!” and so the room was built.

‘Abbás Qulí has a most radiant smile! As he talked of the Master he smiled all the time! He made me feel the joy of the Master, even when he was speaking Persian, and I did not know what he said. He spoke quite slowly, and I could occasionally understand a word that gave me the trend of his thought. He said that the Master said that he had seen many wonderful views in his travels in Europe and America, but that none of them were as beautiful as the view from his little room on top of ‘Abbás Qulí’s house!

XIII:10, January 1923 [XIII:10:284]

The eye of reality

Corinne True

One of the beautiful lessons given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when we were about to leave his prison home in ‘Akká, Syria, 1907, after six heavenly days spent in that sacred spot—from the outside a Prison, but inside a Paradise:—to leave the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and go back to the world and its people seemed very, very difficult, once having partaken of its heavenly atmosphere and quaffed from the wine of true brotherhood. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá saw from the tears which simply would flow in rivulets from our eyes that the task was hard for us, so he told us that when we went back to the world “we must look upon every human being we saw as a letter from the Beloved to us.” “No matter,” said the dear Master, “how blotted, blurred, torn or soiled that letter appears to be, nevertheless, you must look upon it with the eye of reality and say to yourself, this is a letter from my Beloved, therefore, because it is from Him, I must love it with that divine love and overlook all its defects—inasmuch as the Beloved wrote it.” It must be our love and devotion to God, the Beloved, that gives us a sin covering eye and welcomes all as the children of the One Heavenly Father.

XIII:10, January 1923 [XIII:10:284]

Message from Shoghi Effendi

This is the morning of the fourth day in the glorious unfolding of the Bahá’í Cause. Our brothers in Baghdád have brought this out most beautifully in the Persian section of this issue. With the Báb, in Persia, there dawned the first morning of the new day of unity. When he was martyred night fell upon the Cause. Then Bahá’u’lláh arose and the sun dawned in full glory. When he departed from this world there fell upon his followers the night of sorrow and separation. Again the sun dawned, in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and a wonderful new day blazed forth. With ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing night fell once more upon the sorrowing hearts of his friends. But the radiant morning of the fourth day has now broken in glory. The sun of unity and peace has dawned from Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause. After a six months’ absence he returned to the Holy Land and sends all the Bahá’í friends in America the following beautiful message:

“The onward march of the Cause hath not been nor can it ever be stayed. I pray the Almighty that my efforts now refreshed and renewed may with your undiminished support lead it to glorious victory.”—Cablegram sent 16 December 1922.¹

XIII:11, February 1923 [XIII:11:294]

Our trip to Haifa in the summer of 1922

Stanwood Cobb

As many friends have considered it hazardous to undertake a trip to Palestine and the Near East in the summer, it may be of interest to give our experiences. Of course we should have preferred the winter for such a journey, but like many others we were free only in the summer months and we determined to take advantage of our opportunity in spite of climatic

¹ Facsimile of the message is on XIII:10, p. 265.

disadvantages.

First a word as to route. We found it impossible to get any definite information in this country concerning routes, sailings, and prices, through to Haifa; and even in London information was difficult to get and inaccurate. Therefore we will here share our information, acquired through difficult experience.

There are lines that sail directly from New York to the Near East; but they are Greek lines, with small boats and infrequent sailings, and this route is not to my mind advisable.

The quickest way to reach Haifa (also the most agreeable and as inexpensive as any) is as follows: by boat to England or the Continent; by rail across the Continent to Trieste; by boat to Alexandria; by rail from Alexandria to Haifa. The time consumed is as follows: New York to the Continent, from six to eleven days, according to the boat; across the Continent to Trieste, one to two days; Trieste to Alexandria (by express boats of the Lloyd Tristine which has weekly sailings, or by express boats of the Servizime Italiano which has bi-weekly sailings), three to four days; by rail from Alexandria to Haifa, one and a half days. Minimum time from New York to Haifa, twelve days. Minimum expense, about six hundred dollars round trip. Boat fares are rapidly coming down and next summer the same trip probably would cost less than five hundred dollars.

As to summer climate in the Near East, I will say that we were agreeably surprised to find how comfortable travel was under such conditions. We were not in the least made uncomfortable by the heat nor did we suffer any unhealthful effects from it, except in Haifa itself which has a bad summer climate. One should never move hurriedly in the Near East, nor expose oneself to the sun any more than is absolutely necessary. One should avoid native water and some uncooked foods such as salads. One should conserve one's energy. By following these rules one may travel in safety and comfort in Egypt and Palestine in mid-summer. In [XIII:11:295] fact, our train ride from Egypt to Haifa and return was most cool and comfortable, much more so than many a train in America in the summer season.

A trip to the Near East, apart from the glorious privilege of visiting Haifa, is most fascinating. Life is so different in the Orient, and the Orientals have many truths to teach us. Their simplicity of life, their calm and placid demeanour under almost all circumstances, their nearness to God, are qualities which the Western world must also acquire if it is to maintain its sanity and health.

These qualities are of course to be found in the highest degree in the Oriental Bahá'ís, who radiate peace and joy and love. It is always an inspiration to meet the Oriental friends; and they seem to feel an equal joy in meeting us. This joy that comes from the mingling and sympathetic union of the East and of the West is one of the great blessings that God has reserved for this marvellous century. It has never been attained before. It is like two destined lovers who have grown up in utter ignorance of each other, yet all the time acquiring those complementary qualities which are to make their coming union rich and happy.

On the other hand, the time has come when the unfriendly relation which from time immemorial has existed between the East and the West must cease. Ever since the conquests of Alexander the Great the Western world has sought to dominate the East by force, cruelly exploiting it and waxing fat and luxurious from the industry and labour of the Asiatics. This is the century of justice between all men and all races; and a spirit is rising in the East which will eventually change this Western dominance. We were aware of this spirit in Egypt and Palestine and Syria. Persia is alive with it. From friends who have visited India we get the same story. And events in Asia Minor are but precursors of the embarrassment of Europe if it persists in trying to dominate Asia.

This spirit, which disquiets most Occidentals and which has given rise to much alarmist

literature, serves only as an inspiration to Bahá'ís who see in it the signs of the dawning of a new day.

Likewise events in Europe show a condition desperate to the ordinary observation. So great are the hatreds now existing between the different races of Europe that it would seem as if nothing but [XIII:11:296] another great war could be the outcome. One person said to Mrs Cobb, "We hate the whole world!" She asked, "Do you hate Americans?" "Yes!" was his answer, more honest than tactful.

A Rumanian lady, for some years a resident of this country, whom we met in the compartment of the train from Vienna to Paris, then on her way back to America after a rather unsatisfactory visit to her native town, told us most graphically of the hatreds between the neighbouring little countries of the Balkan peninsula. So much do the Hungarians dislike the Rumanians, and vice-versa, that either race when travelling in the other country finds it wise to disguise its nationality. If this be so, how great must be the hatred between Greeks and Bulgarians, and especially, between Greeks and Turks!

The despair in the conquered countries is terrible. A well dressed lady, widow of an Austrian officer, spoke to us bitterly of the desolate life now confronting her. Not only were living conditions almost unendurable, but in the present chaotic economic state of central Europe for which no relief is in sight, what future could she look forward to for her boy of fourteen? For what profession should she train him? The outlook was equally dismal for all the customary professions.

To me this seems the greatest tragedy of all, that no hope for improvement and amelioration lies in the rising generation. For their children, parents see nothing but the darkest outlook.

I would not thus dwell upon the gloom in Europe, were it not to Bahá'í vision a sign of the fulfilment of the prelude to the coming of the Kingdom; and a most clear demonstration that nothing but the power of the love of God can save the world. For as Buddha said, "Verily, not by hatred does hatred cease, but only by love does hatred cease." And 'Abdu'l-Bahá has told us so many times that only the power of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men can bring about peace and restore prosperity to the world.

As for our nine days in Haifa, they were days naturally full of spiritual inspiration. I was especially privileged in visiting on several occasions the Holy Family, a favour not hitherto granted to male pilgrims to Haifa. They told us intimate details of the life and passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá;—how he refused every comfort which his family tried to secure for his last days, how upon his death he had hardly one change of clothing. Anything above this amount of clothing he had always given away. Thus his life stands out as a beacon light, pointing to others the way of service.

We made many visits and prayers at the tombs of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and of the Báb. From the beautiful garden surrounding the tombs we looked down the mountain side to the sea, already perceiving in our imagination the glorious parkway which shall one day rise from the Mediterranean to the Holy Tombs. Even now the authorities of Haifa are planning to construct such a boulevard, thus fulfilling the prophecy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The information conveyed to us by a Jewish girl, a Zionist from Jerusalem whom we met on the train and talked with at some length, gave us an inspiring vision of what Haifa will attain to in the not far distant future, if the Jewish plans for the development of Palestine are carried out. Haifa they intend to make the chief port of the eastern Mediterranean surpassing Beirut and rivalling Alexandria and Constantinople. Haifa is situated much more advantageously for trade with the vast hinterland of Mesopotamia than is Beirut or any other city of Syria or Palestine. It has splendid possibilities as a harbour. The plan is to make a vast sea-wall and

construct great docks at which the largest of ships can unload.

Not only will Haifa flourish but all Palestine, under the impetus given by Jewish energy and capital. An irrigation project is already under way which will embrace practically all of Palestine and make it blossom like the rose. Under the protection of Great Britain Jewish capital will more and more flow to Palestine, and within this generation it will undoubtedly become one of the garden spots of the world. Thus is prophecy fulfilled. [XIII:11:297]

I will mention two experiences while at Haifa, experiences of the inner spiritual life which I shall never forget. One of these experiences came from the extraordinary privilege I had, while visiting the Bahjí or tomb of Bahá'u'lláh, of sitting in the armchair in the chamber of Bahá'u'lláh, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá so often sat looking out over the plains of 'Akká to the sea. For just a minute I sat in this chair, and for just that minute I was abstracted from all worldly sensation and lifted to the plane of the Kingdom. Such a heavenly peace flowed about me as I had never experienced before, not even when in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence. It was a feeling not only of peace but of exaltation, as being above the distractions and anxieties and dangers of this world. Clearly I was on another plane of being, though physically upon this earth. It was such a wonderful experience that I silently beckoned my wife, who was sitting on the couch, to exchange places with me. While in the armchair, she felt this same uplift and supreme happiness. On the couch we both had, on the other hand, merely the feeling of spiritual peace such as belongs to this earth plane at its best. Truly we had for that supreme moment rested with heavenly souls upon the fields of God. No wonder that martyrs sing as they approach the moment of their release from the cage of life!

The other experience that I referred to was that of beholding for the first time the photograph of Bahá'u'lláh. As I gazed upon his countenance, so massive and so full of majesty and power, I felt that adoration and devotion which led men to become his humble followers while he was a prisoner in a penal colony, and which inspired these ardent followers to spread his gospel throughout the world,—“with a thousand longings sacrificing themselves to the Eternal Beloved.”

It was not a feeling of personal devotion which swept over me. It was rather an awe and worship of the majesty of the law which Bahá'u'lláh personified. As I looked into that Face I perceived the import and power of that Message which he brought for the healing of the nations. I realized that his laws were divine laws, [XIII:11:298] as were those of Moses, only far greater and destined to be the foundation of a divine civilization. Before the awful majesty of such a law, as incarnated in Bahá'u'lláh, one could but prostrate oneself, body and soul; and feel that the greatest privilege this life afforded was to work to help bring this civilization to pass.

Such was the power of Bahá'u'lláh, conveyed even through a photograph. And when his sacred shoes were put into my hands I heard as it were the footsteps of them echoing around the world, the footsteps of One from the mountain-top bearing good news. I had prayed at the tomb of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to have a clearer realization of the station of Bahá'u'lláh. My prayer had been graciously answered.

The day will come when every jot and tittle of this Law will be worshipped by mankind, not only because of its divine origin, but because it will have been the means of bringing to this world the happiest and most perfect civilization it has ever known.

XIII:11, February 1923 [XIII:11:298]

The Knighting of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The following beautiful description of this event was written by Dr Dīyá' M. Baghdádí who was at that time in Haifa:

“Among the kings and governments of the world who have become convinced that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the well-wisher and the lover of mankind are King George and his government. The King sent a medal to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with the title, “Sir”, thus making him a member of his household. On the 27 April 1920, the Governor and high officials of Haifa, Palestine presented in a beautiful garden a most wonderful celebration for the knighting of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Bahá’í pilgrims from Persia, America and all parts of the world were present. Muslim, Christian, Jewish leaders, clergymen, notables and local officials from Haifa, ‘Akká and other towns attended. A tent was pitched in the centre of the garden. English troops stood on both sides, from the gate of the garden to the centre where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was seated. The military music added wonderful melody to the rustling leaves of the beautiful trees. The breezes of the spring on that sunny afternoon imparted a remarkable vigour to the physical body just as the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá strengthened the souls. The Governor stood behind ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and, after a short speech, interpreted by Mr Wadí’ Bustání, presented the medal. Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, rising from his seat, gave a brief talk and a prayer for the British government.”

XIII:11, February 1923 [XIII:11:300]

An epistle of Bahá’u’lláh

O thou Muḥammad! Rejoice in thy soul because of that which hath descended upon thee— a book, holy and priceless within which is that which severeth thee from the kingdom of heaven and earth and leadeth thee to the threshold of manifest glory.

Say: Glory be unto Thee! O God! My God! Thou seest my weakness, my helplessness, my distress and my poverty. Therefore send Thou to me from the fragrances of Thy holiness that which, though it be no larger than an ant, will, if it breathes upon (those that are) first and last, transform them into kings of Thy luminous beauty and honour them with the light of Thy manifest countenance.

O my God! I am he who hath held firmly to Thy strong support in Thy flawless and wonderful Word and hath grasped the hem of Thy bounty in Thy Name, the Supreme, the Exalted, the Omniscient. Therefore, O my God! as Thou hast honoured me with Thy meeting and hast acquainted me with the Manifestation of Thy Self deprive me not of the river of paradise which Thou hast caused to flow by the right side of Thy exalted Throne and withhold me not, O my God! from attaining to Thy inaccessible grace and Thy ancient favour which descendeth from the clouds of Thy exalted mercy.

Say: O people! In the name of God the True One! The First Point (the Báb) hath appeared in this Word, were ye of those who know. The fire of oneness hath become apparent in this high tree which overshadoweth all living beings.

Say: Verily, the Holy Spirit hath appeared in a new garment.

Say: Verily, the rod (of Moses) in this white and luminous hand is uttering praises.

Say: Verily, the beauty of God hath been sent forth from the veil of light Exalted is God, the King of Kings!

Say: Verily, the veil of mystery hath been torn asunder and the Youth hath appeared from the dawning point of His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is He who hath not been comprehended by the knowledge of anyone nor by the wisdom of those who have attained. He speaketh now from the vault of heaven summoning all in the heavens and earth; announcing to all the glad tidings of the rose garden of God and calling them to a holy and praiseworthy station.

Say: Whosoever doth not purify his heart from the veils of imitations will never be in the presence of this shining and exalted countenance.

O Muḥammad! Soar thou in this atmosphere with the wings of severance and fear no one. Trust in God, thy Lord, the Bountiful, the Mighty, the Omnipotent. Turn not to anyone, even if harm should befall thee from all living beings. Summon the people to God and to that which hath been revealed in the *Book of Bayán* and be thou not of those who fear.

Say: O people! Fear God! Obey the laws of God with body and soul and be not of the heedless lest negligence take you away from the point of nearness.

Say: Glory be unto Thee, O God! My God! I ask Thee by Thy Name by which Thou dost wipe out disobedience with forgiveness and changest punishment into mercy and dost usher the guilty into the tent of Thy glorious pardon: permit me not to be alone, for less than an instant, even. Sever not the rope of Thy favour. Debar me not from His meeting in the day wherein the eyes are dazzled, the minds of the wise are perplexed and the feet of the well informed slip. [XIII:11:301]

O my God! Thou art He who hath ever been the King and the Creator of the universe, the Ruler and the Maker of living beings. Thou art He whose mercy surpasseth all things and whose favour is greater than all that is in heaven and earth. Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Beloved, the Wise. Therefore, O my God! I am sheltered by Thy dominion and power and protected by Thy grace and favour. Deprive me not of Thy mercy and favour and keep me not from the rose garden of Thy love and mentioning.

Verily, Thou art the Omnipotent, the Beloved, and to Thy servants Thou art the Clement!

(Signed) 152 (Bahá) Seal (Ḥusayn 'Alí)
Translated by Dr Ḍíyá' M. Baghdádí.

Note: A photograph of the original of this Tablet appears in the Persian section, on page 317 of this issue. It is signed by numbers which represent the name "Bahá", a code form used in the days of persecution, and by the seal of Bahá'u'lláh (Ḥusayn 'Alí).

XIII:11, February 1923 [XIII:11:301]

Seven cities in the spiritual journey to God

Compiled from an Address by Jináb-i-Fáḍil

Bahá'u'lláh wrote two books each of which he called *The Seven Valleys*. They were revealed at the request of an Islamic philosopher, one of the Súfís. This man was attracted to the Cause when Bahá'u'lláh was living at Sámarrá. He asked Bahá'u'lláh many questions and many epistles were revealed in reply to these questions. The Persian *Seven Valleys* has been translated into English. It is the untranslated Arabic one which I will explain to you.

The title of this book is *The Seven Cities*. It describes the spiritual journey of those who wish to approach God. It begins in this way:

"O thou traveller in the path of justice! O ye who are gazing toward the beauty of God! Your letter has been received. I carefully read your questions and heard the melodies which emanated from the tabernacle of your heart. The clouds of the will of God are rising that the rain of wisdom may shower upon you and wash away that which you have received from others." That is to say, you will be purified from previous ideas and inclinations and prejudices; your attitude will be changed and you will be led to the oneness of the mind of God and guided to the holy law of God in order that you may drink from this eternal river and your soul may become tranquil, your thirst may be quenched, your heart be made ready and you may become one of those who are lighted by the illumination of God.

I Investigation

If the traveller wishes to accomplish this journey and attain to the mysteries of God and pass through all these stages of God he must first of all enter into the City of Investigation.

When he enters this city of Search or Investigation he must sever himself from everything but God. He must become selfless and lose his will in the will of God, must pass over everything which is in earth and heaven. There must be in his heart no hatred of anyone neither especial attachment to anyone. That is to say, he must love all humanity impartially, not having special love for special people since this love or hatred might prevent him from attaining to reality.

Another thing which is incumbent upon the traveller is that he should purify [XIII:11:302] himself from pride, selfishness and ambition. He must never show any sign of selfishness; he must not be proud of his education, his property or position. When he has characterized himself with these attributes he will then arrive at the City of the Investigation of God. All that he asks God will there make manifest and will show to him His many paths. God will make His illumined path clear to him for He says: "Those who are endeavouring to find us and are searching after Us according to the aforementioned conditions, it will be Our intention to make Ourselves known to them."

The traveller who starts out upon this journey will see many changes along the way. The wonders of God and the mysteries of creation will become manifest to him and he will be informed concerning the path of God and the path of guidance. This is the first city, the City of Search and Investigation, and the requirement for this city is perfect severance—severance from all save God.

II Love

If we become purified from love and hatred then we can enter into the City of Love.

In this place the divine zephyrs of God will waft upon the traveller; his heart will become filled with the love of God to such an extent that he will completely forget his personal self and will know nothing save God. He will entirely forget himself and his own personality. Sometimes he is grieving because of separation and is burning and blazing with the fire of supplication. Sometimes he is joyous and happy. Sometimes he is grieving; sometimes discouraged and restless; sometimes perplexed and agitated. He is anxiously awaiting his especial command from God—waiting with all his heart and soul—that he may sacrifice his soul and body in the path of God. If we greatly persecute him he will take it with utmost joy and happiness. He will live in such a state that he will kiss the hands of his executioners, and is ever ready to sacrifice his life and property in the path of God. If he be thrown headlong into the fire he will be cold; if drowned in the ocean he will be dry. This is the station of the love of God. These are the attributes of the one who has attained to the City of Search and has entered into the City of Love.

Question: "Will not the traveller have a definite object, in the Manifestation of God as the object of his love?"

Answer: Some persons pass rapidly through these seven valleys. He who searches for Truth, who longs to know right from wrong, seeks to find God's Manifestation for he realizes his inability to understand God's Essence. He knows there can be no salvation without the Manifestation of God. He wishes to find the mystery of Manifestation, to grasp the Centre of Lights. Then he becomes a lover of Truth.

III Unity

The third city is the City of Divine Oneness. When man's heart becomes filled with love then he sees oneness; he does not see differences. He sees that all things and all objects are looking toward one centre. He sees unity among mankind. He sees unity among the Manifestations of God. He sees unity and amity among the friends of God and he sees one underlying principle of unity in the teachings of God. He sees nothing but union in union; he does not see differences. He gazes upon everything in existence with respect and homage

because he considers all as existing in God, as signs of Divinity. He sees the rays of the Manifestation of God enveloping all the world of existence. He is never haughty toward anyone. He never magnifies himself. At every instant he feels himself living by the power of the Almighty God. He does not wish for himself what he does not wish for others. He does not say to others what he does not wish said to himself. This is the station of oneness. Such persons are sailing in the ark of guidance. The rays of the beauty of God are manifest in their faces and we can inhale the fragrances of God from their words. These are the characteristics of those who have attained to this city. [XIII:11:303]

IV Amazement

After the third valley, the valley of Oneness, there comes the valley of Amazement and Surprise. When man reaches this stage he is filled with wonder at the world of God. He is submerged in the world of God, is unconscious of himself. This is the state of amazement.

There were in 'Akká a large number of people who were amazed because of the beauty of the Beloved (which Bahá'u'lláh revealed to them). They would get up three hours before dawn and would walk around the house of Bahá'u'lláh many times. Then, when the time for the meeting arrived, Bahá'u'lláh would call them in and talk with them. They were like lovers who were lost in the beauty of God the Beloved. They were amazed. There are people now who have attained to this station.

V Selflessness

After this stage there comes the City of Selflessness. In this city man dies in the will of God. That is, his selfish personality dies away. He forgets himself, forgets his body and soul and swims in the ocean of selflessness. He becomes unconscious of himself, of his personal existence. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh states that the mysteries of this city of selflessness are myriad for this is the city of the evanescence of the lover in the Beloved. When we reach the city of selflessness then the beauty of the Beloved becomes manifest to us. Unless we are selfless we cannot see that reality. If self is forgotten then reality will take the place of self.

VI Immortality

After this city or valley comes the City of Immortality, where the traveller forgets his will. He wishes only what God wishes. The attributes of God will clearly appear within him. His life will become a divine life.

VII The unseen

After the station of Immortality comes the station of the Unseen, or of Invisibility. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh says that this invisible city is an unfathomable and limitless ocean. This is the world of the Divine Attributes. The Sun of the Unseen dawns from this Dawning-Place of Invisibility. Bahá'u'lláh says that this is a vast city and very few have entered this city; and no one knows anything about this city of the Unseen save the Manifestations of God and God Himself.

Summary

Everyone enters into the valley of Search and Investigation, because if we do not arise for the investigation of God we will never reach God, will know nothing of His attributes. If we do not arise for the search of Divinity we will know nothing about Divinity; unless we are thirsty we will not appreciate water. The more we desire to know Truth the sooner we will arrive at reality. Those who are thirstiest will most appreciate water.

One can easily tell the denizens of each city. One can easily tell that such a man is in the first city; another man has entered the city of love; another is passing into the city of oneness, and one can easily see that some people are confounded and amazed.

Some even travel through the city of Amazement and enter the city of Selflessness. Those people have annihilated their will in the will of the Glory of God. They are martyrs; they are living, and walking about, but they are really martyrs. This is what is called the City of Selflessness, and this can easily be recognized and discerned. Some have traversed this station and have reached the station of immortality.

Bahá'u'lláh says that the traveller will have a test in each city. If he does not pass that test he must go back to the first stage. It is difficult to overcome these tests which are in our way, yet, in order to progress we must conquer our selfishness and pride. All these cities are very difficult; but the first is the most difficult—to become characterized with the first conditions. The condition for the first city is severance, that is, severance from everything except the love of God.

XIII:11, February 1923 [XIII:11:307]

The origin of race colour

A tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

To Mr Thomas Maxwell, Chicago, Illinois.—Upon him be greetings and praise.

O thou who art striving for the welfare of the world of humanity! The contents of thy letter were in accordance with the facts. Indeed, the world of humanity is like one kindred and one family. Because of the climatic differences of the zones, through the passing of ages, colours have become different. In the torrid zone, on account of the intensity of the effect of the sun throughout the ages the black race appeared. In the frigid zone, on account of the severity of the cold and the ineffectiveness of the heat of the sun throughout the ages the white race appeared. In the temperate zone, the yellow, brown and red races came into existence. But in reality mankind is one race. Because it is of one race unquestionably there must be unity and harmony and no separation or discord.

God be praised! The animal, notwithstanding that it is a captive of nature and nature completely dominates it, does not attach importance to colour. For instance, thou dost behold that the black, white, yellow, blue and other coloured pigeons are in utmost harmony with one another. They never give importance to colour. Likewise sheep and the beasts are in utmost love and unity. But man is peculiar in that he has made colour the means of strife. Between the white and the black there is the utmost estrangement and discord. When we enter a rose garden we behold how beautiful is the display of variegated flowers. The difference of colour is the adornment of the rose garden. Were it of one colour it would not have such splendour. The adornment of the rose garden is this, that it contains roses of variegated colour.

Thus it becomes evident that difference of colour is the adornment of the world of humanity. Therefore it must not be the cause of discord.

I hope that you with your soul may strive and become a cause of establishing harmony and love between the black and the white.

Upon thee be greetings and praise!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Dr Ḍiyá' M. Baghdádí, 14 August 1922, Chicago, Illinois.

XIII:12, March 1923 [XIII:12:323]

Bahá'í organization¹

Its basis in the revealed Word

Organization in the Bahá'í Movement rests upon the sure foundation of the Word of God.

¹ Quotations have been replaced with newer translations where available.

In this day when many liberal minded people rebel against the restraint to which they sincerely think organization subjects them—it is well to present some of the vital needs for organization which the Bahá'í Teachings make evident.

Bahá'u'lláh touches the heights of Truth when he says:

“We find some men desiring liberty, and priding themselves therein. Such men are in the depths of ignorance.

“Liberty must, in the end, lead to sedition, whose flames none can quench. ... Know ye that the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. That which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief-maker. Liberty causeth man to overstep the bounds of propriety, and to infringe on the dignity of his station. It debaseth him to the level of extreme depravity and wickedness.

...

“... True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty.”¹

“The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá, and should it exceed this number it doth not matter. They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen. It behoveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly.”²

‘Abdu'l-Bahá in *Some Answered Questions* says:

“When the laws of the Most Holy Book are enforced, contentions and disputes will find a final sentence of absolute justice before a general tribunal of the nations and kingdoms, and the difficulties that appear will be solved. The five continents of the world will form but one, the numerous nations will become one, the surface of the earth will become one land, and mankind will be a single community.”³

Other quotations from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá follow:

Absolute equality amongst men: “Equality is a chimera! It is entirely impracticable! Even if equality could be achieved it could not continue—and if its existence were possible, the whole order of the world would be destroyed. The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. ...

“Some are full of intelligence, others have an ordinary amount of it, and others again are devoid of intellect. In these three classes of men there is order but not equality. How could it be possible that wisdom and stupidity should be equal? Humanity, like a great army, requires a general, captains, under-officers in their degree, and soldiers, each with their own appointed duties. Degrees are absolutely necessary to ensure an orderly organization.”⁴

“The Universal Principles which are the foundation of the Religion of God are laid down; but the making of specific laws which are the sub-divisions and ramifications is apportioned

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paras 123, 124, and 126, pp. 63–64.

² Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 30, p. 29.

³ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 64.

⁴ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 151–152.

to the House [XIII:12:324] of Justice. The wisdom of this is that this world never moves for a long period in one form. The House of justice will make laws applicable to the exigencies and requirements of the time. Its members will not form institutions according to their own judgement and thought. The Most Great House of Justice enacts laws and statutes by the power of inspiration and the confirmation of the Holy Spirit and is under the protection of God.”

“About fifty years ago in the *Book of Aqdas*, Bahá’u’lláh commanded the people to establish the universal peace, and summoned all the nations to the Divine Banquet of International Arbitration, so that the questions of boundaries, of national honour and property and of vital interests between nations might be decided by an Arbitral Court of Justice; and that no nation dare to refuse to abide by their decisions. If any quarrel arise between two nations, it must be adjudicated by this International Court and be arbitrated and decided upon like the judgement rendered by the judge between two individuals. If at any time any nation dares to break such a treaty, all the other nations must arise to put down this rebellion.”¹

“Again consider organization and decomposition, existence and non-existence. Every being is composed of many different constituents; the existence of everything is the expression of organization. That is to say, when by divine genesis, organization of certain elements occurs, a being is produced. All existent beings are after this fashion. But when a defect appears in that compound, and decomposition sets in, the parts separate and that being disintegrates and becomes non-existent. Thus annihilation of things is an expression of their decomposition and disintegration. The affinity and organization of the elements make possible the existence.”²

“Many an assembly will be organized whose members will be representatives of different nations, tribes and peoples ... This is through the effect of the Word of God. If all the powers of the world should convene they could not organize an Assembly like unto these assemblies.”³

“The Universal Court of Arbitration is the only body that will resolve all the disagreements and contentions that arise between the nations of the world. Extraordinary exertion must be put forward by the civilized governments to organize such an influential international organization, before which all their quarrels may be arbitrated. What better plan can be conceived by man? What harm is there in this?”⁴

“All the Governments of the world must be united and organize an Assembly”⁵

“Organize ye Spiritual Assemblies; lay ye the foundation of union and concord in this world; destroy ye the fabric of strife and war from the face of the earth; construct ye the temple of harmony and agreement; enkindle ye the light of the realm of the oneness of humanity; open ye your eyes; gaze and behold ye the other world! The kingdom of peace, salvation, uprightness and reconciliation is founded in the invisible world, and it will by degrees become manifest and apparent through the power of the Word of God!”⁶

“I want you to be organized like a flock of the doves of heaven, whose attitude and conduct toward each other is a symbol of that unity which will take place among human beings, when human beings shall become willing to accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”⁷

¹ *Star of the West*, II:15, p. 5.

² *Star of the West*, XI:9, p. 68.

³ *Star of the West*, XI:9, p. 71.

⁴ *Star of the West*, V:11, p. 165.

⁵ *Star of the West*, VII:9, p. 84.

⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 409.

⁷ *Star of the West*, III:4, p. 29.

“... one of the great principles of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings is the establishment of agreement among the peoples of the world. He founded and taught this principle in the Orient fifty years ago. He proclaimed international unity, summoned the religions of the world to harmony and reconciliation and established fellowship among many races, sects and communities. At that time He wrote Epistles to the kings and rulers of the world, calling upon them to arise and cooperate with Him in spreading these principles, saying that the stability and advancement of humanity could only be realized through the unity of the nations. Through His efforts this principle of universal harmony and agreement was practically demonstrated in Persia and other countries.”¹ [XIII:12:325]

In a Tablet addressed to the delegates to the first Bahá’í Temple Unity Convention in 1909 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote:

“Now is the commencement of organization; hence every affair concerning the Kingdom of God is of paramount importance. Among the most important affairs is the founding of the *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár*, although weak minds may not grasp its importance, nay perchance they imagine this to be a temple like other temples. They say to themselves: ‘Every nation has a hundred thousand gigantic temples, what result have they yielded that now this one *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* (is said) to cause the manifestation of signs and prove a source of Lights?’ But they are ignorant of the fact that the founding of this *Mashriqu’l-Adhkár* is to be in the inception of the organization of the Kingdom.”²

The Guardian of the Cause, Shoghi Effendi, reaffirms the need of organization in his luminous epistle to the American friends, 5 March 1922, and quotes the following from the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

“It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and well arranged. Otherwise every person will act independently and after his own judgement, will follow his own desire, and do harm to the Cause.”³

“In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously, well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail.”⁴

The foundation of organization in the Divine Cause is powerfully laid in the above extracts from the Holy and Creative Words, and many others that may be cited. Deeply impressive is not only the frequent recurrence of the term organization, but also the greatness and scope of what Divine Wisdom now plans and confirms. Organization becomes a vital element in the new creation. As the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh brings to light everything needed for the elevation and progress of humanity—the power of organization, through the Might that organizes, will reach maturity and perfection.

It is known that some misapprehension exists as to the need of organization in the Cause.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 388.

² Most of the quotation is in *Star of the West*, VI:17, p. 137.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 21.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 21–22.

This has grown out of a widely circulated statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that the Bahá’í Cause could never be organized. The true statement was, as corrected by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that the Bahá’í Cause can never be rigidly organized; it can never be confined to an organization. The context of the statement tells why, namely: “It is the Spirit of the Age, the essence of all the highest ideals of the century.”

At Haifa, Syria, in 1920, the following question was asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by some American pilgrims:

“It is misleading, is it not, to say that the Bahá’í Cause cannot be organized?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: “How is it possible that there should be no organization? Even in a household if there is not organization there will be hopeless confusion. Then what about the world? What is meant is that organization is not rigid! In ancient times it was rigid. In the Torah all the political affairs were rigidly fixed, but in this Cause they were not. In this Cause there is political freedom—i.e., in each time the House of Justice is free to decide in accordance with what is deemed expedient. This is a brief explanation of the matter.”

As the spirit of oneness is in all the Divine Utterances, the perceiving mind can readily discern the harmony of this statement with the many other Words of the Manifestation and the Centre of the Covenant, creating organization.

It must be evident that the mysterious dynamic of the Bahá’í Cause, its holy ideals, its supreme wisdom, its transcend- [XIII:12:326] ent love, its heavenly teachings, are from a world beyond man and his power to organize. The descent of the Holy Spirit is Pure Bounty—absolutely removed from man’s power to direct or control. But that Divine Intelligence, that Luminous Sun now manifested, bestows upon man guidance and order. Organization in the Bahá’í Cause is not man’s feeble and futile efforts, as in centuries past, to organize and control the affairs of God thus multiplying veils of separation and clouding his own insight. It is rather, as is clearly revealed in the divine plan, the intervention of God to direct and control the affairs of man. Man’s attainment to effective organization comes through obedience to the Ancient of Days and devotion to His Beauty.

The appointment, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause, the provision for the Universal House of Justice, and other vital Laws, give to organization a most eloquent and impressive majesty. The high goal of order and service to which Shoghi Effendi now invites sincere souls, adds a new impressiveness to Bahá’í organization.

One of the greatest signs of Bahá’í organization is its fluidity, its universal adaptability to the present age, and to succeeding ages and cycles of the world. It is not exclusive. It inspires co-operation with the true, the beautiful and the good without as well as within its ranks. For there are today, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said, prepared souls in all religions. One thus finds everywhere forward-looking people who have rent the veils of religious bigotry and racial prejudice. The Divine Command today requires joy and fragrance in consorting with people of all religions. It invites fellowship with the strong, yet strengthens the poor, the weak and the oppressed. It welcomes every sincere soul who seeks advancement, yet becomes the mighty fortress of defence against the seditious and corrupt. Because, as Bahá’u’lláh says:

“Do not associate with the wicked, because the company of the wicked changeth the light of life into the fire of remorse.”¹

Thus organization under the Divine Instructions becomes the safeguard to the Divine Edifice. Yet it must never become crystalized with set forms and outworn traditions, the impotence of which today makes merely human organization ineffective for universal service.

¹ Bahá’u’lláh in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 434.

Organization, far from being impossible, becomes vital and essential in the growth of the Bahá'í Cause. The division and classification of service, co-ordinated by the divine plan of unity, will ever make for greater efficiency.

Organization appears in everything that God has created. From the tiny atom that moves under molecular attraction to the colossal suns that keep their balance with even and majestic tread,—everything moves according to law and order. Even the body of man is organized. Pain, suffering and dissolution are the penalty it pays for revolt. Shall the Intelligence that organized the universe leave the Kingdom of God in man disorganized?

Through organization the great fundamental Principles revealed by Bahá'u'lláh—Consultation and Kindness—will illumine every Assembly. Through the organization of the people of Light, the pillars that support the order of the world, “reward and retribution” will receive just administration.

Organization facilitates help of the strong to the weak, and of the more efficient to the less efficient. It applies, day by day, the law of co-operation and interdependence. It enables an aggrieved but sincere person to have his wrongs righted through the collective wisdom of an illumined group. If this fails to satisfy, an appeal may be had to the Supreme Court of Guidance. Organization thus removes differences and upholds the oneness of the Cause.

The exhortations to love and unity, which so often recur in the Bahá'í Teachings, point the sincere to both an inward and outward security. Esoterically it means turning to the Centre of Light and Guidance. Exoterically, it is found by supporting with might and main, whatever institution or organization is erected on earth through the Heavenly Power. The Divine civilization ever requires of man co-operative effort. Co-operation in its very nature implies organization. If organization is vital even in small affairs, how much more necessary does it become when human welfare is regulated by the laws of the Kingdom? [XIII:12:327]

Organization, too, will in the divine purpose preserve the Divine Teachings. If those who arise to serve, however sincere, construe the meaning of the Holy Words according to their own limitations they may gather around themselves a following, and in this way a multitude of sects will divide the body of the Cause. According to the Revelation of this day the words of the teacher need only be taken if they agree with what is revealed on the part of God and is recorded in Tablets. The teacher may at any time be questioned as to his authority. Should differences arise, they can readily be corrected through the degrees of organization that the divine plan unfolds. The matter of the physical preservation of the Books and Tablets, their correct translation into tongues other than those in which they are revealed, their spread among the regions of the earth,—are matters too weighty to be entrusted to individual direction. How soon would priceless treasures be scattered, lose their purity through alterations, and be lost to future generations! Here again organization proves its great value.

Organization has grown among the friends in America over a period of years. This has occurred in the natural order of evolution. In the early days of the Cause in America the few Teachings that were then available would be read by a group of believers, and if a stranger appeared the Message would be historically given. As members increased, the efforts to reach people of different environments grew, and meetings in public places, publications, etc., were natural steps. With further progress came the organization of Committees to direct local Assembly work. Also there came, with the plan to erect a *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* (Universal House of Worship), the annual Convention. Its volume of business, small at first, increased from year to year. The service of the Convention, as a teaching body, as a temple-builder, as a means of unity, life and harmony among the various Assemblies, has been blessed and glorious! Yet its increasing responsibilities have entailed division of labour; and various committees have been formed to carry forward the work. Within the past year, under the instructions of the Guardian of the Cause, Assemblies throughout America have elected from

among themselves Spiritual Assemblies, with full control of local affairs. The National Spiritual Assembly with its Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, Teaching, Publications, Reviewing and Educational Committees, has been entrusted with full service in all Bahá'í affairs pertaining to America.

Bahá'í organization in the Orient, by all authoritative accounts, has reached a higher standard than has yet been possible in the Occident. There, greater numbers and longer experience are seen; while fiery trials and intense persecutions from without have increased the power and penetration of the inward love that unifies. The happiness, peace and prosperity of the friends upon every plane are inseparably linked together. Sweet is the assurance that such a condition, in time, will be found throughout the world. Our Oriental brothers are ever mindful of the Most Great Guidance and the common weal. They successfully conduct, in a highly organized way, not only the affairs of the Cause, but co-operative enterprises of a private nature. Their organizations are so wise and mature as to prove a strong defence against the deceitful and corrupt on the one hand, as well as just administration and loving stimulus to the activities of the friends on the other. The storehouses of the Spiritual Assemblies kept the friends supplied with food during the recent hardship and distress caused by war; so that not one Bahá'í perished for lack of food. This occurred at a time when thousands of people were starving. Such a blessing from organization is its own eulogy.

In Persia the friends have not only a Teaching Committee, but clubs of teachers. These are organized for the purpose of sharing experiences, avoiding duplication of effort, discussing plans for the work and acquiring greater wisdom and clearer guidance in delivering the Message.

It should be clear that organization, in the Bahá'í sense, is ever spiritual. Bahá is the revelation of the Abhá Light in this world for the guidance of the people. To this end God has revealed Himself in His Greatest Manifestation, illumined the earth with His Brightness in the Orb of His Covenant, and today exercises His tender, compassionate Guardianship over [XIII:12:328] all the creatures. Thus in the Bahá'í Cause organization has come into being through the direction and co-operation of the friends in both spiritual and material affairs. After vainly, through thousands of years, striving to attain peace through material organization of spiritual affairs, man now attains supreme happiness through the spiritual organization of material affairs. Certainly no harm can result to any one from this.

The pillar of Bahá'í organization is justice; its glory is service; its bright jewel is humility; its banner is trustworthiness; its light is Guidance; its armour is prayer; its treasury is Divine Love; its exalted purpose is unity. Its members should be free from prejudices against all men. They should be God-like in their firmness, steadfastness and universality. They should obey the Centre of life and power and count themselves nothing in His Path. They should be able to discover their own faults, confess them before God and be able to see the virtues of other people. They should not choose themselves for positions of honour, but be chosen by others. Under the Instructions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a greater body should be first appointed, from which a smaller body will be elected. In this simple, quiet way, excitement of elections is avoided and harmony advanced.

The future of Bahá'í organization is bright and glorious. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, around which many institutions will centre,—such as the school for orphans, the hospital, the hospice, the abode for the aged and infirm and the college of applied sciences, will in its very nature as well as administration, require very efficient organization.

The Universal House of Justice, headed by the revered Guardian of the Cause, the various National Spiritual Assemblies and the Spiritual Assemblies to be found in all Cities, the International Arbitral Court and the federation of the world, each and all bespeak the divine

evolution of organization to an efficiency undreamed of, with the noblest and most exalted purpose.

The world spiritually organized in the Light of Bahá'í Principles will be the reflection of the Supreme Concourse.

(Signed) Louis G. Gregory, Agnes S. Parsons, Mariam Haney:—who constitute the Committee appointed by The National Spiritual Assembly in January 1923, to prepare this document on Bahá'í Organization.

XIII:12, March 1923 [XIII:12:330]

To the friends in Cleveland

The beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

Care of the members of the Spiritual Assembly.

My beloved friends,

I trust now that I have returned refreshed and strengthened from my needed retirement, I shall very soon hear from you such news as shall encourage and strengthen me in my labours for His Holy Cause.

I look forward with eager anticipation to the welcome news of increased unity among the loved ones of God, of renewed ardour in their ceaseless service to the Cause and of crowning achievements in their field of service throughout that country.

True, in this day the Light of the Covenant is hidden from mortal eyes, yet the unfading Splendour of His Spirit, freed from earthy limitations, shines more brilliantly than ever before and is sure to guide our steps if we but seek His Guidance and walk steadfastly in His Way.

May the radiance of His Inspiration illumine our hearts and the hope of Eternal Reunion be our stay and solace in these days of bereavement and service to His Cause.

Supplicating the Divine Favours on your behalf,

I am your brother in His Service,

(Signed) Shoghi

Haifa, Palestine, 5 January 1923.

XIII:12, March 1923 [XIII:12:333]

One of God's heroes

Jináb (Ibn-i-Abhar) Ayadí, belonged to a noble family in Zanján, Persia. He was appointed by Bahá'u'lláh as one of the "Four Hands of the Cause", in the days of persecution in the middle of the last century, and he "was the recipient of love and honour from all". His life was full of service. Seven times imprisoned by the enemies of the Cause, "he was absolutely fearless", writes one of the friends from Persia, "and when persecution arose, as in the martyrdom of Yazd he individually would carry petitions to the Cabinet Ministers and persons in authority. One vivid recollection is of seeing him speeding across the public square on such an errand. Another recollection is that of seeing him, when totally blind, sitting up in his bed on the foot of which squatting in Oriental fashion was an aged Siyyid who had come from far away seeking Ibn-i-Abhar to teach him the Bahá'í truths. This man was a stranger to Tíhrán; he had heard of the Bahá'í school called Tarbíyat; he searched the city until he found the school and then was directed to the house of Abhar.

"During the last months of Ibn-i-Abhar's life, in spite of his suffering he was busy teaching and counselling the friends. When relating fragments of his experiences he seemed inspired,

always referring to his successive imprisonments and heavy chains with smiles and laughter.” He passed into the unseen world in February 1919.

Ibn-i-Abhar dictated the following autobiographical sketch to his nephew, Fakhru’-d-Dín. It was translated by his nephew, Dīyá’u’-d-Dín Munádi, and Amatu’lláh and was transcribed for the *Star of the West*, in Tīhrán, Persia, September 1922.

The story of Ibn-i-Abhar

A command came for me to leave Abhar and go to Zanján to teach the Azalís. My uncle, ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím, and two other very prominent men, Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-Baghí and Hájí Mullá Raḥmatu’lláh went with me. We rented a house to live in and during the day visited the Mullás, the Governor, and well-known, educated people. Many proofs were given to convince the Azalís. At night, while the others slept I would go to the house of a believer. When the meeting was over a servant would cautiously open the door and I would return home. During four months of strenuous work all but two of the Azalís became well informed and many intelligent and honourable people turned their faces toward the Cause. The fire of the love of God flamed in the hearts of the friends and all received boundless favours from the Kingdom of Abhá.

Upon returning to Abhar we learned that through the flaming of the Word the friends had been attracted to the Cause in an extraordinary degree; however, as a precaution, no one had dared to gather together the attracted ones. This was done and they became very happy.

Shortly after this the enemies began to cry out: “O religion! O faith! The Holy Laws are passing away!” and they persuaded Prince Rukni’-d-Dawlih, brother of Náṣiri’-d-Dín Sháh, who had been my friend, to arrest, imprison and put in chains some of the believers.

It is written in the Qur’án, “Verily the devils incite one another.” Mírzá Abú-Ṭálib, son of Mírzá Abu’l-Kázim, who during the early days of the Cause instigated the first persecution and bloodshed in Zanján now began writing to my cousin, Mirzi Abol-Fatoo,¹ entitled Imám-i-Jum’ih, who was one of my bitterest enemies. [XIII:12:335] These two ridiculed me before the Governor, seeking to ruin me. They stated, in a letter, that Ibn-i-Abhar had been the cause of much disturbance and trouble among the people in Zanján. This letter was spread among the fanatical Mullás.

The Governor was a friend of mine, and he treated the letter of Abol-Fatoo lightly, saying: “It was written through jealousy and a misunderstanding. I have neither seen nor heard anything from Ibn-i-Abhar which is hostile to religion.” This caused an uprising among the people who, suspicious of the Governor, were ready to murder some of the believers.

The Governor now became very much disturbed and ordered that the Tablets be brought from the houses of the believers: if among them there was found anything written by Ibn-i-Abhar the people would be allowed to appeal to the Sháh for his death sentence.

I had written many letters to two confirmed believers, Áqá Siyyid Ismá’íl and Áqá Rasúl. These were found. The Governor, because of his fear, repented his friendship (with Abhar) and secured from the Sháh a sentence of martyrdom. Mírzá Jalíl Khán, chief of the gunners, with ten soldiers was commanded to take me to Zanján.

Suddenly, at evening-time, several soldiers appeared at the door and demanded an interview. My brother, Mírzá Abu’l-‘Aṭúf, said: “It is now late. You had better wait until morning.” Then I came from an inner room and my nephew, Fakhru’-d-Dín, called the officers. About fifty soldiers had surrounded the house. Some students who were there studying with Mírzá Abu’l-‘Aṭúf were put out of the house by the soldiers; whereupon they spread the news

¹ Mírzá Abu’l-Fattúh.

through the bazaars and soon the crowds came rushing from all sides to see what was happening. The soldiers in order to scatter the crowd began firing and the noise of gunshots filled the air. As soon as the crowd was scattered Jináb-i-Khán produced from his pocket a letter addressed to Ibn-i-Abhar who was commanded thus:

“Your Excellency! For the purpose of investigating certain matters your presence is necessary in this city. Mírzá Jalíl Khán, with ten soldiers has been commanded to bring you. With Mírzá ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím and Kárbilá’í Mihdí Mílání you must start for Zanján, that the matter may be investigated in your very presence. Kindly see to it that you do not fail to start; otherwise the affair may become serious.”

After reading the letter I handed it to my brother, whereupon Mírzá Jalíl Khán said to him: “You had better go into the house. We have nothing to do with you.” But when two of the soldiers produced a large chain and prepared to put it upon me my brother could not endure it but tried to prevent them. Then the soldiers pushed him out of the room, saying: “You have no right to interfere.”

My brother returned, gave the soldiers fifty túmán¹ and obtained their promise not to chain me that night. I now went into the inner apartment, and they placed a guard at the door, allowing only one servant to pass in and out. In order to show their importance and to intimidate the family they made threats and frequently fired off their guns.

I take God to witness that during that night our house was like a house of mourning. Nothing was heard but sighs and cries and most of the relatives, men and women, were excited, and crying all night for they were given no information as to the condition of the prisoners.

The fourth hour after sunset my cousin, Hájí Mírzá Hidáyat, brother of Imám-i-Jum‘ih took Mírzá Jalíl Khán into a private room and told him that it would be to his earthly and spiritual advantage to torture this servant.

Mírzá Jalíl Khán, understanding my cousin’s hatred and jealousy said to me: “Why are these cousins so opposed to you, seeking to destroy you?”

I answered: “The uncles of His Holiness Muḥammad were against him, and his cousins sought to martyr his descendants. The citizens of Galilee were opposed to Christ. In Moses’ time his relatives arose and drove him out. The family of Abraham caused his expulsion. And was not Joseph cast into the pit? By whom?—his wicked brethren.” Thus, through scriptural citations I finally led Mírzá Jalíl Khán to the Riḍván of the knowledge of the Manifestation and, until midnight, told him and three others about the Great Cause. [XIII:12:336]

In the morning Imám-i-Jum‘ih summoned Mírzá Jalíl Khán and made calumnious accusations against me and against the Revealer of the Cause. He then tried to persuade him to torture (me) Abhar.

“Tell him that you will bind his shoulders, chain him, put his feet in stocks and ride him on a bare-backed mule. Undoubtedly, to escape such ignominy he will pay you a large sum of money. After obtaining the money then act to the very limit of your power in order to secure your heavenly recompense, for these transgressors lead the people astray and the more scornfully they are treated the more the people will fear to follow them. Then, how great will be your station in the sight of the Great Father Muḥammad in the day of resurrection! Proceed at once to Zanján, and make this matter seem very important before the Governor. As soon as he arrives there let the Governor purify the province of Qamṣar from his ignoble presence—(let him be killed.)”

¹ Túmán is used for singular and plural.

When Mírzá Jalíl Khán compared the words of Ibn-i-Abhar with those of Imám-i-Jum'ih he said: "Áqá, there is an immense difference between your statements and his. Ibn-i-Abhar admonished us until midnight. He gave us the story of the prophets in detail exhorting us to live in peace with all the people of God. He led us to the straight path of love, virtue, holiness and the Oneness of the peerless God. He showed no sadness because of the calamities which had befallen him. Alas for me! that I must bring about the murder of such a prisoner!"

He then arose, saying: "If God wills, the enemy himself will cause good to triumph."

With smiling face he came and reported to me the whole interview, adding, "I thought all Bahá'ís were the enemies of God and of His prophet and I intended to torture and kill you. But since last night, and especially, today, I have changed my mind and am anxious to gain a thorough knowledge of your purpose. I am resolved to do nothing which may cause me to be ashamed in the presence of God and of His prophet."

Ibn-i-Abhar answered: "Verily, the Qur'án says: 'Those who obey God are those who have obeyed His prophet'."

My family wished to send a sum of money to the Governor to obtain my release but he had evidently come under the influence of Imám-i-Jum'ih for he sent a strict order to Imám-i-Jum'ih and Jalíl Khán that he (Jalíl Khán), must set out at once with the prisoner of the government. What a terrible scene followed!

It was the fourth day of Muḥarram, the month of beating.¹ Shops were closed and groups of men had equipped themselves to torment the believers. The soldiers joined in—some having taken bribes; others being followers of Imám-i-Jum'ih; and others joining through fanaticism. The women, hiding in the inner apartment were crying loudly. A rabble of worthless people had gathered about the gate, and friends, also, had secretly drawn near. In the evening Imám-i-Jum'ih with his two brothers, Mírzá Hidáyat and Aga Fatollah,² brought a company of soldiers and instructed them to mount the prisoner in the most ignominious fashion or they would be reported to the Governor and would themselves be humiliated. They gave notice that if anyone rented him (the prisoner) a good horse the animal would be seized and that man and his family would be treated as scorpions. Mírzá Jalál and the ten others did not dare to start with him. A lean pony was brought. Some of the onlookers were scornful; some were laughing; others amazed; and a few were weeping. Many were cursing and reviling, while the sound of crying from the women and children in the inner room rent the heart. The oppressed believers had taken refuge in a corner and dared not utter a word. Imám-i-Jum'ih surrounded by Mullás, theological students, merchants and princes was writing an accusation in an inner room. He ordered this oppressed one to enter, which he did with the chain about his neck and one foot in a stock. Immediately Imám-i-Jum'ih said, with a bitter smile: "Curse you, for an infidel!"

I answered him with a proverb: "First prove the earth and then draw the map of it."

Upon hearing this quotation Imám-i-Jum'ih said, angrily: "Remove this dog from the room. He accounts himself a prophet and reveals verses for us." [XIII:12:337]

Jalíl Khán seized the chain and dragged me from the room while Imám-i-Jum'ih said: "Did you hear what he claimed?"

One answered: "He wanted to make us Bábís." And they all began to curse.

My mother had turned her face toward the point (of prayer) repeating this prayer, which had been revealed for her in a Tablet: "Praise be upon Thee, O Thou, the Beloved, the Knower,

¹ Muḥarram: forbidden, unlawful; the sacred enclosure of Mecca; the first month in the Islamic calendar.

² Áqá Fathu'lláh.

and thanks be unto Thee, O Thou, the Aim of the world!”

Her sisters, Táj Naṣṣāḥ¹ and Ḥusnī Ján, and her daughters, Fátimih and Oma² Ḥabíbih, sent a sum of money petitioning that the soldiers would permit me to visit my relatives, and her son Abu'l-Kázim, gave surety with his life.

At first they refused, but when the sum was increased they brought me bound hand and foot with chains into the inner apartment. This sight caused the women to cry so loudly that the men who were in the inner apartment burst into tears. When Imám-i-Jum'ih heard this he said, angrily: “Did you not hear how he despised us and exalted his own station? Let him go at once so that we may be quit of his scorn.”

All this time not a trace of emotion was to be seen in my mother's face. She did not once look toward me nor did she cease to repeat the holy words. The friends led me to her that she might see my face. She said: “O my dear! You know how precious you are to me; but the most glorified One is the Blessed Perfection. I dedicate you to be a sacrifice in his Cause. Go! Be steadfast! Sacrifice yourself in the Cause of God and fear no one. The Qur'án says: ‘Do they think that those who are killed in the path of God are dead? Nay, they are alive in the presence of their Lord and are supping with Him.’” She did not glance my way nor did she embrace me in farewell but continued to thank God and to pray.

The relatives and the others cried out: “O you cruel one! God does not accept your prayers. How hard-hearted you are to consent to the death of such a son!”

My brother then came and took me out of the room, handing me over to the soldiers who put my other foot into the stock and, mounting me on the miserable pony, started off. Everyone was weeping, but Abhar, turning to them all, believers and non-believers said: “I bid farewell to you and ask you to forgive my failings and to beg for pardon for me at the Threshold of Oneness for it is most probable that I will not return from this journey.” One of his (Abhar's) uncles, a bitter enemy, cried out: “Go to hell so that you can not come back, O you, the branded one among your kindred. I trust that you will be hanged!”

About two thousand people of all classes formed our escort. Imám-i-Jum'ih ordered the guards to take the most public route—which ran through the bazaars and passed by his house. Here his relatives stood on the roofs to ridicule, hurl abusive language and throw stones. The prisoner asked the guards to stop the pony so the crowd might satisfy their curiosity. Then he cried aloud: “O ye people! This day upon which I am arrested upon the charge of being a Bábí is the fourth of Muḥarram. You remember that it was upon this same day that in ancient times they beheaded the descendants of Muḥammad and waved their heads on spears before the other captives, crying: ‘You are heathen; you have left the religion of your fathers and have abandoned the laws of God.’ ‘Know, verily, that God will curse the nation that martyred them.’”

During this speech the people wept and wailed and continued so to do until we reached Muṣallá, one mile out of the city. Mírzá Jalíl Khán was so overcome that he dismounted from his horse and ordered two of the guards to break the stocks and release my feet. Then he, himself, spoke to the people:

“O ye inhabitants of Abhar! You may rest assured that the cause of this man is just. He is being oppressed as was my forefather, Imám Ḥusayn. Do not desert this family. Compare the family of Imám-i-Jum'ih with the family of Yazíd. They tried to turn me against this family but, thank God, I was not deceived and have not mistreated his honour.”

We tarried until sunset, the believers gradually becoming more tranquil, saying: “He will

¹ Naṣṣáḥ (“a tailor”).

² Ama.

have no more trouble along the way except for the heaviness of his chains.” And this was really the case [XIII:12:338] for, two miles out of Zanján, when everyone sat down to rest Mírzá Jalíl Khán, retaining three of the guards who were friendly sent the other seven who continually opposed when religion was discussed, to their homes, telling them not to report to the government office but to change their clothes, and in the morning to come to his house when they would all take the criminal to the office of the government. After the departure of the seven, those who remained began to talk happily about the Cause, chanting meanwhile prayers and Tablets.

The little party soon came to the house of Mírzá Jalíl Khán who then called in some of the believers connected with the court that they might discuss the best method of presenting the matter to the government. They now took off the chains which were about the neck of Abhar.

Two hours later, in the midst of an earnest discussion, there came a loud and peremptory knocking at the door—evidently a messenger from the government; whereupon Mírzá Jalíl Khán and the others hastily concealed themselves. Two deputies and twenty farráshes entered and angrily demanded Mírzá Jalíl Khán and the prisoner, Abhar. It was apparent that the seven guards had turned in evidence.

The government’s messengers with the utmost roughness and disrespect chained the prisoner and dragged him to the government office. Here the head servant was walking about in the hall, so intoxicated that he could scarcely speak. He came up to me and asked, furiously: “Where have you sent Jalíl Khán?”

This oppressed one answered very slowly: “I accompanied him to his own house and after that I have no information about him.”

The head servant called the warden of the prison and said, sarcastically: “Treat him well, because he is the very essence of the Bábís and has converted the servants of the government.”

The warden took my ‘abá (cloak) and emptied my pockets of a small sum of money. Then he put me into a dungeon called in Zanján “Dashborgh”—“stone tower”,¹ a hole dug in the ground and closed over with a stone as large as a millstone which could not be moved at all from below and only with great difficulty from above. The prisoner had only room enough to crouch within. On account of the carelessness of the guards the place was filled with fleas, white ants and lice. One of the prisoners described how sometimes all three would clump together and form a mass the size of a bean. Every day the great stone was taken from the opening for two hours to change the air. Here this unfortunate one was imprisoned for four months and a few days. The place was about ten yards square and there were other believers, also, confined there. When I arrived they began weeping, as though mourning for their own dead children.

I smilingly asked: “Why do you weep? Be happy that you are suffering for the sake of God. You are bound and fettered for the spreading of His Cause. Soon your native citizens, your relatives and your grandchildren will boast because of your very existence and in the sight of men you will reach to the heights of dignity.”

They answered: “We are not weeping for ourselves. We are accustomed to chains and stocks. Our weeping is for your dear and precious life. Until now you have been cherished in ease, and held in the highest respect and honour. How can you exist in such a dark and malodorous hole?”

I answered from the Qur’án: “I am submissive to His command, patient under the calamities of God and there is no one to be worshipped save Him.”

¹ Tashburj.

“Consider how every prophet was a target for the enemies of his time, and no one of them failed to drink the poison-cup, draining it as though it were the sweet elixir of Paradise. In the fire of Nimrod Abraham reached to a high station. In like manner Jesus Christ took up his abode in the heaven of Nearness. Muḥammad and his holy descendants tore the veil of superstition from the eyes of their followers and went, straight and swift as an arrow, to their high station.”

These explanations which were in reality utterances from the invisible so affected the guards and farráshes that they ceased to trouble me. Like the others, they forgot me and listened to the teachings. [XIII:12:339]

In order to learn how the farráshes were treating me the warden sent in a new farrásh. This one also in that dark cell became captive to the Mount of God. He stood like a statue, listening eagerly. The warden, wondering why no sound reached him from the dungeon came, stealthily, near, and stood by the opening listening for the cruel treatment of the prisoners. Hearing nothing he rushed in angrily and found that all the prisoners had gathered around this prisoner and were listening to the words of life. He had a heavy club of almond wood in his hand and with it started beating the head jailer striking him and his assistants so severely that the club broke in two. Then, with the remaining piece, he came toward me and began striking me, saying, “O you devil! Can you not keep silent even here? Do you want to lead astray the prison force?”

After many blows he called for a very heavy chain, in addition to the ordinary one already worn. He handed this collar to me ordering me to put it around my neck. This poor oppressed one had been so badly beaten that his senses were benumbed and instead of placing the collar around his neck he tried to draw it over his head, like a cap. The intoxicated warden seeing this burst out laughing, and his anger passed away. He ordered the other prisoners to be confined in a separate cell lest all should become Bahá'ís. I was then chained to the other believers and my feet were put into the same stock. I now began to chant from memory the whole of the following Tablet, called the Tablet of Praise:

“He is the Glory of the Most Glorious!

“His praise is purified above the knowledge of all beings. It is exalted above the comprehension of the creatures. These things are reserved for the King, the Precious, the Peerless, He who is forever purified above the remembrance of all others.”

XIII:12, March 1923 [XIII:12:339]

An early tablet to Persia

Translated by Shoghi Effendi

He is the All-Glorious!

O thou that art aglow with the Fire that burneth in the Sacred Tree!

At this morning hour, when the Light that shineth from the Abhá Kingdom is shedding its splendour upon the regions of the world and the sweet savours of the Lord wafted from the Realms of Holiness are diffusing their fragrance amongst the holy ones on earth, this yearning one is so stirred with the sweet remembrance of the loved ones of God and so aflame with the desire of their meeting that he finds no way to still his longings or to calm his restless soul.

A Voice is calling him from the Realm on High: “O servant of the sacred Threshold of Bahá! Bestir thyself and, with thy pen in thine hand, make mention of that loving friend of thine that seeketh restlessly the Way of his Beloved and who is so enamoured with Thee that a single drop from the Ocean of Thy loving-kindness is to him the Water of Everlasting Life.”

By thy life, so precious to me, I swear that I can contain myself no more and this pen of

mine can write no further nor can I guide and restrain any more my writing: Ponder this in thy heart and peruse this letter by the power of thine heart and spirit.

O friend! I know not what to say and write to thee. Behold! The Voice of God so resounds from the Kingdom of Bahá that the ear is well-nigh overpowered with its sound, and the Universe is so shaken by the ringing call of Bahá that it may soon disrupt and burst asunder!

I can write no more.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translation of one of the earliest Tablets of our Beloved revealed for one of the early pioneers of the Cause in Persia.

XIII:12, March 1923 [XIII:12:341]

The problem of unemployment

“It will not be possible in the future,” said 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “for men to amass great fortunes by the labour of others. The rich will willingly divide. They will come to this gradually, naturally, by their own volition. It will never be accomplished by war and bloodshed. The ruling power or government cannot treat the rich unjustly. To force them to divide their wealth would be unjust. In the future, proportionately, about three quarters of the profits will go to the workmen and one quarter to the owner. This condition will prevail in about one century. It will certainly come to pass.”—From *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 7.

XIII:12, March 1923 [XIII:12:342]

The coming spiritual renaissance

... Theologians are struggling over new heresies. Division in all great religions is increasing. Christians try to return to Christ, but what is the Christ teaching? Fundamentalists interpret it one way; liberal ministers in a way which is quite different. Some prominent men of science question all our faith. Historical scholars throw ancient documents into doubt. Great demonstrations are held in Moscow denying all religion, just as Bahá'u'lláh prophesied would happen, when he said that after the great war religion would for a time seem to disappear.

In a word, we need a new statement of the teachings of the Divine Christ, applied to new conditions with a new outpouring of spiritual power. “The old teachings,” says 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “are insufficient for today. They cannot cure every disease and are not an ointment for every wound. Those heavenly admonitions of old are greatly loved and profoundly acceptable but the intellectual aspirations of today have advanced and demand fuller explanations of the divine plan. There is great need for universal enlightenment. This need is supplied in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings which are the sum of all teachings. Today he who acquaints himself with the precepts and exhortations of Bahá'u'lláh and reads the Tablets of Kalimát, Tajalliyát, Ṭarázát and Bishárát will know for a certainty that they are the essential food for humanity in this latter day as well as the means of joining this transitory life to the Eternal.

“There are seasons in the revelation from God, as in the natural year, and just as the Christ manifested the Spirit of God in the flesh and helped the earth in his time, now the message of Bahá'u'lláh is the medicine of which the world has much need. Bahá'u'lláh has a larger message on a greater number of subjects than any other, just as this is an age more ready, because of the great spiritual advance made in the great kingdom of knowledge, to understand and benefit by his just commands.”—'Abdu'l-Bahá: From Notes of Mrs Thornburg-Cropper of London.

“As to the significance of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, know that everything which belongs to the universal is divine and all that is divine is certainly for the universal good. Therefore, a divine cause, for universal good, cannot be limited to the Orient nor to the Occident, because

the flame of the sun of Truth illumines the East and the West and its heat is felt in the south as well as in the north; there is no difference between the two poles. In the time of the manifestation of Christ the Romans and the Greeks thought that the Cause was especially for the Jews; they thought they had no need for it because they saw that, according to appearances, they possessed a perfect civilization and they thought that they did not need the instructions of Christ. This false supposition caused many people to be deprived of its grace.

“Also know that the principles of Christianity and the commandments of Bahá’u’lláh are identical and that the roads are the same. But every day there is progress. There was a time when this divine institution was in an embryonic condition. Then it became newly born, a child, an intelligent child. Today it has reached maturity: its capacities, its body are the same, but today, it is resplendent, with the greatest beauty and brilliancy.”—From a tablet to a friend in Paris.

XIII:12, March 1923 [XIII:12:343]

The Covenant of peace

From two tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to German friends, quoted in the diary letters of Shoghi Effendi,

7 and 8 October 1919.

“The underlying foundation upon which the Kingdom rests is love and this must be securely established among the friends and must be widely spread so that it may become the cause of the establishment of the oneness of mankind. This love must be so intensified among the friends as to make of them true servants of one another expending their wealth and sacrificing their lives for one another and consecrating their being to the existence of other souls. Then ye shall observe how people will flock and gather under the shade of the pavilion of the oneness of mankind.”

“Praise be to God! Thou hast given up thy material comfort, ... hast travelled to Lubeck and hast instituted an assembly. From the bounties of God I hope that assembly may become a heavenly gathering, may promulgate the oneness of mankind so that the various peoples and different races may all associate with utmost harmony under the shade of the pavilion of the oneness of mankind, the hostile peoples of Europe may be fused into one, the continent of Europe may become one home, this horrible war may lead to utmost union, harmony and love among the different communities of Europe, the monument of estrangement may quake and the standard of affection and unity be unfurled.”

“You must rest assured,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Secretary of the New York Peace Society, concerning the work of its members, “and let there be no trace of doubt in your souls that God is your assister and helper. The Heavenly confirmations will descend upon you more and more. God will protect you and will give you new strength continually. Your world-motives will conquer the world of men; all obstacles will disappear before your advance; no earthly power can resist the onrushing power of peace. For [XIII:12:344] this power is assisted by the power of God and that which is divinely assisted must prevail. Consider how the Cause of Christ was confirmed. How many resisted it! What mountains of obstacles were raised against it! What hostile forces sought to destroy its foundations! Yet the kings and emperors of the world could not resist its spread and establishment. No power of earth can withstand the on-flow of the spirit of truth. If earthly kings and kingdoms come in its way it will conquer, and they will be overthrown, always: for your cause is truth itself, and truth is omnipotent. If all nations arise to oppose they will be vanquished, and you will be victorious. You are a servant of God, not a servant of this world. A servant of God is he who gives some benefit to the world of man.”

Bahá'í education

Stanwood Cobb

Professor Stanwood Cobb, educator, and author of a number of books upon religion, mysticism and the Near East, taught for a number of years in Robert College, Constantinople, and in other institutions. He is now the head of a remarkably progressive school at Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Every great civilization has brought with it a new type of education, expressing the needs and ideals of the age. And as religion is one of the chief factors of civilization, every new religion has caused a profound change in the aims and practices of education. In fact, in the early centuries of any religious dispensation, while faith and zeal are strong, education has been not only influenced but controlled by religion. Such was the case in the early centuries of the Christian era, continuing even to the Renaissance. Such was the case in the inception of Islám, and has remained so to the present day. Even a new movement within an established religion—such as the rise of Protestantism, or of powerful sects such as the Methodists or Quakers—exerts its modifying influence upon all education brought within its sphere.

Therefore it is apparent even to the casual observer that the Bahá'í faith, when it should become established as a world-religion bringing with it a new world-civilization, could not fail to powerfully affect the ideals and processes of education.

Nor need such a partnership between education and religion be feared, especially since the substantiation of scientific truth is one of the principles of the Bahá'í religion. It is true that scholasticism has been a detriment to education; but the cramping spirit of scholasticism is a symptom of decadence rather than of reality in religion. For instance, Islám, now in its age of scholasticism, was at its beginning a powerful ally of the scientific investigation of truth; and its great universities of Cairo and Cordova became the inspiration and model of higher education in Europe. True religion is an expansive, not a restrictive force; it is the essence of creation, not the spirit of limitation. But the organization which grows up in the name of any religion reaches at last a stage of crystallization, then of paralysis. The oppressive influence of the church at such an epoch, though exerted in the name of religion, is not due to real religion, but as 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, to the very opposite of religion.

The founders of the Bahá'í religion, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have established definite principles to guide the educators of the future. So that if we study carefully these principles, in com- [XIV:1:4] parison also with the general teachings of the Cause, we can form a very clear picture of what education will be like among the Bahá'ís of the future.

In the FIRST place, it will be universal. Bahá'u'lláh has said that it is the duty of every parent to educate his children. If he cannot do this then the state will take charge of the matter. Americans may say, "Such is now the case in this country". But they are mistaken. In this country there are millions of illiterates, a large part of them of old American stock. And as for Europe and Asia, we are aware of the crying need for education in that part of the world. The need is no less great in South America, where the dominant white race is literate, but entirely negligent and antipathetic to the education of the subject races, Indians and Negroes.

When it is conceived that this law of Bahá'u'lláh concerns itself with the whole world, and with every race, nay with every individual, it will be seen how profoundly the complete execution of this law will affect mankind. Illiteracy and ignorance will be entirely obliterated, and all of mankind, by receiving the privilege and aid of education, will for the first time in the history of our planet be thereby placed on a plane of equal opportunity for success in life-endeavours. For the right education is the open door to the expression and utilization of one's native abilities. And while but a privileged portion of the world are placed in this favourable

position of advancement, the submerged nine-tenths are even before they are born condemned to be the toiling slaves of the few. This is not justice. And upon the pillars of justice, not of injustice, is the new edifice of civilization to be raised.

SECONDLY, education will be more practical. Bahá'u'lláh said, "Let everyone be taught a trade or profession." Culture is a gift that makes life more beautiful and intelligent, but skill at a trade or profession is the indispensable means of raising man from brutish servitude. Unskilled labour will barely provide the funds for sustenance.

Whom among the readers of this article would wish for his own children the destiny of belonging to the vast ranks of the unskilled? Then why should he wish it for other people's children? There are those who selfishly fear that the consequence of the education and training of the masses will be to deprive the upper classes of their age-long exploitation of unskilled labour at low wages. They fear for their own comforts. But these fears are groundless. As mankind becomes more intelligent and the supply of low-paid unskilled labour diminishes, new ways will be found of doing the same work in a more intelligent manner. As, for example, the modern method of coaling a ship as compared with the Oriental method; or the abolition of stoking in oil-burning steamships; or the project of extracting heat from coal mines by converting the coal into gas and piping it from the mines.

For every diminution in the quantity of unskilled labour there will be, not a loss, but a proportionate gain for humanity. And as for the workingman himself, who would compare the working conditions of crude labour with those of skilled labour; or the living conditions of the two as determined by their wages?

In one field of production, that of agriculture—by far the most important field of effort of the human race—it is apparent what gains are made, not only for the producer but also for the consumer, by applying intelligence and skill to labour. In every other field of effort the gain will be as great. And in the new dispensation the Adamic curse, "Thou shalt live by the sweat of thy brow", will be changed to, "He shall feed all His creatures."

In the Bahá'í scheme of education the cultural will not be neglected; but it will parallel the practical, and not hold precedence over it. [XIV:1:5]

THIRDLY, much that has been deemed important in education will be dropped. Bahá'u'lláh said, "Teach those things that pertain to human welfare, and not those things that begin in words and end in words." This is a glorious but severe criterion. The race must live. It must live comfortably. All men must enjoy comfort.

Education can no longer serve the intellectual predilections of the few. It can no longer present itself as the willing Pegasus for any journey which the curious mind would make into the realms of thought. No! education, like human labour, must serve useful ends. It must teach those things that pertain to human welfare. So may the race progress more quickly to its destined perfection.

As for those things that begin in words and end in words, they must be discarded. Future educators will apply the criterion. We can only hazard here the guess that much of philosophy will go; much of required mathematics; much of dialectic, of grammar, and of the study of dead languages. The study of modern languages will become unnecessary when, as Bahá'u'lláh directed, the world shall choose a universal auxiliary language.

This pruning of the old tree of knowledge, now full of dead branches, will vivify the stock and cause it to produce new and beautiful fruits for the benefit of mankind.

And as for our school children—those of us who have tried the experiment of "teaching those things that pertain to human welfare" know how eagerly pupils of all ages devote themselves to the study of subjects pertaining to the progress of the race. There will be no

malingering in our schools when education is made vital and adapts its information to the growing needs and desires of the child.

FOURTHLY, education will be made a joyous process. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said that schools must be happy places, and that children must not be overburdened with study. Six hours a day, he said, of combined study and recitation is enough. To go beyond that is needlessly to tire the child-mind. And too much study before maturity, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, blunts the intelligence and does irreparable harm to the developing brain.

Education will be adapted to the individuality of the child, and not try to form each child into a common pattern. In this way children will be happy in their education, and the human race will benefit by the development of all the gifts that are born into it. At present there is much suppression of native genius, both by our social and by our educational systems. The future world will seek out talent wherever found, train it, and give it opportunity.

Bahá’ís, perhaps more than other people, see the hope of the world as lying in the children. Easier by far it is for a child born into the Kingdom to become a perfect citizen of it, than for an adult who has been, so to speak, only naturalized into it. And to perceiving eyes it would seem that marvellous children are being born into the world—more spiritual, more gifted, than the world has hitherto known. Before such children we adults are reverent, respecting higher powers though in those of inferior age.

Therefore the Bahá’í teacher will be humble, sweet, companionable, and above all loving. Not opinionated, austere, bigoted or jealous of mental powers superior to his own. He will be supremely happy with children, for to him teaching will always be a voyage of discovery—the discovery of hidden talents, of dormant powers, of budding gifts, and of germinating flowers of the spirit.

He will be a gardener training his plants, cultivating choice seedlings, gently caring for all; but speechless before the beauty of the blossoms which his care evokes, worshipping that beauty as an apparition of the Divine Splendour behind and through the human veils.

The full power of development latent in the soul we have but little realized. Not only is the human race capable of [XIV:1:6] an enormously greater progress than it has yet reached, but also every child is capable of keener perception, of deeper ratiocination,¹ of greater initiative and creativeness, and of earlier maturity of character.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá once mentioned a plan he had had for founding a model school at Haifa. “I have carried in my mind for some time an educational system, but so far there have been no means for its realization. If that system were once beaten into workable shape, in two years’ time the children would have studied four languages. At the age of ten they would study sciences; and at the age of twelve they would be graduated. I wanted to establish such a trial school of eighty-one pupils, all six years of age, the children to be brought from Persia and Ishqábád, the teachers to be engaged and transported from America. But a number of unforeseen difficulties have prevented me.”

“At the age of ten they would study sciences.” This is a scientific age. The eagerness with which children drink in the truths of science is indicative of what may be accomplished along this line. The present year I began general science with the sixth grade of my school, using a high school text book but accommodating it by means of my own explanations to the knowledge and capacity of these eleven and twelve year old children. It is their favourite subject. They beg to have it oftener.

At the time of the violent earthquakes and tidal waves in Chile, early in November, we made a study of earthquakes. One day we made an excursion to Georgetown University

¹ Ratiocinate: to think or argue logically; to reason.

where Father Tondorf,¹ one of the greatest seismological experts in the world, was so kind as to show us his seismographs; and explain to us how, by means of the records these instruments make, he could calculate with remarkable precision the location of earthquakes thousands of miles away. When we got back to the school we discussed again the causes and locations of earthquakes, and the value to mankind of careful observation and recording of these disturbances.

Here was a subject which, in the words of Bahá'u'lláh “pertained to human welfare”; and the eagerness, receptivity, and comprehension of the children were remarkable. In vivid contrast to this spirit of earnest endeavour was the behaviour of the crowd of high school boys who got on the same car with us coming home from our trip to the university. They were tossing their bundles of books to each other, throwing them about as playthings or as bated objects. “Which subject do you like least?” I asked of the boy next to me. “Oh, I hate ‘em all,” he cheerfully remarked. By the titles of their books, “Algebra”, “Latin”, “Rhetoric”, etc., I should say that their curriculum consisted largely of subjects that began in words, and ended in words. What a supreme and lordly indifference to their studies was manifested by these school boys!

This indifference is the educational tragedy of the day. Bahá'í education will not be so characterized. With the right curriculum, inspiring teachers, and the proper concept of their duty to themselves, their parents, and to the world, the Bahá'í children of the future will develop marvellously and will at adolescence surpass in seriousness and maturity of powers the average college freshman of today.

It is a pity that circumstances did not permit 'Abdu'l-Bahá to demonstrate by means of a model school what true Bahá'í education should be. But from his own words and from those of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í educators will construct a more ideal system of child training than that now prevalent.

LASTLY, Bahá'í education will concern itself not only with the moral but with the spiritual development of the child. And this influence will make itself felt even through the university. At present our educational system is quite Godless. Owing to the nature of our [XIV:1:7] government and the presence in our body politic of groups of opposing religions, public education has renounced all authority over the spiritual life of the child.

This is a condition which if allowed to continue would lead to the spiritual bankruptcy of the race. Already we are near that point. Young parents of the present day, themselves trained in an irreligious educational system, have nothing of religion to give their children; and they send the children again to public schools where the teachers are forbidden to teach religion. Once a week, for an hour, the spiritual needs of the child are cared for by the Sunday school teacher. One hundred and sixty-seven hours a week devoted to secular thought, attention, training, activity, and sleep—and one hour a week devoted to the spiritual part of the child! Can earnest people view this ratio with indifference?

Character training is attempted in our schools. But character must be based on a spiritual foundation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has shown how lacking in the necessary motives for right conduct are those who do not believe in the soul, in God, or in the future life. It is ridiculous to attempt character training apart from the fundamental truths of religion.

What is the solution? In a democracy of mixed and hostile religions, only a new harmonizing and universal religion can heal the breach and make spiritual training a welcome part of public education.

In the Bahá'í world of the future the mind, the soul, and the spirit will be trained together.

¹ Rev. Francis Anthony Tondorf (1870–1929).

And the higher up one goes in education, the more spiritual will one become, and not the more irreligious—as is so often the case today.

In closing I cannot do better than to cite the wonderful words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in regard to the kind of education which our colleges and universities should give. If this ideal, held up by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the inspiration of future educators, ever becomes realized, there will be little need of prisons and reformatories in a world so educated.

“The Universities and Colleges of the world must hold fast to three cardinal principles. First, whole-hearted service to the cause of education, the unfolding of the mysteries of nature, the extension of the boundaries of pure science, the elimination of the causes of ignorance and social evils, a standard universal system of instruction, and the diffusion of the lights of knowledge and reality.

“Second, service to the cause of the students, inspiring them with the sublimest ideals of ethical refinement, teaching them altruism, inculcating in their lives the beauty of holiness and the excellency of virtues and animating them with the excellences and perfections of the religion of God.

“Third, service to the oneness of the world of humanity; so that each student may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of religion or race. The thoughts of universal peace must be instilled in the hearts of all scholars. The mothers in the homes, the teachers in the school, the professors in the colleges, the presidents in the universities must teach these ideals to the young from the cradle to the years of manhood.”¹

XIV:1, April 1923 [XIV:1:8]

Studies in immortality

Part I

The relation of mind, soul, spirit

Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have in this Latter Day of world progress broken the seals and unstopped the vials of knowledge for us on subjects which have long puzzled an increasing number of eager-minded investigators of spiritual truth, viz: is man of the world of nature or is he a citizen of the Kingdom of Light or does he dwell in both realms? What is the nature of his spirit and its immortality—its life in the unseen Kingdom?

The following compilation from the words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is concerned with a question which lies on the borderland of psychology and philosophy—the relation of body, soul, mind, spirit. It will be followed by a compilation to be published next month on the new revelation of immortal life.

“As to thy question regarding the soul,” wrote Bahá’u’lláh from his prison in ‘Akká, to Ra’ís, then minister of the Sultán of Turkey, “know that people have written many and varied articles regarding it and have had many different opinions concerning it. (They speak of) a heavenly soul, a mighty soul, a divine soul, a godly soul, a holy soul, a tranquil soul, a contented soul, and to all these, special definitions and explanations are given by each party.

“As to the soul (spirit) which is purposed, verily, it is sent forth by the Word of God and it is that which when kindled by the fire of the love of its Lord will not be quenched by the waters of the rain nor by the seas of the world. It is indeed kindled by that fire which is burning in the human Lote-Tree, uttering, ‘Verily, there is no God but Me’, and he who hears its voice is one of those who are successful.

“Upon leaving the body God will send it forth according to the best form and will cause it to enter into a high heaven. Verily, thy Lord is powerful over all things.

¹ See *Star of the West* IX:9, 20 August 1918, p. 98.

“Know, also, that the life of man is from the Spirit and to turn is indeed from the soul. Reflect upon that which we explained unto thee in order that thou mayest know the Soul of God who came from the dawning place of grace with manifest authority.

“Know, also, that the soul hath two wings. If it flieth in the air of the love and will of God it will be attributed to the Merciful; but if it flieth in the atmosphere of desire it will be attributed to Satan—may God protect us and you against it, O assembly of knowers! And if it is kindled by the fire of the love of God it will be a tranquil and pleasing soul; but if it be kindled by desire it is a passionate soul. Thus have we given unto thee full details that thou mayest be of those who reflect.

“O Supreme Pen, mention to him who hath turned to his Lord, Abhá, that which will make him independent of the world. Say, that spirit, mind, soul, hearing and sight are one, but differ through differing causes. In the case of man, for instance, ye see that by which man understands, moves, speaks, hears and sees: all of these are through the power of his God in him, but they each one are different, according to the difference of their cause. Verily, this is indeed the truth.

“For example, if all these faculties are turned to that which causes hearing, then hearing and its results become manifest, and if they are turned to that which causes sight another activity and another result will appear; if turned to the brain, head, etc., the manifestations of mind and soul will appear. Think of this that thou mayest reach the desired goal and find thyself independent of that which is mentioned on the part [XIV:1:9] of the people and be of those who are assured. Verily, thy Lord is powerful in that which He wisheth.”—From the *Súriy-i-Ra'ís* Chieftain).

“The soul,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “is a link between body and spirit. It receives bounties and virtues from the spirit and gives them to the body just as the outer senses carry that which they receive from the outer world to the inner senses, in order that (these impressions) may be deposited in the memory and, through his various powers, may be utilized by man.”

“There is a human and a divine spirit, the latter arising through knowledge of and belief in God. The human spirit is superior to the body and struggles with it for control of the soul: when it succeeds the soul becomes heavenly; when the body obtains control the soul becomes degraded.”

“Spirit is the highest and supreme development of the soul. Soul is the material or outer self, the mind. Mind is the action of the soul’s powers. The body is the physical covering or medium in which mind acts and functions. At death everything but spirit is destroyed and becomes extinct.”

“Moral life consists in the government of oneself. Immortality is the government of a human soul by the divine will.”

“As to ____, whom thou hast mentioned, it behoveth him to seek only the divine bounties and those subjects which lead to a real knowledge of the Invisible, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. Then he will see through his innate perception the reality of the triune powers in man, for, verily, the sign of these triune powers which exist in mankind is spirit, mind and soul. Spirit is the power of life; mind is the power which apprehendeth the reality of things, and soul is the intermediary between the Supreme Concourse and the lower concourse. It (the soul) hath two phases—the higher aspireth to the kingdom of Bahá and the lights of the mind shine forth from that horizon upon its higher sphere. The other side inclineth to the lower concourse of the material world, and its lowest phase is enveloped in the darkness of ignorance. But when light is poured upon this phase and if the soul is capable of receiving it, then ‘truth hath come and falsehood vanisheth, for falsehood is of short duration.’ Otherwise,

darkness will surround it from all directions and it will be deprived of association with the Supreme Concourse and will remain in the lowest depths.”—*Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Vol. III, p. 611.

The two powers of man

“Spirit is universal. Man is created spirit in a potential degree. Growth is from a mental into a spiritual station, somewhat like the development from soldier to commander. God, himself, cannot compel the soul to become spiritual; the exercise of a free human will is necessary. We can point the way and furnish the example.—*Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, pp. 3-4.

“I desire each one of you to become so great that each may guide a country. The friends must now endeavour to attain to such a station as to teach the people of America. Divine qualities are unlimited. For this reason you must not be satisfied with one quality but must try to gain all. Each of you must improve himself that he may attain to nothing short of the best. When one stops (advancing) he descends. A bird when it is flying, soars; but as soon as it stops flying it falls. While man is directed upward he develops. As soon as he stops he descends. Therefore I wish the beloved of God always to ascend and to develop.

“There exist in man two powers. One power uplifts him—this is divine attraction which causes man’s elevation. In all the grades of existence he will develop through this power which belongs to the spirit. The other power causes man to descend; this is the animal nature. The first attracts man to [XIV:1:10] the Kingdom; the second brings him down to the created world. Now we must consider which of these will gain in strength. If the heavenly power wins, man will become heavenly, enlightened, merciful. But if the worldly power wins he will be dark, satanic and like the animal. Therefore he must advance continually. As long as the heavenly power is dominant man will ascend.”—‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Diary of Miss Juliet Thompson*.

Degrees of existence

“There are two kinds of life. There is that existence which is palpable to our touch but does not grow or possess sensation—the mineral kingdom. Then there is the higher stage of existence, plant life, which grows but cannot feel. Above this is the animal kingdom which is palpable to touch and has the power of growth and feeling but cannot attain to the station of man which is the highest of all. That which is lower cannot perceive the higher. The mineral cannot understand or feel the plant; plants cannot understand or perceive the animals; and animals cannot comprehend man.

“Now these degrees all belong to one kingdom, are all composed of matter. As it is impossible for these different kingdoms belonging to the same world to understand one another so is it impossible for man to understand the things of the future life. For as the difference between these grades or conditions so is the difference between man and the spiritual kingdom. It is impossible for man to perceive or understand it because he has no power with which to perceive it. As a child in the matrix of its mother cannot understand the world outside so is the human conception on this earth. We can form no conception or idea of the heavenly Kingdom because we have no sense with which to perceive it.

“As it is not yet apparent while the child is in the matrix of its mother what its condition will be—whether or not it will have all the gifts of God, whether or not it will be perfect in all its members, whether it will be blind or deaf or dumb, but afterwards, when it enters the world it becomes clearly apparent if it be defective or not—so is it with the soul in its present state. Its perfections or its defects are not understood until it enters the heavenly Kingdom. Then they are clearly seen and then the soul understands whether or not it is lacking in the gifts of God.

“All the time, too, that the child is in the matrix of its mother it receives all its life and nourishment from (a source) outside of itself. If it were cut off from that life it would die. So it is with the soul here. If it is cut off from its spiritual food it dies.

“As a child in the matrix does not yet know the use of its members—what its eyes are for, its nose, ears or tongue—so also is it with the soul on earth. It cannot understand here the uses and powers of its spiritual gifts. But as soon as it enters the eternal Kingdom these will become apparent.”—‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Prayers, instructions, etc.*, p. 46.

The new birth

“The sacred books of all nations speak of the possibility of the new birth of man. What does this mean?

“A child in the matrix of its mother is in utter darkness. When it is born into the world it comes into the light. While in the matrix it cannot understand the uses of its faculties; but when it comes into the phenomenal world then the uses of hearing, speech, sight, etc., are understood. So when we leave here and go into the Kingdom of the Unseen we will know the uses of the bounties of God given to us in this world. Here we are prepared, and given faculties which are for use in that world. The new birth is realized in this world when we become characterized with the characteristics of God, when His name and attributes become our name and attributes.”—‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Notes taken at Acca about 1900*. [XIV:1:11]

“Spirit in the human world is the discoverer of the realities of existence. All the inventions, all the sciences, all the hidden mysteries are brought to light through the activity of this spirit on the plane of life. While living in the Orient it organizes affairs in the Occident; while living on the earth it discovers the heavenly constellations. These examples ought to show you that the spirit of life is omnipotent, especially when it establishes communication with God and becomes the recipient of the eternal light; then it transforms itself into a ray of the effulgence of the sun of reality.”

“By the power of the Holy Spirit working through his soul man is able to perceive the divine reality of things. All great works of art and science are witness to this power of the Spirit.

“The same Spirit gives eternal life. Those, alone, who are baptized by the Divine Spirit will be enabled to bring all peoples into the bond of unity. It is by the power of the Spirit that the Eastern world of spiritual thought can intermingle with the Western realm of action, so that the world of matter may become divine.”

“Bodily matters are not important. The physical suffering of Christ passed away, but his spirit was everlasting. These bodily sufferings come and pass away, but the spirit is eternal. The body is not important. The spirit is important. The shell is not so important, but the pearl inside the shell is of great importance. The glass or chimney is not so important, but the light itself is very important. There is no importance in outer words, but the importance is in the significances. This cup is of no importance, but the water herein is important. There is no importance in the house, but there is in the one who lives in it. Likewise, the physical body is not so important, but the spiritual body is of great importance.

“Human-kind have come to the world in innumerable numbers, and passed away; their physical bodies and that which belonged to them passed away with them. Their health and disease both passed away. Their rest and hardship both vanished. Their wealth and poverty ended. Their honour and misery terminated. But the reality of man is immortal. The spirit of man is everlasting. It is the spirit to which importance is to be attached. The difference (between spirit and body) is this, that one will enter the realm of enlightenment whereas the other will fall into the world of darkness.”—From Notes of Mrs I. D. Brittingham, Acca, October

“Be it known that to know the reality or essence of the soul of man is impossible, for in order to know a thing one must comprehend it, and since a thing cannot comprehend itself to know oneself in substance or essence is impossible. ... This much can be stated, that the reality of man is a pure and unknown essence constituting a depository emanating from the light of the Ancient Entity, God. This essence or soul of man because of its innate purity and its connection with the unseen Ancient Entity is old as regards time but new as regards individuality. This connection is similar to that of the rays to the sun—the effect to the primal cause. ...

“Since the pure essence, whose identity is unknown, possesses the virtues of the worlds of matter and of the Kingdom it has two sides: first, the material and physical; second, the mental and spiritual, which are attributes not found as qualities of matter. It is the same reality which is given different names, according to the different conditions wherein it is manifested. Because of its relation to matter and the phenomenal world when it governs the physical functions of the body it is called the human soul; when it manifests itself as the thinker, the comprehender, it is called the mind. And when it soars into the atmosphere of God and travels in the spiritual world it becomes designated as spirit. [XIV:1:12]

“There are two sides to man. One is divine, the other worldly; one is luminous, the other dark; one is angelic, the other diabolic. Man is like the animals in all sensuous conditions for all animal characteristics exist in him. Divine and satanic qualities are both contained in man—knowledge and ignorance, guidance and error, truth and falsehood, generosity and avarice, valour and timidity, inclination toward God and tendency toward Satan, chastity and purity, corruption and wickedness, economy and avidity, good and evil are all contained in man.

“If the angelic side becomes more powerful and the Divine Power and Brightness surround man then the second birth takes place and eternal life is attained at this point.”—From an address by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, published in *The International Psychic Gazette*, July 1914.

Note: The foregoing quotations are taken from a compilation on *Immortality* by Mrs Mary M. Rabb. Some of the very illuminating references given on soul, mind, spirit are as follows: *Daily Lessons Received at Acca*, pp. 8 and 36; *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 3–4; *Prayers, Tablets, Instructions and Miscellany*, p. 47–48; *Table Talks with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 6; *Star of the West*, VII:19, p. 189; *Star of the West*, IV:1, p. 37. We suggest also: *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 163, 243; *Divine Philosophy*, Ch. III; Jináb-i-Fáḍil’s Addresses in Seattle, Series I, p. 51.

XIV:1, April 1923 [XIV:1:12]

How the message came to Najaf

Jináb-i-Faḍl

An autobiographical story

Travelling in the Orient is fraught with many difficulties and inconveniences which you do not encounter in the West. We have no convenient methods of transportation. Some of the Eastern countries lack railroads. Consequently one must travel on camels, mules and other animals. One of the journeys which I undertook, in order to spread the fragrances of the rose garden of love and amity, was a trip to Najaf and Karbilá, two of the most important religious centres in the Muslim world. The city of Najaf is near Baghdád in Mesopotamia. Though small, yet, as it is the chief community of the Shí’ih,¹ it has extraordinary importance for the Muslim world. It is built in the middle of a sandy desert around which is nothing but

¹ Shí’í (Pers. shí’ih), pl. shí’yún.

wilderness—no trees, no foliage, no green or verdant pastures, nothing but wilderness. Far off on the horizon one will find, coming down the side of a hill, a small stream which has branched off from the Euphrates. Najaf contains the shrine, with its gilded dome, of one of the first Imáms¹ of Islám. It holds also the religious seminary of the Islamic world all of whose students carry on their theological studies in that centre. Therefore the heads and leaders of the Shí'ih school live in that small yet important centre.

In 1909 a very detailed and wonderful Tablet was sent by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Persia. In this Tablet 'Abdu'l-Bahá commands me to go to Arabia and convey the message of this Cause to the Divines of the Muslim world.

Upon receiving the Tablet and command I started on this eventful trip. From Tīhrán to Najaf, in every city that I entered I raised the call of the Kingdom. Meetings were held and the people were summoned to this Cause. On the way I stopped a few days in the [XIV:1:13] city of Káshán where there are many Bahá'ís. They insisted that I stay with them longer, but, as I told them, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had commanded me to go immediately to the city of Najaf: so they were satisfied. I wrote a letter to the Spiritual Assembly in Tīhrán laying the matter before them. The Spiritual Assembly wrote back: "Inasmuch as you have received a direct command from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to go and fulfil this mission, it is best that you start as soon as possible."

Travelling in the Orient is slow and it was a long time before I reached my destination. As a result (of this delay) the news of the purport of my journey to Najaf reached the 'Ulamás² long before my arrival. They had been telegraphed that such a person is on his way to teach to you this important Cause.

The mind of a Westerner cannot comprehend the animosity displayed by the people of the Orient for this brilliant Cause. The leaders of the Islamic religion, from the time of the appearance of the Báb in 1814, have gathered their forces together to eradicate the tree of this Cause. Therefore, before I arrived, they laid their plans so that as soon as I entered the city they might take me, throw me into prison, and do with me as they pleased. They even stationed a number of spies along the way in order that every stage of my journey might be reported to them. About a hundred miles out of Najaf, lo and behold, an unknown person appeared on the scene, expressing the warmest desire to accompany me and assist me on my way; later it was discovered that he was one of the spies.

After meeting many important persons and speaking in many cities and at many meetings I arrived in the city of Najaf. As I intended to remain there for some time in order to associate in friendly fashion with these leaders of religion I went about, for three days, hunting a house and other necessities for living. During these three days I met many of my former students, in the University of the Shí'ih, and they recognized me, and came to see me; and so the number of my friends day by day increased. I spoke with each one of them about the message of the Cause.

The third day, upon leaving my dwelling house I went to the large assembly hall of the thinkers and scholars. No sooner did I enter the hall than I saw how filled with anger were their faces. They looked at me as a wolf would look upon a sheep. A few of them told me that a large number of the 'Ulamás were anxious to meet me at my own home, therefore it would be better for me to meet them there, and that I should return home, for they were on their way. "We were not informed," they said "of the arrival of your honour, else we would have called upon you sooner. It was your duty to have informed us."

When I reached the gate of my house I found these 'Ulamás, whose number continued to increase. I took them into my reception room and began to talk to them of the spiritual

¹ Imám, pl. a'imma[h or t].

² 'Alím, pl. 'ulamá' (Pers. 'ulamá).

principles of the Cause. I was completely ignorant of their plans to persecute me, nay, they had deeper plans—to attack the Cause. It was at the time when the governments of Persia and Turkey after much struggling had obtained their freedom, and had established constitutional forms of government. One of the fundamental tenets of a constitution is religious freedom. The Turkish government had nominally granted this; consequently the ‘Ulamás could not persecute me in the name of religion. The Shí’ih and the Sunní Universities convened meetings and invented certain plans by which they might persecute me, not in the name of religion but in the name of politics. We were entirely misinformed as to their activities.

When I finished my talk with these men one of them rose, saying: “We have come, on behalf of the ‘Ulamás, to investigate, and to find out what you have.” Then they began searching my few possessions.

I said: “I have not many things; but here they are. Come and look at them.” [XIV:1:14]

We had nothing whatever save Bahá’í books and literature. They seized a number of Bahá’í books written by Bahá’u’lláh also, other spiritual literature belonging to this Cause, with many Tablets and letters; with these they left the house and went to their leaders. Thinking that we might perhaps escape they left a number of their men to act as guards about the house.

Half an hour later a large crowd came rushing to the house; with them was a representative of the government of Persia, the Consul. It was an unruly mob and in their faces one could see the signs of hatred and animosity, while from their lips there issued all manner of unseemly words. The Persian representative did not let them go beyond the world of words; as soon as they began to attack me and do me harm he interfered. So they took me and all my baggage and carried me to the house of the Persian representative. The rest of our property was pillaged by these people and from the house of the Persian representative I was taken to prison and fetters were put upon my feet. In that narrow and gloomy cell I began to commune with and pray to the Glory of Glories. I had for companion another Bahá’í. I was not alone. We said, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has ordered us to come here and teach the ‘Ulamás of the Islamic world, but now that we have been thrown into prison and are in all this difficulty how can we accomplish our purpose? We did not take into account the fact that this very imprisonment would bring the name of the Cause to the attention of thousands and thousands of people. This had occurred by morning for, lo, but a few hours had passed before we be held a seething mob attacking the prison. They rushed into our cell, unlocked the fetters from my feet and carried me, almost on their shoulders, to the great hall of the leaders of Islám.

Upon entering this hall I saw that the elite of the Islamic theological world were present. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had mentioned the names of some of them, and they and all the rest were seated around this hall. The Tablets and books which had been seized in the morning were distributed among this large group of theologians and every one of them, it seemed to me, had a few sheets in his hands.

A volley of questions was now fired at me; and a volley of answers was returned. You probably all know that His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh lived for twelve years in Baghdád. The city of Najaf is very near to Baghdád and the people of that province are familiar with the grandeur and majesty of Bahá’u’lláh whose wisdom no one can deny. That fact which seems as anathema to the theologians and clergy of the Muslim world is that Bahá’u’lláh has changed the laws of Islám. First, the Muslim clergy believe in the uncleanness of all religions and nations other than their own. Bahá’u’lláh addresses all humanity, saying: “*Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch.*” In my answer to them I made it quite clear that the universality of the religion of God was not something very unusual; they would find the same principle in their own Qur’án—and I began quoting verses from their own bible. The session lasted four hours. When they became weary they sent me back to my cell, placed the irons

about my feet, and everything became quiet.

They arranged a still larger meeting for the next day and when they were all ready with their questions they came for me again, to take off the fetters and present me to their august body. For seven days these wondrous meetings continued and every day an inquiring, interested and curious crowd assembled and listened to the proofs concerning the message of the Kingdom. Many of them accepted the Cause. Others derided and repudiated it. During those seven days the only time that my feet were free to move about was when we had these meetings.

Among the Muslims there are many extraordinary tales about the Bahá'ís—one of which is that they are so powerful that when in jail even they [XIV:1:15] grow wings with which whenever they choose they fly out of the jail and enjoy the fresh and bracing outside air. As a matter of fact, the Bahá'ís, often imprisoned, would through their wonderful lives convert their jailer, and he would give them liberty to leave the jail when ever they wished.

This time the jailer did not listen to the call of the Kingdom and every day increased the size of the fetters fearing that I might fly out of the prison. The seventh day I saw through an opening a number of people cutting wood in the court. They were talking about me, but I could not understand all they said. When they came to the jail and took me out I realized that they had decided to put wooden stocks upon my hands and send me out of the town. They had cut out two stocks making a hole for the two hands preparatory to putting my hands into the stocks and carrying me away. The mayor of the city declared a holiday so that everyone could come out and see us in our gala array—and we were made very happy by this for we heard from the lips of the people the words and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh which they had memorized during the last few days while passing the literature from hand to hand.

They exiled us from Najaf to Baghdád, the Turkish guards accompanying us. Between Najaf and Baghdád there is a city called Karbilá. When we arrived there the guards, in order to rest and refresh themselves, put me in prison. In the prison I found a number of important Arabian prisoners, and as their hearts were kind and tender I began to speak with them. Immediately they accepted the Cause. They were so affected by what had occurred during the past few days that upon hearing the story they commenced to weep. In prison I wrote a letter to the Governor of Karbilá, urging him to grant me permission to see him. This Governor was a very liberal minded man and when we had the opportunity to talk with him about the Cause he felt the spirit and was transformed. He told me that although he was powerless to do anything for me in Karbilá—he would endeavour to obtain my freedom in Baghdád. He told me that although the Muslim clergy could not persecute him on account of religion yet they had charged him with certain political schemes, saying that he upheld Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, the former despotic ruler of Turkey.

It took us four days to cover the distance from Karbilá to Baghdád and during that time I rode upon a donkey with my hands in the stocks. It was summertime and the heat was well-nigh unbearable. The donkey became so tired that often he would walk no longer, then, becoming unruly, he would throw me off. My hands were fettered and I knew not how to manage. The unfriendly muleteer whenever I fell from the donkey would come and kick me, saying: "O, you ignorant man, why do you not get up and ride your donkey. As a matter of fact this happened sixteen or seventeen times—that I fell from the donkey and they had to come and put me again upon its back. The confirmation and assistance of the Centre of the Covenant were so great that whenever we reached a town and rested for a day or night we were strengthened to teach one or two souls. For three days I was in Baghdád. In that jail I was permitted to reach many souls. Later on, the enemies planned to take us from there to Persia where there were many wild tribes, ready to attack and kill us on the instant. The 'Ulamás of Najaf had already written to the chiefs of these tribes that inasmuch as they were

unable to kill “this man” under the law upon his arrival at the frontier of Persia they must at once attack and kill him. But they were utterly ignorant of the power of the Covenant. The Consul who was commissioned to take me to the frontier of Persia had the love of this Cause in his heart, and the Turkish governor did not fetter my hands at the time of my departure from the city. No one knew how or why this was forgotten [XIV:1:16] for it is a very important custom practiced upon all prisoners.

When we reached the frontier the guards turned us over to the Persian authorities who, with their men, instead of delivering us into the hands of the wild tribes, treated us with such loving kindness that we were amazed. As we continued our journey many lawless tribes and fanatical individuals lay in wait all along the way, ready to kill us—but they could not because these men were with us. Suddenly we came upon a large body of well armed Kurds. They came up to the carriage driver and asked: “Do you know of two Bahá’ís who were captured in Karbilá and Najaf and are being brought back to Persia?”

The carriage driver, who had now become attached to me and to my companion, answered: “No, I have not heard of them. Why do you want to know about these two men?”

“We want to capture them and, according to the message from the authorities, do away with them,” replied the Kurds.

They had even gone so far as to publish circulars which they spread throughout the city.

Through all these difficulties God protected us, until we reached the city of Ṭihrán. The government authorities in that city in order to quell the uprising decided that the best way to manage the affair would be to keep the two men in custody for some time, until the excitement had vanished.

I remained in Ṭihrán for a month associating with no one; then I started on my journey to the Holy Land to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. When I reached the presence of the Master he related all the details of this journey of mine, so that I marvelled, for it was as though he had been there and witnessed every detail of those things which had happened on this journey. The plans, the strategy, the scheming of those ‘Ulamás and the events which took place ‘Abdu’l-Bahá described. He said: *“My purpose in sending you to that Ulamic centre was to spread the Cause and scatter the literature of the teachings and the books of this Movement. The result is now achieved and a great number of men and women are informed of this Movement.”*

Later on a number of these ‘Ulamás who had become Bahá’ís came to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and now they are engaged in that very city in spreading the message.

These people thought that they were able to extinguish the lamp of God, but God, through His own invisible and mighty power scattered the rays of the sun of reality to the four corners of the earth.

This is but one of the incidents of my travels.

XIV:1, April 1923 [XIV:1:18]

The wondrous light of the Cause

Selections from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s “soul-stirring Words to his loved ones in Persia, revealed some twenty-five years ago, and during the darkest days of his incarceration in the prison-city of ‘Akká.” Selected and translated by Shoghi Effendi and sent by him to the National Spiritual Assembly of America, March 1923.

[Selections available elsewhere have been omitted.]

O true servant of God!

The cycle in which thou hast been called to life is truly the cycle of the Ancient Beauty, and the age, the age of the Most Great Name. Hallowed and sanctified be the Lord that hath

graciously favoured these poor servants of His to gaze upon such wondrous Light! Ours then to render Him thanks, in the daytime and in the night season, for His manifold blessings; to be self-sacrificing in the path of Bahá'u'lláh (may my life be offered up as a sacrifice at His threshold!); to strive for the spread of His Word; to endeavour to manifest His Signs, raise His Edifice, set forth His Proof, recount His Praise, and be lowly and humble, suppliant and submissive before Him; haply His Grace may aid us to prove our gratitude for His bestowals. Wherefore, unloose thy tongue to deliver the Divine Message and diffuse His fragrance.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O friend!

... A celestial fire hath been kindled in the very heart of mankind, and burns brightly in the Sacred Tree. Ere long its glowing flame shall set ablaze the souls of men and its light illumine the regions of the world.

The signs of God have appeared, the mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed, and the secret of all that hath been recorded in the Holy Writ been made manifest. Wherefore doubt and hesitate? ...

Now that that Ravisher of hearts has spurred on His charger into the arena of Truth, and all that hath been hidden is revealed, why be still and silent, heedless and forgetful? The Divine Candle hath thrown its beams upon the world, whilst the heedless, veiled and afflicted, languish, moth-like, in their darkness of [XIV:1:19] error. Now is the hour to be stirred even as the surging billows of the sea, and seek to attain the heights of the stars ... for time is fleeting, and the Divine Messenger will tarry no longer. Let us make haste, and let our lamps be burning.

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O ye the valiant servants and handmaids of the All-Glorious!

Agès, cycles, nay thousands of generations must pass before the Sun of Truth may mount its zenith and shine again in its full splendour. Now that, praise be to God, ye have been called to life and gathered together in this Age, the Age of the Desired One, the ever-praised Beauty, the Day-Star of the Kingdom, the Most Great Luminary of the Realm on High, (may my life be offered up as a sacrifice unto His servants!) how thankful ye must be! How faithfully and fervently should we praise and glorify His Name, inasmuch as He hath graciously aided us to receive this, His most great Blessing! Ten thousand lives be offered for this glory and triumph; ten thousand souls be a sacrifice for such infinite care and this great victory! The holy ones of old, whenever they imagined the wondrous vision of the Age of Bahá'u'lláh they felt as thunder-struck, and yearned for but a fleeting moment of that glorious Hour. Praised be the Lord, we have attained thereunto and been immersed in His Ocean of Glory!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O thou endued with the Spirit of Life!

The Call of God hath proved the very life of the universe, and the animating spirit of mankind. Behold! how it hath vivified the heart of man, and stirred the conscience of the world! Ere long its signs shall be made manifest, and the fast asleep shall be awakened.

The Glory of God rest upon thee!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

XIV:1, April 1923 [XIV:1:27]

Mirrors of the Master

Addresses of Jináb-i-Fáḍil and a special interview

Juliet Thompson

New York City,
6 March 1923.

The power of God's confirmation, in its fullness, is very mysterious. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said once to us in 'Akká: "The magnetism for the Word of God is sincerity of intention, and until you are entirely emptied of yourselves you will never be sincere enough." Jináb-i-Fáḍil is one entirely emptied of himself and filled with the love of God, and therefore whose words have a penetrative power, because the "trace of the Word of God" is in them. When he speaks the word "forgiveness" the attribute of forgiveness grows in your heart; when he speaks the word "faith" you step into the world of faith; his own holiness and wisdom illumine the word "love". By his positive representation of the attributes of the Kingdom, of the greatness of the life of the Kingdom, we see clearly where we have fallen short, where we have been childishly unseeing, where the self has gotten in the way of the larger handling of things. We see how easy it is for love—love and faith—to conquer all—to solve simply every complicated problem.

When I went to him yesterday to ask him for news for the *Star of the West*—news of Shoghi Effendi and Haifa—he said:

"His Holiness Shoghi Effendi has commanded all over the world that wherever there were nine Bahá'ís there should be a spiritual assembly and that the members of every House of Spirituality should be elected on the condition that they possess all the attributes mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh. These Houses of Spirituality must be in direct communication with one another, must benefit by one another—in other words, must co-operate with and assist one another. They must be like the active power and the active members of the same body. All are joined to the Heart which is in Haifa.

"One of the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh is the Law of Consultation. The people of Bahá, in order to promulgate the Cause, should help and aid one another in all their affairs.

"His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh in his epistles and books, states that the 'tent of the order of the world is upheld by two pillars—reward and punishment', and the Heaven of the Command of God is illumined by two stars—benevolence and consultation.

"In the epistles and tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá the foundation of consultation is laid down—that all the [XIV:1:28] individual Bahá'ís may be joined and connected together like members of the same body, so that no event could separate them, or cause dissension among them.

"His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in reference to consultation, states: 'The electricity of reality is produced by the friction of two opposite ideas'. When people consult together the friction of reality always is produced. Therefore the Bahá'ís, by the blending of thoughts, consultation and co-operation, should rise for the propagation of the Cause and diffuse its fragrances to the hearts and minds of the people.

"Of the great construction of the Cause planned by His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi is laying the foundation. And that construction is the building of consultation, union and co-operation among the Bahá'ís so that the Bahá'ís of the East and West may become like unto members of the same body, uniting their powers. Unitedly should they arise for the promulgation of the Cause, so that the banner of the oneness of mankind may be unfurled from the horizon of the world, that the children of the world may manifestly see this standard,

and gather under its shadow.”

Jináb-i-Fáḍil said further:

“I am greatly pleased with the immense activities of the Bahá’ís in this city. They are engaged incessantly and untiringly in the promulgation of this great Cause. From every corner of New York City the call of the Kingdom is raised. Day and night those who have dedicated their lives are engaged in unfurling the banner of the Oneness of Mankind.”

Jináb-i-Fáḍil’s first appearance in New York was at St. Mark’s in the Bowery, where friends from Boston and Canada joined the New York friends in welcoming him.

The following night he honoured my house by meeting a group of the teachers here, answering their questions. He spoke of His Holiness Shoghi Effendi in a way that enkindled in every heart a longing to make the pilgrimage to the Sacred Spot, where, as Jináb-i-Fáḍil made it so clear, the Divine Centre of the Covenant, from his Abhá Kingdom, is reflecting himself in the mirror of Shoghi Effendi. Shoghi Effendi, Jináb-i-Fáḍil told us, is the perfect mirror of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In him we see again our beloved Master. In face, in gesture, even in quality of mind, Shoghi Effendi gives back amazingly the reflection, the likeness, of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Friday evening he addressed Mr Bert Randall’s group at St. Mark’s, where he explained the Hidden Word, “Unreal friends love one another for their personal interests, but the Real Friend loveth and hath loved you for the sake of yourselves”, and where he also gave a talk the substance of which he repeated to me for the *Star of the West*. Its subject was “The salvation of man from egotism”.

“Self and ego,” he said, “were like a cage, a prison. A man may be outwardly prosperous, but if he does not save himself from egotism, he is degraded and debased; while outside of the prison of self he is free, though (bodily) he might be in the greatest prison. Salvation from self is only possible through the Manifestations of God, through love for Him, faith in Him, service in His path. The lives of the followers and adherents of the Manifestations of God are the greatest proof for the validity of this statement. The disciples of His Holiness Christ and the adherents of His cause forgot themselves in such wise that they sacrificed themselves for the world of humanity. There are no other means for salvation from self except through faith, love and service. Those who become ascetics, weakening their bodies in order to reach the ideal state, will never attain to their object, for weakness of body is conducive merely to weakness of spirit; because a sound soul is only in a sound body. Therefore, we must have strong bodies and strong souls [XIV:1:29] that we may rise for the service of mankind.”

Jináb-i-Fáḍil speaks sublimely on forgiveness, with a power in his simple words so amazing that whatever of the poison of resentment remains in our hearts is somehow immediately washed away. No matter what we suffer from others we must at once forgive, he says, leaving the outcome of everything in the hands of God. We may gently admonish, speaking frankly, but always with love and forgiveness in our hearts. The Bahá’í martyrs softened the hearts of many of their persecutors, by the love they displayed to these enemies, under the very sword, even giving away their possessions to their murderers. One of these martyrs said to the man appointed to kill him: “My clothes and the money in my pockets are yours.” The man could hardly go on with the execution; but the Bahá’í said: “Finish your work. You cannot help it.”

Whenever Jináb-i-Fáḍil speaks he gives us great examples of deeds, of heroic living, either from the lives of the Manifestations of God, or from their sincere followers, detached and lofty spirits who, lifted entirely above the influences of this world, manifest naught save greatness of spirit, the greatness of the unconquerable love of God. On this positive aspect of life he dwells, till all that is less becomes revealed in the true measure of its littleness and unworthiness.

Of Jináb-i-Fáḍil, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has written, “there is considerable difference between him and others.”

Tonight Jináb-i-Fáḍil spoke of the ascension of the holy reality of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Abhá Kingdom and of his increasing power throughout the world, resulting from his freedom from his body. He told us wonderful stories of the quickening of the work in Russia, of the stirring of a new life in Turkey, Egypt, among all nations. And he ended by saying that we are as many mirrors and the unseen Master is a Sun in the midst of mirrors. He told us the following beautiful tale:

In a meeting in Bákú he had observed a man so humble that he marvelled at such a degree of humility, and wondered how he had attained it. Later he was told the story.

The man had been born a Muslim, and had been a highwayman and a murderer. But one day he asked himself—“If indeed there is a God, how shall I fare for the way I have lived?”

At last he sought out a Mullá and begged to be shown how to win the forgiveness of God. The Mullá said:

“I will tell you. Go, and find a Bahá’í and kill him, and you will be forgiven all your sins.”

This made the man very happy, for, he said, “This is the easiest way for me to win forgiveness.”

So he found a Bahá’í, who was a baker, and one day went into his bakery and began to heap insults on him, to provoke the Bahá’í, in order to have some pretext to kill him. But the more he insulted the Bahá’í the kinder the Bahá’í became. After a while the Bahá’í asked him to be seated and brought him food, then told him of the coming of the Blessed Perfection, and the man was obliged to give up for that time killing the Bahá’í, saying to himself, “I must try again, when he is not so kind.”

However, when he returned the second time the Bahá’í was still kinder, and on the third occasion showed a spirit so divine that his would-be-murderer, already two-thirds a Bahá’í, became entirely converted. On each visit, Jináb-i-Fáḍil said, a third of him became converted.

Wholly converted at last, he said to the Bahá’í, “Now I want to go and kill that Mullá.”

But the Bahá’í answered: “Rather, you must go and guide him, for among Bahá’ís there is no spirit of revenge—there is only peace and love.”

XIV:2, May 1923 [XIV:2:35]

Studies in immortality

Part II

New revelations of the unseen world

There are human sciences and divine sciences. There is human knowledge acquired through a chain of many minds laboriously building up sets of facts, and there is divine knowledge given to humanity at intervals by a great mind which sees with the Inner Sight.

Seventy years on earth, and then countless millions of years in the unseen Kingdom—such is the relation of mortal life to life eternal. One hundred years, even, on earth, is to the life beyond the Gateway as a tick of the clock to an eternal day. For all humanity, therefore, the absorbing question must be: What is the nature of the life in that endless eternity!

Who are the authorities on this subject of life beyond death? The materialists who deny all that cannot be seen and touched? The traditionalists who accept nothing new? The philosophers who adhere to human reason alone as impregnable in all its deductions—deductions which change from century to century, even during the lifetime of the philosopher himself?

The materialistic scientist, the scientific philosopher follows certain immutable laws and works along them for his logical sequences. The searcher for divine truth, equally scientific, asks what is that law of the divine universe by which we may recognize our great, trustworthy authority?

“Blessed are the pure in heart,” said Jesus, “for they shall see God.” And those who can see God can see His immortal Kingdom. But where is the heart which is absolutely pure?

There are many degrees of existence. As the plant cannot understand the animal, as the animal is powerless to comprehend the glory of the human intellect, so man is unable to comprehend spiritual verities until he is spiritually reborn. “Except one be born from above,” said Jesus to Nicodemus, “he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” “Nicodemus had an earthly mind and only understood earthly things. Heavenly things are alone understood by heavenly minds.” “As to the worlds whereunto Christ referred—unto whom be great glory—(the many mansions),” writes ‘Abdu’l-Bahá “they are spiritual, divine, heavenly, single, unlocated; neither the imperfect mind can comprehend them nor the sinning soul can know them. But verily the vision of the people of the Kingdom of Bahá perceives them and the intellects of the people of the Supreme Concourse apprehend them.”

In a word, the masters of divine science are those who have divine character. [XIV:2:36] Knowing themselves, they know their God, because He abides within them. The most pure, perfect and divine of men are the great world prophets. It is through contact with their teachings and their spirits, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has so wonderfully explained in the article on education in this present issue, that human beings are spiritually reborn. In fact, the degrees of existence are: first, the mineral; second, the plant; third, the animal; fourth, the rational soul; fifth, the spiritually reborn, and sixth the Divine Prophets. These Divine Prophets are so pure and perfect that we call them the primal mirrors, the Manifestations of God. When they tell us of the many mansions of the Father’s house they speak of what they have seen and heard. Their utterances are revelations of eternal verities. “I have yet many thing to say unto you,” said Jesus, “but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he shall guide you into all the Truth.”

Our age of doubt is divinely blessed in having in its midst such masters, who reveal the fuller truth about immortal life. Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have given the most complete descriptions of life in the unseen worlds of God recorded in spiritual literature.

Some questions answered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Question: What will become of the soul of man after death?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The body goes under the earth. Thence it came and thither it goes. Everything that you see returns to its own place. As the human body came from dust, to dust it returns. But the human spirit comes from God and to Him it returns.—*Star of the West*, VII:9, p. 77.

“Thus, it is apparent that the soul, even as the body, has its own individuality. But if the body undergoes a change, the spirit need not be touched. When you break a glass on which the sun shines, the glass is broken, but the sun still shines! If a cage containing a bird is destroyed, the bird is unharmed! If a lamp is broken, the flame can still burn bright!

“The same thing applies to the spirit of man.”—*Paris Talks*, pp. 65–66.

The spirits of the sons of the Kingdom, after the disintegration of this body ascend to the world of eternal existence; but should you ask the place, know thou that that world of existence is the world of unity, but the grades are different. For instance, the mineral

existence has a grade, but the mineral being has no knowledge of the vegetable kingdom. It (the mineral existence) has no information of a higher realm, nay, rather, according to appearances it may deny the higher grade. Likewise, vegetable life has no knowledge of the animal kingdom. It is entirely heedless and unconscious of that kingdom, because the grade of the animal is higher than that of the vegetable. The vegetable, owing to its limited environment, is veiled from knowledge of the animal kingdom and may deny it, although the animal, the vegetable and the mineral live in the world of existence. Likewise the animal cannot comprehend man's faculties of intelligence which generalize concerning the universal and discover the mysteries of being, so that while living in the East he organizes and founds institutions in the West, and he reveals hidden things. Though he abides in Europe he discovers America; though he dwells upon the earth he unravels the realities of the solar system. The animal is entirely unconscious of, nay, rather, is a denier of this intelligent force which penetrates into the unknown and comprehends the general as well as the particular ideas of this illimitable universe.

Likewise the people of the world lack knowledge of the world of the Kingdom, nay, rather, they deny it. Do we not hear from their lips words such as these: "Where is the Kingdom? Where is the Lord of the Kingdom?" But these souls are like unto the mineral and vegetable who know nothing of the animal and human kingdoms. They neither see nor search. However, the mineral, the vege- [XIV:2:37] table and the animal all live in this world of existence.

The divine trials are in this world, not in the world of the Kingdom.

The human reality in the other world has no physical likeness, nay, rather, it has the likeness of the Kingdom, which consists of the harmonious elements of the realm of the spiritual kingdom.

The centre of the Sun of Truth and of the supreme world is the Divine Kingdom. Those souls who are purified and sanctified, after the disintegration of this elemental tabernacle hasten to the Divine Realm, and that realm is in this universe, but the people of this world have no knowledge of it, just as the mineral and vegetable kingdoms have no knowledge of the animal and human kingdoms.—From a Tablet to Mr and Mrs Ostburg, Boston, Massachusetts.

Question: "Do the dead pass entirely away from the earth, losing all consciousness of and interest in the people and affairs of the world?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "No, the dead retain both interest in and remembrance of those they love."—From Mrs Aline Devine's notes, taken at 'Akká, October 1906.

Question: "What is the connection of the spirit with the body?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "It has the same connection as the sun has with the mirror. Death is the name for the dissolution of this connection."—From Mírzá Maḥmúd's Diary, July 1912.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Concerning the question of death, know that the spirit is abstracted and sanctified from all things; for entrance and departure, ascent and descent, union and separation are the properties of material beings and not of the spirit. Consequently, the human spirit does not enter into the physical body, nay, rather, it has some 'attachment' (to it). This 'attachment' is like that of the mirror and the sun. The sun neither enters into nor does it go out of the surface of the mirror, nor does it absolutely identify itself with it, but it (the sun) has some attachment to the mirror and reflects itself therein. However, when this attachment is broken the mirror is deprived of illumination, beauty and effulgence."—From

Tablet to Madame D'Astre of Paris, dated 21 May 1908.

Question: "What is meant by the Mirror for Divine Reflection?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "'Mirror' is the whole body, the brain in particular. Body has many elements in its composition and these are continually changed during one's lifetime. At dissolution each element is received back to its original source. The physical body of man is like that of the animal, the only difference being on the level of consciousness. It follows therefore that only consciousness or mind is left after death. Electricity is known by its attributes and effects. The power of consciousness is also thus recognized. After death the condition is one which cannot be clearly explained in words. It is one of comprehension, understanding which involves all other things—feeling, etc.

"In beings there are degrees; all are not in the same station. Observe the various characters to be seen and compared, say, among ten children who have received identically the same treatment, training and food. Three degrees will be found, which might be classed as, rapid development, less rapid, and almost stagnant."

Question: "Is there any predominant quality which man should develop in order to obtain especial excellence or power after death?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "No, man should develop all his qualities for each quality has its own use and function."

Question: "Is individuality retained by the various individual consciousnesses?"

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Complete individuality belongs only to the station of the Prophet. Those who follow him are under the 'shadow' of his station. After death man does not develop through conscious effort, but through the power of Divine Bounty or unfoldment. All good works, loving memories, prayers and help from lesser beings assist the soul to push forward after death."—Questions asked at Ramleh, May 1911.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: "You will retain your individuality and will not be swallowed up in one vast spirit. Concerning the condition of the human soul after its ascension from the material world: the essence of the human soul is clarified from material substances and purified from the embodiment of physical things. It is exclusively luminous; it has no body; it is a dazzling pencil of light; it is a celestial orb of brightness."

"Those souls who are not vivified and attracted by the Holy Spirit are accounted among the dead, because their souls are deprived of the Breath of the Holy Spirit; and these, after physical death, are in a certain condition, having feeling and discernment in their environment; but in comparison with the pure souls who have been vivified by the Holy Spirit they are as dead, and deprived of life."—From an early Tablet to Mr F. C. Helbry, Tacoma, Washington.

"Thou hast asked concerning the spirits of men. They are not at all annihilated. They are immortal. But the spirits of heavenly souls will find eternal life, that is, they will attain to the highest and most great stations of perfection. But the spirits of the heedless souls although they are immortal yet they are in a world of imperfection, concealment and ignorance. This is a concise answer. Contemplate, and meditate upon it in order that thou mayest comprehend the reality of the mysteries in detail. For instance, no matter how much the mineral has existence and life yet, in comparison with man, it is entirely non-existent and deprived of life. When man is transformed, translated, from life to death, his comparative station will be that

of the mineral existence. In such wise, the mineral life typifies the death of man. This is a brief answer.

“We cannot realize in this world the bounty of God nor can we appreciate His love. But in the next world we can do so.”

The glory of immortal life

From the Words of Bahá'u'lláh.

“But concerning that which you have asked about the spirit and its everlastingness after its ascension: know that it will ascend at the time of its departure until it enters the presence of God in a form which throughout all centuries and times and throughout all circumstances and events of the world will remain unchanged but will be everlasting as the perpetuity of the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His power and His might, and from it will appear the traces of God, His qualities, providences and favours.

“The pen cannot move at the mentioning of this station as it is in its supremeness and exaltation. The Hand of Divine Bounty will cause the spirit to enter into a station which cannot be comprehended by expression nor be explained by all the creatures of existence. Blessing be upon the spirit who departed from the body purified from the doubts and superstitions of the nations. Verily it moves in the atmosphere of God's pleasure and enters into the Supreme Paradise. All the angels of the Supreme Paradise attend and surround it; and it will have fellowship with all the prophets of God and His saints and will speak with them and tell them what happened to it in the Cause of God, the Lord of the universe. If anyone could realize what hath been assigned in the Kingdom of God, the Lord of the throne and the dust, he would immediately yearn with a great longing for that immovable, exalted, holy and most glorious station.

“O 'Abdu'l-Vahháb, now listen in the Persian language!

“As you asked about the immortality of the spirit, this Wronged One beareth witness to its eternity; and as to your question about its form—it cannot be described, and is not needful to be expressed; but only some things need to be known and messengers come only to guide the creatures to the straight path of God and in order that people may be trained. Then at the time of their ascen- [XIV:2:39] sion, with perfect holiness and separation and having been cut from the things of this world, they will repair to the Supreme Station. By the Self of God, the rays of those spirits are the cause of the development of the people and the station of the nations! These are the leaves of existence and the greatest cause of the appearance of divinity and the works of the universe. By them the clouds will shower and the plants of earth spring up. Not one thing of all existing things is without cause, reason and beginning. The greatest cause is that the spirits were and are forever above us unequal. And the difference between this (earthly) kingdom and the other is as the difference between the embryonic world and this world. After its ascension the spirit will enter into the presence of God in a form suited for eternity and for the Kingdom.”

Eternal reunion

From *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*.

“O thou spiritual friend! This world is a prison for heavenly souls and this earthly world is but a cage, and not a nest, unto divine birds. A prisoner who is awake and conscious will certainly seek for freedom, and a mindful bird will certainly wish for deliverance from the cage.”—Vol. I, p. 109.

“Do not grieve on account of the death of thy son, neither sigh nor lament. That nightingale soared up to the divine rose garden; that drop returned to the most great ocean of truth; that

foreigner hastened to his native abode and that one who was ill found salvation and life eternal.—Vol. I, p. 99.

“Be not grieved at the death of thy dear daughter. That divine bird flew away to the rose garden of the Merciful and that plant of humanity hastened to the garden of the Kingdom of Abhá. That drop returned to the Most Great Sea and that ray betook herself to the Most Great Orb. Be happy and thankful, because thou wilt see her face shining in the Divine Kingdom and wilt find her as a lamp amid an assembly in the spiritual heaven.”—Vol. I, p. 179.

“Be not sorrowful on account of the departure of thy good son. He hath indeed departed from this narrow and gloomy world, which is darkened by unlimited sorrow, unto the Kingdom which is spacious, illumined, joyous and beautiful. God delivered him from this dark well and promoted him to the Supreme Height. He gave him wings whereby he soared to the heaven of happiness. Verily this is the great mercy, from Him who is Precious and Forgiving.”—Vol. I, p. 51.

“Mrs ____ hastened from this mortal world to the divine world and soared from this temporal realm to the expanse of the Kingdom. She abandoned the earthly cage and flew toward the bower of the upper world; so that, like unto a nightingale of significances she may in that divine rose garden engage in praising, glorifying and sanctifying the True One with the most marvellous melody. Consequently, do ye not sigh in grief because of her decease and be not dejected on account of her ascension.

“To the people of adoration death is an ark of deliverance and to pure souls flight from this world of dust is the means of attaining to the kingdom of spheres. By ‘spheres’ is not meant this infinite space, nay, rather, is meant the divine world and the invisible realm.”—Vol. II, p. 443.

“O my dear daughter! ... Indeed the separation from thy dear husband is very hard and difficult for thee. But he obtained the privilege of beholding the beauty of the Almighty. We, and you will also soar to that world, and you will find his shining face visible in the heavenly realm and in the world of the Kingdom, and you will find eternal union with him.

“Be thou assured that he has not been lost; he is in existence, that is, in the pure world. And know thou for certain that thou hast not lost him, for thou shalt find him in the end.

“Have therefore patience and endurance and be thou firm and at rest, and seek [XIV:2:40] God’s mercy and benevolence in his behalf. I, too, will pray and beg for him everlasting glory. Be patient, so that thou mayest find great reward and see thy respected husband in the Divine Kingdom in the end, and find peace of soul and rest of heart.”—From a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a friend in Cleveland, Ohio.

“O thou beloved maidservant of God, although the loss of a son is indeed heart-breaking and beyond the limits of human endurance, yet one who knoweth and understandeth is assured that the son hath not been lost but, rather, hath stepped from this world into another, and she will find him in the divine realm. That reunion shall be for eternity, while in this world separation is inevitable and bringeth with it a burning grief.

“Praise be unto God that thou hast faith, art turning thy face toward the everlasting Kingdom and believest in the existence of a heavenly world. Therefore be thou not disconsolate, do not languish, do not sigh, neither wail nor weep; for agitation and mourning

deeply affect his soul in the divine realm.

“That beloved child addresseth thee from the hidden world: ‘O thou kind Mother, thank divine Providence that I have been freed from a small and gloomy cage and, like the birds of the meadows, have soared to the divine world—a world which is spacious, illumined, and ever gay and jubilant. Therefore, lament not, O Mother, and be not grieved; I am not of the lost, nor have I been obliterated and destroyed. I have shaken off the mortal form and have raised my banner in this spiritual world. Following this separation is everlasting companionship. Thou shalt find me in the heaven of the Lord, immersed in an ocean of light.’”—*Selections from Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, No. 171, p. 201. Tablet translated by Shoghi Effendi, 18 January 1918.

“O thou whose soul is tranquillized by the grace of God and by the Greatest Gift! Verily I inform thee of that by which thy breast will be dilated with joy, thy heart will rejoice and thy soul will be delighted in every time and moment. And it is this, that verily thy honoured Wife, who journeyed unto God and hastened unto the Blessed Spot, her heart ignited with the fire of the love of God and her sight and gaze extended toward the Kingdom of Abhá, was firm in the Testament, and was overtaken by death in the land of Beirut, is now attracted to ‘The Living One who shall never die’.

“Verily, she surrendered her life while she was in a condition wherein she was encompassed with the glad tidings of thy Lord from all directions and her nostrils were perfumed with the fragrances of holiness from the Supreme Concourse. Her soul soared up to the summit of sanctity, under the shelter of the mercy of thy Lord, the Mighty, where the concourse of the chosen ones are assembled around it in the Lofty Paradise, and the angels of mercy are blessing it and are speaking its praise while their faces are smiling because of her ascension to heaven.

“By the life of God, wert thou informed of her prosperity and of the bounty with which she is surrounded and of the favours of thy Lord, which were her greatest desire, thou wouldst smile with joy, thy breast would be dilated and thou wouldst thank God for that which He hath poured upon her; that He hath adorned her with the embroidery of sanctity and purity in His Kingdom, the Abhá; and that He hath crowned her with the diadem of the Greatest Gift in the Supreme Concourse.—From an early Tablet to Mr Percells of Chicago.

Preparation for the immortal degrees

“O servants! If in these visible days and in this present world conditions contrary to your wish appear from the Realm of Decree be ye not depressed for happy and divine days shall come and spiritual worlds of holiness shall be manifest. In all those days and worlds for you a portion is ordained, a sustenance is deter- [XIV:2:41] mined and a food is established. Ye shall certainly attain to all these, should ye exchange the garment of mortality for the garment of immortality and enter the station of the paradise of Abhá which is the everlasting abode of glorious, sacred souls. All things are a proof of your existence, if ye emerge from the gloomy dust of non-existence. Be not grieved at the hardships of these numbered days and be not dejected if your outward bodies are destroyed in the Path of the Beloved One; for every destruction is followed by a construction and a paradise of rest is concealed in every hardship.”—Words of Bahá’u’lláh.

“In the beginning of his life man was in the matrix of the world. There he obtained capacity and preparation for this world. The forces and powers necessary for this world he obtained there. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially in the other world. He needed ears; therefore he obtained them in the world of the matrix. Thus was he prepared for

this world. When he came to this world he found that all the necessary forces were ready; all his needs for material sustenance were provided.

“Likewise, in this world he must also prepare himself and become ready for the life hereafter. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom he must obtain here. Just as man prepared himself for existence in this world by acquiring the necessary forces in the world of the matrix so is it necessary that all the forces needful in the Kingdom be acquired in this world.

“After he is transferred from this world to the other world what is man in need of for the life of the Kingdom? In that world there is need of radiance; therefore radiance must be acquired in this world. In that world there is need of spirituality; he must acquire spirituality in this world. In that world faith and assurance, the knowledge of God and the love of God are essential; these he must acquire in this world so that after he ascends from this world to that immortal world he shall find ready for him all that is needful in that life eternal.”—From the Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

“The more difficulties one sees in the world the more perfect one becomes. The more you plough and dig the ground the more fertile it becomes. The more you cut the branches of a tree the higher and stronger it grows. The more you put the gold in the fire the purer it becomes. The more you sharpen the steel by grinding the better it cuts. Therefore, the more sorrows one sees the more perfect one becomes. That is why, in all times, the Prophets of God have had tribulations and difficulties to withstand. The more often the captain of a ship is in the tempest and difficult sailing the greater his knowledge becomes. Therefore I am happy that you have had great tribulations and difficulties. For this I am very happy—that you have had many sorrows. Strange it is that I love you and still I am happy that you have sorrows.”—From a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, about 1910.

“Convey my spiritual greetings to the maidservant of God ... and say unto her: “Verily for each one of the Manifestations of the previous cycles there was a certain station in existence, and a particular degree in the creation of man. But the Manifestation of the Greatest Name—may my spirit be a sacrifice for His beloved ones—was an expression of maturity and perfection in the essence of humanity and the world of existence; just as the sun is the centre of light, the source of heat and the point of illumination, comprising all the perfections which were manifested to the world from the shining stars. Endeavour, so that thou mayest obtain an abundant portion and a great share from the Manifest Light.

“Verily I say unto thee, if thou arrivest at that station thou shalt behold all the holy people humble and submissive at that station. Make haste in life before death, spring before autumn, healing before sickness. Thus mayest thou be- [XIV:2:42] come a spiritual physician, healing all manner of diseases by the breaths of the Holy Spirit in this glorious century and manifest age.”—From a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1902, to Mrs I. D. Brittingham.¹

XIV:2, May 1923 [XIV:2:42]

Two kinds of education

The idealistic youth of today long for education as for the fountain of living water. They make countless sacrifices, work day and night to win an education, travel half-way around the world that they may enter a modern scientific and technical university. China, Japan, India, Turkey, Egypt, Persia, in fact almost every country of the world is sending its brightest youth to the great universities and technical colleges of Europe and America. The true leaders in all

¹ These selections are taken from compilations made by Mrs Brittingham and Mrs Mary M. Rabb.

countries today are realizing that education is the only solution for our social and international problems.

But what kind of an education shall it be? A brilliant technical education, alone, may be used for the destruction of all civilization. Education is what makes modern warfare so terrible. Present day generals and engineers, chemists and airmen are so finely trained in modern science and its technical application that they can destroy human beings with an efficiency undreamed of in all past ages.

Evidently something is lacking in western education. 'Abdu'l-Bahá strikes the keynote for the future in the following address upon the essential necessity of education. He answers the question which the whole world is asking. This address was given by him in the Unitarian Church at Dublin, New Hampshire, Sunday, 11 August 1912. It was taken down in Persian and given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Dr Baghdádí who, with two friends, has rendered it into English for this issue of the *Star of the West*.

That the world of nature is imperfect and needs education is to the wise beyond question. Consider, man uneducated is in utmost barbarism and distress; through education man becomes a man. Left to himself he will be as other animals. Look at the civilized countries. There man is educated acquires ideals, becomes civilized, wise and perfect. But in savage countries, such as Central Africa, man, because he receives no education, remains in the state of barbarism. The difference between America and Central Africa is this that in the United States there is education and in Africa there is no education. The people of Africa have remained in their natural state; but among the inhabitants of this country (America) education has great effect and is firmly established.

Education straightens a crooked branch. Education makes the jungle into a rose garden. Education causes the fruitless tree to become fruitful, changes the thorn patch into a cultivated field, makes devastated countries to flourish. Through education the savage become civilized. Through education the ignorant become wise, the imperfect are made perfect. Education informs man of the world of the Kingdom, makes him aware of God. Education endows man with spiritual susceptibilities, enables him to discover the mysteries of nature, makes him aware of the realities of the Kingdom. In short, it is clear to all that the [XIV:2:43] world of nature is imperfect, and through education will attain perfection.

But for education man would have remained as other animals, nay, lower than animals for some deeds proceed from man which do not occur among the animals. For instance, the animal to satisfy his hunger may devour one animal. But man, devoid of education, and ferocious, kills in a day a hundred thousand people. Consider how those ferocious souls who have come into the world are lower even than wolves, are beneath the carnivorous animals. It is evident that if man is not educated he is lower than an animal.

There are two kinds of education: divine and material. The philosophers who have arisen are material teachers, have given the people material training and have been the cause of the progress of the world of nature. But the holy Manifestations of God are divine educators. The philosophers have educated the world of bodies; the divine, holy Manifestations have trained souls. His Holiness Christ—unto him be glory!—was a spiritual educator, the educator of the Kingdom, the Divine Educator. He educated souls, trained the human reason to see the verities of the spirit. But the philosophers have served material civilization, educating from the material standpoint.

Man, in reality, is in need of both material and divine education. If, however, he does not receive heavenly instruction, if he receives material education only he will be as other animals, for animals discover the bodily verities, the facts of nature, the realities which can be

sensed. But God has created in man a power which may perceive mental verities and which may discover the realities of the Kingdom. That power becomes aware of divine bounties, is the cause of eternal life, bestows ideal perfections. That power distinguishes man from the animal because the animal knows but the nether world while man discovers the verities of Heaven.

Man though he progress materially is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit, of divine education, of the outpourings of the Kingdom. Not until man receives this bounty can he become perfect. Therefore the holy, divine Manifestations have appeared in every cycle and dispensation so that they may give the human souls this divine education, may banish the imperfections of the human world and make manifest ideal perfections. The world of nature is like a jungle. His Holiness the Christ was the divine gardener. He made this jungle to be a rose garden, these fruitless trees fruitful. These lands which according to the laws of nature should bring forth weeds and tares he filled with roses and tulips. This Divine Farmer sowed the earth with seeds; the worthless grass he threw away. The thorn bushes which according to the law of nature should grow he rooted out, and through divine education the thorny place became a rose garden. Had it remained in its original state it would have been either a jungle or a bramble patch.

The point is this, that man, however much he may progress materially, however much he may acquire of material perfection belongs, still, to the animal world and is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit, of divine education. If man partakes of the breaths of the Holy Spirit then the divine reality appears in the human world in utmost perfection and man becomes as the image and likeness of God. He that was earthly becomes heavenly; he that was of the nether world lives now in the divine world; he who was materialistic becomes spiritual; he who was dark is illumined. And this is only possible through the breaths of the Holy Spirit.

The holy, divine Manifestations give a new spirit and a new mind to man, are the cause of great progress; they illumine the world. However, a short while after (their appearance) the darkness and gloom of materialism, of nature, again prevail. The heavenly illumination (the light of the Manifestation) passes [XIV:2:44] away and natural susceptibilities become dominant. It is as though a farmer comes and cultivates land which was full of tares and weeds, and the land brings forth abundant harvest. Then, when left to itself the land once more becomes a thorn patch and a place of weeds.

One time, in Persia, there was a blessed farming land, and through the power of the holy Manifestations that jungle became a rose garden. The darkness of ignorance vanished and heavenly illumination appeared. But soon again the East became entirely dark; no light at all remained; no trace of the divine bounty, nor spiritual education. At such a time as this His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh appeared; at a time when the Eastern nations were in utmost strife and conflict, when the leaders of religions were drinking one another's blood, when sects were battling with each other, intense hatred was rife among the people and no trace of love or heavenly illumination remained. At such a time His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh appeared from the horizon of the East. He taught: the oneness of mankind ..., universal peace ..., that reason and religion must conform ..., that men and women are equal The people of the East were very ignorant. Bahá'u'lláh announced that all people must acquire knowledge, that all children whether in the cities or in the villages must go to school, that it is the duty of all to teach and educate the children. Should the father and mother be unable to educate the children and have not the means therefor, then society must take care of them and educate them so that not one single soul remains in ignorance. Bahá'u'lláh taught that in all schools and colleges sciences, both divine and material, should be taught, in order that the students may discover material realities and the realities of the Kingdom, for material sciences are as the body and divine sciences are as the spirit. The body must live by the spirit. If the spirit does not exist the body then is dead. Though the body be in utmost beauty, yet, if deprived of the

outpourings of the spirit it will be fruitless and of benefit to no one, nay, rather, its non-existence were better than its existence. ... His Holiness Christ says in the Gospel, the one who is born of the flesh is flesh and the one who is born of the spirit is spirit. The interpretation of this verse is this, that physical things are like the body but the breaths of the Holy Spirit are the spirit (in the body). The body must live by the spirit, and therefore His Holiness Christ spoke of the second birth.

What is the second birth? It is this: Man while in the matrix world is deprived of bounties. When ushered into this world from that of the matrix he finds himself the possessor of eyes, ears, physical powers, of intelligence. Although God gave all these bounties to man, in the matrix world they were not yet apparent. Only when born into this world did these divine bounties become manifest. Man then found that eyes had been given to him, that he was possessed of ears, and that powers which could discover all created things had been granted him. He saw the sun, and beheld the moon; he glanced at the sea, and witnessed the plains. A rose garden he saw, green and verdant. Of all these things he was unaware in the matrix world; of them he had no knowledge.

In like manner must man be born out of this world of nature that he may enter into the world of the Kingdom. Unless he be born from this world he cannot attain to spiritual susceptibilities nor can he discover the mysteries of the Kingdom nor behold the realm of God. When in the matrix world man could receive no tidings of this world. In that world he was, rather, a denier of this world for had anyone said to him that there was a world other than that of the matrix, a world most vast and spacious, where a sun was shining everywhere, and a moon, where a rose garden grew in utmost beauty—had this been said to him he would have denied such news, saying there is no world save this (the matrix) world. But when he is born he sees that [XIV:2:45] this world is a different world. It is an infinite world, where stars are shining in the heaven and rivers are flowing toward the sea, where rose gardens are adornments and orchards are as embroidery.

Again, the human world is like the animal world. What does it (the animal world) know of the world of the Kingdom? What does it know of God, of spirituality, of divine bounties? When he is born from the world of nature then will man see the world of the Kingdom, then will he behold the lights of the Sun of Reality and will comprehend the manifestations of divine bounty. He will then be submerged in the sea of the lights of mercy and will understand the secrets of second birth.

The holy, divine Manifestations of God have come for this purpose, that man may be informed of the Kingdom of the Lord of Hosts, that he may know divine realities and may attain to the second birth.

XIV:2, May 1923 [XIV:2:45]

Bahá'í Assemblies

Horace Holley

When evening twilight falls upon the world, and shadows cast from the western mountains fill the home, then the servant goes from room to room, lighting the lamps, in order that darkness may not oppress the people of the household.

And, in the same way, when the evening of civilization approaches; when the light of custom and tradition dies; when the mind stumbles, the heart fails and the soul is enshrouded with sudden fear; when the works of shadow and darkness are done—by wars, by strife, by confusion; and the prescience of universal ruin flies like a bat of ill omen over the uplifted heads and staring eyes; then the Divine Servant passes silently from room to room of the household of the world, lighting the lamps of hearts with the flame of spirit, whose illumination, for those who are severed from all save spirit, is as the rising of the True Dawn

after the overcoming of that besetting inner twilight which the world miscalls truth, mistermis [applies a misnomer to] reality, misconceives as *life*.

But when the lamps of the hearts are lighted, then silently, then mysteriously, even as the Divine Servant came, so He departs; and in that departing we know Him by the glory of the illumination whose rays have penetrated the heart; or we know Him not at all.

This is the first solemnity of the hush of that hour when it is realized that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Divine Servant, having lighted the lamps throughout the household of the East and West, departs unto that Source of Light whence He came.

The shining of the lamps of hearts lighted by the hand of the Divine Servant is the mystery whose outward manifestation stands visible in the life of the world as *Bahá'í Assemblies*, lamps that shone unseen in the last flickering moments of that false illumination of the material age; lamps that shine the more brightly as material daylight ebbs from the life of men.

For the believers, this is the mystery to be considered, the task to be realized, the worthiness to be attained: that from their unity and by their unity the fulfilment of the coming of the Divine Servant may be established in the foundations of the New Age throughout the world. The unity of the believers one with another is as the rays of light from the lamp. If unity does not exist—unity in [XIV:2:46] the depths of spirit—then the lamp burns only to itself; for the world it would be as though the lamp had not been lighted, and as though the Divine Servant had not come.

For the lamp burns not to itself, but to the world, through the manifold rays which the believers are: each believer a ray, all the believers the visible shining of the lamp. The lamp shines not through one ray, but through the infinity of rays; not upon one object, but upon all objects; not for one horizon, but unto all the horizons. Through the personal unlikeness of the believers, the glory of the lamp is manifested. No believer can be spared, lest the lamp be shorn of its rays.

Therefore, in a Bahá'í Assembly, all the aspects of personal unlikeness exist. The believers are not of one kind, not of one sort, not of one character, not of one training, not of one capacity; which unlikeness is essential to the full shining of the lamp. But the believers are alike in this, that each is a ray of light shining forth from the lamp, whereby the lamp illumines one particular object, one special horizon, revealing itself to that horizon through that one ray which the believer, by reason of his faithfulness, his devotion, his selflessness, has become. The lamp shines through all its rays, and no ray is more important than any other ray shining from the lamp.

Each of the believers has two aspects and two stations. He has the aspect and station of his personality, which is the aspect and station of difference; and he has the aspect and station of the ray, which is the aspect and station of oneness. The oneness of the believers is the lamp lighted by the hand of the Divine Servant; the difference of the believers is the work of the world of nature and of mankind, in whose activity we evolve and by whose influence we are conditioned.

In the life of mankind there have been many lamps, each lamp shining unto one room, one community, one horizon; and the rays of these lamps could not overcome the darkness beyond the one room where the lamp shone. Now there is but one lamp, the Sun of Truth, whose shining is for all the rooms of the household of humanity, all the horizons of experience, all the objects of thought and activity.

Therefore, that the oneness of the Sun of Truth may be manifested, it has become necessary in this New Age that the rays shall have no confinement; that all the distinctions shall be

burned away; that reality shall be perceived by one light and known of one spirit. Wherefore, in every Bahá'í Assembly, all the conditions of humanity—all the separateness, all the differences, all the degrees, all the capacities, all the kinds, all the influences built up during the evolution that has gone before—must needs, by the providential law of this New Age, be made one gathering, manifesting the oneness of the Sun of Truth even despite the testimony and evidence of all the differences of personality which emanate from the influence of the world.

This is the mystery of a Bahá'í Assembly: not that its members readily agree, but that they can overcome their differences; not that they are one in personality, in instinctive sympathy, in ambition, in desire, in training, in influence, but that they can penetrate to the foundation of oneness revealed by the glory of the Sun.

Every Bahá'í Assembly is the world in miniature, containing the differences and personal problems of the world, even intensified to the utmost degree. This is our glory, our privilege, our attainment, our distinction; not our weakness, not our shame. No other power save the power of the Sun of Truth could have revealed the oneness in so much difference. It is the spirit of this oneness overcoming our manifold differences, that makes a Bahá'í Assembly a divine foundation, a healing for the world, an inspiration for those who turn from darkness and seek light. Elsewhere differences are organized, but here is unity; elsewhere darkness is worshipped, but here the light shines; elsewhere activity is the [XIV:2:47] pursuit of shadows and reflections, but here activity has one end and aim: that each of the believers may attain to selflessness, and become a ray emanating from the Sun of Truth.

May the friends of the Divine Servant continually assist one another to arise from the station of personality to the station of selflessness which is the station of the ray. May we become infinitely considerate one of another, having cast out pride, ambition, thought and desire, which are veils of the personal self. May we be ever conscious that the unity of each Bahá'í Assembly in itself, and the unity of all the Bahá'í Assemblies one with another, are the preliminary condition to that world unity for which the Divine became [a] Servant in this age. May we be ever conscious that the ray is nothing in itself, but is an emanation from the Sun; that the Sun manifests its power through the ray, and the Sun is all in all.

Then, as the personalities diminish, and the world weakens its secret hold upon the hearts, the Sun will assert its predominant power, having rays unto all the horizons. Then even the consciousness of yielding up self will flee as the ultimate shadow before the Dawn, and the meeting of this selflessness; the community of this faithfulness, will penetrate humanity with a new spirit and a new life.

Now is the work of becoming selfless; but the work of the Sun is at hand.

XIV:2, May 1923 [XIV:2:48]

Letters from Shoghi Effendi

American communities in 31 cities

Dearest Fellow-workers in the Vineyard of God,

Though your number in each of these cities be small and limited, yet by virtue of that Celestial Potency bequeathed to every one of you by our departed Master, you are assured that ere long your small company shall expand and wield such power and influence as no earthly power can ever hope for or attain. Who can doubt that he is ever watching from his Station on High over his scattered fold and is guiding and strengthening his faithful lovers who toil and labour for the fulfilment of his Word and the realization of his Purpose for mankind?

As we observe the sad conditions of the world and the complexity of the problems that are besetting humanity, we may at times lose heart and grow forgetful of the promised dawn of the New Day, so repeatedly and emphatically foretold in the Sacred Writings. But we need only refer to some of the earliest writings of our beloved Master to regain that confidence which the vicissitudes of the world, however distressing, can never shake. Are not these words wherein he assures us of the onward march of the Cause—a march which no one can resist and which is sure to lead humanity to its glorious destiny?

“Now in the world of being, the Hand of Divine Power hath firmly laid the foundations of this all-highest bounty and this wondrous gift. Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this Holy Cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the day-spring of the revelation of its signs. Ere the close of this century and of this age it shall be made clear and evident how wondrous was that spring-tide and how heavenly was that gift!”

And as the outlook grows darker and despondency overtakes the hearts, it is incumbent upon us to arise with greater confidence than ever before, endeavouring to clear the mists of hate and prejudice that have dimmed the vision of mankind and, relying upon these assuring words of his, point out to a weary world the Way of True Salvation.

I very eagerly await the news of the progress of the Movement in your cities and shall be grateful and delighted to hear that you have reinforced your numbers, extended your activities, established a centre and founded a Spiritual Assembly that shall direct and co-ordinate your efforts for the promotion of the Cause.

Awaiting your joyful news and beseeching the blessings of the Almighty upon your efforts,

I am your brother and co-worker,

(Signed) Shoghi

Haifa, Palestine, 8 January 1923. [XIV:2:49]

San Francisco, California

The Beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful in San Francisco, California, USA.

Beloved Friends,

The various tidings that have directly and indirectly reached the Holy Land regarding the combined efforts which the friends of the Western States have recently exerted for the promotion of the Cause in those regions, and in which the friends in that city have shared in no small degree, have filled our hearts with a joy that no words can express.

It is indeed gratifying to learn how your flourishing city, so rich and splendid in its material gifts, so similar in its atmosphere and peaceful surroundings to the Holy Land, and potentially endowed with such spiritual capacity, is now taking a leading part in lending a fresh impetus to the onward march of the Movement in regions which, though distant and remote, are yet so near and dear to the Master’s heart.

May your patient efforts be crowned with signal success and may the Light of this Divine Revelation so illumine your city as to justify the high hopes which our Beloved had confidently reposed in every one of you.

We all remember you very tenderly during our visits to the Three Holy Shrines and beseech every time with renewed ardour the blessings of the Almighty upon your labours.

Your friend and co-worker,

(Signed) Shoghi

30 December 1922.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

To the Beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

Care of the Members of the Spiritual Assembly.

My Loving Friends,

Whenever I recall the tender affection with which the beloved Master referred to you in His spoken as well as in His written words I feel that the day may not be distant when the friends of that city will as the standard-bearers of the Cause herald to their fellow-countrymen and to the world at large the glad-tidings of this glorious Revelation.

Assured and strengthened by the memories of the many blessings that have been yours in the past, it is now assuredly the time to arise with one accord for the fulfilment of our sacred obligations, the pre-requisites of the speedy realization of such brilliant success in the Cause.

With hearts united, with minds purified and with a determination never to waver or surrender, let us step into the arena of service and armed with the sword of utterance and teaching combat effectively the ills and sicknesses of this distracted world.

We need not feel depressed or overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task for the mighty combatants whom the hands of the Master have raised in every part of the globe shall come to our aid and the Hosts of the Unseen shall reinforce our numbers till the Spirit of Love and Peace even as foretold in the Holy Writ of Bahá'u'lláh will have filled the world.

I pray constantly on your behalf that your vision may never be dimmed and your courage may never falter in His Path.

I am as ever your co-worker,

(Signed) Shoghi

30 December 1922.

XIV:2, May 1923 [XIV:2:50]

The Bahá'í Dispensation

Elizabeth Herrick

The history of the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth is the story of God's love for mankind. Rejection of it is the greatest of all tragedies, and the root cause of the trials of men and nations.

Today they need Divine Guidance more than ever, and know not where to find that which meets all the needs of the world. True, they are beginning to turn again to that which in past days was rejected, and this is good; but if they understand it, they will not repeat the tragedy of rejecting the Divine Message in our own day. The voice is One Voice bringing the eternal message, in each era, and in the utterance of the same spirit, courting that which is divine in man. Knowledge of this is the keynote to the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. That perception makes unity possible between men and religions and nations. Therefore it is of supreme importance that there should be understanding on this point; because it will put an end to religious, political, racial and industrial warfare. Only lack of understanding makes such tragedy possible, for the beginning and ending of all prophetic aspiration is to promote unity and harmony amongst mankind. This has been God's aim and purpose throughout the ages. It is the Heavenly Father's work, to which Jesus referred when he said: "My father worketh until now, and I work." Yes, and even again, "until now". For is not the spirit of the Father Himself evident in the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh which has called all the sovereigns of the earth and all

men and nations, in the name of God, to the divine banquet of universal peace? How could the Father's heart be content with less than universal peace? Peace for the different followers of different religions, since the founders of each have, through the inspiration of the same spirit, been one with Him, each doing the work of preparation essential to the summing up of all aspiration in the glad work of this Latter Day, when all are now called by the same Lord, the Lord of all these hosts, to recognize Him, and leaving all things contrary to Him to "follow that which tends to harmony". For the fundamental teaching of the Founders of all religions, is one. Therefore, no one is called upon to reject his own religion, but to recognize the same Spirit in all, that all may become one in heart and mind in this new day, looking to the same point of guidance.

Without Divine Guidance the rich values which await mankind cannot come for is there not, as St. Paul pointed out, a spiritual, as well as a natural law? And has it not therefore been promised in the name of God, that if mankind will believe in Him and co-operate with It, seeking first His kingdom before all else "The windows of heaven will open and shower upon him blessings beyond all that he can think or speak?"

Therefore Bahá'ís rejoice in the glad tidings which Bahá'u'lláh brings to the world today, and invite all the world to rejoice with them, studying the laws which he declares as necessary to the happiness and protection of all nations, and to the fullness of life, which Jesus promised in "abundance", to all men. The universal divine laws have been stated in Bahá'í writings many times, and will be reiterated throughout the world until they are established in the hearts of mankind beyond all forgetfulness, and their portent evident before all eyes. Therefore, until they are known to all, repetition and remembrance is our "daily bread" in the spiritual world even as the wheaten bread is in the material world. All the world therefore is invited in the [XIV:2:51] name of Bahá'u'lláh to co-operate in establishing the bountiful laws of righteousness which the Holy Spirit has promulgated through him. No one can study them without becoming aware that the divine spirit is at work and all can work with It, to bring about the time when warfare will be at an end and all men and nations will live together in harmony, as brothers in the Father's heavenly Kingdom.

That is what Jesus yearned for; and it has been the travail of the Father's Spirit. "I am the Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman," said Jesus. He finished his appointed work. Today, he whom Jesus promised, has come, telling us those "other things", which he could not tell us then because the world was not ready for them. Now it is so ready that it is longing to hear them. Let us therefore pray and labour to convey the glad tidings understandingly, that there may be no more persecutions through misunderstanding.

Looking back through history, we see there was much work for the Spirit to do after Jesus left the earthly abode. So also is there much work for the disciples of Bahá'u'lláh. And we are grateful for the Centre of his Covenant among the nations, which he has appointed in accordance with divine prophecy. For we are through the living example and precept of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, protected from the errors and misunderstandings to which Christianity was liable in its early days, and which have grown to such a degree that even leaders and teachers of religion are troubled to find so little resemblance in it to the living spirit and example of Jesus. It is above all things necessary therefore, in this important Day of God which is the outcome of previous revelation that we should abide in the Spirit and pray for divine grace to live in accordance with it. That we should live and work and pray harmoniously, in Spirit and in Truth; each individual before all else looking to the guidance of the Spirit—and turning not aside for any other guidance. For the Spirit is the life of us all. Without It, there is no life, no love, no harmony or heavenly joy. It is incumbent on us all, now, to manifest these evidences of reality before the world, as the very early disciples did endeavour to do. We are grateful for all the records of our faith, but learning the lessons of the past it would seem well to remember that it is the Spirit which "maketh alive".

Therefore we gird our loins, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit through which many new sciences and arts and wonderful means of travel and unification have been developed, which, without spiritual power, could never have become manifest. It is our charge, and privilege and responsibility, now they are developed through the divine Will for a special purpose, to do our part in establishing those principles of universal righteousness which, although well known to Bahá'ís, are not yet known to the world, lest this increase of human power should be used for destroying the happiness of mankind instead of promoting it.

So we announce to the world continuously those universal principles which Bahá'u'lláh has declared to be the will of God for this day, that all men and nations may move consciously together under the protection of the Divine Bounty toward the haven of peace and rest which is God's design for them and indeed their own heart's desire. They are:

1. The Oneness of Mankind.
2. Independent Investigation of Truth.
3. The Oneness of the Foundation of all Religions.
4. Religion must be the cause of Unity.
5. Religion must be in accord with Science and Reason.
6. Equality between men and women.
7. Prejudices of all kinds must be forgotten.
8. Universal Peace.
9. Universal Education. [XIV:2:52]
10. Solution of the Economic Problem.
11. An International Auxiliary Language.
12. An International Tribunal.

Bahá'ís want all the world to see the light of the Sun of Truth which illumines the path to the most great peace; so we hold up the light, knowing that the "spirit which God has placed within" all men will enable them to see it. Then they will help us to make known the guidance which is so peculiarly necessary to the salvation of men and nations. Without this larger all-embracing aim individual salvation is insecure.

Unity is the order of this new day. All that does not bear its test will be cast aside, and the reason so many in church and state are now anxious to attain unity is that they well know that the world of humanity will no longer accept anything short of reality. It is tired of trusting the blind leaders of the blind who ever prescribe their own conflicting remedies. But when the True Remedy comes to them they will see its all-inclusiveness, and be satisfied.

Unity can never be achieved on the narrowing basis of the minds of men. For some repudiate one religion, and some another, and others seeing this, repudiate religion altogether. It is God's Messenger who brings us the True Remedy in its completeness today. Without it unity cannot be achieved, for it is necessarily the outcome of the aspirations of past ages and the purport of ages to come.

XIV:2, May 1923 [XIV:2:60]

The true spiritual teacher¹ [XIV:2:61]

"Normal spiritual joy has a healing effect upon the body. I can conceive of no greater joy than teaching the Cause of God. When an individual forgets himself entirely, is sincerely self-sacrificing, loses himself in the sea of the love of the Blessed Perfection, fulfils the conditions of servitude, and has won the good-pleasure of the Lord of Hosts his joy will then be unceasing and his happiness a flowing stream of crystal water. A Bahá'í who serves others is like unto a candle which burns and sheds light upon all those who circle around it. The

¹ Quotations available in the writings have been omitted.

highest attainable station of the candle is to burn and brighten the dark room, and the loftiest pinnacle of our progress and perfection is to be confirmed in service to the Holy Threshold. This is indeed the most exalted position. But what do I mean by servitude to the Holy Threshold? I mean this, that with radiant faces, detached hearts, cheerful spirits, sanctified souls, illumined minds and unyielding determination we may arise and teach the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. It is well to bear in mind in all our waking hours that he did not educate us for corporeal joy, material comfort nor the physical benefits of this mortal world. He accepted all persecutions and hardships; and chose us for the illumination of the world of humanity, for the moral and religious education of the races, for the spiritual awakening of the people."

"The believers must teach the Cause not only in words but must adorn themselves with the ornaments of deeds in order that all mankind may bear testimony to this, that their aims are universal, their actions disinterested, their purposes inspiring and all-embracing, so that they may witness in their behaviour and manner the holiness, purity, sincerity and loving kindness of the prophets of God ... Tell them to read carefully the Persian and Arabic *Hidden Words* and to live and behave according to their contents. If a person lives for one day according to those divine exhortations and teachings he will be assisted to move the visible and the invisible world."

"Teach the Cause of God through your deeds and actions. This is God's real benediction and blessing. Live in such a way that when people observe your manners, morals and conduct they may exclaim, 'These are not men and women, but angels of the Lord.' Be ye kind to all mankind. Let mercy be the motive power in your dealings with people. Do not look at their shortcomings. Win the hearts through love and charity; set them aglow with the fire of the love of God. The joy of a soul is indescribable, if the fragrances of spirituality waft from the garden of his being. This divine happiness is not followed by any sorrow nor is this heavenly spring ended by the sultry days of summer."—'Abdu'l-Bahá: recorded by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab during the great war.

"Praise be to God! Your hearts are overflowing with the love of God and you have no great attachment to this world. The thing which is necessary now for you is discourse. It is my hope that you will obtain ... eloquent, expressive and excellent discourse."

"Rest assured in the fact that the breaths of the Holy Spirit will aid you provided no doubts obtain in your heart."—'Abdu'l-Bahá: from *Diary of Juliet Thompson*.

XIV:3, June 1923 [XIV:3:69]

Fifteenth Annual American Bahá'í Convention

Louise G. Gregory

[Extracts of talks by Jináb-i-Fáḍil-i-Mázindaránī. Interpreted by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.]

In 'Akká there lived a man who so hated 'Abdu'l-Bahá that he would turn his back when he met him, fearing lest he lose his hatred. One day they met in such a narrow street that the enemy was forced to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá face to face. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tapped the man upon the shoulder and said, "Wait a few moments, until I speak. However great may be your hatred for me it can never be as strong as is my love for you." The man was startled, awakened, and made to feel the unconquerable power of love. Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá through this power have been able to transform thousands who are messengers of the Kingdom of God in this day.

A woman went to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, received his teachings and blessings, and asked for a special work. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Spread the law of love. Live in accord with love, reciprocity and co-operation."

She answered, "I want something special. All Bahá'ís are asked to do this."

'Abdu'l-Bahá answered, "Very well. Come tomorrow morning, when you are about to leave, and I will give you the special work."

She was very happy all that day and night, in anticipation.

The next day 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to her, "I am going to give you my son that you may educate him physically, mentally and spiritually."

She was surprised, and was made happy at this. But her surprise gave way to wonder when she reflected that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had no son. What could he mean? [XIV:3:70]

'Abdu'l-Bahá asked, "Do you know this son of mine?"

Then he told her: In her city there had lived a man, her worst enemy. He had died leaving a son, with no one to take care of him: this was now her task. When she heard this she was overwhelmed. She was spiritually reborn. She wept and said, "My Master, I now know what the Bahá'í Cause means."

... [XIV:3:73]

...

Children's meeting

... His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeatedly spoke of the education of children and how parents should continually put into their minds ideas of peace and righteousness. He was an ardent lover of children and took with him wherever he went a photograph of children. He likened them to young bushes in a garden of roses. If the young trees are cared for they grow straight; if neglected, they become crooked. If a person is allowed to grow up aslant or crooked like a young tree, no human power can make it straight: only the power of the Holy Spirit can change such a person. In the Orient the meetings of the Bahá'í children are a source of inspiration and happiness to the adults. Their gatherings are of intense interest to everyone for they have a charm of love, simplicity and happiness not to be found elsewhere.

'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that from the very beginning children must be taught lessons of spirituality and morality. He tells us that we must teach the children, in their childhood, only those things which will strengthen their childhood in simplicity of life. The children memorize the wonderful lessons, compilations and recitations with the utmost love and devotion.

There was a family in Persia where the husband, but not the wife, was a Bahá'í. Their little daughter went with her father to the meetings and sat night after night, all attention. Her father asked me if I would like to know the result. I answered yes. He told me that the little girl was repeating, like a phonograph, to her mother, all that I said. Later the father reported to me that his wife had become a Bahá'í, taught by her little daughter.

One day I saw a little girl going to school.

"You, so little, going to school?" I inquired.

"Have you not heard," she answered, "that it is necessary to study science, literature and arts?"

Then she quoted wonderfully the words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I asked her. "What is a Bahá'í?"

She answered: "A Bahá'í is a collec- [XIV:3:74] tive centre of all the qualities and perfections of the world of humanity."

These remarks caused me to wonder at the power of a movement which made this little

girl a dynamo of knowledge. Let us also remember the words of Christ about the children. This is a glorious age, when all these heavenly aims and principles will be fulfilled. How great will be the station of these little children in the Abhá Kingdom, so mighty and universal. Let us teach the children—but let us, first, teach ourselves so that the future ages will be full of light, of new hope and new accomplishment.

... [XIV:3:76]

...

How easy it is to mention the principle of oneness, yet how difficult to fulfil its gigantic task! From time immemorial this ideal has been felt that all the children of men should be one. The poets of the past have sung this song and many gems in literature and philosophy contain the dream of oneness. The great poet of Persia, Sa'dí, wrote a very comprehensive poem on this subject. The children of men are indeed one body for originally they were created from the same substance. When one member feels pain and suffering all the other members suffer. Spiritual ideals of oneness have descended to us as a heritage and there is no doubt that the day will come when hate is forgotten and love is enthroned. The great creational law of the Almighty is the greatest proof that humanity is one. Man is created physically, mentally, spiritually according to the same general pattern. In the world of creation God has placed no difference. The same breezes blow upon all. The same rain falls on the just and the unjust. The same good gifts are shared by all the people of the world. There are certain natural differences between the kingdoms of existence, but all these differences only add to the charm and beauty of nature. How charming and delightful to see diversity amongst the beings! Differences in the natural world are only stepping stones of progress and happiness.

On the other hand, some differences are not natural. They are the creatures of superstition. How unfortunate it is that racial prejudices have affected the realm of humanity! Religious prejudices are the children of hatred and fanaticism. Religion in reality is the cause of love. Differences growing out of religion are manmade. They are swords placed in our hands by the demon of hate, so that we may kill our own children. Is there any doubt that the founders of religion came to establish love and unity among the sons of men? Yet the followers of religions today think that these Prophets were generals, issuing orders of discord and destruction. Look at the animal world. Amid domestic animals of the same kind no prejudices are found. But man, who thinks himself the friend and child of God, shows prejudices that put the animal to shame. Bring together a number of cows from different countries and they would not harm each other. They would graze together in the same pasture and raise no objection to each other. But how often does the inhumanity of man in this enlightened century make man unhappy! Such conduct is due to greed, selfishness and ambition.

Once 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to illustrate this point, told the story of a fat mullá who was praying in a mosque in one of the Oriental cities. A man who saw him and who had some money promised a nearby beggar a pound if he would slap the neck of the mullá. The beggar took the pound and gave the mullá a slap on the neck, then offered excuses, claiming mistaken identity. The mullá accepted the excuse and returned to prayer. The man gave the beggar another pound and [XIV:3:77] the beggar gave the mullá another slap, again excusing himself. Another pound resulted in still another slap. The mullá became very angry, declined to accept any more excuses, and demanded of the beggar why he thus pursued him with insults. The beggar replied, "Just as long as you have that fat neck and that man has money, so long will I mete out to you this chastisement!"

Even so, as long as we have greed, hatred, superstitions and imaginations in our hearts we shall have wars and be far removed from the millennium. We are in need of a supernatural power to change the hearts of men. That power was given by Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the

Bahá'í Movement. Since the appearance of this divine Cause in Persia many years ago its influence has spread far and wide banishing hatred and strife from humanity. It creates a spiritual unity in the hearts of men. In order that this unity might spread through the world twenty thousand people gave up their lives joyfully. This divine revelation is so powerful that it has united Orientals and Occidentals to such [an] extent that they are willing to give up their lives for one another. This is the century of light through the spiritual Bounty. The drawing together of races and religions is realized. The flag of universal peace will be raised from the apex of the world. The oneness of the world will reveal mankind as the stars of one heaven, the leaves of one tree and the voices in one melody of Celestial music.

... [XIV:3:79]

...

We have had during the last few days many divine meetings and many spiritual gatherings. Day after day and night after night our ears have been attuned to the melodies and the dreams of the coming of this new age—a Temple where all the religions of the world may worship, the oneness of the world of humanity, a universal auxiliary language, a day when universal brotherhood is enthroned in the hearts.

When a person hears these principles he is delighted; but then he will often say, "Utopian! Very beautiful, but impossible! Do you not see the world surrounded by darkness." Sceptics think such a plan wholly impractical.

But there is nothing on the face of the earth which is impossible for man to accomplish. Many are the diseases attacking the body politic; but they will all vanish under the treatment of a skilful physician. See the advancement of use- [XIV:3:80] ful science, and how this has happened in the face of things seemingly impossible! Who a short time ago could have imagined the wonders of electricity or the evolution of the air-ship? Our children and grandchildren will see and enjoy much that we now fail to realize.

Our aims are very high, our hearts are full of hope, our steps are firm, our resolution is unshakeable; and we will work and we will labour and we will make the supreme effort and all our hopes will be fulfilled. Does it matter if we do not see the realization of our dreams? Future generations, our grandchildren will see it.

An old man was once seen planting a tree, the story goes. He was asked why did he thus, as he could not live to enjoy the shade and fruit of these trees. He replied that his ancestors had provided for him and now he must in turn provide for posterity.

Then Jináb-i-Fáḍil showed through a brilliant analysis the underlying unity of all the world religions. They all teach according to the needs and capacities of the students of their day the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the Golden Rule, the same great principles of ethics, morality and unity. In highly figurative and symbolic form they portray the genesis, the creation of the world. When we study and behold the unity in religions the work of uniting them seems much easier. Jináb-i-Fáḍil then illustrated from his own experience the marvellous power of the Bahá'í Teachings to unite diverse religions. He told of how he had seen Jewish Bahá'ís, Muslim Bahá'ís, Christian Bahá'ís all meeting together in the utmost love and unity. When mankind partakes of universal religion unity will be established in the hearts.

XIV:3, June 1923 [XIV:3:87]

Soul stirring words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Tablet recently translated by Shoghi Effendi

O ye beloved of the Lord! O ye His trusted ones!

Know ye verily that the denizens of the Realm on High, the dwellers in the habitations of Glory, laud and glorify the company of the faithful on earth, who raise their voice with one accord and sing the praise of the Lord and magnify His holy Name. Exalted be the Lord, my God, the All-Glorious! I swear by the Beauty of His Face, by the Light of His Countenance, by the Dayspring of Glory: were earthly gatherings to walk in the ways of the company of the Immortals on High, they would surely mirror forth, in all their beauty, the splendours of the Celestial Concourse, and unfold the mysteries of the Abhá Kingdom. The greater their purity, the greater their reflected splendour.

Wherefore, let us arise, let us bestir ourselves, let us rally round the Standard of the One True God, and gather together under the shadow of the Lord's Sacred Tree, the Tree that hath voiced [XIV:3:88] the Call of God and uttered the Word of Truth. This is indeed, in the eyes of the Lord, your God, the Gracious, a supreme and glorious triumph.

Should the Spirit of true Love permeate the assemblies of men on earth, they, verily, will grow to become a string of heavenly pearls, a guiding constellation that sheddeth its glory and radiance over all mankind.

The Glory of God, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting, rest upon you.

XIV:3, June 1923 [XIV:3:89]

The spirit of the century

Letter of Shoghi Effendi to the friends of Montclair, New Jersey.

In these days, when internal commotions are shaking the very foundations of men's beliefs, and the flames of distress are purging humanity from its ills and maladies, it behoves us, the loved ones of God, to stand steadfastly amid this world-tumult, and with the Divine Teachings exemplified in our lives, restore gradually peace, assurance and tranquillity to the distracted world. For unless the saving Power of the Word of God comes to their aid, peoples and sects, classes and governments, entangled in the mesh of their own undoing, shall fall a prey to one another's greed and passion, and in the end deplorably perish.

But this is not to be, for we are assured that the Divine Will has ordained that from this raging turmoil shall emerge a world purer and better illumined with the Light of the Divine Revelation, and guided by the principles of the Most Great Peace!

Ours, then, is the duty and privilege to labour with heart and soul for the re-birth of mankind, and hasten the advent of the Promised Day.

XIV:4, July 1923 [XIV:4:97]

Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The time has arrived for the world of humanity to hoist the standard of the oneness of the human world, so that solidarity and unity may bind together all the nations of the world, so that dogmatic formulas and superstitions may end, so that the essential reality underlying all the religions founded by the Prophets may be revealed.

That reality is one.

It is the love of God, the progress of the world, the oneness of humanity.

That reality is the bond which can unite all the human race.

That reality is the attainment of the benefits of the most great peace, the discarding of warfare.

That reality is progressiveness, the undertaking of the colossal tasks in life, the oneness of public opinion.

Therefore strive, O ye people! and put forth your efforts, that this reality may overcome the lesser forces in life, that this king of reality may alone rule all humanity.

Thus may the world of mankind be reformed. Thus may a new springtime be ushered in and a fresh spirit may resuscitate mankind.

The individuals of humanity, like refreshed plants, will put forth leaves and blossoms and fruit, so that the face of the earth will become the long promised and delectable paradise, so that the great bestowal, the supreme virtues of man will glisten over the face of the earth. Then shall the world of existence have attained maturity.

This is my message.

XIV:4, July 1923 [XIV:4:101]

The proof of God's existence

The divine philosophy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Science has discovered a new universe. Its great stars, most of which are suns, according to new measurements are often found to be millions of miles in diameter, separated from us and from each other by bewildering stretches of light years of a vastness which baffles all attempts at comprehension. Our little earth, with all its teeming life, is but a speck in this splendid immensity. Modern science reveals a universe ordered by laws so invariable that astronomers can prophecy an eclipse generations before it appears on the field of vision. The atom, according to the new physics, is itself a little solar system and reveals in miniature the order of the great cosmos.

To many the very immensity and orderliness, the mechanistic perfection of the physical universe make the thought of God unnecessary. Thus, while science is revealing new universes and through the practical application of the discoveries of physics, chemistry, biology and preventive medicine is bringing in a new, material civilization the most resplendent which the world has seen, it is at the same time undermining for many the foundations of religious faith and the historic sanctions for the good life.

The conflict between science and religion is carried forward, in pulpit, in press, in university hall. What is to be done?

The Bahá'í Teachings present to our modern world the great harmonizing, synthesizing, uniting force, scientific and spiritual, for which we have been waiting. 'Abdu'l-Bahá proves the whole vast universe which science has discovered to be a new revelation of the existence and activity of God, the Ever-Living, the Omnipotent Mind, the Pure Creator.

Both science and religion are from the one Sun of Reality. When truly understood, together they flood the world with light upon light.

In his great Tablet to the distinguished scientific scholar of Switzerland Professor Auguste Henri Forel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá with triumphant scientific, spiritual logic proves the existence of God and the reality of the spirit. ... The *Star of the West* feels ... through earnest study of this ... great Tablet the student can grow more and more into an understanding of the magnificent philosophy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the scientific proofs of God's existence.

XIV:4, July 1923 [XIV:4:109]

The eternal witness

Compiled by Horace Holley

"This teaching of union has been lost in the world through long lapse of time, O consumer of the foe.

"This same immemorial teaching of union I have declared to thee today; for thou art my

beloved, my companion; and this secret doctrine is the most excellent treasure.

“Though I am the Unborn, the Soul that passes not away; though I am the Lord of beings, yet as Lord over my Nature I become manifest, through the magical power of the Soul.

“For whenever there is a withering of the Law, O son of Bharata, and an uprising of lawlessness on all sides, then I manifest Myself.

“For the salvation of the righteous, and the destruction of such as do evil; for the firm establishing of the Law I come to birth in age after age.”—*Krishna*.

“Why should I preserve this body of flesh, when the body of the excellent law will endure?

“I am not the first Buddha who came upon the earth, nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise in the world, a Holy One, a supremely enlightened One, endowed with wisdom in conduct, knowing the universe, an incomparable leader of men, a Master of angels and mortals. He will reveal to you the same truths which I have taught you. He will preach his religion, glorious in its origin, glorious at its climax, glorious at its goal, in the spirit and in the letter. He will proclaim a religious life, wholly perfect and pure, such as I now proclaim. His disciples will number many thousands, while mine number many hundreds.”—*Guatama Buddha*.

“There is a Creative Principle which is itself uncreated; there is a Principle of Change which is itself unchanging. The Uncreated is able to create life; the Unchanging is able to effect change. That which is produced cannot but continue producing; that which is evolved cannot but continue evolving. Hence there is constant production and constant evolution.

“The Unchanging goes to and fro, and its range is illimitable. We may surmise that it stands Alone, and that its Ways are inexhaustible.”—*Lao Tzu*.

“When through Me the sky arose from the substance of the ruby, without columns, on the spiritual support of far-encompassed light; when through Me the earth arose, which bore the material life, and there is no maintainer of the worldly creation but it; when by Me the sun and moon and stars are conducted in the firmament of luminous bodies; ... each one of them, when created by Me, was herein more difficult than causing the resurrection, for it is an assistance to Me in the resurrection that they exist, but when they were formed it was not forming the future out of the past.”—*Zoroaster*. [XIV:4:110]

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it; the glory (Bahá) of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the excellency of the Lord and the glory (Bahá) of our God.”—*Isaiah*.

“Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

“The words I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works.

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.”

“But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”—*Christ*.

“Messengers have already come unto you before me, with plain proofs and with the miracle

which ye mention; why, therefore, have ye slain them, if ye speak truth? ... I am the first Adam, Noah, Moses and Jesus.

“Think then not indeed that God fails in His promise to His apostles; verily, God is mighty, the Lord of vengeance; on the day when the earth shall be changed for another earth, and the heavens also; and all shall go forth unto God, the One, the Supreme.

“God is the light of heaven and earth the similitude of His light is a niche in a wall, wherein a lamp is placed, and the lamp enclosed in a case of glass; the glass appears as if it were a glistening star. It is lighted with the oil of a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East, nor of the West; it wanteth little but that the oil thereof would give light, although no fire toucheth it. This is light added unto light. God will direct unto His light whom He pleaseth.”—Muḥammad.

“Exalted and glorified is He above the power of any one to reveal Him except Himself, or the description of any of His creatures. I Myself am but the first servant to believe in Him and in His signs, and to partake of the sweet savours of His words from the first-fruits of the Paradise of His knowledge.”

“In the year nine ye will attain unto all good.”—*Báb*.¹

“The time of former things is past and a new time has become manifest, and all things are made new by the desire of God. But only a new eye can perceive and a new mind can comprehend this station. The Beginning and the End bore allusion to one blessed Word, and that hath come and is made manifest. That Word is the Soul of the divine books and epistles, which hath been and will be forevermore.

“In this Day the new heaven hath appeared and the earth is renewed. Were ye to behold with pure eyes, ye will see the New Jerusalem; and were ye to turn with attentive ears, ye will hear the voice of God.

“Are ye hidden from Myself because of My Name? What maketh ye to doubt? Ye have called for your Lord the self-dependent night and day, and when He hath come from the heaven of pre-existence in the greatest glory, ye have not approached Him, and were of the heedless.

“He who inviteth the people in My Name, he is of Me, and from him will appear that which will be beyond the power of all that is in the earth. Then follow the path of the Lord, and follow not the heedless. Blessed is the sleeping one who will awaken by these powers and will stand up among the dead, directing himself in the path of the Lord; verily, he is of the essence of the creatures before the True One; and verify, he is of those who have attained.”—*Bahá'u'lláh*.

“Each religion teaches that a media- [XIV:4:111] tor is necessary between man and the Creator—one who receives the full light of the divine splendour and radiates it over the human world, as the earth’s atmosphere receives and diffuses the warmth of the rays of the sun. This mediator between God and humanity has different designations, though he always brings the same spiritual commands. In one era he is called Abraham, in another time Moses, again he is called Buddha, another time Jesus, and yet another time Muḥammad. They have all turned to the divine reality for their strength. Those who followed Moses accepted him as the mediator; those who followed Zoroaster accepted him as their mediator; but all the Jews deny Zoroaster, and the Zoroastrians deny Moses. They fail to see in both the one reality. Had the Zoroastrians comprehended the reality of Zoroaster, they would have understood Moses and Jesus. Alas! the majority of men attach themselves to the name of the mediator and lose sight of the real purport.

¹ Báb in Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 141.

“Therefore did Bahá’u’lláh cry, ‘O God, deliver us from the sea of names!’ “Man must turn to the light and not think that the form of the lamp is the essential, for the lamp may be changed; but he who longs for light welcomes it from whatever lamp it shines. If the Jews had really understood Moses, they would have accepted the Christ; but they were occupied with the name, not the truth, and when that name was changed, they denied the reality.

“It is the same with the Christians today. What a pity that they are worshipping a title. They see only the garment. If one recognizes a king by his garments, one would not know him were he to assume a different garb.

“Who is the Christ? When one sees the Christ qualities shining from another lamp, one must recognize that light. We may say that this flower is exquisite; we must not say that it is the only beautiful one. Its perfections are of the divine bounty, a bounty that is universal and unlimited in its manifestations. The marvellous bounties of God are continuous. Should the outpouring of light be suspended, we would be in darkness. But how could it be withheld? If the divine graces are suspended, then divinity itself would be interrupted. Even men ask for continuity.

“We have eyes, and we desire eternal sight. Blindness is an imperfection. We have ears; deafness is a deficiency. As long as we consider these as imperfections in the human world, will they not be even greater defects when we consider the divine world? The bounty of God is without beginning and without end.

“We must adore the Sun of Reality, no matter from what horizon it may appear, rather than worship the horizon; for if we concentrate our attention upon one horizon, the Sun may arise from quite another point, and we consequently be deprived of the Sun’s bestowals. These benefactions are the bounty and guidance of God, the favour of God. This is spiritual progress.”—*‘Abdu’l-Bahá*.

XIV:4, July 1923 [XIV:4:116]

The coming universal society of nations¹

The supreme foundation of the city of the most great peace will, however, be unity of conscience among all people, a deep consciousness that they are all one family, one brotherhood. To strengthen this consciousness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, suggests that there should be universal education of the children of all nations, under a uniform educational curriculum. This curriculum would include the technical, scientific branches of material education, and it will continually train the children to realize the perils of war and the glory of peace. “You must sow the seeds of peace in the plastic minds of the children,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “Teach them the victories of peace. Surround them with the lessons of peace. Envelop them with the atmosphere of peace and inspire their hearts with the glorious achievements of peace. Let their food be peace, their vesture peace, their contemplation peace, their highest aspiration peace and the impelling purpose of their lives peace.” The new education in the oneness of mankind will need to utilize every means to establish in the hearts of the children the consciousness of universal brotherhood.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá also presents a solution of the economic problem by which poverty can be practically eliminated and economic strife resolved into co-operation and partnership, without violence, without changing the existing economic structure.

But the supreme power which changes the hearts of men and unites them into one brotherhood is religion. “Only through the power of the Holy Spirit,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “will the cause of universal peace be established in the world. There must needs be a divine, executive power to bring the self-seeking governments to the terms of universal brotherhood

¹ Extracts.

and conciliation. Nothing else will do it.”

“Not until the cause of universal peace becomes a personal religious conviction,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to some friends at Haifa, in June of 1919, “will it prove to be permanent. Diplomacy is impotent; the all-powerful Word of God must establish it and make it a living, potent and lasting factor in the world. Hearts must be purified and no trace of revenge, enmity and rancour must linger in any heart—until peace shall prove to be permanent.”—M.H.P.

XIV:4, July 1923 [XIV:4:118]

A portrait of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá¹

Story by the artist, Mr F. Carl Smith

“It has always remained a mystery to me how it came to pass that it was my special privilege to see and meet for the first time, in my own home, that universally known, that great spiritual soul, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

“I had heard a great deal about Bahá’u’lláh and his son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, through friends years ago in Paris, and afterwards in Washington, DC. Mr Charles Mason Remey, who had made a pilgrimage to ‘Akká, Syria, on his return had spoken of ‘the Master’s wonderful teachings and especially of the great light which shows in his eyes and upon which one could not gaze without feeling a sensation as of almost dazzling luminosity.’

“It was my good fortune to take the Mediterranean cruise in 1911, which included a visit to the Holy Land. While at Haifa, Syria, I thought of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and wondered just where he might be, for ‘Akká, the City of the Crusaders, lay some nine miles to the north of Haifa along the coast, ‘by the way of the sea’, and could be plainly seen in the distance. As we remained only one day in Haifa it was not possible to take the caravan trip to ‘Akká (the Achor of the Bible), so I spent the day in climbing Mount Carmel and making a sketch of it from the coast.

“Haifa became the home of the Master shortly after that time, and [XIV:4:119] since the war that part of the country is now included in Palestine.

“About a year later ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to America, and while he was in Washington, D.C., he made his headquarters at the home of Mr and Mrs Parsons, where he was a guest for some weeks. The home of Mr and Mrs Parsons was about two blocks from my studio. I was intensely eager to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and I asked his interpreter if it were possible to paint a portrait of him, but he replied that there would not be time.

“On the morning of 12 April, shortly after his arrival in Washington, I received word that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and his interpreters would stop at my studio, but only for a few minutes. I immediately prepared a canvas and had everything in readiness in case there might be prospects of a pose. However, just to see him was more than I had hoped or expected!

“All my nervous excitement passed away on seeing the Master, and my first impression was one of peace and good will, for he was like one of the family, so gentle and mild, and he showed such a kindly spirit. His first words were:

“‘It is so good to come into your home!’ He was interested in all he saw, and we immediately went into the studio where I had a chair placed for him in the proper light and asked if he would be seated. Then the Master said:

“‘Now this is as it should be. Here am I a Persian, and you an American. As a rule one nation despises another not of his own nationality; and here we are friends at first sight! That is as it should be—the world one brotherhood, loving one another!’

¹ Presented in an article by Nellie S. French. At that time the portrait was owned by Mrs H. Collins, Pasadena.

"I immediately began to sketch him as he was interested in what I was doing. Then I showed him a sketch of Mount Carmel, and he exclaimed:

"My beloved Mount Carmel! That was the view I had of it for many years in 'Akká!'

"By this time we had all forgotten our hurry and the pose lasted most of the morning. I seemed inspired while at work and I was amazed at the results, for I never had to touch the features again after that pose.

"During the morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke of his teachings and some of his words were interpreted. He said he believed in equality between men and women and in the oneness of mankind and of religion.

"After that morning I saw a great deal of the Master, for I went frequently to the various churches where he spoke. Also there were many gatherings at Mr and Mrs Parsons' home. I saw him later also, after his return to Washington from his western tour.

"Never shall I forget that experience and I am so happy to have had that wonderful privilege."

XIV:4, July 1923 [XIV:4:122]

A letter from Shoghi Effendi

To the beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful, throughout the City of New York, USA. Care of the members of the Spiritual Assembly.

Dear and faithful friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá!

The welcome letter which the members of your Spiritual Assembly have sent me is indeed a fresh and remarkable testimony of your wise, patient and persistent efforts to promote the Cause of God and deepen its foundations in the heart of that great city.

All throughout the various vicissitudes which the Movement has encountered during this past year of bereavement and uncertainty, the faithful lovers of the Master in New York have, by their wisdom in teaching, the range and character of their activities, their perseverance in their labours and their unity in service, proved themselves worthy of the blessings which our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá showered upon them during his repeated visits to their city. It is my earnest hope and prayer that now at this decisive hour of the Cause of God the friends may with clear vision and redoubled energy endeavour to deepen still further the essential truths of the Cause in their own lives, and then extend the sphere of their activity, endeavouring at all times to infuse the regenerating Spirit of Bahá'u'lláh into the divers communities, creeds and classes that are represented in that most cosmopolitan city of the American continent.

From the leaflets, the circular letter and the pamphlet enclosed in the letter of your Spiritual Assembly, I can see clearly how well you have undertaken the task of acquainting the intellectual and religious circles of your city with the Divine Teachings, how admirably you have co-ordinated your efforts for service and how beautifully you have immortalized the memory of the Beloved's sojourn in your midst.

As I have already intimated in my first letter to the National Spiritual Assembly, I shall be most pleased to receive from every Bahá'í centre throughout America regular and comprehensive reports on the position of the Cause and the activity of the friends. These I shall gladly transmit to the friends throughout the East, who in their present hour of restlessness and turmoil will, I am sure, be cheered to hear of the steady and peaceful growth of the Cause in your land. I have already shared the news you have conveyed to me with the resident friends in the Holy Land, and shall soon, by the aid of the Spiritual Assembly of Haifa, send them to the believers throughout the East.

Our departed Master, whose Call first awakened that city, who later visited it and with his own hands watered its soil, and who to his last hour bestowed his tenderest care upon it, is now, as ever before, watching from his Station on High the progress of the work which he has entrusted to you, his beloved children, ready to bless, guide and strengthen you in your efforts to achieve success for his Cause. [XIV:4:123]

Awaiting your joyful news, and wishing you from all my heart the highest success in all your endeavours,

I am your devoted brother,
(Signed) Shoghi.
Haifa, Palestine,
3 February 1923.

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:129]

Words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The spirit of the age demands the establishment of universal peace. No power on earth can stand before it. God has purposed that peace must reign in this age, and it will come to pass. Let the advocates of peace work with greater zeal and courage for the Lord of Hosts is their supporter.

In this radiant century and merciful age the ears are open, hearts awakened, eyes seeing, consciences stirred.

The age of estrangement has passed. The century of friendship has arrived. The dark hours have disappeared and the Orb of Unity has dawned. Now is the time to be illumined with the rays of the sun of the solidarity of the human race. This is the hour of self-sacrifice for the good of humanity.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The Sun of Universal Love hath dawned.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The banquet of friendship and divine association is spread.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The banner of the Kingdom of God is unfurled.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The heavenly spring hath appeared.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The cloud of Spiritual Grace is pouring down.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The trees of the orchard of humanity are verdant and a'bloom.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The Herald of the Kingdom hath become manifest.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The prophecies of the Holy Books have become fulfilled.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The age of human brotherhood is dawning upon mankind.

Glad Tidings! Glad Tidings! The century of light and universal peace hath come.

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:131]

Universal peace

Louis G. Gregory

Thoughts of universal peace are not new in the world. Outstanding thinkers and philosophers of the past have mentioned it with hope. Seers have visualized it. Bards have sung. Even statesmen of high rank have at times looked beyond the field of nationalism into the broader field of internationalism, with human welfare in mind. But it has remained for the Prophets of God, with the voice of authority, to promise this happy day of the realization of

universal peace.

As the world advances and people become more thoughtful, dissatisfaction with war as the solvent¹ of human problems grows apace. The arbitrament² of arms places right and wrong upon the same level.³ It stirs up the worst passions of human nature. It banishes judgement. It imbrutes⁴ the finer instincts of man. It is the sum of all calamities. War cripples commerce, impedes agriculture, lays waste cities, makes desolate homes, perverts science, suspends education, consumes wealth, vandalizes art, dethrones reason, degrades manhood, violates womanhood, deifies violence, abases morals, dispirits religion, blasphemes God. In wartime people worship the god of hate, however sacred the name by which they invoke him. To this idol they supplicate for confusion upon foes! To this creature of passion they return thanks when foes are destroyed! What has the God of love and mercy to do with all this? The god of hate is without ruth.⁵ Overnight he transforms men into fiends. People who under normal conditions are so gentle and kind that they avoid harming an ant, when war is on not only breathe out cruelty and slaughter against their fellow beings, but do not hesitate to desecrate the very sanctuary of God. Not the least of war's ills is the arrogance of the victor and the hatred of the vanquished. These spiritual distempers may endure for ages.

It must be conceded, however, that some good may come through warfare. But alas! How little is this when compared with the great good of settling the issues between nations upon the durable basis of justice, peace and arbitration! The good that is by comparison a modicum seems mainly to arise in spite of rather than because of, the terrific slaughter of humanity. Peace is life. War is death. Peace is heaven. War is hell. Pride, ignorance, jealousy, suspicion, fear and their ilk unite their hideous faces in the orgy of bloodshed. How long shall these guileful imps deceive the intelligence of mankind?

In the past, numberless cases can be cited of the futility of war to right wrongs or to improve conditions. The thirty years' war in Germany between [XIV:5:132] Catholics and Lutherans was so terrible that during this long period of suffering the population of that country was reduced from thirty million to five million souls. As fully five-sixths of the population was destroyed during this carnage, it is interesting to note the result. At the end of this bitter struggle both sides adhered to their respective faiths. The Catholics continued to be Catholics and the Protestants remained Protestants. The war changed no one's religion. But how frightful was the cost of this bitter hatred which remained to vex long after t[he] destruction [of] so many people

The war of a hundred years between England and France was equally fruitless of results. The English king was ambitious to rule France. Under English law his succession to the throne was justified. According to French law his right was barred. For a time he succeeded in imposing both himself and his dynasty upon France, only to invite the continual force of opposition. The end of a century of fighting saw the king of England confined to his own land and the king of France established upon his throne. For through the heroism of a woman, Joan of Arc, although French law debarred a woman from reigning in France, the French dynasty was restored and the foreign invaders expelled. Void was the effort for those who started it.

The wars between the West and East, known as the Crusades, covered more than two centuries. Their object, on the part of the Christians, was the delivery of Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslim, who were regarded as heathen and infidels. Seven efforts were made to conquer and hold Palestine, netting a total failure. But the terrible acts of the invaders

¹ Solvent: something that solves or explains; solution.

² Arbitrament: the settling of a dispute by an arbitrator.

³ Sentence meaning unclear.

⁴ Imbrute: to make or become brutal.

⁵ Ruth: [now rare]—1. pity; compassion or 2. sorrow; grief; remorse.

reflected the savagery of the dark ages, to which they belonged. Had these ignorant people, who called themselves Christians, paused to investigate the Muslim faith, they would have discovered that the people of Islám had not only the greatest love and reverence for Christ, but in the practice of the religion which their Prophet, Muḥammad taught them they had attained a civilization far superior to the people of Europe, whose religion had then lapsed into idolatry and their civilization into barbarism. But the recent hatreds of the Cross and Crescent for each other are the heritage of those bitter memories.

The world has stood aghast at the terrific losses of the world war.¹ Huge natural resources were destroyed. A vast area was reduced to ruins and shambles. Countless families were reduced to homelessness, beggary and starvation, about \$358,000,000,000 in wealth and treasure was consumed, and approximately 30,000,000 lives were prematurely cut off. After four years Europe is still on the verge of collapse and the whole world still feels the effects of war. One of the delusive claims made for the war was that it would destroy militarism. With more men now under arms in Europe than at the outbreak of the great war nine years ago, with the powers scrapping only a few of their armaments, with the preparation of poisonous gases and great fleets of destructive aeroplanes, this aim is far from being realized. But perhaps we have now dwelt long enough with shadows to prove that force and violence accomplish no lasting results. Can the realm of humanity survive another war?

Let us turn to the armies of peace. Day by day these shining ranks increase in numbers and power. Theirs is the assurance that in the end, victory will adorn their banners. Among the great forces mobilized in this cause is that of popular education. The training of the masses to think for themselves and the diffusion of knowledge will become more and more a deterrent to warfare. If the few people who bring on a war were the only ones to do the fighting, all wars would be of short duration. It is necessary for the people to discern the motives of those who would stir up their passions and exploit their prejudices for personal and selfish ends. The limelight of knowledge will expose these sordid interests, [XIV:5:133] which would impoverish the many to enrich the few. The killing of a human being is at any time a most serious offence, among civilized people. But the killing of millions, perhaps to avenge the deaths of a few, seems not only a great calamity but amazing folly. The righteousness of peace, the criminality of war, will more and more challenge the intelligence of the world. Especially is this appeal to the rising generation; the children in schools, the students in the universities. Dispassionate thinking and common sense are needed to prevent a return of the horrors of the past.

Another sign of universal peace is the growing freedom and influence of women. It is to the eternal glory of that sex that rarely in human history have they lent their powers to the killing of their fellow beings. Their benign influence, through fine intuitions and tender hearts, is cast on the side of life and construction, peace and healing. Happily there is now a growing tendency on the part of the governments of the world to give to women representation in their councils. These helpers are producing from their ranks many brilliant advocates of peace. Their logic is so incisive, their eloquence so appealing, their vision so large, that men listen to them with attention and admiration. From among many of these peace advocates two are mentioned, representing, respectively, the East and the West.

About the middle of the last century Qurratu'l-'Ayn arose in Persia. Through the Báb and her training as his disciple, she perceived that a new day of ideal brotherhood and peace had dawned for all humanity. Her powers included personal charm, great natural gifts cultivated by study and a heart purified by divine love. These she dedicated to the evangel of Truth. She stood for the freedom of women and for the harmony of the world. Her inspired eloquence attracted many to the standard of peace. She travelled from city to city, suffering with serene

¹ World War I.

composure every difficulty from the persecution of benighted and ignorant foes. After years of exalted service, her life was victoriously sacrificed for the truth she espoused. Men of many nations today are thrilled as they read of her wonderful life and character. Today her traces are visible in every reform looking toward the elevation of women, international peace and the harmony of life. She is easily one of the foremost characters of all time.

Another shining example of the brilliant advocate of peace is Justice Florence Allen, of the Supreme Court of Ohio. One passing through Ohio will find the women and the wise men all behind her with their support and very proud of her. No doubt she is destined for even greater honours than those to which merit has already called her. Not only is she a great jurist, but she shows the powers of an international statesman of the highest rank. Nor is the womanly sweetness lacking withal. Her arguments for international peace are so noted for sound logic, array of facts, choice diction, power of analysis, nobility of purpose and moral enthusiasm as to be rarely equalled in the arena of discussion. After this remarkable young woman has spoken, the impression of her hearers is that naught remains to be said. It is inconceivable that an advocate of war can answer her arguments. These are signs that the ranks of women, increasing in potency, are marching toward peace. When they once highly resolve, who can impede their progress?

A third division of the army of peace is the working people of the nations. The farmers in the rural districts and the industrial workers in cities have discovered a common interest. This bond of unity is being extended so as to include the labourers and farmers of all countries. These co-operative societies are a powerful influence for peace among the nations of the earth. It is astonishing how these co-operative societies have grown both at home and abroad. Through co-operation they are building their own [XIV:5:134] mills, factories, banks, etc., hoping, as one of their leaders recently said, "To build a new world in which service and not greed is the mainspring of human action and in which gain without labour shall no longer exist." As the losses of warfare are borne chiefly by the workers and those who suffer upon gory fields are likewise drawn from these classes, they naturally begin to think soberly of peace. Perhaps their thoughts will inspire even those who in the past have exploited them, to be less eager for the gain which means spiritual loss. It is certain that their influence will be felt.

But how can universal peace, in a rational, effective and stable way, be realized? How can the nations keep peace? How can the continents be peaceful? How can the races enter a durable bond of peace? For there must be laws as well as sentiments to maintain peace.

This is truly the greatest thought of today. It appeals to all noble natures. And now comes the publicist and humanitarian, Edward W. Bok, offering a prize of \$100,000 for the best essay, unfolding the most practical basis for this nation to enter into a union of durable peace with the other nations of the earth. This is indeed one of the hopeful signs of the times.

The wise men of the world, its statesmen and philanthropists, may well at this time study the luminous text of Bahá'u'lláh and the brilliant Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, for therein they will find all their questions answered and the heavenly manna of peace offered, now as of old, "without money and without price".

First of all, there must be an improvement in the character and attainments of men selected for high positions. Ignorance of leaders has ever been a bar—sinister to human advancement. In public life among all the nations, there is the greatest demand for leaders who are just, noble, self-sacrificing, free from prejudices, learned in the sciences and arts, informed about both national and international affairs and having minds that expand with universal intelligence. Such pure servants will not only work for peace, but will adopt the means provided in the Sacred Writings for the realization thereof. The great international Tribunal which is to be the permanent foundation of peace must be a fortress of justice. It must be

more than a loose agreement among some of the nations, so that it may not when a crisis comes, as the Hague Tribunal, ingloriously fail. It must include the representatives of all nations and be supported by all peoples. The nations, unitedly and of one accord, must resign to it so much of their powers as will give to it executory authority, enabling it to enforce its decrees. The majestic might of all the rulers must uphold it. Bahá'u'lláh calls the kings to unity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in his wonderful volume, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, reveals the following plan:

“True civilization will unfurl its banner in the mid-most heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking—the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world—should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all [XIV:5:135] international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.

“Observe that if such a happy situation be forthcoming, no government would need continually to pile up the weapons of war, nor feel itself obliged to produce ever new military weapons with which to conquer the human race. A small force for the purposes of internal security, the correction of criminal and disorderly elements and the prevention of local disturbances, would be required—no more.”¹

It is for the lovers of peace to consider its inner as well as outer aspects. The universal treaty, the arbitral House of Justice and the federation of the world, however well organized, can never endure without the confirmation of the spiritual power. Without this mystic power, man will speedily return to the depths of ignorance, vibrating upon the animal plane. The animal plane is ever dark and selfish and heedless of the commonweal. But the Holy Spirit rectifies human nature. It changes the satanic works of men into angelic deeds. It converts self-seeking into self-sacrifice. It transforms narrowness into universality. It creates the oneness of humanity. It expands national love into world patriotism.

Those who follow in the footsteps of the lowly Nazarene, of whom there are still, happily, a few in the world, readily think and act human brotherhood, whether the point of contact be the native or the alien, the mighty or the weak, the learned or the ignorant. The creative Breathings of Christ, in the early centuries of the Christian era, established unity among various races and nations, through the power of his Word. His prayer for the descent of the Father's Kingdom is now happily realized. The followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the world

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 64-65.

today are potentially the world's federation. Through the power of the creative Word, as revealed by him, they have abandoned racial, religious and national bias. Their ideals are pure, their sympathies are broad, their hearts are universal. Trained by the lives and precepts of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the universal educators, they in turn strive to guide the people of the world. Because their hearts are at peace and their spirits rejoice, they are the cause of peace and joy to others. On every continent, amongst all races, in every religion, these people are found. They seek to serve. They believe in one God and one humanity. Under the banner of Divine Love they point all mankind to the great, abiding and perfect peace.

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:136]

The call to the oneness of mankind

From an address by Jináb-i-Ávárih in London

In 1911–1913 His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was the exponent of the teachings of his father, Bahá'u'lláh, travelled extensively in Europe and America. In churches and audience halls, in America, especially, he gave long, important addresses. These addresses were translated into many languages and were spread broadcast. Those who saw him at that time can remember how impressive was his personality; and it may be that that sweet voice which spoke of the oneness of the world of humanity can be heard by the ears of the friends even today.

Because His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá worked in reality for the service of the world of humanity, therefore his teachings had a marked effect in each part of the world, and he left in the hearts of his loved ones, those who were affected by his teachings, a peculiar love and affection.

'Abdu'l-Bahá worked very hard for the oneness of the world of humanity. For forty years he was imprisoned in the barracks and fortress of 'Akká, Palestine, where the climate was the worst that could be imagined. After that, he travelled across the sea, to America and Europe. For three years he travelled. He gave to the world the principles of Bahá'u'lláh.

Now it is as though 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks to us, saying, "In 1911, in 1912 and 1913 I invited you all to universal peace and to the oneness of the world of humanity. In America, repeatedly I said, ere long the world war will appear, nay rather, my words and writings as published in papers and books exist today, in which I said, Europe has become an arsenal. This war will break forth from one spark. The well wishers of the world must work for universal peace; they must establish a court of universal international arbitration. They must lay aside superstitions and limitations, so that no religious, racial superstitions, or political or patriotic prejudices exist. The great ones of the earth should look upon mankind with a single eye, so that the world may become at peace, and may rest at ease."

The spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is calling from the worlds of the Kingdom, "O ye people of the world! has there not been enough of these wars and strifes, this restlessness and enmity? Surely there has been enough. How long must the innocent ones be killed in battle? How long must mothers lament their children? And how long must fathers cry and lament? Is not this bloodthirsty earth yet satisfied with the blood of the youth of the world? Must this bloodshed, and these sanguinary conditions still go on? Will the world continue at war?"

"God has created the world for all people. O children of humanity! be kind to one another. Do not see any strangeness in one another. Consider this word which His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh spoke sixty years ago: 'O people of the world! Ye are all the leaves of one tree, the fruit of one branch, the drops of one sea.'"

Perhaps, still, that melodious voice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is sounding in the ears of those that search for the truth and who say the time for superstition has passed away, the time of

illumination has come, the whole of mankind must be servants of humanity (servants of one another).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say that the members of all nations and religions were from God, that all religions have come for the training of mankind, all have come for the unity of hearts and for the showing forth of affection, one [XIV:5:137] toward another, and, because the truth of all religions is one, all the prophet praised God, all the religions worshipped one God, the prophets are from one Reality.

We must hold to reality, and set aside the superstitions which have crept in.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say we should not have prejudice, saying, “I am a Christian, I am a Jew, etc., I am of the West and this one is of the East, or, I am an American and that one an European. Nay rather, we should say that we are all children of Adam and sisters and brothers of each other.” How much ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wished that there might be unity between the coloured and white races, between the East and the West. He repeatedly said, do the white doves and the black doves fight each other? Do the Western sheep and the Eastern sheep contend with each other? No, God forbid, they are rather in utmost love and friendship with one another, because they are of the gentle creatures. Fighting, quarrelling and strangeness are found among the ferocious creatures. How can man, who is the best of created beings, become involved in such a state!

Is it not good economics that the money spent in wars and destruction be expended instead in promoting and developing human welfare and in improving the conditions of life? Is it not good economics that we should gather together our strength and might to bring forth those treasures which are hid in the earth, and then use them for the betterment of humanity?

But the teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are many. The whole of Persia was too small to contain such a precious jewel as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. When a pearl is in a shell gradually it grows and grows until the shell cannot contain the pearl. Then the shell breaks and throws out the pearl because the shell has not the capacity to hold it. In the same way; Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were the two precious pearls of whom Persia formed the shell, but that shell was small and could not keep these precious pearls; therefore it broke and threw them forth.

Although the exile to Baghdád, to Constantinople, to Adrianople and to ‘Akká was an act of great oppression, yet there was great good in it, for the teachings of those souls were more widely spread in the world. This is why, repeatedly, both Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said they were happy and glad because of their imprisonment and exile.

We said that Persia was too small to hold these precious jewels, yet we must remember the high attainments of that land, for the learned ones of the world know that that land has brought forth great men, philosophers, poets and leaders, nay more, in ancient times Persia had seers like Mahábád and Zoroaster. And in this century, although the civilization and progress of that country have declined, she can now be proud of these jewels, the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Persia can say, “O people of the world! God still is with me; truth has not turned its face away from me!

“It is my horizon, shining brilliantly, which gives forth light to all the world.”

The husband of my sister’s daughter had been martyred, one of eighty-four persons who were martyred together, in Yazd, in 1903. The young man was twenty-five years old. His mother had only this one boy. She gathered up and brought all her money to the executioners and begged them to take it and not to kill her boy. They took the money from her, then shot the boy before her eyes.

About a month afterward a Tablet was revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, without anyone’s having written to tell him of what had happened. The Tablet came through me to the wife of the

young man:

“O thou persecuted hand-maiden of God!

“Although rich women may be brought up in utmost ease and comfort and luxury, yet at last that comfort and ease will be buried in the dust, in the narrow grave, in a dark place. [XIV:5:138]

“The ease of the day will pass away, and the happiness of the evening be spent. But in reality and in truth the hand-maidens who have entered the Divine Path, though they receive persecution, trouble and martyrdom, and see their loved ones persecuted, and drowned in their blood, their end will be everlasting glory and their home eternal.

“Then be thou not sad that thou hast sacrificed thy husband in the path of the beloved of the Lord, that illumined youth whom thou didst see immersed in blood, and in the dust. That was not death, it was life. It was not annihilation, it was existence itself. It was not calamity, it was divine grace. Then praise thou God that thou hast reached such a station and that thou hast come to such a position. Ere long the world and whatsoever is therein will pass away; but the traces of the martyrs in the path of God will remain forever. This world will become a paradise, this world will be seen as heavenly, and the station of these souls will become apparent and known.

“Upon thee be greeting and praise.”

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:138]

The wonderful life of Qurratu'l-'Ayn

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

“The appearance of such a woman as Qurratu'l-'Ayn is in any country and any age a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Persia, it is a prodigy—nay, almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her marvellous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence, her fearless devotion and her glorious martyrdom, she stands forth incomparable and immortal amidst her countrywomen. Had the Bábí religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient—that it Produced a heroine like Qurratu'l-'Ayn.”—Prof. E. G. Browne, of Cambridge University, England.

One of the great principles of the Bahá'í Cause is the progress of woman and equality between men and women. When we speak of equality between men and women many people think that this idea is not new. But it was new at the beginning of this Cause and came from it. It was so new and so important that it was one of the greatest signs of the progress of this age. No one had ever conceived of this idea of equality; nothing definite concerning it was written in any religious book of any age, and some people have even thought that the opposite was taught.

Many women of the early period of the Cause in the Eastern countries rose like flames of fire, like the stars of God. Even in the Occident accounts were written of one of them, Qurratu'l-'Ayn. Her history is very long and interesting. Her sublime faith, her lofty thought, her ardent work and service were truly a great miracle. She was indeed a woman whose equal is seldom found in the history of mankind. Her name, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, means “Consolation of the Eyes”. This title was hers because in knowledge, in sagacity, in radiance of soul and spirit, she was unique among the women of her country. She was a great and illumined soul who shone at the beginning of the Bahá'í movement, eighty years ago.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn's father and uncle were members of the clergy of Persia, and were conspicuous for their dogmatic beliefs. Her great uncle, especially, was a bitter enemy of the Cause. She and her sister were trained, in their home, by their father and uncles, according to the education of that time, scientific, literary and religious. But Qurratu'l-'Ayn hungered for

greater knowledge; she was never satisfied with the education which her father and uncles could give her and she finally left her native city to study [XIV:5:139] in a theological institution which was a centre of religious education.

Women at that time were not supposed to leave their homes to further their education, nor were they supposed to go to other cities in search of the knowledge of God. But Qurratu'l-'Ayn was graduated from the seminary, and received a diploma. This was contrary to the custom—to give a woman a diploma in theology—and up to that time men only had received them. But Qurratu'l-'Ayn's attainments were so extraordinary that they were obliged to give her a diploma.

She then returned home, and married the son of her uncle. Difficulties now arose, for she was very brilliant, very illumined, and her husband was a reactionary leader. She was much esteemed, and at whatever gathering she appeared she spoke upon profound religious subjects. She was a gifted poet and wrote in both Persian and Arabic poetry of a very high order. She had two sons and one daughter.

The Bahá'í Movement had not as yet arisen, but the minds and the hearts of the people were awakening and becoming ready for this Cause. Qurratu'l-'Ayn was still so eager for spiritual knowledge that she left her home and family to study a second time at the religious centre. She spent much time in meditation and supplication, and received inspiration from God. From her deep study she understood that God was about to manifest Himself again, and she was very anxious to meet and speak with the Manifestation. Continually she talked of this, teaching the people and telling them that He would arise. There were several other great and illumined souls who, also, knew that the Light of God was about to appear. They tried to find the Manifestation, seeking diligently from city to city for the Light of God. Qurratu'l-'Ayn was, herself, not permitted to travel, but she asked them to notify her when they found the Divine One. After some time spent in travelling at last, in the year 1844, they found His Holiness the Báb. They recognized his station and understood that he was the morning star in the early dawn of this great Day. Filled with this knowledge they wrote to Qurratu'l-'Ayn.

One night Qurratu'l-'Ayn had a vision. A beautiful being, with illumined face, and wearing a green turban, stood between earth and heaven, praying in new words, with a new meaning, a prayer she had never heard before. When she awoke she remembered the prayer he had chanted and wrote it down. She was waiting for news of this heavenly being when those other great souls met the Báb and wrote to her of him. They sent her several lines from the early writings of the Báb; these lines were exactly the same as those which she had heard in her dream. She became aflame with interest, and sought eagerly for further news of His Holiness the Báb.

One of those early disciples of the Báb was sent by him to the city where Qurratu'l-'Ayn lived and studied in order to work with her. The Báb soon wrote an epistle to the head of the faculty at the theological centre, revealing to him the Glad Tidings. This epistle was given to this disciple and to Qurratu'l-'Ayn. In it the Báb said: "If you have spiritual insight you will know that this is the Word of God. If you can distinguish the Word of God from human thought, you will know that this is the truth. If, with the knowledge you possess, you are not sure, after studying together you must pray and God will send a sign to make clear the truth."

They went to the head of the theological institution and gave him the message; and the news of the Cause spread in that city. Some of the people believed. But many of the mullás did not, and arose in opposition.

One day Qurratu'l-'Ayn while talking of the Cause at the home of a woman believer, knew intuitively, all at once, that difficulties had arisen, and she said, "I must go home." Soon after she had [XIV:5:140] left enemies surrounded the house and took the believer prisoner,

thinking her to be Qurratu'l-'Ayn. They inflicted injuries upon her, but she was happy to bear them. As they carried her through the city, surrounded by enemies, a man, who knew her, told the captors that she was not Qurratu'l-'Ayn whereupon they set her free. After this Qurratu'l-'Ayn went to these enemies and said, "I am Qurratu'l-'Ayn What do you wish?" They took her and banished her with her friends to Baghdád.

In Baghdád she was placed, under Government guard, in the house of a leading muftí.¹ The Governor of the city declared, "I cannot understand this matter for I do not know enough about this religion. We will call a meeting of the mullás and question her."

When this was done, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, being a woman, could not come into the presence of the mullás, but must remain behind a curtain. From that place she gave the message with great power. Many people were present and they asked many questions, to all of which she gave answers which were in accordance with religious and scientific knowledge. Those who listened were completely satisfied and many believed her, realizing that she had profound spiritual insight. A Jew, who was present, became a believer because of her explanations. He recognized in her words the knowledge of God. The muftí of the city also became greatly attracted to the teachings.

The Governor of Baghdád finally exiled her with the friends who came with her. But wherever they went they gave the message and awakened the people. They would enter a city, go to a large house, and invite everyone to come and listen to them. Then, in a few days, the enemies would band together and wreck the house in order to break up the meetings. The Governor would then command Qurratu'l-'Ayn to leave the city. On one occasion, when they had been driven quite a distance from the city—there were no trains—the driver left Qurratu'l-'Ayn and her companions in the desert, taking the horses with him that there might be no means of escape. Qurratu'l-'Ayn wrote an eloquent letter which one of the men of the party carried back to the city. The heart of the Governor was touched when he read this letter and he sent a horse and donkeys to carry them on. Thus Qurratu'l-'Ayn overcame all manner of difficulties.

When she returned to her native city she was opposed by all her relatives, and was made practically a prisoner in her own home. Every day and night these relatives met to question her, but they could not confound her, she was so much better informed than they. Her uncle said, "If you told us you were a Manifestation we would believe it because you have such great knowledge; but when you tell us that a young man without education is the Manifestation we cannot believe it." She told them that earthly knowledge is but a drop from the unlimited ocean of the revelation of God.

While these events were taking place the Báb was a prisoner on the top of a high mountain, in the extreme end of western Persia. He was surrounded by Persian guards and cut off from all communication with his followers. Although his jailers were very vigilant and tried in every way to prevent his disciples from seeing him, yet the friends of the Báb came to the castle where he was imprisoned from every direction, travelling from the north, south, east and west, and by many ingenious ways met him, received his blessing and returned home.

There were many apostles of the Báb who were highly trained in deep spiritual knowledge. They were busy heralding in every way the new day and the coming of the new truth.

While Qurratu'l-'Ayn was a prisoner in her own home, a disciple of the Báb appeared in the city of Qazvín, and started a class for the study of these spiritual teachings, giving the New Mes- [XIV:5:141] sage. Through the patience and fortitude of Qurratu'l-'Ayn in teaching the Cause, and the spreading of the Message by this follower of the Báb, many people became believers, and the fire of opposition was kindled among the Muslim clergy. The great uncle of

¹ Muftí: The religious head of a Muslim community.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn, seized this moment to rise in the mosque and speak against the Báb, thus still further augmenting the opposition. These vehement speeches so inflamed the animosity against the believers that they were scoffed at and derided everywhere.

On one occasion a fanatical mob took one of the teachers and a few others to the gate of the house of this great uncle of Qurratu'l-'Ayn bastinadoed them, and there left them. Another believer was beaten almost to death, and then carried to the house of the Governor. When his brother went to ask for the release of the tortured one the Governor answered by placing a foot of each in the stocks, and beating them mercilessly.

One may imagine how Qurratu'l-'Ayn in her home, felt when she heard of these deeds. Although her relatives tried in every way to prevent her from leaving the house yet she managed to meet the friends, in a home where the pilgrims gathered who had visited the Báb. They met together with greatest unity and joy, encouraged each other, and gained wisdom and strength.

Two great difficulties now arose for Qurratu'l-'Ayn, one within the Cause, one without. Through her intuitive wisdom she realized that the day had come when the old dispensation should end and though she had had no direct instruction from the Báb, she herself began to inaugurate changes and to spread them abroad. It was in the earliest days of the Cause and the time had not yet come for the Báb to announce these innovations, for the hearts of the people were not ready.

One of the pillars of superstition was the veiling of Muslim women and their non-association with men. Qurratu'l-'Ayn with supreme courage, laid aside her veil, and came out heroically to mingle with men. There were many of the friends who were strong and sincere, but, having heard or read nothing on this matter (of the veil) from the Báb, they were shocked and astonished and they blamed Qurratu'l-'Ayn, calling her a heretic. Then it occurred to them to ask the Báb what he thought about the matter. They forthwith sent him, by a special messenger, long epistles against Qurratu'l-'Ayn. On the way the messenger met a prominent believer and told him of this difficulty in the movement. The great man said, "I believe that Qurratu'l-'Ayn is right, although I have no authority for saying so."

When the Báb received these documents he wrote a wonderful epistle, praising the extraordinary qualities of Qurratu'l-'Ayn and calling her "The Pure One". When this glorious epistle arrived all the doubts of the friends disappeared and an understanding of the greatness of Qurratu'l-'Ayn grew in the minds of those who had judged her.

The other difficulty was this: the great uncle of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, he who was so opposed to the Cause, had the habit of reviling in public meetings, the Báb and the forerunner of the Báb, Shaykh Ahmad. At one of these meetings a disciple of Shaykh Ahmad, who loved him very much, was in the audience and he became very much excited when Shaykh Ahmad was attacked. So one morning, when the uncle was praying in the mosque, this disciple killed him. Although the murderer was not a follower of the Cause, but of Shaykh Ahmad, yet, because this Shaykh had foretold the coming of the Báb, the whole city arose, blaming the friends of the Báb. The mob attacked and pillaged the homes of the believers, imprisoning them and putting chains around their necks; and it was decided that Qurratu'l-'Ayn must be placed in still closer confinement.

The father of Qurratu'l-'Ayn at first held the mob at bay before his house, and tried to save her. But he was soon [XIV:5:142] overcome and they rushed in, took her with two other women, and carried her before the Governor of the town. The Governor questioned them minutely about the murder and Qurratu'l-'Ayn with the greatest eloquence explained that the Bábís had had nothing to do with it. The Governor, however, was not appeased, and he had hot irons brought to brand the women who were with Qurratu'l-'Ayn to compel them to tell a

different story. Qurratu'l-'Ayn turned her face toward heaven and began to pray. The court was filled with curious spectators, all watching eagerly this terrible deed.

Just as the burning iron touched the hand of one of the women there arose a commotion at the back of the court, the people crying out that the murderer had been found. He had heard what was being done to the women, and his conscience caused him to confess. So he asked to be taken to the Governor. This confession was such an unheard-of occurrence that the people were incredulous, but he said, "If you do not believe me, I will dig up the dagger that you may see it." He showed them where to find the dagger, and they were convinced.

The persecutions of Qurratu'l-'Ayn continued, and a number of the friends were taken, with the murderer who had confessed, to Ṭīhrán, the capital of Persia. They were all kept prisoners for several months, and then the command came to execute several of them. The relatives and family of Qurratu'l-'Ayn so hated her that they tried in every way to injure her and her followers. The Governor at last set her free, but ordered her to stay in her own home and not to go out. This she did for a long time, always closely guarded. Fearful lest her food be poisoned some of the friends, in the guise of servants, took special dishes to her. She lived, thus, in close confinement, until released by Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh, in Ṭīhrán, sent a letter to Qazvín to Qurratu'l-'Ayn by special messengers who brought a horse and left it outside the city wall. The messengers entered the city at sunset and were taken secretly to Qurratu'l-'Ayn in the middle of the night. She escaped from her house and the city with them, mounted the horse which was waiting for her and, travelling day and night, reached Ṭīhrán. With greatest joy she stood in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.

Of the two men who accompanied her in her flight from Qazvín one was a believer and the other was not. Bahá'u'lláh entrusted to this second escort a large sum of money; this he was to carry in his saddle bag. The money was in gold and silver and the man reasoned with himself that it would be safer to put the silver pieces on top; then if robbers attacked him they would take the silver and leave the gold. When they reached their journey's end Qurratu'l-'Ayn expressed great appreciation of his services and, without looking at the money, took nine handfuls from the bag and gave them to the man. She picked up the silver pieces as they were on top, and he was disappointed. Surmising this Qurratu'l-'Ayn said to him, "You will prosper greatly in the future. This money is but for the expenses of the journey. God will bless you."

In the absence of this man the enemies of the Cause stirred up the people against the believers and, knowing this man to be friendly to them they searched for him. However, upon his return, the search was discontinued, in almost miraculous fashion. The man then realized the truth of what Qurratu'l-'Ayn had told him. Later he became very rich.

During these days there were many meetings of great spiritual importance, the friends sitting at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh and learning new truths. One day, at one of these meetings a very learned man was present. He discoursed upon philosophy, giving proofs and evidences regarding the Cause. Qurratu'l-'Ayn listened for a while, then arose, and cried out, "This is the day of deeds. If thou art a man show forth deeds!" [XIV:5:143]

Again, there was a great meeting, where many of the friends were gathered, (The Conference at Badasht). Up to that time women had taken no part in such a meeting; the veil was still worn, and prejudice was strong. In the middle of the meeting Qurratu'l-'Ayn entered, suddenly, without her veil. The believers were utterly astonished, and much excited, and the meeting was thrown into confusion. Then Bahá'u'lláh, who was present, told one of the friends to chant the chapter from the Qur'án about the Resurrection: "The old conditions have passed away and the new conditions have been set up. The old ideas have vanished and the new principles have appeared."

After this Conference Qurratu'l-'Ayn started upon a long journey, teaching from city to city.

She was continually followed by spies who sought a pretext to accuse her. Finally she was arrested, carried back to Ṭīhrán, and imprisoned in the top of a house, in a room which could only be reached by climbing a ladder. Here she was kept for nearly four years. It so happened that this house was the home of the Mayor of Ṭīhrán. His family became interested in Qurratu'l-'Ayn and often invited her to, come down stairs and take part in their entertainments.

One of these occasions was the wedding of the son of the Mayor, and Qurratu'l-'Ayn was invited to be a guest. Now a wedding day is a time of merry making and not a religious festival; so there was music and dancing. But when Qurratu'l-'Ayn appeared, with majestic carriage and spiritual face, the assembled company looked upon her with awe and asked her to speak to them. She talked eloquently upon the Cause and its teachings of justice.

Shortly before her life was ended Qurratu'l-'Ayn was ordered to appear before the Sháh of Persia, an awe-inspiring despot. He had heard many tales of her, of her wonderful personality and magnetic powers which could win the hearts of her enemies even. So he wished to see her.

When she arrived at the audience room the Sháh was there surrounded with all the pomp of his high position. In she walked, carrying herself straight as an arrow, and began to speak to the Sháh of the great spiritual principles of the Cause. He became so interested because of her beauty, eloquence and depth of knowledge that his mother feared lest he be converted; so she called the guards to remove Qurratu'l-'Ayn.

In the year 1852 orders were given by the Sháh that all the believers be killed, and the life of Qurratu'l-'Ayn was demanded. On the day appointed, the first man assigned the task of martyring her refused to perpetrate the deed. A second man was then sent. He was intoxicated and strangled her with a handkerchief; then he threw her body into a well and covered it with stones.

So she gave up her life, and her spirit ascended to the Kingdom. Though her body returned to the dust, yet her light is ever shining; she is living always. Her name and her services are eternal.

A large volume might be written of the life of this peerless woman. In the history of the world there are few like her. Educated and beautiful, a gifted poet, she was still willing to sacrifice all, even her life, for the sake of truth, that through the spreading of truth the world of humanity might become enlightened.

When Qurratu'l-'Ayn was in prison the jailers refused to give her paper and ink. But so eager was she to write to her sister that she used a straw from the broom for a pen and the juice of green vegetables as ink. She wrote thrilling poems, sublime ideas, eloquent verses on the bits of paper which were wrapped around her food and sent them to her friends. These poems are today chanted throughout the East. Her verses are full of the fire of divine love.

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:144]

The spirit of the century

[XIV:5:146]

In a Tablet to Mr Arthur S. Agnew, of Chicago (1907), 'Abdu'l-Bahá outlines in a few luminous sentences the way in which the coming spiritual civilization will become the real preventive of crime:

“As to the difference between the natural civilization which is, in the present day, in force, and the divine civilization which shall be, ... material civilization prevents and safeguards people from committing evil deeds through the force of the laws of retaliation and correction.

Thus you see how prohibitory laws and rules of correction are constantly being framed, yet no law effective 'for the prevention of crime is to be found, and in all the cities of Europe and America spacious prison buildings have been founded and established for correcting and punishing criminals.

"But the divine civilization will so train mankind that no soul will commit crimes, except a few individuals, which exception is of no importance whatsoever. Consequently, there is much difference between preventing people from evil actions and crimes through correction and retaliation, or through violent punishment, and so training them, enlightening them and spiritualizing them that they will shun crime and evil deeds without any fear of punishment, prevention or retaliation. Nay, they will consider crime itself as the greatest punishment and mightiest retribution, will be attracted to the virtues of the human world and devotedly spend their lives in that which is conducive to the enlightenment of mankind and to spreading qualities acceptable at the threshold of the Almighty.

"Consequently, consider what a difference and distinction is there between material civilization and divine civilization. Natural civilization prevents men from doing harm and wrong through force and punishment and thus withholds them from committing crimes. But divine civilization so trains men that human individuals avoid sin without having any fear of punishment, and the very sin itself becomes unto them as the severest punishment. And they will engage with utmost zeal and fervor in acquiring human virtues, gaining that by which mankind will be uplifted and that which will enlighten the human world."

The problem of law enforcement

Thirteen hundred years ago, in the Arabian Desert among a group of savage people so degraded that they buried alive their daughters, there arose a prophet of God, named Muḥammad. One of the laws which he transmitted from the heaven of the Divine Will was that of abstinence from alcoholic liquors.

For over a thousand years the millions of his true followers have refrained from the drinking of wine. One of our American university presidents, in a tour around the world some years ago, remarked upon the striking absence of drunkenness in all the Muslim cities which he visited.

Thirteen hundred years later the voters of the United States passed a prohibition law and, to make it adamant and everlasting, incorporated it in the Constitution itself. Yet all the authorities of this, one of the strongest nations of the world, are unable really to enforce this law.

The only authority that can truly establish a law is the conscience of a people. The outer authorities cannot watch all the multitudes every moment. The secret, hidden infractions of a law they can never prevent. But if the conscience of a people recognizes an ordinance as the will of God, they will obey it. For God is Almighty, Ever-Present. He sees the inmost heart. By His divine justice He [XIV:5:147] punishes and rewards not only deeds but thoughts and motives. Once the love and the fear of God arise in the hearts of a people and they behold a law as the will of their Eternal Beloved, they will obey it. Even the flames at the stake cannot prevent that obedience.

This is the record of all human history, that the Great Prophets transmit this love for God and His commandments: They are the mouth-pieces of God, the Manifestations of God. "For the law of God is a collective centre which unites various peoples, native lands, tongues and opinions. All find shelter in its protection and become attracted by it. For example, Moses and the Mosaic law were the unifying centre for the scattered sheep of Israel. He united these wandering flocks, brought them under control of divine law, educated and unified them, caused them to agree and uplifted them to a superlative degree of development. At a time

when they were debased, they became glorified; ignorant, they were made knowing; in the bonds of captivity, they were given freedom; in short, they were unified. Day by day they advanced until they attained the highest degree of progress witnessed in that age. We prove, therefore, that the Manifestation of God and the law of God accomplish unity.

...

“Consider the time of Christ. Peoples, races and governments were many; religions, sects and denominations were various; but when Christ appeared, the Messianic reality proved to be the collective centre which unified them beneath the same tabernacle of agreement. ... Therefore, it is shown that the divine Manifestations, the holy Mouthpieces of God, are the Collective Centres of God.”¹—‘*Abdu’l-Bahá*.

Today this voice of Divine Authority, for multitudes of Christians and Jews, is silent. New conditions of society, new sciences, a new industrial order have obscured the shining commandments of Moses and the Christ. Many Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Chinese, are finding the same difficulty in obeying and following their sacred scriptures.

The time has now arrived when from every corner of the world comes the cry for a new outpouring of the Spirit of Truth, to lead us into all truth. We need a new spiritual and scientific explanation of sacred scriptures and symbols, a new voice that speaks with authority, a new application of the divine law to present world conditions. Science is new, world-communication is new, crime has a new power, war has become a new and world-enveloping terror. Therefore we must have a new revelation of the Eternal Truth, powerful enough to solve these problems of the potentially marvellous age in which we are living. We need a teaching which will gather together the broken rays of new sciences, new world movements and longings into the pure white light from which they came.

In the writings and life of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá we find in world illuminating splendour the new manifestation of the Ancient Glory of God. These great teachers explain in scientific terms the bibles of old, their prophecies, their miracles and their commandments. They make the sacred scriptures of all religions one continuous revelation, and reveal the real process of creation, over its millions of years. They manifest again that Holy Spirit which produces a new creation. They transmit God’s voice so clearly that a multitude from all religions and races are laying down their prejudices, their fears, their points of separation that the law of universal love and the oneness of mankind may be established among the nations. Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have become the centre of the new world of brotherhood and peace.

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:148]

Mount Carmel, the Vineyard of God

“The air here at Mount Carmel,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “is fragrant and the earth is sweet.” “Syria is a most wonderful country. It is a world in miniature. The trees of the hot climates, date palm, orange, mandarins, etc., are found in Syria. Tiberias is known for its hot weather, but Mount Lebanon is a cool summer resort.”

“In reality the air of Mount Carmel is most energizing. I have breathed the air of many country places and have seen much natural scenery, but the air of this mountain is most wholesome, vitalizing, and its scenery is very entrancing. Purity of air, sublimity of panorama and beauty of landscape are united on Mount Carmel presenting to the eye a noble and inspiring spectacle of nature; its panorama of sea and land is very unique, its sun is all-glorious, its moon all-beautiful and its stars are all-sparkling.”

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 164–165.

“Many Jewish prophets either lived here or passed a portion of their lives or sojourned for a while or spent the last days of their existence on this mountain.” “This is the Holy Land, the land which gave birth to the prophets—Abraham Isaac, Joseph, David, Solo- [XIV:5:149] mon, Moses, Isaiah, Zechariah and, last of all, Christ. Elijah lived on Mount Carmel. You must love this land very much because all these holy happenings have taken place here. His Holiness Christ came to this holy mountain many times. The atmosphere is permeated with wonderful spirituality.”—From the unpublished *Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, 1914.

[See *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 1–7, for the Tablet of Carmel.]
[XIV:5:150]

The future of the Cause

The Governor of Acre called upon the Master this morning. Having heard of the success of the Cause in America, he wondered how it was possible to unite Muslims, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said:

“Things will come to pass in a wonderful way after my departure. God has brought about this, that He should be on earth and, at the same time, not be (on earth), in order that the beloved ones may not relax their work.

“There will be a little time of quiet, after my departure. Then there will be a great (spiritual) blaze. Especially will this happen if the divine friends remain firm and steadfast in the Covenant, if they are not troubled or disturbed.

“The Blessed Beauty has crowned his believers, and especially those who were in the Great Prison, with an everlasting diadem of sovereignty. In the days of Jesus, the Son of Mary, those who were under the shelter of Jesus could not realize under what shelter they were abiding. But after His Holiness Jesus ascended they served Him faithfully—may my life be a sacrifice to them! In the days of His Holiness Jesus they did not accomplish anything.

“And now no one can realize what a crown is laid upon the heads of the believers, especially those who were associated with the Blessed Beauty in the Great Prison. They underwent great troubles; for days they did not rest. Therefore we must in appreciation of this grace and virtue arise and serve the Cause of God. A similar crown should be placed upon our heads. We were poor, he made us rich. We were looked down upon, we became respected. We were ignorant, we became learned. We were blind, we found sight. We were deaf, we now can hear. There has been no bounty which he has not shown to us. As a sign of gratitude for these gifts and blessings we must be firm and steadfast in the Cause of God.

“All this place will be filled with schools, hospitals, asylums, orphanages and pilgrim houses. The kings of the earth will go forth from the Supreme Shrine at Haifa to the Blessed Shrine at ‘Akká. In the future Haifa and ‘Akká will be united. There will be villas, suburbs and gardens. Here will be the eternal pilgrimage for the world.”—*From the Diary of Mírzá Badí‘ Bushrú‘í, Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahjí, ‘Akká, 16 April 1916.*

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:150]

In the name of God!

O Most Mighty Branch!

On Wednesday two written leaflets have been received from thee and every letter thereof testified unto the Unity of the Divine Essence and the Sanctity of God, the True One, above all resemblance and likeness. Blessed be thy pen, thine ink and the scroll that beareth thy remembrance. [XIV:5:151]

I pray God that by thee He may graciously enable His servants to sound the inmost depths

of the Ocean of Divine Unity, that through thy remembrance He may aid them to drink deep from the stream of Everlasting Life, that through thine utterance He may cause them to quaff the mystic wine of the knowledge of God, that He may assist thee to triumph by the Hosts of understanding and wisdom in such wise that by thee He may gloriously conquer the citadels of worlds and of hearts! There is none other God but He, the Gracious, the Beloved!

O thou that art the apple of mine eye! My Glory rest upon thee. Mine ocean of loving-kindness, the Day-Star of my Grace, the heavens of my mercy be with thee. We pray unto God that He may illumine all mankind with the light of thy knowledge and wisdom; that He may ordain for thee that which may gladden thy heart and solace thine eyes

Mighty and Powerful is He over all things!

Glory, mercy and praise rest upon thee, and upon whomsoever circleth around Thee!

Tablet written by Bahá'u'lláh to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Translated by Shoghi Effendi.

XIV:5, August 1923 [XIV:5:153]

Letters from Shoghi Effendi

Australia and New Zealand

“My dearest co-workers in that distant land:

“How great was my joy to learn that in that far-away continent, remote from the turmoil and restlessness of a weary world, the Voice of God has been raised and proclaimed and, has attracted such a promising number of ardent and faithful lovers of Bahá'u'lláh.

“I offer you my heartfelt love and sympathy and the assurance of my unfailing assistance in the great work of service to mankind which is now so gloriously unfolding itself to your eyes.

“I have shared fully your news with those loving pilgrims and resident friends in the Holy Land whom I meet regularly in what was in the past the audience-chamber of the Master and who thirst after the tidings of the progress of the Cause in every land. They, and myself with them, will pray most fervently for every one of you that the seeds of faith and loving fellowship that you are casting in the soil of hearts may germinate and swell the ever increasing numbers of the valiant hosts of Bahá and enable them to attain glorious victory.

“I shall await with eager expectation the welcome news of the extension of your activities, the widening of your correspondence with the various spiritual centres throughout the world, the plans you contemplate for the spreading of the Movement and the means you will utilize for their speedy execution. On my part I shall never neglect to send you such news as will urge you to press forward your great work for the Cause and hearten you in your labours of love and devotion at His Sacred Threshold.

“Your brother in His Service,

(Signed) Shoghi [XIV:5:155]

Washington, D.C.

The beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful in Washington, D.C., USA. Care of the members of the Spiritual Assembly.

Dearest Friends:

I welcome gladly and heartily this first opportunity of expressing to you in writing what I have always felt in the depths of my heart of my confident hopes for your whole-hearted assistance in the great task that is before me.

I know too well of the spirit of ardent devotion and steadfast love that animates you in your

labours for the Cause, and it is primarily upon this that I confidently rely in facing the great responsibilities of the future.

The world is sadly stricken and in a state of continuous turmoil and signs of weariness and despondency are apparent everywhere. But we, fired with the hope of the Abhá Kingdom and ever mindful of the unfailing promises of the dawn of a new and better day, must weather every storm and endeavour to impart to every earnest seeker that firm faith and inner peace which the world cannot give.

It is our vital and most urgent duty to assure at whatever cost the safety and the unity of the Cause of God, and with harmony and concord firmly established amongst us, to arise with confidence and courage for the enlightenment of the world and the salvation of mankind.

With my best wishes and earnest prayers for your success in these noble endeavours,

I am your brother and co-worker,

(Signed) Shoghi

Pasadena, California

The Beloved Children of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Pasadena, California).

... [XIV:5:156]

My dearly beloved brethren and sisters in 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

Your sweet messages of love and greeting transmitted through the kindness of our beloved Bahá'í sister, Mrs Collins, have deeply touched my heart and have strengthened my hope and confidence in the great service which the Bahá'í youth will render in future to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh.

I have read your individual letters with the deepest interest and enclose for you all in this short answer of mine flowers planted in the close vicinity of the Holy Shrine and placed upon the Sacred Thresholds of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. And as I placed them on those hallowed spots I remembered you most tenderly, and prayed on your behalf, beseeching the Almighty to guide and protect you in your earnest endeavours to learn and to teach the Cause of God.

I very strongly urge you to devote your time to a very serious and profound study of the history of the Cause and of the various Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The study of the Cause and its Teachings and the daily endeavour to exemplify its Spirit in our dealings with our fellow men are the most essential obligations of all Bahá'ís, whether young or old, who aspire to see this Divine Message spread throughout the world.

As to a name for your Club, "Bahá'í Fellowship" seems to be the best reminder of the spirit that must animate continually its members in their work of service to mankind. I cherish the hope that you will all show forth in all your activities the spirit of true Bahá'í fellowship, and grow to become efficient workers in His Divine Vineyard.

Wishing you success from all my heart,

I am your devoted brother,

(Signed) Shoghi

Haifa, Palestine. 18 March 1923.

Brooklyn, New York

The beloved of the Lord and the hand-maids of the Merciful in Brooklyn, New York, USA.

Care of the members of the Spiritual Assembly.

Dear brethren and sisters in 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

In these days of world unrest, of political upheavals, of social disruption and spiritual ferment, the one Power that can bind effectively together the scattered and conflicting elements of human society and breathe into them the vivifying and eternal Spirit of Life is indeed the power of the Call of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!

We, of this noble Faith, the chosen ones of God, who carry with us this wholesome Medicine for the ills and sicknesses of this world, must now bestir ourselves to further activity and relentless efforts in the great and urgent mission entrusted to us by Bahá'u'lláh, that we may minister freely and effectively to the needs of mankind.

Our primary duty is to create by our words and deeds, our conduct and example, the atmosphere in which the seeds of the words of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, cast so profusely during well-nigh eighty years, may germinate and give forth those fruits that alone can assure peace and prosperity to this distracted world.

Clear in our vision, broad in our outlook, tireless in our energies and steadfast in our hopes, let us promote one and all this great work of Reconciliation of which the world stands in such great need at present.

May the Light of His Divine Guidance illumine our path and lead us to our glorious destiny.

Your brother,

(Signed) *Shoghi*

XIV:6, September 1923 [XIV:6:161]

The search for truth

Louis G. Gregory

The search for truth has caused the forward march of mankind in all ages of the world. The will to know is one of the most powerful mainsprings of action and the greatest incentive to progress. Freedom and happiness, both for the individual and collective man, depend upon the knowledge of truth. Greater joy there cannot be than that of discovery. But this attainment is impossible for man unless he becomes an independent seeker. He should, for this noble purpose, put aside empty forms and servile imitations. And while reverence for ancestors is praiseworthy, the independent investigator must weigh his conclusions in the balance of sound logic. However long established the view-points of others, he must strive to know for himself. While this station is possible for all men, its attainment requires courage. For no discoverer of truth can hope to escape the sneers and jeers of prejudice and ignorance. But although the path is difficult, it is yet glorious. Through the degrees of martyrdom the soul of man is freed from its earthly cage and makes extraordinary advancement. The bold and untrammelled search for truth is the light of genius in all times. The power of truth removes the stagnant pools and dead seas of outworn usages. It refreshes the soul of man with living streams that flow from the Bosom of God.

Job said: "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" Such an exalted height of knowledge is not impossible for any man. For the very purpose of man's existence is to know his Creator. The powers by which he may know God are hidden within his own being. Attraction to the beauty of truth reveals man's inward powers. The genial flame of truth sets in motion new vibrations, unfolds the true virtues of religion and the laws of science, apprehends the mysteries of God and His endless creations. Great and wonderful are the reaches of mind. Deep and subtle are the mysteries of the heart. When the inner sight is clear through powers that are heart-dwelling, the mind is brightened and man is thereby elevated to his true station of glory and splendour above the world of matter. If he does not discover these latent powers

the purpose of life is lost. If he does not use these forces, by what sign can he prove himself man? The hand, the eye, and other powers of the physical temple have their manifest functions and improve their skill by service. Should not those greater powers, which attest the emanations of Divinity in man, adorn his career and crown his destiny? The aspiration of man soars Heavenward as he strives to awaken these powers. Spiritual unity is the reality of man and the presence of Divine Bounty.

The beginning of truth-seeking, which [XIV:6:162] may lead through Divine Favour to the Greatest Light, is very simple. First of all, let us have faith; and as a sign of faith let us humbly ask the Giver of Bounty for light and knowledge. If one thereupon subjects whatever is presented him to a reasonable inquiry, he may be astonished at his own growth. If the mind is free from bias or hate, the horizon will widen and faith will become confidence. Even as when, as hungry children, we go to our parents for food, fully confident that they will answer our needs, even more firm should be our assurance that the Light of God will not mislead us.

The Bahá'í teachings, which focalize reality, reveal the unity of truth, however diversified its aspects. The oneness of God reveals the oneness of truth. The singleness of truth reflects the singleness of God. All things in creation are related through their common emanation from Divinity. Because reality is indivisible, it can never be plural. The Divine Light which is the essence of truth, is the universal Glory of God, now manifest. "It is the Bahá of Abhá which covers the earth as the waters cover the deep." When this fact becomes generally known, how conducive will it be to the unity of religions, the end of strife and the establishment of eternal peace! When hearts are aflame with the sacred fire of truth, thoughts will coincide in the reflection of One Reality and constructive service will heal the world. And since this wondrous light and knowledge are impossible save through the Manifestation of God, the ascent of man depends only upon his detachment from all else and his attraction in greater and greater degree to that manifest Splendour. Marvellous poise! Infinite joy! Universal Harmony!

How sad and depressing is the bedlam caused by the opposite! Not long ago, before a noted gathering, a theologian was heard to state very dogmatically the basis of his own faith and that which in his opinion made it superior to all others. But it so happened that the dogma he selected as the holy of holies and *sine qua non* of salvation was no other than a blind superstition, *sans* scientific, rational, spiritual or even common sense basis. He was even mistaken in the assumption that his own faith was the only one that relied upon the said superstition. For inquiry makes it appear that the ancient Egyptians, thousands of years before Christ, as well as millions of non-Christian religionists in the world today, have adhered to the same unprovable belief. Thus in one breath this good man showed himself an alien to science as also to the comparative study of religions. The statement of this dogma is omitted here although it is one which many people unthinkingly and blindly support. The purpose is educational rather than controversial, to stimulate investigation and discovery rather than to shock those who lie dormant. A religious leader may, in his own way, lord it over the masses for a long time. But if he has no universal vision of truth where is his capacity to serve mankind in their progress toward unity and freedom? The attitude of bigotry, narrowness and pride time out of mind has divided the realm of humanity into a multitude of warring sects, belying the spirit of true religion and execrating those whom they should love. Hopeless is the task of establishing unity on the basis of dogma and superstition. Yet the veils are being removed; for all the opposition of mice and men cannot prevent the sun from rising!

Truth is the light of God in the world; and God is love. Truth is the descent of Heaven to man; and Heaven is man's home. Truth is the manna upon which God feeds His children; and all souls are hungry. Truth is the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit in the morning of the resurrection; and this is the morning of that great Day of God! All the Holy Manifestations of God, throughout cycles and ages, have trained humanity in truth. Their pure and perfect lives

were [XIV:6:163] standards of truth. Their sacrificial examples applied the truth. These perfect mirrors of divinity reflected the truth. For this noble purpose Jesus Christ and the other Divine Messengers of the past, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in this day, came to earth in human temples, suffered affliction, pain and martyrdom. Assuredly their purpose was not to exalt themselves. Else why should such intelligent beings descend from a realm of pure delight to dwell in the world of dust? Or whence their indifference to the praise of men? Their true purpose was to free humanity from the thralldom of nature; to remove the barriers caused by blind imitations, spiritless forms, savage dogmas and ignorant prejudices. Kindly they wrought, lovingly they taught, that hatred and warfare might be displaced and truth enthroned. Their oneness of love is outpoured upon all. Their far reaching Guardianship protects all. Can man afford to be heedless to this call? The reign of ignorance and the sovereignty of calamity have ever been for man convertible terms. The still small voice, stronger than the clash of armaments, counsels peace. Will the children of men hear the Voice of God?

The devotee of truth avoids contention. The follower of light seeks its blessing for others. Disciples of truth are signs of guidance. One vivified by the spirit of truth may become the means of imparting life to his companions, for he has turned with reverence to the Sun of Truth, the Creative Word, which brightens and cheers all the worlds. Whoever perceives this wondrous Light will not be misled by a torch or candle, or the will-o'-the-wisp of formalism. Yet one who is divinely favoured will not only seek light and guidance for his kind, but be merciful even to the animals. Insight reveals the relationship of the part to the whole. Guidance brings humility.

Once upon a time, the story runs, six blind men of Hindustan went to see an elephant. As all were blind, their impressions were dependent upon the sense of touch. One, touching the elephant's head, said he was like a ball; another, touching his leg, thought him like a tree; another touched his trunk and declared him like a snake; another his tail, likened him to a rope; another his ear, spoke of him as a fan; another his side, insisted that the elephant was like a wall. They then quarrelled over their various opinions, each adhering to his own with the greatest rancour and obstinacy. They abused and denounced each other and even fought. Each partly right, but all generally wrong, the educational effect of listening to each other's points of view was entirely lost. So it ever is with bigotry and pride.

Happy is he, in this day of hostile creeds and clashing dogmas, who can see the elephant in full proportion. It symbolizes in this day the Sun of reality and truth. Yet how difficult is this, because men are so much attached to the idols of their own fancy! The divine hand ever beckons us to the pathway of light. There seems a touch of humour, as well as pathos in the divine injunction to the truth-seeker:

“Leave them to amuse themselves with their vain discourse!”

Man should ever mount higher and higher in seeking reality. He should never let the mind and heart be limited by the imaginations of men. The vision that is universal is a true emanation from the Divinity of the Word. The same God gives good gifts to all his children. The same vital truth is declared in all religions. The hidden mystery of truth, Divine Love, is the cause of all life. The inner law is changeless; the outer law is varied by the Giver of Bounty from cycle to cycle to relieve human needs. Because men are so forgetful, the Merciful Providence in this cycle of truth and knowledge decrees the renewal of the spirit. What favour can be greater than this? It is the appearance of this Lordly Splendour which rend the veils of superstition and error and reveals the light of assurance and knowledge.

The great and luminous Apostle Paul [XIV:6:164] foresaw the greatness of this day when he wrote:

“When that which is perfect has come, that which is in part shall be done away.” Though men adhere, for limited reasons, to that which is limited, such attachments must ultimately give way; for the darkness is powerless to defeat the light. As mists disappear before the rising sun, so must error and limitations depart as the Sun of Truth mounts higher and higher, approaching its full power and glory. The light and heat of this genial Sun will bring to full growth the minds and hearts of men. There is no night but ignorance! There is no light but truth!

This blessed assurance is given by Bahá'u'lláh:

“Every soul who sincerely accepts the Word of God hath verily passed through the path and succeeded in approaching the paradise of God’s pleasure, and hath assembled with those who are near to God, the chosen ones.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá thus reveals to us the beauty of truth and the ultimate goal of man’s attainment:

“What is truth? Truth is the word of God, which gives life to humanity. It restores sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf; it makes eloquent those who are dumb, and living beings out of dead beings; it illumines the world of heart and soul; it reduces into nothingness the iniquities of the neglectful and erring ones. Beauty, perfection, brilliancy and spirituality in this existence come from or through the word of God. For all it is the supreme goal, the greatest desire, the cause of life, light, instruction. The road to attain to this Truth is the love of God. When the light of the love of God is burning in the mirror of the heart, that flame shows the way and guides to the Kingdom of the Word of God.

“As to what causes the growth of the love of God, know that it is to turn one’s self toward God.”

XIV:6, September 1923 [XIV:6:164]

Prayer—the ladder to heaven

From the Words of Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, with an introduction by Jináb-i-Fáḍil.

The Holy Spirit is the power which is in the Manifestations of God. When man is freed from his natural conditions he draws near to the Holy Spirit. In the early dawn at Haifa, in the Holy Shrines on Mount Carmel, one finds souls intoxicated with the love of God, at this time of prayer and meditation. Through meditation the spirit is delivered from the cage of the human nature; real communication is established and divine gifts are granted. The attitude becomes holy, and we long to serve.

It has been asked: “Should the heart be emptied, to let God speak?” The Bahá’ís have many beautiful prayers and supplications in which the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá dwell and when we are using these supplications and thinking of their meaning our spirit expands.

Christ lived for a long time in the caves of the mountain and it is said that Satan came to test His Holiness Christ, but had no effect upon him. What was Satan and what was the test? Satan was materialistic thought. Satan tried to test the Christ because he was leaving behind human thoughts and was turning to the spiritual Kingdom. Christ had a human body, but his body had no effect upon his spirit. It is written, “The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Before his declaration, Bahá'u'lláh lived alone in a cave for two years, in a high mountain in a very dangerous country called Kurdistán. When the simple shepherds of that region heard him praying in the early morning they felt such a spiritual power that they gathered around the cave to listen.

My meaning is this, that when prayer [XIV:6:165] or supplication is rising from the heart

and is uttered by the tongue, especially if the words are divine words, it attracts divine qualities, like a magnet.

God is Universal Consciousness, unlimited, infinite, unknowable, incomprehensible to our finite minds. The Infinite cannot be included in the finite, but is reflected from every atom in the universe. Each kingdom reflects God according to its degree of receptivity, whether mineral, vegetable, animal or human; but the heart of man is the greatest reflector of all. If you split an atom in the heart of it you will find a sun. "Dost thou think thy body a small thing, while within thee is enfolded the universe?" said Bahá'u'lláh.

Science has proved that God is not a man in the sky, for there is no place which can be located as Heaven. An ant with long horns tipped with olfactory nerves would think that God was a very large ant, with long horns just as man thinks God is a great, perfect man. We have so pictured God as a large man with eyes and ears, who could speak and, perhaps, eat. As there is no physical Heaven, therefore there is no place for such a God to live in. Science has released us from this superstition.

But the universe is full of the spirit, the attributes of God, and the heart is a mighty magnet. True prayer is thinking of, reaching out to God, lifting up our hearts, freeing them from self and material things; and after we have freed the heart it acts as a magnet to attract these qualities, these attributes. It becomes attuned to these vibrations, as a wireless receiver becomes attuned to certain wave lengths in the air. The prayers of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá help to put the heart in tune. *From two talks recently given by Jináb-i-Fáḍil.*

"In all the worlds of existence there is nothing more important than prayer. Prayer confers spirituality upon the heart."¹ "Spirituality is the greatest of God's gifts and life everlasting. It means turning to God." "Turn your faces away from the contemplation of your own finite selves and fix your eyes upon the Everlasting Radiance; then will your souls receive in full measure the Divine Power of the Spirit and the Blessings of the Infinite Bounty."²

"Stay ye entirely clear of this dark world's concerns, and become ye known by the attributes of those essences that make their home in the Kingdom. Then shall ye see how intense is the glory of the heavenly Day-Star, and how blinding bright are the tokens of bounty coming out of the invisible realm."³

Morning thoughts

"Everyone upon awaking in the morning awakes with a thought. The commercial man awakes with the thought of commerce; the inventor awakes with the thought of his inventions; the banker with the thought of money. But you, when you awake, must at once think of God and begin the day with an earnest desire to attain to the will of God and His good pleasure."

"Man must be freed from every material tie and must seek the path of the Kingdom. He must not look backward, he must look forward; not downward, but heavenward."

"The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these.

"But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will

¹ All quotations are from the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá unless otherwise indicated. Quotations located in the Writings are used and individually referenced.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 166.

³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 12.

be obtained.”¹

“We should not be occupied with our failings and weaknesses, but concern ourselves with the will of God so that it may flow through us, thereby healing these human infirmities.”

“Neglect not praying and communing in the gloomy midnights and at morn and eve, and offer glory unto thy Lord the [XIV:6:166] Supreme.”

“Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in His vineyard, and, with a heart full of love, be in constant servitude unto Him.”²

“Draw nigh unto God and persevere in communion with thy Lord so that the fire of God’s love may glow more luminously in the heart, its heat may grow stronger and give warmth to that region and its sound reach the Supreme Concourse.”³

Abu’l-Faḍl, the Bahá’í saint and philosopher, one of the most brilliant scholars of his age, prayed, we are told, seven times every day. Great souls keep strong by reading and prayer. When he went into exile, Bahá’u’lláh gave him the following prayer to be repeated whenever he was in need: “O my God! I beg of Thee by the King of Names and Maker of heaven and earth, by the rustling of the leaves of the Tree of Life, and by the Utterances through which the realities of things are drawn unto us, to grant me”

The joy of prayer

“There is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer.”

“Prayer and supplication are two wings whereby man soars toward the heavenly mansion of the True One. However, verbal repetition of prayer does not suffice. One must live in a continual attitude of prayer. When man is spiritually free his mind becomes the altar and his heart the sanctuary of prayer. Then the meaning of the verse, ‘We will lift up from before his eyes the veil’ will become fulfilled in him.”

“It is most difficult to stand unshaken during the days of trials. When we were living in Baghdád conditions at one time were such that the friends of God were always in danger of losing their lives. Not a night passed during which they were sure that they would be alive in the morning and not a morning did they arise with any certainty that they would see another night. Yet they lived in the highest state of faithfulness, firmness, spirituality and attraction. Áqá Riḍá and seven others lived in one small room. They rested, ate and slept in this one room. Every night they had spiritual meetings, chanting prayers and poems till long past midnight. Often their food consisted of a few dates. These Bahá’ís were peddlers in the bazaars. Some of them sold nothing all day. When in the evening they returned home they all pooled the few piastres which they had made and with that small sum bought their dinner. Some days they made only twenty pares. With this they bought dates and of them made their meal. However, they were the richest men on the face of the earth. They lived in a state of holiness, sanctity, attraction and devotion.

“There was a man, Pidar-Ján.⁴ I cannot praise him enough. He was the embodiment of spirituality. He used to carry under his arm while walking in the bazaars a dozen pairs of stockings, hoping to sell them. But, forgetting his surroundings, he would slowly chant the communes (prayers). Then someone would come up softly, behind him, and take the stockings from under his arm. If a customer wanted a pair of stockings Pidar-Ján would look under his arm—but there would be nothing there. So he thought he would carry the

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 176. (two paragraphs).

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 375.

³ Refer to compilation on Prayer (Chapter IV of *The Divine Art of Living*) in *Star of the West*, VIII:4.

⁴ Pers. “Father dear”.

stockings on the palms of his hands. Again he would become absorbed, reading the supplications, and again the stockings would be stolen without his knowledge.”—*Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá recorded by Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.*

How prayer becomes real

In all centuries those who have learned the spiritual laws prepare for prayer by reading or repeating sentences through which a saint or prophet has reflected the effulgence of the Holy Spirit. The great Manifestations of God reveal prayers which are ablaze with divine love, which melt the heart, and usher one into the [XIV:6:167] court of the Eternal Presence. The heavenly books are like a city, writes Bahá’u’lláh. “What shall we mention of the signs, tokens, appearances and splendours ordained in that city by the command of the King of Names and Attributes. It quenches thirst without water and increases the heat of the love of God without fire. ... It bestows wealth without gold and grants immortality without death. ... This city is renewed and adorned every thousand years, more or less. Therefore, O my friend, we must make an effort to attain to that city.”

The more one reads with “longing, fervour, with love, rapture, attraction and devotion” the sooner does “the Ideal Herald” “dawn like the true morn from the Divine City with spiritual glad tidings and awaken the heart, soul and spirit from the sleep of negligence with the trumpet of knowledge.” “Those who earnestly endeavour in the path of God after severance from all else will become so attracted to that city that they will not abandon it for an instant.”

The prayer that is answered

“There are many subjects which are difficult for man to solve, but during prayer and supplication they are revealed.” “Muḥammad said, ‘Prayer is a ladder by which everyone can ascend to heaven’; if one’s heart is cut from the world his prayers are the means of the ascension.”

“If our ruling desire binds us to God we shall receive what is God-like. ‘I link myself to God and not to dust.’ If one prays to be whole (perfect), on God’s part the answer is eternally complete. We must fulfil the conditions to expect God to fulfil His promises. To pray is to lift the soul into union with the Eternal Goodness. Wholeness is the natural result of abiding in God.”

Prayer and service

In the supreme adjustment one turns the glory received from prayer into the channel of daily business and service to the Kingdom. “Go,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a student coming to America, “with the intention and aim of teaching the Cause of God and spreading the fragrances of God. Then thy study and worldly affairs will both prosper.”

“O God! O God! Cause me to drink from the cup of Thy bestowal. Illumine my face with the light of guidance. Make me firm in faithfulness and steadfastness in Thine Ancient Covenant. Suffer me to become one of Thy sincere servants. Open before my face the doors of prosperity. Prepare for me the means of livelihood. Give me my bread through channels over which I have no control, Thy heavenly treasures. Grant me the power to turn my face toward Thy merciful Countenance, to be faithful to Thy Cause.

“O Thou Clement and Compassionate One! Verily, Thou art gracious to those who are firm and steadfast in Thy strong and impregnable Covenant. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!”

“The Essence of Oneness is sanctified above the servitude of the world of mankind and independent of the devotion of all else. One should, therefore, engage in serving His servants,

which act is identical with serving Him. Then will the essential unity, harmony and oneness become manifest and unveil their beauty.”

When work becomes worship

In the coming spiritual renaissance, the glorious Day of God which is now dawning, work, study and scientific research when performed in a spirit of unselfish service will be accounted as worship. Such is the new Bahá'í teaching. It all depends upon the motive, the pure intention. “We should do little things as well as great things for the love of God,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “Service in the love of mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.” “Bahá'u'lláh has even said that occupation and labour are devotion. All humanity must obtain a [XIV:6:168] livelihood by sweat of the brow and bodily exertion, at the same time seeking to lift the burden of others, striving to be the source of comfort to souls and facilitating the means of living. This in itself is devotion to God. Bahá'u'lláh has thereby encouraged action and stimulated service. But the energies of the heart must not be attached to these things; the soul must not be completely occupied with them. Though the mind is busy, the heart must be attracted toward the Kingdom of God in order that the virtues of humanity may be attained from every direction and source.”¹

“A profession, a trade, farming, these are worshipping God. A farmer who cultivates his land with the utmost application is like a worshipper who with deepest reverence and humility prays to God in a temple. When the labourer works honestly and sincerely it is as though he were praying.” “Every soul who occupies himself in an art or trade,” wrote Bahá'u'lláh, “this will be accounted an act of worship before God.”

Prayer in the peace of solitude or worship in the spiritual meeting will prepare for the prayer without ceasing in home or shop, school or office.

“Mayest thou ever be in a prayerful attitude,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to a friend who was seeking the radiant pathway of the spiritual life. “In all the worlds of existence there is nothing more important than prayer.”

XIV:6, September 1923 [XIV:6:168]

Divine contentment

This tablet to Mr and Mrs Rabb of San Francisco was found by Shoghi Effendi among the papers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ascension. It was unsigned, also no date was attached.

He is God!

O ye faithful ones of the Holy Threshold!

Your letter, which was expressive of your supplications to the Holy Threshold was received. Thanks be to God, that you have remained firm in spite of all the trying temptations.

This material world of ours is a world of contrasts. It has in itself abundance and destitution, joy and sorrow, youth and old age. It is all the time changing and one has to undergo these different stages. Hence it behoves every faithful person to be patient and to be grateful for that which he receives.

It is fitting for those in the Kingdom to be satisfied with their fate and look only toward the increase of the heavenly spark in their hearts for this, alone, will give them rest and consolation. And you, too, should endeavour to increase that spiritual flame, known as the love of God, for through its increase you will enter into a new world of love and contentment.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 187.

I beseech the Lord to help you to overcome these hard conditions and to bestow upon you abundance of gifts from His bounties.

I think of you always and pray for you. Be comforted, and trust in the mercy of the Merciful One, for it is said, "He who is not contented with what he receives, let him seek a God other than Me."

Therefore we have to be contented and devote our time to the worship and the praise of our God.

Upon you be my greetings.

Translated 19 May 1922, by Mírzá As'ad, a Persian student attending the California State University, Berkeley, California.

XIV:6, September 1923 [XIV:6:169]

A note on morality

Horace Holley

Like a boat laid up alongside a rapid stream, our impulse continually feels the tug of a current flowing past, a current in whose urgent flow it seems natural for impulse to be cast, a current in which impulse continually does cast itself. Refreshed and renewed by journeys down this current, journeys long or short, impulse lies again just outside its urge, like a boat drawn to the bank. But the stream never ceases to flow by, its invitation never relaxes its instinctive appeal.

In the current of custom, popular manners, social convention and use, our personal impulses find their most lasting and most urgent expression. Traced to their source, few impulses are personal at all. Few leap cleanly from the man himself, his own expression; most impulses are drawn forth from the man by outside forces—they express the environment immediately about him; for the man, they are impressions so urgent as to require response. Society is the continual, strong current tugging at the boat of our lives. In impulse released we feel a personal vitality and purpose, an enlargement of personal consciousness; but the release of impulse down the social current brings only a reflected self into being. With the dissolve of the determining conditions, the vitality and purpose also dissolve. They disappear like images from a mirror when the room is emptied of its things. The realization of this comes seldom enough, for almost invariably new images immediately replace the old. The ordinary person's habitual self, his reflected self, seems real enough year on year and life on life. For seldom is the room actually emptied of its things before the mirror of mind. When, in sickness or catastrophe, the mirror finds nothing before it to reflect, its own emptiness becomes dreadfully acute. For this extraordinary thing does happen to ordinary people to feel one's self ebb slowly but completely away. The social current does stop unexpectedly from flowing past the boat of our impulse; and when this happens, the boat lies deep enough in mud, unable to follow. This extraordinary sense of losing the sense of ordinary things actually occurs more than once in every one's experience. It happens to us all, but it is an experience we do not communicate to others. The failure of personal impulse to move on the current of reality seems to each one a unique, individual failure. It is a universal experience, but it is never considered universally. We regard it as an experience special and particular to ourselves. It is not a pleasant experience.

But the result is that we continue to take the power supplied to impulse from the attractions environmental to impulse, as a power resident in impulse itself. We invariably hasten our thoughts over this painful lapse of self, and dwell rather upon the occasions when impulse seemed most successfully to seize its own in the outer world. The fact remains, however, that personal impulse is rather passively effective, like a boat, than actively effective,

like a stream. The stream takes the boat so completely within its own movement that the movement seems from the boat itself. The boat's own lack of motivity only emerges as a perceptible fact when the stream turns away out of reach.

At such times, if we face the experience squarely enough, impulse actually weakens and fails like a boat out of water. The social needs dry up first, but the personal needs fade out soon after them. Eating and drinking, apparently personal beyond the range of social influence, become faint and tepid [XIV:6:170] functions as soon as imitation is completely removed. Life settles down into a state of passive torpor—we continue to be, but our being is not our *self*—our “natural self”—at all. The lover who expects to find his mistress at the rendezvous, and awaits her in vain, feels all his vitality ebb away. The mother who loses a child undergoes this experience. The miser is a mere nothing without his wealth. These extreme cases are extreme simply because in each one the social environment has concentrated into a single influence. To remove that influence, in these cases, is to remove the entire experienceable world.

But if we face that experience earnestly enough another fact grows apparent. As the tide of social influence runs out, leaving personal impulse high and dry, another tide seems to flow in. The boat of personal impulse seems to rise upon the current of another stream. This other stream seems to flow within the man himself. It seems to flow less urgently, and before the boat has ridden fairly upon it the unusual condition of things usually changes. The accustomed world swings back, bringing the sense of relief as from a crisis more difficult even than the sense of failure as of a boat in mud.

For some, however, the world swings back too late. It flows in with the old currents of influence after the new current has become a fact. The boat has gone [on] a new journey, through landscapes more desirable, on a stronger tide. The “self” that ebbed away has been recovered, a new “self” the man would not willingly yield.

This hidden inner current, so unreal to the world, is the reality of religion. It is the reality which ordinarily, in comparison with the ease of impulse down the currents of convention, seems an upstream effort, tedious and vain. Of what use to struggle against a current so strong that one's greatest effort only holds one ever in the same spot? It is evident enough, at any rate, that the two currents flow in opposite directions. The downstream of the world is the upstream of the soul. But the spiritual current has its own downstream. It has its own forceful currents which, under the right conditions, carry the boat of impulse not less easily along. It has the same power of communicating its own force to the boat so imperceptibly that the boat's movement seems from the boat itself and not from the stream. But “duty”, as opposed to desire; the lonely effort of attainment as opposed to the genial grace of imitation, do not become aware of this fact. One only becomes aware of it when, somehow, the stream of spiritual experience takes complete possession of the soul. Then it is convention which seems upstream. Then the sense of struggle, the sense of futility, attaches itself to the world; and to join the common activity, urged to it merely by imitation, becomes repugnant and impossible. The soul's own life, of attainment, becomes natural, inevitable, successive acts of self-expression whereby personal impulse is gratified as never before.

The clear, definite statement seem hypothesis more than experience merely because, in almost every one of us, the boat of impulse lies much farther out in the stream of convention than in the stream of faith. The direction of the forces exerting upon impulse for imitation seem to determine the “upstream” and the “downstream” of experience because they press against a greater area of our being. For those few in all generations whose lives have lain more in faith than in convention, religion has been downstream and the world upstream.

Nothing is so important to realize in this matter of morality. It is the truth at the heart of experience; it is the basis of reality in life; and misconceptions in this region work havoc for

the whole of experience at all times. The universal belief that the religious life is a life upstream has dwarfed religion to insignificance in our social development. [XIV:6:171] We have employed as the working hypothesis of religion throughout our civilization the impression that personal impulse is gratified and justified through convention, but negated and made futile through religion. This impression derives from the experience of minds still adrift on the conventional stream—their sense of struggle, as against a mighty, unresting tide, is actually a struggle not against the spiritual requirement but against the social habit. They have never swung fairly out on the other current.

If we establish our moral truth upon the experience of those who have attained, we vivify it as by the transfusion of living blood to a desperate body. For the struggle against the stream of convention—when one struggles full in the stream itself—is really a futile effort. But this is precisely what religion amounts to in most lives: an occasional struggle against a stream dimly perceived to be leading one's life to emptiness and desolation. The first step toward spiritual reality consists in leaving the stream of imitation itself. It is least effective when taken against the stream; most effective when taken away from the stream. For outside the currents of social imitation other currents, even more rapid, await. As one swings the boat of impulse into the current of faith, a greater power than impulse or will perfects the act. The difficulties of religion are not difficulties inherent to spiritual development—they are inherent in leaving the stream of social convention. Spiritual development brings its own downstream, whence the joy of self-gratification amply returns.

The psychologist usually builds consciousness upon two factors, habit and imitation. But these two factors are really one. Habit is the imitation of oneself. The dominant factor, then, is imitation. Imitation like momentum, tends to carry experience along a straight line. So borne, experience confirms itself at every point. The inability to realize that the strongest habit is but imitation of self many times repeated, proves that we drift unconsciously into a being limited on all sides save the direction of its own definite movement. As momentum gathers weight, the influence exerted to swing experience from the straight line grows continually more ineffective. Thus most of us fail to perceive that the essential nature of experience is dual rather than single. As a matter of fact, consciousness has a double pull, a pull now in one direction, and a pull later on in the opposite direction. Habit merges these two definite forces into one, thus destroying the particular contribution each brings. Habit does not only destroy the value of the spiritual impulse in life—it even destroys the value of the worldly or social impulse.

Were each impulse to be given its own terms of influence, life would not be an experience laid out straight along, like a narrow artificial road; it would be a continual ascent, as one ascends a winding staircase in a tower. To follow out each impulse cleanly and courageously in its turn, is to spend the force of each so that the other force can exert itself effectively. The religious "habit" is quite as impoverishing to experience as the social "habit". In those whose lives respond to needs more vital than habits, the impulse of activity carries them on until that impulse is spent, when the impulse to meditation naturally arises. The normal life—the life that is normal to the inner standard and not merely to the standard of the majority of people—ascends from activity to meditation, but then ascends likewise from meditation to activity. It goes from one phase to the other ever around and upward, from stage to stage of the tower. The phase of meditation enriches the activity just experienced—gathers it up and gives it meaning and value—but also prepares new forces for activity to draw upon. Likewise, the active phase enriches the meditation just experienced—enriches it by bringing its purposes and [XIV:6:172] its meanings into effect. It is as though meditation created the vision of a picture, and activity laid the vision upon canvas. The two phases are absolutely reciprocal. On the other hand, it is as though such activity emptied the mind and heart of their pressing fullness, preparing the way for another and greater vision. To be normal, then, a life

would continually ascend the tower, pausing a little at each landing to look from the window—looking out now on one side, now on the other—but ever urged upward, and from the higher landing obtaining a wider and clearer outlook. This is the normal experience, the experience which our own lives attempt to create for us—a rich, eager experience, ever renewed and ever deepened, fed on the bread of physical toil and gladdened by the wine of mystery in revelation. For the tower has many stages. Meditation and faith return again and again, subtler and larger, clearer eyed. And activity returns again, ever more refined, ever more truly expressing the creative urgency of the soul. No man can exhaust the wonders of the tower of experience. It rises high above the city of commonplace. It rises to the heavens. It is not a tower built up stone by stone from the earth; it is a tower let down from the throne of God.

One further remarks of morality, therefore, that the essence of experience is movement and change, while the one obviously immoral thing is standing still. The extreme of immorality is to stand still at any stage of the tower—whether the stage be that of activity, or meditation. It is quite as terrible to spend a lifetime at being “religious” as at unrestingly laying up gold. It is more immoral, for the example is more disastrous to others. The most depressing spectacle in the world is not the worldly who will not ascend above their material wealth—it is the supposedly spiritual folk who will not ascend beyond their stagnant “unworldliness”.

In a true civilization, labour and religion are the two pillars of existence. They are the two pillars that stand so close they become one. Your really religious man merges labour and meditation inseparably one in the other. They are the indrawn and the outdrawn breaths that keep the blood pure. Both would be taken for granted, and the relation of each to the other would be taken for granted. Pure blood compels the reciprocal indrawing and outdrawing of breath. Where labour is not a form of worship, and where religion is not the inspiration and control of labour, the blood of life is impure. Life is not life, but sickness.

Yet health is the normal condition of life, while sickness is the abnormal. In every life the instinct to pass from activity to meditation, from meditation to activity, exists and exerts itself. It exerts itself forever throughout life, but becomes the knocking of a child’s hand against a barred door. Habit denies this vital instinct its full expression. As habit increases—habit which is nothing more than self-imitation—the instinct urges in vain. The instinct continues year after year, though the knocking sounds fainter and fainter. We build the wall thicker and higher with time, until finally the sound no longer reaches through.

Were we conscious of movement upward in the tower on the part of the lives around us, we ourselves would instinctively ascend. Our all-powerful sense of imitation would respond to truth as completely as it now responds to ignorance. No element in mind or heart would have to change to make us worthy of the true civilization. All the elements necessary to enjoy that civilization, to maintain and develop that civilization, are present in men. The difference between war and peace, between poverty and free self-expression, does not imply an impossible or even improbable making over of human nature. It implies rather the response of human [XIV:6:173] nature to its own hidden truth. Were there a soul who had mounted the tower to its very top, who had gone through every intervening experience, making each phase his own, then from the top signalled to us standing dejected below—signalled as with a mighty trumpet blown from the forgotten depths of our own souls, should we not gaze upward? Should we not see before us the easy ascent of the Way? Should we not hear the trumpet, hear it—and *believe*?

The true civilization—its existence, its nearness, its inevitableness—sounds like a clear trumpet in the life and words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The glory of deeds

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

The following narration tells of the glorious martyrdom of three Bahá'í heroes, one a child of twelve, another a youth of seventeen, the third a celebrated poet.

When we view martyrdom from the physical point of view we see only "the destruction of life". But when we behold it from the spiritual point of view it becomes the most perfect manifestation of love and faith the heart can conceive for here the lover of God, the lover of mankind gives his all that the Kingdom of peace may appear in the world. "Deeds speak louder than words." They make words real. "True words," said Bahá'u'lláh, "are verified by action. One without the other will not satisfy the thirsty or open the doors of perception before the blind."

Martyrdom makes the spirit of utter dedication to the service of God so real that it ignites in other hearts a like flame of divine devotion. The martyrdom of Christ on the cross conquered and changed the hearts of untold millions. True martyrdom is the greatest spiritual educator in the world of existence.

An American business man tells of how he was travelling in Persia. He saw a Bahá'í brought forth to execution. He was tied with his chest to a cannon's mouth. A great crowd assembled. The Bahá'í turned to his executioner: "Grant me one request before I enter the heavenly world," he said. "What is it?" asked the executioner. "Turn me around that the crowd may see how happy I am to die in the pathway of God," replied the man.

The executioner turned him around and blew his body from the cannon's mouth.

"I saw that," said the American business man, "with my own eyes. When I want a religion I am going to be a Bahá'í for there is a religion that has power in it."—*Editor*.

There were thousands of martyrs to this Cause many of whom shine with a brilliance like the sun, dispelling the darkness of night. Among those of great renown was Badí', the messenger who carried the epistle of Bahá'u'lláh to the Sháh of Persia. During the reign of this Sháh thousands of believers were martyred. This was because enemies of the Cause impressed upon his mind the idea that this great Cause purposed to overthrow the government of Persia and to establish another form of government; therefore the Sháh feared lest the believers were plotting against him. As soon as he heard that a person was connected, even remotely with the Cause an order was sent to do away with him.

In 1852 he issued an edict that every believer within his domain should be put to the sword, sparing no one. Accordingly, in every city of Persia many believers were thrown into prison and martyred, the greatest of these persecutions taking place in Tīhrán. [XIV:6:174]

Now, a few years after his incarceration in the fortress city of 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh revealed a long and detailed epistle for this Sháh of Persia. Those who have studied it realize that this epistle is a heavenly book containing scientific and spiritual teachings. Bahá'u'lláh purposed to send this Tablet by a messenger who would give it into the Sháh's own hands for it was a well-known fact that the courtiers around him did their utmost to keep the words of Bahá'u'lláh from his ears, saying that these words had such a power that, should the Sháh listen to them, his heart would be changed. Therefore Bahá'u'lláh planned to send this Tablet by a messenger who would carry it to the Sháh himself.

When Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Tablet he wrote upon it certain conditions. First, before the bearer accepted the commission he must realize that in accomplishing it he would be killed

with severest torture and that he must show utmost steadfastness and assurance. Secondly when on his way to Persia, and in Persia, he must associate with no believers for after the king had apprehended him his deputies would undoubtedly try to find out the names of the believers with whom he was associated in order to seize and kill them also. This was the wisdom of the command of Bahá'u'lláh. He must from the very beginning of his journey meet no believers so that he could declare truthfully that he knew no one of them. The third condition was that he should deliver the epistle with his own hand into the hands of the Sháh.

Now Badí' was a youth of seventeen, and at that time was in 'Akká and in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Before his arrival in 'Akká, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh told his followers there that the messenger who was to carry this Tablet to the Sháh would ere long arrive.

One day, when some friends were gathered together His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh took the Tablet and holding it in his hand, said: "Who is the one who will carry this to the Sháh of Persia?"

Badí', like a flame of fire, sprang from his seat and bowing down before Bahá'u'lláh said: "I will carry this Tablet." Bahá'u'lláh asked the question a second time; and the youth repeated his supplication.

Bahá'u'lláh called the third time, and the third time Badí' petitioned that he might carry the Tablet.

So Bahá'u'lláh gave him the wonderful Tablet, and took it, and started on his great mission.

Badí' went to Mount Carmel from the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, where he engaged in supplication and prayer as though in preparation to meet God. There were with him two other believers.

He dressed in a long white garment and would stand in an attitude of humility, facing 'Akká. He seemed like a thirsty man searching for cool and refreshing water. Bahá'u'lláh sent from his presence in the care of one of the believers two small packages to be delivered to Badí', who arose, accepted them in his hands, kissed them reverently and thanked God with great exaltation. The two friends felt that these packages must contain some special command for the service of the Cause, and they asked if it would be possible for Badí' to let them read their contents. But he replied: "I have no time," and immediately set out on his journey to Persia.

He did not tarry at all nor rest upon the way but with patience and utmost perseverance followed the instructions of Bahá'u'lláh. One of the old believers, now living, met the young man on the journey and wondered concerning his great abstraction. This man said that every now and then Badí' would steal away. "Once I followed him," he said, "to find out what he was doing. Then I saw that he prostrated himself upon the ground, facing 'Akká, and prayed with utmost reverence. After I heard the story of his martyrdom I realized that he was offering prayers of thanksgiving."

When Badí' arrived at the gate of Tíhrán, the capital of Persia, the Sháh [XIV:6:175] was out of the city on a hunting trip. So Badí' mounted a hill on this plain outside the city and stood there in his white garment with the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh in his hand. For three days and three nights he stood motionless upon the hill. The Sháh, scanning the country with his field glasses, looked at him many times and at last, filled with curiosity, sent some of his men to bring the youth to him that he might learn of his errand. The messengers inquired of Badí' what he wanted and Badí' replied that he had a very important letter for the Sháh of Persia and he wished to be allowed to deliver it with his own hand. They tried their utmost to get the Tablet from him but Badí' would not give it up. So they returned to the Sháh who ordered that Badí' be brought to him. Thus Badí' at last attained his utmost desire—and delivered the

Tablet into the very hands of the Sháh.

The Sháh realized at once that it was from Bahá'u'lláh. He became very much enraged and, with his attendants, insisted that Badí' reveal the names of the believers with whom he was associated. The courtiers began to beat and injure him, and Badí' gave thanks to God, exclaiming: "At last I have attained to the station of martyrdom which Bahá'u'lláh prophesied upon this Tablet."

He ordered the officers to take the young man away. So they took him, and branded him with hot irons. Badí', to the utter amazement of those who tortured him cried out, in wonderful joy: "You have branded but one side. Would you not like to brand the other also that I may have this fire of suffering all through my body!" They were so astonished that they reported the matter to the Sháh, saying: "Here is no human being. No matter how much we brand him he does not tell the name of any believer but shows still greater happiness." The Sháh replied: "Take his photograph and bring it to me." So while they burned Badí' with hot irons they took his photograph. This photograph exists today, among us.

Then the Sháh commanded that he be put to death immediately and that no one be shown his photograph lest that one become a believer. Thus the prophecy of Bahá'u'lláh, written upon the Tablet, was fulfilled.

Later on the Sháh read the epistle of Bahá'u'lláh, and a wonderful change took place in him. He understood then that the great purpose of this Cause is to establish universal peace, universal brotherhood and universal reconciliation, that this Cause has appeared in order that all mankind may be united in spiritual oneness and brotherhood. Therefore he never again, personally, interfered with the believers nor himself persecuted them.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh in this great Tablet addresses the Sháh thus: "Will you invite the mullás and learned men to meet together and allow me to come also? I will present myself and the mullás may ask of me any sign which would make them realize the station of this Cause. If these signs are manifested from me, well and good; if not, then you may do with me what you wish."

The Sháh sent the Tablet to the mullás of Tíhrán, asking what they would do.

They made no answer to the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, which proved to the Sháh that these enemies were unjust and prejudiced.

Badí' was but one of the many martyrs in this Cause who showed their love for it with fortitude and steadfastness.

Another martyrdom unique to this Revelation is that of Varqá, the poet, and his twelve year old son.

Varqá asked of Bahá'u'lláh the meaning of a verse in the *Book of Aqdas* which refers to the appointment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Centre of the Covenant: "When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root."¹ Bahá'u'lláh replied that the meaning of this verse is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Therefore from that time Varqá with all his heart loved the Master. [XIV:6:176]

Varqá constantly supplicated Bahá'u'lláh that he might attain to the station of martyrdom, and finally his petition was granted. As this promise, however, was not fulfilled during the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh, after Bahá'u'lláh's departure from this world Varqá made his request to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 121, p. 63.

Varqá was a well-known teacher, an illumined speaker and a peerless poet. His poems speak of the love of God and are of such high spiritual quality that they lift the reader to wonderful heights. In several of them he prophesies his own martyrdom.

His son, Rúḥu'lláh, was a youthful genius, a speaker and a teacher of great power and persuasiveness. At the age of twelve years he wrote beautiful poems. He was a brilliant child. Because he was so young and so full of joy and enthusiasm when he went to see Bahá'u'lláh he (Bahá'u'lláh) would sometimes joke with him and ask him questions. Now and then he would call him "the teacher". One day Bahá'u'lláh said to him: "You have a great gift for teaching. Now suppose that Promised One of the Muslims should appear, the One who, according to tradition is like an eagle, and will guide the people to the Kingdom. If this One appears what will you do?"

"Through the confirmation of Bahá'u'lláh," replied the boy, "I will teach him and make him a believer."

Varqá with his young son started on a campaign of teaching, in Persia. They arrived at a city whose Governor was a very cruel and merciless man. The people quickly brought to this Governor reports that Varqá was a brilliant teacher and that he carried with him much wealth. This wealth consisted of fifty volumes of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and was indeed very precious. In addition to the spiritual value of these books they had, truly, material value, for they were written on the best of paper and were embellished and bound.

The Governor sent his officer and had Varqá and his son taken prisoners. When they examined his possessions the Governor saw that Varqá had no wealth, only a few volumes. Varqá, who longed to give him the message of the Kingdom, now began to teach him, and begged the Governor to invite the 'Ulamás and the scholars of the city that he might speak with them. He would, he said, prove to them the validity of this Cause from the text of all the heavenly scriptures and writings. The Governor granted his request and the learned men assembled. Then Varqá and his twelve year old son spoke to them. The boy was so eloquent and persuasive that the Governor and many of the people became greatly attracted. The Sháh now sent a telegram that these two believers be sent immediately to the capital.

In Tíhrán they were held captive, in a large mansion. Here some of the believers visited them secretly. At that time Varqá wrote a letter to the believers of Tíhrán in which he said that, in keeping with the promise of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá it would seem as though the time was drawing near when he should attain to the station of martyrdom, yet, judging from the kindness and respect with which the Sháh and the Prime Minister treated him and the fact that they had put him in such a mansion, he could see no evidence of the approach of martyrdom. Evidently this delay was due to his inability to attain to that high station.

After a while the chief courtier, a very cruel man, carried a report to the Sháh which resulted in an order to put Varqá and his son in prison. From this prison Varqá wrote a letter to the Sháh requesting him to invite all the learned men to a meeting and to permit him, also, to attend this gathering. The Sháh sent this chief courtier, who had given evidence against him, to Varqá to inquire how he wished the meeting arranged. When the courtier entered the prison room and heard from Varqá's own lips his request for this meeting he became very angry, and said: "Do you think to spread the [XIV:6:177] teachings of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the world?"

While these things were happening to Varqá the fiftieth anniversary of the reign of the Sháh occurred. The Sháh wished to make a great celebration of this event; so he planned feasts and parades and demonstrations. In order to do honour to his anniversary the Sháh, himself, paid a visit to one of the holy Shrines outside the capital. There a revolutionist, just arrived in Persia, hid himself. From this hiding place he shot and killed the Sháh.

Upon hearing the news of the Sháh's death the chief courtier went to the prison of Varqá and his son and began to upbraid them. Then he drew his sword and cut Varqá to pieces before the eyes of his young son.

To the boy he said: "You have now seen how your father has been killed. Recant your beliefs and I will give you the highest position in the kingdom." The boy replied: "I have no other hope save martyrdom. My father has trained me all these years that I may reach to this great station." Then the boy, also, was murdered.

The tree of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh was watered with the blood of these divine souls. Under this tree all the children of men will find rest and peace.

The heavenly artists

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in London, in 1913, among his many callers was an actress who spoke to him of the theatre and her work. "We also have a theatre," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The actress immediately became all interest and enthusiasm. "Yes, where is it?" she said. "I should love to see it. Can I play in it?"

"Our theatre," 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered, smiling, "is built in a country where there is eternal springtime. The streets of that city are as clean as the surface of a mirror. The lights of that playhouse are the rays of the Sun of Reality, the actors of our drama are the Holy Manifestations of God, the audience is composed of pure and sanctified souls. They play their parts with the most delicate art. They deliver their words with power and potency. The stage of our theatre is the arena upon which is played the sublimest tragedy, the most terrible drama, the most thrilling and heart-moving events of life.

"Come and join our company. You have acted all your life upon the material stage. Now come and act on this celestial stage. Your fellow actors will assist you, will coach you in your part and, step by step, you will become a star shining in the galaxy of those heavenly inspired dramatists."

A musician visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London and asked for spiritual confirmation in the study of music.

"There are two kinds of music," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá "divine and earthly music. Divine music exhilarates the spirit, while earthly music has an effect upon the body. Divine music belongs to the Kingdom of God, earthly music is of the mundane world. I hope you will be confirmed to study both kinds of music so that you may be able to sing the anthems of heaven and the songs of this world."

To a portrait painter of New York City, who was in 'Akká, Palestine, with a party of visitors, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, picturing in glowing words the work of the heavenly artist: "As to your art, it is one of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh that art is identical with an act of worship, and you must go on with your art and improve in it; and through this very Cause you will be able to make great progress in your art, for you will be helped from above. Say, 'I have two arts, one physical, the other spiritual. The physical one is that I draw the images of men; my spiritual art is that I draw the images of the angels, and I hope that at last I shall [XIV:6:178] be able to draw pictures of the perfections of God. My physical art will at last end, but my spiritual art is everlasting. My physical art can be done by many, but my spiritual art is not the work of everyone.'

"Can you paint upon the page of the world the ideal pictures of the Celestial Concourse? The pictures which are in the ideal world are eternal. I wish you to become such an artist. Man can paint those ideal pictures upon the tablet of existence with the brush of deeds.

"The holy, divine Manifestations are all heavenly artists. Upon the canvas of creation, with the brush of their deeds and lives they paint immortal pictures which cannot be found in any

art museum of Europe or America. But you find the masterpieces of these spiritual artists in the hearts.”

XIV:6, September 1923 [XIV:6:180]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi

From a recent talk by Jináb-i-Fáḍil

When I was in Haifa I felt that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was planning to take a very long journey. We did not, however, grasp its significance. We thought that it was to be a physical journey. We did not realize that it was to be to the Kingdom of Abhá.

One day, in the Pilgrim House, it was said that the physical appearance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá showed signs of weariness. Some of us thought that this was due to the small amount of food which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ate. He always divided the food among the guests, a symbol of the way in which he distributed spiritual sustenance. He took almost nothing, himself, but a glass of milk or the yolk of an egg.

A group of friends were selected and their spokesman, a very old and spiritual Bahá’í went to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Overcome with emotion at the question which he was about to present, he could not speak a word. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took him by the hand, and encouraged him. The old man said: “The believers feel that there are two reasons for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s weariness. First, he does not eat enough. Secondly, he works too hard.” Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, very humbly, told him that he was mistaken. “Do you think,” he said, “that this material food has any effect upon my body? This food has no effect. Only good news from the believers, the glad tidings which comes from all parts of the world of the advancement of the Cause, of the unity of the believers, this, only, improves my health. As to the second point—I am going to take a long journey and at that time my spirit will rest.”

Later, we understood what the Master had meant. These talks showed that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had finished his work, was preparing for the great journey to the Kingdom.

Another day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that the Bahá’ís look to the light, many others look to the glass in which the light is shining. The Bahá’ís apprehend the inner reality of man and the light of God which is living in the Being of the Manifestations of God; others look to the outward appearance or the garment of names. The religionists who denied the Manifestations in the past clung to the garment, the glass, Bahá’ís turn to the reality of the light.

At the time when the Báb was being driven by his enemies from place to place there lived in a certain city a believer who had never seen him. He had heard that the Báb wore a green turban, as did all the descendants of Muḥammad. This believer went to see the Báb, and he looked for the green turban. It so happened that just before his arrival the Báb had taken off his green turban, putting on instead, a Persian cap. So the man did not recognize him. The Báb joked, saying: “I have heard that you have become a believer in the new movement. What has caused this change?”

The man answered: “The proof of Muḥammad was his eloquent Arabic book. I have heard that this young man brought through revelation several eloquent Arabic and Persian epistles which have the spirit of the word of Muḥammad.”

The Báb said: “Whoever thus reveals, you believe?”

He then began writing verses, like a crystal river. The man, overwhelmed, cried out that such an one must be a Manifestation. “But why does not he wear a green turban?”

So ‘Abdu’l-Bahá showed us that we should judge not by the garment, but by the heart beneath.

When but a youth Bahá’u’lláh, dressed at that time, as a government official and not in the

turban and flowing robes of the scholar, entered the classroom of a celebrated theologian. Many students were there. The teacher, who was deeply versed in religious philosophy, suggested, for discussion, some very difficult topics. Immediately the class entered into controversy, many voices being raised; and the teacher was not satisfied with the discussion.

Bahá'u'lláh then asked permission to speak. He soon solved the difficult problems. All had heard that he had never attended a school; yet no sooner did he begin to speak than they realized that he was an ocean of thought whose waves washed the shores of every mind in that audience. The teacher said: Behold! you have all studied! But here is one who has never studied, who gives luminous answers.”

When Shoghi Effendi returned to Haifa many did not realize that, though dressed differently, though young, yet he was the perfect mirror reflecting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. I was so fortunate as to be in Haifa when Shoghi Effendi arrived. It was as though he brought an ocean of hope, activity and longing to serve and to sacrifice. No sooner did he arrive than he began to write to all parts of the Bahá’í world. One who met him saw in him the same will, the same love, the same tenderness, the same overpowering desire to serve that he saw in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

In some of his last talks in Haifa, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “After my departure there will be a short time of quiet in the Bahá’í Cause. Then the flame of love and activity will leap forth and there will follow a great period of work, and proclamation of the Cause, of going out to all the highways and byways of the world.” This is coming to pass. First, a great shock, a feeling of loss. Now, since the return of Shoghi Effendi, and his correspondence with all parts of the world, there is a great resuscitation. The advices and exhortations in the last *Will and Testament* of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that none must rest, but must teach—these are being realized in the visible world.

This is the first year of the mission of Shoghi Effendi. To show him our great attraction in the Cause we must manifest great activity. It behoveth us that in this year we engage in extraordinary service and walk steadfastly toward the city of universal peace and the oneness of hearts and minds.

XIV:7, October 1923 [XIV:6:193]

The life of the Báb

Jináb-i-Fáḍil¹

Bordering on the Persian Gulf, in southern Persia, there is a very beautiful province, called Fárs. This province is quite large and, centuries before Christ, was the seat of Persia’s kings and rulers; it was also the home of the ancient Pársís. It is celebrated in Persian literature as a veritable throne of learning. Here, nearly seven hundred years ago, the great poets Háfíz and Sa’dí lived and died, and here they wrote their verses. Their tombs or shrines are visited every year by many people.

In Shíráz, the capital of Farce, there lived a family, of the merchant class, who for many generations had been noted for their piety, morality and generosity. Into this family there was born, in Shíráz, 20 October 1819, a child, the Báb. The Báb’s father, a merchant, died when the boy was quite young, and the eldest of his three uncles who was also a merchant, took care of him and brought him up. The Báb’s education was entirely elementary; and soon he went into business, becoming his uncle’s partner.

As a child he gave signs of remarkable precocity and, while still very young, wrote beautiful essays in Persian and Arabic. Those who read them were astonished at his knowledge for they were aware how meagre had been his education. The Arabic scholars were especially interested in his writings in that language and thought it very extraordinary that one without

¹ Details in this article should be confirmed by checking authoritative sources.

learning could write such perfect Arabic.

After he went into business his family noticed what seemed to them certain unusual traits in the young man; he would depart at midday, retire to a secluded spot and meditate, chant and read prayers, spending hours in deep spiritual communion. Observing this the Báb's family endeavoured to awaken in him a greater interest in acquiring wealth and fame, but they soon found that these things did not interest him.

In the Báb physical beauty was joined to that of the spirit. His hair was black and his dark brown eyes shone like stars. His features were symmetrical and his face most luminous. His carriage was majestic, yet simple and humble. The purity of his character was such that even his enemies could find no fault with him. It would be hard to imagine a life more spotless, more devoted to love for humanity. He reflected the light of the spirit and radiated to those around him such wonderful spiritual life that his superiority was generally recognized, and he was shown utmost honour and respect. When he entered a room he was given the seat of honour and others, involuntarily, waited for him to speak first. He was full of happiness, contentment and resignation; so it seemed as if the Spirit of God were shining from that young body. [XIV:6:194]

A few years before his declaration, in 1844, he left his uncle's office and journeyed to Karbilá, Mesopotamia, the centre of the Shí'ih Muslim world. The tomb of Ḥusayn, the martyred grandson of Muḥammad is in Karbilá, and every year thousands of people made a pilgrimage to this shrine, where long prayers were read. When the Báb repeated his own prayers before the assemblage the people turned from the usual prayers and gave all their attention to him. The Muslims had, in Arabic and Persian, many prayers which seemed to them beautiful beyond description. Therefore they were prepared to recognize the sublime beauty and the inspiration of the Báb's prayers. He remained in Karbilá several months and many people were drawn to him because of his inspired utterance and the holiness of his life.

At the age of twenty-three the Báb married a young girl, a relative of his family. A little son was born to them who lived but a few months. And shortly after, the Báb was apprehended and thrown into prison.

The religious outlook of the Muslim world had become very dark; the people had lost their spiritual vision and held to dogma as spiritual truth. About this time God inspired the hearts of a number of men to look deeper into their religion and study its true meaning. This school of men in their teachings made frequent mention of a Star of Guidance which was about to dawn. In 1843 they set out on a journey to the distant parts of Persia to try and discover this Master of the New Age. Before starting they gathered together in a mosque and for forty days fasted that they might be prepared for the momentous journey. They had been taught that there were nineteen proofs by which they might recognize the Great Master, the coming One, one of which was his spiritual power which, even if he spoke not a word, would draw the people to him. This power they were to find in the person of a handsome youth. They made a compact that he who discovered the Truth should at once communicate it to the others. Then they started off, in different directions.

Mullá Ḥusayn, a very celebrated and learned man was one of this group. He remembered having met at Karbilá a singularly spiritual youth, who came from Shíráz, and he decided to journey to Shíráz and try to find him. Arriving in that city he made inquiries which led him to the young man's home. To his great joy the door was opened by the Báb, himself, who welcomed him as a guest and bade him enter. Then the Báb told him how, when about to leave home early that morning for his office, there had come to him the foreknowledge that great and glorious news was about to be made known. He knew that the coming of this guest was a part of the good news. So, here in the rose garden of the Báb's home, was laid the foundation of the Great Cause.

The Báb inquired of Mullá Ḥusayn by what sign would he recognize the Great Star. And Mullá Ḥusayn gave the nineteen proofs.

Suddenly the Báb said: “Do you see these signs in me?”

Mullá Ḥusayn was made almost breathless by the question. However, after a moment’s consideration he said: “Yes, I see all the signs but one in you. That one sign is this: the Great One should have extraordinary knowledge. This important sign of wisdom and knowledge I do not see in you.” He said this, thinking that great knowledge must be acquired in colleges and universities.

The Báb talked of other matters, tea was served, and the hours passed.

Later, while conversing upon very spiritual subjects, the Báb again said: “Do you see these signs in me?”

Mullá Ḥusayn did not make immediate reply but led the conversation into channels which it seemed to him must make apparent this knowledge. [XIV:6:195]

The Báb then left the room, and Mullá Ḥusayn, seeing some books upon the table, took one up and began reading. He was astonished to find that both the ideas and phraseology were entirely new and unfolded the divine mysteries. He read page after page and when the Báb returned inquired the name of the author of the book.

The Báb replied: “A young man.”

Mullá Ḥusayn exclaimed: “Read some of these words yourself! Who has written them?”

The Báb said: “You see. You see.”

Then he placed the book beside him, and began to speak eloquently, in a higher language. The words flowed from him like a river. Mullá Ḥusayn listened spellbound, for these were the erudite phrases of the book. He became so intoxicated with divine joy that he was like a man beside himself; so the Báb again spoke in his ordinary manner, and gave him tea. Mullá Ḥusayn threw himself at the feet of the Báb and cried: “I must go and proclaim the truth!” But the Báb said: “No, this is not the time.”

When Mullá Ḥusayn, the first disciple, was completely converted he longed to bring his associates to the Báb but the Báb told him that, for the present, he must just tell them that the Star of Hope had arisen, but not of his whereabouts.

Mullá Ḥusayn returned to his friends who found him so transformed that they besought him to tell them if he had found the Truth. So, one by one, he took them to the Báb, and the first class, numbering seventeen, was formed. Qurratu’l-‘Ayn also became one of these disciples. With the Báb himself they were called the Nineteen Letters of the Living.

The Báb called himself “Báb” because he was the “gate” of the New Age. The first disciple was given the name “Bábu’l-Báb”, for through him the people came to know the truth. Another spiritual person among the eighteen “Letters” who recognized the Báb from afar and instantly believed in him, was Quddús. When the eighteen Letters of the Living were complete the Báb became the Point of Knowledge around which they gathered; eighteen apostles and one Point, making the first circle, the first unity.

The Báb gave his disciples certain wonderful epistles bidding them travel throughout Persia and, especially, to Karbilá that they might teach the religious leaders of the Muslim world. These early apostles were fearless and full of enthusiasm. Whenever they entered a city they at once gathered the people about them and proclaimed aloud the good tidings of the New Day and the coming of a new spiritual dispensation. As their students were of the Muslim world they referred to the Qur’án and its prophecies concerning this day and the

coming of the Point of Knowledge, explaining that they were fulfilled in the Báb.

In the Qur'án it is said that no one could give to the world a book to compare with the Qur'án. And from the time of Muḥammad until the year 1260 of the Hegira this was true. Then the Báb, through divine power, wrote with the same brilliant and profound knowledge. In order to prove this power to the people he called to them in his epistles, saying that he would answer abstruse questions without recourse to any book. So he was asked many difficult questions. And he wrote the answers with the rapidity of lightning, each page a masterpiece in thought, in style and beauty of penmanship. Again and again it was proved that his writings were not of the intellect, but were pure inspiration.

The Báb now went to the holy city, Mecca, the centre of Islám, to which thousands of people journey every year. The journey was made by sea, and one day a terrible storm arose. It seemed as though the ship would sink any moment and the passengers were in a state of great excitement, when some of them noticed the Báb, sitting quietly, apart [XIV:6:197] from the others, in deep meditation. He seemed so undisturbed by the impending peril that they exclaimed: "Do you not realize that we shall all be drowned?" But, with perfect serenity, he continued his meditations, and soon the storm passed and the sea became calm.

Among the passengers on this ship was a man of spiritual insight. He recognized the quality of the courage and serenity in the Báb and later became one of the Letters of the Living.

While the Báb was at Mecca the three disciples who first accepted him started out from Shíráz and began fearlessly proclaiming the message. Mullá Şádiq, an eminent and very popular Muslim, head of a mosque and with a following of hundreds of people, was one of their converts. It was the custom to proclaim, four times a day, from the turret of the mosque: "God is great and Muḥammad is His Prophet!" Mullá Şádiq told the Mu'adh^hin [Muezzin] to call out also that a great Gate of Knowledge had appeared. He, himself, mounted his pulpit and read from the writings of the Báb profound interpretations of the Qur'án. This sufficed to arouse in opposition some of the people of the community; others recognized the mercy and justice of this message to establish the Kingdom of God. The mullás of the city became so disturbed at these happenings that they appealed to the Governor, as fanatical as they, who gathered the people together in a large hall and demanded the presence of Mullá Şádiq.

When Mullá Şádiq entered the audience hall his presence bespoke such majesty that the people were impelled to rise and show him deference. The Governor inquired concerning the new teachings. Mullá Şádiq replied: "You are asleep! You must rouse yourselves and listen to this call for the One whom you are awaiting has appeared, to fulfil the prophecies. This is his Book and he, himself, is at Mecca!"

But this great message was rejected, and the three disciples of the Báb were taken into custody. Their beards were burned, holes were pierced in their noses, they were bastinadoed, and made to ride through the city seated backwards on donkeys. They accepted this treatment with such resignation that the people began to open their eyes. They were banished from that city, and went to other places to teach the Cause.

By this time word had come from Búshihr on the Persian Gulf, that the Báb was returning from his pilgrimage to Mecca. The Governor then sent guards to bring him back to Shíráz. When he arrived in the city the state authorities and the clergy met in a great conclave and flung at him numberless questions. These he answered with such wisdom that his friends were all confirmed in the teachings and his enemies could find no fault with him. Nevertheless it was decided that he must abide in the home of his relatives, that no one could visit him, and that his teachings must not be spread among the people.

But the idols of imagination were now broken. The people were ready to investigate, and

many eminent men, seeking information, made their way to the Báb.

Then a terrible epidemic appeared in Shíráz, hundreds of people were stricken, and fear and consternation fell upon all. The Governor, when his son fell ill, felt that this had come upon them because of their persecution of the Báb. So he went to the Báb and fervently besought him to help his son. When the son was healed the Governor was so overjoyed that he permitted the Báb to leave the city that he might bring happiness to others.

Quietly the Báb left Shíráz and travelled to the city of Işfahán, in the centre of Persia. The rumour of his coming having reached those regions the people ran out to meet him, and the Governor, Manúchihir Khán, a deeply religious man, welcomed him, and became a believer. The radiant, spiritual happiness of the Báb, the glowing beauty of the [XIV:6:198] love of God which he manifested, drew hundreds of people to him. The doors were thrown open, that all might enter, might meet the Báb; listen to his words and be quickened. Among those who visited him during these first days of his stay in Işfahán were many important personages, whose presence inspired the people with confidence. Then some of the clergy, seeing the Báb's large following, feared for their own popularity. The Governor told them that, since this was a theological matter, a meeting would be called, and all their questions could be put to the Báb. Reports were taken of this meeting. These reports exist now, and the questions asked were most childish. The Báb in replying threw such wonderful new light upon these questions that they were utterly unable to comprehend his words.

The Governor was much disturbed. Although he favoured the Báb, yet he could not risk his position. So he said, to the mullás: "I will exile him for your sake." He ordered a cavalcade to accompany the Báb on his departure, and instructed the guards to bring him back. So the cavalcade left the city through one gate, and brought the Báb back through another. He stayed with the Governor for forty days, and many people visited him and received the message. He wrote many volumes upon his teachings during this period of his stay in Işfahán. The Governor became so enkindled that he wished to take radical steps to spread the Cause. But the Báb said: "This is a day of faith and persuasion. Force cannot accomplish your purpose. We must teach the people through self-sacrifice and non-resistance." He also told the Governor that his (the Governor's) days were numbered, and that ere long he would enter the Kingdom of God. On the fortieth day of the Báb's concealment in the palace of the Governor the Governor passed away.

The new Governor was neither just nor good. Finding the Báb in the palace he told the populace. They raised a great hue and cry and demanded that he be banished from Işfahán. Therefore, by special permission of the Sháh, the Báb was sent to Ṭihrán.

While these events were taking place the eighteen Letters of the Living were travelling north, south, east and west proclaiming the teachings with such spiritual fervour that their number had increased to a host of believers. It was like a great conflagration. When the Báb's teaching had spread throughout Persia the Sháh wished to know of its message. On his staff there was a mullá in whom he had great confidence. This mullá he sent to Shíráz to visit the Báb that he might ascertain the nature of his teachings and report to the Sháh. This mullá became one of the Báb's greatest apostles and finally gave his life for the Cause.

The Báb wished to meet the Sháh, personally, also the Grand Vazír [Vizier] and the Cabinet. He hoped that they might be persuaded to give heed to the revelation; then the people of Persia might also become enlightened and enter into a new, spiritual life. Therefore, when he arrived, in his journey to Ṭihrán, at a village nine miles distant from the capital, he sent a letter to the Sháh. But the Grand Vizier prevented the Sháh from meeting the Báb. He influenced the Sháh to write him that it was impossible to grant an interview, giving as excuse that the frontier was being attacked by an enemy. The Sháh then had the Báb taken to northern Persia, there to await a change in conditions, saying he would send for him later. On this

journey from Tīhrán the Báb's bodyguard, rough, uncouth tribesmen, became so transformed through his spiritual power that before the journey's end they were ardent followers, ready to do anything whatsoever that he desired.

In banishing the Báb, at this time, from place to place, the guards made it a custom to stop outside the towns and villages that no one might know of his [XIV:6:199] presence. But despite this precaution the news of his approach would spread and when they drew near the towns the people would meet him and, often, bribe the guards for permission to talk with him and receive his spiritual instructions. Thus this plan of banishment which, it was believed, would exterminate the teachings, proved a failure, for all those who came in touch with the Báb were irresistibly drawn to him. Even the Governor of this province was attracted, and allowed the people free access to his presence.

Then the enemies of the movement again became active and influenced the Sháh to command that the Báb be sent to a very remote castle, near the extreme northern boundary of Persia. The Governor, here, was an exceedingly harsh man, and he kept the Báb's presence absolutely secret. His followers travelled and searched, in every direction, but no one could discover where he was hidden.

In this castle the Báb's imprisonment was extremely severe. He was allowed no light, and completely isolated from the outside world. However, he now had the time to write many divine teachings, which gradually spread throughout Persia. During these days a fire was lighted in the hearts of his followers, which flamed forth and enkindled others and many awoke from the deep sleep of centuries and started out to travel and teach. Then the enemies became more active than ever and determined utterly to extinguish the Cause. The followers of the Báb were obliged at times to band together and defend themselves, bodily, behind trenches, in order to resist the violent attacks made upon them, in different parts of the country. A new Sháh, seventeen years of age, now reigned and the country passed through a period of confusion. More than ever were efforts made to extinguish the flame of the movement, because of a prevailing idea that, in this way, peace could be established in the land.

The siege of Mázindarán, which occurred about this time, has no parallel in religious history. About four hundred of the followers of the Báb were gathered together in a jungle. Here they were surrounded by several thousand guards, armed with guns and cannon, and reinforced by a populace numbering many, many thousands. In the centre of the jungle there was an ancient shrine and here the believers entrenched themselves, and a siege began which lasted for nine months. During the last three months of the siege the little party were almost starving. They ate their horses, and then boiled the leather of the harness, and ate grass and herbs to sustain life. Yet they spent the time in prayer and spiritual communion, and the forces of the government were utterly unable to overcome them.

Then the general decided upon other tactics. He sent to the besieged the Book of the Qur'án upon which he had written a covenant or agreement to the effect that if they would come out, and go their way, their lives would be spared. Believing in the sincerity of this document they filed out into the open. They were asked to lay down their arms, and when this was done a feast was spread before them. While partaking of this feast the soldiers charged upon them and massacred them all, to a man.

Two other events, of a like nature, occurred in southern and central Persia.

The movement seemed threatened with complete destruction. Although the followers of the Báb made heroic defence, the government authorities slaughtered them right and left. Yet, strange to say, their numbers steadily increased, and the longing for truth flamed brighter and brighter.

At last, in desperation, the Sháh and his prime minister determined to do away with the Báb himself. Word was sent to the Governor of Tabríz to bring him out from his prison. An important meeting was then held at which many dignitaries were present. The Báb was [XIV:6:200] questioned, declared a heretic, and sentenced to death. An order was issued that he be bastinadoed. But, at the risk of their lives, the servants of the court refused to carry out these instructions. They were filled with respect and admiration for the noble prisoner. This so angered the enemies that one of them rose in his wrath and himself perpetrated the deed.

The proclamation went forth that the Báb was condemned to death, and great excitement prevailed in the city. On July ninth, 1850, he was brought out, with bare head and feet, and compelled to walk through the streets to his execution while thousands followed him.

One of the most devoted disciples of the Báb, who had been with him in prison, requested that he be martyred with his master. So these two were fastened with ropes to the wall of the citadel, in the open square, and a regiment of Armenian soldiers were commanded to fire upon them. They all fired, at the same moment. When the smoke cleared away the body of the disciple was discovered riddled with bullets. But the Báb was nowhere to be seen. At first it was thought that a miracle had been wrought. But, upon investigation, the Báb was found in a room in the citadel. The bullets had merely severed the ropes binding him to the wall, and he had fallen to the ground, unharmed. He was brought back and the regiment commanded to fire again. But they refused to do so, saying, among themselves, that the Báb must be a great saint. Another regiment, of Muslim soldiers, was brought, and this time their bullets pierced his body, leaving his face quite free of disfigurement. Thus the soul of the Báb ascended to heaven.

His body was carried and dropped outside the city, before the eyes of the populace, as a sign of disgrace. A small number of guards were set to watch the place. While most of them were asleep some of the disciples of the Báb came and bribed the two who remained awake, and obtained possession of the body. They carried it to a silk factory and it was carefully wrapped in silks, and taken secretly to Tìhrán, where it remained for many years. After the departure of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had the body brought to Mount Carmel where it was placed in a tomb and now all pilgrims who journey to this region visit this shrine.

Two years after the martyrdom of the Báb great trouble came upon his followers through a few fanatical disciples who in their ignorance made an attempt upon the life of the Sháh which resulted in a violent persecution of the whole movement. The Sháh, very despotic and powerful, was at his summer palace. These misguided disciples secreted themselves in the garden, and, as he came forth from the palace they rushed forward, with pistols. The Sháh was slightly wounded and several of the conspirators were killed. Believing this to mean that the movement was opposed to the government the Sháh gave orders that all the believers in Persia be searched out. In Tìhrán many were found; among these were about forty eminent men who were placed in an underground prison where they were heavily chained and given little food. Each day one or two of this number were taken out, by order of the Sháh, and executed, after being subjected to every kind of torture. The Sháh divided the believers among groups representing the various professions and trades, to be killed by each group according to their particular method. The spiritual fortitude of these martyrs was so wonderful that some of their enemies even were converted. While undergoing utmost torture they chanted the glorious verses of the Báb, and one of them danced during his execution. Permission was given by the court to kill all believers and confiscate their possessions. It was believed that anyone who killed a follower of the Báb would ascend to heaven.

A regiment of soldiers was sent to destroy the home of Bahá'u'lláh, and [XIV:6:201] men, women and children, nineteen in all, were captured. They were stoned and thrown into prison. This, it was thought, would completely eradicate the movement.

Although the six years of the Báb ministry were spent, largely, in prison and in exile, and he was constantly surrounded by guards and enemies, he was at all times peaceful and happy, always radiating heavenly joy. He was so surrounded by enemies that his friends and followers had the greatest difficulty in obtaining a meeting with him, and yet, thousands and thousands of the people of Persia, of high and of low degree, partook of his teachings, became their embodiment, and spread them to all parts of the country.

During this long persecution the Báb found time not only to dictate many teachings but, with his own pen, to write volumes of exquisite calligraphy. In Persia, to this day, beautiful penmanship is regarded as an art. Those who are fortunate enough to possess some of the delicate writings of the Báb consider them a most valuable heritage. Many of the Báb's writings were, unfortunately, destroyed. Often, when his followers were being persecuted and driven from their homes they buried in the ground, before fleeing, his writings which they prized so highly. Returning at some later time they would find that moisture had almost effaced them.

The teachings of the Báb

The teaching of the Báb to which his persecutors objected most was that man should be delivered from superstition and dogma. Living in Persia, it was necessary to consider the Muslim world; therefore a large part of his teaching referred to questions asked him regarding the Qur'án. He called to the people of Islám to consider the inner and important meaning therein. He taught that he himself was but the "gate" or door to the "City of Revelation", that divine City which would be revealed. He taught that a Great Personage, then living, but hidden behind the veils, would come to them and teach them a divine revelation and would usher in the new era of universal brotherhood. He often addresses this invisible Being in his writings, saying: "O, my Master! O, my Lord! I have accepted every persecution in order to prepare the people for Thy coming so that when Thou shouldst unveil Thyself they might be ready to meet Thee!"

A great question of the Muslim religious world was that of the "return", the belief being that when the new Gate of Knowledge appeared many holy souls would return and be present with him in flesh and blood. This question was given utmost importance, and it is for this reason that the Báb said the qualities and attributes of these holy souls had appeared, through his apostles.

Another question which the Islamic world addressed to the Báb was that of the "Resurrection", which was understood, literally, as it is by the Christians who have the same teaching. The Báb explained that the resurrection is the coming of the Manifestation of God, when religion is renewed. He said that his own coming was the Lesser Resurrection; but the Great Manifestation, of whom he so frequently spoke, would usher in the Great Resurrection. God sitting upon the throne, he explained, meant that the body of the Manifestation would be the throne of the Holy Spirit. Paradise, meant the recognition of the Lord in the Manifestation and living in accordance with His teachings. Hell was selfishness, fanaticism and doubt. He said that resurrection, therefore, did not mean the resurrection of flesh and blood from the tomb, but a spiritual resurrection, an awakening of inner potentialities and spiritual faculties, brought about by the recognition of the Manifestation of God.

The Báb divided the revelation of the Manifestations of God into five parts. The first part deals with those writings [XIV:6:202] which explain the mystery of divinity. The second part includes the prayers, communes, supplications revealed by the prophets and addressed to God. These, when recited, draw man unto the spirit of divine harmony and a higher state of spirituality. The third part is concerned with the interpretations of the heavenly books,

explaining the symbolism and hidden meanings from which man has been veiled for past centuries. The prophets and Manifestations from time immemorial have spoken in metaphor and symbol and their meaning it has not always been easy for people to understand. But the Great Teachers themselves have been able to throw a flood of light upon the esoteric teachings of the former Great Teachers; they alone can fully grasp and explain the significance of the sacred words. The fourth applies to the metaphysical, scientific and theological questions asked by the scholars and thinkers of the age. The fifth part is the essence of the Teachings.

The writings of the Báb may be similarly divided. First, his explanations of divinity, so subtle, so transcendental, so divine in quality that a mind and soul especially equipped are required, to understand them. Second, the prayers which are filled with ecstasy and rapture. Third, answers to questions regarding interpretations of the Islamic writings, as the teachings of the Báb have largely to do with the Muslim world. Fourth, treatises on scientific and philosophical questions. Fifth, the verses of the Báb stating that when the Great Manifestation appears He will cancel or repeal as many of these teachings as are not fitted to the exigencies of the time.

The Báb declared that he had brought in but the Lesser Resurrection because his message was circumscribed, limited to the Islamic people and to one part of the world. But there would arise a new consciousness, a universal resurrection, and this new spiritual consciousness would sweep over the entire world.

XIV:7, October 1923 [XIV:7:203]

The need of the Bahá'í Movement in Europe

Stanwood Cobb

Territet, Switzerland, August 1923

As one travels through the different countries of Europe one is deeply impressed with the tragic and desperate situation with which the whole civilization of that continent is threatened. The hardships under which so many races are suffering, and the dangers of much worse events in the coming years, are due not to physical or necessary causes, but purely to a state of mind. It is the double quality of fear and hate which is spreading the gigantic shadow of oncoming ruin over all of continental Europe.

This state of mind, which would seem the easiest thing in the world to change, is in reality the hardest. It is easier for humanity to tunnel mountains, bridge oceans and conquer the air than to change this psychology of disunion into a psychology of union and fraternity. The sad truth must be told, that the war has failed as yet to turn the hearts and thoughts of the great races of Europe into ways of peace. One nation only, Austria, has learned a lesson and has renounced war thoroughly from heart and soul.

In Europe I am reminded of the advice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, not to give our interest too much to earthly politics, but to the politics of the Kingdom of God. One sees here clearly the futility of earthly politics. The most statesmanly brain, the most astute intelligence, brooding over European politics ad infinitum, could find no earthly way out of the dilemma. There are no sides one can take. There is no one nation that by a sincere effort toward justice is leading the way to peace and stability in Europe. All are wrong. All are sharing in a guilt which if continued can only be paid for with more blood.

So one wearies of reading the newspapers of the different countries, of discussing with different nationals the present situation, with any hope of arriving at a human solution or of being able to take sides with right against wrong. All is wrong here, in the play of politics; and the right is only to be found in the application of Bahá'u'lláh's laws to the crying needs of a war-intoxicated and bewildered humanity.

Here and there, of course; are individuals who have the heart toward peace; here and there are organizations which are working splendidly for harmony rather than disharmony between nations. But the general tide and current of thought in continental Europe is no longer toward internationalism, but toward a nationalism, supported by war.

Hence to those sincere and eager souls who in such a situation despair bitterly of the future, the Bahá'í Message comes welcomed and receptively. They have no argument against it, because desiring peace and prosperity for their country and for the whole world, they can see no way of attaining their desires unless by such spiritual means as the Cause offers.

How clear and evident now is the word of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that no human effort or organization can bring about the ideal conditions for humanity! Those movements here toward fraternity, toward international brotherhood and peace, which sprang up with sincere intention and flourished with a vivid hope in the years immediately subsequent to the war, are now languishing. They have no power or life. The miasmatic overgrowths of hate and fear are overshadowing them, choking them out. It is very plain to any intelligent person that these now feeble calls to peace cannot become effective. Not but what such organizations are good and praiseworthy. All such present secular efforts toward brotherhood, though on the plane of action ineffective, are preparing people to take part later on in establishing the Kingdom [XIV:7:204] of God. Bahá'ís should give their sympathy and help to all such movements—but their heart and central energy to the holy Cause of God.

It is strange how this terrible and heart-moving spectacle of a war-mad Europe strengthens one's faith in the Bahá'í Movement. The reason as well as the heart becomes convinced that only this Cause can prevail against such hatreds and animosities. The Cause begins to stand out like the cloud that led by day and the pillar of fire that led by night the people of God through the wilderness. In America we cannot as yet see the grand station of the Cause, because the life of the people is going on prosperously and happily without it. Pray God it may not need such disasters in America to open our eyes to the need and the reality of the Cause of God.

More consoling and uplifting can be my next letter, in which I shall tell of the holy sweet souls we have met, brothers and sisters in the Cause shedding their little rays of light in darkened countries; and of sincere, earnest souls to whom we gave the Message. These are things to make one glad. This is the politics of the Kingdom.

XIV:7, October 1923 [XIV:7:204]

Can religion and science agree?

Louis G. Gregory

Can religion and science agree? An affirmative answer to this question, generally understood and accepted, will bring peace to numberless people and set at rest a matter that has caused centuries of controversy. Our hope is not the repose of inaction, but the realization of that peace which blends into harmony all forces in human development. The question itself is in view of the fact that for long ages past and for the most part at present, there has been and is conflict between the devotees of science on the one hand and of religion on the other. This strife is not found in reality. It has brought only evil results and can never be justified. For both religion and science are light; but strife grows out of darkness.

Religion clearly apprehended, sanctions every truth discovered and conveyed to us by scientific research. In an age which unfolds so many wonders of science, great light and cheer come through the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that, "Religion must be reasonable; in so far as it contradicts the known and proved facts of science it ceases to be religion and becomes superstition."

It is wonderful to have the mind brightened by scientific knowledge. It is marvellous to have the heart purified by the fire of divine love. Both gifts are sacred and essential to human well-being. But until their unity is widely realized, discord will rend the best elements of the world.

Harmony between religion and science does not imply that pure religion must agree with every scientific theory. There are many such theories which are not sustained by adequate proofs, but rest only upon the imagination of men. Such theories, like the dogmas of religion, often change. The ancient Greeks, although not without fame for learning, once believed that the sun was a ball of fire drawn by horses which daily crossed the sky. Tradition had it that old Sol once lost control of his team and as a result went too near a man's field, burning his wheat. Later the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, with its cycles and epicycles, held sway over the scientific world. Contemporary scientists are practically unanimous in their acceptance of the belief that the entire human race is evolved from common animal ancestry. But these and other theories are all confined in the realm of [XIV:7:205] conjecture and speculation. Scientists cannot justly revile those who refuse to accept what is not proved. On the other hand, religion should not oppose the well-established truths of science, such as the law of motion, the law of cause and effect, the rotundity of the earth, the conservation of energy, the indestructibility of matter, the law of gravitation, the conic sections which form the orbits of heavenly bodies, the great antiquity of this world and of the universe, etc., etc.

It is evident that man, with all his acquired power and knowledge, creates nothing. His inventions are not creations, but discoveries of the secrets of nature. These secrets or laws are classified and arranged and to that branch of knowledge the term science is applied. The creation of religion is also beyond the power of man. That variety of religion which man evolves from his own minor or lower consciousness is but a sorry imitation. It abounds in useless forms, ceremonies and creeds. It leads to a labyrinth of doubt and gloom. It bewilders the judgement but fails to comfort the heart. But when religion and science are both genuine, they have their common origin in the divine Logos, or Creative Word, which, according to the Bahá'í teachings, is the first emanation from the unknown and unknowable Essence of Divinity. It is this supreme Power, bestowing light and knowledge, and periodically revealed to mankind through the perfect man, such as Moses, Jesus and Bahá'u'lláh, which calls into being sciences, arts, virtues and religion. Every grade and element of existence, according to its capacity, reflects the light of the divine Manifestation. The Spirit of the Word gives life to man and the universe. Great, indeed, is the mystery of the Word; Beyond the Word the aspiration of man cannot soar. The hope, the illumination, the heaven of man are in the Word. The Word itself implies its mysterious and Mighty Speaker.

The successive civilizations of the world have all grown out of the various revelations of religion which have come to mankind through the transcendent Might and Favour of God. Pure religion ever gives its sanction to true science, for in spirit they are one. The Bahá'í Revelation accentuates spiritual graces and also brings the greatest stimulus and encouragement to scientific studies. Spiritual faith is not weakened, but confirmed by reason. Every power in man should pay homage to his Creator. When the body, mind and heart all consciously reflect the divine Light and accept its Guidance man becomes happily free from other dependence. When religion, however, becomes corrupted by the ambitions of men it is no longer the paradise of truth, but becomes the wilderness of error. For the superstitions and imitations which pretend to be religion always make war upon science. And a superficial understanding of science may make one arrogant toward religion. But the great scientists of the ages always discover in their laboratories those signs and wonders which make them humble. They bow with reverence before these signs, knowing full well that such phenomena did not create themselves. Great scientists of the past, such as Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle and Pliny, were confirmed in their belief in God through the discoveries of science

and philosophy. The greatest lights of science and philosophy in modern times are reverent in their attitude toward true religion. Professor Huxley speaks of "true science and true religion as twin sisters", and declares that "the separation of one from the other is likely to prove the death of both." Herbert Spencer, while admitting for the scientist a pride before the traditions and authorities of men, yet bears witness to humility "before the impenetrable veil which hides the Absolute."

He further declares:

"Only the sincere man of science, ... one who through lower truth seeks the highest, can truly know how utterly beyond not only human knowl- [XIV:7:206] edge, but human conception, is the Universal Power of which Nature, and Life, and Thought are manifestations."

Within a few years a report was circulated by the press that the American wizard, Thomas A. Edison, was a sceptic, a story which was promptly and vigorously denied by Mr Edison. Yet it may be understood how all these eminent men would be classified as agnostics and sceptics by those who mistake ceremonies for the reality of faith. These men of genius have too large, clear and penetrating a vision to be misled by the idols of human thoughts. But when they discover reality, in either religion or science, they are made happy. No doubt they would all react favourably to the sentiment expressed by the Victorian poet Tennyson, whose conception of peace and progress in both religion and science so clearly reflected the Light of Bahá'u'lláh:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

The Holy Scriptures of all religions reveal the Word of God. The universe at large and all that is therein unfold the works of God through his Word. All that God gives is light; man brings darkness by veils that cover his own heart and mind. Evil is only the misuse of good. How many of the world's greatest scientists are today classified as enemies of religion because they cannot honestly subscribe to those tenets of error which mask as religion and which sometimes are commercialized and are sold for a consideration! And how many religionists, even sometimes the honest in heart, are so veiled by ignorance as to revile science, a blessing to the world from their own Creator! The creation of God is ever bright and harmonious with the melodies of love and unity; but those who fail to use their own highest possibilities of study will never soar beyond the abyss of darkness and rancour.

It has come to pass, even in this day of popular education, that several prominent clergymen have denied the rotundity of the earth, no doubt led by the misreading of their own Bible. One declared that although the philosophers teach that the earth is round, yet the Holy Bible speaks of the four corners of the earth and it is obvious that anything that has four corners cannot be round. So he passed that back to the philosophers, who, he believed, were quite vanquished in argument.

A theologian was once explaining to a rural conclave the creation of man.

"God," he declared, "created man out of wet clay, and then set him up against the palings to dry."

"Well in that case," asked inquisitive Deacon Brown, "who set up those palings?"

"Now Brother Brown," replied the parson, "if you are going to ask such questions as that you will destroy the whole system of theology!"

Despite the veneration which many people have for their own notions, it becomes more and more apparent that theology may be upset without harm to either religion or science.

The clear cause of the conflict between religion and science is the failure of each spiritual generation, or dispensation, to understand its own Holy Book. Truth, divinely revealed, wears two dresses. One is the simple statement, "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little." This all men can grasp, though unfortunately few apply. The second dress is the symbols and parables found in all the sacred writings. These, the hard shells say, must be interpreted and believed literally, or else man is an apostate and infidel whose soul is lost. Even though such literal interpretation sets at naught science and reason, betrays spiritual blindness, and is at variance with all the laws of God's universe, this school of dogma will expel and persecute those who dissent from their own narrow and limited views. The failure of orthodoxy to understand its symbols led to the crucifixion of Jesus, and the same enmity, born of ignorance consumes the souls [XIV:7:207] of men whenever a Divine Messenger appears in the world.

"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Thou that killest the Prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee!" This was the pathetic lamentation of long ago.

Today Bahá'u'lláh says:

"I beckon thee to life; but thou preferrest death!"

It is both sad and strange that darkness is preferred to light. But the eternal hope is now that great Light which harmonizes religion and science, and the Promise is that all creation will eventually see its splendour. It is the Light of God which makes religion reasonable and clearly reveals its harmony with science. The Supreme Authority establishes this for all time. Now we know that those sacred writings, revealed by the Prophets of God, which on their face appear to contradict science were never meant by their inspired authors to be taken literally. Their meanings are veiled by symbol. Therefore, each statement, if not understood, should be weighed in the balance of science, reason, and spiritual insight. If it agrees with the truths of science, it should be accepted without question. If it contradicts the proved facts of science, which are also of God, it is symbolic and not to be taken literally. Prayer, a reverent attitude toward the Word, a study of the Bahá'í Revelation, will unfold its inner significance, which is truly a divine favour. It is not the divine purpose that sincere seekers should be veiled in this day, but rather that all should discover the Great Light of Reality. The true Educators, who are the Holy Manifestations, would awaken in man's consciousness the unity of truth. Man's light, joy, and reverence will increase with this great blessing.

A child reads the fables of Aesop and thinks that the animals actually conversed. But a mature person, perusing the same fables, enjoys their entertaining humour, but with clear discernment sees the purpose in the moral. In much the same way, the Messengers of God in the past, sometimes in the present, have conveyed great spiritual laws in the form of symbol. As these luminous Points so often appeared in the mystic East, they have used those figures of speech and vehicles of expression which were understood by their disciples, revealing light and knowledge according to the advancement of their followers. There, speech abounds in symbols. Even a little light upon those symbols which appear in the Holy Books will bring clearer understanding to those who read. In the light of the Bahá'í teachings it is made clear that water is a symbol of knowledge; fire, Divine Love; tree, a Holy Manifestation; birds, human thoughts; animals, nations and peoples; dragons, religious orders or dynasties; clouds, changes of ordinances, alterations opposed of men; hell, deprivation or ignorance; heaven, knowledge, the Divine Will, exaltation, etc.; Sun, a Holy Manifestation; Moon, successor, or first believer; stars, the clergy, or religious doctors, etc. These are very few of [the] many symbols that appear with meanings that sometimes vary. As we read them, they bring new insight in reading the first eleven chapters of Genesis, which are all in symbol, as well as many other parts of the Bible and of other revelations. Wonderful significances are found in such stories as the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the plagues of Egypt, Satan, Jonah and the whale,

the dead and their graves, the resurrection, the temptation in the wilderness, the rivers of Paradise, etc. Parables unfold the stages of man's progress, from the material to the spiritual, and his condition of utter helplessness and misery when deprived of Divine Favour. But these significances are veiled from those who insist upon literal interpretation and are at war with science.

The origin of science and the inspiration to man's acquirement are in the Word. Whatever of reality man discovers today is his reaction to that marvellous Spirit which Bahá'u'lláh [XIV:7:208] brings to the world. One familiar with the theory of the electron, now popular among the scientists, may well be thrilled in reading in the *Seven Valleys* of Bahá'u'lláh this wonderful statement:

"Whatever mote thou splittest thou wilt find therein a sun!"

After gazing into the starry heavens, and then upon a piece of radium, it is no less thrilling to read the following passage from the *Súriy-i-Haykal*:

"Should we desire to show forth from an atom, suns without beginning and without end, We are indeed able and We can make them all appear in a moment by My Command. Should We wish to produce from a drop of water the seas of the heaven and earth and from a letter the science of what was and is, We are indeed able—verily it is an easy matter."

How marvellous, how overwhelming, is divine knowledge! Man is awe-struck by the Power of the Word! Should he not be a witness to the ceaseless flow of creation which ever meets his astonished vision? He is ever a child if he reads the Book of Life without striving to perceive its meaning. The soul is enriched by both material and divine sciences. 'Abdu'l-Bahá ever beckons us to knowledge! May no false pride or vainglory rob us of the divine gift! May reverence that is meet increase our capacity to know! For whatever the progress of man, the True One remains, exalted in His greatness and Glory,

"A sea upon which no one can sail!"

Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá because of their Revelation and interpretation of heavenly laws, making religion both rational and spiritual, have attracted to their standard some of the world's most powerful minds. Leo Tolstoy, the hope of Russia, drew his light and inspiration from Bahá'u'lláh. Arminius Vambéry, the profound Orientalist, hailed with delight his meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Prof. Cheyne of Oxford University and Prof. Browne of Cambridge have added their tributes to the chorus from many countries and climes. Among the learned in America who have praised the Bahá'í Cause may be included statesmen, ambassadors, jurists, scientists, educators, theologians, welfare workers and philanthropists. Should not the weight of such authorities move the thoughtful to investigate?

The certainty that religion and science agree, as clarified in the Bahá'í teachings, brings a refining, cleansing, healing chord among the disciples of truth. Religion and science united, makes religion scientific and science spiritual. Since religion and science are now wed, the fruits of that marriage will bless, brighten and civilize man. The oneness of religion and science reveals the Divine Unity and the unity of men. It unfolds to our ken the mysteries of creation and the secrets of both worlds. It establishes the connection and correspondence of all phenomena and suffuses the universe with light. The progressive in spirit, those who seek the symmetry of education and want ideal advancement, may well turn to the example of Shoghi Effendi. That brilliant youth, to whom a world looks for guidance, acquired the sciences with diligent application. His grasp of religion is as luminous as the sun.

We are rejoiced to receive word that the name of Miss Agnes Alexander, our Bahá'í pioneer in Japan, is in the list of those who were saved in the great Tokyo earthquake. May all the

beloved friends be protected and safe.

Within and behind the laws of nature, by the watching of whose operations the scientists may explain this cataclysmic disaster, is the Omnipotent and Loving Creator, Who transforms apparent calamity into light and mercy. May this great disaster bring a closer accord between Japan and the United States as they send their good-will to each other over the "Ocean of Peace".

XIV:7, October 1923 [XIV:7:209]

Communication and divine inspiration

The physical world reflects the spiritual, the flowers of earth, the flowers of heaven, the laws of matter, the laws of the spirit. As Plato and Swedenborg and other divine philosophers have so often said, by the law of correspondence we see in things below a reflection of those on high.

Engineers are today investigating with the greatest eagerness the physical laws of the transmission of the electrical waves which produce the miracle of the radio: what interferes with their perfect transmission, what obstacles prevent their conveying a message in its original purity, how can they perfect the receiving instruments, how protect the hearers to whom they are sending beautiful music, for instance, from the jarring notes of the uninitiated transmitters and their poor instruments which vibrate discordantly over the ether.

The radio of the earth is an exquisite symbol of the radio of the spirit. Brilliant scientific minds of our day are investigating with equal earnestness the laws of spiritual communication. Prominent writers and men of science, are devoting their time to perfecting researches in the spiritual radio and making it known to a world which is hungering for spiritual knowledge.

In this investigation, however, we meet with difficulties. We find that there arise in people's minds countless ideas which they believe to be real communications but in reality are merely the ripples of the sea of imagination. They rise to the surface as do the mistaken ideas which appear in the minds of thinkers, in all ages. Like the old scientific conception of the flatness of the earth they are pure imagination. A large part of the so-called communications of our day are simply the motions of the sea of illusion.

But the fact of real spiritual communication is none the less as indubitable as the shining of the sun. It is perhaps the central motive power in all human history, this communication of spiritual thought and life from person to person. It is the essence of all successful teaching. What was that strange something which Moses communicated to the children of Israel? When he stood on the hill and but raised his arms the Jews felt their minds and hearts charged with an invincible energy. Jesus communicated to his disciples something much greater than physical words. He transmitted the love, the purity, the divine flame of devotion to the Kingdom which was burning in the crystal of his divine spirit. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells of how Mount Carmel seems almost to speak with one, as though a wave of unseen life swept from the mountain into our spirits. How much more does the living presence of the great prophet radiate life into our being! A visitor was one time sitting by the wall inside the garden of the Pilgrim House at Haifa. All at once he felt a great current of spiritual life touch and envelope him. He rose in wonder, and beheld 'Abdu'l-Bahá passing on the other side of the wall. Even the walk of the great spiritual Master, Bahá'u'lláh said, sends spiritual energy through the world. It is this broadcasting of the waves of their spirit which makes their written words so life-imparting. In the following quotations 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes this great spiritual law:

"This material world has an outer appearance. It has also a hidden aspect. These created things are linked one with the other into one system which leads to the unseen, and ends at

last in spiritual realities. I hope that these spiritual links will every day become stronger and this mind-communication which is termed inspiration, will continue. When this is realized there is no cause for disturbance over bodily separation. This station is beyond the circle of words and above all description.”—‘*Abdu’l-Bahá: From Diary of Mírzá Maḥmúd, 28 April 1912.*

“Often people speak together without [XIV:7:210] the mediary of the tongue. There are two methods of intercourse—one through the outward tongue, the other through the ideal, the inner tongue. When the spirit is detached, when the heart is in a subjective state, then the ideal tongue can speak. But as long as the spirit is preoccupied and the heart is objective in its activities it is impossible to attain to that station. Consider: is there not an ideal union between the lover and the beloved? Often with the glance of an eye, or a handshake a whole world of thought is conveyed, without the uttering of a word. It is possible to attain to such a state, if we are set aglow with the fire of the love of God, if we are attached to Him, if we are as a burning torch, if we rise above material phenomena and objects.’—‘*Abdu’l-Bahá: Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 20 December 1912.*

“When man’s soul is rarefied and cleansed spiritual links are set up and from these bonds heartfelt sensations are produced. The human heart resembles a mirror. When this is purified hearts are attuned and reflect one another and thus spiritual emotions spring up. This is like unto the world of dreams, when man is detached from tangible matter and experiences spiritual activities. What amazing laws operate and what remarkable discoveries are made and it may even be that detailed communications are registered.”—*From Tablet to a Chicago friend.*

“Know verily, that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has spiritual speech, heavenly conversations and revelations of the heart. Verily I address, through the Bounty of Bahá, in spirit and vision, (those) who address me, and this is known to those from whose eyes God has lifted the gloomy cover.”—*From Tablet to Mrs Nash, Los Angeles.*

“Verily, the spirit knows the spirit, the spirit addresses the spirit, and the spirit associates with the spirit.”—*From Tablet to Mrs Frankland, Tropico, California.*

“Verily, I speak unto thee through the tongue of my spirit, from the spiritual direction, and explain for thee the mysteries of the Kingdom and the meanings of the sacred, heavenly books. ...

“Verily, I love thee with my heart, my spirit and my mind and associate with thee in spirit (and converse with thee) with my inmost tongue. I love for thee to arise to that for which I have arisen, in servitude to the Sublime and Holy Threshold, turning unto God, hoping for martyrdom, so that thou mayest attain to the gift, the lights of which glisten in the eternal horizon.”—*From Tablet to Mr J. F. Brittingham, New York City.*

Communication from the heavenly world

Nor does this communication cease when the spirit of the Great Master ascends into the unseen world. Nay, rather, then communication is easier, because he has laid aside the barriers of the body. It is difficult to find, in its influence on European history, a more momentous event than the conversion of Paul, the cause of which was a spiritual communication received in the form of a vision as he journeyed to Damascus. In his heart was hatred, a determination to uproot, to exterminate if possible the whole community of the early Christians when suddenly he saw, with inner vision, the spirit of the Christ shining upon him,

like the sun, and a voice bade him become an apostle of the new religion. That spiritual communication transformed his life and through him changed the whole course of human history. Similar communications, in later years guided Paul at crucial moments. The Bible is full of accounts of how angels flash to the children of men heavenly guidance. These angels are either the purified souls of those who have ascended into the Kingdom, or they are the rays of the Holy Spirit, in either case a shining symbol of communication from on high. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says: "Evil spirits are deprived of eternal life. How then can they exercise any influence? But as eternal life is ordained for holy spirits therefore their influence exists in all the divine worlds." And Bahá'u'lláh [XIV:7:211] tells us that the rays of these holy souls determine the stations of the nations. They are broadcasting spiritual waves to all corners of the earth and many an artist and thinker who believes himself the creator of great and original ideas has but caught on the receiving instrument of his mind and heart the waves from the world of the Kingdom.

'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Miss Sarah Farmer: "O thou prepared lamp! Be thou enkindled with the fire of the love of God as much as thou canst and illumine those countries so that thou mayest find eternal life and shine upon all ages and cycles."

How to be sure that communications are real

How can we know when the message which comes to us is true and when it is merely imagination and illusion? First we must so perfect and purify our instrument, our mind and soul that they may register none but the communications from on high. Sometimes these come in waking moments. Often they shine upon us in our dreams when the outer mind is quiet and the body is at rest. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says: "It is well known that a very profound relation exists between the spirit of man and the reality in the world of existence, for it often happens that what we see in a dream comes to pass in waking hours. This shows that between the spirit of man and the outer phenomenal world there is spiritual communion. Furthermore the spirit of man has the power of discovering things. When this power is recognized these problems become easy. But the most interesting fact of all is this, that even the materialists, while they deny spiritual power are engaged in making discoveries and are thus immersed in spiritual power and claim to know coming events."—*'Abdu'l-Bahá: From Mírzá Maḥmúd's Diary, 10 June 1912.*

"There are three kinds of visions or dreams. First, those that arise from over-excited nerves, or disordered stomach, and are of no use whatever. Second, when God sends a revelation to a soul that is not entirely pure from the world to such an one He sends visions in symbols and signs, and these experiences need an interpreter. The third kind is when a soul who is severed from the world receives a revelation from God. In this station everything is clear and pure and needs no explanation."—*'Abdu'l-Bahá: From notes of Miss Pearson, taken at Akká, 26 February 1899.*

The true communication is often quite contrary to our personal will. Paul's vision on the road to Damascus meant that he must renounce his will completely, to build the Kingdom of the Christ. We know all real spiritual communications by their fruits. True messages from the heavenly world make our lives more pure, more loving, more dedicated to the service of the Kingdom. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says of these spiritual letters: "My correspondence with thee is uninterrupted, for in my Spirit I supplicate and entreat toward the Kingdom of Abhá in thy behalf. The essence of correspondence is this, that it may be imprinted upon the tablet of the heart. (This correspondence) is sent to thee without intermission by the faithful messenger of the Spirit. Consequently look thou and study thyself. Whenever thou beholdest that the soul has glad tidings, the heart is rejoiced, the eye and the insight are illumined, the ears opened,

the tongue fluent in uttering the truth of His Highness the Merciful One, and the spirit is soaring heavenward with joy know of a certainty that the tablet hath reached thee.”—*From a Tablet to Miss Ambrose, Washington, D.C.*

But the supreme test of the truth of our visions, ideas and communications is to compare them with the divine messages of the great prophets. With them communication with the worlds of God becomes so perfect, so infallibly certain that we call it inspiration or revelation. They are the pure hearts which see God, which reflect the Sun of Reality in Its completeness. At best our messages are but broken rays, coloured by the glass of [XIV:7:212] our imperfect lives. Only the absolutely selfless and pure can receive messages which are invariably certain and true.

Therefore, through all history God has sent a shining succession of these pure mirrors to reflect and communicate the very truth of God in language fitted to their time and age. The great prophets merge their human will in absolute obedience to the will of God. Therefore in them the voice of God can speak crystal clear.

The visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, the revelations which came to Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, St. John on Patmos are recorded in the Bible. From cover to cover the Bible tells one story of divine communication which we know as inspiration.

In our day it has burst upon the world with undimmed brilliance through the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and now in Shoghi Effendi. Jináb-i-Fáḍil speaks of how the great prophet manifests such amazing knowledge, “foresees events thousands of years before they come to pass. They are like sensitive photographic plates on which are reproduced the images of the Kingdom. His Holiness the Báb was the herald of Bahá'u'lláh. He said, ‘Today I am the centre of knowledge. Whosoever desires to ask me any question, no matter on what subject, I will write or speak about it immediately, without reflection.’ He said not only that he would answer, but he said that he would answer without reflection. His inspiration was just like the water springing out of the fountain, uninterruptedly. ‘Whatever I write,’ he said, ‘with my hand, it is not my hand that writes; it is the power of God that moves the hand.’ He wrote with greatest rapidity, on scientific and philosophical subjects. It often happened that the ‘Ulamás of Persia gathered in a great meeting and presented to him abstruse questions. Instantly, the Báb would take his pen and write in answer, explanations that were most clear and perfect.”

Bahá'u'lláh says in his Tablet to the Sháh of Persia: “O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing?”¹

The same inspiration flowed through the pen and the voice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Jináb-i-Fáḍil tells of how “one of the philosophers of Persia came to 'Akká, Palestine. He asked certain proofs of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, I am ready to answer any question that you ask. I will dictate to you provided that you are able to follow my thought, without stopping. The man replied, very well, that is easy. Then he asked a scientific question. The explanation flowed from the tongue of 'Abdu'l-Bahá like a waving sea. When the philosopher had written

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 11–12.

one page he begged to be excused. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that he would dictate more slowly. So the man wrote the second page. But he found it impossible to follow the dictation. He was so filled with wonder and astonishment that he immediately became an ardent follower of the Cause and began to teach others.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in his last *Will and Testament* shows us that after his ascension Shoghi Effendi, the glorious youth, is the dayspring of divine guidance. He is under “the unerring guidance of God”.

Thus we have, in the midst of the world [XIV:7:213] a standard of divine revelation. By this heavenly standard can we compare our ideas, speculations, dreams and visions. The Great Prophet speaks the pure teachings, the pure truth of God. He thus becomes a divine centre of certainty and of unity, for by uniting upon his teaching, which is the teaching of God, the many peoples and nations may become one.

Furthermore, he communicates not only ideas, but the dynamic power to put them into action. He transmits to those who read his words much more than the words, much more than ideas—the divine energy which purifies the spirit, consecrates the life, sets the heart aflame with the fire of love. He communicates his divine energy to all those who with pure and responsive hearts read his words or repeat his prayers. His words are the water of life which makes all things new, God’s bestowal for establishing on earth and in the minds of men, unity and peace. Out of the water of his divine knowledge, flowing through the New Jerusalem of his teachings, rises the tree of life, the beloved community of his disciples in all lands and religions, whose leaves (deeds and spirit) are for the healing and uniting of the nations. “Blessed are they that have a right to come to the tree of life and enter by the Gates into the City.”

XIV:8, November 1923 [XIV:8:227]

The new Covenant

The symbol of the Covenant runs like a shining cord of unity through the religions of the world. The Old Testament means the Old Covenant. The New Testament is the New Covenant. And all through the Bible is to be found the promise of a still newer Covenant to be made in the Latter Day, the fullness of time, when God shall write His law in the hearts of His children, and they shall know Him from the least unto the greatest; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd, a thousand years of peace. “The holy ones of old whenever they imagined the wondrous vision” of this day of days were “as thunderstruck and yearned for but a fleeting moment of that glorious hour.”

The Covenant is a divine agreement between God and His children. He has a wonderful plan for man’s life upon earth, for his destiny as a transformer of the world. “O MY SERVANT! Thou art even as a finely tempered sword concealed in the darkness of its sheath and its value hidden from the artificer’s knowledge. Wherefore come forth from the sheath of self and desire that thy worth may be made resplendent and manifest unto all the world.”¹ “O MY FRIEND! Thou art the day-star of the heavens of My holiness, let not the defilement of the world eclipse thy splendour. Rend asunder the veil of heedlessness, that from behind the clouds thou mayest emerge resplendent and array all things with the apparel of life.”² But to attain to this station ordained for him from the creation of the world, man must obey God’s laws, which are the articles of God’s Covenant, revealed by Him through His chosen messengers. The covenant with Abraham gave the glad tidings that through his seed should all the nations of the world be blessed. The covenant with Moses, uttered from the Sinai of Light, opened the door to the Promised Land. Its first articles were the Ten Commandments.

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 72.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 73.

The sovereignty of David, the splendour of Solomon, the flowering of Israel into a strong nation reveal the power which comes through obedience to the Covenant. The degradation of the Babylonian captivity, the ruin of Jerusalem were the result of disobedience. When the early Christians followed the covenant given by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount they became the light of the world. They united the divergent races and religions of the old Roman Empire into a brotherhood so wonderful that three hundred years after Jesus' crucifixion a man travelling from Persia to England would be greeted by the Christians, all along the way, as though he were a member of their own family. [XIV:8:228]

Centres of unity

The collective centre which unites "various peoples, tongues, nativities and opinions" is the Manifestation of God, the Great Mouthpiece of God. Said 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the Church of the Ascension, in New York City: "The Collective Centre has always appeared in the Orient. Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Muḥammad were Collective Centres of Their day and time, and all arose in the East. Today Bahá'u'lláh is the Collective Centre of unity for all mankind, and the splendour of His light has likewise dawned from the East."¹ These collective centres have established the only real and powerful interracial, international unity that has ever been known upon this earth. They are God's greatest bounty to mankind.

Elements in the Covenant

The covenant of God in each prophetic dispensation consists of two parts: the teachings and the Divine Teacher; the revelation and the Prophet who reveals it. "Is it possible that one may believe in a book without believing in the teacher of that book? Is it possible to accept the sun and to reject its rays? He who rejects the rays is, no doubt, a rejecter of the sun, too. Further, many say, 'we have no need of prophets. We can have direct connection with God.' They do not know that divine prophets are the rays of the Sun of Reality and a means of educating the realities of men. Therefore he who rejects the bounty of the Sun of Reality and thinks himself not in need of it is like unto him who says that he is not in need of God and rejects both God and reality in face of the fact that all creation is receiving incessant bounty from God and is dependent upon Him as the body is dependent upon the soul."—'Abdu'l-Bahá: *from the Diary of Mírzá Maḥmúd, November 1912.*

Again, the teachings are like the rays of the sun: the revealer of the covenant is the sun itself. And the sun is more than all its rays, for it is the divine centre that radiates the rays to all corners of the universe. So is it with the Great Prophets, the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. They are the pure centres through whom God speaks, and pours His Holy Spirit like a river of light. They are both the heavenly teachings and the power of God. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá said of Jesus: "Jesus was a Manifestation of God. Everything of him pertained to God. To know him was to know God. To have him was to have God. To obey him was to obey God. He was the source of all divine virtues. He was a vision of all divine qualities. In this vision the light of the Sun of Reality was reflected to the world. Through this mirror the Energy of God was transmitted to the world. The whole disc of the Sun of Reality was reflected in him."

Because this "Primal Mirror" thus transmits the rays of the Sun of Truth and brings them directly to bear upon the lives and thoughts of men his appearance upon earth is like the glory of a divine springtime. He focuses upon the world the radiance of a new truth, the warm rays of a new love, the showers of God's mercy, the all-renewing breezes of the Holy Spirit. From out his teachings there flowers the summer season of a new civilization.

After the most glorious summer, however, there always follow the autumn and the winter. This has been true of the teachings of even the greatest Manifestations. Their covenant is, after a while, forgotten, its light hidden beneath the clouds of dogma and superstition. When

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 165.

this occurs the Sun has always dawned again, from a new horizon, to fulfil the promise given by the previous Manifestation, that God would send a Successor, a new Mani- [XIV:8:229] festation, who would bring in a new “springtime of His Holiness The Eternal One”.

The succession of these Manifestations of God is the central law of the religious development of the world. It is the supreme teaching of the Covenant. Therefore, “when the old world is sterile and the ages are effete” we must search for the new collective centre of God’s new Covenant, and listen to his words, for when we have found him we have found God’s new will for the new time. This is the law of the spiritual history of the race, that every Great Prophet has taken a covenant with his followers that they should follow and obey his successor, the one whom God has willed to come after him. This covenant tells men that they must be watchful for the next Manifestation, for he may come like a thief in the night. Moses took a covenant with his followers that they should find and obey the fuller covenant to be revealed in the Christ. Christ took a covenant that all should watch for the Son of Man, The Paraclete, The Spirit of Truth. Buddhists have for twenty-five hundred years waited for the fuller covenant to be revealed by Maitreya; Zoroastrians for the three great figures to appear in Persia who would bring the forces of light to everlasting victory. Muslims await the coming of Qá’im, the Mihdí, the Messiah. The Hebrews remember the words of Malachi: “Behold I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the Covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

The new Covenant in Bahá’u’lláh

The Bahá’í Teachings present to a despairing world the glad tidings that these promises of old have been fulfilled in a new and universal way, wonderful beyond all our imaginings.

The true prophets, said Jesus, referring to the glorious ones who should come after him, ye shall know by their fruits. The following are some of the fruits of the life and the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which prove their divine mission:

The reconciliation of science and religion so as to satisfy the minds and the hearts of men.

The statement of the Eternal Truth in the language of today so as to solve the problems of present-day society: “He diagnoses the illness and prescribes the remedy. Every day has its own secret.” “The teachings of Bahá’u’lláh,” wrote ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, shortly before his ascension, “are the light of this age and the spirit of this century. Expound each of them at every gathering.

The first is investigation of truth,
The second, the oneness of mankind,
The third, universal peace,
The fourth, conformity between science and divine revelation,
The fifth, abandonment of racial, religious, worldly and political prejudices, prejudices which destroy the foundation of mankind.
The sixth is righteousness and justice,
The seventh, the betterment of morals and heavenly education,
The eighth, the equality of the two sexes,
The ninth, the diffusion of knowledge and education,
The tenth, economic questions, and so on and so forth.”¹

Teachings stated in so universal a form as to appeal to all races, religions and types of minds, from the least unto the greatest.

Teachings reinforced by the divine Holy Spirit which creates men anew: The teachings of

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 107–108.

Bahá'u'lláh transform, like a divine elixir, the baser metals of human nature into the shining gold of love, sacrifice, illumination. They open the eyes of the spiritually blind, unstop the ears of the deaf and make the simple, the humble, even the children eloquent apostles. "Through them flows the river of Divine Knowledge and bursts the fire of the consummate wisdom of the Eternal."

Creative words that burn away from human hearts the prejudices, hatreds, superstitions that divide religions and [XIV:8:230] races: Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have already united a great multitude, drawn from all kindreds, all peoples and religions into the most universal spiritual brotherhood which the world has ever known. "Consider the power of the Covenant," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a group of visitors in 'Akká in 1909. "Before the coming of Bahá'u'lláh it was absolutely impossible for a Zoroastrian to be united with a Jew, a Siyyid (descendant of Muḥammad), and a Mullá; and for these to be united with a Christian was impossible. But the power of (his) covenant has so gathered them together that they seem like one spirit. Although the bodies are many, the spirit is one."

The lives and deeds of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are so perfect as to be themselves the teaching that they proclaim. The Word was made flesh and all who had eyes to see beheld its glory. Professor T. K. Cheney of Oxford University, higher critic and Bible scholar, tells of his doubts and perplexities; and then of how there came to his study one day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who made all things new. Whereupon he studied the life of Bahá'u'lláh with all the rigor of the higher and historical critic, and could find no sin in him. He was, indeed, wrote Professor Cheney, what his followers loved to call him, the Blessed Perfection.

Bahá'u'lláh established the tree of his Cause in the midst of the most terrible storms of persecution and opposition from a host of enemies. Forty years he was an exile and a prisoner. But he withstood all his enemies like a mountain, until his light shone forth triumphant and illumined the world.

"And some of his signs are the unfoldment of prophecies and glad tidings, the appearance of proofs and references—the expectations of the pure and devout—and they are of those who attain.

"And some of his signs are his steadfastness before the great nations and powerful governments, even before a host of enemies, who shed blood and strive to wreck the divine edifice in every time and place. Verily, therein is a thought for those who reflect upon the signs of God.

"And some of his signs are the wonders of his explanations, the eloquence of his utterances, the rapidity of revealing his words, verses, addresses, communes, interpretations of the symbols and illustrations of the parables. By thy life, the Cause is evident and clear to those who see with the eyes of justice!"—*From a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.*

'Abdu'l-Bahá in the following words, spoken to some visitors at Haifa in the winter of 1920, sums up a few of the proofs of the mission of Bahá'u'lláh:

"Among the proofs are the teachings of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh), teachings such as have not been given since the beginning of the world. These teachings are for all mankind and in them is to be found the highest degree of counsel—advise in the utmost eloquence and beauty of expression, morals in the highest degree of perfection, politics in the highest degree of perfection, laws of the utmost firmness, public management most perfectly regulated. Whatever the world of humanity needs is found here. All the religions of the world see the utmost perfection of man in these teachings. ... The teachings and exhortations which His Holiness Christ gave the Christians can be found in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. Politics are in the Qur'án: the Muslims can find political science of the most perfect order in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Such fundamental things as are useful, such as equality and freedom—these can

be found in the laws of Bahá'u'lláh. ... The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are all-inclusive. Other teachings are like branches; but the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are like the trunk of a tree which sends out all the branches.

“These are from a person who never entered a school, who had never known a teacher, who had never associated with [XIV:8:231] people of learning and who had from his early life been in utmost tribulation. Such teachings are most illuminating. Such teachings are divine. What greater proofs than these!

“The Cause of the Blessed Beauty in every possible way is clearly proved. The proof is not of one kind only, but of all kinds. One is at a loss to know which proof to begin with. For example, in Europe, in the great assemblies, talks were given. I spoke to eminent people. I remember that one day I met a Member of Parliament. He asked me: ‘What is the proof of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh? I want it in a concise and useful form.’ I said: ‘The concise and sufficient proof is that Bahá'u'lláh in such a prison as ‘Akká, and when under chains, raised his banner. In Tīhrán he was in prison and under chains. In ‘Akká he was in prison. Under these circumstances he raised his banner.’ When I mentioned this proof he became very silent. I said: ‘There is nothing recorded comparable to this. What power is this, that from the beginning of the world until today such a thing has not happened!’”

When, through an independent investigation of truth, we find the divine physician, the captain who can guide us safely through the storms into the promised kingdom of peace, then we entrust our lives to his guidance—his guidance and his teachings.

What is the Bahá'í Covenant?

The Bahá'í covenant is an agreement which God takes with those who recognize His latest Manifestation that they will live according to the teachings which He reveals through His Chosen Ones. As ‘Abdu'l-Bahá says: “According to the irrefutable text He has taken from us a firm covenant that we may live and act according to the divine exhortations, commands and lordly teachings.” “If a person lives for one day according to those divine exhortations and teachings (that is, as revealed in *The Hidden Words*) he will be assisted to move the visible and invisible world.” These teachings, “descended from the Realm of Glory, uttered by the Tongue of Power and Might and revealed to the Messengers of old”, shine from the pages of Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá like a world-illuminating sun, dispelling the darkness of nature and ushering in the day of the oneness of mankind, the oneness of religions, universal peace. But the centre of them all, the most great characteristic of this new revelation from God, is the Centre of the Covenant. In every cycle the Centre of the Covenant is, first, the Great Prophet who reveals the covenant to his age. The divine, universal Manifestations of God live their teachings so perfectly that they are not only its centre, they *are* the Covenant. Their pure teachings and pure deeds flow like a fountain ever new, from the Ocean of the Ever-Living.

But when the Great Prophet ascends from this world how is the unity which he establishes upon earth to be maintained? As long as the followers of Moses, of Muḥammad and the Christ had a centre of unity they were the spiritual transformers of the world. But when self-seeking leaders began to interpret their revelations, each one creating “a party round about himself”, sects and divisions arose and the army of light lost its power. Without unity of command the soldiers of God can never scatter the forces of darkness. Therefore the Centre of the Covenant is the essence of the Covenant.

“The Bahá'ís,” says ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, “are ordered to establish the oneness of mankind. If they cannot unite around one point how will they be able to bring about the unity of mankind?” Bahá'u'lláh, in order that God's glorious purpose, of uniting in the Latter Day the divergent peoples and religions into one fold might be fulfilled, bade his disciples, in his last will and testament and in many epistles, to turn after his pass- [XIV:8:232] ing to the one whom God

had purposed, the one branched from the Pre-Existent Stock—‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “The purpose of the Blessed Beauty in entering into this Covenant and Testament was to gather all existent beings around one point so that the thoughtless souls, who in every cycle and generation have been the cause of dissension, may not undermine the Cause.”¹

“There were dissensions after the departure of Christ because there had been no centre appointed.”² “In former cycles no distinct covenant was made in writing by the Supreme Pen and no distinct personage was appointed to be the standard differentiating falsehood from truth.”³

“Inasmuch as great differences and divergences of denominational belief had arisen throughout the past, every man with a new idea attributing it to God, Bahá’u’lláh desired that there should not be any ground or reason for disagreement among the Bahá’ís. Therefore, with His own pen He wrote the Book of His Covenant, addressing His relations and all people of the world, saying, ‘Verily, I have appointed One Who is the Centre of My Covenant. All must obey Him; all must turn to Him; He is the Expounder of My Book, and He is informed of My purpose. All must turn to Him. Whatsoever He says is correct, for, verily, He knoweth the texts of My Book. Other than He, no one doth know My Book.’ The purpose of this statement is that there should never be discord and divergence among the Bahá’ís but that they should always be unified and agreed.”⁴

For thirty years ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant, through the inspiration of God, united members of all religions and peoples into a spiritual oneness which encircles the world. He lived so gloriously the teachings of the Covenant that he was, himself, the Covenant of God’s oneness.

In order that the disciples of Bahá might maintain their perfect unity and through that unity become the spiritual transformers of the world, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also wrote a last *Will and Testament*, naming in clear, indubitable words the collective centre whom God had chosen after his ascension. He entered into a covenant with all his followers that they should follow and obey this Centre. This Centre of Bahá’í unity named by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, this dayspring of guidance, this chosen one of God, this Guardian of the Cause is the glorious and inspired youth, Shoghi Effendi. When the Universal Spiritual Assembly shall be elected, from all the Bahá’ís of the world, Shoghi Effendi will be its life-long head. They will apply the divine teachings to the new problems, the new world conditions.

Thus can the lovers of the light in the Day of God attain unity of action through unity of guidance; thus will they avoid the sectarian divisions of past ages, by turning to the one centre which God has appointed. To love and follow that Centre is to attain perfect freedom, for freedom is not found in following all the new ideas that chance to arise in the individual’s mind, ideas that often separate and divide, cause war and dissension. True freedom is attained by every individual’s obeying in perfect joy the will, the law of God as revealed in His Chosen Ones. “Say: True liberty consisteth in man’s submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty. ... Say: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.”⁵

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 209.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Mrs Helen S. Goodall and others, New York City, 1912.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, III:14, p. 9.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 322–323. Refer also to *The Star of the West*, III:15, p. 7.

⁵ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 125, pp. 63–64.

Arabian civilization

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

The Arabian peninsula is a vast desert inhabited from time immemorial by Bedouin tribes, and Arabs, who, with their camels and horses roamed over the great stretches of that land and on it pitched their tents. Until the coming of Muḥammad, six centuries after Christ, these people developed no distinct civilization. The Bedouin tribes of Arabia were, however, before the time of Muḥammad possessed of certain excellent qualities, such as generosity, faithfulness, loyalty and hospitality. Because of the dry, hot climate of the desert their mode of life was extremely simple, and they wore but little clothing. They were a physically powerful race, many of them able to outrun even their own horses. Like these famous steeds they were fiery and quick-tempered. Yet they possessed qualities upon which a sturdy nation could be built.

The Arabs are Semitic in origin, descended from Shem. As the many tribes were separated from each other their language resolved itself into a number of dialects. Each tribe lived independently, under the leadership of a chief—a shaykh or amír. But as a nation they were always influenced, or governed by the Romans, the Greeks or the Persians.

Previous to Muḥammad their religion was Sabeanism, which is star worshipping. Each tribe had a star, signifying a deity, and Arabia abounded in small temples dedicated to the gods of the stars. Of these many temples the most important was at Mecca, “Head of Towns”, where all the religious groupings and crude ideals of the Arabs were assembled, and then disseminated. This chief Arabian city of Mecca contained hundreds of idols, one of which was very ancient, and thousands of pilgrims from all parts of Arabia came to Mecca to worship in wild, barbaric fashion, their rites including the sacrifice of their own children.

The chief and daily occupation of these people was tribal warfare and internal feuds. To make war was regarded as evidence of courage; and each tribe had its particular method of carrying on warfare with other tribes. Century after century they fought. This kept them weak as a nation; therefore any foreign power could gain control over them because of their disorganized state. They had, also, many blameworthy practices, such as polygamy and drinking. They considered the birth of a daughter such a disgrace that they often buried a girl baby alive rather than let her grow up to mortify the family. The advent of a son they hailed with delight for here was one who could perpetuate the traditions of the family.

This, in brief, is a picture of the life of the Arabs at about CE six hundred—nomadic, quarrelsome bands of people, courageous and generous, yet possessed of many unadmirable qualities. In one section, only, a district called Yemen, was there really any civilization. Here, many eminent kings and rulers had reigned, developing a certain kind of culture. One of these rulers was the Queen of Sheba, referred to in the Old Testament.

The only literature developed by the Arabs was poetry. They loved and honoured a poet and regarded him as inspired. Once a year, at Mecca, a great festival was held, when the tribes from all parts of Arabia gathered, to exchange their merchandise. Here the poets came also, and read their compositions to the people. A group of judges selected the best poem which was then hung upon the wall of the sacred temple there to stay until the following year, when it would either be removed to give [XIV:8:236] place to a better poem, or permitted to remain for many years, because it had no rival.

When Christ arose, even his divine light did not penetrate to these ancient temples of idolatry. A few of the Arabians accepted him, believing in a strange version of the trinity, and worshipping the Heavenly Father, Christ and the Mother of Christ. There were also among the tribes several descendants of Jacob who professed a belief in the Old Testament, but this belief

in God, which came either through Christian theology or Mosaic creeds, was not strong enough to illumine this ancient idol-worshipping nation.

Previous to Muḥammad the Arabs had no written language, but with his advent a new chapter opened in their history, an era of philosophy, science and ethics, for he ushered in a world-wide civilization.

Muḥammad belonged to the family of Quraysh (Koreish), whose members were the custodians of the key of the temple of Mecca, the greatest honour which the Arabians possessed. His ancestors were able men; his uncle, Abú Ṭálib, was counted one of the wisest and most honoured poets of the land. Muḥammad's parents died when he was a small child. He was brought up by an uncle, according to the simple life of his country, and received no education whatever. As a young man, occupied with his uncle's business, he showed a character so sincere and straightforward that the people respected and loved him. He was called Muḥammad the Faithful, Muḥammad the Truthful. Then, at the age of forty, he started upon his great career as a religious teacher, and invited the people to the Oneness of God.

We have a clear, historical account of how Muḥammad came to the realization of his relation to God, and his mission. Forty days he spent, in a cave near Mecca, meditating, fasting and praying. At the end of that time he came forth, with words of inspiration on his lips and a deep conviction that he had a message to deliver to his people. He confided this to his wife, a very remarkable woman, spiritual, and with executive ability which enabled her to carry on large business enterprises. She believed in him and encouraged him in his conviction that he had received a great message and must deliver it.

The story was told, in the symbolic language of that time that, while in the cave near Mecca, Muḥammad had a vision in which he saw a beautiful being descend from heaven, who commanded him to recite certain words, God's first revelation to him. This heavenly being was called Gabriel, or, the Holy Spirit, and his messages to Muḥammad founded the religion of Islám.

Muḥammad's inspired writings begin thus: "Read, in the name of your Lord, who is He that creates! He created man from the embryo. Read! Your Lord is the most generous; it is He who guides the pen. He taught the human mind all it did not know." They end with the words: "Today I have completed your religion and made it Islám (peace)." The revelations of Muḥammad, adapted to the needs of the time, descended from on high during a period of twenty-three years. They were written upon anything he could find, often the bones of sheep, and were finally collected into the Qur'án, which was the first religious text-book of the Islamic world, and the first book written in the Arabic language.

The Qur'án planted in the minds of the Arabian people the seeds of the belief in One Invisible, Eternal God, which flowered into a spiritual and moral civilization. It established among them the principle of divine reward and punishment and gave the moral teachings of justice, love, faithfulness, purity, etc. Barbaric practices were abolished and a new, spiritual consciousness was developed. This in a short time became the mighty tree of a spiritual and scientific civilization which spread its branches [XIV:8:237] from the East to the West. And the Qur'án was the prototype for thousands of ethical, mystical and spiritual books.

Of unity Muḥammad said: "O People of the Sacred Book! Come in and unite in one common centre. Believe in the One God and worship no one beside Him." He also said: "The believers of any religion, whether they be Sabaeen, Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian, if they believe in God and are doing good they should have no fear or unhappiness." Of forgiveness he said: "The believers are they who forgive in the face of calumny. If the ignorant curse them they will reply, 'Peace be unto you'."

The Arabs were submerged in a sea of idolatry, having as many gods as they could find of

stars and planets in the heavens, therefore a very complicated polytheism prevailed. Muḥammad's great service to his people was his declaration of the Oneness of God, the Singleness of the Deity, Who is the Creator of even the highest beings, and far beyond the limited minds of men. The divine power in this teaching destroyed the belief in many deities—the chief cause of dispute among the Arabs. Realizing the greatness of this new truth, they naturally desired to spread it among their fellowmen. The keepers of the various temples, who represented the privileged class and the vested interests of Arabia could not permit the old ideas to be overthrown unchallenged; therefore there was much opposition to Muḥammad and his followers. Yet, Muḥammad's whole life had been so blameless and pure that the people respected and loved him and believed him to be truthful. Therefore, when he claimed to have received a revelation from God they believed him to be sincere, especially since his teachings were so clearly fitted to the needs of the times. The eloquence and poetry of his inspired words were so compelling that all the poets of Arabia took them for their model.

The Qur'án is a book of epigrams, the teachings of Muḥammad given in a poetic and epigrammatic style suited to the minds and thought of the Arabian people. Muḥammad told his disciples to travel among the Arabian tribes, teaching the singleness of God, and to work unceasingly, until all the idols were broken down, and the worship of the One God was established. During the twenty-three years that he himself taught Arabia was rent with great wars, instigated by the chiefs of the different tribes in their effort to annihilate the religion of Islám. Finally, through divine power, all the enemies of the faith were defeated, and, before Muḥammad's death the Oneness of God was well established.

In the Qur'án Muḥammad gave the history of the lives of Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Jewish prophets, and Christ, explaining their spiritual power and their teachings. Previous to this the Arabian people had not believed in any of them, but Muḥammad, through his teachings, brought them to believe in all of the prophets of Israel and in Christ, thus rendering a great service to Arabia. Referring to the prophets of Israel, and others, Muḥammad said that God had sent for every people a guardian, who spoke their tongue. A chapter of the Qur'án is devoted to a history of Mary, the mother of Jesus. He called Christ the Word of God, and the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Muslim world today, because of the teaching of Muḥammad, believes in the prophetic station of these great spiritual teachers. The teaching of the principle of the Oneness of God united the Arabian tribes, put an end to their feuds and brought them to agree upon ideals for common progress.

Muḥammad was not only a religious teacher, he was a statesman and a king. His book contains many rules for moral and spiritual training, and also many regulations for the conduct of the practical affairs of the Islamic world. He abolished the custom of burying daughters alive and also many other vices. The [XIV:8:238] life of Arabia was transformed and the Arabs became a new people, noble and high-minded, guided by a new force and ruled by a new motive. After twenty-three years of incessant labour Muḥammad passed from this world, leaving behind him eighty thousand staunch, zealous followers and an Arabian nation, united under the banner of Islám.

Before the end of the first century after Muḥammad his religion had been carried by his apostles to Asia and to parts of Africa and Europe. Just as the Old Testament became the foundation for the Jewish civilization, so the Qur'án became the foundation for the civilization of Islám. The second century after Muḥammad was marked by great works on philosophy and science. Brilliant minds appeared, not only among the Arabs, but throughout the Islamic world. With the spread of the religion of Islám into many lands the Arabic tongue spread also and came to be regarded as a sacred language. What had been practically a dead language now became one of the most scholarly and, in the first century after Muḥammad, many text-books, dictionaries, etc., were written in Arabic.

Muḥammad taught his disciples to study the sciences. One of his epigrams is: “Study science, even if you must travel to China.” China was, in those days, a very long way off. Again he said: “A man must study, from the cradle to the grave.” This teaching filled the Arabian scholars with a longing for knowledge and in the middle of the second century a great Academy of Science was founded in the city of Baghdád, which was then the seat of the Arabian government. The Caliphs of Baghdád were patrons of science and letters and they brought from all parts of the world Jewish, Christian and Persian scholars, who formed a school of translators. From among the philosophers of Greece nineteen were chosen, whose works were translated into Arabic, and the writings of learned Hindus and Persians were also translated and taught in the Arabic universities.

In a short while Baghdád, Baṣrah, Bukhárá, Alexandria, Cairo, Morocco and Spain became celebrated centres of learning. Brilliant authors, in all departments of science appeared, and hundreds of schools and libraries arose. Observatories for astronomical research were founded, and students travelled to every part of the world in search of particular text-books, and all kinds of knowledge. The Islamic rulers sent out especially trained scholars that they might travel and bring back information, and in some libraries there were more than a hundred thousand books. Universities were established in Baghdád and Andalusia, and to their doors came many students from all over the world, especially for the study of medicine and chemistry.

From the sixth to the ninth centuries, when the Islamic world was actively studying science, expanding and spreading, Europe was submerged in the darkness of ignorance. A period of complete stagnation prevailed, all over Europe, until that country awoke from the sleep of the Dark Ages and put forth an effort to acquire knowledge. Having no scientific text-books of their own many Europeans went to the Islamic schools in Andalusia, studied Arabic for many years, and then translated into Latin such works as those of Avicenna, Rází, Ṭúsí, Averroes, Albucasis, al-Ghazzálí, Avempace, Jábir and others.¹ By this means several educational institutions were established in Europe. Andalusia and Cordova, seats of Arabic learning, became so famous that a great religious leader, who later became Pope, enrolled himself, in the year 999, as a student. Afterwards he spread through southern Europe the knowledge gained in Islamic universities. Many professors from universities in England and France became students of universities in Arabia, and Arabic words became a part of European languages.

One of the Popes of Rome, Clement XI, arranged for a party to travel to the East in order to secure scientific data.

XIV:8, November 1923 [XIV:8:245]

A tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

O thou servant of the Sacred Threshold!

The stability of every throne and the security of the seat of every sovereign are dependent upon the grace of God and are based upon the power of Divine assistance. All the Chiefs and Rulers of the West, Emperors and Kings, that they may establish firmly their rule and dominion over their peoples, proclaim and hold fast unto this saying of Peter, the Apostle: “In truth, all authority is of God”, that is to say every sovereignty is established and exercised in accordance with the Divine Purpose. By this means, they assure the sanctity of their throne

¹ Abú-‘Alí al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd Alláh ibn Síná (CE 980–1037); Abú Bakr Muḥammad Zakariyá Rází (854–925); Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan at-Ṭúsí (1201–1274); Abú’l-Walíd Muḥammad ibn ‘Aḥmad ibn Ruṣhd (1126–1198) “Averroes”; Abú al-Qásim Kḥalaf ibn al-‘Abbás al-Zahráwí al-Anṣárí (936–1013), “Abulcasis”; Abú Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad at-Ṭúsí al-Ghazzálí (c. 1058–1111), “Algazel”; Abú Bakr Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyá ibn aṣ-Ṣá’igh at-Tujíbí ibn Bájjá (c. 1085–1138), “Avempace”; and Abú Músá Jábir ibn-i-Ḥayyán (d. c. 806–816).

and proclaim the sacredness of their sovereignty.

And now, consider and reflect! How often are rulers and governments praised and extolled in the Holy Writ of Bahá'u'lláh and how frequently allegiance and loyalty to Kings and Monarchs are enjoined upon every one! Ponder in your hearts and realize what the result will be in future!

Gracious God! They that are in authority are as yet unaware of this most great bounty bestowed upon them and know not what a rich blessing the Lord hath vouchsafed unto the rulers and governors of the world.

At this hour, in the uttermost parts of the earth, even in the continent of America, peoples are praying on behalf of the Chief and Ruler of Persia and praise and glorify his name. Ere long, ye shall see how the government of Bahá'u'lláh's native land will have become the most advanced country in all the regions of the world.

This indeed is supreme bounty and a warning unto every beholder!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated by Shoghi Effendi.

XIV:9, December 1923 [XIV:9:259]

Through pride will man be reduced to the lowest rank

Stanwood Cobb

A peculiar inspiration comes to one from perusing the word of God in a foreign language. That first vivid impression, veiled by long familiarity with the text as it exists in English, has been restored to me in all its freshness upon reading the *Hidden Words* in German.

One verse has especially impressed me, both from its meaning and from some of the experiences of my travels. "Wegen der sterblichen Herrschaft weniger Tage habt ihr Meine unsterbliche Herrschaft verworfen, euch selbst in rote und gelbe Gewänder gekleidet und damit geprahlt. Ich erkläre bei Meiner Schönheit, dass Ich euch alle unter das gleichgefärbte Zelt des Staubes bringen und die Farben von allen entfernen werde, nur nicht von denen, welche Meine Farbe, rein von allen andern, erwählten." "For a fleeting sovereignty of a few days have you abandoned My imperishable dominion and arrayed yourselves in mortal hues and pride yourselves therein. I declare by My beauty, that I will bring you all under the uncoloured canopy of dust and take away the colour from all, except from those who have chosen My colour, pure from all others."

Bahá'u'lláh has said that it is better to read one *Hidden Word* than hundreds of pages of any other literature. Therefore, let us meditate somewhat on the significance of this mighty utterance. Let us consider some of the examples of fallen glory.

In passing through Holland on our way to Germany, our train went close by Doorn, where William II languishes in exile. Our thoughts were much upon him. When we reached Berlin we found his former palace turned into a museum. I shall never forget the impression received upon traversing these corridors and rooms and gorgeous halls, so recently consecrated to the glory of the Hohenzollern House. There had been a time when every gateway and approach was sternly guarded; when at the bugle calls announcing the forth-riding of His Majesty, the sidewalk crowds and traffic of the street had drawn aside in breathless, almost religious silence to make way for the through-passing of this mortal glory. And now the common crowd invaded the erstwhile halls of imperial grandeur. Yes, penetrated even to that holy of holies, the golden throne room, access to which had been esteemed so high!

I was reminded of the so-similar fate of the tyrant ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd’s palace at Yildiz,¹ in the immediate period subsequent to his forced abdication in the Revolution of 1908. Here, too, the common crowds had penetrated, eager and curious, to see the interior of that sac- [XIV:9:260] rosanct, guarded as few palaces have ever been. As I went through it at that time I was struck by the carelessness of the guards, and the flippancy of the amused crowd thronging these secret and treasured rooms—a natural reaction against their former terror of the Sultán.

It was during the last days of ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life was so seriously threatened. Then in a few days we saw the captive of injustice set free to make his glorious and victorious journey through Europe and America; while the former Sultán, whose rule had been for thirty years the most absolute in the world, was to languish out his life in a sad and miserable captivity.

In the museum at Leipzig we were held spellbound by Lehnbach’s portrait of Bismarck. Those wonderful eyes of the great diplomat and statesman glowed from the canvas with a cold blue flame. They were eyes before which no man could stand in opposition; eyes revealing the great mind, the invincible will, the gigantic magnetism of the man who moulded Europe to his desire. Yet that mind and will and magnetism had to yield before the determination of the imperial young master to rule alone. And not only did Bismarck’s life end in dismissal and exile from the court whose glory he had created, but we see now the utter failure and collapse of all the structure he built up by “blood and iron”. Only there remains the good that he conceived and executed—the unity of the great German people formerly divided into kingdoms and duchies and free cities at constant fratricidal war. So God uses man to forward that which is good; and that which man does of evil is quickly frustrated.

In the same gallery was a wonderful picture of that other great conqueror and superman, Napoleon. How he stormed over Europe, terrifying whole populations, making and unmaking kings, and moulding states to suit his will; yet he lived to see his conquests come to naught, a helpless prisoner on a lonely isle. In the Corcoran Gallery at Washington is a statue of him as in his dying days, looking out over life with still his great will and invincible spirit, learning perhaps certain lessons of the spirit.

In his *Memories of the War Time 1806–1813*, Friedrich von Mueller, Chancellor of Weimar, which we visited while passing through Germany, tells us of his interview with Napoleon, in which he sought pardon and safety for his master, Carl August, Duke of Weimar. Napoleon was very angry with the duke for having fought against him on the side of Prussia; angry, also, because the duke did not now immediately abandon allegiance to his over-lord, the King of Prussia. To secure this audience the duke’s chancellor had followed Napoleon humbly and beseechingly from Weimar to Erfurt, from Erfurt to Raumburg, from Raumburg to Wittenberg, from Wittenberg to Potsdam. At last Napoleon granted the long-sought-for interview: It is a dramatic scene, as described by Mueller. (I translate from the German.)

“Finally came the longed-for moment. I was called into the imperial cabinet, in the midst of which, in rather a defiant attitude, stood Napoleon in his green Chasseur-uniform, his hat under his arm. ... The Emperor broke out into the bitterest reproaches over the conduct of the Duke, my Master. ... ‘You see,’ he said, ‘what I did with the Duke of Braunschweig. I will drive these wolves in the employ of Italy back to those they came from. Like this hat,’ here he threw it angrily to the ground, ‘will I overthrow and humiliate them. And I have a great desire to do so with your prince.’

“By Heaven, if one has not at least a hundred thousand men and a goodly count of cannon, one had better not undertake war with me. These Prussians had as much and more, but what help was that to them? I have scattered them like spray in the wind, I have crushed them

¹ Yildiz Palace in Istanbul.

down, and they will not lift their heads again.” [XIV:9:261]

What a picture of despotic power! The great conqueror asserting his might and prowess; the faithful servant pleading for the throne of his master, who had done no ill but to fulfil his duty to the King of Prussia. After much storming, Napoleon softened and promised to keep the duke upon his throne. “But,” and here he spoke again in fiery mood, “let your duke well understand, that he owes his land and his political existence only and solely to the high respect, the deep friendship which I have for his wife, the duchess and for her worthy sister.”

Of no man is there recorded such an impression of over-mastering power as of this world conqueror. Women hung their heads and blushed as he walked past them. His bravest, roughest generals became tame and awe-inspired in his presence. For a time he held Europe in the hollow of his hand, and there seemed no deliverance.

But Goethe’s mother, writing to Weimar in this period of storm and stress from Mainz, which had fallen into the possession of Napoleon, says, “Yet God still lives, and everything can turn out better than many now believe. *A single moment can change everything.*”

And so it turned out. Napoleon’s power went to ruin more quickly even *than it had been built up.*

One more example of fallen glory comes to mind—the greatest example in history of a terrifying, conquering empire smashed suddenly to pieces! When Sennacherib, the great Assyrian king, was on his way to conquer Egypt, he stopped at a walled city of an insignificant little kingdom and called upon it to surrender. It was a city and a kingdom hardly worthy of his conquest, and worthy of his attention only because it lay in his line of march and communications, and its existence as a stronghold had become to the Assyrians a danger.

It was the general opinion that the city should be immediately surrendered. The councillors so advised, the people so clamoured, and the king was so minded. For woe to that city which resisted Assyria and then was conquered. Death, destruction, tortures unspeakable for the leading defenders—this was the policy of frightfulness that had made the word “Assyrians” a name to terrify even babes with, and had lowered the courage and resistance of those whom Assyria would conquer.

One man alone stood out against the decision to surrender. It was Isaiah, the man of God. To the thundering, earth-shaking armies of Sennacherib he had nothing to oppose but the invisible power and protection of Jehovah. He alone had no fear. By his fiery and inspired words he aroused new courage in the people, the councillors, the king. He promised them safety. He assured them of the invisible protection.

And in one night a plague coming from the marshes of Egypt so smote the Assyrian army, killing a hundred and eighty-five thousand, that “Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed”, to use the simple and quaintly expressive language of the Bible, “and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.”

The Assyrian empire vanished as magically as it had arisen. Within less than a hundred years after Sennacherib so threatened the destruction of Jerusalem, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell before the combined armies of the Chaldeans and Medes and Persians. The terrible scourge of the East was at last laid low. “Its fall was forever. When two centuries later Xenophon and his ten thousand Greeks marched past the place, the Assyrian nation was but a vague tradition, and Nineveh, its great city, was a vast heap of rubbish as it is today. Even the Assyrian speech had passed away.”¹

Read in Nahum, Chapter 3, the rejoicing of Israel at the downfall of this wicked and terrific

¹ Breasted—*Ancient Times*.

city. This passage gives a vivid picture of the fallen greatness of Assyria, one of the most power- [XIV:9:262] ful militaristic empires known to history, which for all its superb war-strength ended in dust.

From these noteworthy examples which history offers, and from many other examples of near and far times, one may see how prone to fall is mortal glory. Over-weening pride is destined to destruction. However great man's will, he cannot battle against God.

So profoundly were the ancient Greeks impressed with this vulnerability of earthly princes, that they dreaded a too great success; dreaded, above all, the pride that is wont to come with success. For they feared the jealousy of the gods, and believed the only safeguard lay in propitiatory sacrifices. We know today that the only sacrifices God wants from men of success and high position are gratitude, humility, and service; and that the only safety in such altitudes is guidance.

If we reflect we can very easily see why unlimited power of will cannot be granted to mortals. What would become of the universe if men of such gigantic wills as Bismarck or Napoleon should go on attaining more and more of power, here and in the next existence?

Would not the whole universe become an anarchy, a war between demonic wills? We have seen what havoc such conflicts make of the fair earth we live upon. Shall the heavens themselves become but the theatre of war? For selfish, egoistic wills can never attain to unity and harmony among themselves. Each seeks to predominate, but no one is powerful enough to eternally hold rule.

Our very conception of the universe is against this. The word, itself, by derivation, means unity, organization, a *revolving* of solar systems according to *one plan*. And whose will shall prevail throughout the universe, save His?

But God's will is not, like man's will, a domination, but a will of love and guidance. It does not seek to crush, but to perfect. What a wonderful example of this was afforded us in the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He did not give commands. He offered opportunities for service. Never did one feel His will infringing upon one's personal freedom. It was offered us only as a guidance, as a gift of love. If we did not accept, it was our loss, and his grief.

Nor did he ever seek to dazzle strangers by the greatness of his station, by any manifestation of His power. Those who had capacity to see, were permitted at times to see him as power. But his power was gently and mercifully veiled from others.

So God works. He could in a moment convince all men of His supremacy. But he chooses not to do so. They must convince themselves. They must discover Him. If they do not choose to do so, they are permitted to conceive of and worship themselves as power, until the time comes for a striking lesson.

Even then God works not in anger, but as the Great Educator, leading us on by rewards and punishments to a knowledge of His Truths. Those who employ their abilities to the utmost are given power. That is their reward. But if they do not ascribe that power to God, they are eventually humiliated. That is their punishment.

Every human will must be turned to God, and revolve about His will. I am so convinced of this, not only from the teachings of God's word, and from the deductions of reason, but also from observations based on life and from history, that wherever I see a human will set itself up to rule and reign in a pride that is forgetful of God, I know a crash is imminent. It is true of individuals, it is true of nations, it is true of our whole planet.

In this day and generation, although we are unaware of it, we are all living perilously near this eminence of pride. The whole Occident has become so confident of its powers over

nature through [XIV:9:263] scientific knowledge, so puffed with pride over its achievements, that it has forgotten God. I hesitate to think of the lessons that may be in store for our planet.

If we, as Bahá'ís, cannot turn other men to the consciousness of God, we can at least increase that consciousness in ourselves, until we realize God as “the One Power which animates and dominates all things.”

It is not without reason that Bahá'u'lláh has given us the daily prayer: “I testify that Thou hast made us to know Thee and to adore Thee. I testify that at this moment I am powerless and Thou art powerful, I am weak and Thou art mighty, I am poor and Thou art rich.” If we can say that and feel that daily, we are safe under the shadow of His protection. Otherwise we are in danger of vanity and egoistic pride; for there is no temptation to which man, even spiritual man, is more subject than that of ascribing power and glory to himself instead of to God.

Not only our own safety, but the safety of the Bahá'í Cause, lies in this humility and evanescence. For where there is self-will and pride, there is emulation, envy, recrimination, disharmony, and eventually a loss of all spiritual power from the individual and from the group.

There is only one road to advancement in the Kingdom. “Verily man is uplifted to the heaven of glory and power through Meekness; again, through Pride, is he degraded to the lowest station.”

XIV:9, December 1923 [XIV:9:263]

The spiritual physician

Tablet to Mr Charles Greenleaf

O thou who art attracted to God, may God uphold thee!

I implore God, the Ever-Living, the Everlasting, to assist thee to spread the spirit of life under all circumstances and conditions, to cheer thy breast by the eternal secret and the hidden mystery, as mentioned in the Bible, the Gospel and Psalms, that thou mayest arise to spread the Most Great Glad Tidings in those regions, to express thyself with an effective power which penetrates into the realities of all things, that thy face may brilliantly shine among the beloved, that the utterances falling from thy tongue in the great public meetings may be like the flowing and running waters, and that the Holy Spirit may confirm thee in the most great assemblies—if thy face be sincerely turned to God, thy heart pure, and thou sacrificest to thy Lord thy spirit, thy personality, thy soul and thy heart, so that nothing is left of thee, neither thought, mention, voice, or even a whisper, save the word Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! Set aside all desires, leave worldly matters, devote thyself to God, be filled with the Spirit, guide the people to safety and bring to them the holy fragrances which emanate from the Kingdom of Abhá.

By the life of Bahá, he who is filled with the love of Bahá, and forgets all things, the Holy Spirit will be heard from his lips and the Spirit of Life will fill his heart, the Lights of the Sign will shine forth from his face, words will issue from his mouth in strands of pearls, and all sickness and disease will be healed by the laying on of the hands.

Bahá is upon thee!

(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

XIV:9, December 1923 [XIV:9:265]

The shrine of the Master

From diary notes of Charles Mason Remey upon his visit to Haifa in March 1922.

Early in the morning following my arrival in Haifa I went up the mountain alone to visit the Holy Tomb of the Master and that of the Báb. I found Mírzá ‘Abbás Qulí within the shrine placing handfuls of freshly cut flowers upon the thresholds of the inner chambers.

The arrangement of the three back chambers of the Tomb, which constitute the tomb proper of the Báb, are the same as formerly, but the three front chambers facing the north, instead of being used for various purposes, as formerly, now form the tomb of the Master.

Curtis Kelsey, who went to Haifa from America in order to install electric light plants at the Holy Tombs and in the Bahá’í Colony, has made an artistic arrangement in his wiring of the Tombs upon Mount Carmel and one quite in harmony with the style and character of the buildings. The black iron lamps hang as formerly, suspended from the high, vaulted ceiling, but he has reversed the shades, thus giving the effect of an indirect lighting system. The Venetian iron candelabra, in the inner shrine of the Báb, which the Master permitted me to make and place there some [XIV:9:266] years ago, is still hanging as before, with its nine tall candles, save that in the central sanctuary lamp, where formerly there hung a glass oil container with a floating wick, there is now an electric bulb. A very powerful electric light is placed on the exterior of the tomb, directly above the main doorway to the north. This is lighted every evening and it forms a focal point on the mountainside and is visible for many miles out at sea.

Several times, in the night, after the household had quieted, Luṭfu’lláh Ḥakím and I climbed up the mountain to the Tomb of the Master, for a few moments of prayer before the door of the Shrine which at that late hour was invariably locked though lights from within might have led one to imagine the building to be open. As is customary in the Orient, burial shrines of importance are kept illumined by night. The Bahá’í sacred Shrines are never left in darkness.

I wish that I might adequately describe the spiritual experience of those nocturnal pilgrimages. The beauty of the spot is beyond description in words. In the clear, scintillating moonlight of the Orient the eye can see for many miles. From this Holy Tomb, Mount Hermon, with its cap of snow, seventy or eighty miles distant, was distinctly visible in the clear moonlight. About the Tomb are fragrant trees, shrubs and flowers. On still nights, when there was little wind, the air would often be heavy with the fragrance of orange blossoms as we knelt on the doorsill pouring out our hearts in prayer and supplication. ...

One evening during the visit, Shoghi Effendi brought with him to the Pilgrim House the original text of the blessed Testament of the Master. We stood about the table as he reverently laid the package thereon, carefully unfolding the envelope from a silk handkerchief in which it was wrapped. As he took the three Tablets from the cover we saw that each was in the handwriting of the Master—written, as Shoghi Effendi called our attention to witness—without hesitation or correction and signed by the Master in several places. We stood with bated breath in the presence of this document of documents in which is contained the wondrous plan for the spiritual organization of the Cause of God and our guidance for a thousand or thousands of years.

The substance of the Testament was, of course, most unexpected. No one could have anticipated its wonderful ordinances. But as one studies it and imbibes its thought he sees at once that no other plan could have been made for guarding and preserving the Cause save the one which the Master has given in his Will. Never have I read anything which gave me the joy and the inspiration that this holy document produced in my heart. It filled my heart with the assurance that the Cause was safely guarded. It gives us a fixed direction toward which to turn and a permanent centre about which we all are to revolve so long as we are in this world.

Apostles of the Master

Two letters from Munírih Khánum, the wife of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

May my soul be a sacrifice to the steadfast in the Cause of God!

The first glad tidings, the first happiness and joy is the return of the Distinguished Branch to the Holy Land and the Holy Shrines. This has gladdened the hearts of all the Bahá’ís.

The second, O spiritual sisters, and handmaids of the Merciful, is that, praise be to God! after the setting of the Light of the—World and the ascent of the Beloved of the World continuous glad tidings and good news have come to the Holy Shrines of the faithfulness of the friends in holding meetings for teaching, in serving the world of humanity, with unity, love, charity and kindness to the people of Bahá. This brightens the tearstained eyes and heals the broken, wounded hearts. In truth it should be [XIV:9:267] so. For in the Blessed Will most of the exhortations are to this effect: “Do not seek repose for a moment. Do not rest for an instant. Go forth to all parts of the world. Be dispersed into every village and town. Be not satisfied until you have given the Message in all the regions of the world.” We must look to the disciples of His Holiness Christ and see what they did after the crucifixion of their Lord. Mary Magdalene was only a woman from Magdala,¹ yet her star shines in the heaven of Christianity. And Her Holiness the Pure, Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, may my soul be a sacrifice to her! although the days of her sacrifice were not very many, yet she became a brilliant star in the heaven of the Cause of God. Among the friends all over the world her name has become a symbol of sacrifice.

In former days there were many steadfast men who sacrificed their pure lives on the field of martyrdom. But such deeds were unheard-of among women. Now, praise be to God! His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has elevated the station of woman and has proclaimed that in this cycle man and woman are like the two wings of the bird. Neither is superior to the other. Girls must be educated as well if not better than boys. And His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh has said that in this age there will appear women who will be the glory of men. There is no doubt that the promises of the Prophets of God will be fulfilled. And in a short while everything that Bahá’u’lláh said will come to pass.

As Jináb-i-Ávárih has told us, at the present time in Ṭihrán about fifty women, with hearts aflame, and brilliant, prepared to lecture and give explanations, are equipped for all kinds of service. This news has indeed gladdened our hearts. He has named the dear sisters and has asked that this one should write and let them know that this bereft mortal has made mention of them in the Holy Shrines.

O beloved sisters! praise be to God, that the field of service is vast and the hungry souls are many. The seekers and the thirsty ones are waiting, and these women are ready! But alas, that some of the people of Persia are bloodthirsty and unjust! ...

It is reported that two handmaids of the Merciful, one the daughter of the deceased Vazír-i-Mukarram of Işfahán and the other the granddaughter of Núr-i-Nayyirin, also of Işfahán, have started out to spread the Cause in their surrounding country. This news has made us very happy. The description of the meetings in Qazvín, and in the different cities of America also gave us great happiness. It indeed indicates that the hope, the wish of all the friends is the spreading of the Cause of God. We beseech the True One that He will keep them under His protection, and we hope that they may attain to that service which is worthy of His Threshold.

Alas, that now the Light of God has hidden itself and the peerless face has disappeared from

¹ Magdala (Aramaic “tower”; Hebrew Migdal; Arabic Mijdal) was an ancient city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, 7 km NW of Tiberias. It is believed to be the birthplace of Mary Magdalene.

among us and the sun of knowledge and forgiveness has set and the cause of joy and the foundation of happiness has chosen absence! ... We hope that in this year the blessings of God and His heavenly bestowals will decree for the Bahá'ís results which will exceed all expectations. We seek mercy for His servants.

The maidservant to the threshold of God,

(Signed) Munírih.

The glorious work of education

To the Friends of God. To them be Glory!

It is plain and evident to everyone that the foundation of all life is education. Were it not for the gift of education no one would have been created, nor would there be any (human) life. In this great cycle and chosen century the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) may my life be a sacrifice to him! has made education important above all other [XIV:9:268] questions, giving it the highest place among God's blessings. In many instances, in different places, in the holy Tablets and the divine Verses he has written and commanded every man and woman, every king, and every well-wisher of the nations to carry on this work, which is the highest and most honourable of all services before God.

In the day of His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the question of education has again been given first place. He has praised the promoters of this great work, for education has become a great necessity. He has declared and explained God's displeasure with those who heed not this great command. The writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are full of this subject. He especially advises the training of girls and women—of the girls of today who are the mothers of tomorrow. It is manifest that the first tutor of the child is the mother. If the mother is not endowed with heavenly morals and is not possessed of merciful qualities, and knowledge, she is indeed not fit for her work as educator. And if she is not prepared to undertake the education of the children this is a sin. It is clear, therefore, that the education of girls is most important.

Therefore, every merciful friend and handmaid of God, in every city and town, should do as much as possible to obey this great command, even if in their respective cities this work is already established.

Because this servant from early childhood has hoped for some means for the education of Bahá'í girls, I one day when in the presence of the Master, besought him that, if it were his wish, we might find here a small school for Bahá'í children, where they could, from the beginning, acquire Bahá'í morals, and learn the history of the Cause. Pointing toward Mount Carmel, he said: "This long mountain will be covered with schools, hospitals and Pilgrim Houses. All that has been foretold will come to pass." I said that I had in mind the little piece of land which Hájí Mírzá Hasan had given. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied:

"There is a piece of land opposite the Holy Shrine. 'Abbás Qulí, the owner, at the Feast of Ridván offered it as a gift, and it was accepted. We must purchase all the adjoining land. That is a good location for a school. It has beautiful scenery and pure air, and is near the Holy Shrines."

At that time the faithful leaf, Miss Sanderson, was at Haifa. She asked permission to share in this work. 'Abdu'l-Bahá granted this request. And the revered Mr Remey drew the plan for the school and presented it for the approval of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

We now have a large piece of land, and the fifteen hundred pounds which belonged to this one have been given to this work. About a thousand pounds have come, from all parts of the world. But the success of this undertaking depends entirely upon the assistance of the faithful friends. We hope that in the day of the Distinguished Branch, with the help of the Holy Leaves and through the exertions of the beloved brothers and sisters, this work will be accomplished.

But this work must be carried out in accordance with the plans and arrangements of Shoghi Effendi, which are, that anyone who wishes to send a contribution to the school will do so in the name of the Holy Leaves, the daughters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. And the receipt, signed by these four, Dīyá'íyyih Khánum, Rúhá Khánum, Túbá Khánum and Munavvar Khánum, will be forwarded to the donor. The money contributed will be placed in the Bank of Haifa in the name of the aforementioned ladies until a sufficient sum has been collected.

Every great undertaking has had a small beginning; therefore, we must now also be satisfied with a small beginning.

(Signed) Munírih.

XIV:9, December 1923 [XIV:9:269]

Heralds of the new day

Adapted from addresses given in London by Jináb-i-Ávárih, whose great history of the Bahá'í Cause is now being published in Persian in Cairo, Egypt.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn

When Qurratu'l-'Ayn was a child there was in Persia a very celebrated Mullá Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í. So great a scholar was he that throughout all the Muslim world he had no peer. Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í was the first divine to attack certain established beliefs prevalent among the Muslims, one of which was that Muḥammad in his living, physical body departed from this earth and ascended into heaven, a belief similar to that held by many Christians with regard to the Christ. There were other Muslims who in their heart disbelieved this teaching, but Shaykh Aḥmad was the first who had the courage to publicly declare against it.

Another Muslim doctrine was that of the resurrection of the body. Shaykh Aḥmad taught his students that the physical body cannot go to heaven, that it will not rise but will disintegrate; while the spirit will be taken up and will dwell in the presence of God. He explained that it was the spirit of Muḥammad, not his body, which ascended.

Again, the Shaykh taught that God always sends teachers to His people, to lead them to His Kingdom, and that this divine bounty had not ceased.

The Muslims believed that there was one—who had been hidden for a thousand years—who would appear suddenly, a great teacher. Shaykh Aḥmad said that the Promised One would not come that way; he would be manifest shortly but would be born in the natural way. This teaching of the Shaykh was of utmost importance to the Muslims, because for a thousand years they had been looking for this person who they believed had been in hiding for that period. And now the Shaykh said he would be born, and would appear very shortly.

Although strictly forbidden by the mullás, these teachings found many adherents, until thousands of people became followers of Shaykh Aḥmad. They were popularly known as "Shaykhí", and by many of the mullás were called atheists.

At last the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad were carried to Qazvín, the home of Qurratu'l-'Ayn and her relatives. Her father and her eldest uncle, both of whom were mullás, opposed the Shaykh. But her two younger uncles believed him and secretly became his followers. Qurratu'l-'Ayn's father and uncle had many discussions about the Shaykh, calling him, in private, "Káfir", which means, "Turned away from God and not of the Muslim religion". Qurratu'l-'Ayn, then between thirteen and fourteen years of age, listened to these conversations and said, "The Shaykh is right and my father and uncle are wrong." She secured the books and writings of the Shaykh and read them constantly. Whereupon her father and uncle said to her, "Read *our* books. Read *our* writings. We know better than he."

Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá'í went from Karbilá to Khurásán and thence to Tíhrán where he met

Sháh Fath-‘Alí who so honoured him that he offered to share with him his throne. But the Shaykh refused, and left for Karbilá, on his journey passing through Qazvín.

After the death of Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsá‘í, his disciple Siyyid Kázim, carried forward his teachings, constantly telling his disciples and students that soon, within a few years, the Promised One would appear. Through the assistance of her younger uncle, who believed in Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim, Qurratu’l-‘Ayn and able to correspond with Siyyid Kázim and secure his writings. She [XIV:9:270] watched eagerly for the Promised One, and often told her younger uncle that unless the new order appeared and the Muslim religion was changed the condition of women in the East would become much worse. She would say, “Will a day come when new laws and revelations will be revealed, and shall I be one of the first to follow those teachings and give my life for my sisters?”

Her longing for the coming of the great Teacher and the new era became so strong that at last she besought her uncle, her father and her husband for permission to make a pilgrimage to Karbilá. She knew that there she would be able to meet Siyyid Kázim. Through the efforts of her younger uncle this permission was at last granted and she set out upon her wonderful journey, accompanied by this uncle. What were her sorrow and disappointment to hear, three days before her arrival in Karbilá, the news of the death of Siyyid Kázim! However, she soon remembered that the Siyyid had left glad tidings of the One to come, and who would come quickly, and her heart was again filled with happiness. She journeyed on to Karbilá and there visited the family of the Siyyid, who gave her access to many of the Siyyid’s unpublished writings, some of which were not even finished. As she read she exclaimed, “Behold, how much the Shaykh and the Siyyid have left us. They have left us a sea of writings.”

There was no one to take the place of Siyyid Kázim and teach his students. So Qurratu’l-‘Ayn came forward and announced that she would take this place, would teach his followers just what the Siyyid had taught and impart to them his knowledge.

This caused much discussion among the Siyyid’s followers. Then thirty-two of the students said, “We will go and hear her once or twice. If we are satisfied we will advise the others to come, and she will teach them.”

It was extremely dangerous and difficult for Qurratu’l-‘Ayn to teach men and for them to come to hear her for in those clays—and even at the present time in many places—women were kept veiled and in utmost seclusion. But Qurratu’l-‘Ayn overcame all difficulties, had a curtain arranged in the room, and behind this sat and taught those thirty-two students who came to hear her. They soon recognized her as the one who could best teach them and saw that she was greater than all the divines in Karbilá. For more than a year she taught these students, and all the time she wept and prayed that when the Promised One came she might recognize him. And she urged the people to watch for him and obey Him who was shortly to come into the world.

When Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Buṣhrúyihí visited the Báb, and became convinced that he was the Promised One, he told the news to Mullá ‘Alí-i-Baṣṭámí, who likewise became a follower of the Báb, the second disciple. Mullá ‘Alí-i-Baṣṭámí then went to Karbilá, and there announced the great tidings that the New Light had arisen. When Qurratu’l-‘Ayn heard this news she summoned him to her presence and asked, “What proofs have you, and where is he?” Mullá ‘Alí gave her some of the writings and prayers of the Báb. She took them, and straightway became a believer. The following day when her pupils came for their lesson she announced the glad tidings that the long-expected time was at hand, saying, “All the promises given by the Shaykh and the Siyyid have come to pass. The Promised One is on earth today!”

And a little child shall lead them

An incident from the early life of the Báb

We now wish to know if Qurratu'l-'Ayn had seen or met or had had any direct communication with the Báb previous to his public appearance and, if not, how she became acquainted with him.

She had heard that there was a young man in Shíráz, twenty–five years of age, [XIV:9:271] who from childhood had lived a perfect life and shown wonderful signs of wisdom and inspiration. But she had never seen him or had access to his writings, and she did not know that the one of whom Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim spoke was this same youth. All that she knew concerning the Báb had been told her by Ḥájí Siyyid Javád, one of the greatest mullás¹ (divines) in Karbilá.

When Ḥájí Siyyid Javád went to Shíráz the Báb, at that time called Siyyid 'Alí Muḥammad, was between seven and eight years of age. Ḥájí Siyyid Javád states:

One night I was invited to the house of the uncle of this little boy, and I perceived some beautiful traits in the little child's character which aroused my interest. This uncle, Ḥájí Siyyid 'Alí, had charge of the little child, as his father had died. I spent the night in the house of Ḥájí Siyyid 'Alí and, in the early morning I heard a tiny, sweet little voice in the next room, which I found to be a prayer room. It was a little child's voice in prayer—such prayers, such a voice, such devotion that I became absolutely enraptured and I, who was a great divine and was known to be very learned became quite humble upon hearing those beautiful words, so that I wanted to open the door and go out and see who that little child was. I waited patiently until dawn, when Ḥájí Siyyid 'Alí came and met me. And then that little child came, and I saw that he was the little child between seven and eight years of age—and he it was who had been chanting in the prayer room. As soon as I gazed upon the child I saw such illumination, and on his face an expression so beautiful, that I felt I could not find throughout the whole human race one like him. Before I could ask Ḥájí Siyyid 'Alí who he was, Ḥájí Siyyid 'Alí said, "This is my sister's child."

When we were having breakfast I asked a few simple questions of the little boy, and he answered me in a deep and grave way, such as one would expect from a very learned person. The child then said, "I am going to school," and left.

I asked where that child went to school and the uncle answered, "He goes to Shaykh 'Ábid to school."

I was so much drawn to the child that I could not stay where I was but got up and followed him to the house of Shaykh 'Ábid.

Shaykh 'Ábid, who was a teacher for the young, was surprised to see me, so great a scholar, so well-known and so famous that the Governor came out and welcomed me into the town, coming to his house unheralded. I at once understood the wonderment in the face of the Shaykh and said to him:

"I have not come to see you. I followed this little child," pointing to him. Then I asked the Shaykh:

"What do you think of this boy?"

As soon as I said this the Shaykh showed great emotion, saying:

"What are you asking me? This child seems to me to be ready to proclaim, to give out a message to the world. What can I say about this child!"

He said, further: "You see that this child comes to my school as a pupil, but in reality he is my teacher and I am his pupil. During class time he says so many wonderful things and goes

¹ Mawlá, Pers. mullá, pl. mawálí: a Muslim priest. Ḥájí (Pers. ḥájí), pl. ḥujjáj, ḥajj: pilgrim; Mecca pilgrim, honorific title of one who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. Siyyid: a direct descendent of Muḥammad.

into so many deep and important questions that I have never heard anything like it in all my life. When the children go out to play one sees him sitting there, reading most important writings. If the children come and insist that he go and play with them he goes and engages them in a way which they do not understand; then he slips away and returns to his work.”

The admiration of this Shaykh for the child so increased my own admiration and wonder that I returned to the house of Ḥájí Siyyid ‘Alí and told him what Shaykh ‘Ábid had said to me. The uncle answered: “I hear so much about this boy. Yet, if I told anything people would [XIV:9:272] only say, ‘he likes to speak well of his nephew.’

Ḥájí Siyyid Javád urged the uncle to tell him more about the little boy. So at last the uncle consented and told him of a wonderful dream which the child had had, when five years old. He dreamed that a pair of scales hung down from heaven. In one side of the scales was one of the prophets; in the other side, which was empty, this little child was placed by an invisible hand. Then this side weighed down the other, and the prophet seemed to be going up and the little boy coming down.

“Then, again,” the uncle said, “we went one day to a public bath. The child slept when there. Suddenly he awoke and said, ‘I dreamed that the roof of the bath next door fell down and killed seven ladies.’ We were surprised, but when we came out of the bath we discovered that this had actually happened.”

If we were to recount in detail the proofs of the truth of the Báb it would take a long time. Suffice it to say that after the Báb proclaimed his mission this uncle and this teacher believed in him, and the uncle was, finally, martyred in his footsteps.

This, indeed, is proof!

All these wonderful incidents about the Báb were related to Qurratu’l-‘Ayn by Ḥájí Siyyid Javád, and thus she came to know him.

When eighteen years old the Báb made a pilgrimage to Karbilá, where he met Ḥájí Siyyid Kázim of Rasht who also recognized signs of the greatness and illumination in this youth. These things and what she had read in the books of old made Qurratu’l-‘Ayn confident that the light was to come from Shíráz. Therefore when she heard that the youth, Siyyid ‘Alí Muḥammad, in Shíráz, had proclaimed his mission she instantly believed in him, and when she read some of his writings these confirmed still more deeply her belief.

When she heard this news and became a follower of the Báb her whole attitude, condition and point of view were completely changed. She now spoke with such power and insight that those who had seen and heard her before were astonished, and exclaimed, “This is not the woman we knew before!” She was so aflame that at any gathering of men or women where she spoke she won the entire attention and the very heart and soul of the audience.¹

XIV:9, December 1923 [XIV:9:272]

What is new in the Bahá’í teachings?

Some of the new teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, specialized for the needs of this radiant century, are the independent investigation of truth, the oneness of mankind, universal peace, a universal court of arbitral justice, equality of men and women, universal education, the unity of science and religion, the underlying oneness of all existing faiths, that work done in the spirit of service is worship, etc.² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá outlines some of these teachings in the brilliant

¹ For fuller details of the life of Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, see *Star of the West*, XIV:5, pp. 138–143, and for the manifestation of the Báb, *Star of the West*, XIV:7, pp. 193–202.

² These new teachings are enumerated in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s addresses in *Divine Philosophy*, p. 51 (1st edition); in the *Star of the West*, VIII:2 p. 31.

Tablet¹ quoted on the inside cover of this magazine, when he likens these principles to the rays of the sun. “The spreading of these rays,” he says, “will deliver the world of humanity from the darkness of ignorance and strangeness and lead it to the centre of all these rays.” That centre is the Sun of Reality from which they have all proceeded. That Sun of Truth has been reflected in dazzling, penetrating power in the mirror of the heart and mind of the great Manifestation of our age, Bahá’u’lláh. The divine Manifestation in every age is the centre of [XIV:9:273] the power which can put the ideals of the age into practice. He transmits the Holy Spirit which creates men anew so that they can live and spread God’s teachings. Whenever he appears on earth *he* is always the gloriously new element in the solution of the world’s problems. And strangely enough, the thinkers of the age often do not reckon with this method by which God solves their problems. “The greatest divine bounty,” says ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “is the appearance of the Manifestation of God. How can we ever limit and circumscribe this bestowal! In reality it is the greatest of spiritual gifts.” “Although the stars are scintillating and brilliant, the sun is superior to them in luminous effulgence. Similarly, these holy, divine Manifestations are and must always be distinguished above all other beings in every attribute of glory and perfection in order that it may be proven that the Manifestation is the true Teacher and real Trainer; that He is the Sun of Truth, ... Otherwise, it is not possible for us to train one human individual and then after training him, believe in him and accept him as the holy Manifestation of Divinity. The real Manifestation of God must be endowed with divine knowledge and not dependent upon learning acquired in schools. He must be the Educator, not the educated; ...”²

“A young boy educated in Oxford will not become the universal educator of mankind. One who is in need of the knowledge of the professors of a university will not become the Manifestation of God. Christ was not taught by any man, yet he was a universal educator. Bahá’u’lláh did not study, but his knowledge was immeasurable. He became the instructor of the world of humanity. Even his enemies testify to this fact.”³

“In a word, the holy, divine Manifestation of God must be distinguished above all others of mankind in every aspect and qualification in order that He may be able to train effectively the human body politic, eliminate the darkness enshrouding the human world, uplift humanity from a lower to a higher kingdom, be able through the penetrative power of His Word to promote and spread broadcast the beneficent message of universal peace among men, bring about the unification of mankind in religious belief through a manifest divine power, harmonize all sects and denominations and convert all native lands and nationalities into one native land and fatherland.”⁴

“The virtues and perfections of the world of humanity are infinite, but degrees exist. The outward form may change, but the inherent qualities persist. The lower degree cannot attain to the higher degree. For example, however much the mineral may advance its progress is limited to the mineral world. It is possible for the black carbon to become the brilliant diamond, but it cannot attain to the vegetable kingdom nor obtain the virtue of growth. Likewise, however much the tree may advance it can never reach to the degree of the animal nor is it able to acquire the power of hearing and sight. Its phases of progress are circumscribed, within the circle of the vegetable kingdom. Where formerly it was fruitless, it has now become fruitful. Or, where formerly it produced small and bitter fruit it now yields large and perfect fruit.

“Consequently, however much the creatures may make progress they will not be able to

¹ *Star of the West*, XI:1, pp. 10–11.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 467.

³ From diary letter of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, 11 October, 1913.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 467.

attain to the station of the Holy Manifestations. Although Peter and Paul made infinite progress, yet they did not reach to the station of His Holiness Christ. He was the essence of essences, and they belonged to the world of change and mutation.”¹

“Yea, all are from God—but one man is so exalted that others bow down before him and he is adored by them, like Christ, and Moses who called people to the oneness of divinity and who became the cause of the education of a [XIV:9:274] nation—while another is so degraded that he adores clay, and worships insects and serpents. Are these two one and the same? No, certainly not! Nay, divine Manifestations are a separate creation.

“All are equal in birth, but look how much they differ in intelligence. One is the wisest of the wisest and a founder of the laws of happiness and prosperity; while the other is the most ignorant of the ignorant, and a destroyer of the edifice of peace and honour.

“This shows that Prophets have a station of their own. Many crossed the desert sands of Sinai but it was Moses who heard the voice of God, because divine Manifestations have a spiritual power peculiar to themselves. Mighty nations swayed the world at the time of the appearance of divine Manifestations, but they were all degraded and obliterated. But behold! what a banner did Christ, a single person, having no helper or assistant, unfurl!

“All are from God, but all have different stations. Both man and animals are from God—but what a difference is there between them !”²

Question: “Did Jesus first realize his mission when the Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “The Holy Spirit was always with Christ.”

Question: “Did he know of it?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “It was hidden from others, but manifest to him. The story about the dove is simply a metaphor. No dove came down. Amongst the people, John the Baptist felt that the Holy Spirit was in Christ. The Holy Spirit was always with Christ. He knew about his mission from early childhood.”

Question: “Did the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also know of their mission from early childhood?”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Yes.”

Question: “In a book I read that at the age of twenty-four the Báb realized his mission.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá : “From childhood it was apparent to him, like the sun. The people felt his greatness although they did not know about his future.”³

Thus, whenever “the ever widening circle of man’s knowledge meets the spiritual world the Manifestation of God is sent to mirror forth His splendour.” The enumeration of the universal principles gives only a few of the rays of the world-illuminating sun.⁴ No one can know all the revelation until he has fully known and reflected in his life and deeds the centre and source of it all, God’s new Manifestation.

“The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted is His Glory! and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestations.”

¹ From a Tablet to Mrs E. G. Cooper, 1916.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: From the diary of Mírzá Maḥmúd, 30 October 1912.

³ From notes sent to America by Mr Fugeta.

⁴ *Star of the West*, XI:1, pp. 10–11.

The life of Bahá'u'lláh

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

Part I

The province of Mázindarán, in northern Persia, has played a most distinguished part in the history of that country. Reaching to the Caspian Sea, it is covered, in its northern portion, by a great forest of primeval trees where many nightingales sing their sweetest melodies, and thousands of varieties of fragrant flowers bloom in profusion. In the south are high mountains, upon whose peaks the snow never melts. This mountainous district, now the summer resort of the citizens of Ṭíhrán, was in ancient times a place of retirement for the “herbod”,¹ the mystics and holy people. Here they went for meditation and prayer.

There are many legends regarding the province. It was said that here there would grow a celestial tree, with branches reaching to heaven. The fruit of this tree would be for the life of the nations. Many people travelled to this region hoping to find the wonderful tree. Another legend was that the king of war and hatred had been imprisoned in one of these high mountains. These stories were, of course, parables, describing in symbolic language the coming of the Universal Manifestation of God, whose teachings would encompass the earth and bring peace to all mankind.

In Núr, one of the districts of Mázindarán, dwelt the ancestors of Bahá'u'lláh. A manuscript has been found, giving his genealogy which goes back more than 1,300 years, to the kings of ancient Persia. These ancestors were people of illumined mind, of great wealth and distinction. So pre-eminent were they among the people that they were regarded as a superior order of beings. They possessed immense estates and many cattle, and built for themselves a great palace on the side of the mountain where the magnificent view took in valley and river. In this palace they entertained in princely fashion their summer guests.

Bahá'u'lláh's father was Prime Minister to the Sháh. He was looked upon by his contemporaries as a genius; his beautiful handwriting is to this day used as a model in calligraphy and the samples of it which still remain are highly prized by connoisseurs. He also had bitter enemies, due to his fearless speaking of the truth, and his high position. During the winter he lived in his palace in Ṭíhrán. But in the summer he retired to his country estate at Núr.

In 1817, in the palace in Ṭíhrán, Bahá'u'lláh was born. Although there were other children in the family, the parents had a unique love for this little boy, feeling even in his infancy the radiance of his remarkable power. Over the entrance to his house Bahá'u'lláh's father inscribed a verse which shows an intuition of his son's future. This inscription may still be read: [XIV:10:292]

“When thou enterest the sacred abode of the Beloved

“Say, ‘I am at Thy command’.

“This is the home of Love. Enter with reverence.

“This is holy ground. Remove thy shoes when thou enterest here.”

Bahá'u'lláh, when a child, had a dream in which he saw himself in a vast desert and around his head was flying every species of bird. Passing over the desert he came to the ocean. He swam in the ocean and all the fishes came to him and swam around his head. He related this dream to his father who told it to a celebrated Interpreter of dreams. This Interpreter said that the birds and fishes meant the thinkers of the world and that this boy would after a while

¹ Hirbud, Zoroastrian religious teacher, lower in rank than a priest.

become so great that all the thoughtful ones of the earth would follow him.

The perfection of character and the radiant spirit of the little child drew to him not only his father and mother, but prominent persons began to prophesy concerning his future. He was so beloved by the people that his father's enemies, even, withheld their attacks, because of this little boy.

When he reached maturity it was supposed that he would, because of his father's high position, enter the government service. But Bahá'u'lláh's purposes were of a different nature.

A very prominent theologian of Persia, a distant relative of Bahá'u'lláh, had a dream. He found himself in a deep valley, beside a beautiful palace. He wished to enter the palace but was told by the people that he must not do so for "The Promised One was within in conference, alone, with Bahá'u'lláh."

The theologian related this dream to many people, and all wondered concerning the spiritual station of Bahá'u'lláh. The theologian said, "Perhaps he has so high a station because he is my relative."

Some thoughtful people replied, "But you, yourself, did not have permission to enter."

This theologian had about a thousand students who met with him in class in order to discuss difficult problems of theology. One day, when their discussion was at its height, Bahá'u'lláh entered the room. After listening for a while he began to speak, and for nearly an hour they listened, wonder-struck, to the torrent of explanation which poured from his lips. The students were astounded, and the teacher marvelled, saying, "We have all studied the books—but here is one who without having studied imparts to us something greater than we have ever heard."

Bahá'u'lláh was by this time regarded by many as a superman, and everyone in the province felt that they must follow his counsel. Then, in 1838, his father died, leaving a vast estate of lands and cattle. Even before his father's death Bahá'u'lláh gave large sums of money to aid the poor.

When Bahá'u'lláh was twenty-seven years old, and living in his home in Ṭīhrán, the Báb declared himself. The people came to Bahá'u'lláh regarding the matter, and he told them, "What the Báb says is true." He also advised his family to study the Báb's writings.

We have no evidence that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh ever met, yet we know that their spiritual communication was continual. There is a story, which is probably true, that when the Báb was under guard, on the outskirts of Ṭīhrán, Bahá'u'lláh visited him, and the people observed how, contrary to his usual custom, the Báb paid extraordinary honour to Bahá'u'lláh, thus showing his recognition of his great spiritual station.

In the early morning of the Cause, when Bahá'u'lláh's own station was as yet unknown, he powerfully assisted the movement, with utmost effort and sacrifice, comforting the persecuted followers of the Báb and giving large sums of money to assist the spreading of the new teachings. With irresistible logic and perfect wisdom he taught the new principles. He had never in his life been to school, yet he wrote with a style of [XIV:10:293] transcendent beauty, and spoke as one inspired. To the listening people his words seemed like the waves of a vast tumultuous ocean.

The wonderful abilities of Bahá'u'lláh, however, aroused the opposition of bitter enemies who made every effort to halt the spread of the movement. In 1847 he was imprisoned for a number of days because of his efforts in behalf of some prominent followers of the Báb who had been arrested. Shortly after his release a great conference of the believers of the Báb was held at Badasht. There, many distinguished disciples came together to discuss ways and means for spreading the Cause. During this time they lived in tents which they pitched on the

plain outside the town. Bahá'u'lláh attended this conference and through his great wisdom unity of thought was achieved among all the different minds. It was into the midst of this imposing conference that Qurratu'l-'Ayn appeared with face unveiled, and declared that a New Day had dawned, the day of the emancipation of women, of the resurrection of souls, when men and women would rise from the graves of ignorance and limited beliefs and would see the Sun of God's Bounty which had appeared from the invisible horizon. Previous to this conference she had written to the Báb that she realized how he, in his wisdom, was giving his new teachings, little by little, according to the capacity of the people, but would he give her permission to teach still more; and if she was rejected she would gladly sacrifice herself to spread God's new Light.

During the great siege of Mázindarán, which occurred after the conference at Badasht, Bahá'u'lláh, taking with him eleven believers, went to the authorities and pled for the besieged. But in answer, he with his eleven companions was arrested, and a great mob gathered from the surrounding district and armed with all manner of weapons tried to kill them. For safe keeping the guards at last hid them in a mosque and the Governor himself interfered to save Bahá'u'lláh and his companions. Some Muslim mullás who had been confounded by Bahá'u'lláh in a discussion of scientific subjects now came forward and incited the people to attack the mosque and inflict injury upon Bahá'u'lláh. The mob became so violent that the guards found it impossible to check them so they made a hole in the wall and through it slipped Bahá'u'lláh and his companions out of the mosque and to safe hiding in a well protected house unknown to the people. Later he and the others were set free and they returned to Tíhrán.

After the martyrdom of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh travelled to Baghdád and Karbilá where he inspired many, many people through his example and his great illumination. After a year's absence he returned to Tíhrán where a veritable reign of terror had started against the Báb's followers. The Prime Minister sent a request to him, at his summer residence just outside Tíhrán, to depart quickly and save himself. But Bahá'u'lláh refused to do this and remained where he was. Soon, a mob went to his palace, brought him out and compelled him, with hands manacled and bare feet to run for miles, amidst the jeers of the people. He was put in an underground dungeon with a number of believers, his neck, feet and hands in heavy chains and these chains fastened to the floor. Here he was kept for four months. Each day a believer was taken out to be killed by the people in the public square. But the presence of Bahá'u'lláh was so glorious that those steadfast souls crowded with him in the dungeon were supremely happy and joyous. He would chant, "God is our Sustainer", "Sufficient unto us is God". And the rayless cell would be transformed into the light of heaven. In their renunciation and spiritual joy they sang and danced even under the swords of their executioners.

Unable to find any pretext for executing Bahá'u'lláh and because he was of the nobility, the Persian government decided at last to exile him and in this way extinguish the new movement. He was [XIV:10:294] ordered to leave Tíhrán immediately, for Baghdád. He was not allowed time to obtain money or to secure even necessary clothing for himself and his family, but all were mounted on horses and started upon the journey. It was mid-winter and heavy snow storms and bitter cold were the companions of the band of exiles as, surrounded by guards, they hurried along over the perilous mountain roads. After the most tragic sufferings they arrived in Baghdád, in 1853.

From Baghdád the light of Truth shone forth brighter than ever and Bahá'u'lláh taught his universal principles. The "lesser resurrection" was ended and the "universal resurrection" appeared.¹ There were many believers of the Báb who kept the faith but, because of the terrible persecutions, were in hiding. These, many of them, when they heard that Bahá'u'lláh

¹ See article on the Báb, in the *Star of the West*, XIV:7, pp. 193-202.

was living in Mesopotamia, in comparative freedom, started out for Baghdád and joined him there.

Humanity is ever prone to oppose its spiritual leaders. And now, many followers of the Báb who had arisen with great courage to accept his teachings, which were far in advance of those preached by the Persian religious leaders of that time, were unable to understand the wonderful and progressive teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They felt that he was abrogating the precepts of the Báb. Therefore much discussion arose. Another cause of disturbance at that time was the appearance of a malady ever present in the world-love of leadership. This crept in among these early disciples causing many of the Báb's followers to believe themselves important. Bahá'u'lláh had not yet declared himself the Manifestation and they had no excuse for attacking him; yet they realized that one had come among them whose power their love of leadership might find a serious obstacle. On the other hand there were many who possessed true insight; these, as soon as they heard Bahá'u'lláh speak recognized him as their new leader and acknowledged him. Finally, after being in Baghdád for about a year, Bahá'u'lláh decided to withdraw for a while that the believers might decide whom they wished to follow. So, quietly one night he slipped away and not even his family knew where he had gone nor the hour of his departure. In the morning, when his absence was discovered, a wide search was made, in every direction, and to every place where he was wont to go. But no trace nor sign of him could anywhere be found.

For two long years no word came from Bahá'u'lláh, and those followers of the Báb who were sincere and faithful came fully to realize what a great and glorious light had been withdrawn. They were confused and at loss; they were like sheep without a shepherd, like lamps whose light had been extinguished. They now saw clearly that only Bahá'u'lláh was their bulwark and sustainer, their source of light and wisdom.

When he left his home in Baghdád, Bahá'u'lláh journeyed to Kurdistán and into the mountain wildernesses of that country, to a place called Sulaymáníyyih. Here he lived, in a cave, dressed in the garb of a religious hermit. Those wild mountains were full of highwaymen and desperadoes and he who travelled in that region took his life in his hands. But as these people came to know Bahá'u'lláh a great love and respect for him filled their hearts. They did not know who he was, only, they said, that he was the embodiment of divine attributes.

Bahá'u'lláh had a most melodious voice, and in the night, in his cave in the mountains, he would chant in Persian the most exquisite poems and prayers. Then the people near his cave would awake, and rise, and congregate at the mouth of the cave to listen to the wonderful singing. Later, these prayers were collected and printed in a volume in remembrance of those sacred hours. This volume is now in the possession of the believers.

One day, in the hills of Sulaymáníyyih, Bahá'u'lláh came upon a little boy, weeping [XIV:10:295] bitterly. Tenderly he picked up the child and, holding him in his arms, inquired as to his trouble. The little boy replied that his teacher had written a line on his slate and told him to copy it exactly. When he could not do this as well as the other pupils the teacher had beaten him. "Therefore," said the child, "I am unhappy." Bahá'u'lláh lovingly consoled him and said that he would teach him to write. He took the slate from the boy's hand and wrote upon it, in most beautiful handwriting, a thought compelling epigram, then told the child to carry this to his teacher. The teacher upon reading the profound epigram, written in such beautiful handwriting was much surprised and inquired where the one who so wrote could be found. Thus the learned men of that region came to know of Bahá'u'lláh's presence among them.

Soon the fame of his knowledge and wisdom spread throughout Kurdistán and the thoughtful ones, regarding him as a saint, came to him with their problems in spiritual and

mystical subjects. Finally the news that a very holy man was living in the mountains in Kurdistán reached the ears of Bahá'u'lláh's family, who immediately said that this could be none other than Bahá'u'lláh and they must set out to find him.

There was a physician, a member of the Persian Consulate, who frequently visited the family of Bahá'u'lláh and felt much sympathy for them because of their great sorrow at his absence. One day this physician came with a story of a merchant who had travelled to Hamadán to sell some bales of goods. On the homeward journey he was attacked by a band of Bedouin robbers who, unable to find his money, cut his throat, carried him back into the mountains, there threw him down and, covering his body with stones left him. A shepherd coming that way a little later, saw drops of blood on the ground and following their trail found the poor merchant, whose heart was still feebly beating. A physician was quickly brought. The merchant was unable to speak, but before he died he wrote upon a bit of paper that there was money secreted in his clothing, which he was carrying to "a renowned saint who lived in the mountains", and he begged that the money be taken to this saint, to be devoted to his cause.

These stories convinced the believers in Baghdád that it was Bahá'u'lláh who was living in the cave in the mountains of Kurdistán. One who was very faithful, said, "I will go and find Bahá'u'lláh and will beg him to return. If he does not wish to do so, I will remain with him." His companions replied that the journey was most dangerous for the country was full of robbers. But he said, "I will go."

After encountering many difficulties he finally reached the cave. He proffered to Bahá'u'lláh many letters supplicating and entreating him to return to Baghdád. At last Bahá'u'lláh consented and started forth with this companion.

His return to Baghdád brought a wonderful impetus to the Cause. His very appearance, so majestic and compelling drew to him people from all walks of life, for one need but look into his face to see that he was not as others. Soon a constant stream of visitors was pouring into his house; the rough Kurds from the mountains, in sheepskin clothing, coming in search of their Master who had so recently been among them; leaders of thought, Jewish, Muslim, Christian, seeking an audience; the various consuls and other dignitaries stationed at Baghdád, who stood silent in his presence, waiting for his words of wisdom. There were also numbers of pilgrims who came to visit the holy shrines established in the cities near Baghdád. Many of these earnest men came to see Bahá'u'lláh to investigate his teachings: returning to their homes they carried the new message.

With Bahá'u'lláh present among them a new spirit shone from the hearts of the believers. He taught them that the way to spread the Cause was for each believer to become a divine lamp of guidance among all the people. The more [XIV:10:296] they were harmed by the enemies of the Cause, he told them, the more must they show forth love and kindness. Then other believers, from all parts of the country, left their homes and relatives and came to Baghdád to be with Bahá'u'lláh, who trained them in these noble characteristics, changing iron into gold, until many were drawn to the movement through the spiritual lives of these early followers.

Then the enemies of the Cause again bestirred themselves. The story is told of a religious leader who was greatly drawn to Bahá'u'lláh. Learning that the enemies were plotting against him he decided to warn Bahá'u'lláh. So he went early one morning to his home, with this intention. He found Bahá'u'lláh beside the River Dajli,¹ walking up and down the beautiful bank which he loved, pouring forth his revelation. The visitor, greatly surprised that Bahá'u'lláh was so undisturbed by his impending danger, waited until he returned to his

¹ Nihri Dijla, Tigris River.

house, and then told him of his danger. Bahá'u'lláh reassured him, saying, "God is working through invisible means."

In spite of all the persecutions the believers did not become downcast or discouraged. They had supreme confidence in Bahá'u'lláh. They were so aglow with the spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the Cause of God that if their material possessions were taken away from them it made no difference to them, for they were living in the paradise of nearness to Bahá'u'lláh.

During these days in Baghdád many books and Tablets were revealed through the pen of Bahá'u'lláh. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* was written during this period, also the *Hidden Words*, *Seven Valleys*, *Jewels of Mysteries in the Highest Journey*, a great Tablet called the *Tablet of Jacob*, and many other luminous epistles. Bahá'u'lláh wrote and spoke in brilliant epigrams so inspiring to mind and spirit that they were repeated everywhere. Philosophers and poets longed to meet him, and his teachings spread far and wide throughout the Eastern countries. Therefore Baghdád during these years was a great centre of divine light.

XIV:11, February 1924 [XIV:11:325]

The life of Bahá'u'lláh

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

Part II

The enemies of Bahá'u'lláh, wishing to exile him from Baghdád, met in consultation. They asked a prominent divine, a very good and sincere man, with many followers, to meet with them. This divine was not a follower of Bahá'u'lláh, but when he heard the plan of the enemies he refused to have anything to do with it, saying that they had never investigated the matter, and therefore could not know the truth; then he left the meeting. The others finally decided to send one of their number to talk with Bahá'u'lláh. This man, also, was good and sincere and when he met Bahá'u'lláh he beheld in wonder the radiance of his spirit. He asked what he should say to those who had sent him. Bahá'u'lláh replied, "You must tell them all that you have seen and felt." The emissary said, "They do not doubt your greatness and knowledge. What they really want is a miracle." Bahá'u'lláh answered, "You have read in all the sacred books that miracles do not appear through the wish of the people, but by the will of God. If God followed the will of the people the order of the world would be destroyed, for the people are many and each one holds in his mind a wish different from the others. However, you may tell your friends that they may consult together and choose one miracle; if I perform this miracle, then they must all believe."

The emissary, rejoicing, returned to his colleagues. While they were considering Bahá'u'lláh's message one said, "If Bahá'u'lláh, through his unseen power should perform this miracle, then would we accept him, and become believers?" To this question they answered, No. So the matter of the miracle was dropped.

At last the enemies of the Cause secured from the government authorities an order banishing Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdád. It first read that he should go, alone. But later this was changed, permitting his family and a few followers to accompany him. The band of exiles left Baghdád and paused, first, in a beautiful garden outside the city. Here they sojourned for twelve days. A tent was pitched for Bahá'u'lláh, and around it the tents for the others. These days in the garden are called "The days of Ridván" and they are of supreme importance, for it was then that Bahá'u'lláh declared, to a few followers, his great mission and began to build the palace of peace and unity for the world. He revealed many wonderful verses which sing the melodies of the New Day of God.

When the twelve days were over, the party, mounted on horses and donkeys and guarded by Turkish soldiers, set out again. The believers who could not accompany them were utterly

broken [XIV:11:326] hearted. It was as though Bahá'u'lláh was a king starting upon a glorious journey. Outwardly, an exile—but in his spirit a great light was shining.

The desert of Asia Minor over which they had to travel in order to reach Constantinople is full of jagged mountains—a most inhospitable land whose vast reaches of wilderness are the hiding place of robbers and wild animals. Through the burning heat of this desert wilderness, in the hottest season of the year, Bahá'u'lláh and his party travelled for months. Only once along the way did they pause. The reason for this delay, a rest for the exiles of nine days, was this: they came upon a merchant who had been attacked by a band of robbers and his load of goods stolen. He appealed to the Turkish soldiers accompanying Bahá'u'lláh to help him; but they refused. Then he approached Bahá'u'lláh and besought him to intercede in his behalf. Bahá'u'lláh called the soldiers to him and told them to assist to their utmost this unfortunate man. So the guards were obliged to leave the party of exiles and to scour the country until they found the robbers, rescued the stolen goods and returned them to the merchant: When this was done Bahá'u'lláh was ready to continue the journey.

After four months of travel through the desert the party reached the seaport town of Samsún, where they went on board a ship and sailed along the Black Sea to the Bosphorus, finally arriving in Constantinople. Here they were met by government officials and the whole party quartered in one small house. Four months they stayed in Constantinople, and from this cosmopolitan centre, the highway between Asia and Europe, the fame of Bahá'u'lláh spread like wildfire. Many prominent men visited him here, and left his presence marvelling at the wisdom of his answers to their questions.

Seeing the power of his influence and how the Cause was spreading, the enemies in their jealousy decided to drive him from Constantinople. He was urged by several prominent men to write a letter to the Sultán of Turkey stating his case. But Bahá'u'lláh declined to do this, saying that he preferred to leave his affairs in the hands of God.

The enemies growing more and more afraid of his influence secured an order for his exile from Constantinople to Adrianople, in the extreme corner of European Turkey and a nine days' journey by carriage from Constantinople. Here Bahá'u'lláh and his party lived as exiles for five years, under the surveillance of the Turkish government. In Adrianople he wrote two wonderful Tablets, called the *Tablet of Command* and the *Tablet of The City of Unity*. In these Tablets he gives instructions for a united humanity and proclaims to the world his divine mission as the Manifestation of God and the Centre around which all the names revolve and the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Scriptures. He also, at this time, wrote many other glorious epistles, each one a flame of light to inspire and illumine the believers. He wrote two Tablets, one in Persian and the other in Arabic, and called them both "*The Tablet of Ahmad*". In the *Arabic Tablet of Ahmad* Bahá'u'lláh says: "Whosoever is sorrowful and disillusioned and disappointed let him read this Tablet; then joy and happiness will enter into his heart."

It was now very difficult for Bahá'u'lláh to communicate with his followers in other regions, due to the strict surveillance of the enemies. However, several of the believers managed to travel back and forth, bringing letters to Bahá'u'lláh and taking back his Tablets of instruction and encouragement. Inspired by his example and self-sacrifice the friends went forth to carry to the ends of the earth the message that the Promised One had come and the Day of Resurrection had dawned, the day of reconciliation and international unity.

After five years in Adrianople his influence had become so great and his fol- [XIV:11:327] lowers so numerous that the enemies of the Cause determined to banish him again, this time alone, and to some very remote place, sending his family and the other members of his party to a different city. When this heart-breaking news was brought to them the little party was panic stricken. They had forsaken every worldly possession and comfort in order to be near to Bahá'u'lláh and now they declared that they could not endure existence away from him.

Then officials stationed at Adrianople, and representing various European governments, came to Bahá'u'lláh and offered him their assistance, that he might go to one of the European countries and live in peace the remainder of his life, or that a protest might be made against his persecutors. But Bahá'u'lláh replied, "No. Reliance is in God, and not in any human power."

His family and the little band of devoted followers were finally allowed to remain with him, and all were exiled together to Gallipoli. Here they were met by an order countermanding the last one and commanding that he be separated from his party.

Bahá'u'lláh now manifested his spiritual authority. He wrote a mighty epistle, called the *Tablet of Ra'ís*. Although this Tablet was written to the one who, according to earthly sovereignty had power of life and death over him, yet a person unacquainted with the facts would suppose it to be written by a King to his most submissive subject. In this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh speaks with power divine and rejects the command of separation from his family and followers. He also prophesies concerning the bloodshed which would occur in Adrianople.

The order commanding the separation of the party was rescinded and a steamship made ready to carry them all to Alexandria. Arriving there (in 1868), after a five days' journey, they re-embarked in a ship bound for Haifa, Palestine. Three more days at sea brought them to Haifa where, after one night's rest, they were put into small boats and taken to 'Akká, a distance of about nine miles,

The city of 'Akká is surrounded by high walls whose iron gates were closed at night. The streets were never cleaned. There was no water for drinking save that filtered from the sea. These unsanitary conditions, added to a very bad climate, bred a disease from which many died. In fact, there was a saying that if a bird flew over 'Akká it would die. The barracks, where Bahá'u'lláh and his party were imprisoned, was the most unwholesome place in 'Akká. The dungeon-like rooms were rayless and damp, without windows, and swarming with vermin. The soldiers behind the iron gates who were given custody of the prisoners were the roughest of characters, and had government orders to shoot at sight any one of the prisoners who attempted to leave the prison. For some time after they were put into this prison they were given neither bread nor water, and the men, women and children were in a most pitiable condition. When they were finally given some bread it was such that they could hardly eat it. And the water allowed them made them all ill, some of the party dying from drinking it. The enemies of the Cause were sure that the exiles would all die within a few months, knowing that human beings cannot long survive such conditions. And one may imagine what this meant for Bahá'u'lláh and his family, who were of the nobility of Persia and had lived in great luxury. But their invincible faith and the confirmations of the Holy Spirit sustained them, and all through those dark and grievous months their hearts were filled with heavenly joy.

After some time the restrictions were somewhat abated and two of the friends were permitted to go out, once a day, to the bazaars to purchase supplies. They went accompanied by soldiers who had orders to keep strict watch upon them and if they attempted to speak one word [XIV:11:328] other than those needed to make their purchases to shoot them instantly.

Before Bahá'u'lláh arrived in 'Akká a wonderful thing happened. One of his followers decided to go there and open a shop. He had been in 'Akká for some time, and had had no news of his Master's fate, for the place to which Bahá'u'lláh was exiled was kept secret by the Turkish government. Then one day he encountered the two believers buying their supplies. They recognized each other in silent joy and happiness. Through this believer communication with the outside world was established. The physician who attended Bahá'u'lláh and his party when they all became ill through drinking the terrible water of 'Akká soon loved them very much, and he asked to be allowed to serve them. So, when he left the barracks he would carry

with him Bahá'u'lláh's epistles and Tablets, to send them to his followers, and would receive their answers.

When the believers learned where Bahá'u'lláh was incarcerated many started out, on foot, across the mountains and the desert, in search of their Great Teacher. After journeying many months they would arrive outside 'Akká. As access to Bahá'u'lláh was impossible they would stand outside the city wall near the sea until Bahá'u'lláh came to the window of his prison room. After looking at him for a few moments they would turn about, their hearts singing with joy that they had seen their Beloved and been recognized by him.

During this imprisonment in the barracks Bahá'u'lláh revealed many wonderful books and Tablets which brought to the far-away friends supreme happiness. At the end of the second year of their imprisonment a tragic event occurred. One of Bahá'u'lláh's sons, called the Purest Branch, a young man seventeen years of age, endowed with a character of superlative spiritual beauty, was one day walking on the roof of the prison. He served Bahá'u'lláh as his secretary and wrote down, at his dictation, his Tablets. As he walked up and down on the roof of the barracks chanting a beautiful prayer he made a misstep over the edge of the roof and fell to the floor below. He was picked up so badly injured that his life quickly ebbed away. Before he died Bahá'u'lláh asked him if [XIV:11:329] he had any request to make. He replied, "My only supplication is that this suffering of mine and my death may be a sacrifice to the friends of God, through which the prison doors may be opened and a greater freedom of access may be given to Bahá'u'lláh."

When this request was made known to the officials their hearts were touched, and because of it and because, little by little, during those two years, they and the townspeople had begun to realize somewhat of the beauty of the lives of these exiles, their love and their unselfishness, the prison doors were opened and they were allowed to secure a small house in the town. Bahá'u'lláh was not permitted to leave the house, but the living conditions were better than those in the barracks. Seven long years he spent, within the four walls of that house, nor did he in all that time look upon a blade of grass or rushing water or hear the singing of the birds which he had loved in his native land. During these years 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a link between Bahá'u'lláh and the outside world. He went among the people, with the utmost kindness, telling them stories, imparting to them knowledge and wisdom. The religious leaders and the government officials learned to love 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So now and then he would take one of these prominent men to Bahá'u'lláh, whose mighty presence was so majestic, whose words were so luminous that many became believers and offered to render any service their positions permitted.

Finally, after nine years' close imprisonment, through the efforts of these influential men Bahá'u'lláh was granted permission to walk in the streets of 'Akká. Later he was allowed to leave the city and have a beautiful garden, called the Garden of Riḍván, about two and a half miles outside of 'Akká. And finally he went to live in a house called the palace of Bahjí, also outside of 'Akká. Here he lived until 1892, when he ascended into the spiritual world.

Bahá'u'lláh was sent by his enemies to 'Akká, Palestine, against his will, an exile and a prisoner. But through this very act of the enemies in banishing him to the Holy Land many wonderful and divine prophecies, of the Jewish prophets and Muḥammad were fulfilled; and many people, Christians, Jews and Muslims, came to see and to follow the new faith.

There is a prophecy in the Old Testament which says that in the Latter Day God will make the valley of Achor a door of hope to all nations.¹ This prophecy could have no physical significance, for the small town of 'Akká, with its high walls and iron gate and its unfortunate inhabitants could never, of itself, become a door of hope for the people of all the earth.

¹ Hosea 2:15.

Therefore the prophecy must be interpreted spiritually, and means that from this dark spot will arise a spiritual light which will shine into the hearts of men, everywhere.

‘Akká is very damp and the place is infested with fleas. There is in the Qur’án a strange verse, which says, “Blessed is the man who is bitten by the fleas of ‘Akká.” Another verse states, “Happy is he who eats the onions of ‘Akká”, referring undoubtedly, to the unpleasant odours of the place. Outside ‘Akká there is a well of stagnant, tepid water to which one descends by means of several steps. This well is called ‘Aynu’l-Baqar¹ and Muḥammad prophesied concerning it, saying how happy would be the man who tasted the water of ‘Aynu’l-Baqar. It is impossible that these prophecies should have a literal fulfilment; therefore it is clear that the greatness of ‘Akká will be spiritual.

From ‘Akká the spiritual teachings of Bahá’u’lláh spread through the world. The enemies did their utmost to crush the light, but it became more and more brilliant. The friends arose everywhere to teach, and distribute the Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh. In many parts of Persia they were martyred, but this only united [XIV:11:330] the hearts of the friends more firmly. The movement spread to India and grew apace in Turkey and Russia and certain parts of Europe.

In the wonderful Tablets and holy books which Bahá’u’lláh revealed in ‘Akká one feels that the author is standing upon the highest mountain of the earth, looking down upon humanity with eyes of compassion and universal love, bidding all to climb the mountain and become characterized with the attributes of the sons of God. With one mighty blow Bahá’u’lláh destroyed the separating walls of tradition and dogma and invited all religions and races to realize that they are brothers and sisters and so to live as to attain the pinnacle of prosperity and success. In his writings we find the perfection of all divine religions, a new interpretation of the heavenly books which breaks the seals and establishes unity among the believers in all the world religions. He ushers in the age of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, of divine justice, equality and peace among all the children of God.

XIV:10, January 1924 [XIV:10:296]

The federation of the world

A Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh

He is the Counsellor, the Trustworthy.

Consider the world as a human being. This being was created perfect and healthy, but due to various causes became ill; and its illness was never removed because it was in the hands of unwise physicians. If in any age one of its members was healed, by a wise physician, its other parts continued ill, with various afflictions. And now it has been given into the hands of those who are fostered by the wine of self-conceit. If of these people, a few try, somewhat, to heal their purpose is to profit thereby, either through fame, or official position. Such people as these have not been and will not be able to remove these illnesses, save to a slight degree. And the great remedy, which is the cause of its health—that is, the unity of all the people of the earth into one cause and religion and form of worship—impossible save through one, wise, perfect, confirmed Physician who, from the Eternal World turns his face to this earth and comes to earth for the organization of the world and the uniting of its people—whenever such light has appeared from the Horizon of the Divine Will and such a Wise Physician become manifest from the Dayspring of Celestial Wisdom, these [XIV:10:297] various physicians have become like clouds to veil his radiance.

Therefore, the people of the earth still continue in their dissensions—and the sickness of the world has not passed away and has not been healed. These physicians were not able to accomplish this great work; neither did they permit the Divine Physician, but became

¹ An ancient spring, ‘Aynu’l-Baqar (“The spring of the cow”), just outside ‘Akká.

beclouding veils to conceal him.

Consider, in these days the Eternal Beauty and the Greatest Name has swept away these veils, and sacrificed himself for the illumination of the world and the unity and salvation of its people. Yet all arose to injure him—until at last he was imprisoned in the prison which is the most desolate of cities, and they closed the doors of entrance and departure. They see the Friend as the stranger and the Beloved as an enemy and regard the peacemaker as the mischief-maker.

O people of wealth and power! Behold how you become a veil, and have withheld the world and its people from the effulgence of the light of the Sun of justice and infinite Bounties and how you see the greatest tranquillity as hardship, and the greatest gift as calamity!

At least listen to the kindly counsels of the Divine Beauty for the organization of the world and the tranquillity of its inhabitants. Every year you are adding to your expenditures, putting this on the shoulders of the people; this is furthest removed from equity and justice, and comes only from the winds of selfishness which are blowing and moving. To stop this is impossible save through a strong, unshakeable peace, which is the greatest cause of the firmness of the principles (which are) the foundation of the people and the nation.

Although the perfect peace and unity they did not receive, the world must be repaired through this (lesser) peace so that its sickness may diminish somewhat. Peace among the rulers was and will be the cause of tranquillity to the inhabitants and people of the country. Through this means they will not need armies and armaments, except in sufficient number to protect their cities and countries; and having established this (peace) the expenses will be less and the inhabitants will be tranquil and they themselves (the rulers) will be at rest. If after this peace (is established) one king should rise against the others it will be necessary for the others, all together, to restrain him.

It is astonishing that up to the present time they have not attained thereto. Although the pomp of kingship and the hugeness of armies are obstacles to some in accepting this peace—the cause of tranquillity for all—these were and will be pure superstitions, for the majesty of man and his honour are only through those things which are worthy of him, not through outer accessories. The people of perception look at the commander as one commanded; count the rich, poor and the powerful, weak; see that their dominion, authority, their wealth their power are dependent upon the people. Therefore, these things will not make the station of man higher, to the people of perception.

The essence of man is hidden in his individuality which must appear through the polish of education. This is man's glory, and all else which depends upon outer things, is not a part of man, himself.

Therefore, they will not look at external smallness or largeness, dignity or honour; and they must attain to the most great peace.

The rulers are manifestations of divine power. It is regrettable that those esteemed souls impose this burden. If in reality they will put the reins of affairs in the hands of trustworthy, faithful and intelligent persons they will find themselves free and at rest. How happy is that ruler who arises to assist God and proclaim His Cause and to illumine the world with the light of justice. It is necessary that all the people of the earth shall love him. [XIV:10:298]

This is that which proceedeth from the pen of the King of Eternity. We ask God that He will graciously aid all the nations with that which will be for their benefit and make them to understand what is good for them in this world and the world to come.

He is Powerful in all things

The oneness of the human world

Louis G. Gregory

The signs of God are numberless in the world today. As light upon the horizon of hearts, as rays from the Sun of Reality, are the teachings of holiness and peace. Among the great principles of unity, from its emphasis and recurrence in the Bahá'í teachings the most brilliant and powerful is that which declares the oneness of humanity. This divine truth is power to the hand that is puny and weak. To the heart frozen by convention it is genial warmth. To the tongue that is mute it is the voice of the angels. The mind cannot resist its logic and the soul is subdued by its spiritual power. Happy therefore is he who perceives its significance. Justice adorns his character. His vision is strengthened and enlarged. He perceives things that are real. All nations are one. All lands are one earth. All races are the great human family. All voices belong to the mighty chorus of praise.

Essential unity, sign of the divine creation, does not destroy essential differences in the world. Distinctions due to appearance, habitat, grades and kingdoms, capacities and powers that vary, all have their bearing in the organization of the world. Yet such differences should not remove that which is basic and fundamental. The eternal bond of love is the universal connection. Yes, wherever organization, itself an expression of love, exists, diversified talents must also be found.

The lowest forms of matter are called by the scientist, inorganic. To him they are lifeless because destitute of organs. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá assures us that even in the lowest forms of matter, such as the earth, there is life. Hence we know that even here there is organization. Science tells us that in the realm of matter there are beings so infinitesimal that a myriad of them united would escape the scrutiny of the eye. Yet in each there is organization which to us attests the divine power. In the highest, spiritual realm, the light of oneness is supreme. Should we not expect to find the Kingdom of Heaven, as befits its lofty state, more perfectly organized than the kingdoms of earth? The unity of mankind does not contemplate the crumbling of all organization, but rather the removal of all friction among all its elements and parts, thereby increasing its effectiveness and power. The uniting power appears in all the kingdoms, but the higher the ascent the greater is its rule manifest. The title of nobility in the divine worlds is service.

The world of man is free to accept or reject what divine wisdom reveals. Evidences of life and hope on the one hand and of collapse and chaos on the other express man's acceptance or denial of the principle of God. The calamities and heart-aches of which man complains are for him a driving force toward his Maker. The breaking down of all plans of relief gradually eliminates all aid save the Greatest Name. This power alone can free man from himself and those idols of hate, fear, error, and superstition which claim his homage.

It is obviously absurd for people to hate because of differences of weight and stature. Is it less so because some are [XIV:10:299] French, others German; some white, others black; some Europeans, others Asians? Rich in imagery, poetic and beautiful in expression are those teachings which unfold the harmony in varied perfection of all the grades and kingdoms of creation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed never happier than when, with his divine eloquence, he unfolded the law of human solidarity, which he indicated must follow the analogy of the other kingdoms created by God. He reminds us of the rubies and sapphires, diamonds and pearls, that compose a diadem; of the many waves of one sea; of the different coloured lambs that together skip and play; of the blue and white doves that find fellowship; of the many trees of one orchard; of the variegated flowers of one garden; of the harmonious notes of one orchestra; of the rainbow with its ethereal and varied splendour, sign of the Covenant of God with all his children. Bahá'u'lláh speaks of mankind as the "leaves of one tree and the fruits of

one branch.”

These great Luminaries, who in their Oneness are the Tree and Branch of Divinity, have left no doubt as to their will for the unity of the world. Man may ever find, in the rose garden of Abhá, that variety which gives joy to life harmonized by the eternal and divine Oneness which is life itself. When the light of unity is unveiled in the inner consciousness, man may find new meanings in the endless forms of creation which yield their secrets for his training. The flora of many regions; the changes of season wherein earth unfolds its treasures; valleys and mountains; rivers and shining lakes; the many shades in the turning of the autumn leaves; the sun, now shining with majestic splendour, anon¹ tingeing the cumulous clouds with red; the moon, many in its phases, yet one in its changeless looking to the earth; the stars differing in size, yet each and all contributing to the brilliancy of the heavens; rain and sparkling dews; plains and plateaux; oases and fertile fields; deserts of ice and deserts of burning sand suggest a panorama of beauty that is endless with the signs of the Heavenly Artist, Who is One. All the kingdoms, according to varying capacities, reflect and praise the True One. But while the lower kingdoms show forth many charms, the perfections of the human realm are richer and more beautiful. On an occasion of state, in the city of Washington, the head of the nation, through the aid of an electrical device which amplified the voice, addressed about one hundred thousand people. In this vast throng, with faces turned expectantly in one direction, one could see far greater beauty in diversity than in all the lower kingdoms of creation. For man, who contains in his being endless possibilities of growth, is nature’s sum, plus the virtues of the higher realm. The marvel of this great gathering was that each figure marked a distinct individuality and was the temple of a deathless entity, the human spirit.

Smaller in numbers, yet far weightier in significance, were the gatherings which surrounded ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the East and West, inspired by his words of wisdom and receiving life pulses from his healing sympathy. These happy friends, in meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, contacted with the world of oneness. The joy of faces indicated that the hearts were shown their reality. New visions of happiness came to all as sentiments and powers were directed toward world fellowship. As the divine Educator called forth their virtues, many for the first time responded to the best within them. The creative power of unity, which builds divine civilization, flowed to the hearts. Alike and yet different, distinct yet harmonious, united yet free, many yet one, the friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá throughout the world, stand through the glory of sacrifice upon the plane of oneness, transformed by the power of the new day.

Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have removed the veils of separation and estrangement from all races and nations. All are urged to acquire culture and all are invited to the table of heavenly teachings. The belief, born of superstition, that any race or nation is incapable of acquiring knowledge is forever dispelled. The strong are saved from pride and the weak from aggression. All are given the right to true strength through the Might of God. “The beloved of God are those in whom the Word of God taketh effect.” For those who prize spiritual values this is enough. Yet it may be interesting to note how the scientific lore of this age reflects the light of the Messengers of God: Sir Arthur Keith, of great renown among anthropologists, declares that the terms high and low do not apply to races, but only to civilizations. Jean Finot of the French school, proves the absurdity of race prejudice with the exactness of a demonstration in Euclid. Prof. Munroe of Japan, in one of his admirable lectures, shows how the different civilizations have been successively developed by peoples of all colours, rejecting the theory that there is inherent inferiority on the part of any race, past or present.

It has been proved in many cases that children whose ancestors have been savages for many generations, if put in school and given an opportunity, can acquire the highest culture.

¹ At another time.

But still woeful is the loss, if divine ideals are lacking. The great war illustrates what people trained by the best of human methods, may yet do to each other. The first discovery of man is his own body and its needs. The next is his relationship to his family. Then little by little he becomes interested in the community, the nation and perhaps the race in its more limited sense. It is pitiable for the world that for the most, development seems arrested here. But now, for those who are willing, the divine bounty widens the horizons of unity to include the world. This attainment is a priceless jewel for man.

A traveller in Persia tells of meeting in that country, where means of locomotion are so limited and common schools so meagre, many people of even lowly life as measured by worldly standards, who discuss and espouse ideals which would honour the sages and seers of earth. These people have been trained by Bahá'u'lláh and his successors to think in terms of humanity and to work and pray for universal welfare. They know and act upon those laws which must govern a united world. Their lives are simple. Their hearts are pure. Their faces shine with divine joy. Yet happier still are the mighty and strong whose human stations do not debar the light divine. The education of Bahá'u'lláh successfully trains all degrees and ranks. Its spirit penetrates all gatherings. One can scarcely attend any gathering of progressive thinkers nowadays without hearing Bahá'í ideals expressed.

It is related that a European king, who was sending a body of his troops to a colony, thus addressed them: "As you go among my subjects across the sea, there is one thought I wish to impress upon you. It is that they are our brothers. If we have any advantage over those people, it is not because of how we look, but because of what we know. And when they know what we know, it is possible that they may do more with it than we have done. So go among them and teach them. And remember that if you insult them because of their colour, you insult me. I know that you intend to do what is right. But this thought cannot be too strongly impressed upon you."

It is clear that all races and nations have much to give to the collective consciousness which brings world civilization. It may be given to some to do more than others, but no wise man will wish to impede the progress of any. Those who are kind will wish to aid the advancement of all. Because human horizons are limited and personal touches are perhaps even more so, men are seldom accurate judges of the capacities and powers of their fellow beings. Men [XIV:10:301] usually allow themselves to be governed by impressions and appearances, while the insight of the Absolute judge penetrates the reality of man. Many years ago one of the great teachers most impressively called our attention to the unerring way in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá looked upon the hearts. The Prophets of God, without exception, have appraised humanity according to spiritual values and standards. They have with one voice commanded unity and have set the example of favouring all people who advance toward God. Such is the badge of distinction in the world of reality.

Down the ages, in all countries and climes, virtues appear which attest a divine power in man. Even among the most primitive peoples this light appears. Even among the so-called savages of the world one may sometimes find a fidelity, a hospitality, a responsiveness to love which put to shame by comparison many of the most advanced. As the poet says:

"I believe that in all ages
Every human heart is human;
That in even savage bosoms,
There are yearnings, longings, strivings,
For the good they comprehend not."

There are flashes of reality in the ancient Sabaeen religion, which in the time of Homer had lapsed into idol worship. In the Iliad, Agamemnon, the king of men, addressing the wrathful Achilles, says:

“If thou hast great strength some god bestowed it upon thee.” Or, as Pope translates: “Know vain man, thy valour is from God!” Thankfulness to the True One augments the power of unity.

Man increases his wealth of divine blessings by sharing them with others. Dispersion, avoidance, hatred, dissipate the forces of life upon every plane. Ill will toward others prevents refreshing sleep, impairs digestion, dwarfs the mind, cankers the soul, disturbs the family, alienates friends, increases foes, and removes one far from God. Hatred between races and nations is now so far-reaching and calamitous as to threaten the existence of all flesh. Greatly to be pitied is he who hates. Those who know would avoid it as they would a pestilent disease. Its subjective harm may be far greater than any injury it may bring to others. But it is certain that love removes hate, and mighty is the power that confirms human service under divine Guidance.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá defines “the reality of humanity” as:

“That universal unity, which is the oneness of the kingdom of the human race, the basic harmony of the world, and the appearance of the bounty of the Almighty.”

The principle accepted, one may view with gladness what it portends in the readjustment to a higher plane, of all human ties. Another attitude perhaps, may be that of elation at sacrifices made, souls awakened, victories won by the sword of the spirit. But the glory of the day is the task that remains. The unification of souls, at home and abroad, is the aim of service to the Beauty of Abhá. Stupendous and splendid is the effort, which God confirms, of forging a chain of love which links all humanity. When this end is achieved paeans of joy will ascend from earth to heaven and the Supreme Paradise will acclaim the bliss of a united world.

XIV:10, January 1924 [XIV:10:303]

The only solution of world problems

One of the interesting signs of the times is the conversion of the well-known suffrage worker of England, Miss Cristabel Pankhurst, to an evangelist of the “Second Coming”. In her first enthusiasm for woman’s suffrage, she says, “I had lived in an atmosphere of illusion, thinking that once certain obstacles were removed, especially the disenfranchisement of women, it would be full steam ahead for the ideal and social international order.” But recent events have convinced her that neither the women nor the men, the workingmen nor the politicians are able to bring in the new international order. “When I really faced the facts,” she says, “I saw that the war was not a war to end war.”¹ “We men and women have not the goodness needed, nor the loving-kindness, nor the wisdom, nor the power, to regenerate the world We (women) are wholly unable, just as the men are unable, even to form, much less to put into effect, the policy that will regenerate the world.” “It is the task, not of humanity, but of Divinity, infinite in wisdom, power and love.”²

Then she discovered the Bible prophecies concerning Christ’s return at the “end of the age”, and that “the establishment of the Kingdom awaits his return.” “Ah! that is the solution!” My heart stirred to it. My practical political eye saw that this Divine Programme is absolutely the only one that can solve the international, social, political and moral problems of the world.”³ “A few years ago,” she says, “there was excuse for the critical having doubts of Bible prophecies. But recent events are fitting into the mould of prophecy so marvellously as to remove all grounds for doubt.” There are the wars and rumours of wars, at least the beginnings of the great Armageddon, the return of the Jews to the Holy Land, the faith of many

¹ *Behold He Cometh*, The Book Stall. New York.

² *Behold He Cometh*, The Book Stall. New York.

³ *Behold He Cometh*, The Book Stall. New York.

waxing cold, the fulfilment of the prophecy foretold in II Timothy, Chapter 3, that “in the last days grievous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, disobedient to parents, ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”

In her addresses she mentions many such prophecies and is so convinced that the coming of Christ is right at hand that before a great audience in Chicago, recently, she said, “I will return and speak to you in the spring, if *He tarrieth*.”

There is no more remarkable sign of the times than the vast multitudes in the Christian churches who are watching for the imminent return of the Christ. It is true that they take the Bible prophecies literally, expect him to descend in a material cloud from heaven, with power and great glory, not realizing that they interpret but in part, prophesy in part, and that when the perfect interpretation is come that which is in part shall be done away.

The first great discovery is that he *cometh*. The second discovery is *how* he cometh. And this has been given to us in the crystal-clear interpretations of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Science and religion are one truth, they tell us. When he comes he does not contradict the known laws of science. He comes as a thief in the night. He comes as the Son of Man. “Unto us a child is born and unto us a son is given and his name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, ... Prince of Peace.” If he should appear from the sky in a material cloud only a few people could see him, But if he appears in his spiritual reality, like the lightning shining from the east to the west, even the cloud of his body will not prevent the multitudes from beholding the light of his teachings and his world-transforming Holy Spirit. Only when he appears as a spiritual reality can every spiritual eye see him. Meeting him in the air is to be interpreted spiritually; our spirits rising to meet him in the heaven of his presence. His angels are his teachers, visible and invisible, who sum- [XIV:10:304] mon his elect from the four corners of the earth. The resurrection of all those who recognize him and are baptized by his Holy Spirit is the rising from the grave of prejudice and self into the Kingdom of universal peace and love. And he appears after the sun of the heavens of the old religious order is darkened and the stars of the old ordinances and leaderships have fallen to earth. But when he comes he is the same sun of divine manifestation rising from the horizon of a new body, a new city, a new name.

The expectation of Christ's return is part of a world-wide anticipation. Each religion awaits the return of its beloved Prophet. There is a little mosque, we are told, in the Holy Land, where a priest presides, keeping ready the shoes that the Messiah is to wear when he comes to Jerusalem. The Zoroastrians are sure that the great Messiah will be born in central Persia; the Jews that he will appear on Mount Zion, when “the valley of Achor” will be “a door of hope” and “Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of God.” Muslim tradition tells about visiting the One in Acre; the Confucianists say that he will appear in the West; Buddhists pray for the coming of the Beloved Maitreya. Though they may name him by different names, all await the Promised One who will unite the many religions until there shall be one fold, one Shepherd.

XIV:10, January 1924 [XIV:10:305]

Ships that pass in the night

Stanwood Cobb

One of the delights of European travel is the opportunity it gives of meeting people of different races and nationalities and exchanging views with them. The way in which the coaches of European trains are divided into transverse compartments seating six or eight people, facilitates sociability. If the journey is of any length one soon gets into conversation with one's neighbours, especially if one knows French, the universal auxiliary language of Europe.

Many pleasant exchanges of opinion and experience take place at this time, when

conversation is a boon to while away otherwise tedious hours. And one can obtain from these sociabilities en route a clear idea and a sincere expression of the native culture and thought, for these casual acquaintances on trains, as on boats, become surprisingly sincere and outspoken.

To Bahá'ís these meetings are of special value because they give an opportunity for spreading the Message.

There are four different types of thought and reaction which one meets with in telling of the Bahá'í Cause. First are those people who are quite satisfied with life as it is. Such people today exist in Europe in only a few countries where conditions of living are still pleasant. Second, are those who lament existing conditions, but are hopeless of any change in human nature of such kind as to effect the desired change in human relationships. Third, are those who desire a change and are working for it along some line which appeals to them as adequate. Fourth, are those who despair of life as it is, see no way out of the difficulties, and consequently grasp eagerly at the teachings of the Cause, finding there a ray of hope.

The first class is, as already mentioned, not common in Europe in this epoch of misery and threatening downfall of [XIV:10:306] civilization. The second class I should say predominates. These must be awakened to a faith in divine power and to a realization that human nature, through the sublimation of religion, can be changed. The third class is not at present susceptible to the Cause, though perhaps sympathetic and appreciative. Some of this class are working along spiritual lines similar to our own, and not only they but their work is in reality part of the Kingdom. Another group of this class is working along anti-religious lines. That is, they not only have no faith in the power of religion to change human nature and to effect a more perfect organization of mankind, but they are actually opposed to religion, believing it an instrument of the upper classes for the suppression of the working class. This group composes a very large number of those who are today working most earnestly to change human conditions for the better. It is a pity that the sins of the church have in the past furnished some grounds for this hostility to it, because there is a great deal of nobility, idealism, and spirit of self-sacrifice in this group of workers, qualities which if permeated and guided by the Holy Spirit could accomplish great good for the human race; but which if spent in strife and race—warfare will serve, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said, only to usher the human race into greater misery and hardships. The last class is increasing rapidly in those countries in Europe which are in suffering and want, and their hearts are fertile ground for seeds of Wisdom and of Truth. They need only proper gardening to bring forth the flowers and fruit of the Kingdom.

One meets all these classes of people in the course of travel. For instance, in riding from Hamburg to Berlin, we met a man of the second class. He was a man of the very highest intelligence, and as I observed, extremely sensitive and sympathetic toward the sufferings of others. He had been a naval officer during the war. He had thought much on life, and was a brilliant conversationalist. Since he knew English well, we could talk all the more readily with him. He had with him his wife, a Norwegian, two adorable children and a maid. They did not know English. He confided to us his chagrin that his wife was bringing up the children according to the old conventions. Here was a soul innately gentle, and loving, of high ideals, seeking the welfare of humanity, but alas, by the faulty means of further death and destruction. He was of course impervious to the Cause, for he was a complete enthusiast in his own belief.

On the train from Berlin to Weimar, we got into conversation with the conductor, who seemed a gentle and simple soul. He had been in the war. He did not want more war. His face lit up when we told him of the Cause. Anything that could prevent war seemed to him praiseworthy. He took with great pleasure the little booklet (number nine) we gave him, and

said goodbye sweetly as he left the train at the end of his run.

An amazing incident took place on the train from Bad Gastein to Innsbruck. We were in a small compartment with only one other occupant, a lady from Vienna. Her conversation showing her to be against war and distressed at the continued militancy of Europe, I asked her if she had ever heard of the Bahá'í movement. "Why, yes!" was her answer. "Two American ladies on this very train were telling me about it. They got off an hour ago at Bischofshofen. They could not speak German much, but they were so eager that they made me understand. They took my address and are going to send me literature."

What an impression it must have made on the Viennese lady to meet two Bahá'í parties in succession. She might suppose that half America was Bahá'í. I saw vividly in my mind's eye the day when Bahá'ís will really be as numerous in America as it might seem to the stranger from her two encounters.

In Persia, where the Cause has made [XIV:10:307] such headway, it is the common saying that if four people happen to gather together one of them is sure to be a Bahá'í. Some years ago the then Persian consul to Cairo, who was a Bahá'í, told me that in Tīhrán he happened one day to be in a group of four people, one of whom undertook to combat this current saying. "How ridiculous," he said, "is the thought that four people cannot gather together without one of them being a Bahá'í! Here we are together, and none of us are Bahá'ís!" He, himself, was not a Bahá'í, but the other three men, unknown to him, were all Bahá'ís. God speed the day when such a saying will become true in America.

This Viennese lady was deeply touched with what we told her. She read booklet number nine with avidity, and said when she finished it, "I believe everything in it." We have her address, which we also sent to Herr Herrigel, and we trust she will continue in contact with the friends and with the Cause. Her interest and zeal were as much an inspiration to us as our message was to her.

The Austrians seem especially susceptible to the Cause. They are a kindly, sweet-tempered people, grateful for help given them in their national distress, and ready to take up humanitarian ideals, longing, particularly, for something to restore hope to life.

Another friend we met again with pleasure was Monsieur D___ from Budapest—a scholar and thinker, official translator in seven languages, a Pole by birth, citizen of the world by virtue of his natural intelligence and breadth of mind, he had found himself in complete accord with the Bahá'í teaching; and he is eager to start an assembly in Budapest upon his return there in September. His wife, a sweet Viennese lady, we found amiable and friendly, as indeed are all Viennese. Monsieur D___ urged us to visit Budapest in September and help him to start an assembly. If we cannot do so we trust someone else will be able to help.

These are some of the "ships we passed in the night". There were others to whom we cannot give space here. Then, there are the Bahá'í friends whom it is such a joy to meet. I am writing this at Hotel des Alpes, Mont Pelerin, where Lady Blomfield is also staying. Each afternoon she reads to us from the book she is writing, episodes in the lives of the Báb, of Bahá'u'lláh, of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and of those noble souls, particularly the women, associated with them in the Cause of God. These episodes, which she has gathered from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and from his family, she has recorded with such vividness that as she reads them to us we seem to live in the days of the Báb, to glory and to suffer with him and his martyred friends.

Through Lady Blomfield we met also A. Ḥusayn Işfahání, who is completing his studies at Lausanne,—an earnest, radiant Bahá'í, of the kind to make one see a brilliant future for Persia. He believes that in twenty or thirty years his country will be preponderatingly Bahá'í. What a glorious prospect, not only for him, but for us all to look forward to. For when Persia becomes Bahá'í, it will shed the blessings of the Divine Civilization not only on its own citizens, but

upon the world.

XIV:11, February 1924 [XIV:11:330]

The life beyond

Stanwood Cobb

At the end of every religious epoch, just when the spirit of religion is being born anew through the agency of a Manifestation of God, humanity finds itself in a lamentable condition of scepticism and disbelief. Not only does it deny God, but what is more extraordinary, it denies itself. That is to say, it denies the eternal existence of its own soul, thus putting itself on a level with the beasts and voluntarily abnegating its high estate as children of the Most High God and heirs to a spiritual kingdom.

The superb faith in the future life brought to the world by Christ which so inspired his early followers as to destroy entirely the fear of death, has almost entirely departed from the world of Christendom, yea, even from the hearts of those who call upon his name.

Not only does the materialistic science of today deny the continued existence of the soul; but those who still adhere to the teachings of Christ hold only a tenuous faith in it. The current phraseology of the day in regard to death is similar to that in the pagan days when Homer sang and lamented the fate of those deprived of this bright earth life. Yes, in the Occident death today is universally viewed as a misfortune, a deprivation, a substitution for existence of non-existence, or at best of a tenebrous¹ existence which is a poor exchange for the glories of our earth life illumined and warmed as it is by the rays of a visible sun.

It is just because humanity is prone to lose the vision, prone to reverse the order of things and put the finite before the infinite, the mortal before the immortal, the material before the spiritual, that it becomes necessary for God to send a Messenger to renew the vision and bring again to humanity the interpretation of this life as a fragment only of complete individual existence.

For the most part, the message of these Spiritual Teachers is one of joy and of great promise. But there is another aspect to their teaching, a necessary corollary to a future life of joy for the spiritually minded. If there are to be rewards for the spiritual, there are also to be punishments, or let us say deprivations, for the unspiritual.

This dual teaching of reward and punishment after death has been one of the most important factors in the spreading of the great world religions. In the teachings of Buddha, of Christ, of Mu- [XIV:11:331] ḥammad, as well as in the teachings of the apostles of these Manifestations, the doctrine of a judgement day, of a time when one's deeds would determine one's subsequent state of existence was greatly emphasized and became an inspiring though stern incentive to the acceptance of the said religion and to the living of a spiritual life.

The vivid symbols and allegories used to warn an ignorant, concrete-minded humanity such as existed in the time of Christ and of Muḥammad, such as exists still in large numbers, have been rightly interpreted by modern intelligence as standing for spiritual rather than material rewards and punishments.

This interpretation of eschatology has not prevailed so long but what many Christians still living can look back to the day when the first proponents and expounders of universal salvation, or Universalists as they are called, were considered as anathema by the literal minded.

My grandfather, Rev. Sylvanus Cobb, was among those who first ventured to interpret away the hell fire and brimstone which had perfumed the nostrils of the devout. He attacked

¹ Dark, gloomy.

especially the sort of revival sermons delivered by one celebrated contemporaneous divine, who was wont to draw such vivid fire and brimstone portrayals of the judgement day that women screamed and fainted.

That mankind is prone to the concrete is evidenced by the luminous portrayals of the punishment of evil doers in the next life which adorn not only the walls of many a Christian church and monastery, but also the walls of Buddhist temples in the East. I have myself seen in the monasteries of Greece and of Bulgaria depictions of the tortures of the damned which show a belief as regards God only possible to men in whom the spirit of revenge predominates, to the exclusion of all mercy.

The Universalists were right in seeing such punishments as incompatible with the Divine Mercy, and in interpreting the teachings of Christ as referring not to material things but to the inner, spiritual evolution of the soul; and to a system of intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards and punishments. Also they were right in calling the attention of theologians to the fact that the *Greek* word "aeon" which had been wrongly translated as "eternity" meant rather an "age" or "epoch", thus overthrowing the theory of eternal punishment and substituting for it the theory, much more comforting, of universal salvation.

This doctrine of universal salvation, opening up vistas of eternal progress, opportunities of gaining the spiritual qualities even after the soul has passed through that mystic corridor of Death into a land the nature and laws and customs of which no man fully knoweth—this comforting doctrine has by now permeated the religious thought of advanced thinkers in every sect or denomination. And that is well.

But as usual the reaction to one extreme has led to the opposite extreme. Those who still, in this age of agnosticism, keep the faith of an eternal life, hold too careless a thought in regard to it. It is assumed that everything will be all right there; that God is merciful and kind and wishes everyone to be happy; that somehow death initiates one into the spiritual life of immortality and the blessed state of the saints.

This careless and false assumption is destroying the very essence of the teachings of the Christ, and of every great Founder of Religion. To interpret the system of rewards and punishments of the religious books as symbolical is well. But by some kind of legerdemain to whisk away every degree of reward and punishment is to controvert the teachings not only of the Holy Books but of nature and existence as well. In the universe that we see and know around us [XIV:11:332] nothing comes unearned. Effort is the price to be paid for every good thing. And the result of non-effort is sorrow and pain.

And this, too, is compatible with, nay, part of, the mercy of God. For the thing of chief importance to man, as to the stages of life below the human, is effort. Nothing earned without effort—this is the universal motto, this is the law on which the universe is run.

Applying this law to the doctrine of a future life, one comes face to face with this astounding truth, that *immortality has to be earned!* It is not a quality inherent in this earth life, nor a gift lightly laid at the feet of all who die. How simple and cheerfully unthinking, to assume that the mere event of death can change an unspiritual person into a spiritual one, or usher devotees of the sense-world into an experience available only to those who have during this earth life developed their spiritual susceptibilities!

To maintain this untruth is to deny those stern and mighty laws upon which the universe is built—the law of gravitation, the law of cause and effect, the law of evolution.

Bah'ú'lláh, though in the main bringing to mankind a message of joy, announced also those sterner truths which the world has shrunk from facing. "Sanctify your souls, O ye peoples of the world, that haply ye may attain that station which God hath destined for you

“The essence of these words is this: they that tread the path of faith, ... must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly Then will they ... become the recipients of a grace that is infinite and unseen, inasmuch as man ... can never enter the abode of immortality, ...”¹

Again, interpreting the meaning of the judgement day as taught by former prophets: “The paradise and fire in the apparent life were and will ever be the acceptance and the rejection; and after the ascension of the spirit, there are paradises which have no equal, and also fire which has no likeness, which are the fruit of the deeds of the advancer and opposer.”

It is impossible to consider this life apart from the future life. It is all one great whole. The thought of what is to come after death is not only a great comfort in times of earthly stress and suffering, but is also a powerful influence toward right conduct in this life.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has said that without this vision of the next life there cannot be enough incentive to ethical action here. The rewards and punishments which are assigned here for our actions are as nothing to the more important results of our earthly deeds which come to us in the hereafter.

That is why every Manifestation emphasizes the life hereafter in connection with the teaching of how this life should be lived.

And just what are the rewards of a spiritual life here? Always, the universal laws are just, logical, beneficent. And the result hereafter of developing a spiritual nature here is just what one might suppose it to be, the power and ability of enjoying spiritual things.

But here is the impressive fact. *The next world is a world of spirit, not of matter; and spiritual things are the only things one can enjoy there. No other source of happiness exists.*

The terrible deprivation in the hereafter of those who have not developed the spiritual life here must by this become apparent. There is no immediate possibility of happiness for them in the heaven-world. Because they have not developed the powers to use and appreciate the things of the heaven-world, they are born into it, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, deaf, dumb and blind.

True, they have a sort of existence there, but as the existence in this world of a stone compared to that of a human being. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used another figure, even more appalling, in saying of an immensely wealthy man held as great in the eyes of this world, that in the next [XIV:11:333] world he would be rolled up like a scroll and put away.

Is there any salvation possible, then, for those who die sinners and are ushered into the next world in a state of evil? There is a possibility of progress, but not by self-effort; only through the grace of God and the prayers and efforts of the saints. That is because the activities of the beyond-world are not as here. Heaven is not a place for the exercise of self-will, for self-development. This world is the stage of existence designed for us for self-improving, for struggle against the obstacles which evil sets in our path. The purpose of this earth life is through it and by means of it to become spiritual.

Oh, if mortals would only realize the importance of this truth, they would drop everything and seek the Kingdom. Christ has compared it to a hidden treasure, or to a pearl of great price, for which the man aware of values would sell all he had of other wealth.

That is why all the prophets emphasize the importance, the necessity of salvation here and now. To be born once is to be but an earth-being. We must be born again to become inhabitants of the Kingdom, spiritual beings, children of God.

And again I say let us not deceive ourselves. Death does not initiate us into these glories. The man who is born again, of the spirit, perceives the realities and attains the joys of the

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 3.

spirit here and now, and forever after. And the man who dies, not in the spirit, faces an existence the tragedy, the suffering of which melts the hearts of angels and causes God Himself, in His great pity, to descend to earth, as it were, in the persons of His Manifestations, to warn humanity of these stern laws, these laws stern yet beneficent.

“*Salvation*” is the message of these Great Ones. And the means of “salvation” also they give us, by their word, their lives, by the immense, incalculable influence of their divine enlightenment and spiritual power.

Love, prayer, aspiration toward God; and toward man love and good deeds. This is the way to salvation.

Shall we say that man is to become good in order to enjoy the after-life? Or shall we say that becoming good, the rewards of heaven are his?

It matters not which way we look at it. It is all one. And the one essence of it all is Love. Love is the fulfilment of the law, and *love is heaven*.

So it is plain that the immortal life is a spiritual condition. Not securable by the physical process of dying. Not a mere sequence to this earth-life. But a condition, above time and place, a station to which we may attain while still in the flesh.

And having attained, while here, immortal life, we go on from joy to joy, from miracle to miracle of God’s love, travellers in the heavenly world fully equipped for the strange, marvellous journeys there.

And not having attained immortality while here, we enter the other world crippled, halting, still-born, helpless, deprived of the ineffable glories—yea, *deprived of every source of happiness*.

So it is well while living here to think of the hereafter. It is well to practise the spiritual life. It is well to be severed from the world. Then shall life, even this life, become more glorious the nearer one approaches the limits of the earth-journey.

And for those whose spiritual senses are developed, who wait equipped for the far journey, the departure shall not be tragic. Death shall lose its sting. Of those who die spiritual, it is true that ere the heart stops beating the soul is welcomed into paradise; and the body makes no opposition to the going, lays no claim upon its master, holds not back as holds the body of the sense man his soul back in ghastly struggle. So the good die peacefully. And in the future ages yet more peacefully, rapt in heavenly essences and perfumes, lulled by Abhá chants.

XIV:11, February 1924 [XIV:11:334]

The angel in the garrison

Horace Holley

Part I

The attempt of modern science to establish a psychology as definite and as authentic as biology is like the fish’s efforts to leap a waterfall’s upstream. Long ago has our racial consciousness slipped over the brink of spiritual power into the shallows below.

Our self-knowledge has come to be determined by that inferior level where power may sometimes, indeed, flow in as from above, but where power is neither to be created nor maintained. Perhaps it would be more accurate to assert that psychology has ceased even attempting to re-ascend the stream: officially, at least, it is more like the second generation of fish that, spawned beneath the falls, feels only a vague instinct of the height which gives its own waters renewal. In modern psychology, as taught in the schools, there may be much logos, but there is no psyche. The mind’s camera has been exposed in a darkened room.

For the essence of this matter is that the psyche is not spiritual fact observable, but a spiritual power to observe all fact. It is not a series of mysterious observations which can be organized into authentic knowledge, it is a mysterious but authentic gift to know. It is not an image of things within which may or may not be real; it is an inner eye which may or may not be possessed. True genius, scientific as well as religious, has always been aware of this fact.

The method of this "psychology" was borrowed, of course, from natural science. Natural science is organized knowledge, definite fact, authenticate observation. Its field of observation is nature; its power of observation is intellect. Now intellect transcends the phenomena of nature as the physical eye transcends the objects upon which it turns its vision. The intellect may, indeed, misapprehend the significance of phenomena in particular instances, as in particular instances the eye may erroneously determine perspective, but from the very nature of things the most unintelligent mind cannot fall to a level of consciousness lower than the phenomenon itself. Its relative advantage remains secure in the same way that the relative advantage between vision and visioned remains secure to the eye. Here there can be no question of the knower slipping downstream with respect to the thing known. Man is fast anchored upstream to the rest of nature as the animal is anchored upstream to the plant, or the plant to the mineral. The problem of natural science, therefore, was never the problem of establishing its own power to know, but merely to establish authentic knowledge of things knowable from the beginning. The mind has grown more accurate through training, but the mind was trained, not created, by its dealings with natural phenomena. Mind created science, science did not create mind. But because our age has been influenced, with respect to consciousness, by the authority of the natural sciences more than from any other source, we have come unquestioningly to accept the dictum of science concerning the proper method of investigating consciousness itself.

But the essential superiority of the knower to the known which obtains between rational intelligence and natural phenomena by no means determines the relation of knower to known as between rational consciousness and the essential nature of man. The most that any psychologist can claim for his own consciousness is that it exists, but its existence, obviously, is conditioned by its po- [XIV:11:335] sition relative to the entire stream. The psychologist's self-consciousness may appear to him complete and aware of no higher existences, but this very completeness may conceivably correspond to a mere stagnant pool shut off from the main current. For even the most dogmatic psychologist cannot avoid the differentiation between minds, the differentiation manifested perceptibly between Shakespeare and his readers, for example, or between Christ and his followers. But the materialistic psychologist explains all such differentiation without altering the essential character of his own consciousness in the least—without even, apparently, realizing any need for altering it. He explains genius, whether religious or artistic, by establishing its factors in terms of heredity, environment or physiological status. Genius appears to him either a greater accumulation of elements present in every mind, or their mere superior arrangement, or, on the contrary, their disarrangement into abnormal states. In other words, he translates the phenomena of consciousness into a medium lower than consciousness itself. He breaks consciousness up into elements similar in degree to the elements which are the raw material, the objective, of natural science. Since the psychologist cannot remove the manifestation of genius—its religion or its poetry—he solicits every possible circumstance of heredity, environment and physiology to sustain his own inherent, unalterable conscious perspective, thereby, for the unwary, obscuring the very fact at issue: that genius is not the power of impression but the power of expression. Genius renders from the inside out, while the psychologist can only register from the outside in. He consequently emphasizes heredity, environment and physiological status because these are all three alike external, material conditions supremely significant to minds whose power of impression surpasses their power of expression, though

they are supremely insignificant to minds conscious of possessing an independent creative force. This is not to assert that heredity, environment and physiological factors do not condition expression, for they do; but their influence is limited to conditioning the form, the extent and sometimes the direction which expression assumes: not one of them singly, nor all combined, can explain the force by which they are shaken into significant patterns of character and art. Heredity may be as the oil of the lamp, environment may be as the coloured globe, and physiological status as the wick, but genius is the flame. To establish the formula of genius in terms of neurotic instability is to betray unmistakably at last the spiritual prostitution to which science has fallen in these latter days. Its triumph is the triumph of logic merely, which convinces only those who start from the same premise; an ominous triumph in this case, since the authority of science has been able to transform much of the world's reverence for valuable spiritual gifts into indifference or sympathetic contempt as for the victim of some mysterious mental ill.

Though responsibility for accepting a material psychology may be forgiven the general, it is more difficult to overlook the responsibility of the scientist himself. He should have recalled the early history of his own subject, the days of Galileo and Kepler, when reason itself, as the power of establishing authentic laws of matter, was upstream to the priest's consciousness; when the priest, consequently, began his attack against reason by denying its validity and ended by condemning it as a dangerous perversion of human nature. In those days the scientist had to defend himself against a consciousness intellectually so much lower that its attack must have seemed as unreasonable to him as would be the attack of so many trees. But today the psychologist himself, since he cannot create art must obviously be downstream to the artist, just as, since he cannot create devoted faith and self-sacrifice among multitudes of people over centuries of time, [XIV:11:336] he must be even farther downstream with respect to the founders of religion. Had the modern materialist, however, realized the case of his own predecessor, he might have felt himself into the profound truth so far denied his reason; that while language is universal, experience is confined to those inhabiting the same spiritual domain. Religious conviction today, in a world of rational materialism, occupies the same position relative to the scientist as the scientist, in those days of dominant theology, occupied relative to the priest. The position is that of a Macbeth against whom advances the nightmare of Birnum wood.

Into a world rationalized as regards ideal if not action, religion has unexpectedly returned, renewing in men the strange lost sense of the soul. Slipping easily through the meshes of biological "truth", and become a force in consciousness itself, this spiritual renaissance cannot be denied—like an angel in the garrison it can only be recognized and obeyed. By individuals, religious experience can be cherished for its own sake in the very teeth of reason; but one may be certain that in this pragmatic age religion may not establish social forms until science has come to terms with its every claim. The task of testing religion, of course, was never rightly the province of biology, and only appeared so while religion was considered in the perspective of history. In the personal perspective, which its return compels, the task falls once more to psychology. But the psychology born of natural science, as shown, rests upon an absolutely false premise. Its premise does not contain that easily vulnerable falsehood which can be disclosed in terms of the correspondence of phenomena; its premise is the more impregnable falsehood consisting in the fact that the psychologist himself is essentially incapable of fulfilling his function. It is not his method which fails, but his experience. He develops his mental film capably enough. The trouble is that the film is blank.

II

To indict the psychology, therefore, is to indict the psychologist himself. But to indict the psychologist is also to render verdict against the society accepting a premise whose error it never required an elaborate laboratory or special instruction to expose, but only the

determination of the individual heart to safeguard its own fairest hope. Society accepted a material psychology because its strongest determination fell in the material world. Spiritual affirmation there has been, even under the reign of the gods of coal and iron, but affirmation which cast back to the days when science could reasonably be ignored. Increasingly now there is spiritual experience among those who would not ignore science even if they could, but these minds still hesitate to press their claims against an authority traditionally opposed to that claim, and one whose method and positive achievement they rightly admire.

The scientific mind came to be considered the true type of supreme intelligence as the result of three distinct influences: the triumph of science over theology in the question of facts; the positive achievement of science in its own field; and last but not least, the rise of universal education. The rapid spread of literacy, and the growing need of education as part of one's equipment for labour, served to identify science with the new effectiveness and advantages of education itself. Knowledge came to imply book knowledge, and the reader of books attributed his own new sense of increased power, naturally enough, to the sources from which it was chiefly supplied. The triumph of natural science as ideal standard of truth was made complete by the basis it seemed to render all men for a conviction of intellectual self-sufficiency. But universal education was made possible only by enthroning the lowest of all intellectual faculties, memory. Memory alone will give the [XIV:11:337] student possession enough of his texts to meet an institutional standard, because institutional standards necessarily make education a matter of receptivity; and the mastery of only a few books under this system creates in the student's mind the conviction that he could, if he so desired, succeed to the heritage of all human wisdom. All human wisdom supposedly being reducible to three feet of wood-pulp and leather. It would be merely a question of adding more rungs to the ladder already begun. This feeling on the part of students has created a tendency on the part of their masters to re-write all old works for which a new need was felt—especially history and philosophy—and to re-write them in terms of the modern standard. In the process of translating history and philosophy into the language of economic values, much unsound material undoubtedly was cut away; but the translators cut away also even more material which had permanent significance as witnessing the faith of men in their own spiritual destiny. Faults of an unscientific material were attributed to the maker's mind; an easy superiority of fact was considered an equally easy superiority of intelligence. Thus another influence was added to the economic pressure already operating toward opportunism, and co-operating with it prevented the average person from perceiving the gap intervening between the receptive mind, whose faculty is memory, and the creative mind, whose faculty is insight. The heritage to all human wisdom, the proud boast of democracy in education, is a heritage of external fact merely. To the true heritage of wisdom, the quality attaching to minds independently of their material, there have appeared few heirs; for minds so trained, so penetrated from the beginning with the need to go on, ever on, through field after field of fact, seldom have opportunity to realize that there soon comes a point where the longest ladder will not serve, but wings are required. Never suspecting his own inadequate psychic instrument, the modern layman does not suspect the inadequacy of the scientist's intelligence for the task of psychology. The scientist, indeed, has only succeeded to the Parthian victory of the priest—that victory whose tragedy consists in the fact that, having been too easily won, it leads the victor to overestimate his own powers.

For these reasons, then, the nineteenth century was content to huddle upon one small island in the sea of human consciousness. It not only cut itself off from the larger area of ancient experience, but even vaunted its own ability to do so as the symbol of truest intellectual freedom. But that small island has been revealed in all its abject desolation by the War. Two waves of experience, rolling from opposite directions, have overwhelmed it forever: the soldier's consecration to a spiritual power not received from without but welling

up in his own being, and the civilian's realization that social stability, even for prosperity on its lowest terms, requires a directive force not resident in the scientific ideal. The scientific ideal has served not life but death, thereby revealing itself less as the criminal to be punished than as the servant to be put under control. Its authority to establish a final standard of truth has, at any rate, been discredited; the problem now is rather to organize a new conviction than to reinterpret an old doubt.

III

As a matter of fact, at the very moment when the cleavage appears between consciousness and natural phenomena, the real contribution science has made the race in the way of thought now first becomes evident. Turning once more, in the light of personal aspiration, to direct contact with spiritual conviction in its original sources, we are struck by the fact that this conviction, from lack of precise and mutual knowledge, possessed an inadequate instrument of [XIV:11:338] thought by which to express itself to other minds. The soul of the older, pre-scientific race expressed itself as a kind of poetry, by allusion and image; expression whose content is therefore necessarily limited to those sharing the key. Real enough to the possessor, religion became dark and shadowy in the process of transfer from one to another mind. Viewed from the perspective of inexperience, its concepts are as actors whose backs are turned to the audience, losing the plot in the mazes of half-heard echo. The man of religion spoke a language apart, a lover's language, certain that his every winged word would find a nest in the heart of him moved by the same passion; unable to image that passion completely to the cold. In other words, religion was given the race in the form of implicit knowledge, a knowledge continually betrayed when translated into the medium of customary speech. But science, creating an external universe mutually perceptible and firmly grasped, has made knowledge explicit. Steeped in the habits of explicit thought, the modern mind differs from the ancient mind not so much in thinking different thoughts as in thinking the same thoughts in a different way. Science has placed the transfer of experience upon a new, socialized basis. The actor now faces his audience, revealing the whole plot. One mind can give its all to another mind through their mutual possession of the same external universe. Slowly but surely knowledge has been turned inside out. This fact, the necessity of science, is also the opportunity of religion. For the first time may we perceive another's soul as positive light in the world of communicable thought, not merely as negative, shadow. For the first time is the mystery of being captured from knowledge, where it perishes, and given the knower, where it lives on. For the first time also can religion be socialized above and beyond ritual and form on the plane of explicit instruction. And the development of mind as self-consciousness from thought implicit to thought explicit actually turns both ways, enabling us to perceive at last that religion and science required one another from the beginning—that the relation of one to the other, in fact, is nothing more or less than the relation of soul and body in the social organization.

XIV:12, March 1924 [XIV:12:362]

The angel in the garrison

Horace Holley

Part IV¹

If the real problem at issue were the difference in degree which exists between the consciousness of the material psychologist, or the believer in material psychology, and the man who has undergone spiritual experience, the argument would stick fast on the shoals of practical impossibility. But this is not the problem at issue. However it may appear, spiritual experience is not a personal, untransferable gift, like talent or temperament. The chief point to be examined is less that the "spiritual" mind differs from the "material" mind in degree than

¹ Printed as "Part II". Parts I-III are in XIV:11.

that, wherever on the stream of reality the latter happens to be located, it faces the other way. The material mind faces downstream. This is the source of their disagreement, that the scientific attitude has its back to the religious attitude. The scientific attitude is concerned with a reality not only downstream to spiritual attainment, but downstream to its own being. Its point of view upon the human drama is the point of view of the lower natural order. The properties of its spectacles it attributes to its eye.

The basis of science is the conviction that conscious states derive as effects from physiological conditions. This conviction is one capable of proof. The proof itself is unquestionably sound to those establishing it. The proof consists of fact as well as theory, of demonstration as well as hypothesis. The proof cannot rationally be denied, but actually, however, it can be overstepped. For physiological conditions, while they do determine states of consciousness, and do so in human conduct as rigorously as the procedure of mathematics, are causal only for the minds facing downstream. The law holds, but it is not the only law. For minds facing upstream—even from the bottom of the stream itself—another law, apparently contradictory, operates. For the consciousness which has learned to seek its reality upstream, in the spiritual order, that which was cause becomes effect, and that which was effect becomes cause. Consciousness dilates, aware of itself as knower rather than mere repository of knowledge, as steadfast love rather than capricious lover; regards its previous state as death compared to life, as seed compared with flower; and stepping as it were from the moonlight of reflected being into the sunlight of being direct and essential, perceives the tyranny of nature replaced by the intimate regard of one all-sustaining Friend. This is the difference, then, between the two attitudes we call spiritual and material: that the spiritualized mind faces the sun of life, the materialized mind its own projected shadow.

Much confusion exists as the result of the terms “inner” life and “outer” life, which serve less to distinguish the upstream from the downstream of consciousness than to oppose inactivity to activity of conduct. The mind turned upon itself for nourishment too frequently asks for bread and receives a stone. The mind’s sustenance is actually not what it contains, in the way of acquired ideas or even personal talents, but what it receives, in the way that a spring receives fresh water or a flower receives light. The well-stored mind, especially the mind with a talent, undoubtedly has, in comparison, a semblance of independent “inner” life, but this independence is by comparison merely, as by comparison the camel is able to go without food. The real life of man is not thought but recognition of God. The first step toward real life is not to acquire more ideas, but to effect a different attitude. In other [XIV:12:363] words, the first step is to turn consciousness about from a downstream perception to a perception upstream. This involves the mind as the mirror of reality, not as the storehouse of impressions. Memory and imagination are not concerned; what is concerned is insight, the dove sent forth from the ark of consciousness to find a point of dry land.

Here lies the preliminary difficulty which diverts many modern minds from spiritual attainment to psychic development—that in and by itself the intelligence is not a boat which can readily be turned about, but rather like the breath by which the mirror is obscured. The capacity of minds to take on new ideas and discard old ones is not like the ship’s freedom of movement about the sea, but the passenger’s freedom about the ship. It does not avoid the consequences of wreck, if toward wreck the vessel is directed. All the customary faculties, memory, will, reason, which in the material mind are concerned with the lesser interest, and exist in terms of the lesser interest, must be detached, from that object and made to function for a different end. That change in the character of consciousness which transmutes material into spiritual being depends upon an awareness of self not as passenger in the ship, but as the ship itself.

Spiritual development, consequently, is a matter of humility, that humility which follows the loss of the sense of independence self-contained. The true nature of humility is not hateful

self-abasement, but the perception of an object of devotion which creates a joy so profound that self is forgotten. An example of real humility is the youth possessing elements of greatness in art. At this stage, the mind is downstream to attainment, but pointed upstream to attainment in others because this attitude serves the instinctive best interests of the awakening mind. It receives impressions from the masterpieces of art in the only way that impressions retain their dynamic quality, by giving them entrance into the mind as from above, in terms of the same qualities by virtue of which the masterpieces were originally created. It reverences that aspect of other minds which it reverences in itself. Genius is far nearer the attitude of humility than is mediocrity. It is the capacity for humility which sets one upon the way of power. That capacity is never a matter of the physical will, whose instinct is to dominate, but of the spiritual will, whose nature is to be inspired. In the spiritual world, the virtues arrange themselves in a scale the reverse of the physical virtues. Possession and domination follow last; the foremost are obedience and response.

However, obedience and response bring strength only to the mind that has found levels of being higher than its own. To respond to new impulses within self, originated by self, merely substitutes one incapacity for another. Darkness cannot drive itself away, it flees only from light. Efforts to achieve religion through a mere understanding of new ideas may change the image in the mirror; it will not remove the blur. One confronts the fact here that religion has nearly everywhere been reduced to the lower terms of knowledge or conduct, so that society closes round the inquiring mind a darkness like its own. All things of all lives can be explained in terms of material intelligence, for every experience entering the material intelligence, either at first or second hand, takes on the shadow of the closed room. The problem as to whether spiritual reality actually exists is not like the question as to whether a certain picture hangs in a locked room, which depends upon the picture, but the question is whether the picture contains the quality of beauty, which depends also upon the inquiring eye.

The book of Job is the eternal drama of the search for God, for spiritual reality, on the part of a consciousness surrounded by materialism. The name of religion is constantly employed, and [XIV:12:364] the authority of religion freely acknowledged, but the miracle of the spiritual life cannot be performed. Job himself was one with his environment until cast outside its resources by extremity of misfortune and pain. Even when feeling himself outside, he turns again and again to it for consolation. Job's friends typify the various ideas held about the spiritual life by complacently darkened minds. One and all, these are but material attitudes disguised under the terminology of faith. One and all, they represent mind in its relation to the downstream of experience—their content is derived from the usages of society, and all they actually know of the eagle is the empty nest. The God of Job's friends is nature adapted to the social organism. But the walls of Job's mind have been broken through as by the weight of a falling tree. He has learned the limit of darkness for the first time through the power of light. Little by little his being adapts itself to the direct rays of the sun, until his intelligence formulates the astonishment of the sprouted seed. He stands outside himself as the sprout stands outside the seed; all his senses respond to their vital power of expansion through a new cycle of growth. From being one who had derived all his happiness from possession, he becomes one who brings to possession a greater joy. From being dependent on things, he learns to render the material world to his new vision as means to an end. He learns that spiritual reality is not the mirage of social prosperity, but social prosperity is its mirage. He learns that the way to God is not that narrow, crowded gate which typifies social competition, but the freedom of every sail to receive the wind once the sail has been unfurled. The path of the spirit brings many agonies, but these have to do with unfurling the sails; never do they mean that the wind has fallen to a dead calm.

In his endeavour to reach upstream to that self we make remote under the cloudy title "soul", Job left behind every element of thought and emotion, every faculty and attribute, and

breasted the current only by becoming one selfless detachment from desire. His consciousness passed as it were through the narrow door of death, where the back carries no burden and the hands no gift. His lost lands and his lost loves merely objectify his loss of the habitual factors of self; his physical agony in the same way represents supreme mental confusion, the quivering patches of shadow and light. But on the further side of that door, when the process came to fulfilment, to Job was rendered back his memory and will, his desires and thoughts and emotions, his recognitions and relationships—all the possessions of self by which being is maintained. But their moment of annihilation in “death” had severed their attachment to the physical centres of life; and their return was as the agencies of spirit. Immortality ascended into his life as sap to the bud in spring. Without physical death, he entered heaven from the earth of his own nature. The heaven he entered was not merely that easier environment which allows “soul” to exist as summer allows existence to the butterfly; it was itself established through the power of his own new perception. Soul does not come by wishing for heaven—heaven comes with the attainment of soul. All the emphasis religion brings to bear on life, in material societies, is vain and sterile by reason of our submission to the mere continuity of time. We remain on the surface of self as the fly upon water. We recognize the supreme transformations of death, but we attribute them to the physical death shared by the serpent and the weed. We develop the strength of giants for the downstream of things, but for their upstream reality we remain as children in the womb. The defensive armour we have cast from our bodies we still retain for our minds. We avoid the Armageddon of self by keeping within that darkened cave where the sun of truth enters not. [XIV:12:365]

There are three stages in spiritual development; the first is that in which consciousness is like the passengers in a ship, borne they know not where; in the second stage, consciousness becomes as it were the ship itself; but in the third stage it seems like the very sea. To the ship, storms are ominous, fatal—to the sea they are passages of its eternal music, evidences of its greatness, renewers of its power. From this condition the soul looks out upon the world neither as conqueror nor slave, but as an actor in the drama of God.

The reason that a spiritual leader like Gandhi seems to be recognized by the world more readily than is the spiritual Servant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, comes from the fact that Gandhi’s influence operates directly in the field of politics, which everybody understands and most people consider supremely important, while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s influence operates directly upon the unseen world of the soul, which alas few people give the first or in fact any vital place in the scheme of life. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was and is invisible to all save those who are truly humble: to them he is more visible than the sun. In the steadfastness of this supreme conviction the friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá may gaze serenely out upon the epic happenings of the day, beholding Job relived in the struggles and agonies of humanity itself; pain multiplied everywhere as never before, until through darkness as of annihilation, men become aware of the sound of the Voice of God.

XIV:11, February 1924 [XIV:11:338]

The scientific religion

Kate Kempner

Professor Auguste Forel, the famous French psychiatrist, out lines in a pamphlet, *Homme et Fourmi*, (Lausanne 1923) a so-called programme human practicable—a practicable programme for mankind which in some form or other must be adopted, if humanity is to survive the destructive forces of civilization—war, alcoholism, etc. Among other points Professor Forel states the necessity of a universal international auxiliary language, as well as that of a universal religion, which he calls the scientific, synthetic, super-national religion of the Bahá’ís for the commonwealth of the world—without dogma, without clergy. He says that in 1920 he learned of the existence of the Bahá’í Faith, founded almost seventy years before, in

the Orient, which gives itself to the service of mankind, to which Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Brahman, Jew or Monist can belong, which leaves aside all discussion of the metaphysical nature of God, the Devil, paradise, hell, etc.

When Professor Forel found the Bahá'í Movement; he who previously had been opposed to the existing religions, because he saw nothing but creeds and sects, obscuring the reality of religion, became a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

He founded a Bahá'í group in Zurich, Switzerland, and professes that according to his opinion [that the] Bahá'í Faith is the religion of the future.

XIV:11, February 1924 [XIV:11:339]

The Bahá'í peace plan¹

'Abdu'l-Bahá's plan for universal peace begins with certain divine principles. Its central note is universality: "Every universal cause is divine and every particular one is temporal. The principles of the divine Manifestations of God were, therefore, all-universal and all-inclusive.

"Every imperfect soul is self-centred and thinketh only of his own good. But as his thoughts expand a little he will begin to think of the welfare and comfort of his family. If his ideas still more widen, his concern will be the felicity of his fellow citizens; and if still they widen, he will be thinking of the glory of his land and of his race. But when ideas and views reach the utmost degree of expansion and attain the stage of perfection, then will he be interested in the exaltation of humankind. He will then be the well-wisher of all men and the seeker of the weal and prosperity of all lands. This is indicative of perfection."²

To overcome the antagonistic forces of nature, its narrowness, its prejudices, its selfishness, its instinct of the survival of the fittest, its accumulated traditions of war, the successful peace plan must be based upon the adamant law of the universe—the universal justice of God. Only that peace plan which has God behind it can hope to be triumphant.

This, then, in part and in outline is the divine peace plan revealed by Bahá'u'lláh over fifty years ago, and presented by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the last twenty years to all parts of the world.

1. All must investigate the truth with an independent mind, with the eye of [XIV:11:340] justice, if they are to find God's new path to universal peace.

2. The foundation of the palace of peace is the consciousness of the oneness of mankind. All are God's children. He is kind to all. He loves all. He nourishes all. "In every century a particular and central theme is, in accordance with the requirements of that century, confirmed by God. In this illumined age that which is confirmed is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every soul who serveth this oneness will undoubtedly be assisted and confirmed."³ "Therefore we must promulgate divine teachings", "proclaim the oneness of the world of humanity", "that ignorant, religious, racial, political and even patriotic prejudices may vanish and the earth become one home and all people be unified."

3. To establish universal peace all the nations will need to hold a universal conference and establish a Parliament of Man, a supreme tribunal which shall represent *every* nation of the world, its people and its government. Its representatives in this universal conference should be "two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives

¹ All quotations in this article are from the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 68–69.

³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 114.

should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country.”¹ These representatives should choose the members of the International Court of Arbitral Justice. The organization of this World Society of nations and its supreme tribunal should be written into a universal treaty, in which “the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, [and] the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, ...”,² and its special, national interests preserved.

4. In this treaty “the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, ...”³ “By a general agreement all the governments of the world must disarm simultaneously. It will not do if one lays down the arms and the other refuses to do so.”⁴ “Once the Parliament of Man is established and its constituent parts organized, the governments of the world having entered into a covenant of eternal friendship will have no need of keeping large standing armies and navies. A few battalions to preserve internal order, and an International Police to keep the highways of the sea clear, are all that will be necessary. Then these huge sums will be diverted to other more useful channels, pauperism will disappear, knowledge will increase, the victories of Peace will be sung by poets and bards, knowledge will improve the conditions and mankind will be rocked in the cradle of felicity and bliss.”⁵

5. All the nations having chosen the Supreme Tribunal, all mankind should enforce its decisions. “First; the financiers and bankers must desist from lending money to any government contemplating the waging of an unjust war upon an innocent nation. Second: the presidents and managers of the railroads and steamship companies must refrain from transporting war ammunition, infernal engines, guns, cannons and powder from one country into another. Third: the soldiers must petition, through their representatives, the Ministers of War, the politicians, the Congressmen and the generals to put forth in clear, intelligible language the reasons and the causes which have brought them to the brink of such a national calamity. The soldiers must *demand* this as one of their prerogatives. ‘Demonstrate to us,’ they must say, ‘that this is a just war, and we will then enter into the battlefield; otherwise we will not take one step.’”⁶

As a last measure, all the nations will use their limited armies and their international police to bring the offending nation to submit to the decisions of the Supreme Tribunal.

6. To render successful the army of peace and to make it triumphant the society of nations will need to enlist every force that makes for the unification of mankind: [XIV:11:341]

- a) A universal language, to be chosen by the world conference and taught in all the schools of all nations in addition to the mother tongue.
- b) Universal, full participation of the women in the suffrage and the political counsels of the nations. “If, in the future, women like unto men are given the franchise assuredly they will prevent the occurrence of war.”⁷
- c) The establishment of a just economic order to be established by the united assemblies of the governments of the world, “so that neither the capitalist suffer from enormous losses nor the labourers become needy. ... When such a general plan is adopted by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it.”⁸

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 306.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 64–65.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 65.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, V:8, p. 116.

⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, V:8, pp. 115–116.

⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, V:8, p. 117.

⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, X:3, p. 39.

⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 43.

d) Universal education for peace. “The education of all the children of all the religions, under a universal standard of instruction and a common curriculum.” “The duty of educated men is to teach in the universities and schools ideas concerning universal peace so that the student may be so moulded that in after years he may help to carry to fruition this most useful and human issue of mankind.”

7. The supreme force for unity and peace is religion. But to be successful religion must be stated in accordance with modern thought, united with modern science. True religion and true science will then flood the world with light upon light. Fundamentally there is only one truth, one reality, one religion—the oneness of God, the oneness of mankind, the power of the Holy Spirit.

8. Divine civilization through the spiritual conquest of nature is the goal of the radiant century before us. Material civilization is the lamp; divine civilization is the light.

“Thou observest that at present the East and the West are enveloped in the darkness of the world of nature. Almost everybody is pursuing material interests. They are like unto other animals that are drowned in the world of nature. The cow is an absolute materialist and is completely enslaved by nature. She has no knowledge of the world of humanity and has no trace of spiritual power. She is drowned in the world of nature. She is, according to the phraseology of the civilized ones, a great naturalist, because she comprehends nothing but perceptible objects and counts them as a determined fact. She has not perceived the fragrance of spiritual feelings, human discoveries and intellectual sciences. She is a pure materialist.

“In short, today the life of the world of humanity is the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, provided they are practised, so that they may raise the pavilion of the oneness of the world of humanity, uproot the antiquated and decadent prejudices and emancipate (all) from the blind imitations of the people of superstition, or, according to the saying of Christ, bring the second birth, and the birth from the spirit be realized.”

“The teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh like unto the rays of the sun illumined the East as well as the West, vivify the dead and unite the various religions. They prove the Oneness of God, for they gather all communities of the world under the pavilion of the oneness of the world of mankind.

“Consider how stirred the world is and in what a commotion are the people of the world. Heavenly Power is needed to do away with this stir and agitation. Otherwise, this great Cause will not be realized through human power. Human power, no matter how strong it may be, it illumines like unto an ignited lamp a limited space and trains a small number of souls. It is the sun which illumines all regions, and it is the Heavenly Power which gathers around a single spot all the sects and communities. Strive therefore, that thou mayest serve this remarkable Power and attain unto profitable and far reaching results.”¹

XIV:12, March 1924 [XIV:12:353]

Extracts from tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Addressed to Mrs Isabella D. Brittingham

O thou who art spreading the fragrances of God! Verily, thy letter was received and I was informed of thy chanting the Verses of God in the spiritual assemblies, of thy excellent speech and eloquent address in the illumined gatherings. I ask God to confirm thee by the Breaths of the Holy Spirit, so that explanations may flow from thy tongue like unto the flowing of the river and the meetings may be shaken by thy stating the proofs of the appearance of the Kingdom of God and the diffusion of the fragrances of God in this wonderful, glorious and excellent century.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze*, p. 36. [Last three paragraphs.]

O handmaiden of God! Verily, God has confirmed thee in spreading the fragrances of God in those climes. Be a pillar of fire and a cloud of light and a blessed tree in the vineyard of God, the Precious, the Forgiving.

As to trials (tests in the path of God), verily, they are necessary. Hast thou not heard and read how there appeared trials from God in the day of Jesus, and thereafter, and how the whirlwind of tests became severe? Even the glorious Peter was not rescued from the flame of trials, and wavered. Then he repented and mourned the mourning of a bereaved one and his lamentations reached unto the Celestial Concourse. Is it, then, possible to be saved from the trials of God? No, verily. There is a great wisdom therein, of which no one is aware save the wise and knowing.

Were it not for tests genuine gold could not be distinguished from the counterfeit. Were it not for tests the courageous could not be known from the coward. Were it not for tests the people of faithfulness could not be known from those of selfishness. Were it not for tests the intellects and faculties of the scholars in the great colleges would not be developed. Were it not for tests the sparkling gems could not be known from worthless pebbles. Were it not for tests the fisherman could not be distinguished from Annanias and Caiaphas who were amid glory (worldly dignity). Were it not for tests the face of Mary, the Magdalene, would not glisten with the light of firmness and certainty unto all horizons. These are some of the mysteries of tests which we have unfolded unto thee that thou mayest become cognizant of the mysteries of God in every cycle. Verily, I pray God to illumine the faces as pure gold in the fire of tests.

As the servants and the handmaidens of the Merciful stand firmly and persevere, the good seed will soon grow in the field and bear the fruit of blessing. Then will spirituality and fragrance prevail and joy and rejoicing come from the Heavenly Sphere, sorrows and toil shall be forgotten and eternal peace and rest appear.

Regarding the two wings of the soul, these mean wings of ascent. One is the wing of knowledge, the other of faith, for these are the means of the ascent of the human soul to the lofty station of divine perfection.

XIV:12, March 1924 [XIV:12:359]

The story of the princess

Adapted from lectures given by Jináb-i-Ávárih in England.

Shamsí-Jahán Khánum, whose [first] name means “Sun of the World”, was a granddaughter of Sháh Fath-‘Alí and a relative of the then Sháh. She was interested in religion and had made a pilgrimage to Mecca. Because of this pilgrimage she was called Hájí Khánum. She heard that Qurratu’l-‘Ayn wrote beautiful poems, and as she herself occasionally wrote poetry she longed to see the poems of Qurratu’l-‘Ayn.

One day she and her maids went out, under pretence of taking a walk. They came to the garden of the Kalántar¹ and entering it Hájí Khánum gradually approached the house in whose top story Qurratu’l-‘Ayn was imprisoned. The Princess later wrote a book of poetry—it is in her own handwriting and in my possession—in which she describes her experience. When she reached the building she turned to God and said, “O God, if this Cause is true, make Qurratu’l-‘Ayn come forward and let me see her.”

“As soon as I had thus prayed,” she writes, “the window of the top story suddenly opened and Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, like a brilliant sun, looked out and called to me, ‘What dost thou want, O Princess?’

¹ The Mayor or Governor. See *Life of Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, Star of the West*, XIV:5, pp. 138–143.

“I was so astonished that I stared at her, solemnly, and then began to cry. She smiled and laughed at me and when I saw this I was deeply affected. It seemed to me strange that I, a Princess and quite free, should be walking into this garden and crying, while she, a prisoner in that little room, was laughing.

“I said to her, ‘O Lady, I would like to know why you are imprisoned?’

“She replied, ‘Because I have spoken the truth. Why did the descendants of Muḥammad fall into captivity? Because they, also, spoke the truth.’

“I asked her, ‘Where is the truth?’

“She said, ‘The centre of truth appeared in the world and they killed him.’

“I asked her, ‘Is it the one they killed in Tabríz?’

“‘Yes,’ she answered. ‘He was our Promised One, your Promised One and mine, and they martyred him.’ [XIV:12:360]

“Then I asked, ‘Who were those people who were in the Fortress of Ṭabarsí?’

“She said, ‘They, also, were his disciples.’”

The Princess now writes, “At this point in our conversation the guards suddenly heard me and came rushing into the garden; but before I was aware of their approach Qurratu’l-‘Ayn called to me, ‘O Princess, go, lest you fall into trouble!’ and she shut the window and withdrew. Then the servants of the Kalántar came up to me and said, ‘What are you doing here, Lady?’

“Vexed with them, I replied, ‘I came here for a walk.’

“Although they knew what was my object yet, out of respect, they merely replied, ‘Very well. Now that you have finished your walk, kindly leave the place.’

“For several days after this I wept and cried, and I longed to see once more this lady, the prisoner, until at last God heard my prayer and again I saw Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, at the wedding of the son of the Kalántar.”

While Qurratu’l-‘Ayn was a prisoner in the house of the Kalántar one of his sons married a young girl. The night of the wedding, when all the Princesses and the ladies of the Royal Household were assembled in the Kalántar’s home, one of these royal ladies said, “It would be interesting to see that Bahá’í lady who is a prisoner here.” All the ladies joined in her wish, and asked for Qurratu’l-‘Ayn. Finally they sent a message to the Kalántar beseeching him and saying that it would be a real joy, and a wedding present if he would let them see the prisoner.

They sent for Qurratu’l-‘Ayn and brought her from her prison room to the wedding feast. One of the Princesses described her thus: “When I saw her my heart was filled with happiness. When Qurratu’l-‘Ayn entered the room, she was so beautiful and so dignified, and when she spoke it was with such power that we in the room gradually turned to her and came and listened to her, and forgot all about the wedding.” She spoke with great enthusiasm—and now she related her sorrows, in stories, and the ladies began to weep, and again she told them stories that made them laugh, and as she walked up and down the room she chanted her poems in so wonderful a way that everyone was astonished. No one of the ladies wished to hear or to see any more of the wedding festivities; nay rather, they listened to her almost the entire evening. And as a result of that night’s experience many of those ladies, of whom the Princess, Ḥájí Khánúm, was one, became firm followers of the Cause.

From this night all the ladies of the Kalántar’s household were greatly attached to Qurratu’l-‘Ayn. They asked the Kalántar’s permission to have her live in the house with them, rather than in the little room in the garden. So she was brought to the house and was closely associated with the ladies there. One of the maids in the house of the Kalántar tells that

Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the prisoner, radiated such love, greatness, power and majesty to everyone there that all, both ladies and maids, became so devoted to her that they would have given their lives for her.

Some years later, the Princess, Hájí Khánum, heard that one of the sons of Mírzá Buzurg, Minister of Persia and the father of Bahá'u'lláh, had become the leader of the Bábí Movement, but she did not know which of the sons this was. She questioned a friend who, misinformed herself, told her that Mírzá Yaḥyá Azal was the one.

For ten years the Princess waited, constantly expecting this son of Mírzá Buzurg to take the place of the Báb and very eager to see him. At last she started forth on a pilgrimage to Karbilá and on the way arrived in Baghdád. Here she made inquiries for Mírzá Yaḥyá Azal and was shown his home.

She sent a friend with an invitation to [XIV:12:361] him, saying, "I wish to talk with you for about an hour."

When Mírzá Yaḥyá heard the name of the Princess he was frightened and said, "This Lady is of the Royal Family and will cause us trouble. Do not inform her and do not let her come here to me."

When this was repeated to the Princess she was astonished, and said, "If this man is the right one, the true one, then how is it that he does not know of my longing and my love for the Cause?"

Again she sent a message to him, saying, "If you are afraid that I will betray you then send someone to burn the tip of my tongue or to cut my tongue so that I will not be able to speak. I want only to see you for a little while as you are from God."

This answer made Mírzá Yaḥyá still more afraid, and he said, "Do not let her come here at all."

The Princess became angry at this answer and she decided to return to Persia and to re-convert to their old beliefs those whom she had taught.

Suddenly, one of the servants of Bahá'u'lláh came to her, and said, "Do not be depressed and sad. The light, the truth is somewhere else. The one whom you seek is the brother of Azal, and he has sent me here to invite you to come and see him tomorrow."

The Princess now became very happy, and she spent the whole night in prayer, weeping and waiting for the day. She reasoned with herself, saying, "Suppose, tomorrow, I go, and am not able to ask the questions which distress me! I had better write them down."

So she wrote all her questions on a piece of paper which she put under her pillow, in order to be ready to ask them the next day.

Early in the morning the servant of Bahá'u'lláh came to her, and said, "Bahá'u'lláh invites you to come, and to bring your questions with you."

She was amazed, and she thought, "Who has told Bahá'u'lláh that I have questions!"

Constantly she said to herself, "This one is the true one, and not Azal."

In an entirely new frame of mind, she went to the home of Bahá'u'lláh, taking her questions with her. When she arrived Bahá'u'lláh was walking up and down inside the house. The moment she saw him, the Blessed One, she fell upon her knees.

Bahá'u'lláh came forward and raised her up, encouraging her, and saying, "Do not be troubled; all is well." Then she wept for joy, and unhesitatingly she accepted his Reality, saying, even, "Thou art God."

He answered, "No, God forbid. God is far beyond being in a body."

She said, "If you are not God then who told you that I am depressed and that I was going back to Persia and that I have questions to ask."

He said, "Nay, I am not God, but God told me of these things."

Before she looked at her questions, he began to answer those very questions which she had written down.

This story was recorded by the Princess herself, in her own hand-writing, and the book is in my possession.

After a time, she left, but Bahá'u'lláh promised her that she should see him again. She hoped to meet Bahá'u'lláh in Adrianople, but was unable to do so. At last, after ten years, she saw him in 'Akká. She sold all her property in order to secure the money for the journey, and married a man quite outside her own social station, that she might be able to go to 'Akká to see Bahá'u'lláh.

In the East, if a Princess marries a merchant it is considered an extraordinary thing, for she forfeits her rank. But this Princess was so devoted to the Cause that she married Ḥájí Şádiq Káshání, a Bahá'í, and out of her own funds she paid their travelling expenses to 'Akká.

XIV:12, March 1924 [XIV:12:365]

When a soul meets the Master

Fred Mortensen

In my youth my environment was not of the best and being around boys of hard character I guess I determined to be as tough as any, which I very easily did, though inwardly I always had a feeling to be above it all. Still I always felt that I should do in Rome as the Romans do. So I violated any law I saw fit, man's or God's. Strange as it seems to me at times, it was through coming into contact with these laws that I received the opportunity to be guided into this most wonderful Revelation.

My dear mother had done everything in her power to make me a good boy. I have but the deepest love for her and my heart has often been sad when thinking how she must have worried for my safety as well as for my future well-being. Through it all and in a most wonderful way, with a god-like patience, she hoped and prayed that her boy would find the road which leadeth to righteousness and happiness. But environment proved a great barrier to her aspirations and every day in every way I became tougher and tougher. Fighting was a real pleasure, as welcome as a meal, and breaking a grocer's window to steal his fruit or what-not was, as I thought, a great joke.

It happened that one night the "gang" was strolling along, just doing nothing in particular (looking for trouble I guess), when one of the gang said, "Oh look at the swell bunch of bananas." "Gee, I wished I had some," another said. "Do you?" said I. About this time I heard a dog barking inside the store, and looking in, I saw a large bulldog. That seemed to aggravate me and, to show my contempt for the watch-dog, I guess, I broke the window, took the bananas, passed them around and we merrily strolled up the street and I suppose would have sung the song, "Yes, we have bananas", if it had been out at that time.

Making the Jews feel that they were back in Russia was lots of fun. I can't begin to tell you how we enjoyed persecuting them, stealing their wine; breaking their windows, in fact doing everything but setting fire to their homes. I [XIV:12:366] plainly remember that it cost me sixteen dollars to pay for broken windows, to keep out of jail.

The great evil that did so much to make us hard, was the saloon with its attendant evils. My! how tough I have seen fine young fellows become under the influence of liquor. I could

tell you many things of a lawless nature, but I write of these few to show what the power of Bahá'u'lláh can do in this day.

I was a fugitive for four years, having walked out of jail while awaiting trial. Then a young fellow was being arrested and I, of course, tried to take him away from the policeman. While this was going on a couple of detectives happened along and in my haste to get away from them I leaped over a thirty-five foot wall, breaking my leg, to escape the bullets whizzing around about—and wound up in the “garden at the feet of the Beloved” as Bahá'u'lláh has so beautifully written it in the *Seven Valleys*.

At this time I was defended by our departed, but illustrious Bahá'í brother, Albert Hall, to whom I owe many thanks and my everlasting good will for helping to free me from the prison of men and of self. It was he who brought me from out the dark prison house; it was he who told me, hour after hour, about the great love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for all his children and that he was here to help us show that love for our fellowmen. Honestly, I often wondered then what Mr Hall meant when he talked so much about love, God's love, Bahá'u'lláh's love, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's love, love for the Covenant, love for us, from us to God, to His Prophets, etc. I was bewildered. Still, I returned, to become more bewildered, so I thought; and I wondered why. It was, as I now know, the power of the Holy Spirit drawing one, who wished to be drawn.

Thus the Word of God gave me a new birth, made me a living soul, a revived spirit. I am positive that nothing else upon earth could have changed my character as mine has been changed. I am indeed a new being, changed by the power of the Holy Spirit as manifested through the breaths of God's Chosen Ones in this day. I have been resurrected and made alive in the Kingdom of Abhá.

Again through the attraction of the Holy Spirit I was urged, so it seemed to me, to go to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He was at Green Acre, Maine, at this time, and when I heard the rumour that he might go back to his home (Palestine) and not come west, I immediately determined to go and see him. I wasn't going to miss meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá after waiting so long to see him.

So I left home, going to Cleveland, where I attended a convention of printers for a few days. But I became so restless I could not stay for adjournment. How often I have thought about that trip of mine from Cleveland to Green Acre! The night before leaving Cleveland I had a dream that I was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guest, that I sat at a long table, and many others were there, too, and of how he walked up and down telling stories, emphasizing with his hand. This, later, was fulfilled and he looked just as I saw him in Cleveland.

As my finances were low I of necessity must hobo my way to Green Acre. The Nickel Plate Railway was my choice, for conveyance to Buffalo, New York. From Buffalo I again rode the rods to Boston, a long ride from around midnight until nine next morning. The Boston and Maine Railway was the last link between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the outside world so it seemed to me, and when I crawled off from the top of one of its passenger trains at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, I was exceedingly happy. A boat ride, a street car ride, and there I was, at the gate of Paradise. My heart beating double time, I stepped onto the soil of that to-be-famous centre, tired, dirty, and wondering, but happy.

I had a letter of introduction from Mr Hall to Mr Lunt, and in searching for [XIV:12:367] him I met Mrs Edward Kinney, who, dear soul, was kind enough to offer me a bed. She awakened me next morning about six o'clock, saying I'd have to hurry if I wished to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Arriving at the hotel I found quite a number of people there, on the same mission, to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Being one of the last arrivals, I was looking around, to make myself comfortable, when someone exclaimed, “Here he comes now.” Ahmad Sohrab did the introducing and interpreting. When Ahmad introduced me to him, to my astonishment he looked at me and only said, “Ugh! Ugh!” not offering to shake hands with me. Coming as I had, and feeling as I

did, I was very much embarrassed. After greeting several others and when about to go to his room, he suddenly turned to me and said in a gruff voice (at least I thought so), “Sit down,” and pointed to a chair—which I didn’t care to do, as elderly ladies were standing. But what was I to do! I meekly obeyed, feeling rebellious over what had happened. Such a welcome, after making that difficult trip! My mind sure was in a whirl.

The first man to receive an interview with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a doctor; he had written a book on love. It seemed but a minute until Ahmad came down and said, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá wishes to see Mr Mortensen.” Why, I nearly wilted. I wasn’t ready. I hadn’t expected to be called until the very last thing. I had to go, and it was with a strange feeling in my heart and wondering, wondering what would happen next. He welcomed me with a smile and a warm hand-clasp, telling me to be seated, he sitting before me. His first words were, “Welcome! Welcome! You are very welcome,”—then, “Are you happy?”—which was repeated three times. I thought, why do you ask me that so many times? Of course I am happy; didn’t I tell you so the first time?

Then, “Where did you come from?”

Answer: “From Minneapolis.”

Question: “Do you know Mr Hall?”

Answer: “Yes. He told me about the Cause.”

Question: “Did you have a pleasant journey?”

Of all the questions I wished to avoid this was the one! I dropped my gaze to the floor—and again he put the question. I lifted my eyes to his and his were as two black, sparkling jewels, which seemed to look into my very depths. I knew he knew and I must tell, and as I answered I wondered what Ahmad thought—if I was a little unbalanced.

I answered: “I did not come as people generally do, who come to see you.”

Question: “How did you come?”

Answer: “Riding under and on top of the railway trains.”

Question: “Explain how.”

Now as I looked into the eyes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá I saw they had changed and a wondrous light seemed to pour out. It was the light of love and I felt relieved and very much happier. I explained to him how I rode on the trains, after which he kissed both my cheeks, gave me much fruit, and kissed the dirty hat I wore, which had become soiled on my trip to see him.

When he was ready to leave Green Acre I stood nearby to say goodbye, and to my astonishment he ordered me to get into the automobile with him. After a week with him at Malden, Massachusetts, I left for home with never-to-be forgotten memories of a wonderful event—the meeting of God’s Covenant, The Branch of that Pre-Existent Root; that wonderful Moon that shall shine as the Sun, as the light of seven days and to whom all shall bow and praise His Holy Name.

A few weeks later I again had that wonderful privilege to be near the Covenant for a few moments.

These events are engraved upon the tablet of my heart and I love every moment of them. The words of Bahá’u’lláh are my food, my drink and my life. I have no other aim than to be of service in his pathway and to be obedient to his Covenant.

This is the Power of his Spirit, his love and his mercy to me.

The preservation of Divine guidance

When the divine Manifestation of God leaves the world how will the purity of his teachings and the unity of his Cause be preserved?

Because this question has not been explicitly answered in any of the religions of the past, there have arisen innumerable sects, due to misinterpretations of the teachings and to the ambitions of self-seeking leaders.

In the supreme plan which Bahá'u'lláh has revealed for the establishment of religious unity in this Latter Day, the divine word promises that God will in the future raise up a glorious succession of “temples of unity” who will preserve the purity of his teachings and the unity of His Cause. These “temples of unity” will be descended from the temple of the Manifestation, “to speak in the Kingdom of creation of their Lord, The Supreme, The All-Glorious, and be of those who obtain light by the light of their Lord. ... Verily we have ordained this Temple (the body of the Manifestation) the beginning of the existence of the new creation, that each one may become convinced that I am indeed able to do what I wish, by merely saying, ‘Be’, and it is. By the shadow of each letter of the letters of this Temple, We will send forth people whose number is not known to any save God, the Protector, the Self-Existent; and from it (the Temple) God shall create certain people who will not be veiled by the illusions of those who acted wrongfully against God, and they will drink, at all times, the pure water of life: Verily are not they of those who are successful? ... in their faces the brightness of the Merciful is manifested, and from their hearts the mention of My Hidden and Mighty Name is heard. ... God hath preferred them to all creation, but indeed the people do not know. They move around the Command of God just as the shadow moveth around the sun ... [XIV:12:371] by the movement of these people all things will move, and by their quiescence all things will rest. ... through them the earth was stationed, and the clouds gave out rain, and the table of Knowledge descended from the Heaven of Bounty—were ye of those who understand. These people are the keepers of the Command of God on earth, protecting its beauty against the dust of surmise and suspicion.”¹

In past history, also, we have had a succession of guardians of the Covenant. For instance, Abraham revealed the Covenant of his day; his descendants, Isaac, Jacob and the gracious Joseph guarded the covenant. The Hebrew prophets, Elijah, Amos, Isaiah and the rest came in succession, with the voice of authority, to guard the commands of God. God said to Jeremiah that through him (Jeremiah) was determined the station of the nations. Through Jeremiah He poured the life of the world. He made Jeremiah the spiritual heart of humanity.² Yet his countrymen put Jeremiah in prison and did not recognize his divine station for nearly a hundred years—until his prophecies of the return from the Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem were fulfilled.³ So it is through religious history; the people do not recognize their Guardian, they do not know where the divine voice is speaking, and so they crucify the Prophet whom God sends to save them.

In this radiant day of unity God is sending His Guardians in the family of His Manifestations, in lineal descent, that all may know them and be blessed and protected by them. In this day, as Isaiah prophesied, “Thy teachers” shall not “be hidden any more but thine eyes shall see thy teachers.”⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took a covenant with his disciples in his last *Will and Testament* that all shall follow and obey the guidance of God as it speaks through the Guardians of his Cause,

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: From *Súriy-i-Haykal*, pp. 13–14; *Bahai Scriptures*, p. 212.

² Jeremiah 1:7ff. Also ‘Abdu’l-Faḍl, *Star of West*, X:7, p. 116.

³ See the celebrated prophecy of the return after 70 years, Jeremiah 25:10–11; 29:10.

⁴ Isaiah 30:20. See also Isaiah 30:26; 60:20.

and the Universal Spiritual Assembly of which they shall be the life-long head, for both are “under the unerring guidance of His Holiness the Exalted One”.

So a new firmness in the Covenant becomes manifest since the ascension of the Master. Those who love and follow the dayspring of Divine Guidance as it speaks through the pure and selfless spirit and pen of the Guardian of the Cause revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—they are of those who are successful.

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XV:1, April 1924 [XV:1:1]

Utterances of Bahá’u’lláh

Justice is loved above all. In these days the face of Justice hath become clouded with dust; calamities and afflictions have prevailed, covenants have been violated, and promises broken. The people have become ignorant, unable to distinguish between that which will open their eyes and that which blindeth them; that which leadeth them astray and that which guideth them into the Right Path.

If in these visible days and present world, matters appear from the Realm of Decree contrary to your wishes, be ye not depressed; for Happy and Divine Days shall come and Spiritual World of Holiness shall become manifest, were ye to exchange the Garment of Mortality for the Garment of Immortality and enter the Station of the Paradise of Abhá!

O people, avail yourselves of the Day of God, verily to meet Him is indeed better unto you than that upon which the sun riseth.

The beginning of Wisdom is to acknowledge that which God hath made manifest because through it order hath been firmly established for the preservation of the world. Each one of the Revealed Words is a Strong Fortress for the world. Verily thy Lord maketh to appear in every century that which lie desireth, as a Wisdom on His part. We have ordained unto every land a destiny; unto every hour a fate; unto every Utterance a time; unto every Circumstance a Word! We have committed to the charge of every land the Sun of Knowledge, so that when the time cometh from it will beam a Command on the Part of God, the All-Knowing.

The Light of men is Justice. Adorn the Temple of Dominion with the Embroidered Garment of Justice and Virtue, and its Head with the Diadem of the Celebration of your Lord, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Assist with the Hands of Justice the broken hearted, and crush the great oppressors with the scourge of the Command of your Lord, the Powerful, the Wise.

XV:1, April 1924 [XV:1:9]

The day of God

Supplication revealed by Bahá’u’lláh

Praise be to Thee, O God of Names and Creator of Heaven! Praise be to Thee, for Thou hast made known unto Thy servants Thy Day, wherein the River of Life streamed forth from the finger of Thy Generosity, and the Fountain of Revelation and Unity became manifest by Thy Manifestation, to all who are in Thy earth and heaven.

O God! This is a Day the Light of which Thou hast sanctified above the sun and its effulgence. I testify that this Day is illumined by the Light of Thy Face and by the effulgence of the dawning Lights of Thy Manifestation.

O Thou, my God, and the Beloved of my heart! With the name of this Day Thou hast adorned Thy Tablet, which is known only to Thee. Thou hast called it The Day of God. Nothing is to be seen therein but Thy Supreme Self, and naught is to be remembered save Thy sweetest Name. Wherefore, when He appeared, the foundations of nations trembled, the learned were bewildered and the wise men were confounded, save those who came near unto Thee, took from the Hand of Favour the pure wine of Thy Inspiration, and drank in Thy Name, saying: "Praise be unto Thee, O Desire of the Nations! Praise be to Thee, O Beloved of the hearts of the yearning!"

XV:2, May 1924 [XV:2:37]

Education must include the spiritual ideals of world peace and brotherhood

A compilation from the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

"The duty of educated men, especially university presidents of the nation, is this: To teach in the universities and schools ideas concerning universal peace, so that the student may be so moulded that in after years he may help carry to fruition the most useful and human issue of mankind."

"The schools should be free from all religious and racial prejudices, for these often prevent good results from being obtained. All schools and colleges should have these three foundations.

"First: They should be sincere in the service of training the souls. They should discover the mysteries of nature and extend the circle of art, commerce, etc., so that ignorance and the lack of knowledge will pass away and the lights of science and knowledge shine forth from the horizon of the soul and heart. In all schools and universities, a general rule for training should be made.

"Second: Training in morality is necessary, so that the pupils' good conduct may remain unchanged and so that they may progress in a most befitting manner, become possessed of lofty ideas, lovers of the world of humanity, and so that they will hold fast to the spiritual perfections and to that which does not displease God.

"Third: Service to the world of humanity should be obligatory. Every student should know, with perfect certainty that he is the brother of the people of all religions and nations and that he should be without religious, racial, national, patriotic or political bias, so that he may find the thoughts of universal peace and the love of humankind firmly established in his heart. He should know himself as a servant of human society of all the countries in the world. He should see God as the heavenly father and all the servants as his children, counting all of the nations, parties and sects as one family. The mothers in the homes, the teachers in the schools, the professors in the universities, and the leaders in the lofty gatherings, must cause these thoughts to be penetrative and effective, as the spirit, circulating in the veins and nerves of the children and pupils, so that the world of humanity may be delivered from the calamities of fanaticism, war, battle, hate and obstinacy, and so that the nether world may become the paradise of heaven."

"In this age every face must turn to God! so that spiritual enlightenment will go hand in hand with material education. Material education alone cannot make the world happy.

Spiritual civilization must assist the material. The material civilization is like the lamp, but the spiritual civilization is like the light in the lamp. The lamp without the light is a useless thing.”

XV:2, May 1924 [XV:2:47]

The world of the soul

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

If we search and investigate and travel through the world of the human soul we find it a boundless, measureless and fathomless reality, a reality which is unique, an ocean which is unfathomable and a world which is infinite. Ancient thinkers said there are two worlds: one is the world of human soul and the other the world of nature; both are two unlimited books of God full of knowledge and wisdom and signs of the power of God. They described the philosopher as one whose inner world was a mirror on which was reflected all the images of the outer world; the philosopher became the prototype of all the discovered truth of life.

When we ponder carefully over the soul of man we realize that the effects of the soul conditions are manifest in all the motions and activities of the external man. For example, if the soul is functioning in a vibrant, spiritual, optimistic and happy environment its effect will be instantaneous and most powerful on the physical body. On the other hand, if the soul is in the grip of fear; if it is weak or in a state of melancholy, the body will immediately respond to those vibrations. Fear and imagination have a great effect upon the body of man. For example, if a person is swimming and permits fear to take possession of his soul, he will immediately lose confidence and also control of his movements. If he is walking upon the ridge of a mountain or the top of a high building and fear enters in, he will tremble and fall. A ropewalker illustrates this principle very aptly. Through the reasoning faculty such perfect control is maintained that he walks upon the rope with perfect poise.

Also, the effect of the inner man upon the outer is not limited to the man himself, but has a general effect upon others. If, for instance, someone begins to yawn from fatigue in a group, others will soon follow his example, or if he is full of vivacity and happiness he will electrify [XV:2:48] others around him. These few illustrations point the clear fact that the world of the soul has independent existence; its effect is creative; it reverberates with the vibrations of joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, friendship and estrangement.

Inasmuch as the soul has this inventive and creative power in the kingdom of imagination, how much more universal will be its scope if it is strengthened and buttressed by the spiritual forces of God. Thus if the soul of man is reinforced by the divine powers and energies, not only his own body will become a perfect example of health and radiation and joy, but he will radiate like the sun those rays of happiness to all who come in touch with him.

The Manifestations of God, the prophets of divinity, are those spiritual educators who have initiated a system of spiritual training based upon this law. The benefit humanity will draw from this system will be commensurate with its application in daily life.

One branch of this system of spiritual education deals with the inculcation of ethics in the lives of men. For example, in the soul of man there are certain tendencies or qualities: one is fear, another courage, another rashness. Now extremes in any direction mean disease and the Manifestations of God come to teach us that fear is evil, recklessness is unwise and that courage is the golden mean. Also, we have a trinity of other tendencies; squandering as one pole and avarice the other. One may be so avaricious that, as the Persian poets express it—the palm of his hand is as dry as the surface of [the] Sahara. The spendthrift wastes money, while generosity again is the golden mean. Also justice is the golden mean between tyranny and a lackadaisical acceptance of humiliation or adversity. Contentment and chastity are two other characteristics that have their extremes.

These five qualities are the five golden rules of ethics. These five pathways lead to a happy, contented life as revealed in the sacred books and taught by the Manifestations of God. If we simply read them, kiss the sacred books as a sign of respect, place them on the shelf and forget them, this will do us no good at all. Theories and words may have an effect upon the lives of men, but Bahá'u'lláh tells us that in the last analysis deeds are the criterion of right and wrong. One may write a most inspiring book or give many lectures on these five qualities without any effect whatever, but if he arises and by his deeds manifests the quality of generosity, for example, by dispensing a portion of his fortune for the alleviation of suffering humanity, his action will have a great effect. The Manifestation of God points to us the road and tells us this is the pathway. If we walk in it, we shall reach a certain destination, but the walking must be done by ourselves; nobody will help us.

This fact is illustrated by the example of a man giving a banquet and preparing all kinds of dishes and when invited to eat, the guest replies: "It is too much trouble—eat it for me." We know the condition of such a man. Those who have not heard about this system of spiritual education are not so much responsible for carrying it out in their lives, but those who affiliate with it and go under its banner are those among the rest of the world who should characterize themselves with its qualities and embody its principles in their lives.

During the last seventy years Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, through their lives and teachings, have trained and educated their followers to be ever watchful—not of others but themselves.

Now this moral training of the soul is one of the branches of spiritual education and we can never characterize ourselves with these golden qualities unless we begin at home with the self within us and try to control that self in order that we may be able to convey the same knowledge of triumph and victory to others.

XV:3, June 1924 [XV:3:64]

Progress only through spiritual power

A compilation from the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá [XV:3:65]

It is impossible that 'economic contentment' be realized by the people of the world save through the transforming Power of Faith. For Faith is the solver of every problem. Therefore you must strive to strengthen the foundation of the Religion of God. Through the Power of the Religion of God every difficulty will be disentangled. The Power of the Religion of God will humble the kings and set at naught the crooked motives of those who are in supreme authority. Then endeavour ye that the Power of True Religion which breathes the Spirit of Life into the dead body of the world of humanity may be promulgated. This is the antidote for the poisoned body of the world and a quick healing remedy for the rancorous disease of man.

XV:3, June 1924 [XV:3:67]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

It is evident that the time has come to end war and establish peace. This is an exigency and requirement of the present century.

XV:3, June 1924 [XV:3:73]

The life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Part I

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

The life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is very significant among the lives of the past heavenly educators. If we study the history of the former manifestations of God we realize that the first portion of their lives has been free from anxiety and persecution, while the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from the

day of his birth has been one of vicissitude, trial and painful ordeals.

Moreover, the enemies and foes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá never ceased to plan and scheme to persecute and bring about his exile and banishment, and to annihilate his revelation. And these people had more general power than the enemies of the former prophets.

One of the Divine Allegorical incidents was that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was born in Tīhrán the same night upon which the Báb proclaimed his mission in Shíráz that is, 23 May 1844. Bahá’u’lláh gave the name of his father to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This name was ‘Abbás but he always called him Master—Áqá—even when he was a little child.

The first few years of the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were spent amid the most tragic and dramatic events of the life of Bahá’u’lláh. He was the centre of the movement, every tragic event revolved around him and his home was the rendezvous of all the Bahá’ís. All the news and all that transpired in the Cause was brought to him.

His home was well known as the headquarters of the Movement and often groups of rowdies would throw stones and try to hurt the inmates. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a little child groups of urchins would surround him and try to stone him. Even at the early age of eight or nine years ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had ready witnessed the plotting of the enemies and had seen the friends martyred and guillotined. Up to this age he had seen many headstones of heroes and heroines who had gone to their death with radiant acquiescence.

Most of the time Bahá’u’lláh was absent from home travelling in the interest of the Cause, and visiting the friends in prison. His property was confiscated and both day and night his household was in danger, so there was no opportunity for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to go to school and learn the things which other children have to learn.

Nevertheless such deep and abiding attachment, such tender regard, solicitude and affection existed and was evidenced between ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahá’u’lláh that even in those early days some members felt deeply that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would eventually unfold, develop and explain the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

While Bahá’u’lláh was going about or in prison, at a tender age ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the object of regard and reverence of his family; all looked up to him as the head of the family in spite of his youth.

At the age of nine the great exile began. The government banished Bahá’u’lláh with his family in 1852 to the city of Baghdád. During a long cold part of the journey ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was so thinly clad that his toes were frozen twice and the effect was felt by him all the days of his life. Often when he was tired out during the hours of day or night his feet would itch and ache.

During the twelve years of Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdád and Sulamániyyih of Kurdistán and the cave of the Mount of Sar-Galú¹ where he went into retirement for the purpose of uninterrupted communion with God, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the cause of happiness to his family as well as its hope.

In that period of time when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was between the age of nine and [XV:3:74] twenty he associated with many theologians mystical and philosophical groups. He opened the treasures of his innate knowledge among them, he entered into those deep subjects and elucidated them in such a clear manner that they marvelled at his unlimited fund of information and asked him from what source he had received it. He answered them in these symbolical words: “I received them from my Father.” Therefore, they titled Him—“Eminent Wise Youth.”

The physical general appearance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was very pleasing. His face and form

¹ Sar-Galú is a village 43 km NW of as-Sulaymáníyah, ‘Iráq. Bahá’u’lláh lived here and/or in a nearby mountain cave.

were beautifully proportioned and he was considered a very handsome youth. He radiated a heavenly spiritual power and carried himself with kingly dignity. As he walked along the streets people admired his carriage and physique, he had such strength and power in his bearing. One of the qualities of the character of 'Abdu'l-Bahá even when he was a youth was his great spiritual fortitude. He had innate poise and balance which no vicissitude could destroy; no one had ever seen him angry and he was never moved or swerved by any outside influence. His physical endurance astonished everyone. He seemed like a great ocean without a ripple on its surface.

Another characteristic of 'Abdu'l-Bahá worthy of emulation was His extreme generosity. In this loving kindness he gave freely of everything he had. It is related that in the home of Bahá'u'lláh there was a beautiful rug upon which he used to sit. One day a poor Arab brought a load of wood to the house. He saw the rug and was very much attracted by its beauty. He handled it caressingly and exclaimed: "Oh, how wonderful it must be to have such a splendid rug to sit upon!" 'Abdu'l-Bahá heard him and said: "If you like the rug, take it." The man would not believe it was really a gift, but for fear he would lose it, he put it over his shoulder and began to run, looking back every few minutes to see if anyone was coming to take it away from him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Go on, no one is going to take it away from you." 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a wonderful sense of humour.

When he was but a child he was taken to the mountains to see his father's sheep. There were thousands of them; the shepherds gave him a feast. At the end of the day the chief shepherd came to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and told him he must make a present to the shepherds. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "I have nothing."—the man said, "But you must give something."—So 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "What about the sheep?"—and he gave them all the sheep. When Bahá'u'lláh heard this he laughed and said, "We will have to protect 'Abdu'l-Bahá from himself someday he will give himself away."

Another characteristic of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was his sociability, courtesy and politeness shown to all degrees of society. He associated with the highest officials, and with people of all ranks, giving them his divine knowledge and thereby raising them to a higher level of comprehension. Likewise he went among the most lowly in the same attitude.

In the East people spend years and years of their time trying to perfect themselves in penmanship. It is considered an art of the highest order and a man will spend twenty to fifty years teaching people this calling. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's penmanship was so beautiful and so perfectly in accordance with all the sacred writings of the East that samples of his work were used to copy from. His knowledge of the Arabian and Persian writing was so great that it seemed a miracle to the people though he never studied in his life.

His range of vision was miraculous, and when talking to Arabs they felt the utmost reverence for him. With philosophers and learned men he carried on conversation which astonished them. Without previous study on any of these subjects he could understand and converse and raise the thought for them to [XV:3:75] a much higher level than they themselves were able to reach.

When Bahá'u'lláh was sent forth to his second exile with his family and followers for four months and had to travel through the most inhospitable desert and villages in Mesopotamia, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was constantly protecting and helping him.

During the exile of Bahá'u'lláh and his family for four months in Constantinople and five years in Adrianople, the spiritual attraction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in his association with many important people was manifested more and more, and won them to him in such a manner that they tried to remove the difficulty of Bahá'u'lláh and help him. For example, the Turkish Governor of Adrianople became so intensely interested that he spent days and nights listening

to his conversations. When the order came for the next exile he was unable to give it in person as he was too much affected by sorrow at parting and was obliged to send the summons by letter.

When Bahá'u'lláh and a group of his followers were exiled to 'Akká and were imprisoned in the barracks, as a result of the terrible climate of the city and the loss of nourishing food, the very unhealthy water and abominable conditions of the prison, they were all sick, and some of his followers were relieved by death. Through these dire conditions 'Abdu'l-Bahá was untouched by disease and continually ministered to the needs of the afflicted ones, giving them necessary remedies and cooking their food with his own hands. Thus through his protecting ministrations they all recovered.

After these two years of the terrible imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh in which no one of his followers was permitted to enter that city to visit him, and the nine years following when Bahá'u'lláh was confined to one little house in 'Akká, through the instrumentality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his association with eminent people Bahá'u'lláh was finally, at the end of eleven long years of imprisonment and hardship, permitted to leave the dreadful city of 'Akká and go to a large comfortable house called the Mansion of Bahjí which had beautiful gardens that were brought into existence by the efforts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In this beautiful place Bahá'u'lláh spent the rest of his days, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained in 'Akká with his family, meeting everyone, attending to the solution of problems, interviewing statesmen, governors, lawyers, etc., in regard to different cases. To him all people came for the solution of their difficulties.

'Abdu'l-Bahá protected the Cause from all objections and opposition. Thus Bahá'u'lláh was left free and unhampered to prepare his message for the world and his followers were now able to visit him. One day of each week of his extremely busy life 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to visit Bahá'u'lláh at Bahjí. On these occasions he always walked, thereby showing his attitude of humility towards his father. But after Bahá'u'lláh told him that he must ride, he obeyed him. He would leave the city of 'Akká riding, but when the Mansion of Bahjí came into view he would dismount and walk. On the other hand, upon the recognized days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visits to Bahjí, Bahá'u'lláh would watch for his coming from a second story window, and as soon as he saw him approaching he would call to his household saying, "The Master is coming, go and meet him!" No sooner would father and son meet than one would witness the utmost humility of the son and utmost love and devotion of the father, making the most dramatic picture conceivable. At these times no one was permitted to enter during their conversation, not even the family. No one could understand this mystery between son and father. It makes one recall the words of the Bible where it is declared, "The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father." There has never been in the world a relationship so sweet and perfect, with so much [XV:3:76] trust and confidence on both sides. In every way 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the prototype of Bahá'u'lláh. They were the same height, their voices were alike, and their manner of discerning.

These were enough to make clear that the glory of God was shining in him, and would continue to shine in him after the ascension of his father. Yet Bahá'u'lláh wrote in almost all of his writings, clearly as well as symbolically, of his station. In the "Tablet of Beirut" he calls him the "Mystery of God". Particularly, in the most Holy Book he said emphatically that the people must turn their faces towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá who was the Branch of the everlasting tree. He also declared that 'Abdu'l-Bahá held the keys that would open the Holy Tablets and Holy Books. Finally, he proclaimed the station of the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the Tablet of the Covenant, which he sealed and gave 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In nine days after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, in 1892, the seal was broken by 'Abdu'l-Bahá amid the group of Bahá'í friends and it was read by them.

Thus 'Abdu'l-Bahá ascended the throne of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and the glory of his

father began to shine through him, to guide, like a shepherd the children of men to the oneness of God and the brotherhood of man.

Verily, it seemed that Bahá'u'lláh had not departed but his sovereignty was still living in the garment of servitude. The pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá began to move for all the world, spreading the breath of life in the utmost humility and kindness as did the pen of Bahá'u'lláh in the form of lordship and command.

Now at this time 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with his great executive power, began to establish the Cause of God in the hearts of humanity. He sent more teachers and workers to different parts of the globe, and a new life was manifested among the friends. Thousands of epistles, perfect jewels of wisdom and knowledge concerning the affairs of life and about religion and divine philosophy, were revealed by him to the world.

All these activities increased the envy of the enemies of the Cause. They had thought that at the passing of Bahá'u'lláh everything would come to an end. Now, however, witnessing the renewed power and strength in 'Abdu'l-Bahá they increased in activity and numbers, and a new group whose jealousy had lain dormant in Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime now arose against 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Those who merely met him visiting the prisons, entertaining the governor, officials and other guests, and who saw the increasing number of pilgrims from different countries, would hardly suspect that enemies of the Cause existed; for though their persecution continued day after day for years. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tried to lead his enemies and those envious of him with the utmost kindness into the path of unity and service. But their envy was too great, and they paid no heed to his advice, opposing him more and more, till at last 'Abdu'l-Bahá left 'Akká and his family and went alone to Tiberius and to Elijah's cave in Mount Carmel, there to supplicate and commune with God.

Humanity always rejects its educators, choosing to follow personal desires, even distorting religious teaching into an excuse for disobedience, and those who are regarded as foremost in religious matters are dominated by their pride to deny a Saviour. Nearness to God and His Manifestation is a spiritual union, not a physical relationship. A spiritual soul, however remotely situated from a manifestation, can nevertheless be more closely attached to that Manifestation than anyone related only by ties of blood. The foremost followers of a religious teaching are like mirrors before a sun, but as their light is reflected and not self-created, should they turn from the sun their light will cease to shine. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh said, a spiritual educator is a divine balance, and the people of the world are weighed by him. [XV:3:77]

The efforts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's enemies were known only to those few who were intimately close to him.

In spite of the fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá refrained for the time being from teaching the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh on account of official prejudice against it, the people through his counsel and guidance began to recognize his great station. 'Abdu'l-Bahá worked with such ease, assurance and poise that he gave confidence to all who visited him. The doors of his house were never closed; they remained open from sunrise to sunset. All manner of people came to him to adjust their problems. Men and women poured constantly in and out of the house, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá was always ready to uplift and counsel the downtrodden.

Different religions leaders and government officials came to him to present their questions. Even the Arab Bedouins and their shaykhs had the greatest devotion and respect for him, journeying great distances to see him. They regarded him as a holy patriarch and received from him gifts, both spiritual and material. Such was his influence that his simple word was willingly obeyed by them when often governmental authority failed.

The fame of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's generosity and love became such a protection that frequently visitors travelling through the desert to him were not only free from Bedouin attacks, but

were also accorded safe conduct.

His simplicity of life forbade his personal use of the costly gifts pressed upon him by his friends in many countries, and he preferred to pass on these offerings to people in need.

A wonderful sight at 'Akká was to be seen every Friday morning before the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. From early morning, the square would be crowded with the poor, the aged, and cripples, men, women and children. 'Abdu'l-Bahá would come out with some of his friends, and the people would crowd round him, yet reverently, like children round a father. He would move from one to another, speaking kindly advice and comfort and putting money into their hands. He was especially kind to widows and their children.

It was indeed a miracle that a prisoner, persecuted and faced with opposed from so many powerful authorities, could thus gain such influence over all kinds of people with spiritual weapons only. As long as 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived the people felt perfect confidence in the future no matter what happened. They felt he was a divine father to whom they could go at all times, a master to whom they could turn at any moment. He continually ministered to their sufferings, often choosing to go on his errands of love at night.

But all the time his enemies had been watching their opportunity to vent their jealousy. They secretly sent many false reports to the Government in Constantinople, and circulated forged letters purporting to have been issued by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Each time the governor or other officials of the prison city were changed, they would bribe them to unite with them in their opposition to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. However, although disheartened by these continuous intrigues, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's power rose supreme above such hatred and won over those officials whom his enemies had persuaded to oppose him.

During this time of persecution, surrounded by spies and enemies, 'Abdu'l-Bahá accomplished the difficult task of having the remains of the Báb brought from Persia to Haifa. He had constructed the shrine on Mount Carmel which was to be the resting place of the body of the Báb. This edifice was made the subject of a new attack. With the co-operation of a few of the prison officials 'Abdu'l-Bahá's opponents sent false information to the Government that he was building a fortress on Mount Carmel and had so much influence with surrounding and foreign powers that the Turkish Government would not be able to withstand his power. This false re- [XV:3:78] port caused the Sultán such alarm that he ordered 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be either drowned or exiled to the heart of the African desert.

His friends, anxious for his safety, begged him to leave 'Akká; but saying that it was his duty to stay, he sent them away to different places in Egypt, and disregarding all threats, remained with certain members of his family in 'Akká.

When the Governmental Investigation Committee arrived in 'Akká the enemies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá associated with them to induce them to make a false report. Accordingly, without visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá or finding out his version, information was sent that the rumours were true. While these plots were progressing and the atmosphere was tingling with suspicion, everyone was amazed to see that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was planting trees and building a house as though nothing would happen.

When the judge sent for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to present himself in court the sorrow of the friends was unbearable. They feared he might be taken away immediately and they would never see him again. However, 'Abdu'l-Bahá reassured them, saying that his greatest joy and happiness would be to be hanged there in Haifa. Bahá'u'lláh had a wonderful felt cap or headdress which was called a crown and this had been treasured by 'Abdu'l-Bahá after the ascension of the Blessed Perfection. Several times the friends had suggested that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should wear this but he always replied, "There would be but one occasion to wear it—if I were to be crucified." At this time he asked the family to have the headdress ready.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered the court he found the charges and false testimony prearranged. After admonishing his accusers for persecuting the Cause of Truth as had always been done in former ages he said, “If you desire to condemn me, I am ready and willing to sacrifice my life and will sign any indictment you prepare, for it will bring me great happiness to be martyred as were the promulgators of Truth before me.”

Just at this darkest hour, when events were most ominous for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Cause, the whole situation changed with a miraculous suddenness. The revolution of 1908, by the Young Turk Party, brought entire freedom to him who had been the world’s Greatest Prisoner.

XV:3, June 1924 [XV:3:81]

Impressions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Shahnáz Waite

When I first saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá I was alone and I came face to face with him all unexpectedly. He stood not over four feet from me. It was in the upper court of his prison home in ‘Akká, with the blue sky overhead and the sun light shining down brightly upon him, the hour being but a little past “high noon”. I might have thought him a member of his family, but every atom of my being, my heart and soul cried out—“This is He.” The face of my dreams of him stood before me with that heavenly smile of welcome. The Light of Infinite Love was radiating from his countenance. Majestic, and yet sublimely tender, he was looking right into my eyes. I gave a start as if I had suddenly been plunged into an ocean of Light, then stood transfixed. It seemed as if I had come upon him unawares and saw the Glory of the Lord shining forth around him; and I know I must have felt as did Mary Magdalene when Christ revealed Himself to her in her vision after the crucifixion “The Risen Lord”. He was dressed all in white. His hair fell in soft waves about his shoulders and his head was crowned with a white turban bound around with a white cloth. His step was firm and kingly. I walked toward him and as I stood and looked up into those marvellous eyes, I knew that every thought, every act of my life was known to him. Yet knowing this, I could fearlessly, unwaveringly meet his gaze, realizing all my sins and weaknesses, yet knowing he understood me as I could never understand myself and that he was indeed Infinite Love Incarnate. Later he came to greet us in Dr Moody’s room and I was fully confirmed—this was truly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but a very different one I felt from the one I had first seen. As he firmly grasped my hand with that welcoming pressure that comes deep from the heart, a hand shake that warms you through and through, I saw the divinely human man, the personification of my highest ideals of an earthly father.

In height, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in reality but medium, yet he held himself so superbly, with such commanding dignity, and carried his head so high, and with such an air of majesty, that he ever gave the impression of great height. His voice was *wonderful*, full and vibrant; each word was uttered with marked distinctness and with that tonal quality, which leaves a faint echo, as it were, or wave vibration such as comes from a beautifully toned bell. All through the day it rang out, first in one place, then another; for with astonishing rapidity ‘Abdu’l-Bahá seemed to be everywhere—now in the garden, now in the room close beside the entrance, now in a guest’s room,—or you could hear him calling someone in the “family section” of the “prison home”. Always when I heard his voice, I felt its vibrations most deeply. Like his face, his voice expressed every emotion, from tones that are stern and emphatic to those as tender and loving as a cooing dove’s.

His eyes defied description. I only know that to me they seemed grey with a circle of white around the iris which at times became luminous. Sometimes in the light I caught a shade of blue, and again by lamplight they seemed brown; ever changing were they and wonderful. Like his face and his voice, they too expressed every emotion felt by him.

I was deeply impressed by His naturalness, his lack of conventionality and set form, and his refreshing simplicity. Divinely simple and simply Divine was he.

XV:4, July 1924 [XV:4:93]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“If tremendous progress in a short time be desired by a people in any social reform, any undertaking for the good of humanity, they must lay hold of the Spiritual Potency. Then will their advancement appear phenomenal, their success magical. This spiritual potency will enable the worker to keep before the eye of the mind the picture of the divine civilization that kingdom for the coming of which we have been praying for nigh two thousand years.”

XV:4, July 1924 [XV:4:107]

The golden rule

“All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them; for this is the law of the prophets.”

The Golden Rule may be well said to have existed always and to be a part of all religions. It is practically certain that no land which had at any time laid claim to a more or less true form of civilization has omitted some phrasing of this basic ethical teaching from its moral or civil philosophy.

In the oldest book in the world, the instructions of Ptah Hotep in Egypt five thousand five hundred years ago, 3,550 years before Christ, is found this instruction: “If thou be among people make for thyself love the beginning and end of the heart.” Sixteen hundred years before the birth of Jesus, there ran an Egyptian “vile” to the dead: “He sought for others the good he desired for himself. Let him pass on.” Again before Christ—3,400 years—when the Hindu Kingdoms were being established along the Ganges, it was written: “The true rule of business is to guard and do by the things of others as they do by their own.”

Twenty-five hundred years ago, 600 years before Christ and 150 before Plato, Laotze wrote in China: “Re-quite injury with kindness.” “To the not good I would be good in order to make them good.” Confucius advised: “What you would not wish done to yourself, do not unto others.”

The books and scrolls of the Hebraic law taught this truth. In a time-stained parchment believed to have been first inscribed some 2,500 years ago, is to be read: “Whatsoever you do not wish your neighbour to do to you, do not that to him.” And to strengthen this, the teachers of 600 BCE added immediately: “This is the whole Law. The rest is mere exposition of it.” And in the Law of Moses it is written: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

The Greeks in 1070 BCE came yet nearer the wording of Jesus with: “Do not that to thy neighbour which thee would take ill from him.”

At the first Buddhist Council held at Rajagriha in 477 BCE the scribes almost duplicated the advice of Egypt’s priests, writing: “One should seek for others the happiness one desires for oneself.”

When Alexander of Macedon marched into Persia in 334 BCE he found there before him the most usual of all these closely paralleled formulae: “Do as you would be done by”—ran the Zoroastrian precept.

A century and a half before Christ the Law of Rome once more repeated the theme: “The law imprinted on the hearts of all men is to love the members of society as themselves.”

And Christ Himself declared that the Golden Rule “is the law and the prophets.”

Again Muḥammad gave yet another expression to it, for the Qur’án instructs: “Let none of you treat his brother in a way he himself would dislike to be treated.”

Finally in this day is added still another instruction in the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh—“*O son of man! If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee, and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou chooseth for thyself.*”¹

XV:4, July 1924 [XV:4:108]

The life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Part II

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

When the successful efforts of the young reformers of Turkey abolished the unjust prisons of a despotic monarch, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went forth from the dark stronghold of ‘Akká into the light and freedom of Haifa and Mount Carmel. Here for eleven months after the stifling atmosphere of ‘Akká which had seriously affected his health, he breathed the pure air of the Mountain of God and passed his time in spreading the divine teachings. He was like a bird which had become free from the cage; and one day, without informing any one, he took ship and arrived at Port Said in Egypt, which was his first journey of freedom after the long years of exile and imprisonment.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá possessed a great love for the beauty of nature, which is a mirror of the beauty of God, and he was extremely happy in the pure atmosphere of Egypt with its tropical trees and flowers. This was indeed a period of rejoicing when eager Bahá’ís from different nations, of every race and colour, gathered round him with love and unity, hearing his deep teaching and happy with his happiness.

Although at the beginning of his stay in Egypt through false traditions the religious prejudice of the people was aroused against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and some of the newspapers printed incendiary articles against the Cause, before very long many theological groups, editors, and other prominent people, in their visits to him, became satisfied from the river of his knowledge and wisdom. They were attracted by the great power of his love; and realizing the necessity of the Bahá’í teachings in this miraculous age, opened their lips in praise and thanks to him.

During the morning hours at this time the news-vendors would bring the papers containing incendiary articles to the place where many Bahá’í visitors were residing, and some of the friends desired to make reply to them. On one occasion the friends brought the papers to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, expressing this wish. However, he said: “These are the heralds of the Kingdom. God is using them to inform the people of our arrival. Let them write anything they like. They will come to investigate, realize the truth and themselves make answer.” And after a few days this came to pass.

During those eleven months the name of the Bahá’í Cause and the greatness of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá became more and more apparent and many souls were satisfied through drinking the pure teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. Although his journey to Egypt caused many of the Persian believers to beseech him to visit Persia since many thousands of them had been unable to meet him while at ‘Akká, the religious prejudice of that land prevented him. His sojourn in Egypt also made his occidental friends eager to have him in their free country where his teachings might be heard without restraint. As their visits to ‘Akká had been accomplished through many difficulties his friends of Europe and America wrote ‘Abdu’l-Bahá many imploring letters urging his presence in their midst and these urgent appeals finally brought about the journey

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 29–30.

of this majestic spiritual teacher to the land of freedom in the west.

The year 1911 marked the journey of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the western world. After spending some months in Europe, he returned to Egypt. The following year, in 1912, his longest and last journey began. He spread his wings and soared to the United States and Canada [XV:4:109] and later to England, Germany, Hungary, and France.

During this year of travel some of the friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were anxious for him to take passage on the steamship "Titanic", but he declined and afterward his wisdom became apparent when this great vessel sank in the depths of the sea.

His western journey consumed almost two years during which time he spoke in many different churches, synagogues, universities and various societies, spreading the teachings of this Cause—the principles of the oneness of the world of humanity and the organization of the world under the banner of universal justice and love. He declared that the world of humanity is entering a new cycle and the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh is its spirit and its light. His effective call was reflected in many magazines and newspapers of Europe and America and resounded in the ears of the whole world, especially throughout the west. The scholars and thinkers who visited him were attracted to his unique personality and many of them said they had been longing to meet and know such a being—a mirror of the teachings of all the prophets, picturing the real life of the spirit.

Undoubtedly the journey of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the West was in reality a journey to all the world, a unique historical journey, and we shall see in due time that the thought of the entire world was transformed. 'Abdu'l-Bahá planted in the atmosphere the seed of spiritual understanding and of reconciliation among the races and nations, the result of which will accomplish the unity of the world. In the Bahá'í world this journey created an irresistible motion which will increase age after age.

Also in his journey to Europe and America the purpose of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was to warn the people of the coming of the world war and he explained the prophecies of Bahá'u'lláh revealed forty years before referring thereto. In his various lectures he declared that a great war was impending and the rulers of the nations, the men of power and authority, were under great responsibility. He called them to extinguish the fire of this on-rushing conflagration through the means of an International Court of World Parliament. Although many could not believe at that time the seriousness of his warning he assured them of the imminent danger. After his return to the East from this journey, he said in many large groups: "We crossed oceans and seas and knocked at the door of Europe and America warning them of the great calamity, but they were in such deep slumber they could not be awakened."

In 1913 he returned to Egypt and to Haifa where many oriental Bahá'ís of different religions and nations who were most eager to visit him welcomed him and gathered in his presence like moths around the candle of love. Afterward, when the great war began and the door to Palestine was closed, when famine and difficulty arose, the heads of many families being killed and others cast into political prisons among the Jews, Muslims and Christians in these tragic conditions the home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá became the door of hope for all the afflicted people. He protected them and helped them like a kind father and the people were filled with hope and happiness because he was living in their midst.

Although after his return from the West to Palestine some of the jealous objectors opened a new door of opposition and sought to cause some of the Turkish generals to oppose 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the general situation had become different; and especially after the war the tree of the freedom of religious thought, which is one of the great principles of Bahá'u'lláh, had spread its shadow in that land. The opposition was without effect and the light of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was reflected without veils to the entire world.

When Bahá'u'lláh departed this life in 1892 the Cause had not been spread [XV:4:110] in the west but from the time Bahá'u'lláh left this world to the year 1903 when the Constitution was declared in Turkey 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed through the most dramatic period of his life, due to the opposition of his enemies, and during this same time, through his divine power, he promulgated the Cause in Europe and America. The boundaries of the movement were extended, the number of the believers was increased and the influence of the Cause was felt more and more. Thinkers in every country began to investigate the movement so that during those sixteen years the history of the Cause is replete with many dramatic events.

The vision, revelation and might of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were so divine that long before the Cause was established in western countries he had issued a request to the friends in Persia teach children English, and amidst all the trials and vicissitudes of 'Akká and Haifa he established a school wherein the younger Bahá'í generation might have contact with occidental education, knowing well that the time would come when they would have to act as interpreters or teachers in promulgating the Cause.

The last years of the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were passed in Haifa where, like a perfect gardener, he protected and trained the garden of the Bahá'í Cause, until the 28 November 1922, when he ascended from the sunset of his home to the highest world. This was indeed the midnight of grief and sorrow for his family and the Bahá'ís of Haifa and 'Akká as well as the surrounding region. No one was able to sleep; the grief of even the little children was uncontrollable. The sounds of weeping and lamentation resounded around the great home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and many other homes throughout the whole night until morning.

When the news of this grievous calumny reached the outside world through cable the body of the Bahá'í Cause in all the globe was shaken and its blood congealed. It was realized that not only the great Trainer of souls had passed, but the kind Father of the entire world. The wonder of this most great bereavement was the fact that so many outside the Cause joined with the Bahá'ís in their sorrow. The following day when the blessed remains were conveyed to the top of Mount Carmel to be entombed in the resting place of the Báb, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had prepared for himself also, from the Governor of Palestine and other dignitaries, leaders of various religions, poets and distinguished men to the poorest widow and orphan of Haifa—all joined in lamentation for the loss of this heavenly bounty. The entire population of the city joined in the long procession wending its way up the slope of Mount Carmel.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was seventy-seven years old at the time of his ascension and during his varied life of exile and imprisonment had known unthinkable suffering and hardship. Through despotic power, through the prejudice and jealousy of religious ignorance, he had contended with unimaginable opposition from every side, both to himself and his teaching. In reality, the power of the Spirit protected his body so that all his years were passed in the promotion and administration of this Cause. Not for one moment was his thought free from his great purpose and not a single moment of his life was lost. Such a great work of brain could not be sustained except by such a powerful spirit. Let us clearly realize this point; if the immense volume of his personal and general Tablets, which were spread throughout the East and the West, were divided among the hours of his life we should see how great was his capacity. The work accomplished was of far greater magnitude than his years signify. The spiritual duties which he had performed and his sacrifices for the sake of his teachings were beyond imagination. In the last hours of his life he was like one having fully accomplished his task and about to take a journey. [XV:4:111]

Therefore almost suddenly, with but slight illness, he ascended from this world to the world of immortality. He called himself "'Abdu'l-Bahá" and in his life he was *'Abdu'l-Bahá* because all his thought and speech was of Bahá'u'lláh in explaining and spreading his blessed teaching. One could see in him only the embodiment of the Bahá'í Teaching. In reality, it was

a divine necessity that Bahá'u'lláh should have such a Servant and that this great being should sacrifice himself for such a Glorious Light, to be an example for all the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá accomplished his spiritual work and spread completely the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, even his objectors and jealous adversaries gradually coming to accept and obey him, through the following great powers:

First, the power of his *pen*, whose comprehensive and effective eloquence and sweetness were such that no one could resist. Each one of the friends to whom a Tablet was addressed realized that it was written to him alone and was like a book of counsel for his especial life.

Second, the power of *divination* by which 'Abdu'l-Bahá knew each soul better than the soul knew himself. Also in reading letters he possessed this power, and he said "My heavenly Father gave to me a power by which I may know from the written word the spirit of every soul."

Third, the power of *love* and *forgiveness* which was so great in 'Abdu'l-Bahá that when his enemies saw the practical evidences of his love they thought he could not know their opposition. It was often declared that he loved his enemies more than his friends and on one occasion when one of the friends was telling him about someone whom he was helping very much who was his enemy even to the extent of seeking his life, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "I know him very well but he is sincere. I love a sincere man even my enemy. His opposition is from ignorance and after a while he will realize and repent." On another occasion he said to one of his visitors: "You come to Haifa where the atmosphere is pure. This is the fountainhead of the river and the water is pure. Here there is nothing but love and purity. God created me for love to all his children without exception, even my enemies."

Fourth, his *generosity* that was so great as to suggest an absence of the sense of worldly value. The precious gifts brought him from different parts of the world for his own personal use would later be found in the possession of others. Every one received from the hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá some gift, while at the same time his family lived in the utmost simplicity.

Fifth, his *fearlessness*. At a time when he was most strongly opposed by government and populace he would walk and speak among the people with such power as though an army were stationed behind him. His confidence in his spiritual connection with God, his severance and spirit of sacrifice were above the power of imagination.

Sixth, his *wisdom* and *administrative capacity* that suggested always the ability to administer the affairs of the whole world. He gave to each soul high or low, rich or poor, in the east or in the west, whatever was in accordance with the spiritual necessity. His power was manifested to each soul according to the degree of capacity.

Seventh, his *spiritual knowledge* through which 'Abdu'l-Bahá possessed the power to open all the sacred books and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Eighth, his *power of explanation and teaching* the Cause in such a logical, scientific and reasonable way as to reflect completely the spirit of this age.

Ninth, the *invisible confirmation* that was with him every moment of his life like the Shadow of God behind him. If every detail of his life could be seen with the telescope of deep intelligence it would reveal what a great, invisible Power and Will assisted him constantly.

XV:5, August 1924 [XV:5:129]

Music
its material and spiritual significance
Compiled by Shahnáz Waite

“We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion.”¹

Truly it is said, “Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.” Let me hear the music and songs of a nation and I will tell you the nature and characteristics of its people. Andrew Fletcher once said, “Give me the making of the songs of a nation and I care not who makes its laws.” Another has written, “Music is allied to the highest sentiments of man’s moral nature love of God, love of country, love of home and love of friends. Woe to that nation in which these sentiments are allowed to decay.”

Ever ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is calling us to love and unity, to divine harmony, which is the true Song of Life. Let me quote from Mr MacNutt’s talk on this subject: “Throughout all of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words there was shining one fixed eternal principle. As a great composer constructs a composition in a certain key—the key of F for instance—commencing his symphony in this key, then enlarging and opening his phrases and developing his subject into other keys, but always coming back to the primal key and finishing his melody in it, showing the consistency, the roundness and wholeness of his conception, so ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed to us the Spiritual Symphony of true Religion, setting forth all his teachings in the eternal living key of Love; enlarging and developing His theme into different subjects, disclosing exquisite blendings, but always coming back to the primal theme, back to the great Spiritual Motive of the Symphony, the Love of God, the motive which controls the universe, the motive around which the universe is constructed, the great Principle of Love.”

In the final analysis of all things, physically mentally and spiritually, we are brought face to face with the great truth that Life is Love, and Love is Life, and its audible Voice is **Music**.

“Music is one of the important arts. It has great effect upon human spirit. Musical melodies are a certain something which prove to be accidental upon etheric vibrations, for voice is nothing but the expression of vibrations, which reaching the tympanum, effect the nerves of hearing. Musical melodies are, therefore, those peculiar effects produced by, or from, vibration. However, they have the keenest effect upon the spirit. In sooth, although music is a material affair, yet its tremendous effect is spiritual, and its greatest attachment is to the realm of the spirit. If a person desires to deliver a discourse, it will prove more effectual after musical melodies. The ancient Greeks, as well as Persian philosophers, were in the habit of delivering their discourses in the following manner: first, playing a few musical melodies, and when their audience attained a certain receptivity thereby they would leave their instruments at once and begin their discourse. Among the most renowned musicians of Persia was one named Barbod,² who, whenever a great question had been pleaded for at the court of the King, and the Ministry had failed to persuade the King, they would at once refer the matter to Barbod, whereupon he would go with [XV:5:130] his instrument to the court and play the most appropriate and touching music, the end being at once attained because the king was immediately affected by the touching musical melodies, certain feelings of generosity would swell up in his heart, and he would give way. You may try this: if you have a great desire and wish to attain your end, try to do so on a large audience after a great solo has been rendered, but it must be on an audience on which music is effective, for there are some people who are like stones, and music cannot affect stones.”³

“Music is an important means to the education and development of humanity, but the only

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 38.

² Barbad or Bárbad, late 6th–early 7th century CE Persian poet-musician, lutenist, music theorist and composer of Sasanian music.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” *Lights of Guidance*, No. 1370, p. 413–4.

true way is through the Teachings of God. Music is like this glass which is perfectly pure and polished. It is precisely like this pure chalice before us, and the Teachings of God, the utterances of God are like the water. When the glass or chalice is absolutely pure and clear and the water is perfectly fresh and limpid, then it will confer Life; wherefore the Teachings of God, whether they be in the form of anthems or communes or prayers, when they are melodiously sang, are most impressive.”

“It was for this reason that His Holiness David sang the psalms in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem with sweet melodies. In this Cause the art of music is of paramount importance. Bahá’u’lláh, when He first came to the barracks (‘Akká) repeated this statement ‘if among the immediate followers there had been those who could have played some musical instrument, i.e. flute or harp, or could have sung, it would have charmed every one.’ In short, musical melody forms an important role in the associations, or outward and inward characteristics, or qualities of man, for it is the inspirer or motive power of both the material and spiritual susceptibilities. What a motive power it is in all feelings of love! When man is attached to the Love of God, Music has a great effect upon him.”¹

In the notes of Mrs Mary L. Lucas, a soprano soloist, taken while on her visit to the Holy Land, she records her instructions from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in her book, *A Brief Account of My Visit to Acca*, from which the following is quoted:

“There was an utter absence of any desire or effort to impress one with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s greatness, which is majestic in its simplicity. When we consider that he has never been enrolled in any school, has always been an exile and a prisoner, has had no access to books, that in spite of all this, his knowledge is unbounded, truly we must marvel! An illustration of this is found in His answer to the musical question I put to Him. I have all my life been interested in music, have studied in America and Europe, and when I asked the Master some special questions in regard to this subject, I was amazed in one sense at His familiarity with it.

“He has never heard any music such as we are accustomed to, having been a prisoner all his life, and yet his knowledge far exceeds that of people who have had great advantages. This fact net only applies to music, but to all things.

“This was my question: ‘I used to be very critical of people; would judge them; if they did not meet with my approval I would dislike them, but when I heard beautiful music all these feelings were forgotten, and the most intense love for these people, for animals, for the whole world, filled my heart and being.’

“I asked for an explanation of this, and I give you the answer. The Master spoke one whole luncheon and dinner consecutively on this point, and has given us but a crumb of His great wisdom:

[Refer to *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II (Music), No. 1422, p. 78ff.] [XV:5:131]

...

“This wonderful age has rent asunder the veils of superstition and has condemned the prejudice of the people of the East.

“Among some of the nations of the Orient, music and harmony was not approved of, but the Manifested Light, Bahá’u’lláh, in this glorious period has revealed in Holy Tablets that singing and music are the spiritual food of the hearts and souls. In this dispensation, music is one of the arts that is highly approved and is considered to be the cause of the exaltation

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Tablet to Edward B. Kinney.

of sad and desponding hearts.”¹

“Music is most important. Music is the heart’s own language. Its vibrations uplift the spirit; it is very beautiful and a great art.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then looked away off out of the window, His face became illumined, and He said softly in English, “*Music! Music!*” As if the words brought forth divine melodies to His ears, as if He were listening to the ‘Choir Invisible’.

“Let us listen to a symphony which will confer life on man; then we can obtain universal results; then we shall receive a new spirit; then we shall become illumined. Let us investigate a song which is above all songs; one which will develop the spirit and produce harmony and exhilaration, unfolding the inner potentialities of life.”²

XV:5, August 1924 [XV:5:132]

Impressions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Hooper Harris

You write me that many of the friends are anxious to know my impressions of ‘Akká and of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. How shall I write so as not to feed the fires of superstition on the one hand, or fail to do justice to the greatness of the subject on the other? There are times when we find the symbols we call words entirely inadequate and when we know that, in spite of all effort to avoid it, we shall be misinterpreted and misunderstood. There are some who, if we allow the heart to express itself freely, will accuse us of emotionalism and over-credulity; and there are others who, if we restrain the heart and write of facts *as* facts, setting them forth in their physical aspect only, will accuse us of lack of spiritual comprehension. However, acknowledging responsibility to God alone, I shall endeavour to convey to all interested something of the impressions I received on my visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at ‘Akká.

I would to God that all the people of the world could have seen and known ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as I saw and knew him! Then, indeed, would war, strife and conflict cease, the fires of hell and hatred cease to burn, and peace and goodwill reign on earth.

However, if we write of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a personality, as a man, we must describe him as the simplest and most humble and most natural man in all the world. He indulged in no poses, made no pretensions, asserted no superiority, claimed no special privileges, and in no way whatever sought to impress one with his dignity and importance. He ate with you, walked with you, talked with you, asked about your health, discussed the simplest matters with you and answered your most trivial questions. In every sense of the word, he was natural; and in every sense of the word, simple. The physical eye observed no halo, saw no sign of supernatural power, detected nothing in fact that might not be noticed in any really good, and naturally dignified man. In a word ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appeared to us so simple and so natural that we wondered what it was that some were able to see in him, who have set in circulation stories that have appealed powerfully to the imaginations of many and which may easily in time pass into records of signs, wonders and miracles. We found it difficult at first to realize that this simple, dignified, kindly and lovable man was the centre of a spiritual power, of a knowledge and inspiration that was recreating the world, and was the object of a love and devotion that no man in the history of the world except Bahá’u’lláh, his father, ever received in his life time.

And this love and devotion was not confined to his followers, but was seen in those who knew nothing of the religion of which he was the centre. We saw high Turkish officials,

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 378.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 77.

Turkish women of high rank, and people of all classes and conditions come to consult him on their most important matters, to seek consolation and advice from him in their domestic troubles, and to ask for his prayers. Twice a week we saw the poor gathered around him to receive gifts at his hands, their only benefactor, their only real protector, in this prison city of squalor and wretchedness; we plainly saw, even with the physical eye, that there was something in this simple, unpretentious man which caused all around him to lean upon him in all things, and to regard him with an unusual love and devotion. What was it in this man that conquered all who met him? This man to whom all about him [XV:5:133] went in their troubles, but who, himself, if he had any troubles, never mentioned them, except to rejoice over them as victories? This man who was so universal that from him we never heard the word "I".

As I write these words tears fill my eyes and run down my cheeks. I whose heart has often seemed to me like a stone; a man hard-headed and combative by nature; accustomed to indulging in plain speech, and, in argument, to giving and receiving blows; one who has never been regarded as sentimental or emotional; I, as I recall my impressions of this man, am obliged to confess that my heart melts like wax, that the tears blind my eyes, and that all desire for controversy and argument, except as God may will, has been taken out of me. What, I repeat, was the strange power of this man, so simple, so natural, so unassuming who asked for himself no special consideration or reverence whatever, but who continually pointed us to the things of the Spirit and to God?

To tell this so as to make myself understood is beyond any power that God has given to me, or to any man. There are some things that the heart can comprehend, but the tongue cannot utter.

In a Tablet to me, 'Abdu'l-Bahá once wrote, "Turn with thy heart to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the hidden mystery will be revealed to thee." I have obeyed this command, and the mystery has been revealed to me—but I cannot express it in words—not even he can do that. The mystery, however, is no mystery at all to those who met 'Abdu'l-Bahá heart to heart. Only through the Spirit can the reality and power of this Man be apprehended. One is reminded of the Words of Jesus: "No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him."

In spite of all I have said, however, I will try and give you an outer description of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He lived a life of imprisonment, of constant anxieties and of hardship, and when I saw him he looked his age, but no sign of physical weakness was apparent. On the contrary, he impressed you as being full of strength and energy, an example of splendid manhood. His hair and beard were grey, and the thoughtful lines on his face and forehead were in keeping with his years. His beard was not very long nor full, but of silky, fine quality. His hair, which was the same colour as the beard, he wore about level with the shoulders. His nose was large, slightly aquiline and finely moulded. His mouth was large and firm, but without in the slightest degree being hard, indicating a combination of firmness and kindness. His forehead was high, broad, and full, giving the impression of great intellectual power.

The wonderful thing about the Master's physical personality was his eyes. At this writing I must confess my inability to tell what it was about them that made them so remarkable. Whether they were black or blue or grey, or a combination of colours, I cannot say. In fact they seemed to change even as I looked at them and into them, as I did more than once. Of this, however, I am quite certain—that I cannot think of 'Abdu'l-Bahá nor pray without seeing those indescribable eyes.

However, one tires of physicalities. The important matter is to try to realize the fragrances of the Spirit that were wafted from that White Spot ('Akká) and from that pure heart. Truly, there was that at 'Akká which was not to be seen with the physical eye, heard with the physical ear, or understood with the intellect—a something that the heart felt and the soul

alone apprehended and which cannot be reduced to the physical symbols we call words.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke, a something was set in vibration over and above the physical words, a something which was spirit and life and which bestowed spirit and life; and it would seem that the outer words were merely a means of contact or a physical medium of connection between the soul and this Spirit and Life that was imparted to the soul. That which the soul received from the words was far more than the mere outer form of the words would seem to warrant.

For instance, I asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for [XV:5:134] the answer to a question that had troubled me for a year or more. He answered me in a few words without apparently any particular effort at explanation—yet his simple statement conveyed to me immediately an understanding of the whole matter that perfectly satisfied. Perhaps the same words spoken by another would have made no impression, for they were in the form of a simple statement without proof. Uttered by him, however, they seemed to change the whole current of my thought, create a new consciousness in me and supply me with the power of comprehension; so that a matter which had puzzled me for more than a year was cleared up in an instant. I trust this will convey to you my meaning—that the real power at ‘Akká was the power of love and knowledge, purely spiritual in its manifestation, a matter of the heart and of the soul, and had no connection whatever with physical miracles and phenomena.

To realize who ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was, to understand his relations to Bahá’u’lláh and to Christ, to comprehend that he needed no other glorification, commendation or exaltation than that he was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, to know why it was that he commanded that no other name or title should be given to him, and that by no explanation or interpretation could the station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá be made any more glorious than it was, one must be able with the spiritual eye to see the things of the Spirit.

If we are to be content, as he was content, with his simple designation as the Servant of Bahá, and have no desire to refer to him by any other title—like him we must realize that we are nothing and that God is all, must eliminate the ego, surrender the self and allow God to do His work in us, instead of imagining that we have any power to accomplish it within ourselves.

To be able to apprehend the station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is to apprehend, at least in part, the great truth of renunciation, of absolute surrender to God. Surrender to God! How easy to say, but how difficult to really understand and do! It means to be conscious of our nothingness, and to open our souls and let the fragrances of the Spirit blow through them, to feel that God in us is doing our seeing, our willing, our thinking, and relieving us of the responsibility. It is to understand that He is the great burden bearer, on Whose shoulders is the government of all things. Here is a vicarious atonement worth having, a vicarious atonement that brings rest and peace and real salvation.

Who are we and what can we accomplish? It is true that the station of man is very high, but it is high because of his capacity to receive from God. The breeze of the Spirit blows by the rocks, by the trees and by the animals, but they are unconscious of it. Man, however, has the power not only to become conscious of it but also to be the instrument of it in the enlightenment of mankind and the vivification of the world. And this is a matter of simple faith. When we realize that we are nothing and know nothing, and stand humbly before God, we shall be clothed upon by the Spirit.

Jesus said: “Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all His Glory was not arrayed like one of these.” With all our toiling and spinning and fretting, the best that we can do is to clothe ourselves with mere garments of fig leaves, with mere symbols to hide our ignorance. However, those who have found the secret of turning to God in perfect self-surrender and sure faith receive a spiritual

garment inexpressibly beautiful. The secret of real spiritual power is the renunciation of the self and dependence upon God.

This spirit of renunciation and of absolute submission and surrender to God is the Spirit in which one was bathed at 'Akká. The lesson of complete reliance upon God for all guidance and for all knowledge is the great lesson we received there, for when we submit to God we realize His Love in us and it radiates from us. The Master has said that when [XV:5:135] we "receive the confirmation of the Holy Spirit we need no other teacher." However, we cannot get that confirmation until we learn to rely on the Spirit wholly.

I trust that we all may learn this great lesson, and cutting ourselves from all outer personalities, lean entirely upon the Inner Reality of which the Prophets are the authoritative and confirmed outer Manifestation. To be free from personality, we must be free from our own personality. Once we have attained this freedom, other personalities will cease to trouble us. Escaping our own personality, we must find refuge in the Love of God.

XV:5, August 1924 [XV:5:135]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

"The mission of the Prophets is no other than the advancement of the education of the world of humanity. The Prophets are the real teachers or educators. The Prophets are the Universal Instructors. ...

The Greatest proof of a Manifestation is the Manifestation Himself. We do not have to prove the existence of the sun. The sun is independent of proof. He who has sight can see the sun and prove it for himself. It is not necessary to seek for other proof. For instance, it is a fixed fact that nothing could grow upon the earth without the light of the sun. It is easily proved that without the sun's heat and light no animal life could exist. The sun's light is indispensable its heat essential. This is the sun's greatest proof. ... The great Prophets did not enter school to be taught of men, yet so many things did they manifest that at last we must admit that the world is not able to destroy the wisdom of the Prophets or grow without them. ... There must be a Standard. ... The Light of God will shine, must shine. ... Although the Christ was not a great and honoured man; although He was of such poor and humble condition that He was born in a manger, yet He changed the whole world by His Power and Divinity. What proof could be greater than this? How can anyone deny His proof! In the same way Bahá'u'lláh came from Persia which is not an important nation of the world. He did not go to school and yet so much knowledge was manifest in Him that we must confess that it is impossible to deny His wisdom and His divinity. ... The Manifestations of God are sent when most needed."

XV:6, September 1924 [XV:6:153]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

"We must love all humanity as the children of God. Even if they kill us we must die with love for them. It is not possible for us to love every one with a personal love, but we must love all humanity alike.

"There are many stages or kinds of love. In the beginning God through His Love created man. Man is the highest product of His Love and the purpose of Man's existence is to reflect this Love of God in his soul. But man in his egotism and love of self turns away from his Creator and thereby prevents the accomplishment of his divine plan. The Manifestations appear to show man the way to God through Love. By them, man is brought to the condition of severance from his egotism and being absorbed into the Ocean of Love Divine.

"There is a profound, a divine wisdom in Love. The Light of God shines in the eyes when

the heart is pure. The home of Religion is the Heart.”

XV:6, September 1924 [XV:6:157]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“The heart of man is a garden. The real garden is in order, well planted, watered and cultivated. This is not so with the jungle. The jungle gives no evidence of cultivation. Where there is no gardener, disorder prevails. Wild growth produces nothing. Human education is of great importance. It is especially necessary to educate the children. They are the young tender trees of God’s planting. But the supreme education is Divine Teaching. Through it the most ignorant become wise and the lowest are elevated to the loftiest heights. This transformation in man is made by the Manifestations of God. Through them the wicked become righteous, the weak firm, the barren fruitful. One day’s education under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is better than ten years’ material training in the universities of the world. Bahá’u’lláh has said that two steps are necessary for human development: Material and Divine Education. ... Education makes of man a man. Religion is Divine Education. There are two pathways which have been pointed out by the Heavenly Educators. The first is Divine Guidance and reliance upon the Manifestations of God. The other is the road of materialism and reliance upon the senses. These roads lead in opposite directions. ... Divine Education is the sum total of all development. It is the safeguard of humanity. ...

“In this age every face must turn to God, so that spiritual enlightenment will go hand in hand with material education. Material education alone cannot make the world happy. Spiritual civilization must assist the material civilization.

“The powers of mind are the bounties of God given to man to lead him toward spiritual happiness.”

XV:6, September 1924 [XV:6:166]

Man and the ant

Stanwood Cobb

Dr Forel is the world’s great authority on ants. His collection now lodged in the museum of Geneva is the largest in existence, He has added three hundred to the known species. In addition, he has in former days been a psychologist of note, a great temperance worker and a distinguished humanitarian. His connection with the Bahá’í Cause is remarkable. At the age of seventy, discovering that Bahá’u’lláh had years ago enunciated principles such as his own soul had evolved and longed to see put in practice, he felt it but logical to call himself a Bahá’í and follower of that great Prophet. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a few years before His passing, wrote a long Tablet to him in answer to his inquiries in regard to the nature of existence This Tablet, satisfying the venerable scientist’s metaphysical inquiries made him a still more devoted Bahá’í.

This is not a fable, but a little pilgrimage to the home of Dr Auguste Forel, who admires the life of ants more than he admires the life of men. In his latest book, *Man and the Ant* he asks in all seriousness—“What can we do to become more like the ants while still remaining human beings?”

Man, he finds, has not yet reached the stage of true social development. “By hereditary disposition man a natural egoist,—individualistic, passionate, rapacious, dominating, vindictive and jealous, eager to exploit his fellow beings, to tyrannize and oppress them in order the better to enjoy life himself. “But,” he goes on to say, “the social instinct of the ant, little by little accumulated in his hereditary memory and co-ordinated by it, is much more sapient than that of the ‘homo sapiens’ of Linneus.”

It was this lover of the insect the life of which represents the most successful social

organization on this planet,—it was Dr Auguste Forel, specialist in psychiatry, lifelong ardent worker for temperance, and the world's greatest authority on ants, whom we were privileged to visit.

"I have just received your card," he wrote, "and I pray you to come and dine informally with us at noon Monday next. Our house is called 'The Ant's Nest' and is fifteen minutes from the station of Yvorne. I will come to meet you if you will telephone the exact time of your arrival."

So Monday morning found us,—my wife, Lady B., and myself, starting on our pilgrimage to greatness. Through the windows of the train shone kaleidoscopically the splendours of the Lake Geneva littoral, Vevey, Montreux, Territet that scenic gem, the Castle of Chillon, Villeneuve, and at last Yvorne charming village at the entrance of the Rhone valley on the Simplon route and the goal of our journey.

Upon our descent, there peered at us, through blue glasses, eyes the keenness and intelligence of which were later revealed to us in the privacy of the home; and there advanced to greet us a man old in years, crippled physically by a partial paralysis, but with a mind and heart of eternal youth.

On the twenty minutes' walk to his home he talked to us eagerly of his work for temperance, emphasizing chiefly his efforts to raise the Good Templars above the dogmatism of nationality and religion, so that they could concentrate fully on the one important problem of temperance for which purpose they were organized.

"Why," he had said to a bigoted Protestant clergyman who was at odds with a Catholic priest in one of the [XV:6:167] Austrian chapters of the Good Templars, "Why spend your time arguing about the next world when you should be working to perfect this?"

By such sturdy common sense, by his insistence upon universality, he finally won his point and achieved the neutrality, as regards politics or religion, of the Good Templars in Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary and Switzerland,—countries in which riotous differences had long been a source of controversy and difficulty in the work for temperance.

Dr Forel, it will be remembered, was one of the first to demonstrate the evil effects not only of drunkenness, but also of that habitual moderate drinking which produces upon the body the effect called "alcoholism". Strong as are the arguments for prohibition furnished by the disasters, individually and socially, of drunkenness, they do not weigh with the average mind as heavily as the facts which have come out as a result of the psychological tests into the state of chronic though mild "alcoholism". It was the proof furnished by Forel and others, that even mild habitual consumption of alcohol produces temporary paralysis and chronic degeneracy of the nervous tissue, diminishing greatly the quantity and quality of the work done in such a state, that brought into the temperance movement in America the rank and file of manufacturers and business men. The financial and moral support given the prohibition movement by these men of affairs was one of the chief causes of the successful passing of the Nineteenth Amendment.

"America is ahead of Europe," said Dr Forel. He is still working indefatigably for prohibition in Europe, where whole populations are alcoholized. On purchasing his own estate at Yvorne he had the vines pulled up, and turned the vineyard into a fruit and vegetable garden. He himself neither drinks nor smokes, and his diet is of the simplest. He has worked ardently for temperance since 1885.

He told us with deep disgust of how in a recent trip to Brussels, in searching for lodging, he happened into a house where four drunkards surrounded one poor woman with their noise and ribaldry. To him these things seem disgusting and abnormal, and cause him to point to the life of the ant as more admirable than our own.

While talking we pass through the simple village of Yvorne and reach the "Ant's Nest" where Madame Forel greets us with simple and unaffected cordiality. While we wait for dinner Dr Forel tells us of his studies in hypnotism and the cures he has effected by use of it. On the wall he shows us an oil painting done by a graceful patient of his, who after a fall from his horse had been unable to paint until healed hypnotically by Dr Forel. Often he has used hypnotism to cure inebriety.

Finding I was interested in the subject and could read German, he gave me before leaving a copy of his book "*Der Hypnotismus, oder die Suggestion und die Psychotherapie*",¹ not yet translated into English or French. Dr Forel, by the way, writes with equal facility in German or French, the greater part of his writings being in the latter language.

Madame Forel now announced dinner, and we were shown to our places around a long table where were gathered in addition a daughter, a daughter-in-law, a guest, and seven grandchildren spending here their summer holidays. Truly did the house deserve its name!

But all went smoothly, as in a true ant society. The children were quiet and happy, the adults enjoying simultaneously a good dinner and an inspiring conversation, while Madame Forel, unflurried, dispensed food and hospitality.

After dinner came the longed for visit to Dr Forel's study, which was of the kind that every writer and scholar [XV:6:168] longs for,—large, lined with bookshelves overflowing into two rooms. Space in which to think, space in which to gather materials for study. On different shelves were collected pamphlets and books bearing upon the subjects he was most interested in. In addition to his specialty, the ant, he has made a deep study of the chief problems of humanity.

War and Peace, Prohibition and other humanitarian subjects have absorbed his attention and attracted his pen.

Then we are shown his own publications, most important of which are his "*Fourmis de la Suisse*" and "*Le Monde Social des Fourmis*".² In addition to his bound books were two shelves full of articles and pamphlets written by him. There were also translations of his works into Russian, Dutch, Italian and other languages.

With trembling hands he took down and showed us the most precious volume of his library, "*Recherches sur les Moeurs des Fourmis Indigènes*"³ by Pierre Hubert, Geneva, 1810; a book which his grandmother, noting his already deep interest in ants, had presented to him at the age of eleven, and which had inspired him to make the study of ants his life work.

In answer to my question as to how early he had begun to study the ant, he told me that this passion was manifest from the age of seven. At the age of eleven, indeed, he made a discovery in regard to slavery among ants which not even Hubert nor other writers on the ants had noted. During his school life he spent every Saturday afternoon and every Sunday in observation of these fascinating insects. In addition to this he utilized every opportunity he could while walking the two miles to and from school each day.

He also remarked that while his theories had changed with the years, the actual observations and facts noted as published in his first book on the ant at the age of twenty-four, "*Fourmis de la Suisse*", have stood the test of fifty years of maturer research and are included practically unchanged in the latest edition of his work. This, he thought, was a striking example of the superiority of fact, as derived from direct observation, over theoretical

¹ *Hypnotism, or suggestion and psychotherapy.*

² "Swiss ants" and "The Social World of Ants".

³ "Research on the Customs of Native Ants".

speculations.

I thought as I heard from his own lips of the early display of his great life specialty, how important it is not to belittle or restrain the hobbies of childhood; how these hobbies may and very likely will prove of greater import than the studies inflicted upon the child by the maturer judgement of a teacher or of an educational system.

Evidently Dr Forel has the same opinion, for in his book "Man and the Ant" in which he compares the social life of each and draws lessons from the life of the insect to benefit the life of man, he says, "The universities must be decentralized as well as the scholastic authorities of all ranks, in order to liberate the pupils from the yoke of bureaucracy and from the terror of examinations. The pupils should be organized as in the "New Schools"—(schools of the freer type in Europe corresponding to the "Progressive Schools" in America)—and there should be the least possible obligatory instruction."

After a most interesting tour of his library, in which among other things we noted the pictures of Goethe, Haeckel, and Darwin, favourites of Forel (though he told me he found Haeckel much too dogmatic, contrasting unfavourably with the modesty of Darwin),—he insisted upon our sitting down in a trio around him while he bestowed upon us the greatest possible pleasure, that of hearing him expound to us his *chef d'oeuvre*, "Le Monde Social des Formis".

Holding the five volumes one after another on his lap and turning the pages with his left hand on account of the paralysis of his right hand, he gave us for upwards of an hour a lecture on [XV:6:169] the life of the ant illustrated by the pictures in his book.

How wonderful is the mind of genius, never aging. This great thinker, crippled in body and brain though not in mind, expounded to us the habits and life of his beloved insect with the joy and enthusiasm of youth, and with a mental clarity which defied all infirmities.

III

"See," he said, "I will show you something very interesting. *The ant has a social stomach.*"

What that meant we were soon to see by aid of an illustration showing the ant as having two stomachs, the anterior one being the social stomach, the posterior one only being devoted to individual uses! Over fifty years ago, Forel told us, he had demonstrated the uses of this social stomach. Segregating several ants and causing them to fast for two days, he had then allowed one kept separated from his mates to partake of a liquid food dyed blue by means of cobalt so as to aid observation.

A marvellous thing was noticed. With a self-abnegation that only the ant is capable of, this little creature did not absorb the food but kept it stored in his social stomach. As soon as he was allowed to go to his mates he regurgitated this food and fed them with it, not until then permitting a small amount to enter his own stomach for personal nourishment.

The opening from the social to the individual stomach is controlled by four valves which seem to operate by will. But this will, as has been shown, is not one of egoistic greed, but of social self-sacrifice. In general, Forel told us, nineteen-twentieths of the food eaten is devoted to social uses, and only one-twentieth to personal uses.

Can one refrain from admiring such abnegation of self; or from drawing from it an application to our human needs? Forel does both. His interest in the ant is illumined by a vision of what humanity might be, were it organized on this social basis.

Many other wonderful things Forel explained to us,—things which are perhaps commonly known but which took on new life from his zeal: the keeping of slaves; the devotion of ant nurses; ant-battles; assassin ants who steal into nests and kill the ant-larvae; and other fascinating details of ant life.

One subject explained by him is worthy of full elaboration here. When ants are attacked they secrete and eject a sticky substance which gums up the antennae of their foes. Since ants not only smell and touch through their antennae, but use them largely instead of their eyes for guidance, an enemy with befouled antennae is as helpless as a wireless station similarly injured. But what most interested Forel in this affair was the marvellous chemical power of the cell which manufactures on sudden demand this gummy substance. He showed us a picture of such a cell magnified five hundred times. There being no heart in the ant, each cell has control of its own supply of blood. Upon notice of danger, this particular cell draws from the blood at its command the chemicals necessary for the manufacture of the gum.

Forel's observations in the world of nature furnish him with the material for his philosophy which is strongly monistic. In the intelligence, skill, and self-sufficiency of this little ant-cell, which magnified five hundred times is not as large as a cent, Forel sees a world of significance. In the microcosm he sees the macrocosm. He is not only a naturalist of the highest order, but a great humanitarian and philosopher.

He condemns mankind for being far too egocentric. Though wonderfully advanced in the arts of civilization, man has failed to develop a social instinct sufficient to organize the world he lives in. He has still the savage instincts of the jungle, and his inherited anti-social individualism threatens now to destroy [XV:6:170] the very civilization which his intelligence and creative imagination have built up.

Forel, for the last decade, has been working out an ideal program for humanity based upon the social life of the ant. He has elaborated a very feasible method of international union which would inhibit aggressive nationality and abolish war. His programme also includes ideas which if put in practice would bring to pass a world culture based on the enlightened application of science to social problems, on justice and unselfishness.

It is a splendid civilization which Forel has envisioned. "The world or organization of the nations is inevitable," he said. "There is bound to be a world state, a universal language, and a universal religion. The Bahá'í movement for the oneness of mankind is, in my estimation, the greatest movement to day working for universal peace and brotherhood."

At this moment the bell rang announcing tea, and we descended to the dining room to partake of that farewell hospitality before starting for the train. Dr Forel was tired, but as his wife assured us, not harmed by his mental and physical exertions of the day. These last moments with him were the sweetest and most intimate of all.

"I regret," he said, "that I cannot do more now for humanity. As you see, I cannot lecture, nor work much."

It is to be noted that Dr Forel has little use for the life of thought only. His observations of the ants, and his own good heart make him value above all things action for the common good.

To comfort him I said, "But by thinking and acting in the past, you can act now without acting. It is like money accumulated in the bank, which earns interest. So your past life of thought and achievement goes on producing its influence, though you are crippled as regards activity."

He was pleased with this idea, but said, "One must not exaggerate personality."

How absolutely modest he is! There is no shadow of a thought of personal greatness, of fame, in his consciousness. Only a love of work, of truth; and a burning desire to further a happier organization of humanity, along the lines of social service exemplified by the ant.

It is for this vision of a socialized humanity that I love Forel; of a glorious civilization where each serves each and work is for the benefit of all, not for self only. This is the dominant thought and motive of his life.

Forel, humanitarian, thinker, I salute you in spirit as I saluted you when I left your house, humbly and lovingly. And I catch in return your smile, wise and kindly, and your great word of farewell:

“I regret that I cannot work more for the cause of humanity.”

XV:8, November 1924 [XV:8:227]

Faith a profession

George Orr Latimer

Moritz Bonn, chief German Lecturer at the Round Table discussion of the Institute of Politics at Williams College this year, has recently made the statement that “war, at least in continental Europe, has had one far reaching result: it has killed faith. Its teachings are contrary to the Christian religion. ... when whole nations are imbued with the belief that their interests are the only thing that matters, when they are willing to spend their lives and the lives of their enemies by the million for their national ideals, their God becomes a mere tribal God.”

This perhaps expresses the popular conception of the meaning of faith, namely a personal attitude by which divine revelation is subjectively appropriated according to the individual's conception of God's purpose and design. Then follows a specialized doctrine, a chosen peopled particular church, a superior nation created through an appeal to the limited personal emotions, highly coloured by racial prejudice and lack of common sense—this is the faith complex of today, something that neither originates from logical processes, nor from immediate inner experiences. To this kind of profession of faith Abraham Lincoln found no time to concern himself with, stating tersely: “I found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their articles of belief and confession of faith.”

What then of other kinds of faith; is the fate of the western world limited by a dying religious belief? Surely there are other faiths, whether in a state of decay or not, that form a vital part of the life of the world. For instance there is scientific faith, such as the belief in the nebular hypothesis or the theory of relativity; a faith that offers a complete substitution for the decadent religious faith. There is the faith in a certain political party to solve the social and economic problems of the nation; there is the reliance in a physician's skill to cure the ailments and afflictions of the body; the trust in the ship's captain to navigate the waters safely in all kinds of weather; there is the sense of security for one's life and property by the due process of law; there is the confidence in the national banking system, upon which are based the delicate and complicated methods of local and international credits—in fact all manner of faiths which vary in form and degree from the trust in the city's fire department and the proper sanitation methods of the milkman to the devout muezzin who never fails to call the faithful to prayer, so that waking or sleeping our every moment is the expression of some form of faith.

If faith has died in Europe, it has likewise been severely shaken in America. Recently Dr Richard C. Cabot, author of “What Men Live By” and at present holding the chair of Social Ethics at Harvard, has pointed out that the web of espionage woven during the late war has become a cancerous growth in the life of our everyday human relations. The spy system at best he says is “something occasional, an exception to be banished as soon as the crisis is over.” However, the system is one based on deceit, treachery and the betrayal of confidence—and it has not been banished. The recent disclosures in the Department of Justice and the Veterans Bureau at Washington have disclosed the painful facts of the spy system at its worst and have almost undermined one's faith in party politics. The idea “to get something on someone” [XV:8:228] has enhanced this uncivilized system. Secret societies that attempt to

take law and order into their own hands still further aggravate the condition and relationship of mankind. This vast spy system has reached into the legal, social and educational worlds, and much more seriously in the industrial world where employers hire workmen to betray their comrades and in retaliation labour unions employ spies against their employers. Betrayal and bribery do not bespeak confidence, rather do they breed distrust and a warping of the moral fabric. News agencies search the world to discover material for future reference regarding one's private life in case that individual should at some time enter the arena of social or political service. The cinema world portrays, with its questionable educational value, the weaknesses of modern family life, thus undermining the sacredness of the home. Even the extreme Fundamentalist has girded himself with armour to "fight for the faith", little realizing that faith is not something to be fought for, but is in itself a conquering power.

O ye of little faith, where is that self-trust that Emerson calls the essence of heroism? "Our fears do make us traitors." Shall we too die for want of faith and assurance, metamorphosed by the fear complex? The body politic is sick on account of lack of altruism. The want of a common faith is the life-destroying ill of humanity at the present time. Everywhere, in the old world and in the new, man has become a worshipper of the idol SELF INTEREST. Everyone is striving for self-advancement at the expense of his fellowman. Faith is blind and dying.

What then is the faith of the future? It is not a mere confession. It is a profession and a practice. To the Bahá'í it is "first of all conscious knowledge, and second the practice of good deeds." It is confidence, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá points out: "The greatest divine bounty is a confident heart."¹ It is assurance of a new heaven and a new earth for man. It is the vision fulfilled of that famous Italian patriot, idealist and apostle of the new democratic evangel, Joseph Mazzini, when he declares: "The first real earnest religious faith that shall arise upon the ruins of the old worn out creeds will transform the whole of our actual social organization, because every strong and earnest faith tends to apply itself to every branch of human activity; because in every epoch of its existence the earth has ever tended to conform itself to the heaven in which it then believed—in form and degree varying according to the diversity of the times—of the words of the Dominical Christian prayer: "Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

The new faith must withstand the hurricanes of scepticism, revolution, race riots, international wars and religious enmities. The quickening power of the Bahá'í spirit has already accomplished the awakening of a new assurance in every one with whom it contacts. It produces severance from selfish motives; it supplies a complete attraction to spiritual attributes. It accepts the plan of God for man's practical and spiritual welfare as both workable and liveable. It acknowledges the voice within but translates that voice into conscientiousness action for the betterment of all humanity. It sees the vision of the heavenly kingdom established on earth as it should be today. It is the motive power of a new and radiant century.

"As ye have faith," proclaims 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the standard—this is the standard—this is the standard."

XV:8, November 1924 [XV:8:229]

What is faith?

Answered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

What is real faith? Faith outwardly means to believe the Message a Manifestation brings to the world and accept the fulfilment in Him of that which the Prophets have announced. But in reality faith embodies three degrees: To confess with the tongue; to believe in the heart; to

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, VIII:19, 2 March 1918, p. 238.

give evidence in our actions. These three things are essential in true *Faith*. The important requirement is the love of God in the heart. For instance we say a lamp gives light. In reality the oil which burns produces the illumination, but the lamp and the chimney are necessary before the light can express itself. The love of God is the light. The tongue is the chimney or the medium by which that love finds expression. It also protects the Light. Likewise the members of the body reflect the inner Light by their actions. So the tongue confesses in speech and the parts of the body confess in their actions the Love of God within the soul of a true believer. Thus it was that Peter confessed Christ by his tongue and by his actions. When the tongue and actions reflect the Love of God, the real qualities of man are revealed. Christ said, "You will know them by their fruits" that is, by their deeds. If a believer shows forth divine qualities, we know the true Faith is in his heart. If we do not find evidence of these qualities; if he is selfish or wicked, he has not the true kind of Faith. Many claim to possess the true Faith, but it is rare, and when it exists it cannot be destroyed.

Faith is not so much what we believe as what we carry out. Man must prove whatsoever he speaketh by deeds and actions. If he claims faith he must live and do according to the Teachings.

Although a person of good deeds is acceptable ... the practice of good deeds.¹

Faith is the magnet which draws the confirmation of the Merciful One.

XV:9, December 1924 [XV:9:249]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

"Jesus was a Manifestation of God. Everything of Him pertained to God. To know Him was to know God. To love Him was to love God. To obey Him was to obey God. He was the Source of all Divine qualities. In this Mirror the Light of the Sun of Reality was reflected to the world. Through this Mirror the Energy of God was transmitted to the world. The whole disk of the Sun of Reality was reflected in Him."

XV:9, December 1924 [XV:9:256]

The divine perfections of Jesus Christ from the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Christ's birthday is a glorious day. ... It is necessary that these anniversary celebrations be observed, else man in his negligence would forget all about his Creator; but we should seek to penetrate the dark veils of custom and imitation of ancestors, perchance we may discover the reality of the meaning. The advent of Christ on this earth was a blessed day, for it was the day on which the Sun of Reality dawned; the day on which all beings were revived. In the world's calendar, it was the beginning of a Heavenly Spring. Today the mention of Christ is on a thousand tongues, but when He was on earth, He was not thought much of, notwithstanding they were awaiting His coming with great impatience. They thought that they would be His intimate friends. When He came they knew Him not; they persecuted Him and finally killed Him.

(*Unity Triumphant*, p. 111.)

Christ appeared in Palestine and was held in contempt because He was from Nazareth. Only twelve believed in Him; one deserted Him. There were other believers but they were not strong. They were troubled with doubts and afterward fell away. ...

Christ said that nothing could ascend into heaven except that which came down from heaven. He also said: "I came from heaven and will return to heaven"—and "The Son of Man

¹ Refer to 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 382-3.

is in heaven.” He said this while still upon the earth and notwithstanding the fact that he had been born from Mary. There is no doubt Christ came from heaven and always was in heaven, but when he spoke he did not mean the literal sky. What then is meant by heaven? Science proves that there is no heaven or sky, but all is limitless space and one universe. In this limitless space the heavenly spheres revolve and have their orbits. But the “heaven” of Christ is that invisible world which is beyond the sight and comprehension of mere man. It is the spiritual condition. Therefore the “heaven” of Christ is the will of God. The Sun of that heaven will never set. In it the moon and stars are always shining. It is the limitless Kingdom of God. It is sanctified from all place. Christ is always there.

(*Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 26.) [XV:9:257]

Those who looked at the material body of Christ and saw Him enduring all the hardships and trials, marvelled that He was the Messiah because He was in this lowly condition. As they were considering His physical being, they failed to see the Light shining within it. But those who looked to the spiritual and the real existence of the spirit in Christ, they firmly believed in him. We must not look at the lantern, but at the light the candle inside the Lantern.

(*Bahá'í Scriptures*, No. 959.)

The world must come to know the Word in Christ. How He was mocked, scorned and laughed at, yet His mission was to uplift the very world which refused Him. Realization of this will bring tears to the eyes of those who deny Him; cause them to grow silent and thoughtful. Christ is always Christ.

(*Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 13.)

You see a Bible in almost every house that you enter. See what Christ has accomplished. Witness what one soul who was crucified has accomplished.

When He was living upon the earth He was alone, ridiculed and rejected by His own people. Almost everybody cursed and ridiculed Him. His own relatives left Him; even His disciples almost abandoned Him; they placed upon His head a crown of thorns and paraded Him over the streets, and finally they crucified Him. He was alone! alone! but the traces of His work and the signs of His message have filled the world. Man must be just. After these statements no one can deny the greatness of Christ. ...

Consider the essential teachings of His Holiness, Jesus Christ, you will see they are lights. Nobody can question them. They are the very source of life. They are the cause of happiness for the human race, but subsequently imitations appeared, which imitations becloud the Sun of Reality. That has nothing to do with the reality of Christ.

(*Wisdom Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 15.)

To bring spirits within the bonds of serenity is a most arduous undertaking. This is not the work of everybody. It necessitates a divine and holy potency, the potency of Inspiration, the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, His Holiness Christ was capable of leading spirits into that abode of serenity. He was capable of guiding hearts into that haven of rest. From the day of His Manifestation to the present time, He has been resuscitating hearts and quickening spirits. He has exercised that vivifying influence in the realm of hearts and spirits, therefore His resuscitation is everlasting.

(*Bahá'í Scriptures*, No. 697)

Likewise with the superlative power and the efficacious Word of God He (Christ) gathered together most of the nations of the Past and the West. This was accomplished at a time when those nations were in the utmost of contention and strife. He ushered all of them into the overshadowing tent of the oneness of humanity. He so educated them that they united and agreed ... and the heavenly civilization was the result. Now, this efficacy of the Word, and this heavenly power, which are extraordinary prove conclusively the validity of His Holiness Christ. Consider how this heavenly sovereignty is yet permanent and lasting. Verily, this [XV:9:258] is conclusive proof and manifest evidence.

(*Bahá'í Scriptures*, No. 730.)

XV:10, January 1925 [XV:10:286]

The spiritual foundation of education

As taught by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

When we cast a glance at all creational beings, we find that the three forms of life are in need of an education. For example, in studying the mineral and the vegetable kingdoms, we find that the gardener has a function there in educating the trees. A tree under the training of a gardener daily progresses and grows. It presents an extraordinary growth. If it be wild and fruitless, by the process of grafting it will become fruitful. If it be small it can be made a big tree, and it can be a beautiful and fresh and verdant tree. But a tree which is bereft of the training of the gardener daily retrogresses and becomes absolutely deprived of its fruitage. It will become a tree of the jungle. Its fruit shall be exceedingly bad. It may become entirely bereft of fruitage. Likewise, when we observe the animal kingdom—the animals which have come under training in their world, daily progress and advance. Nay, rather, they will become beautiful as animals. They may even develop in their intelligence. For example, take the Arabian horse. How intelligent it has become! How well educated and trained it has become! How polite even this horse has become! This is no other than the result of education. But as to the human world, it is a self-evident fact that it is more in need of an education than the other existing beings. Consider the inhabitants of Africa and the inhabitants of America; what a vast difference is observable! How the people have become civilized here; and there they are still in the utmost state of savagery. What is the cause of that savagery and the reason for this civilization? It is an evident thing that education is responsible therefore. Education has given the inhabitants of America this civilization, but lack of education has rendered the Africans still savage. Consider how effective, therefore, is education in the human kingdom. It renders the ignorant wise; the man who is a tyrant a merciful one; the blind seeing; the deaf attentive. The imbecile even intelligent. How vast is this difference! How colossal is the difference between the man who has been educated and the man who has not been educated. This is the effect when the teacher is only an ordinary material one, like all other human teachers. ...

The Prophets of God also state that education is most effective, that it does give man sublimity; it does confer on man civilization; it does improve the morals of society; but they further state that in creation there is some difference. For example, take ten given children of the same age, of the same progeny, in the same school, one curriculum, one teaching, the same food, the same water, the same environment or air, in all respects having interest in common and equal; but we find out ere long that two of these appear exceedingly intelligent; some are in the medium, and some at the bottom of the school. One may become a professor emeritus; one will not even prove an apt scholar, whereas the education has been the same—one teacher—the same school—the same lessons. From all standpoints, there has been an equality, but some advance extraordinarily, some [XV:10:287] occupy the middle school, some only the lowest degrees; hence, it becomes evident that in existence, in the very existence of

man, mankind is not equal. In capacity they differ; in their intellectual capability they differ. They *are* different, but every member of the human race is capable of becoming educated. They *must* be educated.

No matter how much the shell is polished, it can never become the radiant pearl. The black stone will not become the world illumining gem. The colocynth and the thorny cactus can never by training and development become the blessed tree. That is to say, training doth not train the human substance, but it produceth a marvellous effect. By this effective power all that is registered, in latency, of virtues and capacities in the human reality will be revealed. It is for this reason that, in this new cycle, education and training are recorded in the Book of God as obligatory and not voluntary.

(*Bahá'í Scripture*, No. 935.)

All the children must be educated, so that there will not remain one single individual without an education. In cases of inability on the part of the parents, through sickness, death, etc., the state must educate the child. In addition to this widespread education, each child must be taught a profession or trade, so that each individual member of the body politic will be enabled to earn his own living and at the same time serve the community. Work done in the spirit of service is worship. From this universal system of education misunderstandings will be expelled from amongst the children of men.

(*Bahá'í Scriptures*, No. 574.)

_____ [XV:10:288]

Children must receive an excellent education, because they are the young twigs of the tree of humanity and during the years of their growth they imbibe what they hear and see. They [XV:10:289] must have a share of God's love, then they will become spiritualized.

(*Sun of Truth*, Oct. 1924, p. 123.)

The people of the world are like unto school children, and the Dawning Places of Light and Centres of Divine Revelation are wonderful, glorious, incomparable Teachers in the school of reality.

They instruct these children with heavenly teachings and nourish them in the bosom of divine assistance, to enable them to progress in all the degrees of life, to become the objects of God's grace and centres of merciful Bounty, combining all human perfections. Through their holy admonitions humanity develops in every way outwardly and inwardly, consciously and unconsciously, physically and spiritually, until this perishable world becomes like a mirror reflecting the heavenly world.

(*Lessons in Religion*, p. 62.)

If graduates of scientific institutions achieve a deed, it is prompted by interested motives, such as attainment to fame and renown or some other material and personal interest. However, the beloved of God have no desire or intention save that of the good pleasure of the Lord, the Divine Will—that only do they seek. The love of God is the agency that encourages them achieving philanthropic deeds, directs them to acquire good morals, forces them to good acts, confirms them in withstanding insurmountable difficulties, and makes them prefer the welfare of others to their own. However, in Europe just as sagacious men are graduated from the universities, likewise vicious and malicious men were forthcoming there from. The dynamite or bomb, torpedo and other instruments of torture are all results of such education.

However, the Kingdom of God is absolutely good. It quenches all this fire; it effaces these guns and cannons; it transforms swords into olive boughs; it changes wars and battles into

love and accord. ...

The inhabitants of Europe and America have progressed in material Sciences and the Arts of the Kingdom, they have not, yet, established a noteworthy edifice, consequently they are in need of instruction.

Morality is the basis of the happiness of the world of humanity. Merciful attributes are the best adornments for men. Science holds the next position to morality. Science is conducive to the happiness of the world of humanity next in degree to morality. If a nation be well qualified with education and yet dispossessed of good morals, it will not attain happiness. If that same nation be dispossessed of education, but possessed of moral training, it will be capable of accomplishing philanthropic deeds. When morality and science go hand in hand, then will it be light upon light.

(*Heavenly Feast*, pp. 21–25.) [XV:10: 290]

If one entering the Kingdom of God possesses learning and science it is well, but the essential thing, or the thing of greatest importance, is to enter into the Kingdom of God and to be characterized by the divine attributes, and to have the intention of doing good to the world, and to be perfectly kind to each member of the human family, and serve in promoting Universal Peace. Science and learning are good, but they are the branches, not the root.

(*Flowers from the Rose Garden of Acca*, p. 11.)

XV:11, February 1925 [XV:11:322]

Religion the basis for an enduring civilization

From the tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The divine religions were founded for no other purpose than the unification of humanity and the pacification of mankind. At all times and in all ages religion has been a factor in cementing the hearts of men together and by uniting various and divergent creeds ...

(*Wisdom Talks*, p. 20.)

XV:12, March 1925 [XV:12:345]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

It is new year—that is to say, the rounding of the cycle of the year. A year is the expression of a cycle (of the sun). But now is the beginning of a cycle of Reality, a New Cycle, a New Age, a New Century, a New Time, and a New Year. Therefore, it is very blessed.

The rising of the sun at the equinox is the symbol of life, and likewise it is the symbol of the Divine Manifestations of God, for the rising of the Sun of Truth in the Heaven of Divine Bounty established the signal of Life for the world. The human reality begins to live, our thoughts are transformed and our intelligence is quickened. The Sun of Truth bestows eternal life just as the solar sun is the cause of terrestrial life.

This period of time is the Promised Age ... Soon the whole world, as in springtime, will change its garb ... The New Year hath appeared and the spiritual springtime is at hand.

XVI:1, April 1925 [XVI:1:401]

The shining ladder of the words of God

Howard C. Ives

Content not thyself with the repose of a single day and lose not the everlasting rest. Exchange not the immortal Garden of eternal joy for the earthly furnace of mortality. Ascend from the dungeon to the beautiful plains of Life, and arise from the cage of the world to the

alluring Garden of the Placeless.

Bahá'u'lláh

In the Name of God, the Victor of the Most Victorious, proclaim: God will assist all those who arise to serve Him. No one is able to deprive Him of His Majesty, His Dominion, His Sovereignty. For in the Heavens and in the earth, and in all the Realms of God, etc., is the Victorious, and the Conqueror.

The Báb

The greatest bestowal in the world of existence is a tranquil heart, and it is impossible for man to obtain a tranquil heart save that the good pleasure of the Lord. That is, man may so adorn the temple of his being with lofty attributes and philanthropic deeds as to be pleasing at the Threshold of the Almighty. This is the only Path and there is no other Path. My point is this: Let all your thoughts, your ideals, your aims and purposes revolve day and night around one common object that is to live in accord with the good pleasure of the Lord. Then all the doors of felicity will be opened before your faces, you will become successful in all your undertakings, and you will be confirmed in all your accomplishments. The basic principle is the good pleasure of the Lord: and the good pleasure of God is obtained thru a tranquil heart, and the tranquillity of the heart is only gained by living in accord with the Divine Teachings and Exhortations. When a person attains to this station he is contented and peaceful. Then he will become prosperous in all affairs and enter into paradise. This station is joy succeeded by joy, confidence after confidence and Paradise after Paradise. Having reached to this exalted station man lives in Paradise while upon this earth, is in Paradise when he leaves this world. His heart is in Paradise, his spirit is in Paradise and he is encircled by Paradise.

If thou goest away with this unchanging *condition of invariability of inner state*, thou shalt see the doors of confirmation open before thy face, thy life will be a crown of heavenly roses and thou shalt find thyself in the highest state of triumph. Strive day and night to attain to this exalted station.

The afflictions which come to humanity sometimes tend to centre the consciousness upon the limitations. This is a veritable prison. *Release comes by making of the will a door thru which the confirmations of the spirit come.* The confirmations of the spirit are all those powers and gifts with which some are born and which men sometimes call genius, but for which others have to strive with infinite pains. They come to that man or woman who accepts his life with radiant acquiescence.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

XVI:2, May 1925 [XVI:2:429]

The poet historian, Nabíl

Soheil Afnan¹

It is only to a few that the work the poet historian Nabíl and the story of his eventful life are familiar, yet his unique services to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh have put the whole Bahá'í world under a deep debt of gratitude and given him a peculiar claim on our interest.

Nabíl, whose original name was Yár Muḥammad, was born in the district of Zarand on the 18th of Šafar, AH 1247 (i.e. 30 July CE 1831). His forefathers had been nomadic Arabs occupying the north-eastern part of Persia and one of his great grandfathers enjoyed the leadership of the whole tribe. Of a family of six children he was the second son, and his early childhood was spent with an uncle, as his father was an invalid and confined to his room. At the age of nine he was sent to a small school where he learned to read the Qur'án, and his pious father wept for joy to see his son so interested in that work. He had, however, to be content with the mere

¹ Suhayl Afnán (1904–1990).

reading of it, for if he dared to ask his teacher about the meaning of a word or phrase he was told that it was beyond his powers to comprehend such things!

When the boy had grown a little older, the father and uncle thought it best to find him some work; but in order to satisfy his desire for study they decided to send him to school during the autumn and winter seasons, while in spring and summer he should go to the country as a shepherd. It was about this time, at the age of twelve as he tells us, that he began to write verse, and he was greatly encouraged when he read one of his poems to the chief of a neighbouring village and won the great man's cordial approval! As with many more famous men before him, the verdant highlands of Persia and the bright colours that shine in its clear atmosphere seem to have instilled in him the Persians imperishable love of poetry; and the experiences of his shepherd life may well have filled his mind with a sense of awe in the presence of God's mighty handiwork.

It was when visiting a small town in which one of his uncles lived that he heard one day in a little mosque two men by his side mentioning the name of the Báb and the claim that He had put forth. The conversation arrested his attention and led him to enquiry and investigation. His search was difficult at first owing to the caution and secrecy which was the only protection of the early followers of the Báb against the enemies who surrounded them on every side and persecuted them remorselessly; but, nothing daunted, the boy went from one follower to another and travelled from town to town until he found what he sought. It did not take him long to enlist himself among those chosen few, most of whom fell victims to their savage enemies and gave their lives as martyrs in the path of their Beloved.

Years passed by, however, before he was taken to Ṭihrán to see Bahá'u'lláh who at that time had opened his home to the followers of the Báb and was the main source of inspiration to the persecuted enthusiasts of the Bábí faith. There for the first time he met both Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá who was at that time a child of six. Many were the happy recollections of those days which our poet historian used to recall.

Many years afterwards, in Baghdád, he again had the joy of meeting Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but this time was very different from the previous one. In the interval he had suffered four months' imprisonment in his own native place, had travelled extensively throughout Persia and had stayed for a considerable time in Kázimayn patiently awaiting the appear- [XVI:2:430] ance of Him whom the Báb had foretold. He tells us the story of how one day in his own little room in Kázimayn he was seized with a deep feeling of despair, and thought in his heart that after the ghastly martyrdom of the Báb it was hardly fitting for him to remain any longer in the world. Shutting himself in his room for three days he spent the time in reading and rereading to himself a Tablet which Bahá'u'lláh had revealed to him, and composed a few lines of poetry addressed to God, in which he declared that his heart was consumed with longing to meet Him and having no other present to bring he had resolved to cast his own head at the feet of his Beloved. Having written this verse he started reading the prayer of Bahá'u'lláh for the last time, intending thereafter to cut his throat. Hardly had he finished the prayer when the door which had been locked and which many during these three days had tried in vain to open was flung wide with one vigorous push and one of his most intimate friends stepped into the room. Finding Nabíl in a desperate state of mind he at once took him to his home and took good care of him. A few days afterwards, however, our hero felt a strange feeling of greatness in himself and started to write in the style and form of tablets and called the people around him to come and follow his leadership. But some of his friends treated him very wisely and at last induced him to go to Baghdád to meet Bahá'u'lláh there. He at once started on the journey and on reaching Baghdád went straight to the home of Bahá'u'lláh. There he met Him for the second time, but this time to fall at His feet and accept Him as his long sought lord and master.

For many years thereafter Nabíl lived in Baghdád and met Bahá'u'lláh very often, but again he returned to Persia to teach the new faith to his countrymen. Later his travels carried him as far as Egypt where in Alexandria he was cast into prison by the Persian Consul. One day, seemingly by the merest accident, he learned that the ship in which Bahá'u'lláh was being banished to 'Akká was even then in the port of the City. He repaired to the roof of his prison and with eager eyes but heavy heart watched the boat sail on its way.

Soon afterwards he was released and permitted to proceed to Anatolia. From that place he left for Cyprus, from Cyprus to Beirut and thence to 'Akká. He was forbidden to remain there, however, lest the enemies of Bahá'u'lláh should cause a disturbance, and without having seen his Beloved he left for Jerusalem. He soon returned to 'Akká, but, being prevented from entering the town, went and stood opposite the fortress in which Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned. Bahá'u'lláh appeared at a window and beckoned to him, and for the space of about half an hour, he tells us, from his distant station outside the third moat, he gazed with tear dimmed eyes on his beloved Master.

It was in 'Akká, for the most part, that Nabíl spent the rest of his life, and by the wish of Bahá'u'lláh he undertook the writing of an extensive historical narrative of the Bahá'í Cause.

A few words on Nabíl's works may not be out of place. He was a very prolific writer and his poetry might fill many volumes, but not all of it was of a very high grade. A few of his lyrics are extremely touching and beautiful, while some of his longer poems on the history of the Cause have no great literary merit. His main contribution to the Bahá'í literature, however, from which the following gems have been taken, is an extensive work dealing with the whole period from the days prior to the appearance of the Báb until the last days of Bahá'u'lláh. It can hardly be called a history, as the lack of any systematic arrangement or classification of his materials would not justify such a name, but undoubtedly it is a valuable mine of historical materials, and as such is probably unsurpassed by any other work on the same subject and dealing with the same period. The fact that among his principal authorities [XVI:2:431] were some of the closest associates of Bahá'u'lláh, notably Mírzá Músá, gives to his book a unique value and establishes it as an invaluable work of reference to the student of Bahá'í history.

A few gems from Bahá'u'lláh which Nabíl recorded from memory follow:

The time is past when with the two words of admittance (i.e. "There is no God but God and Muḥammad is His prophet") a man should be considered a believer in the Divine Unity and be counted as one of the faithful. The time has come when Bahá'u'lláh, seated on the Throne of Glory, addresses all the world, saying:

Know this, O thou who meekest thy Be loved,
Whose heart doth yearn His Presence to attain,
That till in thee His Attributes appear,
In exile and astray thou must remain.

Bahá'u'lláh gave utterance to this all sufficing, blessed Word:

Had the people of Islám but observed two words of the Lord of Omniscience, all would have attained to the Supreme Guidance and have reached the court of acceptance and the joy of reunion, and would not have been afflicted by all these spiritual diseases and selfish designs. Then would they not have martyred the Solace of the eyes of the prophets (i.e. the Báb) nor arisen against that Promised One. But in the day of his Manifestation they made the temple of that luminous Orb the target of their bullets. "O our Lord, judge thou be between us and our people with righteous ness, and verily Thou art the best of judges!"

And those two blessed words are these: O ye who are believers, fear God and be of the

sincere, and be not of those who have hardened their hearts against the remembrance of God.

And further in the same connection the Lord of mankind says that if a person be quick and keen in his powers of perception and discernment the moment a godly person enters his house he will perceive that the air becomes fragrant and the taste of his food and drink becomes delicious, pleasant and exhilarating while on the contrary if an ungodly person enters, the air becomes oppressive and the victuals lose their flavour. "We seek refuge in God from the evil of the ungodly."

Again he says: Beware that ye hold not fellowship with the wicked, and again: Treasure the friendship of the righteous, but withdraw both hand and heart from association with the ungodly.

When Bahá'u'lláh opened the door of gladness and joyful tidings before the face of the people of the world, He uttered this Most Great Word:

To gather jewels have I come to this world. If one speck of a jewel lie hid in a stone and that stone be beyond the seven seas, until I have found and secured that jewel, my hand shall not stay from its search.

In like manner He says: For the bringing forth of jewels from the mine of humanity, the True One, may His Majesty be glorified! hath in every age sent a faithful Messenger. Today the command of God and His decree is that the multitude of paths and diversity of ways should not be made a cause and a source of enmity and hatred. These plain and firm Paths have all been manifested from one Source and have issued from one place of origin, and these differences were in accordance with the requirements of diverse times and ages. O people of unity! Gird up the loins of effort, haply the world maybe freed from religious rancour and hate!

Prayer of Nabíl: "O my God! Amid my want and poverty I tell of Thy hidden treasures. Withhold not Thy Grace, and aid me to bring forth deeds that shall be worthy of Thy Day!"

XVI:2, May 1925 [XVI:2:434]

Truth is the oneness of the kingdom of humanity

Truth is love among the children of men. Truth is the proclamation of Justice. Truth is Divine guidance. Truth is the illumination of the realm of man. All the Prophets of God have been Heralds of Truth. All have been united and agreed on this principle. Every Prophet predicted the coming of a successor and every successor acknowledged the Truth of the predecessor. Moses prophesied the coming of Christ. Christ acknowledged Moses. His Highness, Christ, foretold the appearance of Muḥammad and Muḥammad accepted the Christ and Moses. When all these Divine Prophets were united with each other why should we disagree? We are the followers of those holy souls. In the same manner that the Prophets loved each other, we should follow their example, for we are all the servants of God and the bounties of the Almighty are encircling every one.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Kunjangun the village of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Inez Cook¹

In the heart of the jungle some forty or fifty miles from Rangoon, lies a little Burmese village—Kunjangun.² Of so little importance is it to natives and Europeans alike that no one seems to have heard of it, and yet one feels confident to say that this small corner of Burma holds so dynamic a force that be fore long it must make itself felt at a great distance.

This dynamo of spirit is created by eight hundred Bahá'ís living and working as a unit—a thing thrilling to the heart and imagination. Picture this, if you can, in a country so steeped in the religious superstitions of the past, and whose people in this quarter still remain so primitive that it would appear almost futile to even carry the great Bahá'í Message of this age to them. To see this is to behold a miracle—for has not 'Abdu'l-Bahá called it His village?

Seventeen years ago the first seed was planted by Jináb Siyyid Muşţafá Rúmí, that selfless servant of 'Abdu'l-Bahá who has seen this wonderful work grow through submitting himself entirely to the Master and reflecting His love to these people.

It is worthwhile to repeat the story as it was heard, of how the first step was taken, for it shows that if the desire be strong enough to serve the Cause—in no matter how small a degree—we can make no estimate of its ultimate goal.

One day in the streets of Rangoon a man from the jungle was seen running breathlessly along, looking utterly desperate and at the point of exhaustion. A Bahá'í happened to be passing at this moment and was attentive at once to this poor man's condition. Asking if he might help, and to hear something of the cause of his distress, he was told that the man was in search of a legal adviser and had come in a great hurry to the city—only to find himself at an utter loss.

The jungle man had been accused of a criminal offence by his sister-in-law, in a passion of jealousy, and shortly afterward convicted by the magistrate, who had received a bribe of two hundred rupees [XVI:3:470] from the sister-in-law. The Bahá'í said that he would lead the man to one who would advise him (Siyyid Muşţafá) and help in any way possible.

On hearing the story Siyyid Muşţafá said that he knew this magistrate and they would return together at once to the jungle. By chance on the riverboat they met the magistrate, who was indebted to Siyyid Muşţafá for past favours, and when asked why he had convicted this man he said: "But the courts are at your disposal, do with them as you will." Siyyid Muşţafá assured him that only justice was desired and that he himself would plead this man's case at another trial. This was done and the accused one freed.

After that several families of Kunjangun came to the city at various times, and were always entertained by Siyyid Muşţafá. For two years he was at this service, never during this time

¹ Inez (née Marshall) Cook (later Greeven) (1889–1983). Named Huviiyyih by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. During her second pilgrimage, she asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá why her friends visiting Haifa had not become Bahá'ís. "When I came here [on first pilgrimage] I was completely intoxicated with the greatness of the Cause. Why didn't they become Bahá'ís? 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "At the gate of the garden, some stand and look within, but do not care to enter. Others step inside, behold its beauty, but do not penetrate far. Still others encircle this garden, inhaling the fragrance of the flowers; and having enjoyed its full beauty, pass out again by the same gate. But there are always some who enter, and becoming intoxicated with the splendor of what they behold, remain for life to tend the garden." [Reply is based on a handwritten note from the translator] A similar response is: "*Among those who visit 'Akká, some have made great forward strides. Lightless candles, they were set alight; withered, they began to bloom; dead, they were recalled to life and went home with tidings of great joy. But others, in truth, have simply passed through; they have only taken a tour.*" (*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 195–6)

² Daidanaw, known as "'Abdu'l-Bahá's village", is 4.25 km NE along the road to Kawhmu from the main road junction in Kungangon, Burma (Myanmar). Siyyid Muşţafá Rúmí's shrine is to the north of the Bahá'í Centre (16.465353, 96.040762). Refer to https://bahai-library.com/history_bahai_faith_myanmar.

mentioning the Cause. Finally they asked why he took so much trouble for them, saying that they had never met anyone like this before. Then he told them that he was a Bahá'í, and they asked to be taught, so that they might become as he was.

There were ten to be taught at first—and these ten instructed others, and so on. Siyyid Muşţafá visited them regularly and helped with all their affairs. A school was started, then a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and later ground was given them for community cultivation—the proceeds to be used for the Cause. There are sixty-five acres in all and last year the rice sold for this netted almost one hundred pounds sterling.

We had a great desire to see this Bahá'í village and decided to make the trip, in spite of all the discouragement we received from the English residents of Rangoon. They told us of all the hardships of the trip, which must be made in one day, and assured us that we probably would not return from the jungle alive and they knew nothing of the Bahá'ís and thought we were a lot of quite mad Americans bent on sightseeing.

Siyyid Muşţafá sent a man to Kunjangun a day ahead of us bearing food, cooking utensils, etc., as these friends are unprepared for visitors or to do our sort of cooking.

We were up before daybreak and on the river by sunrise. The life of the East begins early, so already the little ferry was crowded with natives taking the river journey. They made a picturesque group squatting amongst their gaily coloured robes that rival the sunrise in crimson and blues.

In our tiny, first class compartment there were already two men, a Burmese and an American missionary who had been in the East twenty-one years. Siyyid Muşţafá lost no time in giving them the Bahá'í Message, and we wondered how he had contained himself for two years when getting to know and understand the people of Kunjangun!

Mr Jones, the missionary, was to meet a co-worker at our stop, Twante,¹ and then proceed to another village by the same boat. But we think 'Abdu'l-Bahá had this trip in hand, and other things had been planned for this day.

When we landed, the second missionary (Mr Spear) rushed on board and told Mr Jones that plans had changed and they were both to go to Kunjangun. We had met Mr Spear in one of the shops a few days before and when he saw us in this out-of-the-way place his amazement was ridiculous. "What," he said, "are you American ladies doing in this jungle place—it is too curious!"

We asked them to follow in their car and have luncheon with us and see our eight hundred Bahá'ís—a still more unexpected sight.

We were met in a Ford car by two of the friends and driven to the village twenty-six miles away. What a marvellous sight to see all our Bahá'í sisters and brothers awaiting us, dressed in holiday attire of most colourful materials. Lined up on both sides of the road as we approached, their joyous welcome of "Alláh-u-Abhá" rang forth. Such shining faced and eager curiosity combined would be difficult to picture.

There were four in our party, and before [XVI:3:471] this the only Western Bahá'í they had ever seen was Mrs Schopflocher. Everyone seemed anxious to be of some service to us, the only one for the moment being to reach for our wraps and parasols. They led us to the schoolhouse (of course, this was a holiday for the one hundred and fourteen children who attend) and grouped themselves about us on the floor—the men and old Bahá'ís taking precedence in front and the women and children in the rear. Then they sang Bahá'í hymns to welcome us—taught them in Persian by Siyyid Muşţafá. The rafters sang with the pure joy

¹ Twantay (16.711342, 95.935128).

afloat; and where the chorus was caught up by all the men one could almost see the volume of sound floating through the open doors, on through the sun-baked air to the nearby houses—just as one sees heat vibrations. Or was it just the tumult of my heart, and the mist in my eyes, that made the air seem vibrant?

Mr Jones and his friend arrived in time for luncheon and seemed astonished to find things just as we had pictured them. They could not believe until they saw it themselves that this work had been accomplished right in their territory—where years of effort had brought them so little reward by comparison. They appeared to be as interested in taking snap-shots of the group as we did, but for what purpose they did not say. However, they left with promises to come again and give talks to our friends, which will be most useful, as the Bahá'ís are diligently studying the Bible.

After luncheon we were shown the village proper—which boasts a court, jail and hospital. Most astonishing of all in this progressive community, they have now a jitney service of Ford cars between Kunjangun and Twante, twenty-six miles distant. One cannot imagine what this must mean to the villagers, who have had heretofore bullock carts as their only means of transportation.

Then we made our farewells and left, with regret, for the long trip home. It had been made possible to remain this long only by the generous loan of a private steam launch by one of the Bahá'ís of Rangoon, as the last ferry left Twante long before our arrival there.

Mingled with our joy of this day was an undercurrent of sadness which came as we talked to Siyyid Muṣṭafá on the homeward trip. To quote his words as nearly as possible will give the best idea: “I am an old man now and who will carry on my work? Any day I may be called and who will educate these beautiful children? It breaks my heart to come and see them and to be able to do so little—we need teachers and money to help them now. When you leave don't forget my people of Kunjangun.”

And who, having seen Kunjangun, could forget it!

XVI:3, June 1925 [XVI:3:473]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Through the bounty and favour of God think nothing difficult or impossible. God is so bountiful that He brings fire out from the stone; inflammable matter jets out from the interior of the earth; out of the black dust of the soil He produces beautiful flowers; from the bottom of the ocean He brings pearls and corals. When the Light of His favour is shed upon us the darkness is fled.

XVI:4, July 1925 [XVI:4:487]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The word of God is the storehouse of all good, all power and all wisdom. The illiterate fishermen and savage Arabs through it were enabled to solve such problems as were puzzles to eminent sages from the beginning of time. It awakens within us that brilliant intuition which makes us independent of all tuition, and endows us with all embracing power of spiritual understanding. Many a soul after fruitless struggles in the ark of philosophy was drowned in the sea of conflicting theories of cause and effect, while those on board the craft of simplicity reached the shore of the Universal Cause, aided by favourable winds blowing from the point of divine knowledge. When man is associated with that transcendent power emanating from the Word of God, the tree of his being becomes so well rooted in the soil of assurance that it laughs at the hurricanes of scepticism violently attempting its destruction. For this association of the part with the Whole endows him with the Whole, and this union of

the particular with the Universal makes him all in all.

XVI:4, July 1925 [XVI:4:496]

Conquest of prejudice

Jináb-i-Fáḍil

The idea of world unity was the greatest desire of all the prophets and spiritual world teachers. Whether they came from Palestine, or manifested in India, or China, or Arabia, or Persia, or elsewhere, their great purpose was to establish peace and unity and harmony among the people of the world. They dreamed and prophesied about it often in their writings and sacred books. Jesus Christ always taught love and unity and peace. But, unfortunately, after all those great prophets, those great teachers and educators, and all those different sacred books, when we look at the present situation of the world and read the minds and hearts of the children of men, we find the world much the same as it was thousands of years ago, still groping for the most part in darkness and unhappiness.

The material and industrial civilization grows very much and has reached almost to the age of its maturity, and miraculous discoveries and inventions are appearing day by day. The nations of the world have become close together almost as neighbours, and thus this globe becomes like a small home for the children of men. Yet at the same time, when we consider real civilization, which is to give a happy life to the people of the world, we realize that this has not yet been achieved.

In ancient times there were wars and fighting between Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Persians and Romans, each killing the other and destroying the property of the country. But in this age there are many different new nations doing the same thing, only the names of the nations have changed, and the weapons and instruments of destruction have become more powerful.

In this age there are many groups of people among the different nations whose hearts are full of hope and the desire for peace and unity. They are going to their churches and temples, and asking God sincerely to bring harmony and peace among the people. But they are not able to establish their idea in the world. There was, and is, something practically wrong in the world, and it is, as I believe, a wrong education.

The people of the world in different nations are preparing themselves for the next war, for another great conflict. They are training the children and giving them the idea of loving their own nation and worshipping it as they worship God, teaching them to love their own race as they are supposed to love God, and making them love their own ancestral beliefs and hate other thoughts of the world. Prejudice, misunderstanding and limitations are passing from the minds of parents to the minds of their own children.

Peace cannot be established until we establish it in the hearts of the people. That is the *real* peace and unity referred to. I have not any confidence in a superficial or political peace which may be established through different governments or leaders of the world. I believe peace must be established through the people themselves. And peace must be established in the hearts of our children.

Unfortunately, the education of the world is opposed to this purpose, and especially since the war, when conditions are worse than before. Since the great war all the nations of the world, even the small nations, have tried to make themselves strong and make the next generation have a strong feeling for their own race and nation, for they believe this is their only protection. This has been the root of fighting and separation in past ages and it is still ruling the world too powerfully. This cannot be changed except through a new kind of training and education for our children.

In my own experience I have tried to change the minds of those who have [XVI:4:497] grown up with this limited education and have tried to give them a universal vision and understanding of humanity, but unfortunately I was not able to change their minds and was not fully successful, for this limited kind of education has become established like an impassable mountain which cannot be moved or changed. However, in the pure minds of children it is easy to establish a new kind of education, and this is the only way for the future peace and unity of the world.

We read in the Old Testament that God said he created man in his own image. What is the image of God? Universal love and mercifulness. But you cannot find it among the grownup people of the world. When a little baby is born into the void he is created in the image of God. If someone should ask the little baby, "What is your nationality?" If he were able to answer he would say: "I do not know anything about nationality. I came from the invisible world and I consider just one nation, that is the world of existence. I must wait for my father and my mother and my teachers to make me belong to a limited nation." If someone should ask him, "What is your race?" He would say: "I know only the human race. I do not know more. I must wait for my parents and my teachers to make me a member of some special group." Also, if someone should ask him about his religion, or what tradition he follows, he would say; "I know nothing about different traditions, and my religion is purity of heart and simplicity. I must wait for my parents and my teachers to tell me what creeds and traditions they will make me believe."

Every little baby is created in the image of God, but the parents and teachers of the world are changing that image, and that universality, purity and simplicity of heart, and are giving the child a wrong and limited education.

The races—creationally, intellectually and spiritually—are all the same and equal. There is not any difference in the creation of God at all. All have the same power and ability to develop. The children of all the nations have not any innate prejudice or hatred of one another in the name of any race, nation or religion. What, then, has caused difference and separation? Wrong education.

We have in the literature of the East many stories of the life of the prophets, especially Jesus Christ, which are not found in your Christian Bible. In one of these it is said that once one of the apostles of Christ saw him running from one place to another without being pursued, and the apostle asked him, "Why are you running?" Jesus said, "I am running away from foolish people." The apostle said, "My Lord, you are the son of God, you have the power of the Holy Spirit, you gave life to the dead and cured all kinds of sickness; why are you running from foolish people?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is true that I did all those things, but I could not cure foolishness."

This foolishness is the separation of humanity and fighting in the name of different races, nations and religions. In reality there are not any different nations at all. This globe is one little home, and these different frontiers are not geographical and God made, but were made by man in the dark ages. People are fighting in the name of different nations, and this is superstition and imagination, for there are not different races. There is one human race living in different parts of this globe, each situated under its natural environment. There are not different religions at all. There are different creeds and interpretations of the human mind. The essential teachings of all those religions are the same and equal. All of them originated for the spiritual development of man and for creating love among mankind, not hatred and separation. So when there is not any difference in the nation or race or religion, why are the people separated in the name of different groups and fighting one another? This is foolishness, and Jesus Christ said he could not cure it. It is living even until [XVI:4:498] this time. Only through a new and true education for our children can we establish peace and

world unity.

If we should have this universal education among all the nations of the world in different schools and universities, to make our children realize that the world is one home and humanity is one race, and all the religions are one, and all the manifestations of God were divine educators and inspired by one God, and make them love all the nations as their nation, all the races as their own race, all the religions as their own ancestral religion, this will lay down the foundation of peace for the future. If we should establish this education in the world in this century, in the next century there would not be any more war, and the world of humanity would live in unity of spirit and real peace.

A large group of people who received the spiritual awakening through the manifestation of the glory of God during the middle of the past century, and having the realization of the foundations of world unity for the future, have tried to establish this education in the world, especially in the Orient. In these new schools of universal education they have gathered the children of various religions, races and nationalities, and new text books are in use containing beautiful and prophetic words of peace and love and harmony from the teachings of Jesus Christ, Isaiah, Moses and other Jewish prophets, Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha and other Indian prophets, and other great spiritual teachers and educators from the various countries of the world. Thus, when these children are graduated from such schools, having a universal vision about the world of humanity and the unity of all the religions, and being familiar with the sacred literature of all races, if someone should ask them, "What is your race?" they will answer, "My race is the human race", and if someone should ask them, "What is your nationality?" they will say, "I am a world citizen and if someone should ask them, "What is your religion?" they will say, "My religion is all the religions—that is, to love God and all humanity."

The idea is that the material civilization and the spiritual civilization must grow hand in hand. The material and industrial civilization, without the universal spiritual civilization, is the cause of war and will make the world of humanity dark as a hell, and will cause the greatest war in the future which will divide the world of humanity into two pieces. The material civilization, without the spiritual civilization, is like a dead body, which may be very beautiful, but it has no spirit. This spiritual civilization is the *life* of the world.

Now this is the foundation of future peace and world unity. We have to establish it ourselves, not wait for someone or some group to come from here or there to establish it for us. If we want to establish real peace, if we want to establish a true unity of the world, we have to take part in this activity, and through this the dream of all the past prophets will come true, and the prophecies of all the great manifestations will be fulfilled, and the time will come when the wolf and the lamb will dwell together, when different nations will live together as in different rooms of one home, and different races and different religions will be united and cooperate like different members of one family and different organs of one body, and the world will be a real paradise, peaceful and happy.

(Address given at the Conference for World Unity in San Francisco, 20–22 March 1925.)

XVI:4, July 1925 [XVI:4:505]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

There must be amongst the believers of God the greatest amount of love. The friends of God must be willing to sacrifice their lives for each other; their love must attain such heights idealism and self-abnegation. If such a state becomes realized, then this Cause has given its results; but if it does not attain to this summit of renunciation, then the Cause has not produced any fruit. The fruit of this Tree is Love.

The aim of the appearance of all the Prophets the Manifestations of the holy, divine verities, the revelations of the Holy Scriptures has been for the creation of love in the hearts of men.

His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, underwent all vicissitudes and trials in order that hearts might be cemented together. You must love each other very much.

The believers of God must become distinguished from all the rest of the world through their deeds. One of these deeds is love. By observing them, men must be astonished and wonder at this love existing amongst the believers of God, exclaiming rapturously, "What attraction! What affection! How they are united together! How they have become the expression one spirit and the emanation of one heart!"

XVI:5, August 1925 [XVI:5:510]

Unity—a divine bounty

From the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The human organism may be taken as an example of the bad politic. As long as the members and parts of the human organism are at peace, co-ordinate and co-operate together peacefully and harmoniously, we have as the result a perfection of life in its fullest form; where they differ we have the reverse. ... As long as there is an amicable understanding and unity of action and co-ordination among these elements which go to form this phenomenal being, there we have peace.

(Wisdom Talks, p. 21.)

He who expresses an opinion must not voice his opinion as if that opinion is correct or right, but he must give it as a contribution to the consensus of opinion, for the light of reality becomes apparent when there is a coincidence of two opinions. ... With the greatest or the utmost serenity, sobriety, soberness of temperament, with the utmost state of tranquillity, perfect composure and absolute calm and composure, should man weigh his opinions. But before expressing his own opinion he must weigh the opinion previously expressed. When he sees that the opinion previously expressed is better, he must immediately accept it. He must not be wilful in having an opinion of his own. This we call the en- [XVI:5:511] deavour at arrival at unity or truth. ... The members must be in the greatest spirit of fellowship toward one another, so that good results may be forthcoming.

(Wisdom Talks, p. 7.)

XVI:6, September 1925 [XVI:6:544]

How to make life successful

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Man becomes like a stone unless he continually supplicates to God. The heart of man is like a mirror which is covered with dust and to cleanse it one must continually pray to God that it may become clean. The act of supplication is the polish which erases all worldly de sires. ... Therefore, prayer is a key by which the doors of the kingdom are opened. There are many subjects which are difficult for man to solve. But during prayer and supplication they are unveiled and there is nothing that man cannot find out.

(From notes of Miss Albertson.)

XVI:7, October 1925 [XVI:7:575]

The two natures in man

From the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Then what is the particular function of man? It is that man should rescue himself, save himself, from the defects of nature, and become qualified with the ideal virtues.

Is it behoving for us to sacrifice these ideal virtues and these possibilities of advancement? God has endowed us with a power whereby we can even overcome the laws of nature. Ours is the power to wrest the sword from nature's hand and then use that sword against nature itself. Is it meet that we should be captives of nature still? That is, shall we allow no difference to exist between us and the ferocious animal, but continue exercising a ferocity like unto it?

(Compilation, *War and Peace*, p. 31.)

XVI:7, October 1925 [XVI:7:598]

The Chinese people are most simple hearted and truth seeking. In China one can teach many souls and train and educate such divine personages, each one of whom may become the bright candle of the world of humanity: Truly I say they are free from any deceit and hypocrisies and are prompted with ideal motives.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

XVI:7, October 1925 [XVI:7:600]

The duty of educated men, especially university presidents of the nation, is this: To teach in the universities and schools ideas concerning universal peace, so that the student may be so moulded that in after years he may help carry to fruition the most useful and human issue of mankind.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

XVI:8, November 1925 [XVI:8:607]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's message to the American people

Envy and rancour arise between nations, but because I find the American nation so capable of achievement, and the American government the fairest of the western governments, its systems superior to others, my wish and hope is that the banner of peace may be raised first on this continent, and that the standard of the Most Great Peace may here be unfurled.

May the nation of America and its government unite in their efforts in order that this light may dawn from this point and spread to all regions, for this is one of the greatest bestowal of God. In order that America may avail herself of this opportunity, I request that you strive and supplicate with heart and soul, devoting all your energies to this end, and that the banner of international peace in reality may be unfurled here, and that American democracy may be the cause of the cessation of warfare in all other countries ... I supplicate the Kingdom of God and ask that you may be instrumental in bringing about the "Great Peace" in this country, in this nation and government, and through them spread it to the world.

(*Wisdom Talks*, p. 13.)

I was most pleased with the results of my trip to America. I found a wonderful spirit of peace hovering over that vast continent. The people are inspired with the thought of peace and are working for its final realization. I hope that they will be the first nation to unfurl the standard of peace. I will ever pray for their success. Today this is the most great service to the world of humanity.

(Compilation, *War and Peace*, p. 188.)

XVI:8, November 1925 [XVI:8:610]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Today the most important purpose of the Kingdom of God is the promulgation of the cause of universal peace and the principle of the oneness of the world of humanity. Whosoever arises in the accomplishment of this pre-eminent service the confirmation of the Holy Spirit will descend upon him.

XVI:8, November 1925 [XVI:8:617]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

What is the greatest need of the world of humanity?

Today in the world of humanity the most important matter is the question of universal peace. The realization of this principle is the crying need of the time.

XVI:9, December 1925 [XVI:9:629]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The advent of Christ on this earth was a blessed day, for it was the day on which the Sun of Reality dawned; the day on which all beings were revived. In the world’s calendar, it was the beginning of a Heavenly Spring.

XVI:10, January 1926 [XVI:10:664]

The kingdom of God

Compiled from the utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Divine Kingdom is like a beautiful garden, but if the people who enter into that garden be blind, they cannot realize anything of the beauty of the flowers; and if they should be deaf, they cannot hear the melodies of the nightingale of that garden; and if they have caught cold, they cannot smell the fragrance of the flowers. What is the reason? It is because the deaf and the blind have not the capacity and ability to feel these things. It is as if they had not entered into that garden. And so it is with the divine Kingdom of God. Its stores are open: those who have capacity can get the benefit, and if they have not capacity they will get no benefit at all.

(Table Talks at ‘Akká, p. 17.)

XVI:10, January 1926 [XVI:10:690]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The honour and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches; material comforts are only a branch, but the root of the exaltation of man is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornments of his reality. These are the divine appearances, the heavenly bounties, the sublime emotions, the love and knowledge of God; universal wisdom, intellectual perception, scientific discoveries, justice, equity, truthfulness, benevolence, natural courage, and innate fortitude; the respect for rights and the keeping of agreements and covenants; rectitude in all circumstances; serving the truth under all conditions; the sacrifice of one’s life for the good of all people; kindness and esteem for all nations; obedience to the teachings of God; service in the Divine Kingdom; the guidance of the people, and the education of the nations and races. This is the prosperity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the world! This is eternal life and heavenly honour!

These virtues do not appear from the reality of man except through the power of God and the divine teachings, for they need supernatural power for their manifestation. It may be that in the world of nature a trace of these perfections may appear; but they are not established and lasting; they are like the rays of the sun upon the walls.

As the compassionate God has placed such a wonderful crown upon the head of man, man should strive that its brilliant jewels may become visible in the world.

XVI:11, February 1926 [XVI:11:697]

God’s perfect laws

Excerpts from the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh contains all the great laws and principles of social government. The basis of God's perfect laws is love for humanity and help for human needs. If all people followed this Revelation, the masses would be immeasurably uplifted and the Cause of God glorified. This development of humanity will be gradual, not sudden. It will surely come to pass; it is impossible to swim against the current of Niagara. Teaching the Truth is like building bridges by which humanity may cross over the current which threatens.

(Ten Days in the Light of Acca, p. 13.)

The economic question will have great importance in Europe and America. This question is impossible of solution except through the Religion of God. Day by day it is settled, then it comes up again. It cannot be settled save by the Religion of God. ... Nothing save the Religion of God will solve it. Nothing save the Religion of God. This will include both; the capitalists and labourers will be freed.

The solution begins with the village, and when the village is reconstructed, then the cities will be also. ...

(George Orr Latimer, The Light of the World, pp. 46-7.)

... All will be in the utmost welfare and comfort.

Notwithstanding this, it does not mean that all are equal. It cannot be so. For this reason, the prominent ones, the rich and the poor, will all be at ease. The people of the world are like an army. It has a general, officers and privates. It cannot be possible for all to be privates or all to be officers. Each of these ranks is necessary. But all of them from the leaders to the lowest should know their duty. ... This is the aim, there must be both those who direct and those who carry out the plans.

(George Orr Latimer, The Light of the World, pp. 49-50.)

... In America I said to the Socialists: 'These plans which you have will lead to no results. Suppose you take the property of the rich, [XVI:11:698] what will you do after one year? All of you will be in need and will die from starvation. But it cannot be so for neither you nor the rich will be at rest.' This question of strikes can only be solved through the Religion of God.

(George Orr Latimer, The Light of the World, p. 51.)

... In the world of nature there is separation, there is the struggle for existence. These are the natural tendencies. This is irresistible.

That which saves man from the world of nature is the Power of God. It is faith. It is the Fear of God and it will make man an angel; it transforms him. From all these conditions it frees him. It acts opposite to that of nature. It breaks the sovereignty of nature and without this (power) it is not possible.

(George Orr Latimer, The Light of the World, p. 115.)

It will not be possible in the future for men to amass great fortunes by the labour of others. The rich will willingly divide. They will come to this gradually, naturally, by their own volition. It will never be accomplished by war and bloodshed. The ruling power or government cannot treat the rich unjustly. To force them to divide their wealth would be unjust. In the future, proportionately about three-quarters of the profits will go to the workmen and one quarter to the owner. This condition will prevail in about one century. It will certainly come to pass.

(Ten Days in the Light of Acre, p. 5.)

The doctrine of "human solidarity" is well developed in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Human solidarity is greater than equality. Equality is obtained, more or less, through force or

legislation, but human solidarity is realized through the exercise of free will. The virtue of manmade manifest through voluntary philanthropy based upon the idea of human solidarity is as follows: Rich men give to the poor—that is, they assist the poor, but by their own desire. It is not well that the poor should coerce the rich to contribute to them. Such coercion would be followed by disintegration and the organization of the affairs of society would be disturbed.

The idea of human solidarity, based upon mutual help and understanding, would lead to peace and comfort of the world of humanity, would be the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity, and the means of prosperity and glory of the world.

(Compilation, war, peace and government, p. 94.)

XVI:11, February 1926 [XVI:11:701]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The law of God exacts that there should be neither excessive wealth nor, excessive poverty.

XVI:11, February 1926 [XVI:11:707]

The parliament of man

The following is part of an address delivered by Jináb-i-Fáḍil, Persian Bahá’í teacher, during his visit to this country. The notes have been contributed by Dr Edna Morgan McKinney.—Editor

The Parliament of Man, or the International Legislative Congress, is one of the fundamental principles of His Holiness, Bahá’u’lláh. Bahá’u’lláh over fifty years ago in numerous epistles and many tablets emphasized the organization, the establishment of the Parliament of Man for the safeguarding of the nations. He called all the kings, emperors and presidents of the world to this high station of universal fellowship and asked them to bring together a Parliament of Man which would vouch safe the rights of humanity. This heavenly gardener of the world of humanity planted this seed over fifty years ago in the hearts of the people. The seed pushed forth its head from the dark chamber of the soil and little by little it grew and developed until today it has grown up into a great tree. Its twigs and branches are extending into the hearts of many thousands of people in all parts of the world. The spiritually minded people, the forward looking men and women, realize, that although we have achieved great results in the past fifty years, the result of the future will be far greater; nay, rather, in a short time we will be able to herald in the dawn of Universal Peace.

That great gathering of international peace, the Parliament of Man, which even from a physical stand point will be the most perfect, the most artistic, the most comprehensive expression of universal ideals on the face of the earth, will be established in a spot of the earth which geographically and spiritually will be most favourable to the interrelations and intercommunications of all the races of the world. That assemblage will be composed of the wisest, the most far sighted, and the most perfect and sagacious statesmen and great leaders of the world. It will become an asylum and court of last appeal for all the children of men. It will be the objective centre towards which the eyes of all the people of the world will be turned. In other words, it will be the brain, not only the physical brain, but the international and spiritual brain, of the world of humanity, which will exist for the betterment of the world of man. The representatives of all the nations, whether great powers or small powers, will gather together in that great assemblage to discuss ways and means for bringing about the international solutions of all problems and they will constitute in fact the intelligence of the wisest men of all the countries. Laws will be legislated in the international tribunal which will vouchsafe the happiness and prosperity of the world of man. Those laws and those principles which will create better understanding between the people will issue [XVI:11:708] forth from the spring. The brightest intellects and the most luminous thoughts which will upraise and create a world of good for humanity will be emanated from that Parliament. Just as the

electric energy runs through the various wires to light the house, thus laws will be spread all over the world.

The world of humanity is like the individual body of man. The individual body of man is composed of many members and organs, every limb and organ has a function, and these functions work together orderly for the life of man. A man desires to accomplish certain things. He first of all will begin to organize in a way a parliament, a legislative parliament in his own mind and the functions of the brain begin to consult about the work that the man wants to do. In this consultation assembly in the brain the members sit together and begin to talk whether this work should be done or not, and this discussion takes place in the cerebrum, the seat of thought, and these ideals begin gathering their forces in the cerebrum and cerebellum, and they begin to discuss ways and means and to see if it is advisable to carry the thing out or not. The evil or good powers, such as the power of love, of hate; the power of absolutism, of co-operation; the power of light, of ignorance; gather their forces in the brain and they begin to debate, and, in the long run, one of these two elements will gain the victory over the other. The president of that consultative assembly in the brain is the faculty of reason. When this imaginative faculty is assisted by the power of the Holy Spirit, the result of consultation will be wonderful and conducive to much good. The final result will be in accordance with happiness and prosperity and welfare of the man himself. No sooner does the president of this consultative assembly put his seal of approval on this decision than all the other agencies of the organization in the body start to put it into action, these agencies being the executive department of that legislative assembly in the brain.

Now let us carry this simile a little further and apply it to social organization. It has likewise a consultative assembly, and that will be the international court of arbitration which will be composed of the brightest and most sagacious members of all humanity. That international Parliament of Man will be similar unto the brain and the mind. Just as the mind is the ruler in the temple of man, that larger mind will be a ruler in the temple of humanity, and you must then know that when these great minds come together, and they think in no other way than for the welfare of humanity, the laws and statutes issued from that great universal brain will be obeyed by all the members of the system without hesitation. The representative members of the Parliament of Man having effaced themselves entirely, they will be under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit and all that they will consider and all their deliberations and laws will be inspired by that great power, for they will think of nothing else but to upraise and spiritualize humanity. That is why His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh in many of his writings says that when the Parliament of Man is established and all these spiritual and wise representatives have come together, they will be under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit and all their laws will be in accord with the happiness of human kind.

Unquestionably there are certain conditions for the members of the Parliament of Man. The first condition [XVI:11:709] for the acceptance of the members is that they must be entirely free from religious prejudices. Second they must be entirely free from national bias and patriotic prejudices. In fact, they must be free and quit of all kinds of prejudices. They must extricate themselves from all the passions and desires of the material world which brings man into the snares of struggle for existence. They must be turned at all times toward the immortal kingdom of the world of truth. For if they are not free from all these prejudices and if they are not turning their attention at all times toward the Kingdom of God, and if they are not wholly devoted to the well-being of humanity, then they will not be able to reflect the truth and legislate just laws for all the children of men.

The more civilization becomes complicated the greater will be the number of human wants and the greater will be the contiguity of the different parts of the world and the neighbourliness of the world of mankind. Even today the world has reached to such a stage that the five continents of the world are like five neighbours.

The establishment of the Parliament of Man is an indisputable need and wise statesmen recognize the necessity of such an international assembly in order to equalize the rights and establish justice amongst mankind. We feel assured that one of the great nations of the earth which is civilized and illumined will put forth an effort and call the nations to the formation of such a Parliament of Man. This nation will invite the kings and presidents and rulers of all the other countries and they will come together and discuss dispassionately their economic and other problems and that nation will win forever a great name for all posterity.

About fifty years ago Bahá'u'lláh wrote as follows concerning the establishment of the Parliament Man:

“The kings of the earth (may God assist them) must arise and must hold fast to this cause that is, universal peace which will be the greatest means for the happiness and protection of the world. It is hoped that they may arise to do that which will be conducive to the happiness of the people. They must organize a great assembly where the kings or their ministers or counsellors present themselves and issue forth the command of conciliation and confederation and they must turn their thoughts from armament to disarmament, and if in the future one of the kings from amongst the kings may arise in rebellion, all the kings and all the rulers arise to quell that rebellion. Under such a condition there would be no need of large armies and armaments and the means of warfare, except that there should be enough for the protection of the internal affairs of the state. Should they attain to this great good the inhabitants of the countries will be living in the cradle of peace and happiness, and will be engaged in their own affairs and the lamentations and moaning of the majority of mankind will come to an end. It is more praiseworthy and it is much better if in that great assembly the kings and rulers themselves may be present. In the estimation of God that king which will arise from amongst the kings and rulers to issue forth this command, he will be the envy of all of them.”

XVI:11, February 1926 [XVI:11:714]

Dr J. E. Esslemont

The following brief biographical sketch of the life of one of our most distinguished Bahá'í teachers and authors, is contributed by the Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly of England. Attached to and made part of it is the appreciative expression of Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause.—Editor

John Ebenezer Esslemont, who passed away at Haifa 22 November 1925, was born on 19 May 1874, the youngest son of John E. Esslemont of Fairford, Cults, Aberdeenshire.

He received his preliminary education at Ferryhill public school and continued his studies at the Robert Gordon College and ultimately at Aberdeen University, where he graduated with honours in April 1898, obtaining not only the medical degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and of Surgery, but also a Philip Research Scholarship at the University. He spent the second half of 1899 at Berne and Strasburg, at both of which places he wrote papers on his research work, which were published and considered valuable.

Returning to Scotland in December 1899, Esslemont took up the position of assistant to Professor Cash at Aberdeen University, which position he held until 1901, when he went to Australia, remaining there two years. During this residence in Australia, he married on 19 December 1902.

Early in his life Esslemont's health proved a cause of trouble and anxiety, and in 1903 he was obliged to leave Australia, returning to Aberdeenshire, where he spent the summer, but found it necessary in the winter of that year to proceed to South Africa, the climate of which country it was hoped would prove beneficial to his pulmonary ailment. He remained in South

Africa for five years, returning to his native country in 1908, when he obtained the post of resident medical officer at the Home Sanatorium, Southbourne, Bournemouth which he continued to hold until 1923, when, owing to the death of the proprietor, the Sanatorium was closed and Esslemont found himself without medical occupation.

In 1924 he received a warm invitation from Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause, asking him to spend the winter at Haifa, and early in November he left London, proceeding direct to Port Said. Writing from Malta, the only port of call, on 15 November, Esslemont spoke of a delightful voyage and of feeling much improved in health. He spent a day or two in Port Said, where he was most warmly received by the friends, and arrived at Haifa on 21 November. Here he at once devoted himself to the work of assisting Shoghi Effendi in his multifarious correspondence, which work he continued in spite of ill health until the end.

Such is a brief account of the material side of Esslemont's life; it remains now to say something of the spiritual side, which continues and will continue for evermore.

Whilst at Bournemouth in 1912 Esslemont, in association with several other doctors, took up the question of State medical service and in 1914 he read a paper on this subject before the British Medical Association at its meeting at Bournemouth, which by the attention it aroused helped greatly the deliberations of the Advisory Committee on Public Health. The wife of one of Esslemont's associates in this work, who had met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London in 1911, first mentioned the Bahá'í Cause to Esslemont in December 1914, and lent him some pamphlets. He had been searching for Truth in many directions, but without finding that which could satisfy his innate religious feeling; on hearing, however, the Bahá'í message he was at once impressed by its beauty and thoroughness; so much so that without delay he procured all books in English which dealt with the subject. Most truly applicable to Esslemont are the words of the Beloved Master: "Blessed is he that the Word of God had reached him and had found his soul 'awake'."

His progress in the study of the Sacred Books was therefore rapid, for already in 1915 he was writing to the lady above-mentioned recommending what books she should read; and in February 1916, little more than a twelve-month after he himself first received the Glad Tidings, he wrote at length to a Bahá'í friend in Manchester in terms which show how thoroughly he had accepted the Bahá'í teachings and how profoundly he had already studied them. Thus he writes:

"We can each become like our friend if we make the great surrender of self and selfishness and become willing channels for the Divine Spirit. There is no limit to what the human spirit can achieve in the strength of Divine Inspiration. The germ of the Divine Nature is in every man; only most of us are not manifesting it. Instead, we are smothering it. It is like a plant, which needs sun and rain for its growth, the Sun and Rain of the Divine Love and Bounty. We have the power either to open our hearts to that Love and Bounty or to reject them. Only by turning our attention and interest away from the world and turning them to God can we grow in spirit. Such turning means attending to the reality and inner significance of things instead of to the outward appearance. It means that our interest in and love for everything in all God's universe should vastly increase, but that we should regard all outward appearances but as the garments of the inner realities, as dawning places for the Glory of God. Oh! may people all over the world soon turn to God, as revealed in Bahá'u'lláh, with humble and contrite hearts, begging for His forgiveness and blessing and imploring His mercy and bounty! Then shall His Kingdom come in men's hearts and the whole world become one home and all mankind one family."

This extract from one of Esslemont's early letters shows so clearly the spirit which illumined all his words and actions, that its insertion here will be forgiven by those who read his stirring admonition and appeal. That he himself did in very truth turn to God as revealed

by Bahá'u'lláh, and that having so turned, he never deviated by one hair's breadth from the path of love and righteousness is a fact known to those who had the privilege of meeting him and listening to his glowing talks as well as to those who are acquainted with him only through his writings inspired as they are with that same loving spirit which was so apparent to those who knew him personally.

Esslemont's work as a personal teacher, apart from his letters, began in Bournemouth, where a group of adherents to the Cause gathered under his auspices, resulting in the formation of a Spiritual Assembly of [XVI:11:716] which he was the first chairman, a position he continued to occupy until he left England in 1924. In this connection it may be mentioned that he was also the representative of the Bournemouth group on the National Spiritual Assembly of England, of which body he became Vice President, and which benefited much by his counsel and advice.

Not satisfied with studying the Bahá'í writings for himself alone, which led him to learn Persian so as to read them in the original language, Esslemont set about writing for the instruction of others. The first nine chapters of his justly celebrated book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, which were written during the [First] World War, were submitted to the Beloved Master when peace led to the reopening of communications with Haifa, with the result that Esslemont received an invitation from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to visit Haifa, which he did in the winter of 1919–20. During this visit the Beloved Master discussed the book with the author, making suggestions for its improvement, and indeed read through and revised some three and a half chapters, which had been translated into Persian for the purpose.

The third chapter relating to Bahá'u'lláh was first published as a separate pamphlet, and it was proposed to issue a new edition on the occasion of the Conference on some living religions within the British Empire which was held in London in the autumn of 1924; on consideration, however, it appeared that a more general pamphlet would be both more appropriate and more useful, and thus "Bahá'u'lláh and His Message" came to be written by Esslemont, who also wrote the small leaflet, "What is the Bahá'í Movement?"

It was not only by his printed works that Esslemont became known to the Bahá'í world, for he was an indefatigable and voluminous correspondent not only in English, but also in Esperanto, of which universal language he was a complete master. Amongst his last labours during his stay at Haifa in 1925 was the revision of the Esperanto translation of the above mentioned leaflet which had been prepared for the meeting of the Universal Esperanto Congress at Geneva in August of that year. Another work on which he was also engaged towards the close of his earthly career was the translation into German of his large book.

These evidences of Esslemont's labours in the service of the Cause remain open to all, but of the loving services which he so gladly and selflessly rendered to all with whom he came into personal contact, only they can give full account from the inmost recesses of their hearts; but surely all whom he helped will forever bear in mind the inestimable benefits conferred upon them by his words, and more, perhaps, by his living example [XVI:11:717] of what a true Bahá'í should be, for he was nigh unsurpassed in selflessness, in utter devotion and obedience to the Bahá'í teachings, in love and trustfulness to all his fellows.

No better appreciation of Dr Esslemont and of his services to the Bahá'í Cause can be given than that contained in the following letter which the Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause wrote after the passing of him who loved the Cause so well and served it so faithfully:

[refer to *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 7–8.]

XVI:12, March 1926 [XVI:12:728]

The existence of God

Excerpts from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

We believe in a Universal Essence or Reality which is purified or exalted above all mention, and which cannot possibly be conceived of by the mind of man. But we can prove Its existence by Its signs which we see in the surrounding creation. ... We prove the existence of the Universal Essence by qualities that are perfect. ...

We ask: Is it possible that perfection can exist in the branch of a tree and not exist in the root of the tree? Is it possible that perfection shall exist in a drop of the sea and not exist in the sea itself? Is it possible that perfection will not exist in man himself, but will exist in a hair of his head, which is only a part of him? Is it possible that man, who is a part of the whole, may have qualities of perfection which cannot be attributed to the Essence or Reality? Or, is it possible for man to be a point of perfection and that real Essence be deprived of perfection? A child could not imagine such a foolish thing. ...

We say that the Essence, or Real- [XVI:12:729] ity, is purified from all words, all description and all praise; that the Essence would have first to be understood and then judged. But man cannot understand the Essence.

(Daily Lessons Received at Acca, p. 30.)

The beings in this existent world are created in different conditions. There is the mineral condition or degree, the vegetable condition or degree, the animal condition or degree, and the human degree. Every higher degree comprehends or includes the lower, but the lower degree does not comprehend the higher. For example, man comprehends the kingdoms below him, but the mineral does not comprehend the three higher kingdoms. Whatever progress the mineral kingdom may make, it can never reach a condition of knowing the power of growth, and in the same way whatever progress the vegetable kingdom may make, it can never imagine the condition of the animal kingdom, and the animal cannot imagine the human reality. Though all of them are creations, the difference in degree prevents the lower from comprehending the higher.

As this is so, how can man, the phenomenal being, understand God? How can the creation understand the Creator? How can the art imagine the artist? *Man cannot understand the Reality of Divinity, or know whether he has consciousness or not. The consciousness of God is not the consciousness which we know of. ...* Man's consciousness is a quality of phenomenal beings, but the consciousness of God is the quality of an Eternal Reality. Therefore we cannot compare one with the other. The consciousness of God is sanctified and purified from the consciousness of man.

(Daily Lessons Received at Acca, p. 33.)

XVI:12, March 1926 [XVI:12:744]

The import of religion

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl

The following interesting and valuable treatment of the necessity of religion in the life of the individual and the reuse, is from the pen of one of the greatest of Arabian scholars of the last generation, now deceased. He travelled and lectured in this country about twenty years ago. The structure of thought on the part of Arabian scholars—in fact, all the scholarship of the Near-East which goes back to Arabian learning—is distinctly different from our own western structure, yet is just as logical; and, penetrating these quaint differences that appear in, the dialectic of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, we will be interested in the deep thoughts of our oriental

The real import of *religion* is not known to the majority of men. Even the necessity of religion for the preservation of human society is a point of disagreement among philosophers. In other words, some the men of learning believe that religion is the only foundation upon which the preservation of human society can be secured; while, on the other hand, many among them persist in the contrary opinion. Some think religion the best of divine bounties and consider it as essential for the protection of humanity as the mind is for the body. They assert that just as it is not possible for the human body to accomplish beneficial and universal achievements without the faculty of mind, so it is impossible for the affairs of mankind to be correctly governed without a religion; nay, rather, they say mankind cannot continue in the world without it.

Others consider religion an institutor most detrimental to humanity; account it diametrically opposed to civilization and destructive to human society. To them religion is represented by ecclesiasticism. They persist that religion is that whereby the masses have been prevented from studying useful sciences and arts, and nations have been taught to entertain hostility and enmity toward each other, causing repeatedly destructive warfare. Those who hold this view are so strongly opposed to religion that, in many instances, they even dislike the word and shun its mentioning.

When a discerning person reflects upon the conflicting opinions of learned men concerning the usefulness or uselessness of religion, he will readily understand that the only reason for this difference is the fact that the true meaning of religion and its source is not known among men. Some may ask: how can the meaning of religion be unknown to the leading philosophers and men of learning; and how can it be that men of science are unable to understand the import of religion, ignoring its source and foundation while at the same time they are able to perfect great inventions and make useful discoveries by which humanity is greatly profited and put under obligation to them?

In order to throw light upon this difficulty let us consider the following point: Let one among you submit the following question to any ten or twenty men of learning: "What is religion, its source and foundation, and what is the reason of disagreement among men of learning in accepting or rejecting religion?"

To this question each will render a different answer. Thus you will realize that these ten or twenty learned men do not agree upon the same statement. If one investigate historians of religion and theological [XVI:12:745] writings compiled by philosophers and scholars during the nineteenth century, he will clearly discover their contradictory opinions concerning the origin of religion and its meaning. Did Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, who lived in the seventeenth century in England (and who is represented by the English generally as the leader and standard bearer of irreligion) and Isaac Newton, the standard bearer of religion, both of whom were great philosophers and inventors—understand the meaning of religion in the same way and agree in their views concerning the truth? Likewise other learned men, such as John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftsbury, John Foland, an Irishman, Julius Caesar Vanini, an Italian, Cosmo Ruggeri, a Florentine (and profligate)—all of whom were considered great philosophers—were deniers and antagonists of religion. There were also numerous other men of learning, who entertained different views concerning religion; and some entirely opposed it. To review the names and lives of these men would necessitate large volumes. We omit them for the sake of brevity.

Among religious adherents, the Catholics practice the worshipping of images and pictures of His Holiness Christ, and homage to the relics of saints. On the contrary, Protestants account such worship as idolatry and polytheism. These two communities have mutually contradictory opinions regarding religion; yet both are founded in refined and civilized

nations far advanced in scientific knowledge and enlightenment. Is not their difference of view in such important matters a mighty evidence of the fact that the source and meaning of divine religion are points of disagreement among them? Such is also the case among other nations and religious communities as the Muslims, Brahmans, and the followers of Confucius. All these differ over details of religion.

We should comprehend the meaning of religion, and recognize the proofs and arguments concerning its source and foundation. It is asserted by men of learning that among animals, man alone is created with natural adaptation to civilization and social life. All other animal species are minus this tendency to an organized society; whereas, the life of man depends upon the congregation of individuals and co-operation in different arts, occupations, etc. Without a special community, it is impossible for man to properly conduct the affairs of life.

Mankind alone has been endowed with rational faculties, spiritual perception, comprehension of general ideals, and the gift of invention. Owing to this fact, man has the power of subduing and controlling the animals; whereas, the animals are not endowed with the faculty of influencing man.

This is what is meant by the verse revealed in the Holy Scriptures, "God has created man after our own image." Thus we know that, from the beginning, God has chosen the human form, which is the most excellent among created things, to be His manifestation and has distinguished the temple of man from animals by making him the dwelling place of His Holy Spirit.

Now that it is understood that man is in need of society and co-operation, not only to assist his progress toward perfection, civilization and enlightenment but also to assure the continuity of his race and progeny; therefore, it is apparent he should institute laws to accomplish this co-operation and mutual aid, and protect human society from dispersion and disintegration, which is contrary to the [XVI:12:746] natural divine principles embodied in the creation of man.

Thus we say that mankind is in need of two kinds of power for the preservation of society.

1. A power regulating laws which may guarantee order and discipline in the affairs of each individual.
2. A penetrative power necessarily imminent in these laws, to influence individual obedience and training in such regulations.

For should there be no laws, the high would oppress the low, the strong would be unjust to the weak, lives and properties would be sacrificed to pillage and destruction, blood would be shed, virtue and honour defamed, tranquillity and peace—which constitute the basis of civilization and refinement and are the protective spirit of human society—would be removed and annulled; and finally society, which assures the perpetuity of mankind, would be overthrown and disintegrated.

You have no doubt heard or read in histories the records concerning large races of former times, and as no laws were instituted among them, were accustomed to live as wild animals in forests and mountain caves; their manner and disposition similar to those of beasts of prey. Large numbers of such tribes of men were thus reduced to extinction, such as the "primitive Arabians or lost tribes", whose names and the manner of whose brutal life are still recorded in the pages of authoritative historical works. But owing to regulated laws, the descendants and posterity of these same savage tribes have in the present age far advanced in civilization, and are noted for learning and enlightenment. Even in the present day, various great nations, tribes and peoples, exist in different parts of the world who have not been lifted above a state of barbarity, and still live like animals. Some of them are so steeped in savagery that they practice cannibalism, and resemble beasts of prey more than men. In fact, most of the animal

species, even reptiles, abstain from feeding upon their own kind.

A slight reflection upon the above mentioned points will clearly show that the cause of this decline is absence of laws for the preservation of society. If laws were enacted and enforced among these uncivilized nations and barbarous tribes, they would after a time advance in knowledge, learning, enlightenment, civilization and refinement; attain to prosperity and affluence, and produce philosophers and men of learning who would secure honour and respect for their race and posterity. But those among them who continued in their actual state of barbarism would gradually decline, finally be extinguished, and their names effaced from the records of the world. If their names should survive, they would serve only to render them the subjects of admonition and warning.

The first thing God did for the order and preservation of the world was to create religions, which are the only means of civilizing the world and preserving order. Religion is the only means of elevating the people. If a man be a great savant, but an atheist, we recognize his talent and call him great. Yet we are not sure of his integrity; but if he is a religious man in the true sense, he will be honest and upright, and we have then [have] full trust in him. By religion is meant the knowledge of God, because God first created us to know Him, that He is powerful and mighty in all things, that He encompasseth all things; therefore He made the laws and ordinances which are important for us to know.

XVII:1, April 1926 [XVII:1:6]

The Divine Revelators

Excerpts from the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

That reality which is the Essence of God cannot be conceived of by any understanding, therefore God has created a Manifestor, and in Him is reflected that Sanctified Reality.

The Manifestations are points or sources of assistance for all people, and they are the Educators of man. They are like mirrors, and the Reality the Essence is like the sun.

A Prophet brings a spiritual civilization and after that is established material progress follows.

(Daily Lessons Received at Acca, pp. 34, 54.)

XVII:2, May 1926 [XVII:2:39]

Difficulties in the path of prophethood

From the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Do the Manifestations differ in degree? These supreme holy souls are God-like in their attributes. The garments in which they appear are different, but the attributes are the same. In their real intrinsic power they show forth the Perfection of God. The Reality of God in them never varies; only the garment in which the Primal Reality is clothed is different according to the time and place of their Appearance and Declaration to the world. One day it is the garment of Abraham, then Moses, then Jesus, then Bahá'u'lláh. Knowledge of this Oneness is true enlightenment. Some see the garment only and worship the personality; some see the Reality and worship "in spirit and in truth". Some of the Hebrews admired the embroidered beauty of the garment of Abraham, but were blind to the Real Light which shone upon the darkness of the world through him. Moses was denied; Jesus was denied, crucified; all have been denied and persecuted for this reason. Men see the garment and are blind to the Reality; worship the personality and do not know the Truth, the Light Itself. Some worship the Tree of Life, but do not eat of the blessed fruit of the Tree. Therefore differ- [XVII:2:40] ences and disagreements arise in religious belief. ... Find the Light itself and there will be no difference of opinion or belief as to the personality or degrees of the Manifestations of God.

(Ten Days in the Light of Acca, p. 31.)

The word of God is revealed according to the degree of spiritual sight, no matter who the messenger may be. ... People do not receive the Manifestation of God because they are veiled by their imaginations. Imagination is one of our greatest powers and a most difficult one to rule. Imagination is the father of superstition. ... Through imagination men receive a distorted view of a former Manifestation and are prevented from recognizing and accepting the Truth and Reality of the present one. They are veiled from the Light and Glory of God by imagination. These veils prevent the true Light from entering the soul. Therefore men follow the false light of their imaginations and cling to error instead of truth. Thus the Egyptians were veiled from the Light of God in Moses. The Jews were veiled from the Glory of Jesus simply because they did not know Moses rightly and so were blinded to the one he promised would come after him. Today Jews, Muslims and Christians, not seeing the former Manifestation with true vision, are veiled from the Glory of God in Bahá'u'lláh.

(Ten Days in the Light of Acca, pp. 28–30.)

One of the greatest veils is literal interpretation of the prophecies. ... Again, many refuse the Manifestation in His Day because they do not want to walk the hard road of devotion and servitude, but prefer the easy road of hereditary belief.

Misconception of the Word of God and its meanings is another great veil which imagination throws over the soul and by which the Light is lost. Also people inherit their belief from parents and ancestors and follow it blindly, too negligent to know and see for themselves. Negligence and apathy are heavy “veils of glory”.

(Ten Days in the Light of Acca, p. 30.)

XVII:2, May 1926 [XVII:2:42]

The Day Star

Soheil Afnán

For any appreciation, much less a proper understanding of the remarkable life of the Báb, the real significance of his mission, the purport of his extensive Writings and the far reaching influence of his teachings, nothing is more necessary than a survey, however brief, of the social and spiritual conditions of Persia in the middle of the last century.

The central government in Ṭihrán, enjoying a somewhat nominal sway over the various Persian provinces, was an absolute monarchy and corrupt to the very extreme. By an act of favouritism and graft a man would gain the most important office in the land only to be hurled down again and replaced by one who gave a higher bid. The economic conditions were equally precarious; the country lived under a feudal system similar to the Middle Ages in Europe. Society was governed by a low standard of morality. Religion, which has throughout the history of the East, much more than in the West, been the most important factor of civilization, and which has ever inspired the imaginative mind of the Easterner with everything that was pure and sublime, had for the most part lost its spirit and degenerated into a matter of forms and social rites. It still held sway over the illiterate and ignorant masses, which comprised the extreme majority of the people, and in the hands of the self-seeking and corrupt clergy proved a force by which they could challenge even the mightiest power in the land. The true religion of Islám no more existed, but had been overlaid with an admixture of extraneous doctrines, and the clergy amongst themselves had been divided into various schools of thought bearing hardly any resemblance to the tenets of the mother faith. In the words of an eminent European writer, “Islam survives as the badge of a conservative institution for the protection of the vested interests of the ruling classes, as a war cry for enlisting in their service the passions of popular superstitions and also as a customary

common denominator of heterogeneous schools of thought that accept its inherited forms and ceremonies, just as many Europeans continue to conform to the traditional practices of a Christian church long after they have rejected its dogmas, or ceased to be influenced by its spirit. The result has been, on the one hand, a lapse into mere sensualism, and, on the other, a tendency towards extreme asceticism.”

It was at this time that the Báb appeared. Not only to combat and condemn irreligion and indifferentism, not only to cast aside the veil that hid the corruption of government and church, but to open up a new vista of spiritual life and to prepare the people for the appearance of a “great Person still behind the veil of glory”. He had come, he said, to wipe out fanaticism, to pull down the ponderous edifice of dogmas and rituals that the church had raised only to cover up the ignorance and illiteracy which had killed that spirit of thought and art that was once the pride of the world. It was the dawn of a New Day and with it must come hope and vigour. He exhorted the people to cleanse their hearts and minds of age long superstitions, prepare themselves for the coming of the day. The doings and machinations of the clergy, their explana- [XVII:2:43] tions of the verses of the Qur’án were wrong and corrupt, and in brief all these things must vanish before the piercing, burning light of the new Sun of Truth dawning upon the world.

Nothing is more remarkable, nothing more surprising than that this youth of twenty-five, even in the short period of his ministrations, gathered around him vast multitudes, filled them with zeal and enthusiasm, and out of the abundance of his heart sent them to preach the new gospel. And the ghastly deaths that each of his disciples was sure to meet dampened not the fire of their spirit, but rallied to his standards increasing numbers every day. Nor were his recruits mere underlings and malcontents. The leaders of thought, the most eminent of the clergy, governors, soldiers from the army and also the common man on the street, sat humbly at his feet and drank deep from the ever flowing fountain of spiritual knowledge and truth that flowed from the tongue and pen of the Youth of Shíráz. The King of Persia, hearing of this young divine, dispatched an eminent high priest to investigate the matter. But the old erudite theologian was so enraptured by the young prophet that he fell at his feet and asked to be accepted as a humble adherent. He did not return to the King, but went out to preach the new Faith and ultimately suffered martyrdom with joy. A distinguished man, old in years and experience, hearing one day of the Báb and his teachings, casually in his business store, did not take even time to let his family know, but travelled at once over hills and dales for hundreds of miles just to meet the Prophet his soul had foretold. Mothers watched their husbands and children executed and cut to pieces even with scissors, rulers chose the scaffold to their seats of might, and one man with burning wicks in his flesh sat up and asked the curious mob to make way for his royal “cortege”.

That the Báb’s Writings in the six eventful years of his life, most of which were spent in prison, comprise easily over twenty volumes, is to many very surprising. And his works extend over a wide range of religious subjects from simple prayers to religious treatises and commentaries. In the *Bayán*, which was his great book and which his martyrdom left unfinished, are to be found the main tenets and principles of the new faith. It was there that he explained the symbolic meaning of heaven and purgatory to which the ignorant Muslims clung rigidly, and the religious cycles which have given a new significance to human history. Most of his Writings were written for the people in Persia, and as he said he had come to destroy the old bonds of superstition and to prepare the people for the one whom he called “He whom God shall make manifest”.

Before this growing tide that swept Persia from one end to another, the government and the clergy stood not with alarm but agony. Every conceivable measure, the most barbarous butchery the world has ever seen, helped only to fan the more the growing fire of the early adherents of the faith. The Báb was sent from one town to another and in every case most of

the officials turned Bábís. He was sent to prison and the jailers fell at his feet; Christians, were chosen to escort him and they joined his faith. In the northernmost castle of Persia they confined him and the old Kurd in charge of the prison believed in him.

In the public meetings where the clergy tried to refute his ideas and prove the futility of his claim, he came out victorious; and the insults and bastinadoes he suffered belittled him not to the hundreds that every [XVII:2:44] day lay down their lives for his sake.

Finally the last and only measure that the clergy could conceive of combating and killing the growing faith was to execute the young Prophet of Shíráz. This they carried out in Tabríz when they shot him, together with one of his earnest disciples. In a miraculous manner the first volley shot by a battalion of soldiers left him totally unhurt and the soldiers found him in a little room in the barracks writing a line of poetry on the wall. It was to a second volley by another battalion—the first battalion refused to shoot again—that he finally succumbed.

The Báb was dead, but not Bab-ism. The divine spirit he had infused into the hearts and minds of his zealous and earnest adherents was not only destined to leave a profound and deep felt influence upon the life and thought of the people of Persia, but to pass beyond the frontiers of its mother country and to inspire the people of many lands with that deep understanding of God and religion which lies at the bottom of all sound progress. It was left for Bahá'u'lláh, whose appearance the Báb had foretold, to carry the standard he had so valiantly raised from one country to another, and to sound the call of unity and brotherhood throughout all the nations of the world.

XVII:2, May 1926 [XVII:2:55]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

How wonderful it will be when the teachers are faithful, attracted and assured, educated and refined Bahá'ís, well grounded in the science of pedagogy and familiar with child psychology; thus they may train the children with the fragrances of God. In the scheme of human life the teacher and his system of teaching plays the most important role, carrying with it the heaviest responsibilities and most subtle influence.

XVII:2, May 1926 [XVII:2:61]

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Bahá'í temple) of 'Ishqábád, Russia

Charles Mason Remey

The following article describing the first Bahá'í religious edifice that has been constructed is written by an architect who has travelled much among the Bahá'ís of Persia and the Orient. He has himself given much attention to religious architecture, and has made a series of designs for Bahá'í Temples based on the religious architecture of Persia, India and Arabia. The architectural features of this Temple necessarily appeal to him.—Editor

'Ishqábád,¹ one of the chief cities of Russian Turkistán, is just north of the Elburz mountains, which separate the desert plain of western Turkistán on the north from Persia on the south. The city lies on a plain a short distance from the mountains, which here are rugged and rocky. The town is quite modern in aspect, being laid off with gardens and broad streets meeting at right angles. Rows of trees along the sidewalks remind one of a western city, while the low buildings, the walled gardens, and the waterways which flank the streets and are fed with the water of streams from the nearby mountains, are strikingly oriental in character.

This city was but a huddle of mud huts when Bahá'u'lláh first directed some of his followers to settle there during the days of the most severe Bahá'í persecutions in Persia.

¹ 'Ishqábád means "City of Love".

There in 'Ishqábád these friends found a refuge of peace and tranquillity where the Russian government protected them and allowed them the free exercise of their faith. Thus this city became in reality as well as in name the "City of Love".

The Bahá'ís of 'Ishqábád form a strong element in the life of the place and are highly thought of and protected by the government. The Bahá'í Cause was first brought to the public notice in 'Ishqábád by a martyrdom some thirty five or forty years ago. It was the case of a learned man of some prominence, who met his death through receiving many wounds at the hands of two assassins. These two individuals had been instigated by five Moslems, who took this measure to try to stop the spread of the Cause in that city. The Russian authorities took the matter in hand and condemned to death all of the seven men. The Bahá'ís then petitioned the Governor to spare their lives. Since he did not have authority to do this, a petition to the same effect was sent to the Czar, who granted it; and thus the prisoners were sent in chains to the mines of Siberia. Here is but another instance of the growth of the Cause through persecution, for from that time on the government not only allowed the Bahá'ís to carry on their worship, but it protected them and showed them special favours.

During all of the governmental changes in Russia the Bahá'ís have continued in safety there, since it is understood that they are obedient servants of the government and harbour no sedition against the law of the land.

At about the close of the last century some of the friends in the Orient arose, fired with spiritual fervour, to build the first Bahá'í religious edifice to be erected in the history of the Cause, known as the *Mashriqu'l-Adh-kár*. [XVII:2:62] Following the guidance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Ishqábád was the place chosen for the site, and Áqá Siyyid Taqí Afnán, one of the most tried and venerable of the friends of the Cause, was appointed to direct this vast undertaking.

'Abdu'l-Bahá himself established the style and the general lines upon which the temple was built—namely, that it should be built upon the plan of a regular nine sided polygon surrounded by loggias and in the midst of a garden at the intersection of nine avenues, with its principal entrance facing the direction of the Holy Land—the composition of the building being similar to that of some of the great temples of Persia and India.

The services of an engineer and architect were secured, the Bahá'ís throughout the Orient arose with fervour to give of their means toward the building, and within a very few years the imposing structure was completed.

The *Mashriqu'l-Adh-kár* is situated in the heart of the city. Its high dome stands out above the trees and house tops, being visible for miles to travellers as they approach the town. It is in the centre of a garden bounded by four streets. In the four corners of this enclosure are four buildings. One is the Bahá'í school; one is the traveller's house, where pilgrims and wayfarers are lodged; one is for the keepers; and the fourth is to be used as a hospital. Nine radial avenues approach the temple from the several parts of the grounds, one of which, the chief approach to the building, leads from the main gateway of the grounds to the principal portal of the temple.

In plan the building is composed of three sections; namely, the central rotunda, the aisle or ambulatory, which surrounds it, and the loggia, which surrounds the entire building. It is built on the plan of a regular polygon of nine sides. One side is occupied by the monumental main entrance, flanked by minarets—a high arched portico extending two stories in height, recalling in arrangement the architecture of the world famous Taj Mahal at Agra in India, the delight of world travellers, many of whom pronounce it to be the most beautiful temple in the world. This, the principal doorway, opens toward the direction of the Holy Land. The entire building is surrounded by two series of loggias—one upper and one lower—which open out upon the garden, giving a very beautiful architectural effect, in harmony with the luxuriant

semi tropical vegetation which fills the garden.

The interior is elaborately decorated in plaster relief work. The writer is under the impression that eventually it is the intention to treat the interior in colours and gold, but when he visited 'Ishqábád in 1901 it was still in the simple white stucco. The exterior is also done in stucco, which in that climate resists quite well the action of the elements. The walls, which are of brick, are massively built, while the floors and dome are of concrete and iron. The whole structure impresses one by its mass and strength.

The rearing of this temple in the East has been a great source of inspiration to the Bahá'í people the world around. Who can estimate the effect that is produced by this building? It is the cause of great strength and unity among the Bahá'ís of the world, being the House of Unity open to all peoples. It is a haven of rest to many a soul and a beacon to guide those who seek the Kingdom of God.

XVII:3, June 1926 [XVII:3:76]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Man may live a few days in this world, sleeps, eats, drinks and then passes away, is confined into a subterranean dungeon and goes to the lowest of the low, leaving no trace and no name behind him. But if, on the other hand, he turns during the days of his life to the divine kingdom, acquires human perfections and the excellent attributes of the world of humanity, his life will be a fruitful one, he will pertain to the kingdom and will become heavenly and illumined.

XVII:3, June 1926 [XVII:3:84]

Her Majesty, Queen Marie

Martha L. Root

*The following article, highly interesting in itself, comes to us most significantly just at the time when a remarkable statement of Queen Marie appeared in a syndicated form in the newspapers of America in which she described her impressions on reading Dr Esslemont's book, **Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era**. It is a wholehearted commendation of the Bahá'í teaching. Queen Marie has been for years noted as a personage deeply imbued with idealistic and humanitarian motives. It was our privilege in 1909 before her accession to the throne, to visit her summer home in Sinaia, Rumania, at a time when it was unoccupied by her. We were deeply impressed with the spiritual atmosphere of her living apartment furnished largely with her own handiwork, the carving of the furniture, the paintings, the beautiful altar, all made by herself and all indicative of a deeply spiritual nature. Her books, her thoughts, as one gleaned in a hasty passage of her home, were such as to indicate the kind and spiritual ruler that she has become.—Editor*

Having written to her Majesty, Queen Marie of Rumania, sending with the little note the book, "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era", an invitation came from the Royal Palace that she would see the writer the next morning at twelve o'clock. It was a precious letter, for the Queen was not receiving any one because she was in personal sorrow in those days of 15 January to 1 February 1926, when the writer was in Bucharest.

The palace was not the one in the centre of the city which is used more for state functions, but another great palace farther out, a distance of one half hour by carriage. No need to ask, next morning, if this is the right direction: the hundreds of car passengers, diplomats, military officers, horseback riders, tradesmen and drivers of ox carts formed two great colourful, interesting processions, one going each way. It looked as if all roads in the Balkan lands must be leading to this Rumanian King and Queen's Palace, much the same as the mighty Danube River after touching many lands chooses Rumania in which to seek the sea.

In the distance one sees the splendidly wooded grounds of the palace. They are like a

winter fairyland, enchanting with light snow and icicles half revealing, half concealing their forest greens. Soon one reaches the great gates where officers in fine uniforms stand at attention, and others are stationed down the winding road leading to the *porte-cochère*.¹ One and all when they see the letter, bow, then motion the coachman forward. So everything went easily, just like a shadow moving round and losing itself in the noonday sun. The palace was one of those art creations so satisfying to the eye in colour, form and proportion. As one approaches, one sees that it is not going to be necessary to ring a bell to enter a Queen's home. Men in stately livery assist one, their eyes are kindly, and instantly one feels that a regal atmosphere is also an inner something indescribably extraordinary as well as gorgeous externally. The butler with almost Gladstonian manners shows the way up a wide circular stairway to a drawing room. He informs a Lady in Waiting who comes at once. She is a young woman very pleasing, [XVII:3:85] and she has her knitting, a scarf, in one hand. She smiles and greets me and says that Her Majesty, the Queen, will receive me. Passing down the wide halls hung with art treasures we enter an immense music room where flowers, tapestries, cloisonnés seem vibrant with beauty and perfectly blended.

However, one gives them hardly a glance, for one feels the presence and sees in the distance a most beautiful woman emerging through the portieres. The Lady in Waiting whispers so low that it is like a breath, "Her Majesty", and then disappears, softly closing the doors behind me.

Queen Marie of Rumania comes quickly forward, smiling her welcome. How beautiful she is! She looks like a flower herself, in her blue silk morning dress with gold low shoes and hose. One can understand how all love and adore their Queen, for she possesses beauty and charm of mind and manners, while from her grave blue eyes flashes the light of a great spirit; she knows, she understands, she loves! The meeting that morning, was very simple, very great, the visitor felt the Queen's friendliness.

Sitting down together by the table, Her Majesty expressed thanks for the book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, and said that she was reading it with deep interest. She remarked how people's lives differ: some can be like apostles and travel over the whole world to spread divine Teachings, others perhaps have the task of King or Queen whose responsibility is to bring a country and its people to the highest development possible. She showed how a King and Queen are the supreme court of justice when all else has failed; when justice has not been found anywhere else, theirs is an ear that can still listen, a hand that can still give, a heart that can still pardon.

Her Majesty proved how awake a Queen must be, always watchful, always ready. She must never avow herself tired, never admit that she is at the end of her tether. There must never be any hour of the day or night when the one in need cannot come to her.

Later the conversation turned to religion. Her Majesty expressed herself that every good part in every religion should be respected, that it is not the form but the spirit which is to be considered. She said: "I myself am a Protestant; my husband is Catholic and the children are orthodox. We have always had perfect understanding, each has respected the other's religion. No one ever tried to make me anything except a Protestant, and the people have always found me broad toward other religions. I have never been able to understand this spirit of intolerance and I am astonished at the degree of love that is wasted. If people would only turn to good all their knowledge, their heart, their intelligence!"

Then Her Majesty emphasized how the ills of the world would be so much less, if only people would never put them into words. "For instance," she said, "young people go out full of confidence, skirting a danger perhaps not bad to them, and which perhaps would not lead to

¹ Gateway for carriages or vehicles leading into a courtyard.

bad if the people around them did not fan this thought. No one wishes to be bad. The reason I am so much in sympathy with your Bahá'í Teachings is because it is the good influence which the young should find instead of the bad. The bad is so much more frequently emphasized, that the good often goes under. Sometimes I am accused of not speaking loud enough in indignation against the evils, but life is so full of pitfalls and temptations! I assure you that anyone can come to me and confess his wrong and I will try to help him out of it. All work, all ambition, all thought should be constructive instead of destroying." [XVII:3:86]

Her Majesty, in speaking of her own life, said that no matter how hard hit she was, she always took it as something necessary to her own final completely unselfish self. One saw her big universal outlook, her courage in dark hours, for at the moment when the writer saw her, she had just been going through a great personal grief.

Several questions were asked by Her Majesty concerning the Bahá'í Movement for world peace. She was interested in all the Principles and in the teachings for the inner progress of the soul.

Seeing the writer's Esperanto pin she asked about the progress of Esperanto in the different lands. It was explained that the five pointed star stands for the light to the five continents. The white background is the colour of peace; the green is the Esperanto colour of hope and the word, "Esperanto" means "one who hopes". The little star was presented to Her Majesty and she is wearing it. She was delighted to hear that a new clubhouse has just been presented to the Esperantists of Bucharest by Mr Henry Fisher, one of the great promoters of Esperanto in Europe. She also said: "Esperanto has my greatest sympathy, and although I am so busy I do hope I shall have time to study Esperanto." She was greatly interested in all plans for the Eighteenth Universal Esperanto Congress which is to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland the first week in August. Her Majesty, before her marriage was the Princess of Edinburgh.

Speaking of the Universal Educational Congress which was held in San Francisco in 1923, and in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1925, Her Majesty said she hopes that this Congress will convene, sometime, in Bucharest and that she will herself, come to the sessions.

Her Majesty, Queen Marie of Rumania is an author and some of her works have been translated into Esperanto. She has great capacity and works very hard to promote many universal movements for the better understanding of the nations and the welfare of humanity. The week the writer was there she gave her patronage and much help to the formation and first brilliant meeting of "The Society of the Friends of the United States in Rumania". The object of this society is to perpetuate the existing friendship between the people of Rumania and the United States through a study of the English language, American history, literature, art, science; to facilitate exchanges of scholars of both countries; to invite and receive officially American visitors desiring to know Rumania better. The speakers were Professor Leon Feraru of Columbia University, New York, who is the Chairman of the Literary Committee of "The Society of Friends of Rumania in New York"; American Ambassador to Rumania, Mr W. S. Culbertson and Princess Cantacuzene, Vice President of the International Council of Women. Professor Feraru said there were six hundred thousand Rumanians in America; Mr Nicholas Lupu, Leader of the Peasant Party, another speaker said, "America is not bound by a treaty with Rumania, but she is bound by her ideal of justice, stronger than any treaty, and according to her ideal she cannot do us any injustice."

The world admires Her Majesty, Queen Marie because she is so daring and so enthusiastic in all that she undertakes. She interests herself in all international movements based upon broad and universal principles of right and justice. When the writer said good bye to this great-hearted, wise, beautiful Queen and gave her Bahá'u'lláh's, *Seven Val-* [XVII:3:87] *leys*, a wonderful little book which shows how the spirit can progress through seven stages to perfect freedom, she went away. She too, carried a gift from Her Majesty—a lovely new ideal

of queen-womanhood. It had been a most happy hour. Riding back through the winter beauty, she remembered a curious saying of the Rumanian peasants, "Perhaps the time of afterwards has come!" IT HAS COME! Though one can hardly vision it with earth bent eyes, those thousand years of peace foretold in the Bibles of the world are to begin in this century!

XVII:3, June 1926 [XVII:3:97]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

O thou lover of reality! His Highness, the Merciful, has manifested love and harmony to the world of humanity, so that all of the individuals may find a complete connection with each other and the lights of the Oneness of God may appear in the human world. For this He sent the Holy Manifestations; revealed the heavenly books; established the divine religions so that these holy souls, these revealed books, and these divine religions may become the cause of unity, agreement harmony and love in the world of humanity. ... As this age is a luminous age and this century the century of knowledge, new teachings are necessary, a new effulgence is essential and a new life is needed. The souls cannot accept the ancient ideas, a new thought and new teachings are necessary that shall be the spirit of this age and the light of this century.

XVII:4, July 1926 [XVII:4:104]

The one divine light

Compiled from the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Whatever there is in the world of contingency is a symbol of the spiritual world; whatever there is on the earth is a symbol of heavenly things. For example: In the spiritual world there is the light of guidance, in the outer world there is the lamp, its symbol. In the divine world there is love, symbolized in the material world by magnetism. So there are four seasons in the perishable outer world—spring, which brings the vegetables, refreshes the animals, and promises fruits; summer, which charges the trees with fruits; then follows the autumn, after which comes the winter when the trees are bare and empty. Such is the condition of the spiritual world which has its four seasons—spring, summer, autumn and winter.

When Jesus Christ appeared, it was the last days of the winter time when the people, who are the trees of the divine garden, were deprived of their fruits; that is, of their divine characteristics and divine moralities. As nature needs a springtime to revive the trees, so the spiritual nature needs a springtime to fill the garden with flowers and fruits. It was through the manifestation of Jesus Christ that this spiritual springtime began. Summer followed with its fruits and later autumn came. Winter followed and the trees were naked; that is, the people were without their divine qualities. So again, it became necessary that a new springtime should come. ...

Christ himself said that whatever happened in the cycle of Moses would occur again in his time. Therefore these occurrences were repeated. We cannot say that what happened in the time of Christ was remarkable since the same had happened before. We cannot say that it is extraordinary that the present springtime follows that of last year. We cannot say this year that these blossoms are useless because the same ones appeared last spring. The last spring gave out its benefits, and summer, autumn, and winter followed. If a new spring did not come to the world everything would die. In every springtime there will be repeated what has happened in previous spring times.

(Table talks with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Notes of Mrs Winterburn, pp. 4, 19.) [XVII:4:105]

Bahá'u'lláh is the same Light in a new Lamp. To see, we must look at the Light and not at the Lamp. This is spiritual sight. The sun is one orb but it has different rising points on the horizon. One point, was Jesus, one Moses, one Bahá'u'lláh, and so on. Therefore be a lover of

the 'Sun' and worship it, no matter at what point it may arise. If you worship the dawning place you will fail to see the Sun when it arises in another point of the horizon. Many stand at the old point and worship while they are losing the Light of the Sun in this Manifestation. True lovers of the Sun worship the Sun itself and not the point of its rising. They see and know the Light.

(Ten Days in the Light of Acca, p. 28.)

XVII:4, July 1926 [XVII:4:129]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

As this is the radiant century, it is my hope that the Sun Truth may illumine all humanity. May the eyes be opened and the ears become attentive; may souls become resuscitated and consort together in the utmost harmony as recipients of the same light. Perchance God will remove this strife and warfare of thousands of years. May this bloodshed pass away, this tyranny and oppression cease, this warfare be ended. May the light of love shine forth and illumine hearts and may human lives be cemented and connected until all of us may find agreement and tranquillity beneath the same tabernacle, and with the standard of the "Most Greats Peace" above us move steadily onward.

XVII:5, August 1926 [XVII:5:161]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

The schools should be free from all religious and racial prejudices, for these often prevent good results from being obtained. All schools and colleges should have these three foundations:

First: They should be sincere in the service of training the souls. They should discover the mysteries of nature and extend the circle of art, commerce, etc., so that ignorance and the lack of knowledge will pass away and the lights of science and knowledge shine forth from the horizon of the soul and heart. In all schools and universities, a general rule for training should be made.

Second: Training in morality is necessary, so that the pupil's good conduct may remain unchanged and so that they may progress in a most befitting manner, become possessed of lofty ideas, lovers of the world of humanity, and so that they will hold fast to the spiritual perfections and to that which does not displease God.

Third: Service to the world of humanity should be obligatory. Every student should know, with perfect certainty, that he is the brother of the people of all religions and nations and that he should be without religious, racial, national, patriotic or political bias, so that he may find the thoughts of universal peace and the love of humankind firmly established in his heart. He should know himself as a servant of human society of all the countries in the world. He should see God as the Heavenly Father and all the servants as his children, counting all of the nations, parties, and sects as one family. The mothers in the homes, the teachers in the schools, the professors in the universities, and the leaders in the lofty gatherings, must cause these thoughts to be penetrative and effective, as the spirit circulating in the veins and nerves of the children and pupils, so that the world of humanity may be delivered from the calamities of fanaticism, war, battle, hate and obstinacy, and so that the nether world may become the paradise of heaven.

XVII:6, September 1926 [XVII:6:185]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

The first thing to be considered in every art before studying it, is to know what benefit comes from that art, and what fruit and result can be obtained. If a universal profit accrues to

the majority of mankind from useful sciences, surely a man should exert himself to study them with his whole soul. If the sole result of his study is to consist in useless reasoning, following after the imaginations of others, and becoming a centre of quarrel and dispute out of which no one can derive any advantage—what is the sense of it, why should a man spend his life in empty discussion and argument?

XVII:7, October 1926 [XVII:7:233]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Originally mankind was one family united and compact; later the members of this happy family were divided and subdivided through ignorance and prejudice. Now the time has come again for their final unification. Universal peace will bring about this long-wished-for consummation.

XVII:8, November 1926 [XVII:8:239]

Universal peace

Excerpts from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

How is universal peace to be established? By the education of the public with the sentiments of peace. Today the full realization of universal peace is the panacea of every disease. ... This military and naval expenditure is a great disease. ... The remedy of this disease is through universal peace. This will insure public safety. Today that which is the cause of dispersion is war. If the nations enter into a faithful agreement to [XVII:8:240] leave off all warlike preparation at once, they shall secure for themselves and their posterity eternal welfare. They shall become freed from every difficulty and international confusion. This end must be obtained through the development of the intellects and the inculcation of peaceful ideals in all the institutions of modern civilization.

(Compilation, *Peace and War*, p. 180.)

Man in this world is the edifice of God. He is not a human edifice. If you destroy an edifice built by man, the owner of the house will feel grief indeed and will feel wrath against you. How much more when man is destroying an edifice founded by God.

Undoubtedly he deserves the wrath of God. God has created man noble. God has created man a dominant factor in creation. He has specialized man with particular bestowals. He has conferred upon him mind; He has given him perception; He has given him *the faculty of memory, the faculty of discrimination*; He has endowed him with keen perceptions, the five senses. With all His good gifts to man which were to make him the manifestations of virtues, which were to make him as a radiant candle, which were to make him a source of life, which were to make him an agent of constructiveness, shall we now destroy this great edifice of God? Shall we destroy to its very foundation this great body social or politic? ... There is no baser state than that of the ferocious type. There is no greater degradation for man than this. There is no worse debasement than the battlefield. It is the cause of the wrath of God. It is the cause of the destruction of the foundations of man.

(Compilation, *Peace and War*, p. 30.)

XVII:8, November 1926 [XVII:8:251]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

God has given to man the wonderful gift of scientific knowledge by which he has discovered that none can escape this law except man himself; he alone can control, can, by his knowledge and power, rise above this law. ... It is clear that man alone is able to control the laws of nature.

Look at God’s great gift of power to man, by which he is able to do so much for the

advancement of civilization! Then reflect on the terrible misuse of this divine gift. Instead of using it to promote love, concord and friendship between nations, behold how destruction receives its weapons, hatred and wholesale slaughter of mankind employs the inventions of science; instruments for committing injustice are manufactured, swords instead of ploughshares are forged. O, the pity of it all!

He should use his power for good, to bring the fruits of civilization into the possible possession of all men, to encourage harmony and kindness, to produce concord amongst men; for this reason God gave this divine gift.

XVII:10, January 1927 [XVII:10:303]

The wisdom in tests

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

It is my hope that during the time of tests thou mayest remain in the utmost firmness and steadfastness, so that like unto a lamp thou mayest be protected within the glass, and be not extinguished by the blowing of winds. ... Be thou resolute and steadfast. When the tree is firmly rooted it will bear fruit, therefore it is not permitted to be agitated by any test. Be thou not disheartened! Be thou not discouraged! The trials of God are many, but if man remains firm and steadfast the test itself is a stepping stone for the progress of humanity.

(From Tablets to American believers)

XVII:10, January 1927 [XVII:10:329]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

There are two influences tending toward prosperity and progress which emanate from the forefront of advancement of the world of humanity. They remind the negligent and awaken them that sleep, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, power of utterance to the mutes and life to the dead.

One is the influence of civilization, that development of the world of nature that concerns the material life of man. It promotes physical advancement and cultivates the social virtues. The laws and deductions of science, so indispensable to progress, are the product of lofty thoughts of sound minds, the accumulated results of the efforts of ancient and modern scholars. The most effective power for the promotion and dissemination of this influence is just government.

The other is the divine influence, the holy and spiritual revelations which insure eternal glory, everlasting happiness, the illumination of the world, the appearance of merciful phenomena in the world of humanity and perpetual life. The fundamental basis thereof is the teachings and the precepts of the Prophets, the dictates and attraction of the conscience which belong to the realm of morality. Like unto the lamp they illuminate and brighten the depths and recesses of human realities. The effective power of this is the Word of God!

XVIII:5, August 1927 [XVIII:5:133]

Immortality

From the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

In the revealed Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá there are to be found almost limitless teachings on the subject of "Life after death". We have attempted to select only a few for the purpose of this compilation.—Editor

Know with true certainty that man was not created for the life of this world as it is mortal and there is no certainty therein. Is it possible that this great creation and glorious being should terminate in mortality? Is it meet that the result of God's great creation which is

unlimited—that is, man—should live in this world a certain number of days with many difficulties, troubles, without repose and rest, and then die and end in mortality? No; verily, by truth, this is not meet! Nay, rather, this glorious being and grand creation was made for the eternal life, spiritual happiness, revelations of the heart, divine inspiration, heavenly perfections and virtues of the kingdom.

(Tablet to the Bahá'ís in Ithaca, N.Y.) [XVIII:5:135]

But regarding the progress of the spirit in the world of the Kingdom after its ascension, it is wholly beyond space and time, and developments after leaving this body are spiritual and not terrestrial. It is like unto the progress of the child from the world of the foetus to the world of maturity and intelligence, from the world of ignorance to the world of knowledge, from the station of imperfection to the pinnacle of perfection. As divine perfections are infinite, therefore the progress of the spirit is limitless.

(*Daily lessons in Acre*, p. 89.)

XVIII:6, September 1927

[XVIII:6:175]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

In the scheme of human life the teacher and his system of teaching plays the most important role, carrying with it the heaviest responsibilities and most subtle influences. A teacher is like unto a gardener. Just as a gardener sows the seeds and watches carefully over their sprouting, looks after their growth and progression, so also a teacher must watch over the education of the children and inculcate in their young lives the highest ideals of truth and justice. ...

By every means at their disposal they must inculcate into their growing bodies, souls, minds and spirits, the principles of sincerity, love, trustfulness, obedience, true democracy, and kindness toward all races; thus hereafter the world of civilization may flow in one mighty current and the children of the next generation may make secure the foundations of human solidarity and goodwill.

XVIII:7, October 1927 [XVIII:7:217]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

The advancement of civilization, material perfections and human virtues will bear no fruit or result unless joined to the spiritual perfections, merciful qualities and sound morals, and the happiness of the human world which is the original goal will not be attained. For although through the advancement of civilization and the adornment and refinement of the material world happiness is realized, and the sight of hopes fulfilled in perfect beauty wins the heart, yet concomitantly, great dangers, severe ordeals and awful catastrophes are involved.

Now when ye behold the order and regularity of countries, cities and villages, the attractive adornment, the delicacy of the blessings, the suitability of implements, the ease of transportation and travelling, the extension of knowledge of the facts of the world of nature, the great inventions and gigantic undertakings and the fine and artistic discoveries, ye shall say that civilization is the cause of happiness and the development of the human world.

Yet again when ye glance over the inventions of infernal instruments of destruction, the creation of forces of ruin, the discovery of fiery means which cut at the root of life, it becomes plainly evident that civilization is twin with savagery and a concomitant thereof unless material civilization be aided by divine guidance, merciful appearance, heavenly thoughts, and becomes joined to the spiritual states, the perfections of the Kingdom of God and the divine bounties. ... Therefore this civilization and material development must be led by the great guidance; the mundane world must be made the place for the appearance of the bounties of

the kingdom; material advancement must be made twin with merciful revelation. Thus may the human world appear as the representative of the heavenly assembly on the plane of existence, and the exposition of divine evidence may reveal itself in the greatest sweetness and loveliness. Thus may eternal happiness and glory find realization.

Know ye verily that the happiness of the world of humanity is dependent upon the unity and solidarity of mankind, and that material and spiritual progress both rest upon universal friendliness and love among human individuals.

XVIII:9, December 1927 [XVIII:9:261]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The glory and the exaltation of the station of Christ is as clear as the sun at midday from the books and tablets of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. The object of the Bahá’í Cause is identical with the object of the Bible and the Gospel. The Bahá’ís must be informed as to the contents of the Old and New Testaments.

Concerning the faith of the Bahá’ís as to the station of His Holiness Christ, they believe He is the Word of God.

There are prepared souls in every religion. Today God is working in all the churches instructing many souls in celestial brotherhood. These souls are related by invisible and spiritual ties and are being ripened by the Holy Spirit.

XVIII:9, December 1927 [XVIII:9:283]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s table

Shahnáz Waite

This is the first of a series of articles or compilations giving interesting experiences of those who came into personal contact with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His lifetime either in the Holy Land or during His visit to the West. We will welcome any contributions to this section which we purpose to continue from time to time.—Editor

At no time in the history of human events has such a table existed as existed in the prison home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in the penal colony city of ‘Akká, Syria, during a period extending from about 1896 to 1909 when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, having been set free in 1908, moved with His family to Haifa, ending this chapter in the history of the Bahá’í Cause. The comparatively few who were privileged to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in this prison, and sit at this table as His guests, coming from all parts of the globe, and drawn by the magnet of the “Fire of the Love of God” will never forget it. The realization of the spiritual significance of this experience, its unparalleled uniqueness; its tragic and dramatic setting, and the effect upon the hearts of those so honoured as to “break bread” together under such sacred circumstances, grows clearer, and more wonderful as the years pass. Many of the band of pilgrims who were called to this spiritual banquet have joined the “choir invisible” and are with the Master behind the veils in higher realms today; and yearly the band grows less. Future generations will have knowledge of this—the Master’s table—only through long transmitted narration.

It was at this table that all of the so-called “Table Talks of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” were given, and later were brought back to America by the different pilgrims and shared with friends. Many of these “Table Talks” have been published.

It was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s custom to have the meals served in courses. At the beginning, before the first course was served, and then at the end of each following course, while the dishes were quietly removed, He would speak to the friends along spiritual lines only, giving forth the great Teaching of Bahá’u’lláh in a simplified form, expounding the Word of God from the

sacred Scriptures of the different religions, and at the same time feeding the material body of man. As each course was served, all would eat, then at its removal 'Abdu'l-Bahá would take up the thread of His discourse just where He had left off, with perfect continuity, so the material and spiritual meal progressed side by side.

The penetration of His Word was most marked. He would tenderly express some beautiful thoughts, like the following, for instance, and magically they would be understood both by "mind and heart", and could never be forgotten:

"There is a kind of food which needs neither knife nor fork and of which every one may partake with perfect ease and benefit. It is the food spiritual. This food brings life and stimulation instead of indolence and apathy. It brings peace and content to the one who partakes of it; the more food the more joy and peace. For the Spirit is always eager to furnish sustenance to the soul.

"God be praised. At this table we are joined in Spiritual relationship. We are all of one family because we are under the Shadow of Bahá'u'lláh. Look at the earth. Of itself it is worthless, yet it can reflect the light and heat of the sun. Clouds gather, the rains descend and [XVIII:9:284] the earth becomes fruitful. In the same way the Spirit of God gives life to the soul of man and the Breeze of God awakens the soul from its sleep. Peter was only a catcher of fishes yet his attainment was very great. Amanias the High Priest was much greater in the eyes of the world yet he was deprived while Peter received the bounty of God.

"That which is most delicious in the world of existence is love. Love is the best condiment. ... For instance, the food on this table is nothing, indeed very simple; yet because it is prompted by love it is delicious.

"The Lord's Supper of Christ was indeed a very common thing; but because there was excessive love among the individual members who convened there, that table surpassed the royal tables, and it was established as the Lord's Supper. Even now at this time it is known as such. This was due to the love which existed between Jesus Christ and the disciples."

It is hard to bring to the Western mind, so filled with the material things of life, and with the "pomp and circumstance" of the social and ritualistic customs, an adequate description of this remarkable table, for the environment that surrounded it was one unknown in this "land of the free". Picture if you will one whose rank was that of the oldest son of a Prince of Persia, who had known vast wealth and every luxury His country afforded, imprisoned forty years because of His faith in the Message of Universal Brotherhood and Unity given forth by His Father, Bahá'u'lláh, the Revealer of the Bahá'í Revelation and His promulgation of these Divine Ideals. Stripped of all wealth, all of the simplest comforts of life, a prisoner amid the scum of the Orient, the felons of Syria, yet creating about Him an atmosphere of absolute spirituality, purity, beauty and refinement. A prison home with its stark, bare whitewashed walls and meagre furniture, without the walls of its gardens the rabble of 'Akká, the poor diseased and degenerate, yet within its doors one found heaven; found a luminous "White Spot" in the midst of darkness and despair.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has said: *"The spiritual life is symbolized by simplicity and contemplation, combined with usefulness and well directed activity"*; and this was the rule whereby all of the inmates of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home governed their lives.

The now world famous dining room, in the centre of which stood the Master's table, faced the blue Mediterranean Sea, and overlooked the ancient double seawall of 'Akká. There were one or two paintings, by Bahá'í artists, unframed and framed, which hung upon the wall; an

old-fashioned clock which ticked drowsily; some modern cane seated chairs, the gift of some of the friends who had visited there; and the Master's table with its immaculate appointments. There were always fragrant flowers upon it, and the simple Persian food was ever served with a [XVIII:9:285] spirit of utmost love, which added much to its delicious flavours. The perfume of white jasmine and of attar of roses filled the air. In one corner near the door of entrance stood a basin of water, in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá, according to an Oriental custom, always washed His hands after eating.

Horace Holley in his *Modern Social Religion* has so beautifully described this the Master's table in these words: "To 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as a Teacher and friend, came men and women from every race, religion and nation, to sit at His table, like favoured guests, questioning Him about the social, spiritual or moral program each had most at heart; and after a stay lasting from a few hours to many months, returning home, inspired, renewed, and enlightened. The world surely never possessed such a guest-house as this.

"Within its doors the rigid castes of India melted away, the racial prejudice of Jew, Christian and Muslim became less than a memory; and every convention save the essential law of warm hearts and aspiring minds broke down, banned and forbidden by the unifying sympathy of the Master's house. It was like King Arthur and the Round Table, but an Arthur who knighted women as well as men, and sent them away not with the sword but with the Word."

It was indeed the supper of Divine Love, of Unity and spiritual communion. Here Buddhists, Pársís, Zoroastrians, Muslims, Christians, Jews, and all other faiths met and in perfect love and unity, at that blessed table, "broke bread together", in the Kingdom of Divine Love. No greater symbol of unity could be given in the Orient than this breaking of bread together, for it stands as a symbol of recognition and union. This in itself has been one of the great miracles performed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá—what greater one could we ask? To take these hostile races and religions, that outside of the walls of that prison home were at war with each other, their hearts filled with hatred and oppression—and through the Power of the Love of God, which flowed through Him to merge them all into one. This is the miracle of miracles, and the one upon which the salvation of the world depends. Without this unity and love it needs must perish.

During one evening meal, at the Master's table, as the writer sat next to Him listening to His words of infinite wisdom, she looked at a glass filled with water in front of her place, and the thought involuntarily flashed through her mind, with a great yearning, "Oh! if only 'Abdu'l-Bahá would take my heart and empty it of every preconceived idea and earthly desire, just as one would take this glass and empty it, and then refill it with divine Love and understanding." It was just a flash of consciousness, yet 'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed to read it. He was in the midst of His discourse; He stopped abruptly (but no one seemed to notice it) and addressed His attendant who served the friends. He said but a few words in Persian to him, then continued His conversation. No one's attention was interrupted by [XVIII:9:286] the circumstance; all were listening eagerly to His every word said to them. The attendant came quietly up behind the writer, reached over and removed her glass from the table and taking it over to the corner of the room, emptied its contents of water into the water basin, then returned the empty glass to its former place. Still no one noticed what had happened. 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued to speak, the while reaching over and taking the water bottle on the table in His hand, and in the most casual manner, still talking on the subject of His discourse, refilled her empty glass, then set the water-bottle back in its place. No one save the writer and 'Abdu'l-Bahá knew what had transpired. Her heart was filled with unspeakable joy. This proved conclusively that the innermost thoughts and the innermost desires of the hearts of all present were an open book to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and that His love encompassed all.

To have sat at the Master's table, and to have heard Him say: "You are gathered together at this table, so may you be gathered together in the Kingdom, and as you are with Me today, so shall you be throughout all the worlds of God", is to know what the Reality of the Lord's Supper truly is and to have received God's Benediction.

XVIII:11, February 1928 [XVIII:11:350]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Consider the influence of the Word of God, that although people of totally different temperament, religion, culture and ideas, live in the Pilgrim House [used for the guests of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family] never do we hear even a faint whisper of ill-feeling against each other; they are welded together by the Alchemy of Truth. If you take ten bars of iron and tie them together no matter how closely, they will not become one. But when a metallurgist comes on the scene, he takes the ten bars, melts them in the furnace and casts them in one mould. Only through this fiery process will their atoms commingle with each other, become united and inseparable.

This is the work that Bahá'u'lláh has done and is doing. He has not tied together the iron bars—the religions of the world—with the rope of indulgent tolerance or ordinary amenities of human existence which are liable to break at any time, but with the fire of the Love of God He has melted them first, and then casting them in one mould of spiritual brotherhood, He has rendered the most marvellous services to the world of humanity. Bahá'u'lláh is this Divine Metallurgist, and those who have deep insight and look around the world witness daily the workings of the principle of fusion.¹

XVIII:12, March 1928 [XVIII:12:366]

Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana

Martha L. Root

Miss Root's first audience with Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania was on 30 January 1926, in Cotroceni Palace, in Bucharest. This magazine had an article in June, describing that remarkable and significant visit—Editor

Coming from Geneva and the League of Nations, with stops at Trieste and Belgrade, the writer arrived in Bucharest on 5 October 1927. It was not this eager, colourful "Paris of the Balkans"—so fascinating to tourists, so different from any other city—that had drawn her. Calea Victoria, Bucharest's fashionable thoroughfare, that is always so thronged one wonders how the many motor cars and bevies of horse-drawn carriages ever "arrive" through such a narrow, picturesque moving picture of aristocratic Rumanian life, was just as interesting as before. She liked riding through it all again, coming up from the train to her small hotel.

However, her real visit to Bucharest, aside from her lectures on Bahá'u'lláh's Principles and her newspaper articles, was to bring the love and the sympathy of Bahá'ís all over the world to Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania. The Queen at that time was in the period of great mourning for her husband, His Majesty King Ferdinand, who had passed on 20 July.

All the royal family was spending the month of October in Sinaia at the Queen's palace, Peleshor, which is just beside the greater palace, Pelesh. The two are one estate, but Peleshor is especially the home of the Queen, where she has her books and does much of her writing in summer.

Word came through Madame Simons Lahovary, Lady in Waiting, that Her Majesty would

¹ A similar passage is to be found in *Star of the West*, XV:7, p. 208.

receive the visitor on 9 October. This was purely a favour, because at this time the Queen was not seeing anyone. The writer went to Sinaia, four hours distant, by one of the fast express trains, the afternoon of 8 October. There was a pouring cold rain, but through the storm one could catch glimpses of what magnificent forests, what glorious scenery, have these [XVIII:12:367] “Transylvanian Alps”, these Carpathian Mountains, whose heart is Sinaia.

Next morning the air was fresh and bracing and the sun was shining lovingly over this Sinaia, one of the most beautiful little summer resorts of fashion. The villas grace the mountain slopes as jewels in a tiara of autumnal glory. The Bahá'í decided to walk to the palace Peleshor to enjoy the thrill of passing through those enchanting roadways leading gracefully up and up, and to see at close range the splendid little seventeenth century church and monastery, shining like a pearl of purest white in this diadem of mountain splendour. Deep in her heart, too, was the longing to go on foot and humbly to the first Queen of the whole world who had publicly written of Bahá'u'lláh's great Principles for this universal cycle. Her Majesty Queen Marie's grandmother, Queen Victoria, of Great Britain, had said openly of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings: “If these are from God, they will stand!” and she had preserved His Tablet (letter) to her for later generations to see and read. In the centuries ahead when Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings are lived and fully understood, the name of Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania will stand as the first Queen who wrote and explained the power of these universal principles to bring the permanent peace.

Walking in that paradise of natural beauty, the writer ascended the roadway slopes and passed through that white court, where the Rumanian church stood in its ivory loveliness and the famous old monastery stood loyally beside it. It is the church of the Royal Family, where unnumbered prayers have been offered for Rumania, this country with its dramatic history, more tragic, more swift than the masterpieces of the poets. It is the church where His Majesty the little King Mihai goes to service and where his seventh birthday, 25 October, would soon be celebrated in a very great way. Perhaps to this very spot Jesus Christ's trustworthy Disciple, Andrew, had come, for Rumanian tradition says that Andrew, from that faithful Band of Eleven, came to Rumania to bring the Glad-tidings of the Christ. How well he had done it! For this Sunday morning, after TWO THOUSAND YEARS, all Sinaia, all Rumania, had already gathered very early to sing praises to Christ!

The roadway from the church led up directly into the great park, picturesque with broad, sweeping landscapes and century old trees which showed their generations of care. The writer walked on past the magnificent immense Palace Pelesh, where King Ferdinand, with his Queen wife's arms about him lifting him higher, had courageously passed from this home into the House of Many Mansions promised by His Lord, for King Ferdinand was a devout and true Catholic. How well the writer remembered seeing him two years before, that morning in Cotroceni Palace in Bucharest, where she was waiting a moment in a small drawing-room just before she was taken into the great music room to be presented to Her Majesty the Queen! The King was about to pass through this small drawing-room with some friends, but seeing the American he took them through another salon. He had appeared so tall, so noble, so serious!

Coming to the architecturally smaller Palace Peleshor, built by the late King Carol for King Ferdinand and Queen Marie and their children, the pedestrian found it situated in a perfect setting of terraced gar- [XVIII:12:368] dens. If the royalty of the world have more beautiful environment for country palaces than this in Rumania, the writer has never seen them.

Palace Peleshor is large—it isn't small, only it seems so, because it stands near the great Palace Pelesh. (The Palace Pelesh takes its name from the little mountain stream called Pelesh which passes through the place.)

What a feeling of silent, unutterable sympathy one has coming to this palace where Her

Majesty Queen Marie and Her Royal Highness Ileana, where His Majesty the little King Mihai and Her Royal Highness Princess Helen, His Royal Highness Prince Nicolas, Their Majesties King George and Queen Elizabeth, of Greece, were staying for a few weeks, and each was deeply missing the loved one who had gone from among them!

Ladies in Waiting stood in the great hall to receive the visitor. They were the same fine women who had greeted her two years before in Cotroceni Palace, but now they were dressed all in black. One explained that Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana was still at the church, but had left word she would receive the guest when she returned a little later. The other Lady in Waiting took the writer up the broad, circular open stairway to the Queen's drawing-room on the next floor.

Her Majesty Queen Marie stood in the centre of this luxurious salon where the sunshine yellow, soft colours blended into a harmony of pastels. How beautiful she was. All in black draperies, with bands of white about her head and binding the wrists! Only a great artist could have designed such a mourning costume as she wore that day, but the Queen is an artist in everything she wears, and does, and says. But it is the radiance in her eyes and the tender smile one loved most and will remember longest. Her welcome was solemn, sacred, cordial. When she heard the deep greetings from the friends she replied with a wonderful message to the Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause, Shoghi Effendi, and to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sister, who is called The Greatest Holy Leaf, and to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife, The Holy Mother. She added: "Tell them, also, I hope some time to go to Jerusalem and 'Akká and Haifa. I should like to pray at both graves and to meet the Family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá." [XVIII:12:369]

She sends this message to the Bahá'ís of the United States: "I am so happy to be able to thank, through the Bahá'í magazine, *The Star of the West*, all those Bahá'í friends in America who sent me the lovely bouquets in all the cities through which I passed. How it touched my heart! Wherever I came, those nosegays always on my table, nothing personal, never saying who had brought them, never able to thank anyone, just sent with the love of the Bahá'ís of those cities, went straight to my heart! No one ever understood how much those bouquets meant to me!

"I am so happy to think I have been able in any way to further a Cause which, I am sure, is destined to bring happiness, if not to the world, to all those who really have understanding of what is the real meaning of God."

Her Majesty Queen Marie, in her daily article during a year for an American syndicate, touched on all subjects, and the four articles which she wrote about Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings show the love the Queen feels for this Message that will bring so much happiness to the world. She could do in one hour what some people might work for ten years to accomplish. Yet she said: "I carry it on humbly. I have been a groper¹ and life has taught me many things. It is logical that this Message of Bahá'u'lláh should come to me. Ever since I received these books they have been my dearest spiritual reading next to the Bible. I am sure they will bring the same blessing to all those to whom they come."

She spoke about teaching the Cause and said that if one wishes to give another truth, he should do it humbly. People who teach should not make one feel he is lower down than they are. She admired so much the spirit of selflessness found in the Teachings. She, herself, certainly is evanescent in her service, this Queen who possesses one of the keenest intellects, who is deeply intuitive, who is outspoken in her manner, penetrating in her testimony and always courageous in her stand. She said: "With bowed head I recognize that I, too, am but a channel and I rejoice in the knowledge."

The writer told her Majesty how these open letters had been translated into scores of

¹ Someone who searches blindly or uncertainly.

languages and ten million people in one continent alone had read them. She explained, too, what a balm they had been to those suffering persecutions for the Cause. This gracious Queen replied: "I am very thankful; I take it as a sign that God accepted my humble tribute."

Her Majesty Queen Marie, continuing, said that one must begin this Movement with the younger generation. She thought that the best book to give out to people explanatory of the Teachings is Dr J. E. Esslemont's book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*. When the writer asked her about the Balkans and how to promote all these principles of universal education, universal auxiliary language, the new solution of the economic problem by which every child in every country may have education and the welfare of the peasants be improved, she replied: "The Balkan lands, being nearer the East, are always on the defensive; it is because they have been ill-treated coerced and more betrayed by other countries. They become suspicious of anything that brings a new message, fearing it may be underhand, that there may be some ill motive back of it all. One can make a good beginning by showing them and all the rest of [XVIII:12:370] the world how comprehensive these Teachings are, how they hurt no one's feelings. The booklets and books should be well translated and well printed in these different languages."

The Queen has read nearly every book that has been published on these Teachings. She studies them and knows their truth. Several of these books were beside her. Her Majesty Queen Marie received with very great pleasure, that morning, the sacred gift which the writer had brought and presented from the dear Bahá'ís of faraway Mashhad, chief town of that Province in Persia. It was an illumined sheet, on which was inscribed a Prayer of Bahá'u'lláh. It was adorned and blessed in the centre with a lock of Bahá'u'lláh's own shining hair. She loved it and will have a frame specially designed for it, and in the oval she will place a small photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she so deeply appreciated this treasure. It is indeed a glorious gift, for no one else in Europe has a similar remembrance from Bahá'u'lláh. Speaking, too, of the illumined work, the polished gold of the letters, the Queen said: "It is in the most perfect taste of all the Orient! I know how rare and beautiful it is!"

Then Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana came into the drawing room, accompanied by her brother, His Royal Highness Prince Nicolas. They had just come up from the Rumanian Church a little after ten o'clock. (Services are early in Rumania.) The Princess is very young, very beautiful; she is serious, she is sweet. One saw at a glance that she is much interested in spiritual realities. She invited the writer to come up to her room on the third floor for a little talk. The room of this Rumanian was charming and full of sunshine. There were, perhaps, more than one hundred pink roses in the different gold bowls and in crystal vases; they gave an exquisite charm and fragrance to the apartment. On the walls were pictures from the life of Christ, a portrait of Jeanne d'Arc and two artistic companion pieces of maidens dancing on the greensward. Beside the long couch close to the three great and very high windows stood a little, low table for books, with shelves underneath for more books. Princess Ileana, like her mother, is a great reader. On this little table was a tiny photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which she had received the day before. Here, also, was a brass bowl of the delicate pink fragrant roses. With her religious [XVIII:12:371] and other books she had nearly all the works of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá which are published in English. A very beautiful picture of Christ hung above her couch. In an open bay window alcove, also flooded with sunshine, was her writing desk. It was well arranged and one could see that it is a place where much work is done. She said to her visitor: "I do not see how you ever get so much writing and other work done! I am obliged to get up very early, morning to get my correspondence finished."

Then a little heart to heart talk followed. This young Princess is enthusiastic and keenly eager to help the thousands of girls in her country. She does wonderful work in the Young Women's Christian Association, the Girl Guides and in the Rumanian Church, and she will translate two little booklets about Bahá'u'lláh's peace principles into the Rumanian language.

She is devoted to the work of the Rumanian Church and to the Rumanian people; she tries to work with them and for them. She spoke of having given *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* to one friend at Court and she added: "He said he read it and loved it!"

Her brother, His Royal Highness Prince Nicolas, came in two or three times during the conversation. He is pleasant and delightful, and so devoted to his mother and sister; he helps them in everything which interests them. So the morning was spent, and when the writer was leaving this dear Princess said: "I will come down with you, perhaps you may not know your way." Just then His Royal Highness Prince Nicolas came from his study, which was near. He swung into step with a grace and ease that showed he must have been doing it like that all his life, and, smiling and courteous, became with his sister.

This little outer visit to Palace Peleshor in Sinaia had an inner significance. The real audience with Her Majesty Queen Marie and her young daughter, Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana, was that souls met that day and spoke together of the realities of this life and of eternity. The Queen said to her children that morning, as the conversation turned to life after death: "Papa knows; he sees that all we are trying to do is constructive." Just how constructive for Rumania, for all the Balkans and all the rest of the world the study of these Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh for world understanding really is, the future will soon show. These Royal radiant souls are planting seeds of spiritual world co-operation which, throughout eternity, will bear harvests.

XIX:1, April 1928 [XIX:1:3]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

A new era of divine consciousness is upon us. The world of humanity is going through a process of transformation. A new race is being developed. The thoughts of human brotherhood are permeating all regions.

XIX:2, May 1928 [XIX:2:52]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí

Chapter I

*This story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America is based on material and notes corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself and which He had turned over to Dr Baghdádí at the time He was leaving this country. The twofold purpose of this series, which will continue for several months, is, in the words of the author, 'First to bring back to the memory of the believers the time of the incomparable days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to them and to remind them of His words, His instructions and His admonitions; and, secondly, to give a picture of His visit so that later believers who did not have the blessing of seeing Him, may benefit by reading a brief history.'—*Editor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the revered world leader of the Bahá'í Movement, arrived in New York from England on the White Star liner, *Cedric*, 11 April 1912. It was His first visit to the United States, and, aside from His short stay in Egypt and a visit to France and England in 1911, his first travel away from forty years enforced sojourn in the prison city of 'Akká in Palestine (the Holy Land), where He and His Father, Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í religion, were exiled by the Turkish Government. He seemed, however, to fully understand and appreciate the modern scientific and industrial civilization of America. His utterances then and later throughout His travels in America gave praise to the energy, the initiative and the achievement of the American people. The skyline of New York particularly interested 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and He called the big skyscrapers "*the minarets of the Western world's commerce and industry.*"

On the pier to meet Him were, besides many of the Bahá'ís, a great number of people, among them the representatives of the press who had eagerly awaited His arrival. *"I am here,"* 'Abdu'l-Bahá told an *Evening World* reporter, *"to unify the religions of the world, to talk in the interest of universal peace. I have no creed to preach. I have no doctrine to propound. My word is the word of love Do not worship the Lantern—worship the Light."*

Another reporter asked what Bahá'í meant. *"It means,"* answered 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *"to love all the world, to love humanity, to serve it, to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood."*

Accompanied by His interpreters and secretaries, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the Hotel Ansonia. In the afternoon He visited the home of Mr and Mrs Edward B. Kinney, where Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims had gathered to meet Him, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá made no distinction in religions, creeds or races.

Though He was about sixty years of age, forty years in the "Most Great Prison" at 'Akká had made Him appear older. He was of medium height, but had the appearance [XIX:2:53] of a tall man because of His erect form. His long silvery hair flowed over His shoulders. His beard and moustache were thin but full. His forehead was broad, full and high. His nose was aquiline. His eyes light blue and penetrating. He wore a voluminous outer coat (called an 'aba) made of grey wool and which reached almost to the floor, and His turban was white. In a word, His garments were the same as those worn by all the Prophets of the East.

"Having heard of the numerous organizations for peace and arbitration, and because of My great interest in these subjects, I have come here," said 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "to advocate the unity and solidarity of humanity. That is the essence of My teachings. All nations and all religions must be united. By that unity perfect peace would reign among men. Strife and animosity are due to misunderstandings. If these misunderstandings be removed then unity can be accomplished.

"All the Prophets of God were Manifestations of Truth and Reality. But because imitations have crept into religions, divisions and misunderstanding have resulted. These imitations cannot be found in the reality of religion. Human beings should refer to the original foundations, and then six thousand years of strife and warfare will vanish. My purpose is to bring about the oneness of humanity and to secure accord and fellowship among all mankind, so that all may dwell together finally as one family. They were so originally."

On 12 April 1912, not less than one thousand Bahá'ís and inquirers eagerly frequented the homes of Mr and Mrs Howard MacNutt and Miss Phillips, where they had the privilege of meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

A number of clergymen called on Him the following day and heard these words from His lips:

"Materialism and spirituality have always kept pace together. Now materialism has gone ahead, the divine foundation is forgotten and is being left behind. Among the causes of this failure is that religious leaders have presented religion as if it were opposed to science and reason, and have promoted imitations. [XIX:2:54] Therefore you must bring about a conformity of religion and science.

"The appearance of the Manifestations of God is like the appearance of the spring season. Undoubtedly the spring season does not last permanently and eternally. Now we are hopeful that the divine springtime may again become the cause of refreshing the garden of the world of existence."

That afternoon the Bahá'ís had the pleasure of meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the home of Mr and Mrs Alexander Morten.

On His way home, after glancing at New York's high buildings and its crowded streets,

'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked to His party, *"America has a wonderful future. But these extremely high buildings and the great crowds are depressing to my heart and are not good for the health of the people."*

Dr Percy Stickney Grant was not the first minister to invite 'Abdu'l-Bahá to speak in his church, but his was the first invitation that 'Abdu'l-Bahá accepted. There was little room left in that church when the eleven o'clock service on 14 April began. "It is our privilege this morning," said Dr Grant, "to hear one who has come out of the East, a new and great herald of good will; one bearing a message of love to all mankind. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is a Master of the things of the Spirit. He comes from that part of the world where men meditate; where contemplation was born. He teaches the fundamental unity of all religions—a truth in which this congregation believes profoundly and we welcome here one who may help the material fervour of the Occident to gain a new peace by the infiltration of the harmony of the Orient."

'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in Persian, an interpreter translating a phrase at a time. *"Our material civilization,"* 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *"has progressed greatly with the perfection of the crafts and the forward steps of material science, but our spiritual civilization, that which is based on divine morals, has declined and become degraded. We should strive to make our material civilization the purest possible medium, the most unclouded glass, through which the light of our spiritual civilization must shine."*

"One of the things that supports a spiritual civilization is Peace," He said, *"and the most pressing need of politics is universal peace."* But the oneness of humanity human solidarity—which has been the message of all the Prophets, will be achieved only through spiritual power, for neither racial distinctions nor patriotism can further it. The oneness of humanity will come with the supremacy of spiritual civilization, and not while, as now, we are submerged in a sea of materialism. *"The cause (the Bahá'í Cause) is progressing in the Orient,"* He concluded, *"and the heavenly civilization is daily making itself more manifest."*

These things 'Abdu'l-Bahá said in the few moments that He spoke before He returned to His seat beside the altar.

At the taking of the collection [XIX:2:55] 'Abdu'l-Bahá made a generous contribution.

During the prayer He stood with forearms extended, the palms of His hands turned upward, not downward, and as He finished He passed these over His eyes and face. A sense of indescribable joy and exhilaration seemed to be with many in the congregation, and not a few lingered afterward to see Him.

In the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at a *union meeting* of Advanced Thought Centres, at the Carnegie Lyceum. His address here, and that of the morning at the Church of the Ascension, both with a wealth of parable, are published in full in the addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America, under the title, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*.

The evening of 14 April and a part of the 15th, were given to visitors and friends who came to see Him.

A remarkable coincidence happened on 15 April. Lo and behold! Mr Hudson Maxim and Mr W. H. Short appeared at the same time at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's door. Mr Maxim was one of the greatest inventors of arms and explosives, and Mr Short was Secretary of the New York Peace Society. The interview in substance was as follows: Mr Maxim stated that he himself was, like 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a promoter of universal peace only from a different angle; that he was devoting his life to the invention of the most dreadful instruments of war and most costly so that it would never pay the nations to fight.

'Abdu'l-Bahá explained that the result of modern discoveries and inventions was more destructive than ever before. He gave as an example the history of ancient wars between Persia and the Romans who fought for a period of twenty years, but only six thousand lives were lost in action. But now, with our scientific methods of fighting, many thousands of lives can be destroyed in one day. Finally 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised Mr Maxim to invent a gun of love that it might give and prolong life, so that his name would be written with a pen of gold on the pages of history and throughout the ages the people would be able to say, how wonderful it is—the greatest inventor of war instruments has invented the gun of life and peace! This thrilling interview is published in the *Star of the West*, III:7, p. 4.

On the afternoon of that day the Bahá'ís met 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the home of Mr and Mrs Mountfort Mills.

On 16 April, He visited the home of Mr and Mrs A. P. Dodge, where a number of friends were invited to meet Him.

On 17 April, an Inter-Racial Amity meeting was held at the home of Mr and Mrs Edward B. Kinney. Here, addressing the white and coloured friends, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: *"Always the East has been the dawning-point of light and the rising-place of effulgences. But the blessings of the coloured and white people under the creative effect and influence of the outpouring of the Sun of Reality resemble the gathering of roses of variegated colours. This difference of colour adds charm and beauty, and is conducive to the wealth of their splendour."*

The dinner served to the friends that evening was prepared and cooked by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own hands.

On 18 April, two public meetings were held at the home of Mr and Mrs Marshall L. Emery; and in the evening 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the Bowery Mission, where more than four hundred of the poor received His spiritual comfort and material gifts. [XIX:2:56]

Every act of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a spiritual connotation; therefore it is of great interest to note his open-handed way of dispensing charity to these poor men who were down and out, most of them. He carried with Him to the Bowery Mission the amount of two hundred dollars specially ordered from the bank in twenty-five-cent pieces. Every one of the four hundred men received not only a dinner but one or more of these quarters directly from the hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. That their hearts were touched is expressing it most inadequately. Many of them wept tears of emotion. Thus did 'Abdu'l-Bahá demonstrate the need of combining material and spiritual blessings and that the Bahá'í Movement stands for the perfect manifestation of both these important phases of civilization.

19 April was the day of bidding farewell to the friends, and on the following day He left for Washington, D.C.

In His contact with Western civilization, how universal 'Abdu'l-Bahá showed Himself! This Servant of God from the Orient, landing from the prison city of 'Akká into the heart of the Occident, emerged unprepared on the streets of New York, the greatest city of Western civilization, and found Himself perfectly at home! The civilization of the Occident seen here in its most striking modernistic form did not amaze or repel Him. *As He walked the streets of the Metropolis* with His majestic mien, He seemed as perfectly at home here as in the setting of the Orient whence He had come. Nor did He seem to the people of New York—even the blasé reporters—the object of peculiarity. Their attitude toward Him was one of great respect and appreciation. In fact from His first landing upon the docks, His way was marked only with admiration and reverence.

(To be continued)

XIX:2, May 1928 [XIX:2:56]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“The Prophets of God, one and all, Christ Himself, as well as the Blessed Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh), have all appeared and raised the call with the one purpose of transforming the world of man into the Kingdom of God. Their common aim was to turn the earthly into heavenly, darkness into light, things that are satanic into things Divine. They strove to establish the reign of harmony and love amongst the children of men, to unfold to their eyes the fundamental unity of all mankind, to demolish the foundations of differences in the world, and to confer upon it the imperishable blessings of eternal life.”

XIX:3, June 1928 [XIX:3:69]

An experience with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Anise Rideout

It was my great privilege to be in New York during the last days spent by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America. There was a question which I greatly longed to ask, but fearing the reply would be that I must talk to people, everywhere, I hesitated.

Finally, on the last day, almost the last moment of my stay, it came to me that it was cowardly to hesitate. On that day, as I came into His Presence, He immediately said, ‘Are there any questions?’ At once I asked the question, ‘Which is the best way to give the Bahá’í Message?’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Face became very serious, His Voice loud as He answered in these words:

‘The first thing to do is to acquire a thirst for Spirituality, then Live the Life! Live the Life! Live the Life! The way to acquire this thirst is to meditate upon the future life. Study the Holy Words, read your Bible, read the Holy Books, especially study the Holy Utterances of Bahá’u’lláh; Prayer and Meditation, take much time for these two. Then will you know this Great Thirst, and then only can you begin to Live the Life!’

‘To live the Life you must be the very kindest woman, you must be the most pure, you must be absolutely truthful, and live a perfectly moral life.

‘Visit your neighbours when they are sick or in trouble, offer your services to them, try to show them that you are longing to serve them.

‘Feed the poor, divide what you have. Be contented to remain where God has placed you; be faithful in your care of those to whom He has trusted you, never waver in this—show by your life you have something different, so that all will see and will say, ‘What has this person that I have not?’

‘Show the world that in spite of the utmost suffering, poverty, sickness, you have something which gives you comfort, strength and peace—that you are happy—serene—satisfied with all that is in your life.

‘Then they, too, will want what you possess—and will need no further teaching—after you tell them what it is.’

XIX:3, June 1928 [XIX:3:87]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America

Dr Díyá’ Baghdádí

Chapter II, Washington, D.C.

This story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit in America is based on material and notes corrected by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself and which He had turned over to Dr Baghdádí at the time He was leaving

this country. The twofold purpose of this series, which will continue for several months, is, in the words of the author, 'First to bring back to the memory of the believers the time of the incomparable days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to them and to remind them of His words, His instructions and His admonitions; and, secondly, to give a picture of His visit so that later believers who did not have the blessing of seeing Him, may benefit by reading a brief history.'—Editor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá reached the city of Washington on 20 April 1912, accompanied only by an interpreter. He went to the home of Mr and Mrs Arthur Jeffrey Parsons. In the evening He addressed the second annual conference of the Persian American Educational Society. The meeting was held in the Lecture Hall of the Public Library, and every seat and all available standing room was occupied by an audience eager to hear Him.

When He entered the hall, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was greeted by the audience all Bahá'ís and their friends and guests rising. *'It is an evident fact,' said He in His address, 'that for Persia there is no better government to use as a model than that of America. Persia offers virgin soil for American commerce. In Persia all the mineral resources, and indeed all of the material resources, are latent in the soil and in the people. Perfect amity should be established between Persia and America, whether it be in material bonds or in spiritual bonds.'*

After He had spoken, and when He was seated on the platform, hundreds pressed around Him, seeking to grasp His hand.

In an interview after His address, someone announced the sad news of the sinking of the *Titanic*. 'Abdu'l-Bahá declared that the disaster to the White Star liner *Titanic*, much as He deplored it, was only an outward expression of the too rapid development of the age. Progress is too fast. Both Americans and Europeans seem to be possessed of the mania for speed. He said: *'It is true in this country in particular growth in all directions has progressed too rapidly. Moderation should be practiced in all things. Be temperate, even in the size of the ships you build and in their speed; in your railroads and the schedules you expect your trains to maintain. It was a pitiful waste of life that came because of the effort to save a few hours in time—rushing a great vessel at top speed when it was known there was danger from icebergs.'*

On the following day, 21 April 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the Universalist Church. The text of His address in part is as follows:

"Whatever the minister has said (in his introductory remarks) is an evidence of high morals and service to the world of humanity, truly commendable and worthy of praise, for it is opposed to natural prejudices which for six thousand years have made unstable the world of humanity. How many wars were fought, how much discord has occurred, how much hatred has appeared amongst mankind. But inasmuch as this age is the age of the revelation of reality, praise be to God! the thoughts are being directed toward reality and the souls are ready for the oneness of the world of humanity. The ocean of truth is surging and the mirage of imitations is day by day passing [XIX:3:88] away. The foundation of the existing religions is one foundation, and that foundation is reality and the cause of unity and love of humanity and the means of the progress of mankind. But after every one of the Divine Manifestations, that light of reality became obscured. The darkness of superstitions and imitations crept in. Darkness befell the world of humanity. Day by day bitterness increased to such a degree that nations became antagonistic, and to such an extent that were it not for political hindrances they would have crushed and annihilated each other.

"Now it is not enough! We must investigate reality. We must put away these superstitions. Praise be to God! We all are the servants of one God. We are all under the shade of His bounty. We are recipients of His bestowals. God is kind to all, why should we be unkind? God is at peace with all, why should we be at war? At most some are ignorant; they must be

trained. Some are sick and ailing; they must be healed. The sick must not be despised. The child must not be insulted. Efforts must be made to secure a remedy and healing.

“All the prophets have come to educate and develop the immature souls into maturity; to establish unity and love amongst mankind, not bitterness and hatred, for God has wished all good for His servants, not evil. He who wishes evil for His servants is against God and is not following the example of God, nay rather, he is following the example of Satan. For the attribute of God is mercy, and the attribute of Satan is hate. He who is kind to the servants is following the example of God, and he who is unkind to the servants is against God. For God is absolute mercy, perfect love; and Satan is absolute hate and utter bitterness.

“Therefore know that in every meeting where there is love, that meeting is the meeting of the Merciful One; and wherever there is hatred, that is satanic suggestion. The Divine Prophets appeared that the souls may become manifestations of the Merciful One, and to establish love and affection in the hearts.

“Man has two aspects or natures—merciful or divine and an animal aspect. The merciful aspect is peace, happiness, love and faithfulness. But the animal aspect is strife, discord, war and battle. If the animal aspect dominates in man, he becomes lower than an animal. If the divine aspect dominates, he becomes an angel of the Lord. The teachings of the Prophets were for this: that the animal aspect may be conquered, so that the souls that are captives of nature may be saved and the heavenly aspect may dominate. That divine aspect consists of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It consists of the ‘second [XIX:3:89] Birth’. He who possesses that aspect is a well-wisher of all; he is kind to all the creatures; he has no bitterness toward any creed, and he shuns no religion.

“For the foundation of the divine religions is one. If we investigate that foundation, we become united; but if we follow imitations, we disagree because imitations are different. The foundation of the divine religions is conducive to unity and fellowship. His Holiness Christ said, ‘I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth.’ This is the century when that Spirit of God has spoken and revealed all the truth; He has explained the validity of the religion of Christ, and delivered the people from, superstitions. So that the basis of ignorance and bitterness may vanish, and the foundation of love may be established. We must strive with soul and heart that this bitterness and hatred may disappear and this discord and strife may entirely pass away.”

On 22 April 1912, a reception was held in honour of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the home of Mr and Mrs Arthur Jeffrey Parsons to which the Bahá’ís and their friends were invited. *‘Consider what the confirmations of Bahá’u’lláh have done,’* said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘for they brought us to the home of one who with such love has prepared a feast in my name. How the power and influence of Bahá’u’lláh has linked the East and the West, the divine outpouring is available and the merciful favours are complete.’*

On 23 April 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke at Howard University, and from there He went to the home of Mírzá ‘Alí Qulí Khán for luncheon. Here He said: *‘Thanks must be offered to Bahá’u’lláh because it is His confirmations that stir the souls. It is the blessings of the Abhá Beauty that change the hearts. It is the re-enforcement of the Kingdom of Abhá that makes the mosquito an eagle, the ant a Solomon, the degraded the centre of honour.’*

In the evening He spoke at the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, and that was a real Inter-racial Amity Meeting.

On 24 April 1912, it was the privilege of the Bahá’í children of Washington to have ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá at their meeting. He gave them the most helpful message, sweetened their little mouths with candy and blessed them with these words: *'Praise be to God! These children are like a bouquet of roses in their utmost beauty, delicacy and sweetness.'*

In the evening, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the white and coloured believers and their friends at the home of Mrs Dyer, a member of the coloured race, and after the meeting He remarked, *'Before entering the meeting I did not feel as if I would like to speak. But as soon as I saw the unity and attraction of the coloured and white believers, I became interested and anxious and with perfect sincere love I spoke. I have compared the harmony of the different colours to that of a pearl and ruby necklace.'*

Later, while riding in a carriage on His way to the home of Mr Alexander Graham Bell, the famous telephone inventor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá very sweetly and softly chanted in Persian, *'O Bahá'u'lláh what hast Thou done? O Bahá'u'lláh may my life be a sacrifice to Thee. Through what sufferings and hardships Thou hast passed Thy days. What calamities Thou didst endure. But in the end, what a formidable foundation Thou hast laid. What an evident banner Thou hast raised.'*

When Mr Bell finished telling his own story namely, it was his love for his wife, who was totally deaf, [XIX:3:90] that inspired him to invent an instrument that might help her hearing and while striving in that line, the instrument developed into the telephone—'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'Most of the great inventions were discovered in this way (by accident). The search for Alchemy was the cause of the appearance of thousands of useful remedies, and by travelling from Europe to India in a straight line, the American Continent was discovered, etc.'*

On 25 April 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to the Theosophical Society, and then He sent a message to the Esperantists. Later, in a humorous mood, He said to Mrs Parsons, *'It is very difficult to have one like me as a guest. Every guest and traveller has a limited number of friends with whom he makes special dates for visits, but you are forced all day long to be the entertainer of all.'*

In the evening, addressing a large number of statesmen and Government officials at a banquet held in His honour at the home of Dîyá' Páshá, the Ambassador of Turkey, said, *'Tonight is a blessed night, worthy of rejoicing and thanksgiving for several reasons. First, thanks be to God, we are in a country that is most prosperous and free. Second, at a home which is related to the sublime Turkish Empire. Third, we are the guests of His Excellency, the Ambassador, who is in the realm of morals shining like the sun. Fourth, this meeting portrays the unity and harmony of the East and the West in a real figure, for His Excellency, the Ambassador of Turkey, is from the people of the East, his honoured son is here, and his revered wife is an American. Likewise, the representative of Persia (Mírzá 'Alí Qulí Khán) is from the nobles of the East and his revered wife is also an American. This is an evidence that the East and the West can be united and harmonized. Undoubtedly the utmost desire of the people of power and affluence, the possessors of broad ideas and sound minds, is love amongst human beings; [XIX:3:91] their highest hope is for unity and harmony amongst mankind. In ages past this truth was not clear, but since this is the age of light and the century of science and progress of the world of humanity—through divine help and favour—this matter has attracted universal attention. The members of the human family are in reality one; all are from one family, of one country and of one globe. This is the age of the oneness of mankind and the passing away of superstitions of past centuries. Every thoughtful person feels that this is the century of oneness and unity, and the imaginary prejudices are vanishing. Therefore, we are hopeful that the misunderstandings amongst the nations may disappear, so that all may know that the first foundation of the Merciful One is the oneness of the world of humanity and the original aim of the Divine Manifestations is the training of mankind. The divine religions are not the cause of discord, nor are they the means of hatred and animosity. For the foundation of all religions is*

reality, and reality is one and cannot be multiplied. These differences are caused by imitations. For imitations differ; therefore, they become the cause of differences and quarrels. This darkness of imitations has beclouded the Sun of Reality. Now, thanks be to God, day by day, this darkness is vanishing; this separation shall soon disappear altogether; the Sun of Reality shall rise and shine; the banner of the oneness of the world of humanity and the tent of universal peace shall rise, and the world shall become a different world.

'I am thankful and grateful for the kindness of His Excellency the Ambassador, because he was the cause of gathering and uniting different people in this meeting. Undoubtedly such meetings are worthy of thanks and praise.'

At the close of this meeting former President, Mr Theodore Roosevelt, called and had a wonderful visit with 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

On the following morning, 26 April 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at All Souls Church, and in the evening He addressed a Woman's Suffragist meeting. *'One of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh,'* He declared, *'is equal rights for men and women. When Bahá'u'lláh uttered this principle, the people were stunned.'*

On 27 April 1912, Mrs Arthur Jeffrey Parsons wished to offer a sum of money; but with infinite gentleness 'Abdu'l-Bahá advised her to *'distribute the money amongst the poor.'*

At the luncheon hour, a most wonderful reception was held in honour of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the home of Mrs Parsons, to which some three hundred statesmen, Senators, and scholars, including a judge of the Supreme Court, were invited. It was a peerless reception. When dinner and refreshments had been served and after every one in the audience had received 'Abdu'l-Bahá's answers to all important questions, there came a few moments of silence and quietness. All the distinguished visitors seemed to be in a state of deep meditation, and the sign of their appreciation was clearly manifest by their extreme admiration for and highest reverence toward 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the 'Master' and the 'Great Teacher', as they called Him. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá broke the silence by saying to the judge of the Supreme Court, *'Just as there is unity amongst the United States, in like manner it is possible to have unity amongst the nations of the world.'*

To a doctor He said, *'I am hopeful that you will raise the banner of universal peace.'*

To a master mechanic and engineer He said, *'Just as at one school you are teaching engineering to different students, I hope that you may enlighten different people at the divine [XIX:3:92] school by the truth of the foundation of divine religions.'*

To Admiral Peary, discoverer of the North Pole, He said, *'I hope that you may discover the unknown of the world of the Kingdom.'*

To the Archbishop he said, *'My hope is that these harmful imitations may be put away and you may promote the foundation of the teachings of Christ and banish the ceremonies which are opposed to science and contrary to the Truth.'*

To the Ambassador of Switzerland He spoke of the importance of 'Divine Civilization'.

To a Senator He said, *'Just as you are striving for the welfare of America, you must also be the well-wisher of all the countries and nations of the world.'*

Finally, turning to the Judge, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked what the verdict was. 'It is all right,' the Judge said, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá smiled.

28 April 1912, was farewell day, and before leaving the city of Washington, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke first to Mrs Parsons, then to all the friends who gathered around Him. He said: *'It is springtime and we have had good meetings at your home. I shall never forget. I shall always ask divine confirmations for you, that in every way you may be confirmed both in material and*

spiritual things. The physical world has an outer and an inner plane, for all existing things like a chain are linked together until the spiritual is attained, and finally become abstract realities. We are hopeful these spiritual links may day by day become stronger and this heart communication, which is termed as inspiration, may become permanent. When this connection is established, then physical separation will have no effect, and this station is holy and sanctified above words.'

To the friends he said, *'I hope that our meetings shall give everlasting results. The oneness of the world of humanity and universal peace are the greatest blessings.'*

While crossing the Potomac River, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'Whenever I see such views, I become saddened as I recall how much Bahá'u'lláh loved the beautiful green fields, of which a cruel imprisonment deprived Him for so many years.'*

(To be continued)

XIX:4, July 1928 [XIX:4:111]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí

Chapter III—Chicago, D.C.

This story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America is based on material and notes corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself and which He had turned over to Dr Baghdádí at the time He was leaving this country. The twofold purpose of this series, which will continue for several months, is, in the words of the author, 'First to bring back to the memory of the believers the time of the incomparable days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to them and to remind them of His words, His instructions and His admonitions; and, secondly, to give a picture of His visit so that later believers who did not have the blessing of seeing Him, may benefit by reading a brief history.'—Editor.

His arrival in Chicago, 29 April 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the Plaza Hotel, where the rejoicing Bahá'ís and their friends had followed Him from the railroad station. *'You have a beautiful city,' He said. 'The divine call was first raised in this city. I am hopeful that in Chicago the Cause of God may obtain the highest efficacy. Just as this city is lighted with electric light, I hope that it may become lighted with the Light of the Kingdom.'*

'Many meetings, both large and small, were held in Washington. Night and day I had no rest. Unity was established between the white and coloured people. Many became believers. Those who were not believers have become very near. Nevertheless, I like Chicago very much, for the call of Bahá'u'lláh was first raised in this city. I am hopeful that you may become confirmed in great services and that you may be in the utmost fellowship and love with each other.'

One of the believers asked for protection from tests and trials. *'The most severe tests were in Persia,'* said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *'When property was confiscated, the friends were made martyrs, and not for a single moment was there any safety of life.'*

Turning to the friends, said, *'I was longing exceedingly for your meeting. Were it not for this longing, the favour of Bahá'u'lláh would not have been with us. When I boarded the boat at Alexandria (Egypt) I was not feeling well.'*

Looking from the window of His apartment in the Plaza Hotel, with Lincoln Park, Clark Street and North Avenue in full view, He said, *'These buildings have beautiful views. The park, the streets and city lights can be seen.'*

On 30 April 1912, the Bahá'ís of Chicago and newspaper reporters came to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Later, He spoke at Hull House, founded by Miss Jane Addams. It was a real Inter-racial Amity meeting, for the large audience was composed of white and coloured people. After the meeting, 'Abdu'l-Bahá noticed many children and unemployed labourers crowding and

pushing each other to gain a glimpse of Him. He stood in their midst, and into each hand He dropped a quarter or half dollar.

In the evening, at a public meeting arranged by the Bahá'ís of Chicago at the Masonic Temple, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke of the significance of temples and the importance of the Bahá'í Temple—the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

On 1 May 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá dedicated the Bahá'í Temple grounds in the beautiful village of Wilmette, near Chicago. With an attractive trowel made of solid gold, handed to him by Miss Irene Holmes, 'Abdu'l-Bahá dug the earth to lay the corner stone. He then called on a few of the friends to dig more earth on behalf of different nations and countries, that they also might share in the blessed occasion [XIX:4:112] and be of those who were remembered. Dr Ardishír Írání, formerly of India, but now residing in Washington, D.C., took the trowel in his hand and dug some of the earth on behalf of the Zoroastrian believers. Áqá Siyyid Asadu'lláh represented the Muslim Bahá'ís. This writer represented the Arabian Bahá'ís. Qudsiyyih Ashraf represented the Oriental Bahá'í women. The corner stone finally was laid by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own hands.

There is a little history connected with this most favoured stone. It is this: When the Temple grounds were bought, Ḥusayn Mazlún, an old Persian Bahá'í, was living in Chicago. He was a hard working man and could not speak or write a single word in English. But he felt that it was his duty to contribute something that might help the Temple. He had nothing but a pure heart and a sincere purpose, and these qualities inspired him to procure a stone with the hope that perhaps someday it might be included with others that would become a part of the foundation or walls of the Temple. So, with the help of Mrs Nettie Tobin, of Chicago, a solid white stone was obtained, and Ḥusayn Mazlún carried it on his shoulders and back, to the Temple grounds. But neither Ḥusayn Mazlún, nor any one else, could have even dreamed that the stone was destined to be the corner stone of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the first Bahá'í Temple in America, and that it would be laid by the hands of 'Abdu'l-Bahá with His eternal blessings upon it, and in the presence of an impressive gathering from the four corners of the earth. Such is the fruit of a sincere action and such is the reward for the pure in heart.

2 May 1912, the Bahá'ís of Chicago and vicinity came to the Plaza Hotel very early in the morning, and this is what 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to them: *'The reason for travelling such a long distance and enduring hardships is for the ignition of light in the Occident, for in the Occidental countries there is great capacity. The inhabitants are not so much captives of imitations and superstitions. The high ideals can be rapidly spread. Today the greatest ideal is service to the world of humanity and universal peace.'*

In the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the Federation of Women's Clubs, at Hotel La Salle, and also attended a reception held in His honour at the same hotel by the Bahá'í women of Chicago.

Later, one of the friends asked a question in regard to human capacity. *'People have different capacities,'* said 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *'In some persons capacity is obtained entirely from natural powers. This expression and appearance of natural capacity is dependent upon education and is subordinate to man's own efforts; that is to say, natural capacity without human education and efforts cannot appear perfectly and its perfection depends upon efforts and training. The highest expression of man's capacity is, however, obtained through the training of the Divine Teacher of the world of humanity.'*

Another friend asked about association with the wicked or evil doers. *'These are of two kinds,'* explained 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *'one kind where the harm returns to the evil doer himself, and he is not an assailant. Undoubtedly such an evil doer must be awakened and trained with wisdom. He is sick; he must be cured. But the other kind, whose menace reaches others, and when*

association with such a person becomes the cause of immorality—in this case association with such a person is not permissible, except for those who are able to stop, train and win him, and as much as possible strive to improve his morals and uplift his character; otherwise, appeal should be made to the [XIX:4:113] Centres of Justice to protect human society from the menacing deeds of such persons. In the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, too, association with all the people of different religions and the recognition of the oneness of mankind is enjoined; but also association with the wicked is prohibited, and it is shown how it is necessary to be careful of the deniers and negative people.'

On 3 May 1912, the Hindus of Chicago, most of them university students, were welcomed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the Plaza Hotel. Dr J. F. C. King accompanied the boys and became a Bahá'í. As a dentist, Dr King is very successful and he is still residing in Chicago.

One of the friends asked about the time when the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár would be built. *'I am not going to discuss the matter of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (the Bahá'í Temple),'* 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied. *'It concerns the (National) Spiritual Assembly. If I have to say anything about it, it must be built immediately.'*

On 4 May 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the Plymouth Congregational Church; and from there He went to the home of the minister, Dr Ford, where a luncheon was prepared for Him. In the afternoon He spoke to the Theosophical Society at North-western University Hall.

To an inquirer about the future of the Orient, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'It cannot progress except through an ideal power and the Divine Cause. Every Divine Manifestation was sent to a people and country that outwardly never had any chance for safety and prosperity. But because they came under the protection of the Divine Cause, they even surpassed all civilized countries. Today, every nation and country that raises the banner of the oneness of the world of humanity, and comes under the protection of this Divine Power, in the end it shall become the leading power of the world.'*

To another inquirer who wished to know the difference between the Bahá'í religion and other religions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: *'From a fundamental standpoint, the foundation of all religions is one, and all are built on Truth. That is why there is no difference among the Founders of religions and Divine religions as regards the spiritual side of Their message and the spiritual laws which They teach. But the accessories of religion; that is to say, the laws that deal with transactions and small matters—this branch of religion—the outer laws—being dependent upon the exigencies of time and place, must be changed or readjusted in every age.'*

To another who inquired about the existence of evil and unhappy things, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'In the world of existence and creation, there is no evil. Nay, rather, evil is the absence of good, even as darkness is the absence of light. Change and transformation is an essential requirement of the world of creation, for if change and transformation does not exist, then there can be no composition and growth. And because change, transformation and disintegration are necessary, the opposites have to exist, but in reality there are no opposites. Just as in the sphere of the sun there is no darkness, nor does it have an East or West, yet night, day, light and darkness are of the requirements of this world.'*

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá arose and went to the cemetery. He prayed at the grave of David True, the only son of Mrs Corinne True, who just a few moments before passing away, opened his eyes, and seeing 'Abdu'l-Bahá at his bedside, he whispered, 'O 'Abdu'l-Bahá! I love you! I love you!'

From there 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to All Souls' Church, where He spoke; [XIX:4:114] and later lunched at the home of Dr Milburn, the minister.

5 May 1912, was the day of farewell. Early in the morning all the Bahá'í children of Chicago

and their parents filled the large parlour of the Plaza Hotel. None but those who have seen 'Abdu'l-Bahá and witnessed His great love for children and the great love of the children for Him, could ever describe the purity and fragrance of the atmosphere of His meeting with the children, for whenever and wherever there were children, 'Abdu'l-Bahá would go to them and they would come to Him. Yea, even nursing babies knew Him by His peerless personality and also by His unique and resonant voice, calling them, *'O my baby! My good baby! My sweet baby!'* For one of His countless divine qualities was the quality of incomparable generosity and philanthropy. He was always prepared to meet and please His visitors, be they high or low, children or poor. And aside from being the treasure of knowledge and wisdom and the ocean of all things of the spirit, 'Abdu'l-Bahá always kept Himself well supplied with material things to bestow upon those who went to Him. Flowers, candy, money, clothing, protection, comfort, etc., but these were for distribution among the friends and the needy and everybody else but Himself.

After welcoming the children and giving them flowers and candy, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to them as follows: *'According to what His Holiness Christ has said, you are the children of the Kingdom, and according to what His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has said, you are the candles of the world of humanity, for your hearts are in the utmost purity and your souls are in the utmost sanctity. You are not entangled with this world; and like unto a mirror, your hearts are [XIX:4:115] clean and polished. Your fathers and mothers must educate you with greatest tenderness, and teach you the highest morals and ideals. So that in the utmost perfection you may be imbued with the virtues of the world of humanity. May you progress in all degrees, study sciences and arts, become the manifestations of eternal blessings and the means of great advancements.'*

Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the parents and all the Bahá'ís of Chicago. *'I am going away, but you must arise to serve the Word of God. Your hearts must be pure and your intentions sincere in order that you may become recipients of the divine bestowals. Consider that although the sun shines equally upon all things, yet in the clear mirror its reflection is most brilliant, but not so in the black stone. This great effulgence and heat have been produced by the crystal clearness of the glass. If there were no clearness and purity these effects would not be witnessed. Should rain fall upon salty, stony earth, it will never have effect; but when it falls upon good pure soil, green and verdant growth follows and fruits are produced.'*

'This is the day when pure hearts have a portion of the everlasting bounties, and sanctified souls are being illumined by the eternal manifestations. Praise be to God! you are believers in God, assured by the Word of God and turning to the Kingdom of God. You have heard the Divine call. Your hearts are moved by the breezes of the paradise of Abhá. You have good intentions, your purpose is the good pleasure of God. You desire to serve in the Kingdom of the Merciful One. Therefore, arise in the utmost power. Be in perfect unity. Never become angry with one another. Let your eyes be directed toward the kingdom of truth and not toward the world of the creatures. Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry when you love them for the sake of God. Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and mercy. Therefore do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections. The eyes that cover faults look toward the Creator of souls. He created them, trains and provides for them, endows them with capacity and life, sight and hearing; therefore they are the signs of His grandeur. You must love and be kind to everybody, care for the poor, protect the weak, heal the sick, teach and educate the ignorant.'

'It is my hope that the unity and harmony of the friends in Chicago may be the cause of the unity of the friends throughout America and that all people may become recipients of their love'

and kindness. May they be an example for mankind. Then the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá and the bestowals of the Sun of Reality will be all encircling.'

Before leaving Chicago for Cleveland, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in All Souls' Church, Lincoln Centre. And that was another real Inter-racial Amity Meeting.

Among the noted persons who became Bahá'ís through 'Abdu'l-Bahá at that time were Mr and Mrs Albert R. Vail and Dr and Mrs William F. Slater.

(To be continued)

XIX:5, August 1928 [XIX:5:140]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí

Chapter IV

*This story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America is based on material and notes corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself and which He had turned over to Dr Baghdádí at the time He was leaving this country. The twofold purpose of this series, which will continue for several months, is, in the words of the author, 'First to bring back to the memory of the believers the time of the incomparable days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to them and to remind them of His words, His instructions and His admonitions; and, secondly, to give a picture of His visit so that later believers who did not have the blessing of seeing Him, may benefit by reading a brief history.'—*Editor.¹

Cleveland, Ohio.—6 May 1912, at the Euclid Hotel, in this city, as well as in every place, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was welcomed by the Bahá'ís and their friends and the ever present newspaper reporters. When a reporter asked for a message, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'My message is the oneness of mankind and universal peace. To conform religious questions with true science. Equal rights for all, and the removal of religious, national and political prejudices. To explain the reality of divine religions and to do away with imitations and sectarian superstitions. The training of women to such a degree that they will have equal rights with men. Readjustment of economic conditions and standards of living, so that, while a prince may be seated on the throne of honour, the poor also may possess a house and a mat. The establishment of spiritual civilization, the improvement of morals, and the unity of the foundation of divine religions, for if the people of the world investigate the reality of religions they become united, because reality is one. On account of imitations, they have remained disunited and in disagreement, for imitations differ.'*

Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the home of Dr C. M. Swingle, where He spoke to the Bahá'ís and their friends. In the evening He addressed the public at the Euclid Hotel.

Pittsburgh, Pa.—7 May 1912. The dear friends in this city engaged an apartment on the seventh floor of the Schenley Hotel and were exceedingly happy about it, because it looked like that of the Plaza Hotel in Chicago. Then during their private interviews, the friends, one by one asked the same question: 'Master! how do you like these rooms?' His reply to all was also the same, *'Khaylí khúb! Khaylí khúb!'*—meaning 'Very good! Very good!' When all had left His presence happy and pleased, He turned His smiling face toward this servant and exclaimed, *'The friends here are anxious to know if I like these rooms! They do not know what we had to go through in the past. Imagine the conditions and surroundings when we were exiled by the Turkish Government and were imprisoned in the barracks of 'Akká; Bahá'u'lláh occupied one room; His family and several other families were forced to occupy one room. Aside from the*

¹ Chapter I of this brief story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America, recorded the events which transpired on His arrival in New York. Chapter II related to His first visit in Washington, D.C. and Chapter III to the first visit in Chicago. Chapter IV, which follows, tells of the stirring events and spiritual victories of His visits in Cleveland, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Montclair, N.J. and the return visits to Washington, D.C.; and New York.

severe illness that was raging, and the death of many among us prisoners—adults and children—on account of unsanitary [XIX:5:141] surroundings and starvation, I noticed that my own presence in that crowded room was another source of torture to all of them. This was due to the fact that parents and children were suppressing and restraining themselves by trying to be quiet and polite in my presence. So, in order to give them freedom, I accepted the morgue of the barracks, because that was the only room available, and I lived in it for about two years. Now the kind friends here wish to know if I like these magnificent rooms!

In the evening ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed a public meeting at the hotel. He explained some of the Bahá’í principles, and declared that *‘the Orient must acquire material civilization from the Occident and the Occident must acquire divine civilization from the Orient.’*

Later, at a meeting composed of doctors and educators, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá answered all questions, and in addition He explained how to heal the sick. *‘If they (the doctors) learn about the foci—that is, the points of entrance of disease germs—and take the balance or equilibrium of the body elements as the base of treatment, and when an element is diminished or lacking, a diet that can supply the diminished element is given, then there will be no need for drugs and other difficult methods of treatment.’*

Though this scientific statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sounds very brief, the intelligent and progressive physician knows that it contains the secret of medicine and the foundation upon which the right course of physical healing must be based in the future.

When the doctors present had no more questions for discussion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that He had one question to ask them. *‘Why is it that the animals heal themselves, but man in sickness remains puzzled or helpless?’* For a moment the doctors looked at each other inquiringly, but not one opened his lips. Finally, after consultation, perhaps, they said, ‘We would rather hear the answer from the lips of His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.’ This was His answer: *‘Because man’s thoughts are not limited to one direction; therefore, he is more heedless. On the other hand, however, through concentration and deep thinking, his knowledge is more than all other creatures.’*

On 8 May 1912, while preparing to leave Pittsburgh for Washington, D.C., we, the servants, begged ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to have a special compartment, or at least a berth, on the train, that He might rest better. But He absolutely refused. *‘I do certain things and have certain expenses,’* said He emphatically, *‘only to help others and to serve the Cause of God; otherwise, from the beginning of my life, I never liked distinction.’*

Washington, D.C.—8 May 1912. This was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s second visit to the city of Washington, and on His arrival He occupied an apartment at 1340 Harvard Street. Later He visited the home of Mr and Mrs A. J. Parsons.

On the following day—9 May 1912—the fire of opposition was ablaze in the hearts of a few fanatical clergymen on account of the great public interest in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to their city. They spoke bitterly against Him and the Bahá’í Cause; but all their efforts were in vain. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comment on the matter was this: *‘I deal with people very gently that they may not turn away and raise the least objection. Yet these ministers of Washington have accused us of atheism. The opposition of the leaders of religious sects is an evidence of the power [XIX:5:142] and greatness of the Bahá’í Cause, for nobody would pay any attention to an unimportant cause.’*

On the following day—10 May 1912—‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke at a Woman’s Meeting, and later visited a settlement house, a welfare organization for young children in which Mrs Alice Barney and others were interested. From there He went to the home of Mrs Barney for dinner. Mrs Barney’s son in law and daughter, M. and Mme. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney, of Paris, France, were also present.

New York City.—11 May 1912. This was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s second visit to the city of New York. The Bahá’ís of that city and vicinity filled His apartment at 227 Riverside Drive. *‘Marhabá! Marhabá!’* This is the first greeting that almost all the friends and visitors heard from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s lips—meaning, ‘Welcome! Welcome!’ After welcoming those who came to see Him, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed the group in these words: *‘We went to Chicago and Washington. It was very pleasant, for the American people are polite, eager to learn, and anxious to advance. When man sees a tree growing and thriving, he must be hopeful, for undoubtedly it will blossom and bear fruit. People have asked questions and when they heard the answers, they did not argue. As we met the learned men and discussed great questions with them, they expressed their satisfaction. All those who asked important questions, on hearing the answers, showed that they were pleased. Some of the learned men in other countries are not like that, because they always like to argue. We met good ministers at Chicago and were invited by several of them to speak in their churches. We delivered comprehensive addresses and were invited by one of them, Rev. Dr Milburn to his home. There was not a single soul who did not express satisfaction and approval.*

‘Yesterday, too, we spoke to a distinguished group in Washington, D.C.—some of the judges and one of the personal friends of former President Roosevelt. When the subject of the cause or means for uniting the different religions, and for good will among the nations, was brought up, this friend (of Mr Roosevelt) said, ‘Christ was the source of discord!’ Afterward, as I explained to him the unity and good will of nations under the power of His Holiness Christ, he smiled and accepted, and all others who were present were also pleased. Finally, I asked, ‘Have you any more questions or objections?’ He replied, ‘No! Not at all!’ I asked, ‘Did you accept these explanations?’ He replied, ‘All right.’

Montclair, N.J.—12 May 1912. ‘While still tired from travelling,’ exclaimed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘again we must leave today for Montclair to speak at Unity Church.’

First He went to the home of Mr and Mrs Easel and from there to the Unity Church. Here He spoke upon the subject of ‘Divine Unity’—the Oneness of God’. When He brought the Church Book to be blessed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s pen. His wish was granted, and this was what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote in Persian: *‘O God! Thou pure Lord! Thanks be unto Thee, that the mountains and deserts were traversed and the great Atlantic was crossed until we reached this continent and in this country, we have mentioned Thy name and fame with our tongue. Even in this church, like unto Elijah, we have proclaimed Thy Kingdom. O God! Make the people of this [XIX:5:143] church to be attracted to Thy beauty, and in Thy shelter, protect and bless them.’*—E. E. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás¹

New York City.—On the evening of 12 May 1912, at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, West 104th Street, New York, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá delivered a remarkable address at the meeting of the International Peace Forum from which the following is quoted:²

‘When we review history, we find that from the beginning of the world until the present time, strife and warfare have prevailed among mankind. It was either a war among religions, or battles among races, or strife and warfare among kingdoms, or between two continents. And all of these have arisen from human ignorance and have emanated from misunderstanding and lack of education. And the greatest warfare and battles were among religions.

‘It is an indisputable fact that the divine Prophets came to establish unity and harmony

¹ ‘Ayn-‘Ayn (E. E.) is a short form for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás.

² Refer to *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 116ff.

among mankind. They were Divine Shepherds, not wolves. The shepherd gathers and protects the sheep; He does not disperse them. Every Divine Shepherd assembled a flock of sheep who were formerly scattered. Among the Shepherds was His Holiness Moses, Who gathered the sheep of the scattered tribes of Israel, united them and took them to the Holy Land. He gathered them after their dispersion, harmonized them with each other, and became the cause of their progress. Therefore, their degradation was transformed into glory, their poverty into wealth, and their vices were changed into virtues to such a degree that the Solomonic Sovereignty was established and the fame of their glory reached the East and the West. Thus it becomes evident that Moses was a real Shepherd because He gathered the scattered sheep of Israel and united them.

‘When His Holiness Christ appeared, He too became the cause of unity. He gathered the scattered sheep of Israel with the scattered sheep of the Greeks, Romans, Chaldeans, Assyrians, and Egyptians. These people were in the utmost strife and warfare with each other. They used to shed the blood of each other and like ferocious animals even devoured each other. But His Holiness Christ gathered, united, and harmonized these people, and destroyed the foundation of strife and warfare. It is evident, therefore, that the divine religions were the cause of fellowship and love. The religion of God is not the cause of strife and warfare. If religion becomes the cause of discord, its non-existence is better than its existence, for religion must be the cause of life; if it becomes the cause of death, it is better to be without religion. For religious teachings are like medicine, if medicine becomes the cause of sickness, unquestionably the non-existence of the medicine is better than its existence.

‘Likewise at a time when the Arabian tribes were in the utmost enmity and strife, shedding the blood of each other, confiscating property, making families and children captives, waging continuous warfare in the Arabian Peninsula, when no soul was at ease and no tribes had any rest—at such a time His Holiness Muḥammad appeared. He united the scattered tribes. He caused them to agree and harmonize with each other. Strife and warfare were banished. The Arabs progressed to such a degree that the kingdom of Andalusia and the great dominion of the Caliphs was established.

‘From this we can understand that the foundation of divine religion is one and that it is for peace, [XIX:5:144] not for war; it is love, truth, unity, and fellowship. But wars emanated from imitations which later had crept in. The origin of religion is one and that is Reality. ... In imitations, differences are found; because imitations differ, therefore they become the cause of discord. If, however, all the religions of the world would forsake imitation and follow the original foundation of religion, all would agree. They would have no more strife and warfare, for religion is reality and reality is one; it does not accept multiplicity. ...’

‘In Persia, the utmost bitterness and hatred existed among the different sects and religions. Likewise, in other Asiatic countries. Religions were hostile toward each other. The sects used to shed the blood of each other. The races and tribes were at war, fighting and battling constantly. They believed that the highest honour was in slaying their own kind. It was considered a glory for one religion to attack and conquer another religion in battle. It was at such a time that His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh appeared in Persia. ... He laid the foundation of universal peace, raised the call of the oneness of the world of humanity, spread the principles of peace and reforms in the East. He wrote to all the kings of the Orient about this important matter, encouraged all and announced to all that the glory of the world of humanity lies in the establishment of peace and righteousness. This took place sixty years ago. Because He promulgated the principles of peace, the Oriental kings arose against Him, for they imagined that these principles were contrary to their personal benefits and self-interest. They inflicted upon Him all kinds of punishments. They beat Him severely and imprisoned Him. They banished Him to remote lands and finally held

Him prisoner at a fortress 'Akká) and persecuted His friends. On account of this matter—that is, the abandonment of superstitions, imaginations, and for the oneness of mankind—they shed the blood of twenty thousand men. What homes they wrecked! What souls they attacked and murdered! But the friends of Bahá'u'lláh never wavered, and even until now, with heart and soul are making the greatest effort, endeavouring in the promotion of peace and agreement and in this great cause they are standing in action. ... My hope is this, that the first ray of peace may start from America and reach other regions. The American people are more capable than others to do this, for they are not like others. ... Capacities exist in all countries and the cry for universal peace is rising, for the people are distressed. Every year the governments are adding more to the expenditure of the armies. Therefore, the people are tired. Just now in Europe the earth is loaded with explosives and deadly instruments. Ere long, these weapons of hell shall wreck the edifice of mankind! ...

'Now, just as America is famous throughout the world for her material prosperity and is well known and noted for her efforts in the promotion of industries, may she also endeavour to spread universal peace, so that she may be confirmed and this great matter may spread to other regions. I pray on your behalf that you may be confirmed and assisted.'

(To be continued)

XIX:6, September 1928 [XIX:6:170]

Tea with a Queen and a Princess

Martha L. Root

Miss Martha Root, coming up from Greece to Yugoslavia, arrived in Belgrade, the capital, on January eighteenth. She knew that Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania and Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana of Bucharest were in Belgrade. She had written them she was going to Yugoslavia and the Princess had sent a note saying that they, too, would be in Belgrade early in January. They were at the Royal Palace, guests of Their Majesties King Alexander I and Queen Marie Mignon. The Yugoslavian Queen is the daughter of Queen Marie.—Editor.

Going out into the principal thoroughfare of Belgrade, Kralya Milan on Thursday morning, January nineteenth, one saw at a glance that it was a fete and the throngs were wild with joy. 'Why are all the people so happy?' the writer inquired, and a man who knew German replied in that language: 'A little Prince is born at the Palace!' So the little Prince had come! the second son to the King and Queen of Yugoslavia! This American visitor was so happy she said: 'I, too, am Serbian today, for I'm just as delighted as you are! Only I wish my education were Serbian, then I could read all these newspapers which have the Queen Marie Mignon's pictures on the front pages!'

This was Thursday and Saturday came a little missive from the Royal Palace: 'Mama and I would be so glad to have you take tea with us at half past four,' and was signed, 'Ileana'. Then this is what happened; the writer who arrived at the gates of the Royal Palace five minutes before the hour was met by stern guards standing straight and unbending in their red and blue Serbian uniforms, and why not! They had two little Princes to take care of now! Then secret service men appeared quite unheralded and they escorted the caller to an office of the Superintendent situated to the right and still outside the grounds. There three stalwart officials in full uniform and several decorations carefully examined this little note signed 'Ileana' and written on the Royal stationery with the wide black border of mourning. One of the men then quickly took the visitor through what seemed to be a private gateway into the Royal Gardens, and with his hand he motioned back, the writer does not know whom or what, for she was looking straight ahead to the palace. Passing by several soldiers of the Guard, who bowed profoundly, she was taken through the Royal Palace entrance hall, then through a reception room up into another reception apartment where the rugs, the furnishings,

everything was in splendid Serbian art designs, for this palace is new and its decorations are very interesting. A pleasant attendant with kindly eyes and dressed in the picturesque Montenegrin costume with its wide, red, softly twisted girdle, helped her off with her wraps, and another attendant in conventional black took her up in an elevator.

Rare for her, she was in panic because all this formality had made her a little late and to be late to meet a Queen and a Princess! Upstairs suddenly she halted at the door of the lift, before coming out. Downstairs she had taken off the white kid glove from her left hand to arrange a nosegay, a moment more and she would have forgotten to put it on before entering the Royal drawing rooms! Still, she remembered in time and slipped it on while the attendant in the stately black cloths had to smile and she did, too! Hurrying from the elevator to the apartments of her Royal Hosts an inner poise came, a glad ecstatic happiness, for she was going to meet them again!

A cordial, low voice called as she [XIX:6:171] came through a little reception room into the drawing room where Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania and Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana arose to greet her.

How dear they were! The Queen was perfectly beautiful in her black gown with its myriad draperies and the soft cream whiteness of the bands about her head and the wide cream cuffs on the smart sleeves. Long strands of pearls heightened the pleasing effect. She was very happy, one could see in her smiling eyes how delighted she was that her daughter, Marie Mignon, and the new little babe so fresh from God had come safely, this little Princeling for whom everyone had been anxiously waiting for nine days! Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana was smiling and looked very girlish in her frock of black wool.

It was a wonderful tea party in that great drawing room all in soft grey furnishings with a few American Beauty-red roses in vases here and there. Later during the hour Her Majesty Queen Marie spoke of the passing of her dear friend Loie Fuller. The guest asked if she might quote the words and send them to 'The Bahá'í Magazine, *Star of the West*'. The Queen said: 'Yes, you may, but do not call it an interview with me, it is only a talk with you.' One could see how this great Queen, granddaughter of the Czar Alexander II of Russia and granddaughter of Queen Victoria of Great Britain had truly loved and deeply appreciated the friendship of Miss Loie Fuller, sometimes spoken of only as 'the dancer'. 'It was the essence of soul in our friendship,' said Her Majesty, 'it had nothing to do with our situation in life, the fact that I was a Queen and she was a dancer. She was a creator of marvellous colour effects. She had one of the biggest minds of our century, and Loie Fuller was one of the most selfless women who ever existed. We knew each other for twenty-five years, through our fundamental love for humanity. She worked for me to help me be a strength to the [XIX:6:172] world. Why can't we see the essence in each human being and not just the outside circumstances?

'Well, since the death of Loie Fuller she is colossally recognized as the goddess of light and as the creator of marvellous dances which were a great contribution to art. Not only that, but she is honoured for her great work toward peace.'

'Inwardly I am free, I am not like those who have not the courage to see! Sometimes I write, and as I thought of the people who are not nice to me—(you see I have written it here) I would infinitely rather be nice to them while they are not nice to me, because if I'm not, I shall always be ashamed of myself for not being nice, yet I shall always be able to forgive them!'

The conversation later again turned to incidents in Loie Fuller's life. The Queen related how Miss Fuller was always interested in getting museums started, thinking it helped bring better understanding among countries. Then a little incident came up about gifts and treasures and Her Majesty said: 'That was just like Loie, she always gave away everything, she kept nothing for herself! I once gave her a golden locket which had been a gift to me from one

of the Emperors of Russia. In it was a little ivory miniature of me which she loved best. It was perfect and all hid in this little case of gold. To make her accept it, I said: 'you wear it Loie, and then you can leave it to one of your museums!' It was stolen from her the next day, and she told me it was just a sign that she should not possess anything just for herself alone!

The writer asked Her Majesty if Miss Fuller had known about Bahá'u'lláh's principles for peace, the Bahá'í Movement? She said she did not know, but that Loie Fuller was very internationally minded in religion. 'I didn't have any opportunities in the United States to talk with her about these spiritual matters.'

Then the Queen spoke about the real meaning of God and true religion and her Majesty made this wonderful statement:

'The ultimate dream which we shall realize is that the Bahá'í channel of thought has such strength, it will serve little by little to become a light to all those searching for the real expression of Truth.'

Then Her Majesty Queen Marie was called to the room of her daughter, Her Majesty Queen Marie Mignon. She said good bye very tenderly and asked the writer to give her greetings to all the dear friends.

Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana did not need to go upstairs to her sister. She said: 'I am free until my little nephew comes, then I shall be busy.' She told the writer about her Girl Guide work in Rumania. Her own words were: 'In Rumania the Girl Guide work is the one thing best for all grades of society. Perhaps you know, it was started by the Americans. Our girls always speak of the American secretaries with great love.'

The Princess said there are two thousand Girl Guides in Bucharest alone, and there is a centre in Jassy. She added: 'And very soon we hope to organize the work in Constanza, our port. Yes, and we have large canteens for working girls and a big canteen for workmen where about one thousand men can eat a whole meal for less than a sixpence!'

Just then her darling little nephew, Crown Prince Peter, four years old, came in with his toy cups and saucers to have a tea party, too. He is a charming little boy, very slender, very alert. The Princess asked him to tell the writer whom he has upstairs to play with, thinking he would announce his new little brother whom he already loves devotedly. Instead [XIX:6:173] he quickly said: 'Oh upstairs I play with my grandmother, with my Mama and with you!' and he smiled his happiness. Then he at once knelt down on the rug by the table and became very busy arranging his cups and saucers and preparing his own party.

So the Girl Guide conversation was continued: the writer liked what Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana said about the spiritual work with the girls. She said: 'The spiritual work with the girls is going beautifully, it is the most advanced part I can speak of. I also wish to have a physical department, but our work is not developed enough for that yet. We have some colonies (summer camps) in the mountains now, and we hope to start one by the sea if we can get the money to do it.' She explained how the girls can go for a month's holiday to these camps. She spoke especially of the Young Women's Christian Association and of the Children's Red Cross, for she is an indefatigable worker in both. She said 'I think all these are very excellent to get at everybody generally, it is good for racial amity. But individually no activities compare with the more organized work of the Girl Guides. In the Girl Guide organization, one works directly with the girl—her heart, soul and brain.'

The Princess also spoke with deep insight and love of the Young Women's Christian Association. She says it is under the patronage from the Rumanian Orthodox Church, and that both Orthodox and Protestants can be members. She explained: 'The YWCA girls often come

and sing in our Church (The Rumanian Orthodox Church). I find that girls of all sorts come into the Young Women's Christian Association. They come with great interest though often protesting, and sometimes just a little bit sneeringly, but they soon change their attitude, because of our simple cheerful way. Sooner or later they become very good members.'

'I love my work very much indeed, and it has often helped me when I found things difficult both inwardly and outwardly.'

This inspiring and very young Princess is the great ideal of the girls of Rumania. It is certainly fine that she studies, thinks and works so hard to help the girls of her country. And though she only came to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, for a visit of three weeks, she brought with her a great number of good books—books on religion, universal peace and service—and she loaned them to her young friends of the Yugoslavian Court. (She does not know it but the writer later saw the rare and splendid fruits and the happiness which the visit of Her Majesty Queen Marie and Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana brought to Yugoslavia).

Now suddenly the little Crown Prince has finished his play. He has gathered and put into the box all the toy cups and saucers. He stands up close beside the Princess and says: 'O Auntie, why does it take you so long to eat?' and Her Royal Highness replies to him: 'Because, Peterkins, we are almost as bad as you are sometimes, we talk instead of eat!' So very soon we three walked through the great hall where the Crown Prince Peter's little automobiles were waiting for him, but he passed them by, he wished to go upstairs to his little brother. Her Royal Highness held his left hand in hers, she took the writer's hand in her right and in a good bye that will never be forgotten, she pledged her service, saying: 'I am only too pleased to do as much of the work as I can!' Thus came to a close this truly royal tea party!

XIX:6, September 1928 [XIX:6:180]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí

Chapter V

*This story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America is based on material and notes corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself and which He had turned over to Dr Baghdádí at the time He was leaving this country. The twofold purpose of this series, which will continue for several months, is, in the words of the author, 'First to bring back to the memory of the believers the time of the incomparable days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to them and to remind them of His words, His instructions and His admonitions; and, secondly, to give a picture of His visit so that later believers who did not have the blessing of seeing Him, may benefit by reading a brief history.'—*Editor.¹

13 May 1912, at Hotel Astor, New York. Reception by New York Peace Society. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke upon the subject of 'Universal Peace' and after the reception, He said to His interpreters, 'No matter how much I say I am the Servant of God, 'Abdu'l-Bahá the servant of Bahá) still they call my name Prophet. It will be nice if something is done so that they will stop using these names and titles.'

Speaking to a group of Hindus and Japanese who came to see Him in the evening, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, 'In the ancient times India was very prosperous. From the continent of Asia civilization spread to Egypt and Syria, and from Syria to Greece, and from there to Arabia and Spain, and from Spain it spread to different European countries. Nevertheless, the world of

¹ Chapter I of this brief story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America, recorded the events that transpired on His arrival in New York. Chapter II related to His first visit in Washington, D.C. and Chapter III to the first visit in Chicago. Chapter IV told of the stirring events and spiritual victories of His visits in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Pa., Montclair, N.J., and return visits to Washington, D.C. and New York. Chapter V, which follows continues the story of His stay in New York, His attendance at the International Peace Society's Conference at Lake Mohonk, and of His visit in Boston and Worcester, Mass.

humanity has not yet reached the stage of maturity. Whenever this material civilization becomes the twin of divine civilization, Universal Peace is established, and the souls attain to the station of the angels, then it will be the time of the maturity of the world.'

On 14 May 1912, the International Peace Society held its Conference at Lake Mohonk, N.Y., and was invited to address the members. Here He remained three days. After delivering His address, He said to the interpreters, *'Once I wrote to the friends in Persia in regard to peace congresses and conferences, that if the members of the conferences for peace do not succeed in practicing what they say, they may be compared to those who hold a meeting to discuss and form firm [XIX:6:181] resolutions about the sinfulness and harmfulness of liquors. But after leaving the meeting, they occupy themselves in selling liquors, and just as before they become engaged in their business. Now we must not only think and talk peace but we must develop the power to practice peace, so that like unto the spirit in the body of the world, peace may permeate the whole world.'*

The members and speakers who attended this conference were from all parts of the world, most of them did well in presenting their papers. But one of the speakers was very much excited, he kept pounding and hammering the table with his fists, kicking the chair with his feet, shouting and screaming at the top of his voice. Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked, *'There are times when a speaker should raise his voice in order to emphasize his point. There are times when he should speak low, and at times he should smile. Gestures must harmonize with the character of words.'*

On the following day, 15 May 1912 'Abdu'l-Bahá went out to take a walk and a crowd of young men and girls followed Him. On reaching a large tree, the blossoms of which were in full bloom, he stopped and faced the crowd with His wonderful smile. It was a real spring afternoon. The sky was clear and the sun flooding the green hills with its warm rays. Everything was quiet except for the melodies of song birds and the gentle breeze that whispered to the leaves. Then suddenly the silence was broken by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who undoubtedly knew the youthful crowd was anxious to hear Him tell an amusing story. He did tell them a peculiarly significant story, which fixed clearly in their minds the importance of deeds. And then He said, *'It is very easy to come here, camp near this beautiful lake, on these charming hills, far away from everybody and deliver speeches on Universal Peace. These ideals should be spread and put in action over there, (Europe) not here in the world's most peaceful corner.'*

On the following evening, 16 May 1912, about nine o'clock, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'We have to leave this place tomorrow and I wish I had one of my Persian rugs here, that I might give it as a present to our host, Mr Smiley, President of the International Peace Society.'* Those who were in His company told Him that it would be impossible for anyone to go to New York and return in one night, as all have to leave about ten o'clock in the morning. Then He looked at this servant and asked, *'Well, what do you say?'* I said, 'I am not afraid to try anything for you, my Lord.' He handed me His key and said, *'Take this and go to my room and bring a rug. May God bless you.'*

From Lake Mohonk I hired a carriage to take me to the railroad station. To my disappointment, I learned on arriving there that there was no passenger train at that hour for New York, but a freight train was just leaving. I jumped the tracks and made a wild dash as fast as I could run. Finally I caught the rear end of that speeding train and succeeded in climbing up without mishap. Then while I was trying to catch my breath, the conductor came and protested my action and ordered me to get off at the next station. I showed him my professional card and told him that I was going on a very urgent mission. 'O you are a doctor! That is all right.' Fortunately, the kind conductor did not ask what the nature of the urgent call was.

About two o'clock in the morning I reached 'Abdu'l-Bahá's apartment and had to awaken Mrs Grace Ober and her sister, Miss Ella Roberts, to let me in. They were very kind and asked me to have something to eat and to rest a while, but I thanked them and told them that I was in a great hurry. Then I selected one of the [XIX:6:182] most precious rugs from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's room and hastened to the railroad station. I took the first early morning train. It was about nine o'clock when I landed at Lake Mohonk station. From the station it would take one hour to reach Lake Mohonk by carriage, and I had to be there at ten o'clock. I looked around and there was no vehicle of any kind in sight. But finally, the mail carrier appeared with his little wagon and got off at once to receive the mail. I got on the little wagon and awaited his return. When he came and saw me, well! was I nervous? It was certainly one of the embarrassing moments of my life. However, I explained my position to him, namely, that I was in the service of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whom we regarded as our spiritual king, and I showed him the rug that had to be delivered right away to Mr Smiley, President of the International Peace Society. Then as a last resort, I suggested that in case it was against the law to let me go with him, he could at least let me relieve him that morning because I knew how to drive a horse, and if it was necessary, he might consult with the Post Office or the police.

O what a relief came when he said, 'It's alright I guess, I am going up there anyway.'

We arrived at our destiny just at the time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was shaking hands with Mr Smiley and preparing to leave. He took the rug with a smile and presented it to Mr Smiley to keep as a souvenir.

'Why this is just what I have been seeking for many years!' Mr Smiley exclaimed. 'You see we had a Persian rug just like this one, but it was burned in a fire and ever since my wife has been broken hearted over it. This will surely make her very happy.' Afterward the Secretary of the International Peace Society, who was the last one to leave, came and said to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'We all appreciate your blessed visit and we believe what you said is the truth. But we are sorry we cannot include religion in our organization. Our members are composed of all kinds of religions and sects the Protestant, Catholic, Jew, etc.; naturally everyone prefers his own belief and will protest if any religion besides his own is favoured.' To this 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *Your members may be compared to beams of different metals and you are trying to unite them as you would tie these fingers together with a string.*' Here 'Abdu'l-Bahá brought His own five fingers close together to illustrate His point. *'See, no matter how you tie them, still they shall remain separate. But the only way to make these metals into one alloy, is to put them into a crucible and apply intense heat to melt them all. For our melting pot, we use the fire of the love of God.'*

On 17 May 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to New York. During the following days spent there He used to take a walk in the park along Riverside Drive. Often He went alone, and knowing that the friends would like to accompany Him, He said, *'I sleep on the grass. I come out of fatigue. My mind rests. But when I am not alone, surely I talk, and rest of body and mind cannot be gained.'*

On the following day He spoke at the Church of Divine Fraternity and Dr John Herman Randall became interested and attracted to the Bahá'í Cause.

On 19 May 1912 the continuous stream of anxious visitors who called to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá at His apartment in the Hudson Building aroused the objection of the owner and therefore, 'Abdu'l-Bahá moved to the home of Mr and Mrs Edward B. Kinney. Among his visitors that day was a group of Jewish Rabbis. In the evening 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at Brotherhood Church, Bergen and Fairview Aves., Jersey City, N.J. His subject was 'The Brotherhood of Mankind.' [XIX:6:183]

On 20 May 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at a Woman's Suffrage meeting in the Metropolitan

Temple. On His way, referring to the car of Mr Mountfort Mills, He said, *'Know the value of this automobile. In the future they will say, 'this was the car of the servants of the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh).'*

21 May 1912 was children's day. All the Bahá'í children of New York and some of their little friends had a lively visit with 'Abdu'l-Bahá before He left for Boston.

22 May 1912. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stopped at the Charles Hotel. In the evening He addressed the Unitarian Conference.

On 23 May 1912, He visited the Syrian and Greek Relief Society. While all were eating lunch, He said to the president of the society: *'How fortunate you are to be engaged in service to the poor. My greatest privilege is to be counted as one of the poor.'* Then He gave her ten gold pounds (about \$50) as His contribution to the poor. From there He left for Worcester, Mass. and on His way, glancing at the beautiful country with its green fields, He said, *'I wish that Bahá'u'lláh had come to these regions. So fond was He of such scenery that often while travelling, wherever the country was more beautiful and more verdant, He would ask His company to make a stop. Once while passing by the shore of a lake, the green country, the purity of the water and the beauty of the weather were so lovely in the eyes of Bahá'u'lláh that He asked that the caravan be stopped and all remained there for several hours.'*

At Worcester, Mass. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the University and met a number of students who were from Japan, China and Turkey. On leaving He said to the President, *'I am very pleased with you and your university. Indeed you are serving the world of humanity and you are self-sacrificing to mankind. Above all I wish for you the best there is in the Kingdom. My hope is that you may be the cause of spreading sciences and arts, and I pray on your behalf that God may make you an everlasting banner, and cause the divine love to reflect from your heart. From you and the teachers and the students, I beheld much love and affection. This meeting I shall never forget, and always I shall remember your services.'*

This day, 23 May, was a day of rejoicing and happiness, for it was the anniversary Feast of the Declaration of the Báb (and also the blessed birthday of 'Abdu'l-Bahá). That evening in Boston a wonderful feast was prepared by Mrs Alice Breed and she had baked a large cake and decorated it with sixty eight candles, and the first candle was blown out by Himself.

On the following day, 24 May 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the Free Religious Association or Unitarian Congress.

25 May, the Bahá'ís and their friends were invited to meet at the home of Mrs Edith Inglis, and in the evening He addressed the public at Huntington Chambers; and later a group of ministers called to see Him.

On 26 May, 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the Syrians of Boston, and indeed it was a royal reception. Commenting on this meeting, He said, *'What a good meeting that was. How the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh change the souls.'*

Returning to New York, He stopped at the home of Mr and Mrs Edward B. Kinney During the day He spoke at Mount Morris Baptist Church, Fifth Ave, and 126th St.

On 28 May, from early morning until late at night friends and inquirers in groups called to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá. [XIX:6:184]

On 29 May, He addressed the Theosophical Lodge at Broadway and 79th St. One of the friends inquired about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's health. He replied, *'My health and happiness depend upon the progress of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. This happiness is a lasting happiness and this life is an eternal life.'*

On 30 May 1912, He spoke at the University of New York.

31 May 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the country home of Mr and Mrs Wm. H. Hoar at Fanwood, N.J. where a meeting was held. Mr Hoar pleaded to have Him stay there for a while, but He excused Himself, saying, *'We have no time for pleasure and fresh air. We must be occupied in service to the threshold of God.'* Later He spoke at the Town Hall in Fanwood and then returned to New York.

On 1 June 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the following message to a Socialist who had called to see Him. *'Tell the Socialists, sharing in property and lands of this mortal world is conducive to strife and warfare. But the sharing and heritage of the Kingdom is conducive to unity and goodwill. Instead of striving for worldly sharing, if you strive for the things of the Kingdom, you will gain strength and eternal happiness. For the divine Kingdom is spacious and will give you whatever you desire, and there will be no more strife and warfare. Is this not better and nobler?'*

On 2 June 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave, and 10th St. New York. After leaving the church He said, *'At first, on arriving at the church, I did not feel inclined to speak, but when I stood before that great audience, where the atmosphere of the church was filled with the Holy Spirit, I received a wonderful feeling of vigour and happiness.'*

On 3 June 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the guest of Senator Gifford Pinchot at Milford, Pa., where a large number of America's greatest statesmen and government officials were waiting to welcome Him. Here, also, 'Abdu'l-Bahá predicted the coming of the World War. When addressing His honoured audience. He said, *'A world war among the powers is inevitable! But it will not be in America. This war will be in Europe. You have taken a corner for yourselves. You do not interfere with anybody, neither are you contemplating taking the European countries, nor is there anybody covetous enough to invade your lands. You are at ease. The Atlantic ocean is a natural mighty fortress. Europe and other countries will be forced to follow your methods. Great changes will take place in all Europe. The centralization of great governments will end in the independence of internal states or provinces.'*

On 4 June 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to New York and stopped at the home of Mrs Champney, which like the home of Mr and Mrs Edward B. Kinney, became the centre of attraction. One of the many friends present asked about the material civilization in America. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'This material civilization is like a glass or bulb, very transparent and pure. But divine civilization is like a lighted lamp. When these two are combined, the utmost perfection will be obtained. The light of the Oneness of the world of humanity, equal rights and divine morals shall spread from this country to other countries and shall illumine the world.'*

Another person asked, 'Is it possible for the busy man of the world to become spiritual?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'The more the souls advance in material things and the more they act with moderation, the more they can acquire capacity for spirituality. The more sound the body becomes, the more will be [XIX:6:185] the reflection and manifestation of the spirit. Yes, the things which are contrary to spirituality are those that oppose true science and a sound mind.'*

On 5 June 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá entertained the Bahá'í children at the Unity Club. On the following day, 6 June, He visited the homes of Mrs Newton and Mrs Ives, where wonderful meetings were held. Addressing the friends, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

'In the world of existence there is no issue greater than meetings that are held just for the love of God. Consider, people from the East, people from the West how in the utmost fellowship we are gathered in one place. It was impossible in the past to have such fellowship and unity. It is the power of Bahá'u'lláh that has united the hearts and brought the souls under the power of One Word. The members of a family even can never be

gathered together with such a degree of love and be associated in such joy and happiness. It is through the divine power and the influence of the Word of God that we are assembled with such cheer and gladness turning to the Abhá (Most Glorious) Kingdom and like unto young trees of the rose garden, swaying by the breezes of favour and bounty. This day is the day that can never be forgotten, because we are under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh; our hearts are rejoicing with His glad-tidings; our nostrils are perfumed by the fragrances of the Kingdom of Abhá; our hearts delighted with the divine call and our spirits revived by the merciful outpourings. Surely such a day will never be forgotten.'

(To be continued)

XIX:7, October 1928 [XIX:7:195]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

God is like the calm and limitless sea. His Bounty is overflowing and imitable. The Love of God, the Beauty of God is everywhere and exists for man if he will but rise to spiritual heights, open his spiritual vision and behold it. All souls have capacity for enkindling the Spirit, and as we may all be assisted by Its Divine Power, we must will to receive it.'

XIX:7, October 1928 [XIX:7:218]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

Dr Díyá' Baghdádí

Chapter VI¹

This story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America is based on material and notes corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself and which He had turned over to Dr Baghdádí at the time He was leaving this country. The twofold purpose of this series, which will continue for several months, is, in the words of the author, 'First to bring back to the memory of the believers the time of the incomparable days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to them and to remind them of His words, His instructions and His admonitions; and, secondly, to give a picture of His visit so that later believers who did not have the blessing of seeing Him, may benefit by reading a brief history.'— Editor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá at Philadelphia

8 June 1912. A very unfortunate event happened² through the malicious act of one who was supposed to be a friend, causing not only trouble to 'Abdu'l-Bahá but increasing greatly the strain of His daily work. The writer has witnessed on many such distressing occasions how 'Abdu'l-Bahá would never say even a word to the offending person, for He was the essence of mercy, the source of compassion and the ocean of forgiveness. He always covered the faults in His masterly way, and often would shower more kindness upon those who wronged Him. However, before retiring that night, He said, *'The purpose of the appearance of the Greatest Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh; the endurance of calamities and disasters; the martyrdom of the holy souls and the ordeals of the sanctified temples, were for the purification of souls and the spirituality of the friends.'*

9 June 1912. In the morning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at the Unitarian Church 15th St., and Girard Ave, and in the evening at the Baptist Temple.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's return to New York

10 June 1912. On this day a remarkable Tablet was revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for M. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney of Paris, France. In it He referred to His visit in Philadelphia and of

¹ Dates corrected according to the explanation in *Star of the West*, XIX:11, p. 350, later in this document.

² Refer to the explanation in *Star of the West*, XIX:11, p. 350, later in this document.

the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá which were all encompassing.

Speaking of the days in Baghdád, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'The Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) after leaving the 'Abode of Peace' (the city of [XIX:7:219] Baghdád) and also Adrianople, did not speak at public meetings. The style of His talks and His blessed utterances were wonderful, peerless and incomparable. But for the sake of reverence, I do not choose to speak in that same style.'*

11 June 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not feeling well, and that was a sure sign there was inharmony somewhere among the friends. For He always declared that His health was in the hands of the friends. In their unity He received health, and in the lack of it He would be ill. So on that morning He said, *'Bahá'u'lláh has closed the doors of dissensions. He referred affairs to the Supreme House of Justice, and whatever its decision may be, all must obey. He even said that should two divisions be formed amongst the Bahá'ís and each one establish its House of Justice and oppose each other, both of them would be false. And before the establishment of the House of Justice, He appointed and confirmed the Centre of the Covenant and said whatever he does is right. With the blessed pen, He wrote His Covenant.'*

In the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the home of Mr Topakyan, the Persian Consul General. Then He returned home where the friends were eagerly awaiting Him. When someone inquired about the significance of dreams and the power of spirits, He replied, *'It is certain that there is a great connection between the human spirit and the realities of existing beings or things. Thus sometimes whatever one sees in a dream, the same takes place on awakening. Nay rather while one is awake and when the heart is free from troubles, certain things make an impression that later will materialize in a physical form. Therefore there is a spiritual relation between the human memory or mind and physical forms. And the spirit possesses the power of discover or unfoldment. When this power is known, these questions become easily understood. Nevertheless, here is an interesting thing, while the materialists are denying the spiritual power, they themselves are occupied in discovering the layers or strata of the earth (geology) and are submerged in the spiritual power and claim to know the happenings of the future.'*

Another friend asked, 'In the Tablets it is stated that we must be severed and detached. In another place it is stated that we must learn a trade or profession. Do not these two statements contradict each other?' 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'In the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, it is incumbent upon every soul to acquire a trade and an occupation. For example, I know how to weave or make a mat, and you know some other trade. This, in itself is an act of worship, provided that it is conducted on the basis of utmost honesty and faithfulness. And this is the cause of prosperity. Yet, in spite of being so occupied,—if the heart is not chained and tied to this world, and is not troubled by current events, neither hindered by wealth from rendering service to mankind, nor grieved because of poverty,—then this is human perfection. Otherwise in a state of poverty, to manifest generosity and in a state of weakness to claim justice—this can easily be said, but it is not a proof of man's attainments and alertness.'*

Someone asked, 'How can we recognize the person with selfish and insincere aims?' 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'I have spoken on this subject before. Christ said, 'By their deeds (fruits) ye shall know them.' Those who are related to me, shall be known by their deeds.'*

12 June 1912. On that day friends and visitors took 'Abdu'l-Bahá's headquarters by storm, all eager for private interviews. For this reason, He said, *'Whosoever has not yet had a private interview, or if anyone has [XIX:7:220] very important business, let them come in, but the rest we shall meet at the general meeting. For it is impossible to meet all, one at a time.'*

Later at the general meeting, He spoke on the subject of true refinement and declared that, *'One of the special laws of Bahá'u'lláh is the one prohibiting cursing and defamation, and that all should seek forgiveness for their enemies. Though the nations and people are physically related*

together in the world of spirit and heart they hold aloof from each other. But those who have spiritual relationship, and unity of conscience, are always ready to sacrifice their lives for one another, even though they have no physical relationship.'

'In the traditions of the Shí'íhs (the second largest Muslim sect) concerning the coming of the Promised One, it is stated that 'Knowledge consists of twenty-seven letters. All the Divine Manifestations who came, from the first to the last, have revealed only two letters.' Aside from the true meaning (of this tradition) the victory and power of the Cause of God, the appearance of wonderful signs, the explanation of divine questions, the unfoldment of the secrets of the holy books, and the all encompassing knowledge of this Most Great Manifestation in the world of the Cause, are a hundred times more than that. Also, outwardly speaking, the wise people of this age have acknowledged that the sciences, arts, industries and wonders of this century are equal to more than those of the past fifty centuries, nay rather, even greater than that.'

13 June 1912. Speaking of the bitter days of persecution, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'Notwithstanding all these persecutions and ordeals, the Cause of God was victorious and irresistible, even though the Committee of Investigation and its members every hour inflicted grave injustice and brought forth false accusations at the city of 'Akká. After joining and conspiring with the deniers and enemies at 'Akká to crush and destroy us, and while they were still on their way to Constantinople, the wrath of God overtook them. The whole matter was changed. All the oppressors became degraded. Some of the members of the committee were put to death and some had to run away. Finally one of them went to Egypt and begged food of the believers to save himself from starvation.'*

The reader may know perhaps that in 1907 the enemies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá aroused the fear of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd, the Sultán of Turkey, and turned him against 'Abdu'l-Bahá. So he sent a committee to investigate some serious charges, namely, that was going to make Himself a king, and other false accusations. While at 'Akká, the committee met 'Abdu'l-Bahá; and then returned to Constantinople with the intention of asking the death sentence from the Sultán for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. But before the committee reached Constantinople, one day the Sultán was talking with the chief of the Muslims at the door of the Mosque, when a bomb that was evidently intended for him, exploded and he had a very narrow escape from death. He fainted. About three hundred lives were lost by the explosion. Then soon afterward, the Young Turks came into power; Sultán 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd was deposed and cast into prison, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not only freed from danger by the Young Turk Party, but also from the Turkish prison.

Speaking upon the subject of discord among the friends, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'Bahá'u'lláh declared that whenever the people of Bahá have discord, even though on behalf of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, both sides are to be rejected.'*

After taking a short nap, He returned and said, *'I was tired. I slept a little. I dreamed that I was talking [XIX:7:221] to you, and it was so clear I was awakened by my voice. One of the words of that dream was the word, 'distinction' [imtiyáz]. Therefore, it is befitting that we speak on the subject of distinction.'* (And this talk is published in full in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 189ff.)

14 June 1912, the sad news of the death of Áqá Siyyid Taqí Manshádí, one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's old secretaries, was received. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'The Station of Áqá Siyyid Taqí Manshádí will become known in the future.'*

Speaking of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'Notwithstanding that the Blessed Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh) was in prison, His blessed tent was pitched on Mount Carmel with the utmost dignity. From a purely outward point, His power and might was in such a great degree that the governor of 'Akká tried for five years to see Him and visit the holy threshold, but he refused and never paid any attention to him.'*

Speaking of His own public addresses, in churches, etc.; 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'They are according to the capacities of the souls and the exigency of the time.'* Then He declaimed a verse from Persian poetry, to illustrate this point *'Though the father may sing to the baby 'Tee-tee' in his own mind, he may be drawing an architectural plan.'* We gather from this bit of illustrated verse how infinitely beyond the powers of audiences to grasp are the images and cosmic visions of the Prophet.

XIX:8, November 1928 [XIX:8:239]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

'Consider how great and unexampled have been the diversity of race, the antagonisms of faiths and the conflict of opinions in Persia. In this day, however, the fragrance of holiness has produced so complete a fusion of the divers elements in that land that its varied peoples, its opposing sects and hostile races have become even as one soul. Reflect how great is their (Bahá'ís) love one for the other, how firm their union, how unified their interests, how close their association and intercourse. Christian, Jew, Zoroastrian and Muslim, having all banished every trace of estrangement and difference from their midst, have all gathered together in perfect harmony and understanding, with all affection, happiness and freedom.

'Ponder in thine heart what the Power of the Most Great Name (Bahá'u'lláh) hath wrought!'

XIX:8, November 1928 [XIX:8:253]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

Dr Díyá' Baghdádí
Chapter VII

This story of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in America is based on material and notes corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself and which He had turned over to Dr Baghdádí at the time He was leaving this country. The twofold purpose of this series, which will continue for several months, is, in the words of the author, 'First to bring back to the memory of the believers the time of the incomparable days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to them and to remind them of His words, His instructions and His admonitions; and, secondly, to give a picture of His visit so that later believers who did not have the blessing of seeing Him, may benefit by reading a brief history.'—
Editor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá at Brooklyn, N.Y.

15 June 1912. 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the Fourth Unitarian Church, at Beverly Road, Flatbush, Brooklyn, N.Y. At noon, He lunched at the home of Mr and Mrs Howard MacNutt. In the evening, He addressed the Central Congregational Church at Hancock Street. In His inspiring addresses He proved the validity of Christ and Muḥammad. The attention of the reader is called to this great fact, namely, that in all the history of America, no one has ever tried to prove the validity of Christ in Jewish Synagogues, and the validity of Muḥammad in Christian churches. But this 'Abdu'l-Bahá did with pure logic and irrefutable evidence.

Later at a general meeting He said among other things, *'No matter how much the world of materialism progresses, still it is in need of the teachings of the Holy Spirit.'* He urged the believers to teach and told them just how to teach the Bahá'í Message saying, *'You must teach the Cause of God in the utmost humility. Just as I am humble in the presence of all, even the children, so you must be likewise.'*

17 June 1912. Consenting to the repeated requests of the friends, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the home of Mr and Mrs Howard MacNutt to have a moving picture taken. The series of those pictures were as follows: 1. His arrival and alighting from an automobile and how He was welcomed by the friends. 2. His walks and talks to His secretaries and interpreters, *'Consider*

the power of the Ancient Beauty, and the influence of the Greatest Name—(Bahá'u'lláh)—How He has established such a unity and fellowship between us and the American people! If the powers of the world were brought together, it would not be possible to have the hearts so attracted to each other, and we here are assembled with such love at such a reception and love one another with heart and soul! Behold what the power of Bahá'u'lláh has done and how He made the people of the East and the West, the lovers of each other! Were it not for His power, it would have been impossible to arrange this meeting. Praise be to God! We are all united and agreed in heart and soul.' 3. His walks alone, chanting in Persian, 'His wonders are resplendent His power is perfect. His favours are bestowed. His mercy is abundant.' 4. His sitting with white and coloured children, giving His blessings to them while the Persian friends are standing in His service. 5. His bidding farewell to the friends and uttering the following words: 'Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The sun of Truth has arisen! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The New Jerusalem has descended from heaven! Glad-tidings, Glad-tidings! The divine glad-tidings are revealed! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The secrets of the Holy Books are unfolded! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The Great Day has become evident! Glad-tid- [XIX:8:254] ings, glad-tidings! The banner of the oneness of the world of humanity has been raised! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The tent of Universal Peace is set up! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The divine lamp is lighted! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The merciful breeze is wafting! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The promises and prophecies of the Prophets are fulfilled and evident! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The Glory of Carmel has become reflected on the horizons! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! The East and West are embracing each other! Glad-tidings, glad-tidings! Asia and America, like unto two lovers, are holding the hands of each other!'

18 June 1912. *The Brilliant Proof*, the manuscript of a book written by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, the most noted Bahá'í writer and historian, was received and highly approved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who asked me to give it to Mr Albert R. Windust of Chicago as a present and with the request that it be published. When someone suggested to Him a visit to the beautiful country for recreation, He refused, saying, 'We love the meetings of the faithful ones, not beautiful sight-seeing trips. But first we must be faithful to God, then to His servants. Even if we have in the past seen beautiful places and delightful sceneries, it was either for business and meeting people, or while travelling.'

Then He wrote a wonderful tribute in honour of Áqá Riḍáy-i-Qannád, a true and a pioneer servant of the Bahá'í cause, who died at 'Akká. 'Faithfulness,' as defined in this tribute, 'means that I should be a wanderer in this mountain and desert! True faithfulness is when I become lost, stripped from names and unconsidered; in the field of sacrifice to be a target for the arrow of unfaithfulness! In short, I have but one request to make of the friends of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, and that is to bow their heads at the Holy Threshold (the Holy Shrines) and ask for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the cup of martyrdom, so that in servitude to the Threshold of Bahá, He may sweeten His mouth with a drop from the ocean of faithfulness!'

On the following day, at the request of Miss Juliet Thompson, a noted Bahá'í artist, 'Abdu'l-Bahá consented to have His portrait painted by her. Later Mrs Smith of Philadelphia called and asked for a name, and for advice concerning her health. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave her a Persian name, 'Tábandih', meaning 'brilliant'.¹ And his advice concerning health was, 'You must always be happy and associate with happy and cheerful people and characterize yourself with the characteristics of the Merciful One. For happiness has a connection with health preservation; and from sorrow, diseases are born. The source of permanent happiness is spirituality and merciful conduct which is not followed by sorrow. But physical happiness is subjected to a thousand kinds of changes and transformations. Have you heard the story about the Emperor who while looking into a mirror used to be sad and distressed and would wail, 'Oh! What a

¹ Tábanda, Pers. light-giver, radiant, shining, brilliant, luminous.

splendid and youthful body I once had; now how helpless it is! What a beautiful face I had, how homely it has become! What a graceful form I had, how out of shape it has become!' One by one, he used to recount all the good features of his physical equipment when he was young and then, making comparisons, he would show forth his sadness. This is the end of physical happiness!

A question concerning calamities and cataclysms was asked. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: *'The links of the chain of existing things are connected by a universal law and divine order, and all created things are linked together. It is impossible for any of the links to break except by its relation to that universal law and order. Whatever happens is from the essential requirements and is based on great wisdom. For it is a divine decree that grass should grow and then wither; every green and verdant plantation eventually to dry up; every united body to become dispersed; and every composition to be followed by decomposition. All these are from the requirements of that universal law and the collective links that are interpreted as divine decree or fate.'*

'Abdu'l-Bahá at Monclair, N.J.

20 June 1912. Here 'Abdu'l-Bahá rented a house for a few days and on the first evening there, He went out for a walk, accompanied by Mírzá 'Alí Qulí Khán and this servant. Oh! What lessons of wisdom, justice and severance did He teach us that night! Indeed we learned from Him in one hour more than we could have learned in many years from any school or teacher. The following is one of the incidents of His life when He was a very young boy in Baghdád which He related to us that night, and which, indeed, is a clear evidence of His innate and keen wisdom, His justice and fairness, His severance and detachment from material things. *'Mírzá Hádí-i-Javáhirí, a very wealthy Persian Bahá'í died in Baghdád leaving a son, three daughters and a great fortune. The son, Mírzá Músá was also a Bahá'í, but the daughters were fanatical Muslims. A fierce fight started among these heirs because they mistrusted each other and could not come to a decision as to how to divide equally among themselves their father's immense fortune. Finally Mírzá Músá went to Bahá'u'lláh for help and assistance. Bahá'u'lláh said, 'This is not my work, go to my Greatest Branch ('Abdu'l-Bahá)—will help you.' Though I was but twelve years old, I at once summoned a reliable real estate man and asked him to divide their estate into four equal parts. I also summoned a furniture dealer and asked him to divide the furniture into four equal parts. Then I summoned an expert jeweller who divided their jewellery into four equal parts. This plan pleased all the heirs. It took only from morning until noon for the three experts to finish their work of dividing everything into four equal parts, and then everybody was happy.*

After a day or so, Mírzá Músá came to me and told me confidentially that he had in his possession all his father's money in gold and nobody else knew anything about it. He wanted me to have all that money for my services. I asked him to show me where the money was. He took me to his room and produced a satchel full of gold. I locked the satchel, sealed it with wax and ordered him to call his sisters in. When they came, I explained to them that it was unnecessary to call an expert to divide the money, that it could easily be divided by themselves. Seeing the satchel sealed with wax, all of them were satisfied and each one received one fourth of the money. Though at that time I did not have any money, and I had to get along in the cold without an overcoat because I could not afford to buy one, and my old turban needed to be changed, I did not wish to take any of their money.'

Streams of big tears gushed forth from my eyes and in my heart I said 'No wonder you are called Master.' Yea the citizens of Baghdád and the inhabitants of 'Iráq always called Him 'Master', because He was the first one to settle their problems and adjust their affairs.

22 June 1912. Concerning inter- [XIX:8:256] ference in politics and meddling in government affairs, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'The people of Bahá are forbidden from interfering or meddling in political affairs and in every country, they must obey the government and the law and order of*

the land.'

23 June 1912. Concerning material progress in Europe, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'The material progress of Europe shall reach a stagnant mark, that is, it will one day reach to the limit, and everything that reaches a natural limit and then stagnates, surely must then decline. We are hopeful that spiritual progress may reach and protect them from this fate. On the other hand all those movements which are in a stage of birth and growth, face a sure progress. In those days when we were leaving Tíhrán for Baghdád, there was nothing in appearances to show the strength that was in the Cause, but because the Cause of God was then like a young tree, full of the power of growth and development, it was in reality even then destined to encircle the East and the West; whereas the great and apparent absolute power of Náṣiri'd Dín Sháh was destined to reach its decline and fade and vanish.'*

That afternoon, seeing every seat in the house occupied and scarcely any standing room, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'We do not look at the place of meeting, nay, rather we look at the radiant faces and hearts of the friends.'*

When someone inquired about His health, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'Physical health is of no importance. The importance is in the spiritual health which has a lasting effect and ecstasy. The more you think of the body, the worse it becomes. Therefore, it is better not to pay so much attention to it. Today I drank a glass of milk. I feel much more comfortable. Why should man go to so much trouble and hardship for eating?'*

25 June 1912. After lunching at the home of Mr and Mrs Edsel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá started for New York.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's return to New York

Mrs Florence Krug stated that her husband, Dr Krug, was having a change of heart, and that he not only had ceased his opposition, but he was helping and encouraging her to serve the Bahá'í Cause. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'When the Muslims were beating Chief Mu'abadán (a Persian fire worshipper)¹ with the whip for drinking wine, (this was the old Muslim way of punishing the violators of their prohibition law) he cried, 'O Arabian Muḥammad! What hast thou done! What an influence Thou hast manifested!' Now it must be said, 'O Bahá'u'lláh! What hast Thou done! What power is this that has transformed such people into captives of love and united the east and the west!''*

In the afternoon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá paid a short visit to Mrs Gary at her home; and from there, passing through the military park, He went to the home of Mr and Mrs Hooper Harris, where a meeting and dinner were arranged for Him.

27 June 1912. While sitting with a group of friends in the park, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'What revolutions have taken place (in the East) and what waves have risen from them until they brought us here, and yet, what other waves are to rise! ...*

'My beginning and end is the Holy Threshold (the shrine of Bahá'u'lláh). Whatever we have is from that Threshold and to it we shall return. Were it not for His help and bounty, these souls (the believers) would not be sitting here at your left and right. Where is Persia and where is America!'

(To be continued)

XIX:9, December 1928 [XIX:9:261]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Consider! Has anyone singly and alone accomplished without the aid of his contemporaries

¹ Mu'abbid, pl. mu'abadán: Pers. (fire) worshipper.

any great thing in life? United members of an organism or assembly will be in power and able to accomplish great deeds. Human beings singly and alone cannot fully achieve a great good thing; in fact man cannot live solitary.

Therefore, life must be lived in unison in society; and when socially united, fully united, they can do everything.

When one family is well united, great results are obtained. If this circle of unity be widened so as to include and control the interests of an entire village to the extent that all the members of its population are fully united and in perfect accord; the results will be accordingly. Now widen the circle again! Let a city be united and the results will be still greater. Widen the circle yet more and have the people of a country united; then, indeed, important results shall be forthcoming. And if a continent is fully united and will unite all the other continents, then is the time when the greatest result shall obtain.

XIX:9, December 1928 [XIX:9:288]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Every movement in the world of humanity bringing on its back unity and accord is good; and every matter which creates discord and inharmony is evil. This century is a radiant century. Its discoveries are many. Its inventions are great. Its undertakings are multitudinous. On account of these great accomplishments, this century is superior to all other centuries. But the greatest undertaking is the unification of language, because it is more beneficial and productive of more pleasure than any other undertaking of this age. The unity of language brings about great fellowship between hearts. The union of language is the cause of the attainment of accord. It brings about the entire sweeping away of misunderstanding between the people; it establishes accord between all the children of men. It gives broader conceptions and greater vision to human minds, and today the greatest undertaking in the world of humanity is to understand and make yourself understood. Every individual member of the body politic, on account of the widespread of an auxiliary international language, will be enabled to put himself in touch with the current events and ethical and scientific discoveries of the age. An auxiliary universal language will give us the key—or the master key—to the understanding of the secrets of the past ages. Through an international language every nation in the future will be enabled to pursue its scientific discoveries very easily and without any difficulty.

XIX:10, January 1929 [XIX:10:306]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America

Dr Dīyá’ Baghdádí
Chapter VIII

From the account of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s daily activities and words while in America, furnished us by Dr Dīyá’ Baghdádí, we have here taken some of the most significant passages, for the most part never before published. Noteworthy in this number is a teaching on the Immortality of the Soul.—Editor.

Immortality—A large and very important meeting was held at the home of Mrs Agnes S. Parsons, in Dublin, N.H., on 7 August 1912, to which all Bahá’ís and members of the summer colony, many statesmen and their families were invited. He who is eager to learn the truth about the immortality of the soul and is interested in the future life, let him study carefully and meditate thoughtfully on the following address that was given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at that meeting:

‘1. First, we must prove that there is no death for the world of [XIX:10:307] existence, or existing bodies, because death means separation of the elements of a compound—the body.

For example, all these contingent beings or created things which we can see are composed of elements; that is, simple, single elements were composed or combined together, formed infinite forms and, from every composition, a certain creature or object was created. Thus from the composition of certain elements, this flower was created. As to the term, death, it means the decomposition or separation of the simple, single elements and atoms, not their destruction, for these elements are everlasting, indestructible and can never be lost. Then we say this flower is dead or destroyed, we mean that its composition has been followed by decomposition—only the order of its composition has been upset—but its original elements are eternal. In the same way, man was created from simple, single elements. Therefore, his death means separation of these elements, but they are everlasting and can never be lost. Thus the term life means composition, and, death means decomposition, or separation and transformation of the elements from one form into another. Just as the transformation of the vegetable kingdom into the animal kingdom means death of the vegetable, in like manner, the transformation of man from the physical world and the separation of the elements (of his body) means the death of man. Then know, that there is no death in the world of existence, at most, there is transformation from one condition to another. But the human spirit is not a composition or combination of elements that must be followed by decomposition. If it were a composition, then we might say it would die, but because it is not a composition, therefore, it does not decompose or die. This is also evident even in the simple elements and their parts (atoms, ions and electrons) where there is neither composition, nor decomposition. And there is no question about that.

'2. While the body changes from one condition to another, there is no change or transformation for the soul. For example, the youthful form of the human body will become old, but the soul, remains the same; the body becomes weak, but the soul does not become weak; the body becomes defective or paralyzed, but for the soul, there is no change. How often a member may be amputated from a body, but the soul remains the same, and never changes. Therefore, while the body undergoes changes, the soul does not change. And because the soul does not change, it is immortal. For the pivot or the main thing in mortality is change and transformation.

'3. In the world of dreams, the human body lays helpless; its powers lacking; the eyes do not see; the ears do not hear, and the body does not move. But the soul sees, hears, travels and solves problems. Therefore, it becomes evident, that by the death of the body, the soul does not die; in the passing away of the body, the soul does not perish; when the body sleeps, the soul does not sleep, nay, rather, it comprehends and discovers things; it flies and travels.

'4. The body may be here, but the soul can be present in the east or west. While in the west, it manages the affairs of the east, and, in the east, it discovers the things of the west. It organizes and runs the vital affairs of nations. While the body is in one place, the soul travels in different countries and continents. In Spain, yet, it discovers America. Thus, the power and influence, which belong to the soul, are lacking in the body. The body does not see, but the soul sees and explores. Therefore, its [XIX:10:308] life does not depend upon the body.

'5. There can be no effect without a cause. It is impossible for the cause (for example, the sun) to perish, and its rays and light continue to exist; the fire to be extinguished, and its heat still be felt; the light to be blown out, and the lamp continue to shine; the mind to be gone, and the intellectual faculties remain. In brief: there is no effect without a cause, and as long as the effect exists, or inasmuch as the effect exists, the cause must also exist. Thus, though His Holiness Christ appeared nineteen hundred and twelve years ago, His work has lasted until this very day; His kingdom is evident; His influence is wonderful. Is it possible for that Spirit of God (Christ) to be of the mortal and such great work of His should stay

immortal? Then it is evident that He, that Source of eternal light and everlasting outpourings (Christ) is the cause of the existing signs of His work.

'6. Every created thing has a definite form or shape at a time. It may be a triangle, or square or pentagon (a figure of 5 sides and 5 angles). It is impossible for an object to take on different forms at one time. For example, this rug is an oblong square. Is it possible for it to become circular? It is impossible unless its shape is changed into a round form. Thus while it is impossible for any of the created bodies to appear in different forms at a time, the human soul possesses all forms and shapes at a time. The soul then does not need to be changed and transformed from form to form and cast out one shape to take on another shape and figure. And because the soul is independent of change and form, therefore, it is not matter and is immortal.

'7. When man looks at creation, he finds two things—the tangible and the intangible. The tangible things are such as the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Whatever can be perceived by the senses, namely, that which is visible to the eye, heard by the ear, detected by the nose, felt by the touch or hand, and tasted by the mouth, all these are subject to change. But the intangible cannot be perceived by the physical senses. Like the mind and knowledge or science, these, are intangible realities (realities that must be reasoned out) and are not subject to change and transformation. The eyes do not see them, and the ears hear them not. It is impossible for knowledge, which is an intangible reality to be transformed into ignorance. In like manner, the soul belongs to the intangible realities, therefore, it neither changes nor perishes. However, he who has insight, spiritual, and merciful, will find that the human soul was never and will never be of the perishable. He perceives that all things have been always with him and are under his shadows. He finds himself eternal, everlasting, ever living, immortal and submerged in the lights of the Exalted Lord. For he has spiritual perception and susceptible conscience and is not limited by the rules of mind and human senses. But he who is lacking in insight and a pure conscience, always finds himself desperate, and of the dead. Whenever he thinks of death, he becomes alarmed and believes himself to be of the perishable. But the blessed souls are not like that. They know that they are immortal, full of light, and will never die like unto the disciples of His Holiness Christ. That is why at the time of martyrdom and death, the Bahá'ís are in the utmost happiness, because they know that there is no death or annihilation; at most, it is this: that the body vanishes but the soul is eternal and immortal in the divine realm.' [XIX:10:309]

A lady asked, 'Why is it that all the Divine Manifestations have always appeared in the form of man and not woman?' 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained that the greatest work of women is to be the mother of the Divine Manifestation. Then He laughed heartily, and said, *'Though women are equal to men as far as capacity and faculties are concerned, yet, no doubt men are stronger. Even among the animals, such as pigeons, sparrows, peacocks, etc., a distinction (between male and female) is evident.'*

On His return to His apartment in New York on 16 July, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was met by a number of friends and inquirers. A lady physician asked an interesting question, 'Why should we have so many disasters and catastrophes in the world?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *'There are two kinds of disasters. (1) Those that are caused by immoral deeds and vice, such as, untruthfulness, hypocrisy, dishonesty, injustice, etc. Undoubtedly, bad deeds have evil results. (2) Those that happen because of the essential requirements of the world of creation; the universal divine law, and the universal relations that are inevitable such as the law of change and transformation, death and life. Thus, it is impossible for a tree not to dry up, and life not to end in death.'*

The Syrians of Boston invited ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to their club on 24 July 1912, and anxious to know if the Arabic language would in time be the international language. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: ‘No!’ ‘Then, how about the Esperanto language?’ someone asked. ‘A few weeks ago,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied, ‘I sent a letter from New York to one of the Esperanto leaders. I wrote that if they hold a conference for representatives from different races and rulers of different countries to consult about this language and promote it then it will become universal.’

Question: ‘Does not the Essence of Divinity—God Himself—appear in the flesh?’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *‘The Essence of Divinity—God—is sanctified above ascent, descent, and appearance. The lights of His qualities are manifest or reflected in the mirrors of the hearts of His Holy Manifestations.’*

Question: ‘What is the meaning of ‘Everything is in everything’?’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *‘It means the transference or transformation of created bodies into infinite forms of creation. Every indivisible electron is transformed into all the forms of creatures and everything travels or moves in everything.’*

On 30 July 1912, Mírzá ‘Alí Akbar Nakhjavání, who came to this country in those days and served faithfully as one of the Persian party in the service of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, said, ‘How powerful and effective your words are!’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *‘This is not my power, nay, rather, it is the power of My Father. This work, is His work.’* Then turning to the friends assembled, He continued: *‘Confirmation is something different than capacity, knowledge and mind. How many unimportant souls have discovered important matters. How many souls have endured hardships for years to explore the North Pole, yet, Admiral Peary reached it. But the real point must be explored. Because he was confirmed, Columbus, with just a trifle of trouble, discovered America. The disciples of His Holiness Christ, though outwardly considered degraded, have accomplished that which Napoleon could not accomplish. They transformed the very nature of the world. From this it becomes evident that affairs are carried out through confirmation.’*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá on 31 July 1912, visited the Henderson Summer School about twenty–five miles from Dublin, N.H. ‘Twenty years ago,’ said Dr Henderson, ‘not a single summer school could be found anywhere, but now, there are hundreds of them in this country.’

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *‘Every praiseworthy thing spreads rapidly. But the children must first be taught about religion, that they may become faithful and honest.’*

XIX:11, February 1929 [XIX:11:346]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America

Dr Dīyá’ Baghdádí

Chapter IX

From the account of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s daily activities and words while in America, furnished us by Dr Dīyá’ Baghdádí, we have here taken some of the most significant passages, for the most part never before published. Noteworthy in this number is a teaching on the solution of the economic problem.—Editor.

He who is interested in the economic problem and its future solution, let him study the following from a Tablet (or letter) written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Mrs A. S. Parsons, of Washington, D.C.

'The solution of the economic problem should begin with the farmer and then all other classes. For the number of farmers compared with other classes is more than double. Therefore, it is only proper to begin with the farmer who is the first real worker in society.

'A group of efficient people or a committee should be elected and the whole village be under its management. Also, a general Storehouse should be established, and a secretary appointed. At the time of harvest, a certain percentage of all crops must be given to the general storehouse, under the supervision of the committee. This storehouse should have seven revenues or incomes: (1) Income taxes. (2) Taxes on animals. (3) Property or anything left without an heir. (4) Lost and found, that is, things found and unclaimed. (5) One third of all treasures or things dug out and excavated from the earth, must go to this Storehouse. (6) One third of all the mines must go to the Storehouse. (7) Voluntary contributions.

'In short, the Storehouse should also have seven expenses, as follows: (1) An appropriation to pay the expenses of the Storehouse itself, and for public health. (2) To pay one tenth of the storehouse income as government taxes. (3) For government taxes on animals. (4) A home for the orphans. (5) A home for the aged. (6) Schools. [XIX:11:347] (7) For the support of the poor.

'As to the first, the income tax must be collected in the following manner, for example: When all the income of a person amounts to \$500 and his necessary expenses amount to \$500, he should be exempt from paying taxes. Another person whose expenses amount to \$500, but his income is \$1,000, should pay one tenth of his income for taxes, because he has more than he needs for his living and can afford to pay one tenth of his income without trouble. Another person whose expenses are \$1,000 and his income, \$5,000, should give one and a half tenths of his income, because he has more than he needs. Another person whose necessary expenses are \$1,000, and his income is \$10,000, should give two tenths because he also has more than what he needs. Another person whose expenses are \$4,000 or \$5,000 and his income is \$100,000, should give one fourth. Another person, whose income is \$200, and his actual needs, just to exist on, amount to \$500, who does his best in his work, but has had poor luck with his crops, such a person should receive help from the storehouse, that he may not starve, but have a decent living.'

'In every village the necessary means of support for all the orphans must be appropriated from the storehouse. Also for the aged, the helpless, the unemployed, education, public health—for all these, appropriations must be made from the storehouse.'

'In case there is a surplus (in a storehouse) it should be turned over to the National Treasury for national expenditures.'

'By adopting such a system, every individual in society would live in the utmost comfort and happiness. The different degrees would remain secure and undisturbed. Because the difference in degrees are of the essential requirement for society. Society is like unto an army. For an army, a marshal is needed, a General is needed, a Commander is needed, a Captain is needed, and a private soldier is needed. It is impossible to have them all of one rank. The preservation of different ranks or degrees is necessary. But every private soldier must live in the utmost ease and comfort. Likewise, for every city, a judge is needed, a merchant is needed, the wealthy is needed, a tradesman is needed, a farmer is needed, etc. No doubt, these different ranks must be preserved, or else, the general law and order will be upset.'

Question: 'Will the ancient glory of the East ever returns?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'The East will be better. How many great souls came to the world; how many*

of the wealthy; what kings sat on the thrones of honour and glory; what charming people were the models in the world's pleasure circle! What was their end? All their glory, life, pleasure and vigour, have perished. But the song of the beauty of Joseph is still conquering the world, and the glory of the disciples is still enduring, and their hard labour is the cause of eternal life.'

Question: 'What is your opinion about the New Messiah of the Theosophists?' [XIX:11:348]

'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'The Theosophists are educating a child in European schools, that he may become the Promised One (Messiah) of all nations. What thoughtlessness this is! God must choose the Promised One, not the creatures. A lamp lighted by the creatures, will be extinguished; but the Lamp of God is ever shining. He who is educated by the creatures, will always be dependent upon the creatures. How can he bestow everlasting wealth? It is just as if a person wishes to make a sun out of a lamp, oil and wick.'

On 18 July 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá hinted that soon He expected to leave the city of New York, and from that moment, many of the believers wept as they felt the sting of His separation. Later, referring to the great spiritual souls who would appear among the believers, He said, *'My health and the heaps of work are my obstacles, otherwise it could be possible to inspire certain extraordinary souls from amongst the friends, and not until such souls are developed can the original aim be achieved. At present, some have acquired zeal and capacity. But those who would be chosen, are other persons. Mullá Ḥasan and 'Abdu'l-Bahá were sent by the Mujtahid (Persian High Priest) to Bahá'u'lláh in Mázindarán. As they saw Bahá'u'lláh, their souls became so inspired and vivified, that night and day, they did not have any rest for one moment, after suffering bitter persecution and ordeals, Mullá 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave his life in the field of sacrifice, and ascended to the Abhá Kingdom. Likewise, Shaykh Hindí, who was sightless, after meeting Bahá'u'lláh in Mázindarán, spent the whole night singing until morning. Such souls in the Cause of God must be of the elect. Such souls are qualified to be in the field of service and self-sacrifice.'*

On 20 August 1912, Mr F. Mortensen of Chicago, formerly of Minneapolis and Montana arrived at Green Acre. Not having money to buy his railroad ticket, Mr. Mortensen chose to ride on the bumpers, between the wheels under the cars of the train, flirting with death, from Minneapolis to Green Acre. He mingled with the friends, and not a soul knew anything about him. But 'Abdu'l-Bahá picked him out at once and with utmost kindness, He said to him, *'You are my guest here.'* He kept him a few days and gave him money to go home happily. The outside world will never know how generous 'Abdu'l-Bahá was. Suffice it to say that every day of His life, whether in poverty stricken Palestine, or in turbulent Syria and Egypt: in European countries or in rich America,—'Abdu'l-Bahá was ever-ready to give a helping hand to anyone who went to Him for help. For one of His titles was, 'the Father and Friend of the Poor'. Just imagine! Now comes a poor pilgrim who has to return to Persia or some other country, who has no money. Then there is the sick and the helpless. There comes the student seeking money for education. Here is a friend out of work, and there is another under a heavy debt. In short: He was the helper of all; and in order to do that, how many days would He deprive Himself [XIX:11:349] from even the necessary food and comfort, that other sufferers be relieved. Yes, He would even give away his garments to men who needed clothing. Moreover, God only knows, how many innocent prisoners were made free by Him. How many sons were returned to their lonely mothers after they were drafted for duty in Turkish battles. How many stolen properties were recovered and given back to their owners. How many have lived a happy life, and how many are still enjoying the blessings of His inexhaustible bounty. And all this was only a part of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's work in this world.

Speaking of man's heedlessness, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *'As long as the Divine Manifestations are among the creatures, the people do not appreciate them. They curse and insult them. But after their departure, they worship them, and many of the people, like these who are now camping outside of Green Acre, would live a solitary life. Even they persecuted Columbus and some of the ancient doctors and philosophers, as Socrates; but later, they began to glory in their praise.'*

A minister from Portsmouth: 'The fanatics are persecuting me because I write and preach on your teachings.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'In every affair, firmness brings forth good results.'

A lady: 'I am unhappy today. I am not contented with myself.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'This is the sign of progress. He who is contented with himself is a manifestation of Satan, and, he who is not contented with himself, is a manifestation of the Merciful One. He who worships himself (selfish) can never progress, but he who finds faults in himself will try to perfect himself and will progress. If a person has one thousand good qualities, he must pay no attention to them, nay, rather he must try to find his own faults. For example: If a person owns a building, properly decorated and strongly built, but if there is a crack in one of its walls or ceiling, undoubtedly he must forget everything else and start to repair the crack. Moreover, absolute perfection is not possible for man. Therefore, no matter how much he progresses, still he remains imperfect and there is a higher degree of perfection than his. And whenever he looks at that higher degree, he cannot be contented with himself. That was why when someone called His Holiness Christ, 'Good Master!' He replied, 'There is only One Good, that is God.'* The lady, 'I always speak on unity and the brotherhood of man. I am very happy to see you in this country and hear these wonderful teachings. I am going west to spread this message.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'We must strive that hatred and opposition may pass away, and the souls may become free from the chains of superstitions. You must serve in this path and be the cause of unity of mankind.'*

On 23 August 1912, on his way to Malden, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stopped at the home of Miss Farmer to say good bye. Many of the friends were present and it was a sad, sad hour. The most eloquent tongue [XIX:11:350] and the pen of the world's best writer can never and will never be able to describe how happy the true believer was on meeting and, how sad he became on leaving Him. That is why whenever the hour of separation was at hand, you could see the eyes streaming with tears. *'We have finished our work here,'* said He. *'We have planted a seed. Souls have become very much attracted and uplifted. Everyday I used to see presents, such as flowers, fruit, honey and candy, sent here by unknown friends. This was an evidence of their sincerity and wholehearted faith.'*

An explanation

We wish to mention here in regard to the 'unfortunate event' referred to in the article 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America' by Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí, which appeared in the October 1928 *Star of the West*, as occurring in Philadelphia, that this event was in no way connected with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's association and contact with the people of Philadelphia, but occurred in His own entourage. His visit to Philadelphia was most happy in every respect as regards His reception and experience in that city.

The dates given for the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Philadelphia in the October *Star of the West* were in error owing to an incompatibility in the translation of the Oriental calendar in which

the *Diary of Mírzá Maḥmúd*, who wrote the official account of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to America, was recorded. Upon investigation we find that the dates throughout this article as given in the Western calendar, are one day off, and should have been as follows:

‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Philadelphia on the afternoon of Saturday, 8 June 1912. He spoke in two prominent churches, the Baptist Temple and the Spring Garden Unitarian Church on Sunday, 9 June, and He spoke at the home of the Revell’s on Monday, 10 June and left for New York in the afternoon of 10 June 1912.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was so pleased with the friends and the people, enjoyed the hospitality of the Revell family at their home and everything was so lovely that He Himself testified in writing in the following Tablet to M. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney of Paris, France, 10 June 1912, how wonderful were the Abhá confirmations while He was in Philadelphia:

‘O thou kind friend! Due to an invitation extended by two ministers and the plea of the friends of God, I went to Philadelphia for a few days. Two splendid meetings were held at two churches and according to my incapacity I spoke. But the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá were all encompassing and evident like unto the sun. Though we are poor, yet He is the Possessor of Wealth. In short, the blessed verse (of Bahá’u’lláh) ‘And we shall make victorious whosoever arises to serve My Cause with the armies of the Supreme Concurrence and a contingent of near angels,’ has become clear and manifest. ...’

(For details of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to Philadelphia, we would refer the readers to the *Star of the West* of 24 June 1914, and also 13 July 1914).

XIX:12, March 1929 [XIX:12:357]

The spring season

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in many of His Writings, draws a wonderful analogy between the material season of spring and the spiritual springtime. We have gathered only a few of these important teachings for the compilation which follows.—Editor. [XIX:12:358]

When spring comes there is a divine wisdom in its appearance. God has a special object in renewing the earth with its bounty. For the dead earth is again made to blossom so that the life of plants and flowers may continue and be reproduced. The trees put forth their leaves and are able to bear all kinds of delicious fruits. All the birds and animals, everything with soul-life is rejoiced and rejuvenated in the coming of spring. If this does not come to pass, it is not spring; it may be autumn. But it is possible that spring may come and yet a tree rooted in bad ground will be deprived of its vivifying powers. Or a fruitless tree may not bear, although the warm sun and vernal shower are descending upon it.

So likewise an evil soul may derive no benefit, produce no fruit from the coming of a Manifestation of God. The divine springtime which brings forth spiritual flowers in other souls fails to beautify the soul that is evil. In general, however, just as everything is vivified, refreshed and renewed by the bounty of the literal spring, so every soul receives some degree of illumination and growth from the Manifestation when He comes. He is the Divine Spring which comes after the long winter of death and inaction. The wisdom of God is seen in His coming. He adorns the soul of man with new life, divine attributes and higher spiritual qualities. By this the soul is enlightened, illumined. That which is dark, gloomy and forbidding becomes light, hopeful and productive of new growth. So in the Divine Springtime the blind receive sight, the deaf are made to hear, the dumb speak, the timid become courageous and the heedless awaken to new realizations. In short they have become the image of that which God planned them to be and which the heavenly books promised shall be the true station of man. This is the power, purpose and virtue of the Heavenly Spring.

The time has arrived for the world of humanity to hoist the standard of the oneness of the human world, so that solidarity and unity may bind together all the nations of the world, so that dogmatic formulas and superstitions may end, so that the essential reality underlying all the religions founded by the Prophets may be revealed.

That Reality is one.

It is the love of God, the progress of the world, the oneness of humanity.

That Reality is the bond which can unite all the human race.

That Reality is the attainment of the benefits of the most great peace, the discarding of warfare.

That Reality is progressiveness, the undertaking of the colossal tasks in life, the oneness of public opinion.

Therefore strive, O ye people! and put forth your efforts that this Reality may overcome the lesser forces in life, that this King of Reality may alone rule all humanity.

Thus may the world of mankind be reformed. Thus may a new springtime be ushered in and a fresh spirit may resuscitate mankind.

The individuals of humanity, like refreshed plants, will put forth leaves and blossoms and fruit, so that the face of the earth will become the long promised and delectable paradise, so that the great bestowal, the supreme virtues of man will glisten over the face of the earth. Then shall the world of existence have attained maturity.

This is my message.

XIX:12, March 1929 [XIX:12:378]

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí
Chapter X

From the account of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's daily activities and words while in America, furnished us by Dr Dīyá' Baghdádí, we have here taken but a few quotations, for the most part those never before published. The Addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America were published in early volumes of this magazine and later collected and published in book form in two volumes under the title, 'The Promulgation of Universal Peace'.—Editor.

Question: 'You have made it clear to us that the soul is immortal, but what will become of the soul of the wicked and the unbeliever in the next world?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'All realities and souls or spirits are immortal. Even the soul of the unbeliever and the spiritually defective are immortal. But when these are compared with holy souls and sanctified spirits, they are not worth mentioning. It is just like this wood, which has an existence, but in comparison to the existence of man, it is as if non-existent.'*

Question: 'Is it right to take revenge in the case of a criminal, and, how can crimes be controlled?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'People have no right to take revenge. But the government must protect the lives, property and honour of the people. The more material education is increased, the greater will be the temptations for committing crimes. But spiritual education is an inspiration for benevolent deeds and human perfections. We are hopeful that crimes may pass away, and day by day the spiritual perfections increase.'* [XIX:12:379]

Question: 'What relation has nature to God? Is God in all things, or is He an independent power and nature is His creation?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'Some of the philosophers believe that God is an Infinite Reality. That a spark from that Infinite Reality exists in every human being. That God is the possessor of the greatest power. That all contingent beings—all created things—manifest or express Him according to their capacities. Thus the Supreme Being, the Creator, is transfigured into infinite forms. This is the theory of Plato. But we explain that the Supreme Being, who is knowable to the mind, comprehended and understood by us, is He who dominates and animates all things. That all things are like the elements, and, He is like the spirit, which animates and dominates them. Even like the human body which is composed of elements, is animated and dominated by the soul. Also, compared with the human body, all matter as a whole, is animated and dominated by a Power—the Supreme Being. But the Real Supreme Being is not He who is knowable, who can be comprehended by the limited, finite human mind; nay, rather, He is Himself, the One who exists, animates and dominates by Himself, and by Whom all things are created. All things are the product of His work and He rules all things.*

'We call Him the Supreme Being because we need a term to express ourselves, not that He can be comprehended by us. Our aim is to explain about how things find their existence. All things find their existence in two ways. One, by manifestation, the other, by emanation. For example this flower has appeared on this tree. This is called realization by manifestation. The other, is like these rays which emanate from the sun. This is called realization by emanation. In like MANNER, ALL CREATED THINGS HAVE EMANATED FROM THAT REAL SUPREME BEING—GOD—AND THEREFORE, NATURE AND ALL CREATION ARE FROM HIM AND NOT HE FROM THEM.'

Question: 'Did God create evil in the world?'

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *'In the world of existence there is no evil. Evil is nothingness and whatever is in existence is good. Ignorance is evil, and that is the absence of knowledge. Evil has no material or outward existence. Thus, evil is the absence of good; poverty is the absence of wealth; injustice is the absence of justice; imperfection is the absence of perfection. These opposites are referred to absence or nothingness, not to existence.'*

'Abdu'l-Bahá made a unique differentiation between the different types of the rich and the poor when He said:

'The patient poor are better than the thankful rich. But the thankful poor are better than the patient poor. And the best of all is the rich-giver who is free from temptations or tests, who becomes the cause of the happiness of mankind. Though through thanksgiving blessings are increased, yet the most perfect thanksgiving is through giving, and the station of giving is the highest of all stations. Just as it is said in the Qur'án, 'Ye shall never receive blessings until ye give of that which ye love.' [XIX:12:380] A king at the time of his death wished he was of the poor class. 'I wish I was poor!' he exclaimed. 'In the first place, I would not have ruled with injustice, and, in the second place, at the last moment, I would not be in such a state of remorse and regret!' A poor man who heard him say this exclaimed, 'Thank God that at the time of death, the kings wish to be poor, but we, the poor, at the time of death never desire to say we wish we were kings!'

Green Acre: 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited Miss Sarah Farmer, the founder of this Bahá'í Centre. He called on her not because she was an idealist and a sincere lover of mankind, but because she was an invalid. For one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ethical laws was to visit the sick and cheer the invalid. He would even call on his bitter enemies whenever they were ill and help them in the

time of need.

'Abdu'l-Bahá said: *'Green Acre must be made the centre for the investigation of reality, not that everybody should come and use it as a place of propaganda for his own ideas and benefits. The Shining Reality which is the Spirit of the world today is One and not many.'*

On 25 August 1912, Bahá'ís from Boston and Green Acre came to see Him and in the afternoon, He addressed the New Thought Society in Boston. On the following day, when a group of old faithful believers came to see Him, he said, *'This meeting is an evidence of faithfulness that we have not forgotten each other. In the world of existence, there is no greater quality than faithfulness. Love cannot be disturbed by the passing of time. Consider how faithful were those souls in Persia, who while under the sword, remembered Bahá'u'lláh, and neither calamities, nor sufferings could prevent them from remaining loyal, and on the altar of sacrifice, they cried from their hearts and souls, 'Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!' (O Thou Glory of God!) This is the quality of faithfulness!'*

Montreal: While riding through the City with Mr Sutherland Maxwell, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, glancing at a school:

'Because of the fact that in these schools only material things and natural philosophy are being taught, therefore, no genius students of great mental power can be found. Whenever divine and natural philosophy are studied together, then there will be wonderful souls and greater progress can be achieved. This was the cause of progress in (ancient) Greek schools. They used to teach both divine and natural or material philosophy.'

Passing by a Unitarian Church, he remarked, *'Tomorrow we will raise the divine call in this place.'* On approaching the Church of Notre Dame, he stopped to see it for a few minutes. *'Behold what the eleven Disciples have done: What a self-sacrifice did they display! This I say unto you, that you should walk in their footsteps. When man becomes severed (from worldly things) he will transform a world. The disciples of Christ held a meeting up on the mountain and made agreements with each other to endure any sort of calamity; to regard every ordeal as a blessing and every difficulty as an ease; the [XIX:12:381] married man was to free his wife; the bachelor to remain single, sacrificing comfort and life. That was the way it happened. As they descended from the mountain, every one of them hastened in a certain direction, never to return! This is how they left behind them such achievements as a souvenir. After His Holiness Christ, the disciples indeed, became earnestly selfless, not selfless in words.'*

To 'Abdu'l-Bahá, thrift and economy had but one place, where He surely practiced them that one place was no other than Himself. For example. On leaving the Windsor Hotel, in Montreal, He wanted to board a street car. 'A taxi cab will be more comfortable for you,' someone suggested. 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, *'That is nothing. In this way one dollar difference is saved.'* But when He reached the Maxwell home, lo and behold! the first thing He did was to see the butler, the nurse, and the maid, and give to each one a five dollar gold piece!

On 3 September 1912, one of the first callers was the President of the Montreal University. To him 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained the Bahá'í Principles and in conclusion He added, *'These are the aims of the people of Bahá'u'lláh. Do you not wish to do the same work? You also should strive that the real oneness of the world of humanity may be realized; that mankind may be free from prejudices and relieved from wars and conflicts. It is for this that we are striving. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has opened a wide door for all. For example, at a time when people of different religions, countries, races, and nationalities, believing each other to be infidels, cursed and outcast, He addressed the inhabitants of the world, saying, 'O people! of the world! Ye all are*

the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch’.

Speaking of children, said: *‘Children are the adornment of the house. A house without a child is like a house without light.’* Turning His face to Mr Maxwell and to all the gathered friends, He continued: *‘You must adhere to whatever is the cause of happiness of the world of humanity. Show affection to the orphans. Feed the hungry. Clothe the needy. Give a helping hand to the unfortunate. Then you will be favoured at the Divine Court.’*

On 7 September 1912, addressing the public in the parlour of the hotel in Montreal, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: *“Just as in the physical world there are four seasons, in the world of religion there is also a divine spring season and spiritual springtime. When the divine outpourings cease, the trees of existence lose their freshness, and lack of life prevails on the farms, then it is like winter. The souls become depressed and low; the country of the hearts becomes choked with weeds and thorns; not a rose and not a flower; no beauty, no charm, and no pleasure. Therefore, the divine springtime starts again. This is the divine law and the requirement of the creative world; this is the cause of the continuous appearance of the Holy Manifestations and the renewal of religious laws and ordinances.”*

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XX:4, July 1929 [XX:4:101]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá¹

The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication. Prayer is conversation with God. The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is none other than conversation with God. It creates spirituality, creates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets new attractions of the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence.

Prayer and supplication are so effective that they inspire one’s heart for the whole day with high ideals and supreme sanctity and calmness. One’s heart must be sensitive to the music of prayer. He must feel the effect of prayer.

Man becomes like a stone unless he continually supplicates to God. The heart of man is like a mirror which is covered with dust, and to cleanse it one must continually pray to God that it may become clean. The act of supplication is the polish which erases all worldly desires. ... Prayer is a key by which the doors of the kingdom are opened. There are many subjects which are difficult for man to solve. But during prayer and supplication they are unveiled.

XX:5, August 1929 [XX:5:130]

The uniting power

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Praise be to God that the Divine Cause in this Bahá’í dispensation is one of absolute love

¹ Refer also to the *Star of the West* VIII:4, pp. 42–42 and XVI:6, p. 544.

and of pure spirituality. It is not of this kingdom the earth, for it is not war and distress, nor the oppression of one people by another. Its army is the love of God; its victory is the ecstasy of the knowledge of God; its battle is that of Truth—the exposition of the Word; its warfare is against selfishness; its patience is its reserve; its entire meekness is its conquering power; and its love for all is a glory forevermore. In a word it is a spirit and it is love.

It is for us to consider how we may educate men that the darkness of ignorance and heedlessness may disappear and that the radiance of the Kingdom may encompass the world; that the nations of men may be delivered from selfish ambition and strife, and be revived by the fragrance of God; that animosity and hatred may be dispersed and wholly disappear. While the attracting power of the love of God so completely unites the hearts of men that all hearts beat as a single heart; that the arteries of all mankind may pulsate with the love of God; that contention and war may utterly pass away, while peace and reconciliation lift their standard in the midst of the earth.

Bahá'u'lláh made the utmost effort to educate (His people) and incite them to morality, the acquisition of the sciences and arts of all countries, kindly dealing with all the nations of the earth, desire for the welfare of all peoples, sociability, concord, obedience, courtesy, instruction of their children, production of what is needful for the human race, and inauguration of true happiness for mankind.

The existent world needs a uniting power to connect nations. There are various uniting powers in the world. ... All these uniting powers are ineffective and perishable. The only uniting power which can connect all hearts and last forever is faith in God and love for Him. This is the only enduring power, the one that never perishes.

It is God's Will that the differences between nations should disappear. Those who help the cause of unity, are doing God's work. Unity is the Divine Bounty for this brilliant century.

XX:5, August 1929 [XX:5:149]

The Holy Land today

Ruth Ellis Moffett

A visit to the Holy Land, where every stone, every corner and every path speaks with historic memories and palpitates with stories of the Old Testament Prophets, and the life of Jesus the Christ, requires deep preliminary study and careful preparation. One needs especially a spiritual preparation to penetrate the profound mysticism which surrounds and illuminates the countryside of Galilee, Samaria and the hills of Judea, and then they might be able to picture just a little of the lives of those simple but great characters of the past as they lived and suffered and prayed.

The history of the Holy Land loses itself in the dim mists of the ages. There is an ancient legend that 'Akká was the home of Adam. Here legend and history weave a fairy like pattern of the past.

Picture for yourself a narrow strip of rough, rocky, mountainous land between two great reservoirs of pure air—the Mediterranean Sea and the Great Desert. The atmosphere has a singular purity and translucent quality, so that the colours must be mixed on the palette of the imagination with the most mellow and delicate tints.

Next sketch rapidly, many rocky, barren, mountain ranges, several large sandy plains, a few small valleys capable of being cultivated. Paint in vivid colours a heterogeneous mass of all

kinds of people, with [XX:5:150] differing customs, costumes, standards of living, and grades of development. These, all unamalgamated and warring with each other until England reaches out a rescuing hand, restraining and bringing a semblance of order out of chaos.

We find in this little strip of land, no longer than from Albany to New York City, the Bridge of Sighs of history. It is the bridge between the north and the south, the connecting link between the east and west. It is the footstool of kings, the keynote of empires, the battlefield whose soil is stained with the blood of wars innumerable, and it is the home of outlaws, the shrine of martyrs, saints and Prophets by the score.

In Palestine there are Christians, Moslems, Jews, Samaritans, Germans, Indians, Russians, Persians, Armenians and Syrians—all hating and mutually suspicious of each other.

In 721 BCE Israel's glory departed and these people had no part in the affairs of Palestine for over 2,000 years. Palestine was successively ruled by Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Syria, Rome and last by the Turks for 700 years. These changes have had a very disastrous effect upon the political, economic and religious life of the country.

But already, in the short time since England has taken Palestine as a mandate, there is marked improvement in sanitation, good roads, substantial buildings with red tiled roofs, the absence of beggars and lepers and general signs of progress in all phases of life.

It seems the weakest spot in the progressive programme which England has been carrying out so far, is in the field of education. This is for several reasons, first, financial, for not enough money has been available; second, because the Jews are taking care of their own people by establishing an excellent school system. The Christians are also doing fairly well with their own, leaving the difficult problem, however, of the big mass of Moslem people for England to care for; in the third place, seven-eighths of the Moslems are totally illiterate and resent being educated. So there is, a great need for sympathetic teachers.

The Jewish University, founded by Einstein is most interesting and is already becoming the University of Universities taking up advanced work where other Universities discontinue. There are modern laboratories in biology and colloidal chemistry, theology, history, literature, law and philosophy of the Jew. They have England to thank again for this great educational opportunity.

The English soldier boys are doing their bit, with great courtesy and tact. Bruce Barton says that if the Jews attempt to set up a government of their own, there will be a great revolt which will wipe out the Jews entirely. This illustrates how strong the feeling is against the Jews. The hope of harmony and peace and cooperation, however, lies with the children, as they become educated and enlightened.

It is plain to anyone that the problems of the Holy Land are today, complicated and of a most delicate character.

There are inconsiderable groups of every religion in the world, each [XX:5:151] with some kind of a centre in the Holy Land. The same ill feeling and lack of understanding constantly seen between the racial groups exists between the various religious camps.

There are shrines of many of these religious groups, ancient and modern, all over this fascinating land. One little known but most interesting is the Shrine of the Samaritans, at Nablus. The Samaritans are a dwindling remnant of Babylonian colonists. In the 7th century BCE, the Assyrian conquerors had planted them to replace the Israelite population of Samaria, who were deported fifty years before, to countries east of the Euphrates. On the return of the Jews from exile in 536 BCE, the Samaritans were not allowed to take part in the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, so they built one of their own on Mt. Gerizim and thereby stereotyped the race and worship so sharply that there is no association with the Jews, even to this day.

All the various religions of the world seem to be divided between those that are most conservative and those that are progressive in their ideals. This is very apparent among the Jews and we are surprised to learn that it is becoming more evident today among the Muslims.

The President of the Constantinople Woman's College told me of the reformation of Turkey which seems to be a harbinger of conditions evolving in the Muslim world. She said that in Turkey, Islám is dead. A wind revives it for a time, but its revival does not last long. There is nothing they have yet found to take its place. They are through with dogmas. They are willing to accept new ideas and are trying to take the best of the old and the new for the good of the people.

But it is rather disconcerting the way they look up to the people of the United States with trust and a belief that all Americans are honest. They are now religiously tolerant, but are rabid against proselytizing. They quickly close the schools of those who teach religion of any kind. She said "If we Americans are welcomed to their country and shown every courtesy and hospitality and they demand that we teach no religion, we should keep faith with them until the doors shall open wider."

"Everything that was before 1923" she said, "does not exist today. The young Turks are trying to put the best foot forward, and are grateful to the United States for all we are doing to help her save her self-respect. But we must be more patient and sympathetic and co-operative. We must get a new set of religious principles over to the Turkish young women." It seems to be the tendency of the young Muslim in the Holy Land today to rebuild the best from old Turkey, and add the new from the western world. Of all the natural shrines in Palestine today none are more enduring, symbolic and free from the man-wrought web of superstitions than are the beautiful Sea of Galilee and majestic, old, Mt. Carmel. The Sea nestles in calm, mirror-like blueness, 700 feet below the level of the sea. It is surrounded by softly curving hills and bordered with a strip of golden sand. It is thirteen [XX:5:152] miles from north to south, and six miles from east to west. This beautiful spot where Jesus the Christ told the story of the good Samaritan, and then said, "Ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." And where He said to the fishermen, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men", is surely one of the most truly impressive natural shrines of Christianity: This is doubly so because of the more recent presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who also taught the people beside the tideless sea.

When bathed in sunshine and inhaling the freedom of the pure open spaces, and with face turned heavenward, one instinctively replies, "Yes, Lord, I will follow Thee too."

To appreciate Mt. Carmel, the Mountain of God, we must turn back the pages of history for a moment. During the Greco Roman days before Christ this famous mountain was covered with groves and terraces and many towns nestled at its feet. The Old Testament Prophets lived and taught upon it's sloping sides. Jesus Christ and His disciples often escaped from the crowds and from persecution in its friendly caves.

In the 7th century CE, Khusraw Parvíz, the Persian Conqueror came, followed by the host of Khalífih 'Umar.¹ The four centuries of Muslim rule (637 to 1098) were most destructive. The Christian Crusades (1098 to 1187) added to the devastation. Each destroying the monuments of the one preceding. The Saracen invasion in the 13th century drove both the Crusaders and the Carmelites away.

In 1631 Father Prosper again established the Carmelite Order on Mt. Carmel, over the cave of Elijah. In 1761 the Turks again became victorious, destroying the monastery and many of the villages of the Druses. In 1799 Napoleon entered upon the scene. For three months,

¹ He was an Arab, hence Khalífa 'Umar.

March, April and May, he made unsuccessful siege on 'Akká. Finally being forced to abandon it, saying that if he could take that speck of dust, he could change the map of the world.

The next scene is of the wounded soldiers of the French being cared for on Mt. Carmel.

The scene changes. The Turks became enraged again, destroying everything on the historic old mountain. In 1827 Monk John the Baptist rebuilt the monastery, naming it Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. In 1914 at the beginning of the world war, the Turks tried again to destroy it.

From the earliest founding of this old monastery, the Carmelite monks have preserved a legend that the Christ would again appear upon the Mountain of God. They have a special room in which they expect Him to appear. They keep candles burning in this room, and a monk is in constant attendance. It is reported that in 1887 or '88, Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation of the Christ Spirit for this day, did appear in that monastery and signed His Name to the guest register. But the Carmelites were asleep and have not yet awakened.

It is recorded Bahá'u'lláh, the Promised One, sat beneath the clump of cedars on the mountain side, [XX:5:153] praying perhaps for the peace and quickening of the world.

Near it stands the simple, impressive Shrine of the Báb, the Herald of the Bahá'í Revelation to mankind, and the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the servant of God.

Truly this is the Mountain of God—a bit of heaven brought to earth.

As one stands on the Path of Contemplation at sunset, overlooking the sea and the valley filled with history and legends shrouded in the mysteries of the past, the brain becomes deeply impressed with the pure brilliance of colour, the delicacy of tint and the purity of air and the vista of inexpressible peace which prevails.

The soul responds spontaneously to the words, "Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God." Here in the soft, mellow, gold tinted after-glow, all the mystic past, all the inharmonious creeds, all the discordant races, seem to merge into one. There were no creeds, no divergent races, no varying Holy Places—all were Holy, all were one, and God stood revealed in the midst.

The Holy Land today is like a mighty river, gathering many brooks and streams into the unity of its on flowing current in its progress toward the sea, and we see in vision the prophecy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "*All must become united and agreed: All are drops of one river, the waters of one sea, the breezes of one garden, the streams flowing from one fountain, the birds soaring from one apex, the hyacinths adorning one park intoxicated with one wine, and their hearts ravished by one melody.*"

And so we will close with this thought of the Holy Land today, singing in our hearts—"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for Them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God." (Isaiah 35:1-2)

XX:6, September 1929 [XX:6:174]

Communication with the other world

Compiled from the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

... [XX:6:175]

Question: Are there 'earth-bound' souls who try to have and do have an influence over people, sometimes taking entire possession of their wills? 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered: "*There are no earthbound souls. When the souls that are not good die they go entirely away from this earth and so cannot influence anyone. They are spiritually dead. Their thoughts can have influence*

only while they are alive on the earth. Caiaphas had great influence during his life, but as soon as he died his influence ceased. It was of this kind that Christ said, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' But the good souls are given eternal life and sometimes God permits their thoughts to reach the earth to help the people."

(Daily Lessons Received at Acca, p. 41.)

Regarding the materialization of spirits through mediums: A person finding himself in a state of trance, or unconsciousness, is like one who sleeps; whatever he feels and sees he imagines to be matter and of material things, but in reality they are wholly immaterial. ...

There is a wonderful power and strength which belongs to the human spirit, but it must receive confirmation from the Holy Spirit. The rest of which you hear is superstition. But if it is aided by the Bounty of the Holy Spirit, it will show great power, it will discover realities, and it will be informed of the mysteries. Direct all the attention to the Holy Spirit, and call the attention of every soul to it. [XX:6:176] Then will you see wonderful signs. Outside of the Bounty of the Holy Spirit all that thou hearest concerning mesmerism or trumpet communications from the dead are sheer imagination.

(Tablets to Mrs Ella Goodall Cooper)

XX:8, November 1929 [XX:8:229]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Rivalry between the different races of mankind was first caused by the struggle for existence among the wild animals. This struggle is no longer necessary, nay rather, interdependence and co-operation are seen to produce the highest welfare in nations. The struggle that now continues is caused by prejudice and bigotry. Today nothing but the power of the Divine Word, which embraces the reality of all things, can draw together the minds, hearts and spirits of the world under the shadow of the heavenly tree of unity.

Self interest is at the bottom of every war. Greed, commerce, exploitation, the pushing further of the boundaries of the kingdom, colonization, the preservation of the treaty rights, the safeguarding of the lives and interests of the citizens, are a few of the pretexts of going into war. And it has been proven by experience that the results of war are ruinous, both to the conquerors and the conquered. ... But in this luminous century the greatest bestowal of the world of humanity is universal peace which must be founded so that the realm of creation may obtain composure. ... Like unto a spirit, this ideal must run and circulate through the veins and arteries of the body of the world.

XX:8, November 1929 [XX:8:239]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Those kings and rulers whose fame for just government and greatness filled the world did not occupy themselves alone with their personal ambition and the acquirement of riches, but accounted the public weal and the increase of the inhabitants of their countries and the general treasury as their greatest care. Their glory was not bought with gold or silver, but was purchased by the soundness of the principles and the nobility of their aspirations. Such are those rulers who are benevolent and wise, whose dignity and real happiness lie in the well-being of the public ...

XX:10, January 1930 [XX:10:290]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

If the oneness of the human world were effected all the differences which separate mankind would be eradicated. All strife and warfare would cease and the world of humanity

would find repose. Universal peace would be promoted and the east and west would be conjoined in a strong bond. All men would be sheltered beneath one tabernacle. All nativities would become one. All races and religions be unified. The people of the world would live together in peace and their well-being would be assured.

XX:10, January 1930 [XX:10:293]

What is faith?

Faith outwardly means to believe in the Message a Manifestation brings to the world and accept the fulfilment in Him of that which the Prophets have announced. But in reality faith embodies three degrees: to confess with the tongue; to believe in the heart; to show forth in our actions. These three things are essential to true faith ...

The greater the faith of man the more illumined his life. Faith is a miracle; it has a wonder working power. Its spiritual influence refines the character, suffers man to become humble and meek; places in his heart the fear of God; prompts him to devote his time to humanitarian deeds; spiritualizes his nature; exalts his ideals and enkindles his lamp. The greater the faith of man the more numerous will be his philanthropic actions. Faith is like unto the trees, deeds are like unto the fruits. Faith is like unto the lamp, deeds are like unto the light. ... Faith is not so much what we believe as what we carry out.

There are three kinds of faith. First that which is from tradition and birth. For example: a child is born of Muslim parents; he is a Muslim. This faith is weak, traditional faith. Second, that which comes from knowledge and is the faith of understanding. This is good. But there is a better the faith of practice. This is the real faith.

Faith is not so much what we believe as what we carry out. Faith is the magnet which draws the confirmation of the Merciful One. We know and see the Light, we go close to it, are warmed by it, and reflect its rays on others. This is real faith, and thus we receive power to become the eternal sons of God.

XX:10, January 1930 [XX:10:299]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

All healing is spiritual healing in reality, no matter whether medicine or affirmation or supplication are used. Any method which establishes the confidence of the heart, is approved—only that when it is done without the medium of drugs or food, no money should be accepted for it.

Asked which is the true attitude of prayer—affirmation or supplication—‘Abdu’l-Bahá emphatically replied: *“Supplication because at the door of God’s bounty all are humble suppliants and needy.*

“Those who say they are healing through the Power of God, should accept no pay, for they are the dispensers of God’s bounty, channels of His grace. They should be like the disciples of Christ, who, after the crucifixion, assembled together for the purpose of discussing matters pertaining to their mission. They regarded the Life of Jesus and His teachings. ‘Freely ye have received, now freely ye must give.’”

XX:10, January 1930 [XX:10:301]

A great prince speaks of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Martha L. Root

The following interview with a Muslim notable of Egypt has great human interest in revealing intimately not only the personality of a distinguished Oriental, but even more especially in showing the breadth of thought of a modern Muslim. In the Islamic world, as well as in Christendom, intelligent and cultured people are much broader in their religious attitudes than a generation ago.

It was in Cairo, Egypt, on 14 November 1929, that one of the greatest Princes of this wonderful land of the Pharaohs and the Khedives,¹ His Royal Highness Prince Muḥammad ‘Alí Páshá, so charming, so cultured, so far seeing a philosopher, spoke to the writer about his meeting with His secretary had called at my hotel three days before, and the invitation had been given for Thursday afternoon at three o’clock. Motoring out through the colourful Cairo thoroughfares toward Mania Palace, the home of the Prince, the writer realized that nowhere in Egypt is the aggressive modernism of the nineteenth century more in evidence than in Cairo. It is just this combination of the old and the new that gives the city its enchantment. Some of the streets with their mosques and bazaars and coffee houses were medieval just like those in the Arabian Nights, others so spacious with squares and parks and hotels, opera houses, theatres and shops, that one feels London could boast no better. But suddenly the chauffeur crosses a fine bridge called Prince Mohamed Ali bridge, and turns the car to the driveway beside the sinuous silvery Nile. Everywhere are to be seen villas and splendid mansions, silhouetted against tall, stately sensitive palms, and the driver halts the motor car before the most imposing of all the palaces.

The pleasant, fine secretary received me, took me into a richly carpeted and tapestried entrance salon where I wrote my name in the Guest Book. “Surely this Prince must be a great sportsman,” I thought, “for these walls are covered with pictures of races and racers.” Then we stepped out again into the porte-cochère and walked into an Egyptian garden, the most beautiful tropic paradise I have ever looked upon! Only a great artist could have created such a poem of palms; such a symphony of colours! And in the very centre of the immense grounds was a great Banyan tree—the raison d’être for all the other magnificent trees—and the palace and the remarkable little mosque all in Moorish architecture and the tower of classic beauty and finally the gates wondrously carved all in black ebony. “Oh, I must have been mistaken!” my mind said, “His Royal Highness the Prince, could not have been a sportsman, he is surely a famous architect, artist and genius!”

One may read all one’s life about the charm of Egypt, and see the show places which millions of tourists have visited, but walking in this garden of palms, perfect palms representative of every species in every land, one wonders if heaven [XX:10:302] is more lovely, and if in the Kingdom Beyond there are trees like this Banyan tree which is a living tent without poles and cords, extending its welcome shade to all who come under it.

I was glad that no Pharaoh’s daughter or no Cleopatra of the Ptolemies came walking down those palace steps in the distance, instead it was infinitely more interesting to see His Royal Highness Prince Muḥammad ‘Alí Páshá, brother of the former Khedive of Egypt and nephew of His Majesty the present King Fu’ád, this gracious host who had met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, come around one of the curving roadways of the garden to meet me. He came quickly, swinging his cane, a handsome man with most sincere, frank, humanity trusting eyes. His very soul salutes one through his penetrating brown eyes. He was dressed in a modish suit of grey; he wore the distinguished red fez, and on his little finger was a wrought gold ring set with a large and very unusual emerald.

His delightful Highness the Prince shook hands with me and invited me to sit down in one of the comfortable rustic chairs at a little table under the Banyan tree. You will sit with us, O

¹ Khidíw (khidív), khidíwar, pl. khidaywí “ruler”.

reader, for you too, are in this enchanted garden to hear what a Prince, who is a savant and a philosopher, has to say about 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Only the Prince called him, 'Abbás Bábá' which in Arabic means 'Abbás Father or Father 'Abbás.

"Yes, I knew 'Abbás Bábá," commenced the Prince, "He was a great friend of my brother, 'Abbás Hilmí II, the late Khedive. Also, Osman Murtaḏá¹ the Grand Master of Ceremonies of my brother had a great friendship with 'Abbás Bábá. I met your loved Teacher first early in 1912 on my way to Paris. Then when I was in New York in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá' was living in a house near Central Park, a home which his friends, (or do you call them his followers?), had prepared for him. I was living in the Belmont Hotel in Fifth Avenue, and 'Abbás Bábá was kind enough to come and visit me there. I deeply appreciated this kind visit."

Then His Royal Highness the Prince explained how proud he was to see a great Oriental moulding the spiritual thought of America. My host continued: "Although we are sorry to see Orientals so backward in sciences, still we must not forget that some great generals, great leaders of thought and all religions have been born in the Orient. 'Abbás Bábá has proved to Europeans and to the entire West that great generals of the Spirit are still born in the East! As I love the Orient and am an Oriental, I was very proud of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's high station and prestige in the United States. Yours is a country of such stupendous wonder, such marked inventions, such marvellous strides in progress, and you saw the greatness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

This earnest Prince spoke with such sincerity, his words were: "I loved 'Abbás Bábá and admired Him, and I felt He loved me and was a good friend to me."

"After this visit in New York," the Prince recounted, "I met 'Abbás Bábá again in Paris. He told me of His great conference in Oxford University, He told me too, of His friends in Germany. Later on, we travelled together on the same ship [XX:10:303] coming back to Egypt. For four days we were always together. I was very sad when I heard of His passing, for I considered Him the most important man in our century. A man like 'Abbás Bábá cannot be replaced, that is my opinion. He had such a great spirit, such a powerful brain and such a grasp of realities!"

Here the conversation changed, for just in this moment a lovely young svelte Egyptian boy dressed in cream robes all embroidered in red silk and with a red cap on his head, came bearing a golden tray with cups of mocha coffee. It was real mocha too, direct from the planter to the Prince, and its delicious flavour I can best describe to you as "cup selections only!" Over the coffee cups the writer asked His Royal Highness the Prince; "Are you a sportsman? I saw all those racing pictures. Or are you an artist? Is it you who have created this garden which is so beautiful that I shall carry it away with me in my memory as a dream garden of palms where Muḥammad and Christ and Bahá'u'lláh would choose to walk and talk together? Or could you be the architect who designed this rare little mosque and tower and palace? Or Your Royal Highness, are you a musician?"

He laughed and replied: "Well, I've always been a keen sportsman. Yes, I paint, I love nature, I am a musician and an artist, so I didn't need any architect for this place." The Prince said that the garden was his creation and that he had gathered the palms from all parts of the world. He elevated the whole grounds two metres from the Nile sands, twenty years ago, and had the trees planted, except the huge Banyan tree in the centre which is one hundred years old.

"I bought the property solely for the big tree," the Prince Muḥammad 'Alí Páshá said, "this tree so fascinated me, it was the tree that made me choose this place for my home. This Banyan tree was planted for my grand ancestor a century ago, planted by a Dutchman."

¹ 'Uthmán Murtaḏá.

The Royal host said that many American statesmen had visited him and admired his garden, but that Colonel House when his guest paid him the compliment to say that it was the prettiest garden he had ever seen. Speaking of Americans, the Prince said: "We used to have a charming American Minister here, Dr Morton Howell. Dr Howell was a straight forward, good American. One day sitting out here under this Banyan tree, he said to me: 'Prince I thought Honolulu was a paradise, but since I have seen your garden, I know that not only in Honolulu but here in Cairo is a little spot that is just the same—it too, is paradise!'"

The Banyan tree and all the palms, this afternoon that I was at Manial Palace,¹ were so clean-looking, every leaf and every trunk shone as if they had been given a "tub bath" every morning (but of course only the hose or the heavens could give them that!) and the shining green grass rippled in the sunshine as if it had just sprung up from a shower spray. It was the grouping of the grand palms, too, which was so elusive, yet so satisfying. One does not see everything at once in this garden, it has many vistas. Mrs Butts' flowering vines from India rose in sprays here and there like crimson rambler roses; purple Bougainvilleas massed the [XX:10:304] entrance wall, while little meadows of red geraniums threw forth their vivid beauty, and all the wide garden paths were covered with a most attractive red sand which was very pleasing.

After our coffee, sitting under this wonderful Banyan tree, the conversation turned to life and philosophy. The Prince said: "I am in good relations with all people. Since I was six years old I have travelled over the world, and I have learned that some things cannot be changed, they must run their course, so one must be a little philosophical and accept what comes."

His Royal Highness asked about my visit to Egypt and what I wished most to do. He also spoke of my coming visit to Haifa, and then he alluded again to the Bahá'í Movement saying: "You all have accomplished a great task in the United States. It was very interesting to see the large number of Bahá'ís in America and to read of the splendid progress of the work."

He later spoke about Burma, and said it would be very good if these Bahá'í Teachings were promoted there—I quote his words: "Though I respect all religions, I think if 'Abbás Bábá's talks and counsels could be spoken of in Burma it would be very good. There are such numbers of people there who would be uplifted and educated; certainly religion is a very good thing. My situation is this: being a good Muslim and with my position in the Muslim world, it would not be correct for me to be Bahá'í, but always I have been a good friend of 'Abbás Bábá. I remember in talking with Him, how very fascinating He always was! Dressed all in white and with those two very bright eyes gazing into mine, I used to say to Him sometimes in fun, 'O 'Abbás Bábá, do not look too much into my eyes!' He was such a strong character, such a profound man, and He never did anything to hurt my feelings, He always showed me how much the Bahá'í Teachings are near to the Muslim religion."

The dear Prince continued: "In your Bahá'í ideas, all the Prophets are good, all men are brothers, all live together in love and admit that all the Prophets are from God. The Bahá'í Cause is a very conciliatory religion because it brings all people together."

He said that much in the Bahá'í Teachings would appeal to the United States because there they are working so hard for peace and to do away with fighting. He added that many people in America would like the Bahá'í instructions which are not to abuse with drinking, namely, not to use intoxicating liquors that cloud and take away the mind. 'Abdu'l-Bahá often spoke and showed how much the renouncing of tobacco, wine and opium gives health, strength and intellectual enjoyment, penetration of judgement and physical vigour. "All the principles of Bahá'u'lláh," said this Prince, "would be appreciated by Americans."

The writer told him that President Herbert Hoover is a Quaker, and he was very interested

¹ Manyal ("nilometre"). Qaşr al-Manyal (Manial Palace) in the al-Ḥayy al-Manyal (El Manial district) of Cairo.

to hear about Quakerism and its progress.

His Royal Highness Prince Muḥammad ‘Alí Páshá said, among other things: “Life is very difficult today. There are so many millions of people, so many ways of looking at things, how can all peoples be [XX:10:305] made broad minded and just? In a family of ten members, to get all to be good is a task, how then can nations accomplish it? I am very sorry that all religions in these days, seem to be backward. Only people who feel they need help turn to religion now. So many of those who have money for all their pleasures, do not think about God or religion. Only today I was reading one of our Prophet’s Words, ‘You will see in the mosques, some day, only the people who need something from God.’ Religion has not been looked upon lately, as proper and necessary to educate the family. This isn’t that religion is bad, but it is because some of the followers of religion are intriguers.”

For example, he stated that in Mexico, it wasn’t that the Roman Catholic religion was not good, but the government did not wish the priests to have the ruling of the country. The Prince’s words were: “If the church people would only be wise enough not to interfere in governmental matters, but would confine their attention to teaching the ignorant and doing good to everybody, no government would ever fight them.”

These are just a few of the thoughts of this great Prince of Egypt Muḥammad ‘Alí Páshá, who so graciously received me this afternoon. Each time that he spoke of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, his eyes and the tones of his voice, as well as his words spoke the eloquence of his love for ‘Abbás Bábá, ‘Abbás Father.

No matter by what name this Prince calls himself spiritually, his life is a rare garden of good deeds to all humanity. He may truly be said to be a Buddhist, a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim and a Bahá’í! I am sure that he was happy to know that through the visit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the United States and Europe, many thousands of Christians began to study the good in all religions and learned to know and to love the inner essence of the Teachings of Muḥammad.¹

XX:11, February 1930 [XX:11:325]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Through the bounty and favour of God think nothing difficult or impossible. God is so bountiful that He brings fire out from the stone; inflammable matter jets out from the interior of the earth; out of the black dust of the soil He produces beautiful flowers; from the bottom of the ocean He brings pearls and corals. When the Light of His favour is shed upon us the darkness is fled.

The point is this, that in the path of Truth every difficulty is made plain and every trial is a matchless bounty ... The Bahá’í Movement bestows upon man a new spirit, a new light, and a new motion. It enlarges the sphere of thought. It illumines the horizon of the intellect. It expands the arena of comprehension.

¹ Readers may care to know that the day before I left Cairo, speaking with Mr A. Muḥktár, the Secretary to His Royal Highness the Prince, I asked him: ‘Mr Muḥktár, please tell me what you, as a true Muslim think about Jesus Christ.’ He replied: ‘We Muslims believe that the Christian religion is sent by the Powerful God through His beloved Prophet the Christ. We have great respect and belief in Jesus Christ. At the same time we are told in the Qur’án that Christians have exaggerated the belief and respect concerning Christ and taken Him as a God or the Son of the God which we never admitted. As a result, we believe in the Christian religion and in Christ as a Prophet, but the Christians deny our religion as a religion from God and they deny the Mission of Muḥammad as the Prophet sent from God. They cannot say that we deny the Christ, nor that we do not respect the Teachings of Christ and believe in Him as a sacred Prophet.’

Egypt, the present great stronghold of Islám has more than once given new orientation to religion and world culture. She stood high in her glory long ago when Europe was entirely unenlightened. May she go forward now to a new, still higher spiritual civilization and progress in this universal epoch just dawning! May His Royal Highness Prince Muḥammad ‘Alí Páshá plant a universal spiritual tree in the Nile garden of Egypt that may be for the Healing of all peoples who visit and revisit this fine land! He is called to a high station and he was deeply loved by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!

Be thou solute and steadfast. When the tree is firmly rooted it will bear fruit, therefore it is not permitted to be agitated by any test. Be thou not disheartened! Be thou not discouraged! The trials of God are many, but if man remains firm and steadfast the test itself is a stepping stone for the progress of humanity.

XX:11, February 1930 [XX:11:331]

A visit to Queen Marie of Rumania

Martha L. Root

Her great and beloved Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania, the first Queen in this new universal cycle of civilization to arise promoting the Principles of Bahá'u'lláh for better world understanding, invited the writer for the fourth time into her presence to meet her and her youngest daughter, her charming Royal Highness Princess Ileana. The other audiences had been in Controceni Palace in Bucharest, in Pelisor Palace in Sinaia and in the Royal Palace in Belgrade when Her majesty was visiting there.

But this fourth visit was the most lovely, unique and happiest of them all. It was an invitation to her summer palace "Tenha-Yuva" at Balcic, on the Black Sea.

O reader, take the mental automobile and accompany me, and you will journey into a new landscape; see an extraordinary palace, marvellous architecturally and absolutely beyond compare in colour harmonies. It was designed by the Queen herself and it expresses her ideal of a little home to dwell in where every member of the household can live in perfect poise and joy and can be alone when he or she wishes to be. The palace is built on sheer, sternly rising white cliffs overlooking the Black Sea, a sea so melodious in its surging, so malachite green at the foot of the cliffs, so black in the distance far out where it mirrors the low hanging deep blue clouds.

No one except Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania would have dared attempt to build a palace on that glorious but almost impossible site. I am sure no one except Her Majesty Queen Marie could have persuaded her husband and the Rumanian Ministers to let her try to do such a thing! But they must have been exceedingly proud of this splendid triumph; and proud of their Queen who had the brains, the courage, the architectural genius, the colour fineness to create this most original and fair "pearl" of a palace, "set" in the platinum grey of perpendicular rocks, and nearly circled by the sea. It is the most unusual setting and the most unusual palace in Europe.

The writer was so longing to see Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania that she could hardly notice the exterior life of Balcic, wonderful as it all was. Only subconsciously she noted and was pleased that this tiny little village of Balcic stretching around the rocks like a prelude to the palace setting, had flags flying at every door in honour of their precious Queen.

She sat alone in the motor car halted at the royal entrance gate while her card was being sent on to the palace in the distance.

Suddenly a bugler comes out on the cliffs far above and to the right and began to play a welcome. Yodlers on still higher rocks echoed the sweet sounds. What a hospitable welcome from a Bahá'í Queen to the messenger who is bringing [XX:11:332] the greetings from the Guardian of the Cause Shoghi Effendi and the devoted good wishes of Bahá'ís from every land!

The Commissar of the palace met the guest and showed her to a charming little palace which she thought was the Queen's home, but no, it was the guest palace! There are several little palaces so each one can have his own quarters here at "Tenha-Yuva." There in the guest palace the writer was shown into a room full of autumn colours so warm, so vivid, so fresh

and vibrant with beauty! Surely the Queen must have arranged these flowers, they were so exquisite. I felt she had been there and placed them herself and her presence had blessed the apartment.

The other guests came from their rooms and we went down the stone steps, admiring each terrace gay with perfect flowers, not too many but growing just in the right places. A pumpkin vine with its flat, round, yellow fruit rested over the roof of a little rest house. Blue larkspurs were charming along a yellow grey wall and thousands of burnt orange zinnias massed the lower terraces. Passing a great oak tree bending far out over the sea and just back of it a stream of sweet water, we came to the palace which is just at the edge of the sea.

It is wondrously beautiful.

In the long wide entrance hall with its white side walls adorned with tile mosaics in rare blue, the great dark oak table has a collection of very historic old pewter vases, pitchers, and bowls from Turkey. Brilliant red zinnias mixed with gold were the flowers in bowls here, giving just the rich touch of colour that brought out the beauty of the art treasures and furnishings.

Then we go into the dining room where the great windows overlook the sea. Such a dining room! There colour and grace and harmony play together and please every eye. The long dark oak carved table is set with a Chinese blue silk cloth embroidered with silver eagles, and arranged on this are low bowls of glowing gold and orange bronze flowers, rare silver pieces and crystal. The open fireplace has a cheerful warmth to offer and the whole room breathes [XX:11:333] welcome and great comfort with beauty unsurpassed. The walls are white and the furniture black walnut richly carved. Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana was here with some other friends who have come in just ahead of us. She was so friendly, so radiantly well, so beautiful and happy. She was dressed in her naval costume for she had just come in from the sea. She had on a white silk tailored shirt with collar and tie, a blue military coat trimmed with gold braid, a short cloth skirt and grey hose. The sister of Her Majesty, Princess Hohenlohe, who came from her feudal castle, Langenburg, in Würtemberg, Germany, was a guest that day.

As all were conversing, I saw a moving sunshine-yellow silk curtain which was hung at the window back of the circular arch and in that moment down the circular open stairway, pausing in the white arch, came her dear Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania. She was beautiful, a little pale, and very slender. She was dressed in black with touches of white at the throat, and cuffs of white peeped through the wider openings of her graceful black cloak or 'abá'. She wore the wonderful ropes of pearls and each ear was adorned with one large round pearl. Her "Juliet" or rather "Marie" headdress was of white silk. One does not think of naming this Queen's attire as "clothes". They are not something that she just "puts on". They are a *tout ensemble* creation chosen by a consummate artist to express her moods, her spirit.

People may say she loves clothes, but perhaps she is not dressing just for herself, but for eyes to see perfect art and perfect beauty. She is born a great artist and to her it would be a crime not to express beauty in everything she wears and in everything she arranges in her home. Certainly her gowns and her furnishings—some of which are very expensive and some inexpensive—delight and uplift every passing eye.

But it is the lofty great spirit looking out through the windows of her beautiful eyes that one sees first, and last, and remembers longest. She greeted the Bahá'í visitor graciously and invited her to sit beside her at her left, at table. Her Majesty's sister sat at the right. The conversation, which was general, was in English, French and German. Her Majesty sat at one end of the great table and Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana at the other.

Her Majesty in a little interlude explained to me that "Tenha-Yuva" is a Turkish word and

means “a solitary nest”.

“I saw the beautiful tree leaning over the sea,” she said, “and the sweet water stream flowing back of it. The tree and the stream decided me to build here.”

In the distance we saw the little yacht of Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana close to the warship and Her Majesty said: “It is not really a yacht; it is a yawl and it is called *Isprava*, that means a *happy adventure*.”

Then the conversation flowed back to other topics. Several kings and presidents were spoken of and each time Her Majesty praised their work for this generation. When the writer spoke of President [XX:11:334] Thomas G. Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, what a savant he is, and how much he is admired and loved in university circles of Europe, Her Majesty responded: “Yes, he is loved everywhere. He is one of the great humanitarians of this century.”

Later in the luncheon conversation one of the men present said jokingly: “Well, Ileana, what Prince have the newspapers engaged you to today?” “Every day my poor Ileana is supposed to marry someone else!” said the Queen. “I shall not let her go away in a hurry, if I can help it.”

The writer told them of a country where the young men said: “If you do meet Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana, tell her we all wish her to marry our King!”

Anyway, whoever wins this sweet and serious girl will find that underneath the fun and gayety is a young woman who is trying her very best to help humanity. She is spiritual and her whole life is based upon religion. That is what impressed me most. She is genuine, very lovable, and she is full of enthusiasm.

After the luncheon was over, Her Majesty Queen Marie of Rumania and Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana invited the writer upstairs to their drawing room for a little talk alone, the others going over to the guest palace. Sitting in this glorious apartment overlooking the singing sea, the real meeting with Her Majesty and Her Royal Highness took place. The Queen asked about Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause, and about the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whose name is Bábíyyih, but who is known among the friends as the Greatest Holy Leaf. The Queen said she would like so much to meet them; she would like to go to Haifa and 'Akká and pray at the holy tombs of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and visit the great prison where Bahá'u'lláh and His family and followers were imprisoned. Her loved Majesty said: “Ileana and I will go to Egypt and Palestine this winter after the New Year and we shall surely go to Haifa.” Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana told me: “I am always looking forward to going to Haifa; I shall go when I can.”

They asked about the long trip the writer is going to make to the Far East. Knowing that I came [XX:11:335] from Constantinople to bring the greetings of the Guardian and the friends throughout the world and to see her and say goodbye before I leave Europe and that I am returning at once to Constantinople, Her Majesty said: “I hope as soon as you return you will be able to see the Ghází Kamál Páshá. I know he has done such tremendous work for the development of his country, and he is so liberal in his thinking that the Bahá'í Principles would lead him to that part he is still looking for—religion that is not fanaticism. The Bahá'í Cause gives everything, without putting those barriers from which free thinkers with such difficulty have freed themselves. One is not chained by the Bahá'í Teachings. There is a straight road to walk on in admitting all the great Prophets who have gone before.”

Then we spoke of her lovely home in Balcic which she has created. No flowers in Constantinople or in Constanza were so fine as those grown in her cliff gardens (where it is difficult to grow anything). Her home designed by herself might almost be a holy house, for the tower rises up a little like those in the Rumanian churches. “I love this home in Balcic so

much," she said, "for in this region there are so many different nationalities united. We can smile on all equally and spread good understanding. Here in Balcic and round about no one has closed doors or windows to the country houses."

Mention was made of the Turks for there are some in that part of Rumania, and Her Majesty added: "I am very fond of the simple Turk. He is hard working, frugal, honest and devoted." Certainly the nationalities get along happily here.

Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana has an atelier here in Balcic and she is modelling a Bulgarian, a Turk, a Rumanian and a Russian. I was interested in this earnest and beautiful Princess who sat on the divan close to her mother.

"Whenever I have a difficult mission which requires amiability and diplomacy," said the Queen, "I send Ileana. I can always count upon her to do it as I would do it myself, and she has youth and strength, which are added assets. My daughter has a brave spirit to do. I can use for her the words in the Bible which I always use for myself: 'Whatsoever thy hand bindeth to do, do it with thy might.'"

Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana had to leave early. She was going out on the gunboat to do some manoeuvring, as she is just learning how to bring a ship to pier. "The naval work is my pastime," she said before she departed, "but my real work is the Young Women's Christian Association and Girl Guides and I am very interested in all progressive social work, and all that will help for the future. I throw my whole soul into anything that will be helpful for the country."

They were so kind to give the photographs, autographed, which form the illustrations of this narrative. An Indian one (which may be published at another time) was taken in the United States, where the Indians called the Queen [XX:11:336] "Morning Star, the woman we have always waited for!"

Her beloved Majesty gave a beautiful picture to be sent to Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause, and with it she sent a message of love and faith.

And now, like the ceasing of music, the visit in its outer form comes to an end, but the Queen and the Princess, for whom Bahá'u'lláh and the Hosts of the Supreme Concourse have waited, have arisen to promote these Teachings for the New Day of God. One saw them doing it, right there in the little group of "the solitary nest" and from those white cliffs that day went a message that may reverberate around the world and be acclaimed by the Angels of the Abhá Kingdom!

XXI:2, May 1930 [XXI:2:47]

Dynamics of prayer

Ruth J. Moffett

The archaeologists have discovered that before the dawn of recorded history, even the earliest primitive man has worshipped a super being and has believed in immortality. The Neanderthal Man, which is represented in the newly placed group at the Field Museum, Chicago, existed 50,000 BCE. With the discovery of those skeletons was found indications of primitive worship and belief in immortality. Mr Henry Field, director of the Field Museum, says that a very recent discovery indicates that a great flood occurred at about 4,000 BCE and still earlier time of Noah, referred to in our Bible, was probably only about 3,000 BCE. A recent discovery reveals this interesting inscription: "In the land of Kish (which was the first capital after the first flood) there are legends of earlier races 30,000 years before our inscriptions begin."

From different excavated art pieces and implements, from crude frescoes on the walls of

caves, from the skeletons found in various places is clearly indicated that inherent in the very centre of man's being, there always has been an inner urge impelling him to look beyond his sense perception, beyond his consciousness to a Creator, an urge to implore that Creator for help in time of trouble, and guidance in time of danger. Our ancestors worshipped this Creator in the storm, the lightning, the famine, the sun, moon, comets, eclipses—in anything that inspired awe and wonder. Gradually throughout the panorama of cycles, man's conception of this Supreme Being has unfolded as his consciousness has expanded. Although the methods of worship have changed through every conceivable form, yet the keynote of all, throughout this stupendous symphony around which all the melodies, discords and harmonies weave in mystical upliftment—is *prayer*.

What is prayer? There are many beautiful definitions by the Prophets of God. "Prayer is loving service." "Prayer is the soliloquy of the beholding soul." But the one I like is, "Prayer is the practice of the Presence of God."

A careful analysis reveals that there are nine ways in which man turns his heart to God, or tries to practice the Presence of God. The one with which we are most familiar is:

Supplication. This is a humble, earnest entreaty, with a sense of dependence upon what is greater than ourselves. We remember the words of Paul, "God is an ever present source of help in time of trouble." We have all lifted our consciousness many times by this impelling motive to prayer. And also;

Compunction. This is an uneasiness of mind arising from wrong doing. It is the sting of conscience, or a sense of remorsefulness. This [XXI:2:48] feeling of unworthiness we find in many of the Psalms: "Feed me O Lord with the bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink." Psalms 140:5. Compunction also compels us to prayer, as does:

Aspiration. This is the longing, usually unexpressed, for what is above one's present attainment, a somewhat vague longing for what is pure, noble and spiritual. Alger says, "It is not aspiration but ambition that is the mother of misery in man." We all have these vague longings and aspirations within us, which lead us into the prayer life. The next is,

Intercession. This has been described as entreaty in behalf of others. We remember these familiar words of the Prophets of God, "*The service of others is perfected by prayer,*" ('Abdu'l-Bahá) "Let your light so shine before men that they, in seeing your good works will glorify your Father which art in Heaven." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me." (Christ) "Withhold not from my servant in whatsoever he may ask of thee, for his face is My face, and thou must reverence Me." (Bahá'u'lláh)

Gratitude. Gratitude is also we know the cause of lifting the heart upward. It is the sense of appreciation for favours or bounties received. Gratefulness wells up in the heart and finds expression in prayer, as for example the words of David, "Oh give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercies endureth forever." Also the words of Bahá'u'lláh, "*Praise be to Thee O God of Names and Creator of Heaven, Praise be to Thee for that by reason of which Thou hast made known to Thy servants, Thy Day, wherein the River of Life hath flowed from the Finger of Thy Generosity, and the Spring of Revelation and Unity hath become manifest through Thy Manifestation to whomsoever is in the earth and heaven. Praise be to Thee, O Desire of the world! Praise be to Thee O Beloved of the hearts of the yearning!*"

Meditation. Meditation and prayer are not exactly synonymous. We are told that meditation is the continued thought about those things beyond the physical world. Both meditation and contemplation are necessary as one develops in the practice of the Presence of God. Meditation begins with continued reason, we are told, merging into a state of calm reflection and devotional pondering on statements of thoughts, ideas and principles about

God. This seems to be a high intellectual process, while contemplation might be described as beginning with continued attention, merging into a state of beholding, a looking to God, resulting in spiritual perception. This seems to be a combination of the highest intellectual and emotional processes. Mara Williams in his book *Hinduism* says, "A true Buddhist never prays, he only meditates on the perfections of Buddha, and the hope of attaining Nirvana."

Oblation. May be described as the act of offering something as a sacrifice in worship. As man's ideas of God have changed, the form of oblation has changed from the offering of burnt offerings of many kinds of animal and human flesh, to the offering of fruits and [XXI:2:49] grains with prayers. Later, sweet smelling incense was used until the more advanced souls have learned to sacrifice the self consciousness to the God Consciousness, and to give the self in hallowed consecration and joyous dedication. As in the words of Bahá'u'lláh. "Draw me unto Thee O My Divine Centre, by the secret springs of my existence, and all my powers and senses shall follow Thy potent magnetism."

Adoration. Adoration has quite a different heart motive. It is the act of rendering divine homage, of rendering veneration and reverence to the Divine Being. It is a joyful, spontaneous uplift of deep feelings of love, admiration, awe and devotion. We the servants of God have much to learn of the way to turn our hearts to God in adoration and to learn the real meaning of the words of Bahá'u'lláh as expressed in the daily prayer, "O God Thou hast created us to know and to adore Thee."

Communion is the combination of several of the foregoing urges. It is the interchange or inter communion of spirit, or the spirit's conversation with God. There is the longing on the part of the soul to receive wisdom, guidance, light and the opening of the soul, not to receive the answer to this or that minor question, but to receive illumination, the Christos or the Logos. "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." (Psalm 42:1) "My love is in thee. Seek, and thou wilt find Me near. I have placed within thee, a spirit from Me, that thou mightiest be My lover." "Love Me that I may love thee; if thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee." (Bahá'u'lláh)

We can learn a valuable lesson from the little girl who, when she was asked why it took her so long to pray, said, "You see, I always like to wait to hear what God has to say back to me."

These nine urges to prayer supplication compunction, aspiration, intercession, gratitude, meditation, adoration, oblation and communion are all necessary for the practice of the Presence of God. Some religious groups emphasize and practice one or two to the exclusion of the others. Each urge is important and all are essential, though all need not be used at the same time. Anyone without all the other steps is incomplete. The expression of each urge indicates the progress the soul is making on the path of God.

Prayer, may be expressed in four ways, the Thought Prayer, with more or less definite thoughts and ideas; the Heart Prayer, which is a vague, high, emotional aspiration. The Will Prayer, which is expressed in various forms of affirmation. And last the Uttered Prayer which is the expressed thought, idea and aspiration of the one praying. These are best expressed in the words revealed by the great Prophets of God. There is great power in the spoken word, and there is great wisdom in using the words revealed by the great World Teachers, all of whom have revealed prayers for the upliftment of the [XXI:2:50] people. The Bahá'í Revelation contains the most abundant and richest material for prayer life.

While in Haifa, the beloved Guardian of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, Shoghi Effendi, gave to the writer, the most concise, complete and effective formula she has ever seen, for the **Dynamics of Prayer**. After saying to stress the need of more prayer and meditation among the friends,

he said to use these five steps if we had a problem of any kind for which we desired a solution, or wished help. (First step) **Pray and mediate about it.** Use the prayers of the Manifestations as they have the greatest power. Then remain in the silence of contemplation for a few moments.

(Second step) **Arrive to a decision and hold this.** This decision is usually born during the contemplation. It may seem almost impossible of accomplishment, but if it seems to be an answer to prayer or a way of solving the problem, then immediately take the next step.

(Third step) **Have determination to carry the decision through.** Many fail here. The decision, budding in to determination is blighted and instead becomes a wish or a vague longing. When determination is born, immediately take the next step.

(Fourth step) **Have faith and confidence,** that the power will flow through you, the right way will appear, the door will open, the right thought, the right message, the right principle or the right book will be given you. Have confidence, and the right thing will come to your need. Then as you rise from prayer take at once the fifth step.

(Fifth step) Then he said, lastly, **Act! Act as though it had all been answered.** Then act with tireless, ceaseless energy. And, as you act, you, yourself will become a magnet which will attract more power to your being, until you become an *unobstructed channel* for the Divine Power to flow through you. Many pray, but do not remain for the last half of the first step. Some who meditate arrive at a decision, but fail to hold it. Few have the determination to carry the decision through, and still fewer have the confidence that the right thing will come to their need. But how many remember to act as though it had all been answered? How true are those words "Greater than the prayer is the spirit in which it is uttered", and greater than the way it is uttered is the spirit in which it is carried out.

Now out of a few simple words by our wise Guardian, a great light has shone. Out of this light has grown an effective method of practicing prayer, out of which has grown a long trail of prayers answered and problems solved, and out of this method of practicing prayer has grown a new life in the most ancient of human acts of worship.

Many have asked to whom shall we pray? All the Manifestations have taught the same answer, to God through that great Cosmic Focal Point that stands between the finite and Infinite absolute station of Unknowableness. That is the way taught by all the Messengers of God. The Manifes- [XXI:2:51] tation is the Way of Prayer.

In conclusion may we add these thoughts. He who is in need will pray. He who hesitates to supplicate God is standing in the station of pride, or has not awakened to his own need, or has not realized the great value of prayer. He is therefore deprived. Therefore let all our business be to know God. The more we know of Him the more we shall desire to know Him, and as knowledge is the measure of love, the deeper and more extensive our knowledge is, the deeper our love is. "The root of all knowledge is the knowledge of God."

The Presence of God is realized within, but is evoked by something from without. When these two streams meet on the fifth step enunciated by Shoghi Effendi, the exterior life becomes an act of worship, and we have learned—*the Dynamics of Prayer or the Practice of the Presence of God.*

XXI:2, May 1930 [XXI:2:54]

The only pictures of the Báb

Martha L. Root

Those who have seen the beautiful painting of His Holiness the Báb in Haifa and gazed

upon that pure Face will be interested to hear from whence came this painting. On the evening of 26 January 1930, just before I was to arise and speak to one hundred and fifty friends in a great drawing room in Tīhrán, I suddenly caught sight of a large photograph which looked like the Báb. I asked my interpreter, Mr Valíyu'lláh Varqá and he said: "No, that is not an authentic photograph of His Holiness the Báb, it may have been drawn from memory of the one in Haifa. But on the way home after the lecture I can tell you about the only paintings there are of His Holiness the Báb."

So coming back to the hotel he told me this thrilling story: "You asked about the painting of the Báb: I begin at the beginning. When the Báb was captured by the Persian Government, he was at last taken to Urúmíyyih near Tabriz. There when He wanted to go to bathe, the Governor of the city sent Him a most spirited horse which no one could manage. He thought that the Báb would try to ride it and be thrown and killed. However, in the presence of the Báb the horse became very quiet and even bent for the Báb to mount it. The people, all non-Bahá'ís, who saw the Báb go and come on this horse shouted that it was a miracle, and He was a holy man. They ran to the bath and collected the water in bottles, considering it blessed water. One of those who saw the people come in crowds and came, too, to observe, was the painter to Muzaffari'd-Dín Sháh (though at that time he was still the Crown Prince). This painter was engaged only to do his work. "This painter, some years later, became a Bahá'í under my father's teaching (my father was 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá). Then the painter told my father about going with the crowd to see the Báb in Urúmíyyih before the time of martyrdom. This painter told father that at that time he conceived the idea of painting the Báb without the latter's knowledge. He prepared paper and pencils for a sketch and went into His holy presence. People were listening to the Báb Who was seated on a rug on the ground. One corner of the 'abá was thrown back. As soon as the artist entered, the Báb drew the 'abá into place, folded His hands one upon the other and looked at the painter as much as to say that He was ready! The painter studied the Báb's Face and then went out and drew. He returned again and again and each time the Báb took His original position, thus the sketch was made.

"The painter showed this sketch to my father, and father asked him to make a coloured painting from this sketch in order that it might be sent as a gift to Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká. This was done, and when Bahá'u'lláh received this painting, He was very happy and said, "This is the Báb!" In those days photography was not known and that sketch had been the only one made of the Báb during His life- [XXI:2:55] time. Bahá'u'lláh called one of the uncles of the Báb, showed him the painting and asked, "Do you know this face?" Instantly the uncle replied, "Yes, it is the Báb!"

"Bahá'u'lláh at once sent one of His 'abás¹ to my father asking him to give it to the painter. My father, at the time he had sent the painting, had asked permission from Bahá'u'lláh to have nine paintings made and sent to nine important cities in Persia to be kept by believers in special places. In answer Bahá'u'lláh had given permission for the painter to make only one more and that was to be given to my father. No more were to be made. This painting of the Báb which my father had been confiscated by the Government with other papers, but when I was in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá He promised me that sometime this will be given back to our family. Siyyid Asadu'lláh found the sketch made by this painter in the home of a Bahá'í family in Persia and he sent it to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká. Thus the painting of His Holiness the Báb and the one sketch are now preserved in Haifa, the other painting is lost for the present, and aside from these there is no other authentic painting or photograph of the Báb."

Such is the interesting story told to me by Mr Valíyu'lláh Varqá. American friends will remember him for he came to the United States with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1912.

¹ 'Abá' (Pers. also 'abá), pl. a'bí'a.

The first feminist martyr [Qurratu'l-'Ayn]

Mírzá Núri'd-Dín-i-Zayn (Zeine) *Mr Zayn, the author of this valuable article, is a graduate of the American University of Beirut and is now a teacher of sociology in that splendid institution. He has a remarkable background. His grandfather, Jináb-i-Zayn, left Persia and followed Bahá'u'lláh first to Baghdád and later to 'Akká where he spent the rest of his life as one of His amanuenses, so the family first lived in 'Akká and later in Haifa. We are fortunate to have for the Bahá'í Magazine the accurate material which Mr Zayn has sent us a picturesque and dramatic account of the tragic story of Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the far famed Persian feminist and poetess, the first woman martyr for the freedom of women.*

"You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women" so said the Persian feminist and poetess Qurratu'l-'Ayn, when she was imprisoned in 1850.

Born from a noble family, her keen and sagacious intelligence and her fervid eloquence very soon filled all those who came in contact with her, with awe and admiration. Awe, because in her controversies with the most learned men, she was ever triumphant. Admiration, because in a time when most of her country women could not read or write, she displayed such marvellous powers of learning and speech.

Her beauty matched her elocution. But it was a grand, a commanding, a majestic beauty. On one occasion, it is so related, when she was delivered up to the government authorities, she was brought before the Sháh, who, on seeing her, said: "I like her looks; leave her and let her be". On another occasion, the festivities and rejoicing of a wedding were going on in the house of one of the Persian nobles. When Qurratu'l-'Ayn came in the ladies of the court and other distinguished guests who were present were so much attracted by the charm of her looks and so greatly impressed by the beauty of her speech that, "forgetting the festivities, they gathered round her, diverted, by listening to her words, from listening to the melodies, and rendered indifferent, by witnessing her marvels, to the contemplation of the pleasant and novel sights which are incident to a wedding".

It means very little to say that Qurratu'l-'Ayn was in advance of her age, unless one says also what that age was. Persia, nay the East in general, was in a deplorable state. Ignorance and superstitions prevailed; intolerance and bigotry waxed high. Education was neglected. The rights of women were slighted. Such were some of the conditions during that age. Filled with a passionate desire to change all that situation she raised her voice against it, discussed and debated with doctors and sages, and addressed the meetings of the most eminent men. At the beginning she used to carry on her discussions and talks from behind a curtain, but later she threw aside her veil, thus adding the power of her looks to the potency of her words. To lay aside the veil and speak in public, at a time when "women were secluded in harems and had to be closely veiled if they appeared [XXI:8:231] in public places" when it was considered impolite for them to speak to men, needed a heroic courage. The very ideas she propounded endangered her life. Yet her courage never failed her and her heart never recoiled from the oppressions and persecutions that she received at the hand of her enemies. By day and night, and accompanied by a few women who had become inspired by her noble ideas, she travelled in Persia from city to city, pleading with men and women everywhere to abandon their prejudices and superstitions and love truth; to put aside hatreds and jealousies and live in harmony and good will with each other. She championed the cause of education of both sexes and fought for the freedom and rights of her kind. Her fame now spread far and wide so that "most people who were scholars or mystics sought to hear her speech and were eager to become acquainted with her powers of speculation and deduction."

Finally, the clergy were alarmed: her vehement and tumultuous ideas confounded them, and her courage and steadfastness in spreading those ideas filled them with apprehension. The people were aroused to molest her, and eventually, she was delivered up to the government authorities. It was then that she pronounced those heroic words with which this account begins. She was imprisoned for two years. Then in August 1852, a disastrous attempt was made on the Sháh's life. Many people were arrested, horribly tortured and condemned to death. And she was one of the innocent victims of that fatal day.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn met a very painful and lingering death. The story of her execution is a very tragic one. She was delivered over to one of the military authorities—a Sardár—who was made responsible for her execution. In Tīhrán “she was placed in the house of the Kalántar, a town official who was made responsible for her custody”.

“Three days” (the Kalántar’s wife related) “our beloved guest stayed in her room chanting prayers—eating little and seldom. On the morning of the third day she said to me: ‘Tonight, they will come for me’. She gave to me a bottle of attar of roses, a ring, and a handkerchief—her only possessions—all she had left of her former riches.”¹

Another account has it that Qurratu'l-'Ayn had put on a snow white robe of pure silk before her execution. When asked by her guardian, early in the evening, why she had changed her dress, “I will be going on a long journey tonight,” she had answered. And so by dint of feminine intuition, she had known the time of her death. As the leaden footed hours of the night were passing one by one and the silence of nature grew deeper, the beginning of that journey was drawing nigh. “Chanting prayers, she waited, waited, prepared and ready for what she knew would come!”¹

And that evening they came.

It was the fifteenth of September 1852. The lights of the city of Tīhrán were going out one by one. People were sleeping. The richly coloured domes and minarets of the [XXI:8:232] capital shone pale in the light of the moon. A sad moonlight was shining through the window of the room where the beautiful Qurratu'l-'Ayn was confined. It was a room in the garden of the Sardár near the gates of the city, to which she had been brought that same evening. The stars were so pale! And the night was so still, so silent, as if the whole creation was watching breathlessly in dreadful expectation of a bitter and heartrending tragedy.

At about midnight, for the first time, the tranquil silence was broken by the sounds of some footsteps. Presently a key turned in the lock, the door opened slowly, and a handsome young Turk entered the room of Qurratu'l-'Ayn. He held a silken handkerchief in his hand. She, sitting on the floor in the middle of the room, was praying. As he moved towards her, she suddenly raised her head, threw at him one of her piercing glances and said in a clear and dignified voice: “Young man, it becomes you not to be my executioner, and to perform such a crime.” Horror stricken by those words, the young Turk refused to touch her, turned back, and ran out of the door “like a madman”. It is said that he dashed into the room where his master, the Sardár, was awaiting him, flung at his feet the fatal handkerchief and the money he had received as a bribe, and said: “I am ready to kill myself and not shoulder the responsibility of this woman’s death.”

A few moments later, another person entered the room of the prisoner. He was a heavy set, coarse, ugly looking man. And he was drunk. He held the same handkerchief in his hand. Qurratu'l-'Ayn had finished her prayers, but she was still sitting on the floor. As his looks fell upon her, his wolfish eyes flashed with ferocity born half of intoxication and half of his own beast like nature. Without a moment’s hesitation, he threw himself upon the unfortunate young woman and accomplished his dark deed—he strangled her with the handkerchief.

¹ From unpublished notes, with permission of Lady Blomfield.

There were still signs of life in her when he drew her out of the room. Here he met others who were sent to help him in the accomplishment of the Sardár's fiendish scheme. They dragged her to the rim of a dry well and threw her into it. Immediately the well was filled up with large and heavy stones. It was midnight.

The moon had now sunk behind the snow clad Elburz mountains. The shadows of the domes and the minarets grew deeper and blacker. Darkness enveloped the city of Tīhrán. There was not any light save the pale glimmering of the lonely stars. As the men were returning from the well, something fluttered on a rosebush nearby. Apparently a nightingale disturbed in her sleep. At the same time a loud shrill sound of a cock pierced the appalling silence of the night. Also a wind was growing, "a wind that laid a cold finger upon flesh and spirit." And the leaves that laid without a sound on the trees began to whisper again. It seemed that the creation was beginning to breathe once more; but there was something in that breath that resembled a deep sigh, like the sigh that is drawn by the audience when the curtain falls on the last act of a [XXI:8:233] mournful tragedy. And we can, with a profound certainty, say that the silent stars, that night, looked down upon one of the most ferocious and cruel acts of man.

Thus ended the life of one who "like a lily of the desert growing amongst ruins, gave flowers and perfumes to surrounding moral devastation". Why? Because she *believed*, she believed in the great new Message of the Báb; and because she, fearlessly, unwaveringly, enthusiastically, *delivered* that Message to the people of her country. "The Báb said of her: '*Lo! she answered My call, even before I had called her.*'" She believed that *that* Call was the Truth.

The story of her conversion is in itself a testimony to her keen spiritual sense and deep receptiveness to truth. "One never-to-be-forgotten day," writes Lady Blomfield,¹ she (Qurratu'l-'Ayn) was turning some books and papers in the library of a more enlightened cousin, when she found a little leaflet, the first words attracted her attention, she read on and on, she became more and more interested then thrilled and excited!

"Who wrote this?' She cried to her cousin who came in.

"What have you there? What has happened? Why are you so agitated?"

"But you must tell me who wrote this.' She showed the leaflet to him. Then it was his turn to be agitated.

"You have found that, where? Oh, I cannot tell you about it, you should never have seen it! It is a very secret matter! It should have been securely and carefully concealed.

"Now that I have seen it,' and her voice shook with excitement, 'you must tell me about it, my cousin.'

"He still hesitated, but at last, yielding to her enthusiasm, he said: 'It is written by Shaykh Siyyid Kázim—keep it a secret, closely guarded—the risk of a terrible danger would attend its discovery!'

"So this wonderful pamphlet is by Shaykh Kázim-i-Rashtí and Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'í? And this is what they teach their disciples? But it is the Truth, every shining word of it ..."

And once the fire of that Truth kindled her soul, her faith became dynamic. From the moment when she believed the Truth until the hour of her martyrdom, she followed the demand of the venerated Shaykh teacher, Shaykh Kázim-i-Rashtí: ... "*then let all the world know*". No wonder then if E. G. Browne wrote "Had the Bábí (Bahá'í) religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient that it produced a heroine like Qurratu'l-'Ayn".

¹ From unpublished notes, with permission of Lady Blomfield.

More than seventy years ago, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, throwing back her veil, told her countrymen: "Why do you sleep? Awake from your beds of negligence. The sun hath arisen from the day spring of pre-existence. Why do you drown yourselves in the sea of materialism? Behold the resplendent light! Listen to the songs of the New Age. A new life is breathed into all existing things. The zephyrs of the divine favour are wafting upon you." [XXI:8:234]

Does not the world need that message today when the moral life of the people everywhere is becoming loose, when ancient customs and cherished beliefs are disintegrating, when the economic forces are threatening disaster, when the threads of political relations are sorely strained and tangled?

Let the politicians in their offices of State, and the leaders of religion in their houses of worship and the teachers of youth in their educational institutions—who are all in a great measure responsible for the establishment of Peace and Order in the world—let them turn their gaze to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and see for themselves if it is not therein that lies "a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth."¹

XXII:2, May 1931 [XXII:2:45]

Zamenhof: the man

L. N. Newelt

This article, reprinted from "International Language", gives an excellent picture of the man who created Esperanto. The author calls him a genius. It would seem clear, however, that his success was due not only to genius, but to divine guidance, which flowed to him because of his utter sincerity, devotion and self-sacrifice in the spread of the great ideal of an international auxiliary language.

Zamenhof was an indefatigable worker. All his life, except during the days of his last illness, he had to struggle to keep his family, and for an oculist amongst poor people, the struggle was a bitter one. From Esperanto he made no profit, except royalties on the sale of his works, which certainly did not make good the losses caused by the inevitable neglect of his practice. Lack of money made difficult even travelling to the international congresses; the childlike excitement discernible in his letters on his journey to the Sixth Universal Congress in Washington shows how great was the event in his life, and how great were the efforts which it cost. In spite of money worries, ill health, bitter opposition and mockery, he fought on and worked unceasingly, and in none of his work is there any sign of discouragement (except, perhaps, in the poems *Ho'mia kor'* and *Mia penso*) or bitterness.

One looks for the motive which enabled him to persist and conquer. As we have seen, it was not love of money. Nor was it ambition or love of power, for when, in 1889, it was proposed that the American Philosophical Society should call an international conference of scientists to elect an auxiliary language, he offered to hand the matter over to them entirely and "to retire from the scene"; and, as we know, at a later date (as soon as it was practicable) he gave up all rights in his invention and all official positions. He wished for none of these. His aim was to give humanity peace and ease from the suffering caused by dissension and war, and he saw that a neutral means of communication would be one of the most important factors in achieving that aim. He was an idealist through and through, and he strove for his ideals [XXII:2:46] with a passionate tenacity which sprang from the simplicity of his character. That simplicity gave him the strength to inspire his followers with his own ideals; to that fact it is due that Esperanto survived the early years. At times he showed even a touch of naivety,

¹ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 19.

as, for instance, when he proposed to collect the names and addresses of ten million people who would promise to learn Esperanto, before asking anyone to begin to study.

But he was shrewd, too. He expected no miracles, and foresaw opposition from the first. In his first textbook he answered in advance almost all the objections which can be raised against an “artificial” language. He realized that to make headway, the new language must be stable, and that to be stable, its basis must remain unchanged until the language is universally accepted. Hence, the principle of the inviolability of the fundamental grammar of Esperanto, which has caused so much controversy. It is safe to say that Esperanto would have gone the way of a hundred ephemeral projects, dying stillborn, if it had not been protected by this “dogma”. When the famous Delegation was convened in 1907 for the purpose of choosing an international language, he pointed out from the first that it lacked the necessary authority, and that its choice, whatever it might be, would be ineffective; and the Delegation was indeed a fiasco.

He had a vein of wise disillusionment, as is shown by the following paragraph which appeared in *La Esperantisto* in 1891:

We must not forget that the world has always remained absolutely deaf even to the wisest of moral sermons, but remember that it flies to that which appears to have achieved success. For ourselves we may realize that our task is still very difficult and perhaps for a long time to come will demand an iron patience; but to the public we must always show a cheerful face. We must not lie, as the Volapukists did, inventing great and important facts, taken from the air; but also we must not forget that mankind, for whose good we are working, is a sick, obstinate child, who will take no medicine unless we take pains to sweeten it.

We have no record of unkindness or injustice of any kind, but the following letter shows that he could be tart, when occasion justified it:

Your letter is signed: “One of the warmest friends of the language Esperanto!” I do in fact remember that from time to time you send me letters asking after the progress of the affair; but you have never written to say what you yourself are doing for our cause. The “warm friend of our affair” is not he who is always asking questions, but he who works for it and spreads it. Instead of asking me every month what has been done, you should ask yourself, “What have I done for our affair during the past month?”

I quote these texts to show that Zamenhof’s character had its due proportions of salt. We may guess that many letters like the above were required.

With all his simplicity, perhaps because of his simplicity, he showed in his leadership of the Esperanto movement a sagacity and statesmanship which amounted to genius. I need not dilate on the innumerable [XXII:2:47] pitfalls besetting the inventor of an instrument used by all sorts of men, in all parts of the world. It is sufficient to refer the student to the speeches and articles in this book, in which he points out that Esperanto must have a democratic government; that the language must evolve slowly and naturally in use, and not by sudden changes; that it must be tied to no religion or political theory (not even to Zamenhof’s own dearest cause, pacificism and internationalism allied with the noblest sort of patriotism). His sane guidance was the determining factor in the constant and orderly progress of the movement, and his good influence is still felt today.

I have used the word genius. This is the only word which is adequate when we are considering his creative work on Esperanto. When he compiled the language, research work on the elements necessary in an artificial language was hardly begun; he must be considered as the pioneer and greatest master of the subject. Familiarity with the result of his labours does not breed contempt; on the contrary, it is the common experience of those who have studied Esperanto deeply, that their admiration and wonder grow with increasing knowledge.

That is the proof that he worked well; and those who have followed in his steps have never equalled him. The superiority of Esperanto results partly from that ten years' constant testing which it had before appearing in public; but it results too from the fact that its author was a genius.

"Genius" here includes the term "artist". It is curious that nowhere in his articles and letters do we find any mention of selection of words, or arrangement of grammar, from the artistic point of view; he never touches on aesthetics. It is possible that he never presented this side of the question even to himself. But the beauty of sound and association in Esperanto could have been imported only by one very sensitive to beauty; he was undoubtedly a great, unconscious artist—the language itself is proof of this.

Above all we receive an impression of a modest, lovable man; one who was sincere in all things, an enthusiast who never thrust his views on others; a determined worker who never wavered from his aim. His personality calls forth a deep respect, and even from those who never knew him in the flesh, an affection which explains the enthusiasm and sacrifices of those who had the privilege of working with him.

XXII:3, June 1931 [XXII:3:76]

Bahá'í pioneers

Part I

Siyid Mustafa Roumie¹

A short historical survey of the Bahá'í Movement in India, Burma, Java Islands, Siam, and Malay Peninsula.

The author, one of the leading Bahá'ís of Mandalay, was in his youth an ardent associate and companion of the great Mírzá Jamál Afandí who first brought the Bahá'í Message to the countries of southern Asia. These chronicles are both fascinating themselves in the spiritual adventure they narrate, and also invaluable as a history written by one who was an eye witness.

When through the mighty Will of God, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, came out of the terrible prison walls in the fortress of 'Akká (where He had been exiled and incarcerated for a number of years by the Turkish government at the instigation of the fanatical Muslim clergy of Persia) and finally settled at Bahjí, at a distance of about a couple of miles from the Great Prison, His numerous devoted followers and many ardent admirers of His teaching and high ideals poured forth from all corners of the world, especially from Persia, to lay their allegiance at His feet and to receive His command to serve the great Cause of the "upliftment of humanity" for which He and His noble adherents had undergone severe sufferings and privations and suffered diverse humiliations, chastisements and persecutions of which there is hardly a parallel in the history of the world.

Among these followers was a venerable figure of rather an advanced age, a great scholar of Arabic, Turkish and Persian, the selfless striking character of whose personality and whose singular courteous manners most eloquently testified to his noble birth and high rank. Sulaymán Khán was his original and official name, and Tunukábání in Mázindarán Persia) was his birthplace. He subsequently came to be known in the Bahá'í world as Jamál Afandí or Jamálu'd-Dín Sháh. As an orthodox believer in the Báb since the early period of His Declaration, he was well aware of the prophecies regarding the Manifestation of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore he with peaceful heart pledged his faith in Him. Leaving his dear home in Persia he renounced all his worldly possessions, very cheerfully gave up his official rank and position and presented himself to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, offering most humbly and meekly to sacrifice himself at the Holy Threshold of his Lord so that he might attain His

¹ Siyyid Muşţafá Rúmí.

supreme pleasure which to him was more precious than all the treasures of the universe put together. Such was the condition of the early sincere devoted believers.

His Holiness revealed a Tablet conferring upon him the distinguished title of “Lámi” (i.e. the brilliant one). The opening words of that holy Tablet which was written by the Supreme Pen were as follows: *“O thou the brilliant one! We have conferred upon thee the title of ‘the brilliant one’ so that thou mayest shine forth in the universe in the name of thy Lord the Possessor of the Day of Distinction.”* He then received a command to proceed to India with his kins- [XXII:3:77] man, Mírzá Ḥusayn, who was directed to accompany him. These two noble and heroic souls, without the slightest wavering, at once set out from the Holy Land with unflinching determination to serve the Divine Cause, and took the first boat available from Port Said to India.

They landed in Bombay about the year 1872–73. On their arrival here they met Jináb Ḥájí Siyyid Mírzá Afnán and the great sage Jináb Ḥájí Muḥammad Ibráhím, “the *muballighín*”¹—both of Yazd (Persia). Since they were quite strangers to the country and were not acquainted with the language, customs and manners of the people of India, they decided for the time being to act under the advice and guidance of these two gentlemen of Yazd, who were well known as general merchants and commission agents, and had their business of long standing in Fort Bombay under the celebrated name of Messrs. Majid Sayed Mirza and Mirza Mahmood Company. So Jamál Afandí’s first place of residence in India was “The Hussainieh”.² This was a building dedicated to the celebration of the mourning ceremony of Imám Ḥusayn by its founder a zealous Shí’ih philanthropist from Lucknow, India, called Babri Ali.

During his short stay in Bombay Jamál Afandí did not remain inactive. Despite the language difficulty he managed to deliver the Great Message to many distinguished Persian residents, such as the late Áqá Khán (the then head of the Khoja Ismailieh Community and grandfather of the present well known leader of that Community), and the Persian High Priest of the Shi’ih Isna Asharieh Mosque, Mír Siyyid Muḥammad. The latter accepted the Message and proved to be one of the most confirmed and devout believers. Within a short period Jamál Afandí became a marked figure in the public eye, and the nature of his activities became widely known, which necessitated his friends advising him in the interests of the Cause and their own protection to leave Bombay and go to the interior provinces of India. Accordingly he left Bombay and travelled through many important towns proclaiming the glad-tidings everywhere and resurrecting souls from the dark graves of error and prejudice whenever such opportunity presented itself. Finally he reached Rampur Rohilkhand, which was then under a native chief by the name of Nawab Kalbi Ali Khan, an orthodox Sunní Muslim. Jamál Afandí was the guest of the chief’s uncle Colonel Nawab Asghar Ali Khan. During the stay there the chief one day arranged for a meeting at his palace of the Muslim clergy of his State for a discussion with him about the Bahá’í doctrine of the “non-existence of evil”. Jamál Afandí in the course of his address told the audience that the Bahá’ís do not believe that there exists any positive evil in the creation. According to Bahá’í philosophy all is good. The Creator of all things is but one God. He is good, and therefore His creation is purely good. Evil never exists in His creation. It is a non-existent thing.

At the end of his discourse the High Priest of the State, who was noted for his learning, pointed to the fire on the hubble-bubble which the chief was smoking and question- [XXII:3:78] ed Jamál Afandí. “Is this not a positive evil? It may burn the palace and reduce to ashes all present here in no time.”

Jamál Afandí answered the question with great eloquence. He asked the audience to

¹ Muballigh, pl. muballighát, muballighún (also muballighín): bearer (of news), messenger; informer, denouncer; detective. Name given to Bahá’í teachers or “missionaries” (especially those on journeys to spread the Bahá’í Faith).

² Ḥusayniya, Pers. ḥusayniyyih, a congregation hall for Shí’a Muslims.

imagine what would be the consequence if fire were to cease to exist upon earth for a moment. In its absence the very existence of human life would be impossible, as it is a principle element in the creation system believed by the cosmologists, and generally in cold countries people would be simply frozen to death without fire. We ought to be thankful to the Creator for creating such a useful thing for the preservation of our life. How can one justly call it a positive evil! The improper and wrong use of it, as of all things in the world, is undoubtedly an evil.

It is the same with all the natural qualities of man. If they be used and displayed in an unlawful way they become offenders and blameworthy. The gist of the Divine Laws in all religions is to use each and everything in its proper place as ordained by its Author. Then each thing is termed as good and lawful. Only when used in a wrong place is it called unlawful, evil, or sin. The chief object of the Prophets of God was to teach this doctrine to mankind according to their condition and the necessity of that time. Thus have arisen the "Commandments" and "Prohibitions".

He also illustrated the same principle from a pen knife which was shown to him by the Chief. Referring to it he said, "How useful an article is this. But its misuse (for example, if it is used for the purpose of stabbing) is an evil. The creation of metal is not an evil in itself. It is one of the necessities of our life. But when men turn it into a deadly weapon it becomes an evil."

The Chief and the whole Assembly of the learned men accepted his scholarly exposition of the doctrine with great applause; and many became interested in the teachings of the New Philosophy of the New Age.

II

About this time in 1876, there was held an historic gathering in Delhi, the ancient capital of the Mogul Empire in India, on the occasion of the assumption of the title of the "Empress of India" by her Majesty Queen Victoria. Almost all the Rulers of the various Native States with their entourage, high officials of the British Government and many notable persons, Indians as well as non-Indians, came to the gathering. Jamál Afandí was not slow in taking advantage of a unique opportunity. There he came in contact with almost all the celebrities of India and quietly unfolded to them the Great Mystery of the age. He met here Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, and found in him a true and sympathetic friend of the Cause. Finally he proceeded to Deccan Hyderabad—the Nizam's dominion. The Nizam being very young at that time Jamál Afandí was introduced to the Prime Minister, Sir Salar Jang Mukhtarul Mulk, who was a staunch Shí'ih. Through the magnetic personality and eloquence of Jamál Afandí this statesman soon became deeply interested in the Bahá'í Movement and eventually a [XXII:3:79] Tablet from the Supreme Pen was revealed in his favour. (According to the laws of the Kingdom, high officials could not confess openly any religion except their ancestral faith declared on oath, even though they were ruling monarchs.)

His next move was towards Madras, in southern India. While in Hyderabad and Madras he conceived the idea of visiting Burma and unfurling the banner of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá on the shore of the Irrawaddy, as he received information that King Mindon of Burma was a monarch of exceptionally generous disposition and absolutely unprejudiced mind, and though himself a Buddhist was tolerant to all forms of worship. In those days the steamships running between India and Burma were very few in number, so he had to wait for some time before he could catch a boat to take him to Rangoon. While he was thus waiting, a message from the Chief of Rampur State was received, soliciting his immediate presence there, because the brother of the Chief—Nawáb Muḥammad 'Alí Khán—had displayed a tendency towards atheism and it was the conviction of the Chief that Jamál Afandí was the only person qualified to demonstrate

to his brother the absurdity of his belief and bring him round to the true faith of Islám. Jamál Afandí readily accepted the invitation. But before proceeding to Rampur he sent Mírzá Ḥusayn with a servant to Rangoon by a cargo boat, and he also sent along with them all his luggage.

It was in Madras that Siyyid Muṣṭafá the writer of this account, met Jamál Afandí the first time. I was then quite a young man and was just preparing to return to my native country, Karbilá and Baghdád, after having settled my dues in consequence of a heavy loss sustained in the rice business. Jamál Afandí's eloquent address, his silver voice and his flowery language frequently attracted large gatherings around him. This humble servant was one of his ardent admirers. I soon became so devotedly attached to him that I actually approached my father, Siyyid Muḥammad, celebrated as Rúmí, for permission to accompany Jamál Afandí to Rampur. My father, who was a very learned Muslim divine and held in great esteem and reverence by the Muslim public, did not approve of the proposal; and although he did not exactly know that the theme of Jamál Afandí's talk was the Bahá'í Revelation, yet he not only refused permission but even prohibited me from entering his house. I was determined, however, to accompany Jamál Afandí to Rampur and succeeded in doing so.

(To be continued)

XXII:4, July 1931 [XXII:4:112]

Bahá'í pioneers

Part II

Siyyid Mustafa Roumie

A short historical survey of the Bahá'í Movement in India, Burma, Java Islands, Siam, and Malay Peninsula.

In the first instalment of this spiritual autobiography, Mr Roumie told us of the work of the great teacher, Jamál Afandí, Persian apostle of the Bahá'í Cause who had proceeded to India by the command of Bahá'u'lláh. How he spread the Bahá'í teachings there; the author's own meeting when a youth with this great teacher and his keen desire to accompany him on his missionary tour of India. The second instalment follows.

At the time I succeeded in carrying out my desire to accompany Jamál Afandí on his missionary tour through India, he had with him two other Bahá'ís as his constant companions: they were Rafiuddin Khan of Hassanpur, and Haji Ramadhan of Rampur. After leaving Madras, our journey was broken for a couple of days at Gulburga where friends and officials from Hyderabad came to meet him. After a short trip to Bombay we set out for Rampur. On our way to the Kanpur Railway Station Jamál Afandí met the very brother of the Ruler of Rampur State for whose sake he had undertaken this long journey. What happened was that the Rampur Chief, with the object of forming a closer acquaintance between Jamál Afandí and his brother, sent the latter to Kanpur to meet him and travel with him up to Rampur State.

Jamál Afandí on this occasion stayed about a month and a half at Rampur, in the mansion of the Chief's brother, and availed himself of this opportunity to hold several public and private discourses on the ideals and ethical teachings of the Bahá'í religion. Within a few days the Chief's brother and those who were prompting him were silenced, their atheistic doctrines were thrown into the shade, and all their casuistry proved to have no real foundation. In this way Jamál Afandí incurred the displeasure of one Náẓir Aḥmad Ḥasan of Aligarh, a most zealous supporter of atheism, who wielded considerable influence over the Chief's brother and who, by some treacherous means, had cheated him out of more than thirty thousand rupees which resulted in much heated conversation and correspondence between the two. The Chief's brother was indignant at the conduct of this old atheist friend and had imprisoned him. From his prison he wrote to Jamál Afandí asking him to intercede for his release. Jamál

Afandí did so and he was duly released, eventually having to leave the State. He swore vengeance against Jamál Afandí, although from him he had received nothing but kindness.

Jamál Afandí and I accompanied by a servant boy, left Rampur for Lucknow via Kashipur State and Moradabad. At Lucknow he met the Rajas of Amethi and Balarampur States, who accorded him a very cordial reception. Meanwhile the Raja of Kashipur also arrived and took him to meet and interview the Governor of United Provinces (India). [XXII:4:113] The Rajas gave us a letter of introduction to the Maharaja of Benares, the sacred city of the Hindus.

Jamál Afandí then proceeded to Benares and for a fortnight remained the guest of the Maharaja at his palace. During this short period he became acquainted with many leading citizens of Benares, Hindus as well as Muslims of all schools of thought. One of his acquaintances was Áqá Muḥammad Taqí Benarasi of Khurasan, at whose house he happened to meet Haji Ahmad Bindani, an influential and wealthy citizen of Rangoon; and several leading Persian Muslims of Calcutta.

At the very first interview the conversation gradually turned on the question of time regarding the appearance of Imám Mahdí, the Qá'im and the Rij'at-i-Ḥusayní according to Shí'ih creed. A learned Shí'ih theologian who happened to be present in the assembly at the time, declared that no time had been specifically mentioned in regard to that, either in the Qur'án or in the sacred traditions of the revered Imáms. Jamál Afandí then cited several passages from the Holy Qur'án and the traditions of Imám Ja'far-i-Şádiq which pointed to the year AH 1260 (corresponding to CE 1844)—as the time when one should look for the coming of the expected Mihdí who would be born like other human beings in accordance with the natural law of procreation. He refused the theory of the sudden and phenomenal appearance of a youth of one thousand years of age from the strange and unknown region of "Jábulqá" and "Jábulsó".

Jamál further maintained that the Imám on his appearance would introduce a New Cause, a New Dispensation, a New Revealed Book, and a New Divine Law for the guidance of mankind. He also quoted numerous passages from the sacred traditions to the effect that the Imám would be subjected to all kinds of persecutions humiliation and opposition, and eventually he and his followers would be martyred by men of his own race. It was an exceedingly interesting discussion which went on for a couple of days, at the conclusion of which the learned divine protested that although there was a good deal of force in Jamál Afandí's argument, were they justified in accepting it since there was no appearance of the Anti-Christ or Sufyání. Jamál Afandí then in his usual friendly manner said, "Let us jointly pray for the divine guidance and endeavour to grasp the true significance and right meaning of the Words of the Holy Book, which according to the saying of Imám Ja'far-i-Şádiq could be comprehended only by his chosen ones and faithful servants whose hearts are pure."

From Benares we proceeded to Calcutta, visiting Patna on the way. We arrived at Patna at dusk and went directly to an Inn where we spent the night. Early next morning, information was received that the police had surrounded the Inn the previous night and had been checking the arrival and departure of the guests. Shortly thereafter some high European officials came directly to Jamál Afandí and informed him that the Chief Commis- [XXII:4:114] sioner desired to see him, and that he should accompany them. So we went with the officials to Danapur where the seat of government was at that time. On arriving at Danapur, we were ordered to wait in a room under police surveillance and remained there for four hours without knowing the cause of this sudden arrest. I suggested however that Náşir Aḥmad Ḥasan, the atheist, who was offended with Jamál Afandí at Rampur, must have had something to do with this little surprise. My surmise proved to be quite correct for very soon a clerk came to Jamál Afandí with one of the letters which he had written to Náşir Aḥmad Ḥasan, and began to question him about it. Finding that the reason of the arrest was some

misunderstanding about this letter in the mind of the officials, I asked for permission to produce the letter of Nasir Ahmad Hasan to which that one was a reply. Upon receiving permission I promptly produced the letter in question, a reference to which at once cleared all doubts. We were immediately set free and all our effects were returned to us. Thus the attempt of an atheist to do mischief to the Cause was frustrated.

As this incident took place during the month of Muḥarram (Muslim New Year) the majority of the best citizens, like Nawab Muhammad, Nawab Welayat Ali Khan, and other illustrious persons, sympathetically, gathered together around Jamál Afandí and invited him to their homes, where he had opportunity to deliver the Bahá'í Message freely in those large meetings.

After a week or two we left for Calcutta. On arriving there the party went to live in a house in Kolutollah which had been engaged for us by Nawab Safdar Ali Khan, the paternal uncle of the Rampur Chief. Here, too, within a very short time the magnetic personality of Jamál Afandí and his exceedingly affable manners attracted many leading citizens of Calcutta and its neighbourhood. He soon became a well-known figure in the community, particularly among men of a religious and philosophic turn of mind. Jamál Afandí however, was always eagerly seeking an opportunity to deliver the Great Message of universal love and peace, the message of the wonderful revelation of God's mystery, the message of the advent of the New Age.

At last the opportunity presented itself when he met Ḥájí Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karím Shírází, a renowned Persian merchant of Calcutta, at whose residence leading Muslims used to meet every day to discuss current topics. This was the time of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, and so the main subjects discussed were the events of the war as they appeared in the newspaper reports. In the course of these discussions, Jamál Afandí, as often as possible, directed the attention of his audience to various prophecies in the Holy Qur'án and the Tradition of the Prophet, regarding the signs of the appearance of the Promised Redeemer. [XXII:4:115] His marvellous eloquence and his unique method of presenting the subject made a great impression on his audience.

About this time Jináb Ḥájí Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí Afnán and his assistant Áqá Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Hamid arrived from Hong Kong, China. They were enroute to Persia via Bombay. Jináb-i-Afnán was one of the maternal uncles of His Holiness the Báb. Both these gentlemen had business in China and came to see Ḥájí Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karím in this connection, and were his guests. They were known to Jamál Afandí, and they recognized each other at the meeting in Ḥájí Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karím's house. The unusual joy expressed by these friends on their sudden and unexpected meeting, the extraordinary warmth and affection manifested as they inquired about each other's welfare, astonished all who were present at the gathering. The people then began to suspect that Jamál Afandí was a member of the new sect.

On the following day the visitors came to see Jamál Afandí, and after a long conversation about the war and much discussion of various passages of the Holy Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh (*Súry-i-Ra'ís* the Tablet of the Chief) relating to prophecies concerning Turkey, Jamál Afandí requested me to chant the Tablet for his two honoured guests. As it was the first time that he had heard these supreme utterances—while I was chanting the Tablet he was conscious of a sudden flash of Heavenly Light and was quite overwhelmed with an inexpressible divine illumination. He could not at the time fully realize the cause of the strange emotion that completely overpowered him. After the chanting of the Holy Tablet was over, the revered guests and Jamál Afandí discussed between themselves the fulfilment of Bahá'u'lláh's prophecies, His teachings for the upliftment of mankind, His noble ideals raising the standard of morality, and the majesty of His mission, all of which I listened to attentively as if spellbound. At the termination of the discussion, I confessed the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's claim and decided to dedicate my life to the service of the Divine Cause. The three veterans at once embraced me, and kissed me most affectionately. Jamál Afandí then in his supplication to the

Sacred Threshold submitted my name, and a Holy Tablet was revealed in my behalf, the English translation of which is as follows:

“O Mustafa (the chosen one or selected as the best one). The supplication of Jamál, who is soaring in the atmosphere of the love of his Lord, the Opulent and Exalted, was submitted in the Holy Presence, and thy name was mentioned therein. We testify to thy truthfulness and sincerity, that thou mayst read it and be among the thankful ones. Say, ‘O God of the universe, who appeared with the Greatest Name! I beseech Thee by the essence of the existence in the name of those who were not prevented by the hosts from turning towards Thy Face, and those whom the Kings could not prevent from beholding towards Thy Horizon, to write for me with Thy Supreme Pen that which behoveth Thy [XXII:4:116] Generosity. O possessor of the Names and the Creator of heaven! O my Lord! I hereby testify that which Thou hast already testified before the creation of heaven and earth, and I acknowledge that which Thy tongue has already declared before the manifestation of the Kingdoms of Thy Command and Creation. Verily Thou art He, there is no God but Thee. I supplicate Thee that thou mayst draw me in every condition near to Thy Horizon, and destine for me, O my God! that which is good in every world of Thy worlds. Verily, Thou art the Mighty, the Exalted, the High and the Great.”

(To be continued)

XXII:5, August 1931 [XXII:5:130]

What is the oneness of humanity?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The greatest prize this world holds is the consummation of the Oneness of Humanity. All are the children of God. God is the Creator, the Provider, the Protector of all. He educates all of us, and is compassionate towards men. His grace encompasses all mankind. The sun of God shines upon all mankind. The rain of God falls for all. The gentle breeze of God wafts for all. Humanity at large is sitting around the Divine Table of the Almighty. Why should we engage in strife? Why should we ever engage on the battlefield to kill each other? God is kind, is He not? Why should we be unkind? What is the reason? How are we benefited by being unkind? Today the chief means of dissension amongst the nations is religion, while in reality the religion of God is one. Differences lie in blind imitations which have crept into religion after its foundation.

Religion is Reality, and reality is one. It does not permit of multiplicity. His Holiness Abraham was the Herald of Reality. His Holiness Moses was the Spreader of Reality. His Holiness Jesus was the Founder of Reality. His Holiness Muḥammad was the Spreader and Promulgator of Reality. The Reality of religion is one. Fundamentally there is no difference.

The Reality of religion consists in the love of God, in the faith of God, in the virtue of humanity, and in the means of communication between the hearts of men.

The Reality of religion is the oneness of the whole of humanity.

XXII:7, October 1931 [XXII:7:208]

Bahá’í pioneers

Part III

Siyyid Mustafa Roumie

A short historical survey of the Bahá’í Movement in India, Burma, Java Islands, Siam, and Malay Peninsula.

The missionary journeys of the author, Mr Roumie, with the great Bahá’í teacher Jamál Afandí throughout India, were successful in a general way. Jamál, a cultured Persian scholar of refined,

venerable appearance and eloquent discourse, found no difficulty in attaining access to leading people of various Indian States, including high government officials and rulers themselves. During his stay of two years in India, he visited many important States. Everywhere he received a warm reception and his message was listened to courteously. In many cases men of influence became followers of the Bahá'í Faith, and in several places Bahá'í Assemblies were formed. The work thus begun, by Jamál has continued in unbroken succession to the present day when India has reached the point of being second, perhaps, in importance to Persia itself in the number of Bahá'ís.

We left Calcutta May 1878 and reached Rangoon after a trip of seven days, steamers at that time being very slow. Our arrival in Burma was rather unusual. Though we had no acquaintances in this city, the news of our missionary journeys had been widely spread and because the difficulties in regard to our baggage and the police department had been noised abroad, all of the citizens of Rangoon knew of our arrival. At the wharf were many people who had come to meet us, among them a young man, Ḥájí Siyyid Mihdí Shírází of Egypt. We had written to him about our coming, requesting him to procure a suitable place for our residence. This he attended to, and was at the wharf to meet us upon our arrival.

Here we found in this picturesque new country everything different: new faces, new kinds of dress, new language, new manners, new food, new religion, and new forms of worship which were not known in India. There were very few Persians then living in Rangoon, and most of them rich merchants; the other foreign peoples frequenting Rangoon were Chinese and Indians. Our new friend, Ḥájí, assuming us to belong to the wealthy commercial class had secured a large building in the business quarter. Later, because of defects in the roof, we moved to adjoining quarters in Mogul Street. Here people of all nationalities, creeds and castes came daily to see us. Jamál Afandí had the faculty of speaking to each soul in accordance with its own needs. His wisdom as a teacher was extraordinary. His audiences were always attracted and as a rule felt themselves blessed by his eloquent addresses.

The Chief Commissioner gave us a wonderful reception and listened with kind attention to our statements, promised to help us in every way possible, and gave us a letter of [XXII:7:209] introduction to the then chief secretary, Mr J. E. Bridges. The next day we went to interview this gentleman. He received us courteously, was very kind to us, and after due inquiry into our affairs, directed us to see the Deputy Commissioner to whom he gave us a letter of introduction.

As a result of this mission of Jamál Afandí in Rangoon many wonderful souls accepted the Faith enthusiastically, and in a very short time the Cause was widely promulgated. Then occurred a peculiar incident due to the unwise zeal of our Rangoon friend, Ḥájí Shírází. Being a novice in the Cause and untrained in the best way of giving the Bahá'í Message, he took it upon himself, in a moment of great zeal, to go to the Shí'ih Mosque in the midst of the Friday worship; and there making a stand loudly called upon the congregation inviting them to come and see the Bahá'í teacher, Jamál Afandí. "Don't pause or tarry for a moment," he said, "come immediately. The appointed time foretold in the Holy Books has arrived. The prophecies have been fulfilled. The Promised Ones have duly appeared. The glad-tidings of Their Manifestation is widely known in Persia and all over the world. Thousands of people in Persia have accepted this Faith, and have sacrificed lives, family and wealth in this path. Come immediately and hear Jamál Afandí in his wonderful way expound this Movement. You will see with your own eyes the new heaven and the new earth, the new sun and the new moon, the new religion and the new faith ..." etc.

This unwise and ill-timed discourse created the greatest commotion and tumult among the fanatical Shí'ih congregation in the Mosque. Outcries, curses, abuse, scoffings—were raised from every side. A terrible excitement reigned, in the midst of which Ḥájí fortunately escaped

and slipped out of the Mosque, otherwise he would undoubtedly have received fatal injuries from the mob and perhaps have been killed then and there.

The Muslims called a meeting to deal with this “infidel”, and a special priest named Áqá Siyyid Javád, a visitor to Rangoon, brought there to officiate especially at the Feast of Muḥarram, rose in the pulpit and openly denounced [XXII:7:210] and abused and cursed our friend Ḥájí, mentioning him by name. He roused the mob to fierce excitement, urging them to unite in force and violence and to eradicate the Bahá’ís from Burma. He urged that our friend Ḥájí be expelled from the Shí’ih Mosque, excommunicated and killed on the spot lest the whole province be won over to this heretic faith.

This provocative sermon impressed only a few of the audience. Fortunately the majority were of too much culture and intelligence to pay any attention to it.

Meanwhile we were all in the dark concerning this event Ḥájí—probably because he was ashamed, having given us no information concerning it. It had been done entirely without consultation with us.

What he did do was to bring a charge of defamation of character against the priest who had delivered the violent sermon against him. This charge, brought before the District Magistrate Court, after full investigation, was decided against the fanatical priest. He was obliged to execute a bond for keeping the peace for six months. Feeling disgraced by this, the priest left Burma by the next boat for Calcutta.

Soon Ḥájí came to us again bringing half a dozen of his relatives and friends to Jamál Afandí to hear the Bahá’í Message. Ḥájí’s father-in-law—a well-known merchant—having died, his wife had inherited the property and rule of the family. Since she did not sympathize with Ḥájí in his Bahá’í Faith, it was necessary for him to leave his kindred and become separated from the family.

The result of Ḥájí’s mistaken zeal in the Mosque did not cause any violent hindrance to the work as was feared, but it was some time before the poisonous effect of the incriminating sermon of the priest had died away. After all, some results did come from Ḥájí’s public announcement of Jamál’s mission as given in the Mosque, for some of the people who heard it were curious to investigate the truth of the matter.

One afternoon a young Persian gentleman of about thirty came up to see us, evidently by his appearance some one of high family. But he was most rude and coarse in his manner to us, and we soon noticed that he was intoxicated. Evidently he had been under the impression that we were people of low class. As soon as he entered into the presence of Jamál Afandí and recognized his culture and station in life, he realized his mistake, became silent and remained only a little while, asking permission as he left to come and see Jamál Afandí the next day.

He came punctually as promised, a perfect gentleman now both in manner and dress. We welcomed him warmly, and as Jamál Afandí discoursed to him with love and wisdom, gradually the young man’s face shone as a result of the effect of the Divine Message with which he seemed to be delighted. He remained seated for a long time in silence, a soul enchanted. Then Jamál told him to come again the next day, for he should take time now to digest what he had heard this day. It was enough of a lesson for the present.

Jamál Afandí learned upon inquiry about him that he was a descendant of the “Kad-khudá” [XXII:7:211] family of Shíráz, Persia, and his name was Áqá Muḥammad Kázim Shírází. He had come to Rangoon to visit his uncle and cousins who had settled here many years before and were clothing merchants.

This youth now came every day to see us and soon was a confirmed Bahá’í. Later he told us how he had come first to see us as a foe, and purposely had made himself intoxicated in order

to inflict some fatal injury upon us. But what a miracle, he said, that he had returned the next day and the next and the next, impelled by his attraction to the Cause. This youth received many wonderful Tablets from Bahá'u'lláh.

In Rangoon we had many followers from the Sunnī community and some from the Shí'ih community.¹

In the Sunnī community were Meolvi Abdul Subhan Koreishes,² his five sons, his wife and his wife's sister and mother, as well as other relatives belonging to this family. This composed the largest Bahá'í family in Rangoon. They subsequently received many Tablets from Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Among the Shi'ite community also there were a large number who received Tablets from Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and from this community a group journeyed in 1899 to Haifa; they were the pilgrims who went with the sacred marble coffin, made in Mandalay for His Holiness the Báb, which was placed in the Tomb of the Báb on Mt. Carmel.

(To be continued)

XXII:7, October 1931 [XXII:7:212]

Auguste Forel—man of vision

Stanwood Cobb

I shall never forget my pilgrimage³ in 1922 to "La Fourmiliere"⁴ at Yvorne, Switzerland, home of the great scientist, philosopher and humanitarian, Dr Auguste Forel, recently deceased. He was then in his seventy-fourth year and crippled by paralysis as a result of a previous stroke. His enunciation was poor, it was difficult for him to formulate his thoughts rapidly in words, his hands were crippled and writing was extremely arduous for him. Yet the thing which impressed me most in my day's visit and communion with him was the feeling of a great intellect and a great soul expressing itself through the crippled medium. One could see plainly that the spirit of the man was undiminished, his intellect as powerful as ever. It was only the channel through which that intellect could reach the world that was effected. What an argument for the immortality of the soul His brain had become injured, his mind not at all. His spirit, may we say, had become even greater as a result of his physical disability.

Dr Forel showed me with interest and indefatigable patience his works ranged about on the numerous shelves of his study, innumerable books on a wide range of subjects. He had literary command of two languages, German and French, in each of which some of his publications had appeared. In addition, copies of his works had been translated into almost every language of Europe. All these he showed me with pride.

Besides his own publications, these book shelves which surrounded the room on every side from floor to ceiling, were piled thick with other publications which he used as research material, all divided into sections according to subject matter. Here no housekeeping diligence was allowed to invade. This room was sacred to Dr Forel and his literary work. Everything must be left as he himself left it, so that he might know just where to put his hand on anything that he wished. It was not as orderly as a modern office or library. But it was

¹ The Muslim world is divided into two main groups: the Sunnī and the Shí'ih. The Sunnún (Turkey, Arabia, part of India) are literal followers of the Word and acknowledge the Caliph as their spiritual head whom they look upon as the spiritual and temporal successor of Muḥammad. The Shí'yún, on the contrary, do not accept the Caliphate, considering that 'Umar usurped this rule by his martyrdom of 'Alí and his two sons. They believe in the hidden spiritual succession of Imams, the twelfth Imám, the Mahdí, yet to be revealed would be the return of Muḥammad. They follow interpretation rather than the letter of the Qur'án and in the interpretation depend upon their priests, who thus have great power over them. They are more excitable than the Sunnún. [Shí'í (Pers. Shí'ih), pl. Shí'yún; Sunnī, pl. Sunnún; and Imám, pl. A'imma[h or t].]

² Mawlawí 'Abdu'l-Subḥán Qurayshí.

³ Refer to *Star of the West*, XV:6, September 1924, pp. 166ff.

⁴ "The Anthill".

evidence of the strange paradox that a creative mind which is most orderly in its power to organize intellectual material, may be in the organization of the material environment somewhat cluttered. For the mental and physical energy is given in such cases to the organizing of ideas, and no time or energy is left for tidying up.

With the keenest interest Dr Forel showed my wife and myself five volumes on the life of the ant¹ which has just been published in French. This work has later been translated and published in this country. He turned to the different parts of the book, and gave us a long discourse in elucidation of the text and of the illustrations, telling us how he came to make his discoveries. At the age of twenty-one, he had published a book on the ant, the observations and discoveries of which he never had reason to modify. By colouring with cobalt the food which he fed the ants, and [XXII:7:213] by keeping food from all but one ant at a time, he made the discovery of the strange social stomach of the ant which is anterior to its own individual stomach. Food is first turned into liquid form in this social stomach and from there regurgitated and shared in case of need with other hungry ants, only one-nineteenth being kept to go into the individual stomach.

He showed us an illustration of the valve which leads from the social stomach into the individual stomach. I remember my attempt at that time to picture to myself in how far we must consider the workings of this valve to be automatic, and in how far we may consider this a voluntary ethical effort on the part of the ant.

Dr Forel gave us many interesting incidents of his life. He said that as a boy he was not very fond of studying. He was poor at Latin and mathematics. What he loved best was to linger on his way to and from school to study insect life by the roadside. From the age of six years he observed the snails, the wasps and the ants. At the age of eleven his grandmother, appreciating his fondness for insect life, gave him a rather costly book on the ant, highly prized by him ever since. This book he said, was a great formative influence in his life; for it led him into making the study of this remarkable insect his major life work.

At the age of twenty-one, as stated above, he brought out his first work on the ant, which made him famous. Others too have become world authorities on the ant, but Forel has the honour of having added more variety of ants to the knowledge of science than any other man, and of having formed the largest collection of ants in existence, which later he donated to the Natural History Museum of Geneva.

Dr Forel had a many sided mind. Both his interests and education covered many spheres of human thought and study. He received the Doctorate of Medicine, also of Philosophy, and made distinguished contributions to the science of psychiatry, myrmecology² and philosophy. He published books which became well known on such subjects as hypnotism, alcoholism, psychiatry and the sex life. "The [XXII:7:214] Sexual Question", published late in life, has been widely circulated and has been translated and published in this country.

During his long life of scholarly achievement, Dr Forel published more than four hundred different works. The mere enumeration of these filled a pamphlet of thirty pages which was published by his friends in Vienna in 1908 on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday.

Dr Forel's medical and psychiatric work at the lunatic asylums of Munich and of Zurich (of the latter he became director) turned his attention to the fatal effects of alcoholism. From then on it became one of the chief missions of his life to combat in every way possible this

¹ "Le Monde social des fourmis".

² The branch of entomology dealing with ants.

curse. I recall with what fire and indignation he spoke to me of how besotted drunkards get, how filthy they make their homes, and how tragic their inebriation may become for their wives and children. This poison which leads men to foul and evil deeds of which they would otherwise be incapable, seemed to him one of the greatest curses of humanity. He was one of the first in Europe to found a temperance society. When he bought the property at Yvorne he told me that he had the vineyards torn up to make place for vegetable and flower gardens.

“On the first of September 1928,” says the *Feuille D’Avis de Lausanne*,¹ “thousands upon thousands of the people of Europe wrote their recognition of the master of Yvorne as a compassionate physician, a courageous struggler against alcohol and all forms of vice, as a learned psychiatrist, a seeker who revealed the world of the ants, and a thinker who showed the people prophetic vision and the voice of a life free, peaceful, united and happy. All of which he lived as he recommended.”

Shortly after the world war, which was a tragic blow to his humanitarian belief in the ideals of world peace, he came in contact at Karlsruhe—(where he was visiting his daughter and son-in-law, Mrs and Dr Brauns)—with the teachings of the Bahá’í Cause. The principles enumerated by Bahá’u’lláh for the New World Order, those lofty ideals for world peace and world brotherhood, so deeply impressed Dr Forel that he became himself a Bahá’í.

“I found Bahá’u’lláh had years ago declared the very principles which I had come to believe in, he told me, therefore I wished to be considered a follower of Bahá’u’lláh.”

From that day on “the grand old man” of Switzerland devoted his life largely to the promulgation of these principles of Bahá’u’lláh. “He served Bahá’u’lláh with immense capacity and indefatigable faithfulness up to the day of his passing,” says of him Miss Martha Root, Bahá’í teacher and world traveller, who visited him a few years before his death, “He was truly a glorious and loving apostle of Bahá’u’lláh.”

“Dr Auguste Forel,” she declares, was one of the great Bahá’ís in Europe. Wherever, in lecturing at the leading universities of Europe and the far East, I spoke of Dr Forel, his great achievements and his Bahá’í acceptance, the students listened with keen interest and acclaimed their approval with tremendous applause. And when I [XXII:7:215] visited the chief cities of Switzerland to lecture about Bahá’u’lláh’s universal principles or world peace, every city and every educator in Switzerland had heard of these teachings from their celebrated patriot and scientist, Dr Forel.

“I had the privilege of visiting Dr Forel in 1929,” Miss Root further states, “and I consider him one of the greatest humanitarians I have ever met—one of the most just, most kindly, most intelligent. He was a genius who saw the truth and the power of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings to usher in a New Era in divine civilization.”

It is of interest in connection with the later life of Dr Forel to know that one of the most important Tablets given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the world was addressed to this great scientist. The Tablet dwelt chiefly on the proof of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, Dr Forel having been, up to the time of becoming a Bahá’í, a positivist; he was an ardent humanitarian devoted to the advancement of humanity but not believing in the existence of God or the soul. This remarkable exposition of on the scientific proofs of the existence of a Divine Creator and of the soul was accepted by Dr Forel. It would be well if this Tablet could be studied in every university in the world, and by every scientist and religionist.

¹ *Lausanne Notice Sheet.*

XXII:8, November 1931 [XXII:8:249]

What of the future?

'Abdu'l-Bahá

If the tent of the oneness of the world of humanity is not pitched on this earth and Universal Peace is not established, there will be more wars. For this war has become a cause of hatred. For instance, the Germans will not forget, the Austrians will not forget, the Bulgarians will not forget. If the banner of Universal Peace is not raised, this question of war will be more acute.

On one side there will arise the tumult of the Socialists, from another the storm of Bolshevism, from another the problems of labour, from another the antagonism of nations, from another religious hatred, and from another racial prejudices. It is clear what will happen. All of these are like dynamite. One day they will explode, unless the banner of Universal Peace is raised according to the divine teachings, and the oneness of the world of humanity proclaimed.

According to the divine teachings the banner of Universal Peace must be raised by the Power of the Word of God. The oneness of the world of humanity must be established by the Power of the Holy Spirit. No matter how the politicians strive, it will become worse. The power of man is helpless. ...

This period is like the false dawn. This peace is like the false dawn. We will see what the future brings. This has not taken place yet.

We cannot abolish war by war, for it is like cleansing blood with blood. The divine teachings will accomplish it however.

XXII:8, November 1931 [XXII:8:250]

Bahá'í pioneers

Part IV

Siyyid Mustafa Roumie

A short historical survey of the Bahá'í Movement in India, Burma, Java Islands, Siam, and Malay Peninsula.

Jamál Afandí, accompanied by the author, Mr Roumie, during two years of pioneer missionary work in India, found no difficulty in obtaining access to the leading people of many important Indian states including high government officials and rulers themselves. Everywhere Jamál received a warm reception and his message was listened to courteously. In many cases men of influence became followers of the Bahá'í Faith, and in several places Bahá'í Assemblies were formed. The work thus begun by Jamál has continued unbroken succession to the present day when India has reached the point of being second, perhaps, in importance to Persia itself in the number of Bahá'ís.

In 1878 they left Calcutta for Rangoon. Here their mission was highly successful, and in a short time the Bahá'í Cause was widely promulgated in spite of some instances of attempted persecution.

After the establishment of the Cause in Rangoon we left for Mandalay early in 1879 with several Persian companions. As there was no railroad communication at that time, we had to go by a slow river steamer which ran once a week from Rangoon to Mandalay, capital of the then independent kingdom of Burma.

There were many obstacles to successful missionary work in Burma. In the first place we did not know the Burmese language. Secondly, we had no arrangements for our

entertainment there or for contact with the natives, and had to shift for ourselves until we were fortunate in finding, as later described, a Persian from Calcutta who knew us and who gave us our first opening in the city. Thirdly, under the rule of the despotic Burmese king, teaching of the Cause was extremely dangerous. Promulgation of a new religion was, by Buddhist law, to be punished either by banishment, or execution by torture.

But did not a Tablet from His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh give us the Divine command to proceed to Mandalay and establish the kingdom there? This, then, was our spiritual duty. What difference did it make to the lives of obedient servants if they were killed or spared in the line of duty? They considered nothing to be their own, all belonged to their Lord.

The trip to Mandalay was long and tedious, as the boat did not run at night, and it took us more than ten days to reach our destination. We arrived at Mandalay about an hour before sunset, and had great difficulty in finding lodgings there. At the advice of the chief of customs, who was a Muslim, we took shelter for the night at a Mosque called Joon Pull where we slept as well as we could in an open shed adjoining the Mosque.

Fortunately on the very next morning a Calcutta friend, previously referred to, Hájí 'Abdu'l-Karím upon hearing of our arrival, came to see us bringing with him a Burmese friend named Hájí 'Abdu'l-'Azíz (in Burmese Ko Pooh) a dealer in precious stones. This Burmese gentleman was well known and respected by the Moslem community of Burma. We asked him if he could procure us a house, [XXII:8:251] which he did—a residence in the Moslem quarter not far from the Mosque.

News of our arrival spread through the Moslem community of Mandalay, and men of all classes came now and then to see us asking many religious questions. One gentleman who had already accepted the Cause in Rangoon, Áqá Muḥammad Kázim Shírází, came rejoicing to see us, and became a regular and enthusiastic visitor thereafter.

Also our Calcutta friend Hájí 'Abdu'l-Karím came regularly to question Jamál Afandí upon spiritual problems connected with the Moslem law. He joined us every day to take with us the Persian tea.

As far as possible in our missionary travels, we tried to mingle with all races, creeds and nationalities, but the people brought to us at this time were chiefly Muslims. As it was in this circle that we mingled mostly, we felt it necessary to observe all due Muslim rites. There was for instance the Fast of Ramaḍán and the Feast that follows it; all the obligatory prayers we also attended; but although we were associating constantly in this way with Muslim Burmese, we were unfortunately not able to converse with them in Burmese, and our Calcutta friend Hájí 'Abdu'l-Karím interpreted for us.

Thus our days went on until one evening as we were returning home, all of a sudden, stones were thrown at us from the darkness opposite our house. We were seated at the time in front of the house in conversation with friends who had been waiting to see us. Fortunately no one was hurt, and the landlord came out, shouted loudly, and the stoning ceased. The next morning our friend Hájí 'Abdu'l-Karím came to tell us that the people of the quarter disliked our presence there and it would be best to move somewhere else—they wanted to get rid of us. We thought it best to comply with their desire and engaged a house with a compound at some distance from this one. Here our friends continued to meet with us, occasionally bringing new seekers of truth. These people Jamál Afandí welcomed and entertained in the most kindly way, conversing with them on spiritual subjects, and they would depart strong admirers of [XXII:8:252] him and of the message which he had presented.

This quiet and unobtrusive method of teaching led to some important results. One of our new friends, Abdul Wahid, who, like many other Muslim merchants in Burma, had taken the Burmese name, Ko Thin, carried the news of Jamál Afandí and his spiritual message to his

uncle 'Abdu's-Sattár (in Burmese Koo) a very well-known silk merchant, a man of great intelligence and influence in his circle. Abdul Wahid related to his uncle all that he had heard and seen during his visits with Jamál. The old gentleman, 'Abdu's-Sattár, an ardent seeker of truth, told his nephew to invite us both to dinner in his home—an invitation which we accepted with great pleasure.

They came to fetch us with a bullock chariot, then the chief vehicle in Burma, and after our evening prayers, we accompanied them to the home of 'Abdu's-Sattár where we found our host very eagerly awaiting us. We observed that we were the only guests, and after the dinner and the usual exchange of politenesses, 'Abdu's-Sattár began to put all sorts of questions to Jamál relating to Şúfí mysticism. Jamál Afandí with great promptness and brilliancy answered all of his questions and solved all of his spiritual problems to his entire satisfaction. We talked until the early morning hours and it was about two o'clock when we made our apologies and took our departure. Later we heard that our aged host, through the sheer delight and pleasure he had in conversing with Jamál, was unable to sleep that night.

The very next day, to our great surprise, his nephew came with a bullock cart and a chariot to take us with all our belongings to a home which 'Abdu's-Sattár had assigned to us. Upon arrival there we found the old gentleman busily at work, engaged in having constructed for us a meeting house on a vacant piece of land adjoining our home. Soon this meeting house became a centre which attracted a sincerely devotional audience. This was the real beginning of the Divine Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in Mandalay. It is evident that the chief credit for the opportunity to spread the Cause in Burma must be given to 'Abdu's-Sattár and his nephew. They were the first to become believers in Mandalay, noble souls, each of them, and they were the recipients of many Tablets from His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh.

Gradually the number of believers increased from day to day until it reached the number of some two hundred or more. These were busy and happy days. Indeed we worked day and night, and I was also kept busy translating Tablets into the Urdu language, translating verses from the Qur'án and the Traditions regarding the time, place and person of the Divine Manifestation prophesied in these Holy Books. This subject finally extended itself into a book of some three hundred pages, *The Standard of Truth or Reality*, which I wrote for 'Abdu's-Sattár.

We stayed in Mandalay for eighteen months. When the time came to leave, Abdul Wahid was appointed as our representative. Through him we were able to continue communication with the Mandalay [XXII:8:253] friends. In order to prepare him for this responsibility we had been teaching him daily the divine principles of Bahá'u'lláh.

How grateful we were to God that in a city where there was such danger in spreading the message of Bahá'u'lláh, we had been protected by the friendship and influence of our new Bahá'í brother, 'Abdu's-Sattár. This was our salvation, for although the Persian Shí'ih community publicly denounced Jamál Afandí as a Bahá'í and incited the people to do us injury, yet so great was the influence of 'Abdu's-Sattár that no one was found who dared to come forward and oppose or obstruct the Movement.

Meanwhile our Persian friend, Áqá Muḥammad Kázim Shírází, was working independently within the circle of the Persian Shí'ih community where he was able to guide many souls to the Truth, among them Áqá Siyyid Mihdí Shírází and Áqá Muḥammad Šádiq, both of them partners of his in his Mandalay shop, and others some of whom had become natives of Mandalay.

In the course of time the prejudice of the Persian Shí'ih community became somewhat decreased. Two well-known merchants, Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí Işfahán and Áqá Muḥammad Ibráhím Shírází, each invited us to dinner in their homes where we found gathered all the

notable Persians of Mandalay. Jamál Afandí took advantage of this wonderful opportunity to deliver a most convincing address on the expectation of the Qá'im and the Messiah. The audience received this address in the most respectful silence except for a few polite questions. It seemed these souls had been impressed, but due to their ignorance of Truth and to their intellectual pride they preferred to follow blindly their own dogmatic creeds.

The Priest of the Chinese Muslim Mosque, a learned sage, came to see us bringing with him a written question, a spiritual puzzle, which he wanted made clear. This Jamál Afandí accomplished to his great satisfaction, pointing out how the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh had fulfilled all these prophecies. The Chinese gentleman retired completely satisfied with his answers.

Thus having finished our duties for the present in Mandalay, feeling that much of importance had been accomplished and that the Supreme Cause of Bahá'u'lláh was well founded there, we returned to Rangoon by the same river steamer by which we had arrived.

(To be continued)

XXII:9, December 1931 [XXII:9:258]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Why did Christ come into this world? People think He came in order that they might believe in Him as the Word of God, or the Son of God. "He came," they say, "to redeem us through His blood."

Christ was not seeking after fame. He came that He might educate the world of humanity and illumine the world of reality. He sacrificed His life for the realization of this fact. This is reality. Every fair and just man accepts this. Now is it befitting that we lay aside the refining of character and engage in war, or abandon the second birth and occupy ourselves with enmity? Christ came to release the people from the promptings of the lower nature, to make them angelic. For this thing He accepted all calamities.

XXII:9, December 1931 [XXII:9:272]

Bahá'í pioneers

Part V

Siyyid Mustafa Roumie

A short historical survey of the Bahá'í Movement in India, Burma, Java Islands, Siam, and Malay Peninsula.

Jamál Afandí, accompanied by the author, Mr Roumie, during two years of pioneer missionary work in India, found no difficulty in obtaining access to the leading people of many important Indian states including high government officials and rulers themselves. Everywhere Jamál received a warm reception and his message was listened to courteously.

In 1878 they left Calcutta for Rangoon. Here their mission was highly successful, and in a short time the Bahá'í Cause was widely promulgated in spite of some instances of attempted persecution.

After establishing the Cause in Rangoon the missionaries went, early in 1879, to Mandalay. Here they met with some persecution. Their teaching had to be quiet and unobtrusive. Fortunately they were befriended by a wealthy merchant of great influence who built them a small hall in which to carry on their work, and put them under his personal protection. Feeling that they had given a good foundation to the Cause in Mandalay, they now return to Rangoon.

Our safe arrival back at Rangoon delighted the hearts of the friends and uplifted their spirits. We found awaiting us there many holy Tablets revealed by His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh for the friends in India and Burma as well as for ourselves.

As we planned to stay for a while in Burma, it was thought best to undertake some kind of business in order that, like the apostle Paul, we might earn our own living and pay our own way as we went about our missionary work. It was finally decided to open a pony market, also have a line of hackney carriages, and a shop for the sale of provender. This business in due time proved quite successful and profitable.

The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, meanwhile, was gradually progressing; but although we had a goodly number of followers, they were, as a rule, of our own race, and we felt it very necessary that the Cause should reach out among the natives. Otherwise the foundations of the Bahá'í Movement in Burma would not be strong enough to withstand the changes that time brings about among a foreign population who are constantly on the move, going here and there in search of business. The result would be that unless the Cause was spread among the native population, it would gradually die away again.

By this time we counted among our followers only two native families in Rangoon: that of Jináb Áqá Hájí Siyyid Mihdí Shírází from amongst the Shí'ihs; and secondly that of Molvi Abdus Subhan Korishee.¹ Even these, however, were not actually natives of Burma, although they had become naturalized citizens: the former family being from Persia, and the latter from India.

We did our very best to remedy this defect in the establishment of the Cause in Burma, and exerted our utmost to attract the natives to the Kingdom. But our endeavours at this time were not effectual. After the lapse of one year we took a second trip to Mandalay to see the friends, upon their invitation and continual requests, so that we could nourish them with new [XXII:9:273] and higher teachings. A member of the Shí'ih Persian community of Mandalay who was very hostile to the Bahá'í Movement engineered a piece of chicanery which proved quite fatal to our work at Mandalay at this time.

He instigated a professional cook, who had been with us at Hyderabad while we were sojourning in that city, to start, falsely, a civil suit against us for one hundred and seventy six thousand five hundred and nine rubies, stating that he had sold goods to us in Hyderabad for which he had not been paid.

The courts in Mandalay, we were informed, were entirely lawless and unjust at this time and well known for their bribe taking. Many bona fide claims had been dismissed by them as false, and many false claims had been decided in the affirmative. Many defendants, and some of the plaintiffs even, had been sent to jail and violently tortured preliminary to the first court hearing.

Fortunately some of our influential Bahá'í friends managed to secure all of the details of this claim and a copy of the complaint from the Court. We also had an interview with the Prime Minister Kewun Mingyi through the kind intervention of our Bahá'í friend Mullá Ismá'íl, the Chief Commissioner of Customs. After listening to our story, he promised to give us justice upon the following day when the case was called. He was as good as his word, and the case against us was dismissed on the ground that it was not a case for the judiciary of the Burmese Court, but should be presented at the Court where the business transaction had taken place. The Judge stated in his judicial opinion that the case seemed to be nothing but a piece of religious antagonism and hatred toward the revered personage of the defence.

Although thereafter we found ourselves free from this danger, the Bahá'ís of Mandalay had no peace of mind even after the decision of the case in our favour, for they well knew the lawlessness of their courts. Anybody might bring an action, civil or criminal, against any person without much trouble or expense. Therefore it was deemed too risky for us to stay longer in this city, and after a few months we departed for Rangoon although it was a great

¹ Mawlawí 'Abdu'l-Subhán Qurayshí.

disappointment to our friends. This was the decision of the Mandalay believers, although it was a bitter disappointment and sorrow to them.

We came back to Rangoon distressed and heartbroken over the results of our trip to Mandalay, but we could not sit down and lament in idleness. We had to earn our living. So the writer was sent with some ponies and some jewellery to Calcutta, from which trip he returned with great profits. He was then sent on another trip of the same kind with livestock and gems to Penang in the Malay Peninsula. This was an entirely new part of the world to him, but I managed to find lodgings, upon my arrival, in the house of a well-known leader of mysticism, Omar Khalidi, a man of Malay descent. He was about sixty years of age with half a dozen grown up sons and daughters, most of whom were able to speak in Arabic. Thus I was able to converse [XXII:9:274] with them and got along very well. Because this island was quite small, I became within a week a conspicuous figure everywhere, and although I had not yet found educated and interesting souls, yet I continued to deliver the message of Bahá'u'lláh to all receptive and intelligent people. Finally after disposing of all my ponies and gems favourably, I returned safely to Rangoon.

After a couple of months I was sent on a similar errand to Calcutta. Now it was decided that Jamál Afandí and the writer should go on a long trip through India, and if possible around the Malay peninsula and to the Java Islands. The friends in Rangoon unanimously agreed to this proposition. Therefore leaving our business in charge of some of the friends, we took the first boat to Calcutta. Here we found that most of the Bahá'í friends had either moved or died, therefore we did not stay long here, but left for Dacca, an important city of Bengal. Here we met with some interesting and important people. From there we went to Bombay where we stayed about three weeks. Bombay at this time was an important centre of the Bahá'í Movement in India.

We next went to Madras where the Cause had a large number of followers, about four hundred in all. The number of believers was considerably increased after our arrival in Madras, and the writer was kept busy delivering public lectures every night in various parts of the town. He was delighted to be again with his aged father, Siyyid Muḥammad Rúmí, then in his one hundred and fourteenth year.¹

During our stay in Madras many eminent persons joined the Bahá'í religion, among them: Nawab Ferooz Hussein Khan, Nawab Muhammad Miyan, Siyyid Kazim Ali, Oman Khan Subadar, Major Bahadur, Siyyid Dawood, and one mulla, Muhammad Ali Rampuree, a very learned sage, also his nephew, Murad Ali, a merchant.

Our next stop was Singapore, where we were the guests of the Turkish Vice Consul, a well-known Arab merchant. From here we sailed for Batavia, the chief seaport of Java. We had great difficulty in getting a passport for travelling in Java, but finally secured one from the British passport office. This allowed us, however, to travel only in seaport towns and for only six months.

During all our travels in Java, we were closely watched by detectives and spied upon everywhere, as the Dutch government was exceedingly afraid of religious propaganda in Java. We were also hampered here by lack of facility in the Javanese language, which Jamál Afandí did not understand.

From Batavia we went to Surabaya where we sojourned for a couple of months, leaving there finally for the island of Bali. The inhabitants of this island had originally been Hindus and Buddhists, but their religion now had become somewhat corrupted; the king of this province could hardly be said to practice any religion except perhaps a corrupted form of

¹ The Muslim year, being lunar, is shorter than our solar year, so that the age of one hundred and fourteen in Muslim reckoning would correspond to the age of about one hundred and five years in our reckoning.

Buddhism. His queen had [XXII:9:275] been a Muslim by birth. This queen was keenly desirous of seeing Jamál Afandí. She sent some high officials to fetch us to the palace, bringing two beautiful ponies for us to ride on as there was not any kind of a vehicle. Accompanied by the palace escort, and by our friend the Chief Commissioner of Customs who served as interpreter for us, we reached the palace and were cordially welcomed. For hours the king and queen questioned us earnestly about spiritual subjects. It was a most interesting conversation. Finally, after partaking of coffee and some sweets, we received permission to retire.

After a couple of days, we sailed for the Sulawesi (Celebes) islands, the chief seaport of which is Makasar, now the seat of the Dutch Governor. We landed here safely and the police instructed the porters to take us with our luggage to the Arab quarters, where we were to be put under the guardianship of the Chief of this quarter.¹

We were greeted cordially by this Arab Chief, who had been born and brought up here. A very large brick building with an iron gate was given us to live in, of which we occupied only two rooms on the top floor, one for Jamál Afandí, and one for our luggage, occupied by the writer.

As experienced travellers, it occurred to us to inspect carefully the whole building. We closed the doors of all vacant rooms, especially we took particular pains to close the huge gate opening on the public road. The wisdom of this precaution will soon be seen. The building, owned by a rich Chinese merchant, seemed to have been abandoned for many years. It took hours to lock the gate with the utmost difficulty. Meanwhile news of our arrival and of the location of our lodgings was being spread over the whole town.

In the morning, to our amazement, when we looked out we saw a throng of citizens outside the building. They asked us with great astonishment how it was that our lives had been spared that night. Had no ghost, demon, or evil spirit disturbed us? How was it that we had been safe from harm? Had we overcome the Monstrous Devil? It had always been the case previously that those who spent the night in this great edifice, were found dead in the morning, and from no known cause. So terrible had been the reputation of this residence that the surviving heirs of the Chinese owner of the building dared not live in it.

We told them that we had driven out the evil spirits, ghosts, demons and devils from the house and made it habitable, thus wiping out the superstitious ideas that the Chinese and natives had had about this house for years.

Knowing that the Chinese have many superstitions and a great fear of demons, we concluded that, owing to some deaths in this household, they had abandoned the place because of the belief that it was haunted. But to our amazement we subsequently learned that their fears were by no means groundless. The Chief of this Arab quarter who [XXII:9:276] was in charge of the residence, had been in the habit, it seems, of bestowing it as a shelter upon inexperienced and unknown fellow countrymen travelling to that city, if he considered them to be rich. They would retire for the night assured of the careful protection of this Arab Chief and would go to sleep without taking any precaution. Once they were sound asleep, some of the Chief's men would creep in, dressed up to resemble demons, and choke the sleeping men until they were dead. The next morning they would be buried by the Chief and their belongings would be taken away by the said Chief for safe custody!

But in our case the evil designs of the Chief were thwarted by our precaution. His men did come to the big gate, it seems, and tried hard to force it open. Jamál had been awakened by the noise and shouted loudly in Arabic, "Who is there?" and looking out he saw men running

¹ Throughout the Dutch East Indies it was then the custom for travellers of various foreign races to be segregated, each in its own district, and under the rule of a chief of that race.

away from the gate.

In spite of this knowledge which we had acquired of the evil designs of our native Chief, we dared not disclose to him our awareness of his villainy for we needed his help in all of our movements. So instead of confronting him with his crimes, we deemed it best to present him with a gem worth twenty dollars and thanked him for his kind protection.

(To be continued)

XXII:10, January 1932 [XXII:10:313]

Bahá'í pioneers

Part VI

Siyyid Mustafa Roumie

A short historical survey of the Bahá'í Movement in India, Burma, Java Islands, Siam, and Malay Peninsula.

Jamál Afandí, accompanied by the author, Mr Roumie, during two years of pioneer missionary work in India, found no difficulty in obtaining access to the leading people of many important Indian states including high government officials and rulers themselves. Everywhere Jamál received a warm reception and his message was listened to courteously.

In 1878 they left Calcutta for Rangoon. Here their mission was highly successful, and in a short time the Bahá'í Cause was widely promulgated in spite of some instances of attempted persecution.

After establishing the Cause in Rangoon the missionaries went, early in 1879, to Mandalay where they laid a good foundation for the Bahá'í Cause.

Several years were spent in missionary journeys to Burma Mandalay and the chief cities of India. Then Jamál Afandí and the author left for more distant journeys to Singapore, Java and the Sulawesi (Celebes) Islands where they met with extraordinary adventures.

During our stay in Makasar we became well known as experts in the healing of the sick and the soothing of nervous ailments. With the supreme power and help of the Greatest Name we were able to heal many of the sick, and those who thought themselves possessed by evil spirits were also relieved by our prayers. Through this healing work we were able to deliver the message of Bahá'u'lláh to everyone with whom we came in contact; and when the time arrived for us to depart, it was only with the greatest difficulty that we were able to tear ourselves away from these people who had begun to depend so much upon us.

From Makasar we proceeded in a small sailing vessel to a seaport of the Sulawesi islands called Pari Pari, then ruled by a native independent chief called Fatta Aronmatua Aron Raffan, which means "The Great Monarch and King of all Kings". On our arrival I went directly to the customs official to ask permission for landing. The officer in charge gave me a pony on which to ride to the royal palace—a palace built of bamboo—to obtain this permission from their King. The King, who was advanced in age, was eagerly awaiting our arrival and watching with a telescope through the window of his palace. As soon as I entered the royal palace the King got up from his seat and warmly embraced me saying that he was happy to see his honourable guest. Then he eagerly inquired the whereabouts of Jamál Afandí, who, I replied, was still in the ship awaiting for his royal command to disembark.

When I entered the royal presence I saw there two envoys sent to the King by the Dutch Governor of Makasar with a private letter to the King indicating the arrival of the two visitors—Jamál Afandí and the writer—and requesting the King to refuse any help that they might request for the purpose of making their journey into the interior of the native states; for the letter stated these two men were necromancers, and would use the art of enchantment to

win the chiefs and their subjects for their mystic religious rites.

The King was not favourably impressed with this defamatory letter. [XXII:10:314] In fact he was noticeably annoyed by it and in an angry tone he said to the two envoys, "These venerable visitors are our guests and under our protection, and the Dutch Governor should not interfere with our religious affairs. This is my reply to his offensive letter, and an unofficial message which should be conveyed by you to him." The envoys, thunderstruck, immediately retired disheartened and unsuccessful in their hostile mission.

The King enjoined upon the customs official to apologize to Jamál Afandí on his behalf for not being able to do him the honour of a public reception, and directed the customs official to accommodate the guests in his own house. This was done, and we were honourably received by this official. The day after our arrival we were summoned to the Court to have an audience with the King. We were warmly received by him. He embraced each of us and bade us be seated close beside him. After the usual salutations and politeness he inquired about our voyage and the object of our unexpected and delightful arrival at such an unfrequented spot.

With perfect sincerity and candour, yet with tact and sympathy, we explained to him our whole missionary adventure in a way calculated to produce interest and satisfaction on his part. The King was exceedingly delighted and asked us to call again on the next morning. So on the morrow we were again furnished with ponies and rode a distance of about two miles to the palace, and this time had audience with the Queen and also with the princes. In fact we found ourselves becoming very intimate with the King and all the royal family.

The King was suffering with an ugly disease called psoriasis. His whole body was covered with scales like fish scales which caused constant irritation and itching. His skin was so sensitive that he could stand but little clothing and so he wore but very few garments. Jamál Afandí had inspired such faith and admiration in the King as to make him confident that his spiritual visitor could heal his painful disease, and he requested this of Jamál. The latter replied, "We are not qualified physicians or trained in the healing of material ills. But we will earnestly pray for divine guidance, and by means of that try to find the remedy for you."

When we returned home we consulted and prayed together for the solution of this problem and responsibility which the King's sickness and his faith in us had placed upon us. The results were, as the reader will see, a remarkable confirmation of the fact that no matter what the difficulty, Bahá'ís will find a heavenly guidance through consultation and prayer.

Having sought the guidance, then, we immediately proceeded to act. We went out to the neighbouring jungle to search for medical herbs, as we had nothing of this nature with us. We found many trees of cassia fistula with its abundant fruits which are mildly laxative. We collected some of these fruits; and going further into the jungle found some plants of jungle mint and gathered the leaves of this also. We sought to be guided in the collection of other plants and herbs, continually using the Greatest Name while we were engaged in this extraordinary search. We brought them home, and praying also the [XXII:10:315] while, prepared from them a brew, and also a purgative from the cassia. We had a few cakes of carbohc soap with us fortunately, and we prepared three bottles of oxymel combined with vinegar and sugar, and took all of these preparations and the soap with us to the royal palace the next day. We gave four doses of the purgative to the King on alternate days, and gave him nourishment in between times. Every day he had a hot bath with a strong application of carbohc soap, taking internally some of the herb brew we had made and the oxymel.

As the natives were unable to carry out any of these services, even the bath, the writer personally executed everything necessary. It took more than a month to soften the skin and gradually bring it to a smooth and velvety condition as before this sickness. Finally through divine confirmations and the glorious powerful effects of the Greatest Name, we succeeded to

a certain extent in affecting a cure. After all, the faith of the old King was certainly a great factor in his remarkable recovery. Needless to say, the royal family were greatly impressed because of this healing, and were won to our friendship and to attachment to our Message more than ever before.

(To be continued)

XXII:11, February 1932 [XXII:11:322]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

War is a grievous calamity. It begins and ends in disaster. ... What is this land, this earth? Is it not this: that for a few years we live on this earth, then it becomes our grave, our cemetery? Eternally shall we be beneath it. Now is it beneficial or kind to engage in war and strife for an eternal cemetery? Many generations have come and have lived for a short time on this earth and are buried under it. It is the universal graveyard of humanity. Is it praiseworthy that we engage in warfare, shedding blood, destroying homes, pillaging the wealth of nations and killing little children ...? Is it worthy that we sacrifice eternal life and the everlasting soul of man for the sake of a little dust?

There is no doubt that God is displeased with this. There is no doubt that the perfect man will not approve. Justice and equity will not permit it.

XXII:11, February 1932 [XXII:11:342]

Bahá’í pioneers

Part VII

Siyyid Mustafa Roumie

A short historical survey of the Bahá’í Movement in India, Burma, Java Islands, Siam, and Malay Peninsula.

Jamál Afandí, accompanied by the author, Mr Roumie, during two years of pioneer missionary work in India, found no difficulty in obtaining access to the leading people of many important Indian states including high government officials and rulers themselves. Everywhere Jamál received a warm reception and his message was listened to courteously.

In 1878 they went to Rangoon, where their mission was highly successful. In 1879 they started on an extensive missionary tour of Burma, Mandalay and the chief cities of India. They then undertook a still more distant journey to Singapore, Java and the Sulawesi (Celebes) Islands where with the primitive people they met with extraordinary adventures and success.

After several minor trips we reached the province of Padalia, ruled by Fatta Chikourdi. When our boat, after a rather alarming trip through a crocodile infested river, reached the town in which the King resided, his officers met us at the landing and took us to a commodious guest house on the river side. They then presented to us the formal greetings of the King and took in return our greetings to His Majesty. The next day we were summoned to the palace. King Fatta Chikourdi, of Padali and his Queen Diammarala welcomed us warmly and invited us to visit them and have audience with them daily. In our judgement, however, this place was utterly devoid of spiritual souls. The people were not at all interested in our mission, nor did they have capacity, it would seem, for receiving our declaration of the divine dispensation. So we made up our mind to move further on to the province of Boonay as soon as the King should deign to provide us with canoes and other requisites for our trip. We could not of course ask for this immediately as it would be rude to make too short a visit.

As we were waiting an opportunity to tactfully talk of our departure, to our surprise a serious epidemic of smallpox broke out in the principle towns of Padalia. The houses around the palace had many victims, especially among children, and the loss of life was very great.

The King felt uneasy about this and [XXII:11:343] asked us to do something to arrest the ravages of the plague. We had no instruments or medical material to handle such a situation. We found ourselves forced, however, to take some steps to oblige the King. I was instructed by Jamál Afandí to procure some ordinary needles, tie them up tight and put them in a small vial together with some ripe scabs from long affected children, adding to this the milk of some woman who was giving suck to a male child. With this I was to vaccinate the children of the province. I carried out the instructions to the letter and later I vaccinated daily upwards of five hundred children. Of these only one per cent died; all the rest were saved by this treatment.

Through this medical work we found opportunity to deliver the Message to all. We were not able to stay long enough however, to prove the results of this missionary activity, for we soon left for the province of Boonay. The King generously supplied us with all the necessary travelling equipment and three long canoes with full escort. He affectionately bade us adieu, and we started down the crocodile infested river once more. Before sunset we reached our destination and were warmly received by the King and his officials and given the guest house opposite the palace for our residence. After dinner we were invited to the audience chamber where we were received enthusiastically by the King and Queen. In this very first interview we became intimately acquainted with each other, and the King as simply as a child put all sorts of questions to us, both material and spiritual.

With our party, as it happened, was an Arab from the province of Yemen. He happened to journey with us down the river. The King undertook to recite a prayer known in Islám mystical denominations as *Jeljelutich*. This Arab suddenly interrupted and impertinently attempted to correct the pronunciation of an Arab word in the prayer which the King had, in reality, pronounced correctly. The King, very much annoyed, told him that he was mistaken as to the proper pronunciation but the Arab, who was quite impolite and rude and even insane in his obstinacy, continued to contradict the King. So irate did the King become that he ordered the Arab put out of the palace, and gave instructions that he should never be admitted again. He then turned to us and asked us if we had brought this monster in our company. We explained the facts as to how he happened to be with us, and the King became appeased.

The King was so attracted by the stirring talks of Jamál Afandí that he kept him answering religious questions until the late hours of the night; in fact, it was not until two o'clock in the morning that we were permitted to retire.

Every day and evening we were now in the audience chamber holding religious conferences with the King, continuing to solve his spiritual problems. After a few days the King asked us to write a handbook in Arabic outlining principles for the administration of his State, as well as a booklet for teaching Arabic colloquial conversation. This gave us an unusual opportunity to present the principles of Bahá'í administration and government to the [XXII:11:344] King, for we based our handbook upon the universal laws of Bahá'u'lláh.

Meanwhile the Arab, really partially insane it would seem, deprived of the privilege of entering the palace turned his grudge upon the writer. It took a good deal of precaution on my part to avoid trouble, but one day as I was working on the manuscript of the handbook above mentioned, the Arab, sitting upon his bed, started to vehemently shake the bamboo floor of the house in such a way as to prevent my writing. Upon my polite request to him to desist, he suddenly appeared quite naked from behind the curtain of his bed and struck me upon the head with a heavy block of wood. Fortunately the Queen, happening to look out from her palace window, saw this attack and informed the King who with a large corps of his followers rushed in and arrested the Arab. He also had my wound treated and dressed. Then he gave orders to have the Arab executed. As Bahá'ís, Jamál Afandí and myself both begged the King to forgive the criminal; and after a long entreaty upon my part, it was granted and the

order was given that he should not be executed but banished with a criminal record to the Dutch settlement. The King and Queen, great admirers of Jamál Afandí and the writer, kindly permitted us to present to the insane man some gifts for his journey, about ten dollars in cash and five dollars worth of native cloth.

The books were finally completed and presented to the King and Queen respectively. Also we gave the King lessons in the translation of his books into the Malay language which were exceedingly appreciated.

The King and Queen accepted the Bahá'í Cause and made a vow to promulgate it in all the provinces of the Sulawesi (Celebes) Islands as soon as they should receive confirmation for this missionary effort.

Thus having raised the standard of Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá, we made our preparations to return. With great sorrow at our departure, the King and Queen had all necessary preparations made for our voyage. The atmosphere was very melancholy when we went to bid adieu to their Royal Highnesses.

(To be continued)

XXII:12, March 1932 [XXII:12:375]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Soon it will be the time of Spring. Already the signs of the flowers may be seen upon the mountains and in the valleys.¹

(Ten Days in the Light of Acca, p. 57.)

XXIII:3, June 1932 [XXIII:3:71]

White roses of Persia

Part I

Martha L. Root

Here is told one of the most moving stories, tragic yet noble, among the many martyrdoms of the Bahá'ís in Persia the story of Varqá. The material for this article was gathered by the author on her recent visit to Persia. This is the first of three instalments.

Ṭihrán, Persia, has so many faithful Bahá'í families that to go among them makes one think: "O Persia, your famous attar comes not alone from your roses, the perfume which diffuses itself through the lives of your believers is a fragrance still not equalled in other countries." If there is a more sweet or tender story of devotion to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the great Bahá'í Cause than the lives of 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá and his little son Rúḥu'lláh Varqá of Persia, I have not heard it. When I was visiting in Ṭihrán I used to meet 'Azízu'lláh Varqá and his younger brother Valíyu'lláh Varqá, sons of 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá, and often I used to ask them about their father and brother. All this narrative is absolutely true and in it the reader will see how God prepares souls to come into this world.

'Alí Muḥammad Varqá was an ardent Bahá'í of Tabríz, Persia, in the days when Bahá'u'lláh was a Prisoner in 'Akká, Palestine from 1868 until His passing in 1892. He was exiled and imprisoned because His Teachings which are now being studied by some rulers, many statesmen and millions of other people, were, like those of other World Teachers, very far ahead of His time. To begin at the beginning, 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá had one son, 'Azízu'lláh, two years old, when one day in April another little son was born in his home, and he and his wife named the child Rúḥu'lláh which means "the Spirit of God".

¹ The remainder of the paragraph and a subsequent one are to be found in *Star of the West* XIX:12, p. 358 (included above). The quotation is also to be found in *Star of the West*, XV:12, March 1925, p. 345.

There was glad rejoicing when Bahá'u'lláh from 'Akká sent these parents a Tablet (a letter) about this new babe and in it the reader with insight will discern the introduction to this thrilling story which follows. Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

“O Varqá! It is for thee to chant in both ears of this little one three times:

“Verily, thou hast come by the Command of God! Thou hast appeared to speak of Him, and thou hast been created to serve Him Who is the Dear, the Beloved!”

“We mentioned this before when his mother implored us, and now We are mentioning it again. We are the Generous and the Giver!” (His mother sent no petition by letter, but it was perhaps when this little one was coming into this world that she cried out to Bahá'u'lláh.)

While Rúḥu'lláh was still a little child, Bahá'u'lláh sent a second Tablet. It read:

“He is the Hearer and the Seer!

“Blessed art thou, for thou hast witness the grandeur and greatness of God while still a child. Blessed is the mother who nursed thee and has arisen to do what is becoming of her! We beg God to write for thee from His Supreme Pen that which is fitting to His Generosity, Bounty and Favour. Verily, He is the Generous and the Bountiful! Praise be to God, the Lord the Worlds!”

Another Tablet to Rúḥu'lláh from Bahá'u'lláh was:

“O thou Rúḥu'lláh! Verily, the Greatest Spirit has inclined towards thee from the [XXIII:3:72] Prison and is mentioning thee with such a station that its fragrance will continue as long as My Kingdom and My Grandeur endure!

“Thou, when thou bindeth and knoweth (the mention) say: ‘Praise be to Thee, O Ocean of Bounty! Thanks be to Thee that Thou hast made me to appear and in my first days speak Thy mention and Thy praise. Verily, Thou art the Forgiving and the Compassionate!’”

Later, another little son came to bless their home and he was called Valíyu'lláh.

“What kind of a Bahá'í father was ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá?” you may ask, and “How did he train his sons spiritually?” All fathers who read this tale will see in the life of this Persian the highest ideal of fatherhood, a height not reached in every home, and too high to be understood by many fathers. He, himself was a Bahá'í teacher. The picture of the Báb is preserved to the world today because ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá led a great painter to become a believer. The narrative of the Yazdí family so distinguished in Egypt for their Bahá'í services is another fruit of the many souls to whom he first brought the Teaching in Persia. He was never outside his country except to go to Palestine, yet his pupils have served with glory in the Near East and in Europe.

Being a wise young father, recognizing in what highest education really consists, he took his two little sons, ‘Azízu'lláh and Rúḥu'lláh (little Valíyu'lláh at that time was too young to go, he was only a babe in arms) for a pilgrimage to Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká. Other parents could with profit follow this same plan and today take their children to meet Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause in Haifa, Palestine. If children can glimpse the highest ideals while they are still very young, these ideals may be their lofty inspiration throughout life. Certainly this story shows how one little boy developed into a teacher, a poet, a great philosopher and a world hero before he had hardly crossed the threshold of his twelfth year. Educators must see in the life of this son an astounding Power in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh!

Many were the incidents of that historic visit to Bahá'u'lláh but I only tell you a few of them. 'Azízu'lláh Varqá told me that when the maternal grandfather, the father and Rúḥu'lláh arrived in 'Akká, they went to the room of the secretary of Bahá'u'lláh. It was furnished with a mat and they sat down on this, for they had been told that Bahá'u'lláh would come to this room to meet them. In the distance there were steps leading to an upper room and the father told 'Azízu'lláh to go and stay near those steps to watch the approach of the Blessed Beauty and then to inform them. The child went but when he looked and saw Bahá'u'lláh at the head of the stairs he mounted several steps and knelt at the feet of His Lord. He was crying so hard his very bones were shaking. Bahá'u'lláh stopped and made him [be] happy and they came down the stairway together, the little boy just behind Bahá'u'lláh. It was a great meeting, but when the visitation was over, the father said to his little son: "Why did you not do what I asked you to do? Why did you not run and tell us?" 'Azízu'lláh replied: "I do not know. I do [XXIII:3:73] not know how I mounted those steps, I was not conscious that I went up the stairs." We know how moved Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, England, was, when he first met Bahá'u'lláh but here is an account of what it meant to a very young Persian boy.

The next day they were all invited, the grandfather, father, and two small sons to visit Bahá'u'lláh in His own room. Then when the visit was over, the two boys were invited to the room of Bahá'u'lláh's daughter, Bábíyyih, known throughout the world as the Greatest Holy Leaf. She was then perhaps about forty-five years old. She said to her little guests: "What are you doing in Persia?" and Rúḥu'lláh replied: "We are teaching the Bahá'í Cause in Persia" "What do you say in speaking to people she queried, and Rúḥu'lláh answered: "I tell them God has appeared again on this earth." The Greatest Holy Leaf smiled but said: "When you are speaking you must not say this openly." The child replied: "I do not say it to everybody, I know to whom I must say it." "How do you know the people to whom to speak?" she continued, and he said: "I know people from their eyes; when I see their eyes I know." In fun, Bahá'u'lláh's great daughter said: "Rúḥu'lláh look into my eyes and see if you could speak to me?" Naively he searched her eyes and told her: "No, I cannot speak to you, because you know everything."

Two young men sitting and doing their writing lessons in the other part of the room began to laugh over the conversation and the Greatest Holy Leaf said: "Look into their eyes and see whether you could speak with them and convince them." The child looked at them long and carefully, and then answered: "It is very difficult and it is of no use to try to convince them." (These two young men were Zia'u'llah¹ and Badí'u'lláh who afterwards turned against the Cause. When this conversation was told to Bahá'u'lláh He said: "Rúḥu'lláh is a Bahá'í teacher."

The little group stayed for several months in 'Akká and in Bahjí. Rúḥu'lláh studied Persian writing every day and every Friday he used to show a copy of his writing to 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who often praised it. Rúḥu'lláh's father was very insistent about their lessons and very severe when they did not study, for he knew the importance of education.

'Azízu'lláh recounted another incident of the visit saying that when Bahá'u'lláh wished to reveal (dictate) a Tablet, he used to dismiss everybody with great haste. He, 'Azízu'lláh, said:

"One day I was in Bahá'u'lláh's Presence with the whole family and He called for the secretary to bring ink and paper quickly and in the same moment He requested us all to go. I was just a child, but seeing this haste to send every one away, I had a great longing to be present sometime when a Tablet is revealed. I had asked from one of the members of His

¹ Dīyá'u'lláh.

family to ask Bahá'u'lláh if I could come, please, to see a Tablet revealed. A few weeks later in the Garden at Bahjí, when I was playing with some children, the door of the home was opened and one member of the family called me and said that Bahá'u'lláh wished to see me. I ran to His room and entering I saw that He was chanting revealed Tablets and poems. So entering His room that day, I thought everything was the same as on other days, that Bahá'u'lláh was only chanting. I stood near the door which I had entered, and [XXIII:3:74] was only a few moments in the room when I began trembling in my whole body. I felt I could not stand any more on my feet. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh turning to me said 'Good bye'. As I lifted the curtain to go out, I fell on the threshold and was unconscious. They took me to the room of the wife of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh where they poured rose water and cold water on my face until I revived. The members of the Family asked me what had happened and I told them about going to Bahá'u'lláh to hear the chanting. When I was relating this, the lady who had called me first, came in, and she said to me: 'You, yourself, had asked me to permit you to be present, now that was the time when a Tablet was being revealed.'

"Then I understood why Bahá'u'lláh in haste dismissed everybody. It is because the people cannot endure it, there is such a Power in the room."

'Azízu'lláh Varqá said that his father had a similar experience during this visit to 'Akká. His own words are: "Father had been asked by someone to implore Bahá'u'lláh's help concerning a certain matter and to beg that a Tablet be sent. When my father presented this petition, Bahá'u'lláh called a secretary to bring ink and paper, and He also sent for His brother Músá Kalím and another one of the relatives. He put a hand on each one's shoulder and began to walk up and down revealing the Tablet. Father began to tremble and he said he couldn't say what was happening. He heard Bahá'u'lláh's voice but He could not understand His Words. Some minutes passed and He dismissed them all. Then outside they began to discuss and none of the three had understood Him, they had only felt the Power. It is certainly interesting to hear about Bahá'u'lláh from those who saw and spoke with Him. They said they could not look upon His Face, it was so glorious, the eyes so shining. There was such a vibration that everyone began to tremble and they could not understand His Words; there was such a Power there."

One evening in 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh called 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá alone to His Presence and said: *"I wish to speak with you alone tonight. There is something in the existence that in most of the Tablets We have named the greatest Ether. When any one is endowed with that Ether all his deeds and words will be effective in the world."*

Then Bahá'u'lláh arose and walked a few steps and He continued: *"Even this walking of the Manifestation is effective."* Again sitting down, He said: *"Christ declared His Mission. The Jews crucified Him and they thought what they had done was a very unimportant matter, and Christ was buried; but as Christ was endowed with that Ether, that Ether did not stay under the ground; It came up and did Its great work in the world."*

Then Bahá'u'lláh turned to 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá and said: *"See 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Master, what a wonderful effect His deeds and Words have in the world! See how kind and patiently He endures every difficulty."* The Bahá'í, 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá felt that Bahá'u'lláh really was showing him the Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that He would be the Successor spoken of as the Greatest Branch, and 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá asked to become a martyr in the path of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Blessed Beauty Bahá'u'lláh, accepted this sacrifice and promised the pilgrim that he should give his life in service to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

(To be continued)

The supreme affliction

A study in Bahá'í economics and socialization

Alfred E. Lunt

This article is printed in complete form at the request of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, and has been passed by the Reviewing Committee. It presents a very complete treatment of the economic plight in which the world finds itself today, and describes the perfect solution as found in The Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

“And We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make of them Our heirs.”¹

The primal necessities

God has created hunger and thirst, the need of warmth and shelter as essentials of the very existence of the human race, and has deposited within man an ever present consciousness of these needs. Throughout the countless ages of man's occupation of the earth, these necessities have, to an overwhelming degree, been his taskmasters, the seat of his ambitions, the source of his joys and sorrows. Since food, drink and housing are vital needs of his physical existence, and these have never been attainable except through individual effort—these primitive needs have wielded an enormous influence in the history, progress and destiny of our race. In the hope of gold, men have yielded life. For the power of money to purchase these necessities, men have frequently laid aside honour, and have not fallen short of the commission of detestable crimes. The dethronement of God, in the human consciousness, and the enthronement of gold as a cherished idol, is not a mere play upon words in the past and present history of the race.

The unbalanced distribution of necessities

As the individuals of society, because of this primitive urge, identified happiness with the possession of the goods of this world, and tasted of the power that comes with the attainment of property in excess of their actual needs, the distribution of means gradually became unbalanced. This unbalanced distribution, however, is by no means a modern phenomenon. The emergence of humanity from the patriarchal state marked the taking on of individual responsibility for livelihood, and was the signal for a steady encroachment upon property by the more capable, more ambitious, or more unscrupulous members of society. We must remember that up to comparatively recent times, huge masses of humanity were either slaves, possessing no right to property of any kind; serfs, with [XXIII:4:98] an inchoate right at best to a meagre ownership; or feudatories, holding their fiefs, lands or properties conditioned strictly upon an oath of unrestricted service to their lord or baron. As a consequence, the favoured classes held all property in their sway, and vied with each other, often by private war or foray, to attain larger and larger possessions. Many of the medieval wars had their rise in these inordinate contentions of barons and princes, in which the hapless serf or feudatory bore the brunt of the fighting.

The emergence of innate differences in economic capacity

With the successive destruction of feudalism, serfage and slavery, the struggle for existence devolved upon all men. Theoretically each man had his chance, but, here, the innate differences in the character and capacities of men became disclosed in a universal sense and for the first time. Initiative, education, ability, ambition for fame and power, cunning, cruelty, greed found abundant contrast with sloth, timidity, incapacity, ignorance and resignation. These innate differences, excellencies and defects, being part of the natural order, appeared

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 146. Quote from Qur'án 28:5.

insurmountable, and opened the way for a kind of economic slavery. Money being a seed for the reproduction of itself, tended to multiply in the hands of its possessor. Monopolies became the order of the day. In monarchical countries, the nobility held tightly to their landed estates, and wielded power over the commoner. In the republics, the wealthy classes, fortified by the laws of inheritance, and tending to accumulate ever larger ratios of the available wealth and to control it, have gradually consolidated their position, to the weakening of the agricultural element, the office worker and the day labourer.

Economic insecurity

Although the universal, public school system of the west unquestionably fits the average boy and girl for a higher level of social living, and has greatly diminished the illiterate percentage, the levels above have, at the same time, proportionately advanced in wealth and power, so that the grades and degrees of society have not materially changed. The average graduate of the public schools finds his or her economic level as a mechanic, a factory worker, a clerk, a farmer, or as proprietor of a small business. While this represents a striking improvement over the condition of the poorer classes of past centuries, it is, nevertheless, a fact that the vast majority of the inhabitants, even in the western countries of the globe, are not economically secure, beyond the weekly receipt of their pay envelopes, and when confronted with disaster, sickness or unemployment soon deplete their small reserves.

This is strikingly illustrated in the current wave of economic collapse and its consequent unemployment which has numbed the financial nerves of every country. The normal unemployment ratio has swelled to a three or four fold extent, and hardships and anxieties multiply. Self-respecting family heads discharged from employment and unable, after urgent quest, to find remunerative jobs, reluctantly turn to the charitable agencies. The City of Boston,¹ alone, is disbursing [XXIII:4:99] \$24,000 daily² to an ever increasing number of destitute families. This is but an instance of what is taking place in hundreds of American cities and communities. Doles and public aid in other countries have brought great nations to the verge of national bankruptcy. The over production of commodities which followed and had its source in the feverish war period, has failed to adjust itself to the requirement of peace, and the demand for goods, seriously impaired by the diminished pay rolls, gives no promise of restoring the economic balance of the past decade and returning the workers to the factories in the numbers and with the earnings to which they had become accustomed since 1914.

The old order changeth, but mankind remains its prisoner

In the face of these conditions, industrial leaders and statesmen have proved themselves largely impotent. The old order, developed from the feudal system, enchains and blinds those who are at once its beneficiaries and its victims. While it would be idle to say that no recovery can be expected from the present economic crisis, since the economic law of supply and demand ultimately re-establishes a balance, it is, notwithstanding, equally true that such a system, susceptible, as history proves, to these repeated debacles in our economic life presents grave defects. The prime, devastating element that at present dominates the economic life of the nations is their supine and abject surrender to the natural laws of the survival of the fittest, and the struggle for existence. The claws of nature are unyielding and essentially cruel. The vegetable and animal world are its truest exponents. But is humanity likewise forever condemned to the cruelties of this soulless law of the lower levels of the creation? This point we shall endeavour to unfold.

¹ Massachusetts, USA.

² In October 1931, a total disbursement of \$8,640,000.

The tyranny of natural law

“I am not my brother’s keeper”, by which Cain sought to escape the questioning of the Supreme Judge, has been adopted and made a part of man’s daily life. Granted that countless exceptions exist among us, the fact remains that in the economic relationships, this purely natural law has full sway. We salve our conscience with various forms of charitable aid and poor relief, but this is but an evasion of the issue. A fundamental malady in the human body can be lastingly healed only by ascertaining the real cause of the malady, then by a prescription that meets the exact conditions. May it not be that definite human rights are being ignored, that divine relationships exist which, recognized and applied, contain the solution?

Organic disease and health

We know that any undue separation of functions in an organism, any impairment of the reciprocal relations between its parts, is a certain cause of disease. This is equivalent to disorder and discord, and may be termed the operation of the law of decomposition in the organism. Its course, unless interrupted, is ever towards the dissolution and death of the organism. On the other hand, the unity and health of the organism is synonymous with the [XXIII:4:100] perfect reciprocity of its parts, their full co-operation each to each. Happiness, welfare and efficiency, according to the creative plan under which the organism came into existence is thereby bestowed. Under these conditions, the beneficent law of composition pours its blessings of life and health upon the creature. These primordial laws of composition and decomposition are rooted in the creation and are not inherently controllable by man. They bestow life and death, and constitute the inevitable fate of all created life in a world of “becoming” and contingency.

Decomposition, the unerring agency of destiny

But although these basic laws of destiny are inviolable in their sphere of action, they are powerless to operate except under the exact conditions that call them forth. They are compulsory and selective but neither voluntary nor fickle. Like the arrow to the mark, they obey only the law of attraction and unerringly choose the habitations of their affinities. And by this I mean it is impossible for the law of decomposition to operate in a healthy body. Like maggots or fruit flies arising in a basket of decayed fruit or a heap of animal refuse, spontaneously appearing within rather than from without their host, decomposition enters an organism only because it is attracted by the disordered condition that exists therein. In other words, disorder, disunity, discord—the three ds of a dismal triad—invite decay. As Bahá’u’lláh said: *“Listen truly: mortal eye shall never perceive the Everlasting Beauty, and the dead mind delights only in lifeless clay; for like seeks like and has affinity with its own kind.”*¹

The body of man represents and is the highest organism we know. Logically, and by corollary, the body of humanity, homo sapiens as a race, is likewise entitled to this distinction, in the collective or racial sense.

Nature’s dualities—life and death

The picture we have endeavoured to paint but dimly and faintly depicts the vast cosmic forces that proceed from the inmost recesses of Nature, governing, limiting, expanding and controlling every material atom in the universe. Whether composition or decomposition, fire or humidity, sour or sweet, ebb or flow, or any of the great natural dualities, these colossal forces are, in a word, the unyielding arms, the adamant jaws, the very claws of Nature, and at the same time—since the duality persists and its other aspect must be translated into terms of human consciousness—they are the tireless servants of humanity, furnishing heat and

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *Bahá’í Scriptures*, No. 218, p. 176.

moisture, cooling water to parched lips, life and movement to the blue ocean, and delectable fruits and grains to the taste. Are these forces friends or foes? Shall we fear and shun them, content in a palsied ignorance of their true origin and function—or shall we approach closely and examine them with faith and assurance, conscious of a certain oneness with them, mindful that the Lord of all Being is our common Author? And more important, shall we submit utterly to their dominion, or shall we examine carefully the reality of these forces? Perchance, we may possess weapons by which to conquer and subdue them.

Man, more ferocious than nature

If we treat Nature as we have been accustomed to treat our foreign nations of various colours and origins, [XXIII:4:101] with fear and poorly concealed detestation, it is certain she will, in her time, turn and rend us, or at least will have the last word. This is because only by studying her changing moods, born of the duality, in a sympathetic and dauntless spirit, can we adapt these forces to the up building of civilization. As we cannot control or change the inherent properties of the laws of life and death, as was previously stated, so we cannot change natural elements such as fire into moisture, or water, per se, into something lacking humidity. But we can, and have, converted the action of fire into grateful warmth, and diverted it from turning into a destructive conflagration; we have transformed certain chemical elements into a humane, soothing anaesthetic, and we, also, have, shameful to say, utilized other natural elements and cunningly and cold heartedly converted them into deadly and devastating vapours today threatening, with the menace of potential war, millions of living men, women and children. Man has done this. And it is a fair question to ask, whether Nature, workshop of the mysteries of creation as she is, hurler of the thunderbolt and the twisting tornado, is to be feared as are those men to be feared who consciously and deliberately in the name of an abandoned, rejected and false patriotism, hideous in their ferocity and cruelty, today forge the implements which, should war come again, will break the heart of mankind?

Nature yields to science certain aspects of her sovereignty

To resume. The purpose of this apparent diversion from the subject is to provide the basis upon which to certify to two outstanding verities. First, that man can adapt the blind, unintelligent forces of nature to purposes apparently contrary to their normal uses, as, for instance, sending his body under and beneath the sea in a submarine containing oxygen, which defeats the natural law that has for ages barred the body of man from the ocean depths; or imprisoning within a storage battery or confining to wires, the rampant force of electricity whose nature, undisturbed, is to be elusive, free, cosmic and unrestrained. In a word—man possessed of a power unknown to Nature, superior to Nature and transcending Nature even as the mind transcends the mere instinct, bends the natural forces to his own ends.

A new and greater conquest now required

And, second, that while we cannot change or recreate the inherent properties of the natural elements, such as converting a basic element into another element, we can, to a degree not yet wholly understood and determined as to its scope, formulate and prepare the conditions in a particular device, or, (and this is the all-important issue) within our (man's) own organism, both individually and racially, which will attract the beneficent, kindly, life giving forces of nature, rather than those containing the elements of destruction. And this is but the first step. For behind these beneficent and kindly forces, the Sun of Truth which is the Word of God pours forth a love and a knowledge compared to which the greatest light of Nature is but a guttering candle. It is these divine powers that are our ultimate goal. [XXIII:4:102] A point of receptivity for these reposes in the breast of man. But the fortifications of Nature must first be stormed.

The Equilibrium of health and the law of decomposition

It may, here, be objected that we are confusing the disease itself with the process or law of decomposition, or attributing to every disease two major causations. That the disease sets up its own pathology and no force enters from without in the sense of an all embracing law. Furthermore, that all diseases are self-communicatory and do not, and cannot, per se, constitute an affinity which attracts anything whatsoever.

We submit, however, that the equilibrium of the elements within an organism is the point from which all deviations from the normal must depart. As we conceive this abstruse problem, and take as the most perfect example, the body of man, it is plain, for example, that if, in such a body, the prime elements of organic iron, calcium or manganese, or any of these, are either in excess of the normal or abnormally diminished in volume, in the blood stream, a departure from the health equilibrium is thereby instanced which sooner or later must produce a disordered functioning. This is the first step toward what we call disease. The resistant factors within the body do their utmost to combat and neutralize the poisons that are automatically created by the disturbance, but if the conditions setting it in motion are not drastically changed, through a dietary and regime adapted to the need, and then only in case the organic functions are not too greatly impaired, the disorder is progressive and death intervenes. Because of this basic law of life and health, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in an illuminating and profound Tablet at one time stated that when material medical had advanced on scientific lines sufficiently to become competent to analyze a drop of blood, to the extent of disclosing the presence and ratio of every essential element there present, each to each, medical science would at that moment have within its hands the key to health. Once knowing the degree of the departure or deviation from the normal of the elements requisite to health, and comparing this with the known proportions which each element should occupy in the blood flowing through a healthy body, the restoration of health was to be found in the assimilation of those organic aliments necessary to restore the equilibrium, or, conversely, in the reduction of intake of those aliments which had been found to be in excess in the blood of the patient.

There remains to be proved the part played by the natural disintegrating force at the focal point of the disease we have instanced. This force ever seeks to break down and destroy any composed organism. It is antithetical to that which draws together and composes the essential particles that, as units, we know as living beings. It is separative, disorganizing and ever tends to resolve the combination of elements back into their original, unrelated, and independent status. Thus, the decomposition of water releases the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen, hitherto held together by the sanction of composition—into their original loneliness. The affinity that [XXIII:4:103] drew them together as moisture, is shattered. Similarly, the more complex organisms, such as the animal, in the transformation of death yield up their elements which had been conjoined during the life of the animal. The moving force in this process is this natural law of change and death. Other demonstrations exist of which lack of space prevents the details, but the essential process has become clear.

The forces of decomposition within our economic life are powerless unless man opens the door to their visitation

But, in all this, the application of our thesis is primarily that a departure from the equilibrium of health and composition must exist before the destructive element can assert its power and accelerate the progress of the disease through the inflow of the separative impulse. Without this departure, the organism is immune. Secondly, that an intelligent organism, as is man, may, through this knowledge, and the power of self-analysis, become cognizant of three things: 1) The existence of a diseased state within his collective or racial body, in its economic relationships; 2) His recognition of a power which he innately possesses to change voluntarily, and in accordance with these basic, universal laws, the disorder within himself for

which he, alone, is responsible; and 3) By thus applying the eternal axiom “Physician, heal thyself” employing those economic remedies that are the true “aliments” for the restoration of economic equilibrium, he will rout the enemy of his well-being by depriving it of the nutrition it must have for the accomplishment of its fell purpose. The situation calls for a racial adaptation of the story of Hercules and the earth-giant Antaeus. The giant’s strength became atrophied and impotent when deprived of the vitalizing forces of his earth mother. May humanity shake off the tentacles of this strangling power by summoning its God given resolution, drinking deep of the Cup of Knowledge which God has extended to this storm tossed planet in this New Day, and with the divine weapon of heart and soul destroy forever the selfish and egotistic veils that have made him lose hope in successfully changing what he calls “human nature” which is in reality but a base surrender to the natural law that holds him in its grip. The being who has succeeded in harnessing the fire and the lightnings of Nature, will not fall short in subduing the more interior and subtle natural force that has so long tyrannized over the use and distribution of the vital necessities of his life, such as food and drink, shelter and comfort. He, man, will not, must not fail in this greatest of all conquests even though, to thus finally assert his divinely bestowed spiritual sovereignty over the power of Nature, he must pay the full price, by sacrificing and yielding up the doubtful guerdon¹ of living unto himself alone. The New Age calls him to this greater happiness; the law of unity, deposited by the Ancient of Days in every infinitely small and infinitely great created being, calls him to establish now his own unity; to put aside the playthings of the past and lay hold of the strong rope that God has revealed in this dawn of human maturity; to place himself under a law greater than Nature, a law emanating from Him who created Nature [XXIII:4:104] and all her works through His Wisdom and Power. Why should mankind, possessing attributes and powers directly derived from Divinity Itself, and never possessed by Nature, the intelligence and will to conquer Nature’s cosmic forces, be content to subject himself any longer to her domination over his most precious material relationships? The installation of love for his fellow men, the assertion of his divinely given will are invincible forces, that no merely natural power can withstand. The Way is open. Shall we walk therein, or continue to wander in the gloomy morasses of self-delusion?

The thesis

Our thesis, then, is—that since humanity, through its noble and gifted inventors and scientific discoveries, has proved its God given right to invade the darksome cavern which is Nature’s fastness and stronghold, bringing forth therefrom, bound and captive the titanic forces which he, mankind, has proceeded to adapt to his material service upon the earth—it is certain, that through a spiritual power he even now possesses, he will apply this same process, on a higher plane, to release and free millions of his own race, made in the temple and image of Almighty God, and still held fast within the claws of nature, from the economic shackles that, today, deprive them of inherent and innate rights, withhold from their out reached hands the little comforts they crave, confine them to factory, office building and mine unnecessarily long hours, and deny them that vital interest in the great businesses they have assisted to up build to which, under the law of God, they are entitled. To remedy these diseases that, in this century, have brought low the industrial and commercial structure over well-nigh the whole earth, is the task and duty of every soul informed of the divinely spiritual basis upon which the economic relationships rest; of every far seeing business man who has realized even a trace of the organic unity of mankind; and of every labour leader whose vision is big enough to see beyond the ranks of his own group and to identify their true interests with those of every other basic element of the industrial fabric.

The reason for this is because *“The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine*

¹ A reward; a recompense.

in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit."¹ Without knowledge of the principles contemplated in this preceding quotation, no improvement in the economic state can be realized.

Nature is powerless to confer upon men the knowledge of how to achieve this new economic freedom. Nay, rather, the mind and heart of mankind, derived from a Source that is supernatural, even from God, possess those keys that will unlock the treasuries of knowledge that have been prepared against this very use in this New Age. But let not man suppose he can, in this, underestimate the power of Nature which has for so long defeated and enslaved him. He must watch her (in her interior workings within his social and economic life) even as the cat watches the mouse, or, more accurately, the mouse watches the cat. Up to now, the cat has toyed with the mouse almost as it willed, in the great economic kitchen of [XXIII:4:105] humanity. Man, unwittingly or urged on by greed, has left wide open the door through which the similitude of Nature delights to stalk. This door is no other than human covetousness, ignorance, strife and discord, the cutting off, by violent and harsh means, of the essential relationship that exists within the Kingdom of Man and between its component parts (individual men). This essential relationship is that which, in the Divine Mind, has made of humanity, as a whole, an organism of sacred and highest destiny. Put in another way, every human being, white or coloured, it matters not, is a cell within this vast organism and entitled by divine right to the co-operation and reciprocal aid of every other cell, without exception or possibility of error; even as he in turn contributes of his full strength and function to the welfare of the whole. Who is so blind, after consideration of this strictly accurate and dynamically scientific fact, as to deny its truth?

We have previously demonstrated the unanswerable truth that the human body is the archetype of all organisms. Can the aggregate of human beings, fortified as they are by the possession of mind and soul, be less organically one than is a single cell of this great collective racial entity?

Applying these sacred and basic truths, and emphasizing again the deadly accuracy of that spiritual science that informs man of the divine reality of his own essential oneness, we would now apply it as the sole and inevitable formula for the healing of our economic life. Wise men of all nations will grasp this formula, even as the sore athirst seizes the cup of cool water. From countless sources, today, men of vision are recorded in expressions that prove their awakening to the penetrating power of this irrefutable, universal axiom. Even as "My people perish for lack of knowledge" equally it may be said: "My people are revived and made whole by accepting and applying the advices of Him who is the Knower, the Generous."

In this demonstration, full recognition must be given to the fact that the law of decomposition in its long sway over the psychology and egoistic consciousness of mankind, is not so easily overpowered as are some of nature's lesser children, such as chemical elements, fire and electricity. This is because that death dealing law, in its purely human phase, is associated with the ultimate destinies. There are strict limits to which mankind can guide its operations; although even in its more terrifying aspects it is, in reality, as are all natural laws, the symbol of Divine Providence, and the pathway to His Nearness and Good Pleasure.

Man's supreme affliction

Since the decompositional phenomena invariably and solely appear, as has been mentioned in detail, within an organism which has, consciously or ignorantly, allowed its original functions to become disordered, we must, in fairness, admit that these reappearing economic upheavals, this present state of suffering and threatened starvation in which millions of human beings today find themselves, comprise unerring evidence that the economic life of

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238.

humanity has become the prey of the destructive, obdurate, negative [XXIII:4:106] power of nature, the sinister element of its duality. What can humanity do to stem this tide, which engulfs not only our industrial life, but is also the prime cause of every war that history records? Must the race perish for lack of knowledge?

The answer is plain. The causes contributing to the disease that has sapped our industrial strength must be resolutely uncovered and the remedy administered. Without attempting to enumerate every pathological lesion in our economic system, it will suffice to point out some of the major elements that, at present, operate to attract the destructive forces which have assailed the world.

Let us begin with the greatest constructive remedy, in a general sense—following this with an enumeration of the existing maladjustments that are opposed to economic health:

Fellowship and unity

The inculcation of love and of unity between all men is a mighty restoring agency for all these ills. This must be realized. It is, in reality, the essence of the divine elixir, which has been prescribed by the Divine Physician of this Age. The oneness of mankind, our essential brotherhood, is the hope and promise of every one of the great, universal Teachers and Prophets. This century marks the dawn and the practical expression of this great truth in the life of humanity. This is the reality of man. Every strife and discord in our common life together arises from the conflict of personalities. But the realities of the souls are in accord. The leaders of the business world must investigate this resplendent reality, and apply this unity in the business life of the world. On this point, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says: *"Science cannot cure the illness of the body politic. Science cannot create amity and fellowship in human hearts. Neither can patriotism nor racial allegiance effect a remedy. It must be accomplished solely through the divine bounties and spiritual bestowals which have descended from God in this day for that purpose."*¹ Arrayed against this truly divine elixir for social and economic health, are these traditional, ingrained and sadly disordered states of present day civilization, centring largely in the business and political fields.

1. The principle of trusteeship

Failure to recognize and apply the trust relationship essentially existing between the poor and rich, the fortunate and the unfortunate. Since in every trust, there must be a trustee, a trust fund, and a beneficiary, no room is left under this arrangement for further continuance of the laissez faire policy by which man contemplates his fellow man as a creature apart, admitting no responsibility towards him. Pauperism, wretchedness and misery cannot exist in the same world with this trust principle, which is based upon the right of every member of the human family to the necessities of life, provided he, in turn, contributes his part as a worker in the world. This basic remedy will, further on, be elaborated, as will certain of the other headings of this section.

2. The tithe

Almost entire ignorance of the divine and basic law governing the tithe or income tax. [XXIII:4:107]

3. Organic relationship between labour and capital

The barrier which has been built up between labour and capital, employee and employer. This is, in effect, a lack of unity and understanding among the leaders of both classes of their real organic relationship.

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 171.

4. Taxation

A system of taxation which ignores the true principle upon which contributions to the state or government should be based.

5. Strikes and profit sharing

Strikes and lockouts in industry are a symptom, merely, of the faulty relations of worker and employer. The bargaining power of the great trades unions is based upon the collective influence of multitudes of workers whose only protection against injustice has been conceived to lie in the creation of a class bound together by a community of interest. But this community of interest is wrongly placed. It should be with the employer whose success and profit depends upon the worker's faithfulness and efficiency. Classes are an indication of separation in the business organism, and this has attracted the destructive forces of which strikes and labour troubles are but an inevitable result. The conflicting elements, therefore, must be bound together in unity through a common interest. This interest is attained through true profit sharing which contemplates a type of partnership or ownership in the business, on the part of the worker. This means, rightly worked out, a new and hitherto unknown peace will come to the industrial ranks, which no outside force can break. Besides this, the principle of wages sufficient to assure the workmen of an adequate support should be supplemented by the adoption of a method of pensions to be accorded to faithful workers who have become feeble and helpless. The purpose in all this is to confer a sense of security upon the worker who comprises the vast majority of all men. This is brotherhood illumined by the light of justice. Wages, alone, fall short of justice to the man or woman whose hands, skilled or unskilled have become calloused and hardened by countless hours and successive years of faithful service to his or her employer, firm or corporation.

The class theory in industry, an organic disease

Without this toil, the wheels of industry cannot turn; without this daily grind of human tissues and energies, no profits will appear. These workers are a component and essential part of the business organism with which they have allied themselves and are entitled to their part in its ownership. Only a blind and unsound reasoning can justify the continuance of the class theory, in industry. To do so is to descend to the level of inorganic life, the lowest mineral state. No—man, and his economic relationships with his fellow man, is organic, inter related, cohered. The lowly functions of the nails, hair and skin in the human body are essentials to bodily health and efficiency. The finer organs of the brain and heart, the eye and the ear all contribute instant succour and unflinching co-operation to those lowlier parts, which, in turn, protect and round out the perfection of the whole. No neglect appears in a true organism for any of its parts. The welfare of each is the vital concern of all. And, conversely, the affliction or impairment of any is a menace to the health of the whole body. It takes but little acumen to apply this example of a universal solvent of industrial harmony to the present confused, uncoordinated industrial picture.

6. The upliftment and security of agriculture

At the present time, the economic status of the farmer has suffered owing, in part, to overproduction in a world-wide sense, and the lessened demand which characterizes the present impoverishment of the general population. Agriculture is of first importance in the modern state. Plans of a co-operative nature must be applied to strengthen and fortify the producer through the application of the new principles of trust relationship, mutual aid and taxation, to the agricultural communities. Encouragement and assistance must be extended to the large mass of our urban floating populations, now economically insecure, to return to the land, where many of the necessities of life may be provided through scientific farming. The present unbalanced artificial and highly abnormal life of the cities is, at best, a symptom of

immoderation, and has built up false standards of living for millions who are thereby deprived of the blessings of that normal existence which is synonymous with a country life. Moderation, without which the truly balanced life is impossible, is a vital feature of the civilization now dawning upon humanity.

7. Labour saving machinery should be in part an asset of labour

The failure of employers, generally, to grant the workers any part of the savings in the cost of operation of a business effected by the enormous increase in the use of labour saving machinery, and, its corollary, the retention of schedules of working hours which are a survival of conditions existing before the advent of the machine age.

8. Injustice to workers no longer young

Servile and selfish submission of the business world to the unchecked operation of the natural law of the survival of the fittest which is cruelly and unwittingly applied to the elimination from industry of workers who have passed a certain age, regardless of their ability or physical fitness.

9. Provision for work—its spiritual and real significance

The present faulty system of provision for work, due, in part, to the maladjustment now existing between the urban and the agricultural occupations. In this New Age, arts, sciences and all crafts are considered as worship, when undertaken in the right spirit. The basis for this is that all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. Since all men are commanded to work and engage themselves in some one occupation, the avenues of permanent occupation must be opened through suitable enactments and provisions. Bahá'u'lláh tells us: *"We have made this—your occupation—identical with the worship of God, the True [XXIII:4:109] One."*¹ This will release into the fields of production and wealth vast numbers of persons at present occupying, economically speaking, a purely parasitic status.

10. The tariff

Brief mention has been made of the tariff barriers that separate the nations. This subject is of baffling complexity unless the touchstone presented in this thesis is courageously, unflinchingly and universally applied. Granted that every tariff, other than nominal, constitutes a barrier between the nations who are, from this point of view, interdependent cells or functions of the grand organic body of the race, it is clear that such unnatural and purely provincial enactments must, inevitably, set up a pathology quite outside and contrary to the fundamental and divine proposition that humanity is essentially one family. The reprisals visited by other countries upon an inordinately high tariff made into law by a particular country, the resentments that are set up, and, more practically speaking, the boomerang like effect upon the particular country in the impairment of its foreign trade as a consequence of the inability of foreign nations to pay their commodity debts in goods because of the high premiums exacted by the tariff impositions, is an evidence of this truth. This fact is well known, and is a material contribution to the present international economic catastrophe. There is a growing realization of this which the rapid reproached of nations together, in recent years, has engendered.

The old order justified itself in its tariff policy because it was founded upon the conception of nations as independent entities, supremely sufficient unto themselves. Other nations were foreign, untrustworthy, or, at best, precariously inimical to the fatherland. Racially they were of a different order, according to this view, ever hatching sinister designs against the fatherland, and in some strange way less human than ourselves. The strange and unknown is

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Scriptures*, No. 82, p. 143.

ever synonymous in the human mind with fear and distrust. But the new world order instituted by Bahá'u'lláh knows neither strangeness nor foreignness. Under its dynamic impulse, nations are being drawn together, while in the process the scales of superstition and fear fall from the eyes of the different peoples, as the snow flake melts and vanishes under the warm sun. This is because of the universal action of the Sun of Truth whose powerful rays are penetrating the densest veils.

The liquidation of the tariff question will necessarily be a gradual process; paralleling the attainment of homo genesis by the nations. The strongest bulwark of the tariff is its appeal for the preservation of the standards of living in a country fortunate enough to enable its people to utilize a larger degree of comforts and luxuries than is possessed by less favoured nations. Only as the sharing of benefits is applied, only as the consciousness of the organic oneness of the whole race is implanted, only to the degree that the entire body of mankind becomes sensitized to the needs of its weaker members, will the appeal of the argument for the sustainment of a specialized and strictly localized standard of living lose its force. But since this fundamental spiritual precept is an essential element of the new world order, that transforming power is certain, in the coming days, to eliminate every outworn element, even as the mighty surges of ocean cast upon the shore every impurity.

11. The unconscionable levies of war

The demands and exactions of national governments for military and naval expenditures, which consume the major part of all governmental income, based upon both direct and indirect taxation of the people, and are a moving cause of tariff walls between countries, enacted for the purpose of revenue production for the payment of these crushing and unhallowed obligations.

12. A universal language

The reinforcement of industry in the international relations by concentration, without further delay, upon the selection of a universal language, through which improved communication and understanding with foreign business houses and industries will result, is an important remedy to the existing confusion and misunderstandings witnessed in international business dealings.

The need of an *aqua fortis*¹

Let us now elaborate, somewhat, certain of these major headings that are of special importance in the readjustment aimed at. It must not be supposed that a deep seated disease, which has baffled the best economic specialists by its stubborn and frequently violent symptoms, a disease that is so chronic that those whom it has made ill have, indeed, confused its manifestations with those of normality, can be cured with mere bread and water or sugar pills. Nay, the patient, in this case, is so near dissolution that a strong and bitter remedy must be administered, an *aqua fortis* as it were, and the reactions may be, at first, convulsive, and akin to the agonies of resuscitation.

The reader will have already noted those of the above headings that constitute the point of adjustment, or moderation, between the crystallized theories of extreme capitalism and its polar opposite, socialism. This balance, in the midst of unbalance, is one of the greatest contributions in economic thought to be unfolded by Bahá'u'lláh. Fundamentally stated by Bahá'u'lláh, its teaching was extended and applied practically by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Many, perhaps most, of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's most profound discourses on the economic phase of life, were declared on American and Canadian platforms, and in western pulpits.

¹ Figurative, nitric acid.

Capitalism and socialism

The sternest and most unrelenting objection to the adoption of the maxims of socialism has been and is its supposed assault upon the right to hold private property, and its feared interference with the vested right of individual initiative. In western countries this threat to an ancient inheritance of individual rights has produced a determined resistance that has successfully curbed any noteworthy political advance of the socialist state. No socialist political party, even in the brief days of power it may have attained in a few instances, has applied to the government of the state the full impact of socialism. This is because of this inherent, somewhat unaccountable urge within the [XXIII:4:111] human breast, which instinctively opposes any undue limitation of its alleged right to self-expression and self-advancement. Russia alone has succeeded, through the terrorism of revolution and regicide, in implanting a new theory of government, pseudo-socialistic in its nature, but only by the institution of a new ruling class deriving its power from a minority of the population. But the differentiation of class is not, per se, a basic doctrine of true rather, an average levelling of all society, and the ultimate elimination of economic class distinctions.

The prime defect of capitalism

The Bahá'í Economic Plan supplies the remedy for two major defects in the capitalistic and socialistic conceptions. As stated above, it is the moderating force that ever seeks the equilibrium of the two extremities or opposing polarities. The defect of capitalism has been its unwillingness to apply the doctrine of human unity in its relationship with the working class; its failure to recognize its interdependence, which calls for sharing and co-operation, with the other integral elements of the business organism. Regardless of the increase of profits in favourable times, notwithstanding the lowering of the cost of operation and production through the wholesale discharge of workers occasioned by new labour-saving machinery, the capitalistic idea has, in the main, been to absorb for itself, its owners and stockholders, every dollar of net profit. The true theory, however, is that the benefits derived from new inventions be distributed, in a reasonable and just way, to those directly affected, in this case both employer and employee. Every invention adapted to industry is, in reality, clothed with a public interest in which the worker has a share. Both justice and equity require that the employer, alone, be not permitted to absorb 100% of the benefits. Independent of the profit sharing plan, elsewhere treated, this blow to labour may be at least in part redressed by new and diminished schedules of working hours, thus making unnecessary the discharge of workers, while at the same time preserving wage schedules so far as possible. Such action would have an intensely stabilizing effect. Very recently, one of the largest industrial corporations in America has announced its intention to place its workers on a six hour basis, while simultaneously increasing its working forces to correspond with the new conditions.

The fundamental defect of socialism

The inherent defect in the socialistic philosophy, on the other hand, is its philosophical inability to recognize the innate and created differences in human capacity and attainment. Any departure from the conception of humanity as an organism, merely confuses the issue. The organic relationships are synonymous with the differences in capacities; and each proves the existence of the other. This being true, no dead level can be successfully brought about in human society. The function of the heart can never be imposed upon the function of the liver, or the finger nails. To attempt this is only to repeat the dubious experiment of Lycurgus, King of Sparta, who divided all the property of the king- [XXIII:4:112] dom equally, and assigned to each man his place. After Lycurgus left the kingdom, believing it to be permanently established in accordance with his plan, these innate differences of capacity among his former subjects speedily reasserted themselves, and the old order was re-established.

Reciprocal and organic co-operation essential to human happiness

The problem, therefore, is to build, in accordance with the new order of this century, the true reciprocal co-operation between all the human cells of this vast organism, in closest mutual service. This is the true law of being; this is the condition basically essential to the happiness and welfare of humanity. Under such a condition, there will be no extreme poverty, no man without the necessities of life. Nor will it be possible for a wealthy man, possessed of means far beyond his needs, to live in happiness side by side with one who is starving and wretched. The trust principle as applied to the economic world is inclusive of the rights of all; it is not only protective of the rights of private property and initiative, but at the same time destroys pauperism and insures the necessities of life, as a right rather than a dole, to every willing worker and to every unfortunate one who without fault on his part is the victim of economic disaster. This truly divine law is the point of reconciliation between the contending forces of capitalism and socialism. It destroys fear and will draw men together in the solution of their common problems. It is the solvent of the chemistry that has arrayed its elements against each other in fear and distrust, leaving itself wide open to the influx of the destructive forces.

The ingredients of the Divine Remedy

Let us turn at this point to the utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and see of what the remedy of the Divine Physician is composed. We are painfully aware of the disease, and the only question is whether we have suffered enough to awaken us to acceptance of a real remedy, rather than to continue to imbibe mere nostrums and sedatives.

We have hitherto refrained from excessive quotation from these Words of Life and Guidance, realizing that this matter must be capable of expression in its practical applications, by a simple layman who may be assumed to represent, to some degree at least, the viewpoint of students of this world wide problem. But any inspiration we have received is due to the power and justice of these Words about to be quoted:

Bahá’u’lláh says:

“O ye rich ones on earth!

“The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.”¹

“O children of dust!

“Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.”²

“O son of man!

“Bestow My wealth upon My poor, that in [XXIII:4:113] heaven thou mayest draw from stores of unfading splendour and treasures of imperishable glory. But by My life! To offer up thy soul is a more glorious thing couldst thou but see with Mine eye.”³

“O son of spirit!

“Vaunt not thyself over the poor, for I lead him on his way and behold thee in thy evil plight and confound thee for evermore.”⁴

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 54.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 49.

³ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 57.

⁴ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 25.

“O son of man!

“Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?”¹

“O son of being!

“If poverty overtake thee, be not sad; for in time the Lord of wealth shall visit thee. Fear not abasement, for glory shall one day rest on thee.”²

“O son of man!

“Should prosperity befall thee, rejoice not, and should abasement come upon thee, grieve not, for both shall pass away and be no more.”³

“O quintessence of passion!

“Put away all covetousness and seek contentment; for the covetous hath ever been deprived, and the contented hath ever been loved and praised.”⁴

“O my servants!

“Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.”⁵

“O my servant!

“The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.”⁶

“O oppressors on earth!

“Withdraw your hands from tyranny, for I have pledged Myself not to forgive any man’s injustice. This is My covenant which I have irrevocably decreed in the preserved tablet and sealed with My seal.”⁷

“O children of negligence!

“Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the colour are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire!”⁸

“It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation, such as crafts, trades and the like. We have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship unto God, the True One. Ponder ye in your hearts the grace and the blessings of God and render thanks unto Him at eventide and at dawn.”⁹

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 56.

² Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 53.

³ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 52.

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 50.

⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 80.

⁶ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 82.

⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 64.

⁸ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 75.

⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 26.

“O children of men!

“Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment [XXIII:4:114] may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.”¹

“... through the ideal power he should be free and emancipated from the captivity of the world of nature; for as long as man is captive to nature he is a ferocious animal, as the struggle for existence is one of the exigencies of the world of nature. This matter of the struggle for existence is the fountain-head of all calamities and is the supreme affliction.”²

“Religion is the outer expression of the divine reality. Therefore, it must be living, vitalized, moving and progressive. If it be without motion and non-progressive, it is without the divine life; it is dead. The divine institutes are continuously active and evolutionary; therefore, the revelation of them must be progressive and continuous. All things are subject to reformation. This is a century of life and renewal. Sciences and arts, industry and invention have been reformed. Law and ethics have been reconstituted, reorganized. The world of thought has been regenerated. Sciences of former ages and philosophies of the past are useless today. Present exigencies demand new methods of solution; world problems are without precedent. Old ideas and modes of thought are fast becoming obsolete. Ancient laws and archaic ethical systems will not meet the requirements of modern conditions, for this is clearly the century of a new life, the century of the revelation of reality and, therefore, the greatest of all centuries.”³

“The essence of the matter is that divine justice will become manifest in human conditions and affairs, and all mankind will find comfort and enjoyment in life. It is not meant that all will be equal, for inequality in degree and capacity is a property of nature. Necessarily there will be rich people and also those who will be in want of their livelihood, but in the aggregate community there will be equalization and readjustment of values and interests. In the future there will be no very rich nor extremely poor. There will be an equilibrium of interests, and a condition will be established which will make both rich and poor comfortable and content. This will be an eternal and blessed outcome of the glorious twentieth century which will be realized universally. The significance of it is that the glad tidings of great joy revealed in the promises of the Holy Books will be fulfilled. Await ye this consummation.”⁴

“If wealth were a necessity, Christ would have wished it for himself: He lived a simple life, and one of the titles of Bahá'u'lláh was ‘the poor one’. In Persian His title was ‘darvish’ and that means one who has not a slave.

“All the prophets of God were poor, His Holiness Moses was a mere shepherd. This will show you that in the estimation of God, poverty is greater than the accumulation of wealth—that the poor are more acceptable than the lazy rich. A rich man who spends his wealth for the poor is praiseworthy.”⁵ [XXIII:4:115]

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 68.

² ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets to the Hague*. No. 1, p. 7.

³ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 140.

⁴ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 132.

⁵ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, III:18, p. 8.

“What could be better before God than thinking of the poor? For the poor are beloved by our heavenly Father. When His Holiness Christ came upon the earth those who believed in him and followed him were the poor and lowly, showing the poor were near to God. When a rich man believes and follows the Manifestation of God it is a proof that his wealth is not an obstacle and does not prevent him from attaining the pathway of salvation. After he has been tested and tried it will be seen whether his possessions are a hindrance in his religious life. But the poor are especially beloved of God. Their lives are full of difficulties, their trials continual, their hopes are in God alone. Therefore you must assist the poor as much as possible, even by sacrifice of yourself. No deed of man is greater before God than helping the poor. Spiritual conditions are not dependent upon the possession of worldly treasures or the absence of them. When physically destitute, spiritual thoughts are more likely. Poverty is stimulus toward God. Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase of poverty. The greatest means for prevention is that whereby the laws of the community will be so framed and enacted that it will not be possible for a few to be millionaires and many destitute.”¹

“Then it is clear that the honour and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches. Material comforts are only a branch, but the root of the exaltation of man is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornments of his reality. These are the divine appearances, the heavenly bounties, the sublime emotions, the love and knowledge of God; universal wisdom, intellectual perception, scientific discoveries, justice, equity, truthfulness, benevolence, natural courage and innate fortitude; the respect for rights and the keeping of agreements and covenants; rectitude in all circumstances; serving the truth under all conditions; the sacrifice of one’s life for the good of all people; kindness and esteem for all nations; obedience to the teachings of God; service in the Divine Kingdom; the guidance of the people, and the education of the nations and races. This is the prosperity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the world! This is eternal life and heavenly honour!

These virtues do not appear from the reality of man except through the power of God and the divine teachings, for they need supernatural power for their manifestation. It may be that in the world of nature a trace of these perfections may appear, but they are unstable and ephemeral; they are like the rays of the sun upon the wall.

As the compassionate God has placed such a wonderful crown upon the head of man, man should strive that its brilliant jewels may become visible in the world.”²

“The disease which afflicts the body politic is lack of love and absence of altruism. In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that, unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love and accord may develop within them, there can be no healing, no agreement [XXIII:4:116] among mankind. Love and unity are the needs of the body politic today. Without these there can be no progress or prosperity attained. Therefore, the friends of God must adhere to the power which will create this love and unity in the hearts of the sons of men. ... This is an exigency of the times, and the divine remedy has been provided. The spiritual teachings of the religion of God can alone create this love, unity and accord in human hearts.

“Therefore, hold to these heavenly agencies which God has provided so that through the love of God this soul-bond may be established, this heart-attachment realized and the light of the reality of unity be reflected from you throughout the universe.”³

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 36.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 79–80; 2nd edn pp. 89–90.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 171.

“The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá’í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized.”¹

“Among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form, the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs, and human equality will be universally established. The poor will receive a great bestowal, and the rich attain eternal happiness. For although at the present time the rich enjoy the greatest luxury and comfort, they are nevertheless deprived of eternal happiness; for eternal happiness is contingent upon giving, and the poor are everywhere in the state of abject need. Through the manifestation of God’s great equity the poor of the world will be rewarded and assisted fully, and there will be a readjustment in the economic conditions of mankind so that in the future there will not be the abnormally rich nor the abject poor. The rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic condition as well as the poor, for owing to certain provisions and restrictions they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress of want and misery. The rich will enjoy his palace, and the poor will have his comfortable cottage.”²

“The mystery of this phenomenon, the cause thereof is this, that mankind has been created from one single origin, has branched off from one family. Thus in reality all mankind represents one family. God has not created any difference. He has created all as one that thus this family might live in perfect happiness and well-being.

“Regarding reciprocity and co-operation: each member of the body politic should live in the utmost comfort and welfare because each individual member of humanity is a member of the body politic and if one member of the members be in distress or be afflicted with some disease all the other members must necessarily suffer. For example, a member of the human organism is the eye.”³

The sympathetic nervous system of the body of mankind

“If the eye should be affected that affliction would affect the whole nervous system. Hence, if a member of the body politic becomes afflicted, in reality, from the standpoint of sympathetic connection, all will share that affliction since this (one afflicted) is a member of the group of members, a part of the whole. Is it possible for one member or part to be in distress and the other members to be at ease? It is impossible! Hence God has desired that in the body politic of humanity each one shall enjoy perfect welfare and comfort.”⁴

A disordered household

“Although the body politic is one family yet because of lack of harmonious relations some members are comfortable and some in direst misery, some members are satisfied and some are hungry, some members are clothed in most costly garments and some families are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family lacks the necessary reciprocity and symmetry. This household is not well arranged. This household is not living under a perfect law. All the laws which are legislated do not ensure happiness. They do not provide comfort. Therefore a law must be given to this family by means of which all the members of this family will enjoy equal well-being and happiness.

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 132.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 38.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 38.

“Is it possible for one member of a family to be subjected to the utmost misery and to abject poverty and for the rest of the family to be comfortable? It is impossible unless those members of the family be senseless, atrophied, inhospitable, unkind. Then they would say, ‘Though these members do belong to our family—let them alone. Let us look after ourselves. Let them die. So long as I am comfortable, I am honoured, I am happy—this my brother—let him die. If he be in misery let him remain in misery, so long as I am comfortable. If he is hungry let him remain so; I am satisfied. If he is without clothes, so long as I am clothed, let him remain as he is. If he is shelterless, homeless, so long as I have a home, let him remain in the wilderness.’

“Such utter indifference in the human family is due to lack of control, to lack of a working law, to lack of kindness in its midst. If kindness had been shown to the members of this family surely all the members thereof would have enjoyed comfort and happiness.”¹

“God is not partial and is no respecter of persons. He has made provision for all. The harvest comes forth for everyone. The rain showers upon everybody and the heat of the sun is destined to warm everyone. The verdure of the earth is for everyone. Therefore there should be for all humanity the utmost happiness, the utmost comfort, the utmost well-being.

“But if conditions are such that some are happy and comfortable and some in misery; some are accumulating exorbitant wealth and others are in dire want—under such a system it is impossible for man to be happy and impossible for him to win the good pleasure of God. God is kind to all. The good pleasure of God consists in the welfare of all the individual members of mankind.”²

The infinite design of universal brotherhood

“The purport is this that we are all inhabiting one globe of earth. In reality we are one family and each one of us is a member of this family. We must all be in the greatest happiness and [XXIII:4:118] comfort, under a just rule and regulation which is according to the good pleasure of God, thus causing us to be happy, for this life is fleeting.”³

The selfish man is lower than the animal

“The man who thinks only of himself and is thoughtless of others is undoubtedly inferior to the animal because the animal is not possessed of the reasoning faculty. The animal is excused; but in man there is reason, the faculty of justice, the faculty of mercifulness. Possessing all these faculties he must not leave them unused. He who is so hard-hearted as to think only of his own comfort, such a one will not be called man.

...

“We ask God to endow human souls with justice so that they may be fair, and may strive to provide for the comfort of all, that each member of humanity may pass his life in the utmost comfort and welfare. Then this material world will become the very paradise of the Kingdom, this elemental earth will be in a heavenly state and all the servants of God will live in the utmost joy, happiness and gladness. We must all strive and concentrate all our thoughts in order that such happiness may accrue to the world of humanity.”⁴

“The solution begins with the village, and when the village is reconstructed, then the cities will be also. The idea is this, that in each village will be erected a store-house. In the language of Religion it is called the House of Finance. That is a universal store-house,

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 39.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 41.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 41.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 42.

which is commenced in the village. Its administration is through a committee of the wise ones of the community, and with the approval of that committee all the affairs are directed.”¹

The storehouse and the trust fund—its receipts and expenditures

“**First**, whatever contributions are necessary, they obtain from the bank at interest. For instance, they borrow from the bank at three per cent and loan to the public at four per cent. Any farmer who is in need of implements, they supply and give him all his necessities. When the crop is harvested, it will be the first income (of the store-house). The first revenue is this. But this revenue is not equally distributed. For instance, a person may have a crop of one thousand kilos and this is only sufficient for his wants and living. From him nothing will be taken because he needs it all. If something is taken from him, he will remain hungry. But again, there may be one whose needs require one thousand kilos and his income is two thousand kilos. From him one-tenth is taken. Again, one needs two thousand kilos, but his income is ten thousand kilos. From him two-tenths will be taken. He needs two thousand kilos. If two thousand are taken from him he still has six thousand remaining. One has fifty thousand kilos, from him one-third is taken. One may have ten thousand kilos expenses, but has one hundred thousand kilos income. One-half is taken. The greater the income, the greater is the ratio (of taxation).

“**Second**: It is also the same with the cattle. They take proportionately the revenue from the cattle. For example, if a man has two cows necessary for his wants, nothing is taken from him. The more he has, the more is taken from him. [XXIII:4:119] This is the second revenue.

“The **third revenue** of the store-house comes from one who dies without heirs.

“The **fourth revenue** comes from mines. If a mine is found upon the land of a person, one-third of it belongs to him and the remainder to the store-house.

“The **fifth revenue** is hidden treasure. If a person finds a hidden treasure (in the earth) he takes half of it, and the other half goes to the store-house.

“The **sixth revenue**. If it (treasure) is found on the way, also half of it belongs to the store-house.

“The **seventh revenue** is voluntary contributions. Of their own free will and with the utmost willingness, the people will give.

“These are the seven revenues, but there are seven fixed expenditures.

“The **first expenditure**: The store-house ought to give one-tenth to the Government, to the public treasury for the public expenses.

“The **second expenditure** is for the poor. The poor who are in need, those who are exempt, not those who are idle. For instance, if a person’s crop is burned or he has a loss in his business, and for this reason has become poor; these poor people are to be taken care of.

“**Third**: The infirm, who come to want and cannot work.

“**Fourth**: The orphans. To them also help must be given.

“**Fifth**: The schools. The schools must be organized for the education of the children.

“**Sixth**: For the deaf and blind.

“**Seventh**: Public health. Whatever is necessary for the public health must be arranged.

¹ George Orr Latimer, *The Light of the World*, p. 47. [Emphasis added.]

Swamps should be filled up, water should be brought in; whatever is necessary for the public health.

“If there is something left over (after these expenditures) it should be given to the Great House of Justice. And thus there will be no want in the village. The people will not remain hungry, they will not remain naked. All will be in the utmost welfare and comfort.”¹

“The right of every human being to the daily bread whereby they exist, or the equalization of the means of livelihood.

“The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, that everyone, as far as possible, according to his rank and position, shall share in comfort and well-being.”²

“A financier with colossal wealth should not exist whilst near him is a poor man in dire necessity. When we see poverty allowed to reach a condition of starvation it is a sure sign that somewhere we shall find tyranny. Men must bestir themselves in this matter, and no longer delay in altering conditions which bring the misery of grinding poverty to a very large number of the people. The rich must give of their abundance, they must soften their hearts and cultivate a compassionate intelligence, taking thought for those sad ones who are suffering from lack of the very necessities of life.”³

“Bahá'u'lláh has revealed principles and laws [XXIII:4:120] which will accomplish the adjustment of varying human capacities. He has said that whatsoever is possible of accomplishment in human government will be effected through these principles. When the laws he has instituted are carried out there will be no millionaires possible in the community and likewise no extremely poor. This will be effected and regulated by adjusting the different degrees of human capacity. The fundamental basis of the community is agriculture, tillage of the soil. All must be producers.”⁴

The principle of tax exemption

“But here is the real solution. The rich should be merciful to the poor, but with their free-will, not with force. Should it be with force it would be useless. It should be according to law and not by violence, so that through a general law every one might know his duty. For example, a rich person has a large income and a poor person a small income. To put it in a more explicit way: a rich person in this case must be exempt from taxes. If the poor person gives one-tenth of his income and the rich person one-tenth of his income, it will be unjust. Thus in this way a law should be made that the poor person who has only ten kilos and needs them all for his necessary food, be exempt from paying taxes. But if the rich person, who has ten thousand kilos, pays one-tenth or two-tenths taxes on his products, it will not be a hardship to him. For example, if he gives two thousand kilos, he will still have eight thousand kilos. If a person has fifty thousand kilos, even though he gives ten thousand kilos he will still have forty thousand kilos. Therefore, laws must be made in this way. These laws must do away with the present system of wages and earnings. If today the owners of factories increase the wages of their employees, after a month or a year, they will again cry and strike and ask for more increase. This work has no end.”⁵

The farm community

“For example, the farmers plant near a village. They get products from their cultivation.

¹ George Orr Latimer, *The Light of the World*, pp. 47–49. [Emphasis added.]

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 151.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 151.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 37.

⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Scriptures*, No. 667, p. 342.

They take one-tenth from the rich and the poor according to their income. A general store may be built in that village for all the incomes and products to be brought therein. Then it will be considered who is rich and who is poor. The farmers whose incomes are sufficient only for their food and expenses must be free from paying taxes. All products and incomes gathered and collected must be put in the general store. If there is a helpless one in that village his daily needs must be given to him. On the other hand a rich person who needs only fifty kilos of products and still have five hundred thousand kilos, after all his expenses are paid, should be taxed two-tenths and at the end of the year whatever remains in the store should be distributed for the general expenses.”¹

Protection for every class

“The seventh teaching [universal education] suggests a plan whereby all the individual members may enjoy the utmost comfort and welfare. The degrees of [XXIII:4:121] society must be preserved. The farmer will continue to till the soil, the artist pursue his art, the banker to finance the nation. An army has need of its general, captain, and private soldiers. The degrees varying with the pursuits are essential. But in this Bahá’í plan there is no class hatred. Each is to be protected and each individual member of the body politic is to live in the greatest comfort and happiness. Work is to be provided for all and there will be no needy ones seen in the streets.”²

“He [Bahá’u’lláh] has set forth the solution and provided the remedy for the economic question. No religious Books of the past Prophets speak of this important human problem.”³

“... Bahá’u’lláh set forth principles of guidance and teaching for economic readjustment. Regulations were revealed by Him which ensure the welfare of the commonwealth. As the rich man enjoys his life surrounded by ease and luxuries, so the poor man must, likewise, have a home and be provided with sustenance and comforts commensurate with his needs. This readjustment of the social economy is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it ensures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible.”⁴

Voluntary service by the wealthy—the true equality

“But in the divine teachings equality is brought about through a ready willingness to share. It is commanded as regards wealth that the rich among the people, and the aristocrats should, by their own free will and for the sake of their own happiness, concern themselves with and care for the poor. This equality is the result of the lofty characteristics and noble attributes of mankind.”⁵

“One of the most important principles of the Teaching of Bahá’u’lláh is:

“The right of every human being to the daily bread whereby they exist, or the equalization of the means of livelihood.

“The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, that everyone, as far as possible, according to his rank and position, shall share in comfort and well-being.

“We see amongst us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones who starve with nothing; those who possess several stately

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Scriptures*, No. 668, p. 342.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Scriptures*, No. 572, p. 278.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 455.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 181.

⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 44.

palaces, and those who have not where to lay their head. Some we find with numerous courses of costly and dainty food; whilst others can scarce find sufficient crusts to keep them alive. Whilst some are clothed in velvets, furs and fine linen, others have insufficient, poor and thin garments with which to protect them from the cold.

“This condition of affairs is wrong, and must be remedied.”¹

Equality in capacity is impossible

“The remedy, however, cannot consist in the bringing to pass of equality, absolute equality among men; this would be impossible. There is needed some organization which will bring about an order in this disorder. Equality is a mere dream and absolutely impracticable. If Equality existed the whole order of the world would be destroyed. In mankind there is always a difference in degree. Since creation men have never been the same. Some have superior intelligence, others are more ordinary and some are devoid of intellect. How can there ever exist equality between those who are clever and those who are not? Humanity is like an army. An army must have a general, captains and soldiers, each with their appointed duties; it cannot consist of generals only, or captains, or soldiers only—there must be degrees in the organization.”² [XXIII:4:122]

The tyranny of starvation

“Some are too rich, some are too poor, some have millions and some have nothing. An organization is necessary to control this state of affairs. It is necessary to limit riches or it is necessary to limit poverty. Either extreme is wrong. There should be a medium state. If it is right for a capitalist to possess a great fortune, then it is also just that a workman should have means of existence. If poverty is allowed to reach a condition of starvation, it proves that there is a tyranny. Men must see that this does not happen in any case. There must be special laws. The rich must give of their plenty. If they have more than they need they must think of those who are in want.

“The government of a country should make laws which conform to the Divine Law. The Law of God exacts that there should be neither excessive wealth nor excessive poverty.”³

Excessive wealth and excessive poverty alike are forbidden

“There is need of an equalization so that all may have an apportionment in the comforts of life. For example, the wealthy man, whose table is adorned with all kinds of delicacies, must allow the poor to have at least his necessities. It is not right that one should have all the delicacies and all foods on his table when another is in want of the necessities of life. The rich must be merciful to the poor and out of their own willing hearts should they uplift them, they should not be forced. There must be a readjustment and legislation which shall equalize conditions until humankind may have composure and rest with utmost ease.”⁴

“O people of wealth and riches! If you see a poor man suffering from any calamity, do not run away from him, but sit with him and ask him about the things heaped upon him from the seas of determination and predestination.”⁵

Legislation essential

“The Bahá’í Cause covers all economic and social questions under the heading and ruling of its laws. The essence of the Bahá’í spirit is that, in order to establish a better social order

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 151.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, III:2, p. 5.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, II:2, p. 6.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, III:6, p. 3. An alternative text is in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 107.

⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Tablet to Guide the Guides.

and economic condition, there must be allegiance to the laws and principles of government. Under the laws which are to govern the world, the socialists may justly demand human rights but without resort to force and violence. The governments will enact these laws, establishing just legislation and economics in order that all humanity may enjoy a full measure of welfare and privilege; but this will always be according to legal protection and procedure. Without legislative administration, rights and demands fail, and the welfare of the commonwealth cannot be realized. Today the method of demand is the strike and resort to force, which is manifestly wrong and destructive of human foundations. Rightful privilege and demand must be set forth in laws and regulations.”¹

The cementing of the hearts through love

“While thousands are considering these questions, we have [XXIII:4:123] more essential purposes. The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá’í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized. The Bahá’ís will bring about this improvement and betterment but not through sedition and appeal to physical force—not through warfare, but welfare. Hearts must be so cemented together, love must become so dominant that the rich shall most willingly extend assistance to the poor and take steps to establish these economic adjustments permanently. If it is accomplished in this way, it will be most praiseworthy because then it will be for the sake of God and in the pathway of His service. For example, it will be as if the rich inhabitants of a city should say, ‘It is neither just nor lawful that we should possess great wealth while there is abject poverty in this community,’ and then willingly give their wealth to the poor, retaining only as much as will enable them to live comfortably.”²

“... man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples. They are, in truth, cup-bearers of the life-giving water of knowledge and guides unto the ideal way. They direct the peoples of the world to the straight path and acquaint them with that which is conducive to human upliftment and exaltation.”³

Wages and a share of the profits to employees

“For instance, the manufacturers and the industrialists heap up a treasure each day, and the poor artisans do not gain their daily sustenance: that is the height of iniquity, and no just man can accept it. Therefore, laws and regulations should be established which would permit the workmen to receive from the factory owner their wages and a share in the fourth or the fifth part of the profits, according to the capacity of the factory; or in some other way the body of workmen and the manufacturers should share equitably the profits and advantages. Indeed, the capital and management come from the owner of the factory, and the work and labour, from the body of the workmen. Either the workmen should receive wages which assure them an adequate support and, when they cease work, becoming feeble or helpless, they should have sufficient benefits from the income of the industry; or the wages should be high enough to satisfy the workmen with the amount they receive so that they may themselves be able to put a little aside for days of want and

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 238.

³ Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 34.

helplessness.”¹

“Good God! Is it possible that, seeing one of his fellow-creatures starving, destitute of everything, a man can rest and live comfortably in his luxurious mansion? He who meets another in the greatest misery, can he enjoy his fortune? That [XXIII:4:124] is why, in the Religion of God, it is prescribed and established that wealthy men each year give over a certain part of their fortune for the maintenance of the poor and unfortunate. That is the foundation of the Religion of God and is binding upon all.

“And as man in this way is not forced nor obliged by the government, but is by the natural tendency of his good heart voluntarily and radiantly showing benevolence toward the poor, such a deed is much praised, approved and pleasing.

“Such is the meaning of the good works in the Divine Books and Tablets.”²

An international assembly should concur on a wise and moderate law for the protection of both employers and employees

“Now I want to tell you about the law of God. According to the divine law, employees should not be paid merely by wages. Nay, rather they should be partners in every work. The question of socialization is very difficult. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united, and organize an assembly, the members of which shall be elected from the parliaments and the noble ones of the nations. These must plan with wisdom and power, so that neither the capitalists suffer enormous losses, nor the labourers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law, then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be effectively preserved; also the rights of the capitalists are to be protected. When such a general law is adopted, by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world should collectively resist it. Otherwise the work will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place.”³

How to procure sincerity and efficiency among the workers

“For instance, the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their employees and give a fairly certain percentage of their products to their workingmen in order that the employees may receive, beside their wages, some of the general income of the factory so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

“No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely. Also, every factory that has ten thousand shares will give two thousand shares of these ten thousand to its employees and will write the shares in their names, so that they may have them, and the rest will belong to the capitalists. Then at the end of the month or year whatever they may earn after the expenses and wages are paid, according to the number of shares, should be divided among both. In reality, so far great injustice has befallen the common people. Laws must be made because it is impossible for the labourers to be satisfied with the present system. They will strike every month and every year. Finally, the capitalists will lose. In ancient times a strike occurred among the Turkish soldiers. They said to the government: ‘Our wages are very small and they should be increased.’ The govern- [XXIII:4:125] ment was forced to give them their demands. Shortly afterwards they struck again. Finally all the incomes went to the pockets of the soldiers to the extent that they killed the king, saying: ‘Why didst thou not increase the income so that

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p.274; 2nd edn p. 317.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 277; 2nd edn pp. 219–320.

³ Bahá’u’lláh in Esslemont, *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, pp. 145–6.

we might have received more?"¹

The message of love, peace and unity for our social and economic life

The above quotations are but a few of those that might be adduced from the writings and discourses of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, if space permitted, directly applicable to this intimate study of human relationships. We have, however, had to rest content with these basic extracts from a source whose every utterance is a call to humanity's inmost reality; a message of love, peace, and unity for the race; a universal diagnosis and prescription. The true physician penetrates the veil of symptoms into the field of causation. Likewise, when he finds the body overcome with a complication of diseases, he is not concerned with one disordered function only, but seeks the remote cause that has also affected or infected the other organs. The dawn of its maturity has come upon the race. The playthings and crass ignorance of childhood days have been set aside. The newly understood unity of science and religion calls for the adaptation of scientific principles to our economic life. These principles, being essentially divine, cannot conflict with the fundamental religious foundation which is the love of God and of mankind, (which Christ defined as both "the law and the prophets" and the knowledge of God, the eternal search for which is the revealer of science and heavenly mysteries. It is the lack of this love, and ignorance of this knowledge that the Wise Physician has declared to be the primary cause of man's present turmoil and ravaging illness.

A new economic axiom

The introduction of the trust principle, i.e. that the poor are a divine trust, possessing certain rights as contrasted with mere charity, establishes a new economic axiom: That every human being, who is willing to work, is entitled, as of right, to the necessities of life. Since the Creator has made sufficient provision for all, and has deposited in the earth the elements essential to the production of food and shelter, it is no longer allowable that any man should starve or be without the means of existence. Man, generically speaking, is a beneficiary of the bountiful trust confided to nature by the Lord of men. More than this, he is, in the sight of God, a beneficiary of the soul impulses of his fellow men. If a beneficiary, he is entitled to a share in the proceeds of this trust endowment. In his turn, he must contribute to the general enrichment through his labour, art or calling, and be not found wanting in this.

War expenditures doomed by the new world order

The governments and communities must make work available when ordinary means fail. Relieved of the enormous burden of war expenditures, which will surely come to pass, the internal adjustments of a people will be subjected to a far deeper scrutiny than has yet been possible, and the surplus wealth of governments and general co-operative contributions [XXIII:4:126] alike devoted to the constructive up building of the New Order.

A new emphasis upon the evolvment of individual destinies

Poor houses, and pauperism, would be erased from the picture. The millions of underfed and under developed, now deprived of normal development both of body and soul, will find transformation through attaining to their destined place in the organic life. The innate qualities of growing children will be lovingly and carefully studied by a new type of teacher, so that the God given talents may be early ascertained, and the divers capacities encouraged and led to their special goal of service. New knowledge and new scientific means of determining the innate capacity of a soul will be uncovered. Poor bankers will no longer be made out of good mechanics; and boys and girls who love the soil and the sweet tang of country air will not, for lack of this knowledge, find themselves in a clerical position. The inner realities of human beings will tend to a greater revealment for the abundance they attract.

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, pp. 43-44.

The right to the necessities of life

The second important change in our social structure is the principle of mutual assistance. This has already been referred to as the right to necessities. A farmer whose crop is ruined by forces beyond his control, a widow with young children, a cripple unable to work, a worker ill and without means, an orphan lacking kind relatives, an unemployed though willing and self-respecting worker or artisan, all these and a hundred other types of misfortune that are daily encountered, are protected under this plan from the loss of self-respect, or from sinking into criminality, or from the humiliation of poor relief and the cognomen¹ of pauper. These possess a right to share in the abundance of their common mother, earth. God does not withhold from such His rain and sunshine. The children of men must not withhold from their neighbours and brothers of the race, these rights which the Mercy of God bestows, nor classify them as outcasts. Under this system, a man can, with head up and eyes unashamed, reveal to his village House of Justice his needs, his woes, his hopes, and be conscious that, in so doing, he is but receiving what is due him as a child of God. His need is usually but temporary and let it not be supposed that the vast majority of mankind fall short in self-respect. He offers to work, and work is given, but his crushing temporary burden of debt and anxiety has been lifted, and he breathes a prayer of thanksgiving for this evidence of Divine Providence among his fellow men. A year hence he may be contributing to the funds of the common storehouse. The new consciousness that will be built through experiences like these, will enrich humanity for the bars of individual and isolated selfishness have been rent asunder; the sharp claws of nature have been clipped.

A new principle of taxation

Two sweeping changes appear. One is limitation upon the taxing power; and, by the same token, an expansion of that power. In the first case, the power of the community or government to tax would come into being only when the income of [XXIII:4:127] the citizen exceeds his actual necessary expenses. Up to that point, he is exempt, since to tax him would be an act of tyranny, in that it would automatically deprive him of at least a portion of his necessities, thus defeating the essential purpose. This is a new principle in taxation.

The expansion of the tax power, however, as it would apply to the incomes in the higher levels, is not a new principle, at least in certain western countries. The graduated income tax has become almost a tradition. The tithe, moreover, has a most ancient inheritance, even to the days of Melchizedek, King of Salem, to whom the patriarch and prophet Abraham rendered the tithe. Originally the rights of God—the tithe, through this new and merciful command, becomes the means of succour to the unfortunate, as well as the salvation of the state.

When we speak of the tithe or income tax under the Bahá'í plan the meaning is an inclusive one. In most countries today where the income tax is in effect, enormous holdings of tax exempt securities are in the hands of the people and no revenue is derived from the holders in respect to the actual income from these intangibles. This is inconsistent with the just application of the spiritual and universal principle involved in the income tax as set forth in the Bahá'í writings. Not only tax exempt securities but a vast quantity of other intangible personal property, upon which taxes should rightly be paid at present, escape these levies. In one great commonwealth or state of America, the Tax Commissioner estimated that while the State was receiving taxes on approximately three billion dollars worth of real estate, there was at least nine billion more of intangibles escaping or exempted from taxation. This was before the income tax was enacted. What proportion of the taxable property of this particular state still escapes taxation under the income tax statute is not accurately known, but there can

¹ Any name, especially a nick name; loosely an appellation.

be no question that it is very large. It follows that a system of income taxation imposed under the high spiritual standards which have been stated as flowing from the Bahá'í plan, would greatly benefit the community, would equalize and perhaps minimize the rate or percentage of taxation now necessary under the partial application of the law, and would, above all, spread the tax into those areas hitherto untouched, whose responsibilities have had to be assumed by the middle classes of wage earners, professionals and businessmen. The fact that since the inauguration of income taxes, the volume of tax exempt securities has grown to an enormous extent, lends added emphasis to the need of the introduction of an impartial and universal system under which all income producing property be disclosed and assessed. Applying such a principle, the right of states or nations to issue tax exempt intangibles must be subjected to the closest scrutiny. The principles of interdependence and co-operation cannot admit of any indirect evasion which results in laying upon any class or level of income a burden greater than justice permits.

In this plan, however, emphasis is laid upon the preservation of the right of individual initiative, capacity, and private ownership. Whatever expansion the taxing power achieves, it will always fall short, substantially short of confiscation. An abundant residue is retained by the wealthy man who has generously contributed to the welfare of the commonwealth, and his initiative [XXIII:4:128] is never deprived of its reward. Nevertheless, through his recognition of his innate relationship with the living organism of his community, he has furnished that co-operation and reciprocal help that the organic life requires for its health and well-being. For example, the brain demands and receives the largest volume of blood, in the entire circulation of the body. For this, it renders the most vital and commanding service. Similarly, those in the high places of the tower of humanity, must reciprocate.

Capitalists and socialists meet at the balanced point of moderation

And here, I believe, we will hear the "well done" of the socialist. Capital, so long entrenched, will, under this plan, step into its true place in the economic organism. It will have taken a long step toward the middle position, the path of moderation. Socialism, which is essentially a justified protest against the hardships of the present economic system, likewise, will advance toward that greatly to be desired equilibrium—and the two contending theories of social and industrial life find union in their common sacrifices. The principle of individual ownership and initiative, the degrees of capacity and service have been maintained, and on the other hand, the recognition of a common humanity, organic co-operation, and the rights of all men, have been subserved and instituted. Meditate upon this divinely practical and practically divine plan, ye who are at present full of fear of the future, and ye who have become almost disheartened and discouraged over the intractable abyss that has separated you from your brothers! Adopt this plan and invite the warming life giving forces of composition, health and happiness, for this is one picture of human unity and mutuality.

The dole

In the face of this system, the dole loses its appeal and fades away to nothingness. The plan, through which a nation, or state virtually chloroforms its unemployed into quiescence by opening its treasury to weekly unearned stipends, is both faulty and dangerous. It is only another symptom of social disorder. Ignoring the law of work and self-respect, the dole is an artificial political remedy with reactionary final results. Outside the law of compensation for services rendered, it cannot be regarded as a permanent or effective means of solving this all embracing problem. The principle involved differs widely from that herein set forth, which affirms the sacredness and essentiality of work, and provision for work. Although seemingly parallel to the Bahá'í plan, in providing means from the public treasury to those in need or unfortunate, the parallelism fades because the basis upon which aid is given is, in the one case, based upon charity, and in the other, upon right. Moreover, the dole deals mainly with

unemployment, while this plan covers the entire field of misfortune. The dole is the extended hand of the state to its unemployed, needy ones, but it does not confer employment. The hand of labour is nerveless, for lack of available work. No service appears, to balance the payment. More basically, the need and excuse for the dole is brought about by the existence of the very disorders in our [XXIII:4:129] general economic life, which are alone responsible for these terrific fluctuations in the demand and supply of labour, these recurring industrial depressions whose cure depends upon the administration of all the ingredients of the divine prescription, not one only. While the dole is a gesture along the line of least resistance, to quiet a threatened revolutionary impulse on the part of the hungry and destitute, it is admittedly ineffective in any permanent sense. That prosperity which in current parlance is always "just around the corner" if too long delayed, will come too late to preserve the financial integrity of a state weakened and emasculated by the employment of a purely artificial device as a substitute for employment. We readily admit that in the present state of the economic consciousness, some such method was inevitable. We are not criticizing those who invented the dole. No other avenue was at hand. We are, however, criticizing the hit or miss system which made it necessary. The new consciousness of man's real organic life, which sees the material and spiritual civilizations indissolubly joined, which rejects and denies the right of purely material interests to dominate, any longer, the destinies of mankind, will insist upon the establishment of the balance. Material and selfish interests have deprived this organic body of its soul, notwithstanding that the body without the soul is as a lamp lacking both oil and light. To join these once more together is as 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed it—"light upon light". The day of overweening material dominion is swiftly passing. Love and brotherhood will attract and establish the spiritual elements of civilization side by side with our material necessities.

The challenging statistics of depression

In the industrial depression of 1920–21, the wages of workers in the United States were cut approximately 23%, but dividends decreased but 3%, while at the same time interest paid on investments increased \$71,000,000. In this current depression, 1930–31, the aggregate wages paid in 1930 diminished to the extent of \$9,600,000,000, while during the same period, astonishing to relate, interest payments and dividends rose from the 1929 figures of \$7,500,000,000 to a total of \$8,000,000,000. This is stated on the authority of a recent article in *Collier's*, by Mr Owen P. White. These figures, if accurate, disclose the protection which employers in industry accord themselves in troublous times, and illustrate the fact that the worker, discharged or on half time, pays the real price of the depression, and is, in effect, its principal victim. It is fair to assume, as well, that the use of labour saving machinery, without regard to the just interests of labour, has played a substantial part in this inequality of distribution of the earnings of industry. No more concrete example of the doctrine of living "unto oneself" need be adduced than these amazing statistics. This is the direct application of the theory of separation, and the denial of organic reciprocity.

Unemployment reserves

Now, in paying out these huge sums to stockholders and investors during depressed periods, it must be assumed that industry at least to some [XXIII:4:130] extent, drew upon corporate reserves accumulated in more prosperous years. The author of the article referred to, cites several illuminating facts on this subject, and applies the existence of such reserve funds directly to the subject of unemployment reserve insurance. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in one of His discourses on the matter of profit sharing, says that other means of alleviating the lack of work should also be employed. In good business years, this unemployment reserve plan has built up, in several major instances in America, a solvent fund which, in the present crisis, has operated to keep the unemployed workers from these factories from the bread lines. Three per cent of the payroll was set aside in this fund by the employers, one and one-half per cent

by the employees, during the favourable years, and from this, during the existing depression, thirty per cent of full time wages was paid each entitled worker. Were this system allowed to operate during a reasonably long term of favourable years, it would undoubtedly accumulate, through investment and interest, to a point enabling an even larger percentage of normal earnings to be paid in the time of need. But as Mr White points out, this thirty per cent has preserved the self-respect of these workers, and is the best argument against the dole, or even the charitable community chest.

Another large and well known corporation, which put this system in operation in 1915, found the accumulation, in 1930, warranted a payment to its unemployed workers, with dependents, of eighty per cent of their normal wage, and sixty per cent to those without dependents. Numerous other examples are cited, in which large, fore sighted corporations have installed this beneficent plan. These reserve funds must always remain solvent, and in case of unduly protracted periods of unemployment, the depletion of the fund would terminate its benefits until it again became solvent. This constructive and humane plan is an example of what unemployment insurance can accomplish. Stabilization in industry is an attainable goal once the minds and hearts of employers are opened to the influx of the spirit of the age. Every such measure will surely attract the divine confirmation.

The love of God

In one of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh says:

“The fear of God hath ever been the prime factor in the education of His creatures. Well is it with them that have attained thereunto!”¹

“The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation.”²

“Religion is, verily, the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world, and of tranquillity amongst its peoples. The weakening of the pillars of religion hath strengthened the foolish, and emboldened them, and made them more arrogant. Verily I say: The greater the decline of religion, the more grievous the waywardness of the ungodly. This cannot but lead in the end to chaos and confusion.”³

These statements of reality penetrate to the innermost heart of our problem. In this sense, “religion” is used as identical with the divine foundations revealed by the Prophets in all ages, as contrasted [XXIII:4:131] with the religions systems later established by human agencies. “*Religions are many, but the reality of religion is one.*”⁴ [This statement] is a divine utterance furnishing the key.

Deeds show the station of the man

There is but one way a man can show his love for God, and that is the degree of his service to his fellow men. As it is written: “Deeds show the station of the man” for all are partners in mere words. It is the practical application of this truth in the field of industry and within the social structure of humanity that will rout the decompositional process just now so firmly fastened upon us all. A deepening consciousness of man as the most sacred of all created organisms, and the destruction of the superstitious, imaginary, false belief that he is individually independent and inorganic, is essential. Herein, the educators of mankind must play a leading part. While true consciousness is the light of heart and soul, the education of

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 27.

² Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 27.

³ Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 28.

⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 126.

the mind is a pathway thereto. The new education will guide and illumine this path, and will be a powerful aid to this end in the very near future.

Fear, one of nature's most satanic forces, is powerless before love and faith

The eradication of fear, which holds the most of humanity in a grip more relentless than death, itself, and is, alas, only too well founded, in view of the unrestrained and selfish disregard of the rights of men by those who at present control the means of livelihood—can be accomplished only by the adoption of the balanced principle of moderation we have endeavoured to set forth. By the eradication of fear, Bahá'u'lláh says *“the very nature of man will be changed”*. Fear, an inheritance of the animal world, is, like darkness, a manifestation of the sinister, negative power of Nature. When hope and happiness arise side by side with it, it vanishes, even as darkness is found to be non-existent when the light shines. The economic gloom of today nourishes and vitalizes fear to the nth power. What is this fear that blights the countenances of millions of men with its livid and ghastly infection? It is the fear of pauperized old age; of closed doors of opportunity while the wolf crouches upon the doorstep of the workman's cottage; of the widow with little ones wending her way disconsolately to the office of the Poor Relief; of the unemployed worker turned away again and again from the door of factory and shop; of the wounded and maimed returned from the wars; of the hard toiling farmer whose crops Nature has blighted in a single night, or upon whose fields swarms of insects have descended, raised up perchance by this very disorder that flourishes in our social structure; of the cripple who looks forward only to a lifetime of dependency; of the fifty year old worker denied the right to give of his strength and experience; yes, of the business man oppressed with anxieties as his books reveal the red ink entries of deficit.

Because of this fear, because of impending bankruptcies and the fancied loss of financial standing, how many suicides are recorded as the iron wheels of industry turn day by day? Visualize, if you may, the faces of countless thousands of the children of men, by which I mean [XXIII:4:132] men and women, endowed as are all humanity with heart, soul and mind, white and drawn, in whose lineaments the cruel knife of fear and anxiety has carved deep and ineradicable furrows. The juggernaut of a feverish and unrestrained industrial machine has turned these children of an all loving Father into unrecognizable shadows of their true humanity. The claws of Nature have sunk deep into their vitals, numbing the finer forces, preventing the achievement of the divine destinies they might have attained. In truth, have we surrendered to the natural law of the survival of the fittest, the “supreme affliction”. Indifference worse than hate itself, the shame of Cain flaunting itself in the face of the Divine Command to keep and cherish his brother, selfish greed that seizes the results of toil—are these not the insignia of man's degradation, of the terrible forces of decomposition hovering ever nearer to the scene of final dissolution? These agonies and this truly satanic condition are not of God, for they are blind, unintelligent, unloving, while He is the Seer, the Knower, the Loving. His Love has poured forth in this New Time, His favour to the poor and oppressed is evident. In the sight of God, man has no justification for longer living unto himself alone. Nor can he find excuse in pleading “human nature” in this light. For this disorder is not of human origin. Rather is it of a world lower than the animal. This is because man has been endowed with a power to know the Divine, while the animal does not possess that power. Man is responsible, the animal is not responsible since it has no means of knowing God.

Humanity bows before a usurping sovereignty

Indeed, Nature herself, is “uninformed of God, the Almighty”. By surrendering, therefore, to the natural law, humanity has accepted the sovereignty of a blind and unintelligent force. Reflect, then, upon this word from Bahá'u'lláh:

“O son of spirit!

“I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I moulded thee, *how dost thou busy thyself with another?* Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.”¹

This moving appeal is directed to the slumbering spiritual consciousness of humanity, to that capacity within with which the world of nature has no part, to the human reality itself, a reality that transcends Nature and is destined to achieve sovereignty over her, even as today she has been permitted to usurp sovereignty over a being superior to her both intrinsically and innately. Ignorance of this supreme fact has humbled and retarded the race. But the hour has arrived when this tyranny is to be conquered. Happy are they who awaken to the divine gifts of nobility, spiritual wealth, knowledge, and love that have been deposited within them, and gird up their loins to enlist in the army that is gathering to carry the last and strongest redoubt in Nature’s dark citadel.

XXIII:6, September 1932 [XXIII:6:179]

White roses of Persia

Part II

Martha L. Root

This is the second instalment in the series relating the story of the martyrdom of Varqá, the Persian Bahá’í. In the first part the author gave a summary of Varqá’s family history including copies of the Tablets (letters) of Bahá’u’lláh addressed to them.

The great visit in ‘Akká came to an end and the little group started for Tabríz. On the way they went by Mazra’ih, near ‘Akká to visit the grave of ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá’s father; for years before his father, Ḥájí Mullá Mihdí, with the latter’s two sons, one of whom was ‘Alí, had started to visit Bahá’u’lláh in the great Prison in ‘Akká. They had walked the long distance from Persia, but the journey was too hard and Ḥájí Mihdí had died here in Mazra’ih so near to his heart’s destination, ‘Akká, which place he never reached. The others had gone on to see Bahá’u’lláh. So the reader will see that ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá had had the great bounty to visit Bahá’u’lláh when he himself was still a boy. It is no wonder then that he had come again and brought his little sons. They prayed at the grave of Mr Varqá’s father, and they remembered with thankfulness that Bahá’u’lláh Himself had come several times to that tomb in Mazra’ih to pray for their beloved relative.

When they were home again in Tabríz matters did not go quite smoothly. ‘Alí Muḥammad’s wife’s mother was very much against the Bahá’í Cause. She instigated one of their servants, brought up in the home from childhood, to kill her son-in-law. Secretly, however, the servant was a Bahá’í, so he went and told his master to leave the house, because if he stayed the mother-in-law would certainly get someone else to put her son-in-law to death. So ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá left home and went to stay with a Bahá’í believer. His mother-in-law went to the Mullá and asked him to give an order that her son-in-law might be killed because he was a Bahá’í. The Mullá replied, “He has not confessed to me that he is a believer, I cannot condemn him. If you can prove to me that he is a Bahá’í, I could issue a death verdict against him.”

So the grandmother took little Rúḥu’lláh with her to see this Mullá. Rúḥu’lláh used to speak to everybody and he was a celebrated little teacher. His grandmother told him she was taking him to the home of a friend of his father and that their host was a Bahá’í. So when the child went in he held out his little hand and said: “Alláh’u’Abhá!” The Mullá was astonished at such

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 13. [Emphasis added.]

a salutation, but the grandmother made a sign to him not to say anything. She asked Rúḥu'lláh to pray some of his Bahá'í prayers which his father had taught him. The child at once prayed the daily prayer and then he prayed a long one, one of the most deep and beautiful prayers ever revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. After the little boy had finished the Mullá said: "Those prayers are wonderful, no father should be put to death who has trained a child like this one!" and he refused to issue a verdict for the death of 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá, [XXIII:6:180] Rúḥu'lláh's grandmother on his father's side of the house was very different. Her husband had had a Bahá'í teacher come to speak with her (which he did without seeing her, for she sat behind a curtain to receive her lessons). When she heard about the Bahá'í Cause and that a Prophet had appeared she said, "We are not waiting for a Prophet; I have studied all the Books, and we are waiting for a Manifestation of God." The teacher had used the word "Prophet" so as not to startle her, but to try to tell her gradually that the great *World Teacher* was here, but she was an apt pupil and more ready than he thought to receive the Truth. She at once became a believer.

One day in Tabríz, a group of distinguished Bahá'ís were speaking together about who would be the successor of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá said it would be 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Another said it would be the secretary and a third held the opinion that it would be Muḥammad 'Alí, another son. 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá said, "Bahá'u'lláh has stated that if there is anything which we do not understand we should write to Him," so he sent a petition asking this question. Bahá'u'lláh at once wrote back saying that it would be 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Azízu'lláh Varqá has this Tablet.

Then 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá wrote a second letter to Bahá'u'lláh asking that not only he but that one of his sons might be a martyr in the path of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Greatest Branch. Bahá'u'lláh replied to this petition and accepted their sacrifice, which means that they could become martyrs. The family moved about from place to place because he was a Bahá'í teacher and travelled throughout Persia.

Once, when the times were very dangerous a lovely Bahá'í woman near Ṭihrán took 'Azízu'lláh and Rúḥu'lláh into her own home to try to protect them. This was when the Varqá family was living in Ṭihrán. The husband of the Bahá'í, who was not a believer, though he was a celebrated lawyer and a great statesman, objected to having the children in the house. He said: "You cannot do this, we too, shall be killed."

His wife replied: "Let me ask you something. If a man has been a butcher for forty years and in a dark night someone gives him a dog to kill instead of a lamb, do you think he would make a mistake and kill the dog instead of the lamb?" Her husband said, "No." Then she answered: "Be assured you will not be murdered instead of a Bahá'í." She kept the children for several weeks and during that time nothing happened to any of them.

'Alí Muḥammad Varqá took his two children, 'Azízu'lláh Varqá, who was thirteen years old, and Rúḥu'lláh Varqá who was eleven, and went again to 'Akká in 1895 to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá. (Bahá'u'lláh had passed on in 1892.) Valíyu'lláh Varqá the youngest child was left at home. There were many happy incidents during the days spent with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but I wish to relate one which though not quite so pleasant at the moment, reveals 'Abdu'l-Bahá's great character, the quickness of a father to obey and the wisdom of little Rúḥu'lláh.

A large group of Bahá'í children [XXIII:6:181] were playing together when one little boy uttered a naughty word; Rúḥu'lláh quickly slapped him on the mouth saying he deserved punishment. This child who had said the word was the son of a great martyr and since he had come to 'Akká he had been very favoured by the Holy Family and all the believers. The other children marched in a body with this little boy to tell Rúḥu'lláh's father and to complain about this matter. Rúḥu'lláh, when he saw them going, ran into the court and up the prison stairs,

through the open door into ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s room and sat down close beside Him. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was by the window writing Tablets. As soon as ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá heard the children’s story he started out to find his son. Going into the court, he saw Rúḥu’lláh sitting beside ‘Abdu’l-Bahá upstairs near the window. He motioned him to come down. Rúḥu’lláh was vigorously nodding “no”, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá attracted by this motion said, “Why are you nodding out the window?” Then Rúḥu’lláh related the whole story of how he had slapped the little boy on the mouth and said he knew if he went down to the court his father was going to punish him. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá called the father to come upstairs and said very sternly: “No one must say anything to Rúḥu’lláh about this matter!” Usually ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was very careful that children must obey their parents, but He repeated it a second time: “No one must say anything to Rúḥu’lláh about this matter!” From that time on ‘Alí Muḥammad was very respectful to his little son Rúḥu’lláh and he never again reproved him for anything. He was a good father and Rúḥu’lláh was a good son; he never consciously did wrong.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá during this visit gave Rúḥu’lláh the title “*muballigh*”—which means “a teacher of religion” a Bahá’í teacher. When the family returned to Persia they went to live in Zanján which is situated in the northern province of Ádharbayján. The father, ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá, wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from Zanján and Rúḥu’lláh who was continuing diligently his study of Persian writing, sent two lines of copy for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to see what progress he had made. When the answer came to the father’s letter, there was a Tablet enclosed for Rúḥu’lláh who at that time was eleven years old. The Tablet was in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own handwriting and was as follows:

“He is the Most Glorious!

“O thou who art nearer to the sucking age! The impression of the musk like writing of that sign of the Love of God (Rúḥu’lláh) was seen. Verily, in a short time thou hast improved greatly, and seeing this great progress is the cause of my joy and happiness. Certainly thou must try thy utmost that thy writing may become better day by day and in the world of writing it may become the glory and the bounty of the Supreme Pen!

“Always I must hear from thee, and thou must describe and explain about those whom thou dost teach (spiritually). Upon thee be Bahá!” Signed: ‘Ayn-’Ayn¹

When ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá read this Tablet, with great reverence and solemnity he knelt with forehead to the floor and said: “This is the son who will give his life as promised by Bahá’u’lláh, because a pen of wood could not have such an effect, the effect of the Supreme Pen would be the mighty pen of martyrdom.”

(To be continued)

XXIII:7, October 1932 [XXIII:7:202]

Bahá’íyyih Khánum—an appreciation

Ella Goodall Cooper

The author, a loyal Bahá’í for many years—one of the pioneers of the Bahá’í Cause in this country has made visits to the Holy Land, (several times accompanied by her mother, Mrs Helen S. Goodall) and is numbered among the very first American pilgrims to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. She has had advantages which enable her to draw a fine pen picture of the noble and saintly sister of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who was known as the Greatest Holy Leaf. This is a story which will be dear to the heart of every Bahá’í.

It is now thirty-three years since that never to be forgotten first pilgrimage to the Most Great Prison² was undertaken by a group of believers from the West and, while many details

¹ ‘Ayn-’Ayn is short form for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás.

² In ‘Akká.

of the visit have faded into the background, there are certain events and personalities that remain clear and vivid in my memory, and which time seems powerless to efface. Next to meeting the Beloved Master Himself¹ was the privilege of meeting His glorious sister, Bahá'íyyih *Khánúm*, known as the Greatest Holy Leaf. Her personality is indelibly imprinted upon my memory. Tall, slender and of noble bearing, her body gave the impression of perfect poise between energy and tranquillity, between wiry endurance and inward composure, imparting to the beholder a sense of security, comfort and reliance, impossible to describe.

Her beautiful face was the feminine counterpart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's the lines of suffering and privation softened by the patient sweetness of the mouth; the dominating brow, bespeaking intellect and will, lighted by the wonderful understanding eyes, in form like those of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but deep blue rather than hazel. Watching their expressive changes—as one moment they darkened with sympathy or pain, the next moment sparkled with laughter and humour only served to deepen the impression of her irresistible spiritual attraction.

The ladies of the blessed family eagerly explained to us the loftiness of her spiritual station, which we instantly felt but could not analyze. They told us that Bahá'u'lláh had written for her a precious Tablet (letter) in which He had stated that so great was her spiritual attainment that her prayers would always be accepted at the Throne of God, and that her supplications and interventions for others would never fail to be answered. Thus she was set apart as the purest and most saintly of women, and through her He glorified the position of woman in this New Day. All this was recognized by the maidservants, whether wise or simple, high or low. It was touching to witness their humble homage, scarcely less than that accorded 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself as, reverently touching her shoulder with lips and forehead, they would beg her to supplicate at the Holy Threshold in their behalf, the while their tears fell like rain.

Small wonder that such a strong [XXIII:7:203] yet gentle quality of authority made her naturally the head of the household group that circled about 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She presided over the room called Ladies Room which was the centre for all family gatherings, and where the women visitors were entertained. From the hour of the early morning tea, at which 'Abdu'l-Bahá was often present, to the last good night, whispered by some weary yet grateful traveller, *Khánúm* (as she was affectionately called) was ever in demand. During the long day, which began before six in the morning and rarely ended before eleven or twelve at night, there were frequent spontaneous gatherings in this general room, and save for the brief midday siesta, this association with the women constituted the only variation in the monotony of their prison lives. The spiritual peace and joy pervading these simple meetings was a new and unbelievable experience to us—the Western pilgrims.

The chanting of the sacred tablets by the Persian ladies, at the request of the Greatest Holy Leaf (who had thus made them happy) the murmur of low voices as news, generally tragic, was imparted, the bubbling of the friendly samovar as tea was handed around by the young serving maids, and, above all, the impalpable yet vibrant atmosphere of love and service made these meetings attract all including the children—Shoghi Effendi among them, who slipped in for a little while and knelt quietly to listen. Even the birds seemed to feel the friendly spirit for they flew freely in and out through the open door leading to the court which was open to the sky.

The Greatest Holy Leaf was also custodian of the spiritual treasures of the family—they had no material riches—such as the sacred Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and other revered relics belonging to Him and to some of the lamented martyrs. Under her care were the precious

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

attar of rose, symbolizing the “fragrance of the Love of God”, the favourite perfume of Bahá'u'lláh, the collection of gold rings, set with stones of carnelian carved with the Greatest Name, the devout handiwork of the poor Bahá'ís of Persia, who sent them to Khánum to be given to the pilgrims or new believers, at her own discretion.

Her authority, so real yet so humble, was instinctively accepted by the family of the Master, who sought her wise and loving counsel upon every occasion. In this way all co-operated to save the time and strength of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Whose life must be given to the service of all mankind, as they well realized. Even the believers of other lands, having come to know of her power through the accounts of the early pilgrims, have been wont to write her of their problems and beg her prayers at the Holy Shrines. And although she neither spoke nor wrote English, yet her influence, subtle and beneficent, has penetrated even to the far West, bringing courage and assurance to many a distressed soul.

During a later pilgrimage to 'Akká, when I accompanied my mother, we were privileged to [XXIII:7:204] view another aspect of the life of Bahá'íyyih Khánum. Having in mind the first picture of her purely spiritual activity, we found her life, like a finely cut gem, had many facets, some of which we were yet to know. It happened that there were many Eastern pilgrims to be cared for and, consequently we had little opportunity of seeing Khánum, whose time was fully occupied with household tasks.

One day we caught a glimpse of her in the kitchen seated on a low stool, her firm, capable hands busy with a large lamb that had just been brought in from the market. Quickly dividing it, she directed which part was to be made into broth, which part served for the evening meal, which part kept for the morrow, and which sent to those poor or incapacitated friends who were daily supplied from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's table. On the shelves were huge pans holding rice soaking in clean water to be ready for the delicious pilau (a famous Persian dish) and there were many other visible evidences of the hours of preparation necessary to provide for the material welfare of the visitors.

It was then we learned of her practical efficiency. The enormous amount of work attendant upon such entertaining with only the crudest and most primitive facilities, must be seen to be appreciated. We learned that she had organized the household affairs, and each one of the Master's daughters took her turn at directing them for a week—planning the meals and marketing, and seeing that all was cooked and served to the different groups twice each day. Without running water, with only charcoal for fuel, with no gas or electricity for lighting, only oil, the cleaning and filling of the lamps alone consumed a large amount of time and energy. I well remember seeing one day the array of lamps waiting to be filled and returned to their respective rooms. The tired little sigh with which one of the ladies was regarding them, told the story, and I thought how true it is that here in the East as well as in the West, “Woman's work is never done!”

Seeing this side of the character of the Greatest Holy Leaf, we recalled the answer made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to one in this country who said to Him: “Please explain to me the story of Martha and Mary.” He did not do this, but said: *“It is My hope that you will revive the lights of both those revered women.”* In Bahá'íyyih Khánum we found this exquisite balance between the practical and spiritual teachings perfectly exemplified, and once more could be thankful for the privilege of becoming witness to the possibility of actually living the life of a true believer, fully and joyously, even in a Turkish prison, under the most trying and difficult conditions that could possibly be conceived.

When the dreaded moment came to say goodbye, the sorrow of parting from the beloved ladies was lessened only by the hope of a future visit. The last face I remember was that of the Greatest Holy Leaf, calm, gentle, radiant, her deep understanding eyes shedding the light of

the Love of God upon us, that light which only glows brighter with the passing of the years.

XXIII:7, October 1932 [XXIII:7:226]

White roses of Persia

Part III

Martha L. Root

This is the third part in the serial story of the martyrdom of Varqá and his little son Rúḥu'lláh, early Persian Bahá'ís. The preceding chapters gave a summary of the family history; copies of the Tablets (letters) of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to them; a brief account of the wonderful visit of the father and his two sons to 'Akká to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá; and a copy of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Rúḥu'lláh. The story will be concluded in the November number.

Rúḥu'lláh, a boy so timid that he would never even go alone into the garden in the evening, was always remarkably courageous when it came to doing anything for the Bahá'í Cause. He thought a great deal about becoming a martyr, and in this connection wrote the following poem which he sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. One can see in reading it, how the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh train even a child into becoming a savant and a philosopher. No translation from the Persian can give the exquisite meter nor an adequate interpretation of the Persian metaphors alluding to literature and letters which the cultured people of Írán know so well. Here is his poem:

“In the Name of our Great Lord Abhá!
O Cup Bearer, fill the cup to the brim
Make this Zion of my heart full of fire with your Wine.
It is the time of receiving Bounties and the day of help.
Face O friends of Bahá
Towards the world with the banners of Guidance.
Any one rising to serve God,
The Lord of Mankind will help him,
The one who sacrifices his life in the Covenant of God,
The Face of God will turn towards him.
O Cup-Bearer, give a cup from Thy Bounties
That I may be pure from sin,
Although my sins cannot be counted,
Still I am hopeful through the Favour of God.
Welcome, O Cup Bearer of the Ancient Gathering.
Let fall a drop to this earth (body) through Thy Favour
Till through Generosity, this ray may shine
And be worthy of sacrifice.
O God, when the time will come that at Thy Door
I may give my life for the Love of Thy Face
What a happy day it will be,
That in the square of love
I may give my life
In the path of the Beloved's Love!
What a happy moment it will be, That I may say openly
The praise of King Bahá on the cross!
O God, when shall come that time
That I may be severed from this fated body,
Facing towards the eternal Rose-garden
Becoming verdant from the Bounties of seeing God?
I am burning in the desert of privation

And inflamed from the sparks of remoteness.
 Take the veil from Thy Face ('Abdu'l-Bahá)
 O King of the Worlds
 In order that from the Light of Thy Face
 The heavens may become illumined. [XXIII:7:227]
 O Prince of Covenant!
 O King of Covenant!
 From your fire the Párán of Covenant is on fire.
 O Thou, who hast named Thyself "'Abdu'l-Bahá" (The Servant of Bahá).
 Through Thy Commands the banners of Guidance are uplifted.
 Thou art the Dawning Place of the secrets of God;
 Thou art the spring of the rivers of God,
 Like the letter A thou hast stood to uplift the Cause of God
 O powerful King of Kings!
 But like the letter B, thou art humble in service near the door of the Shrine of Lord Bahá.
 O Thou who art the Greatest Branch of the Tree of the Cause,
 O Thou who art Branched from the Ancient Root,
 O Thou who art the Dawning Place of the Inspiration of God,
 Through Thee the eyes of Abhá people are enlightened.

"Give a cup from the divine wine, that I who am sleeping may become conscious;
 Rend asunder the veils of doubt and superstitions,
 Soar to the zenith of the Seventh Heaven,
 Pass from this dark cage of earth and water
 Going to the pure spiritual Kingdom;
 Become free from this world full of torture and pain,
 Facing the spiritual Native Land,
 Inhaling from the Rose-Garden of the soul
 The fragrance of the Beloved;
 Returning like a wind from the Land of the Beloved,
 Blowing fragrant and life giving breezes
 Bearing sorrow sweeping Glad-Tidings;
 Saying openly to the friends of the world
 It is the Day of the Covenant!

"Friends be on your guard,
 O lovers of the Face of the Beloved,
 Turn your souls toward the Land of the Beloved,
 O comrades, grasp the opportunity,
 Help and assist the Cause of God,
 Try, O friends, that there may be spread in the regions of the earth
 The Teachings of the Powerful God
 Until the sleeping creatures may become conscious,
 May lay aside superstitions and prejudices,
 Their eyes becoming enlightened with the Light of God;
 The thorn gardens of their hearts becoming rose-gardens,
 Try, O friends, it is time for service.

"Give a glance through Kindness to this yearning, sorrowing bird,
 Who, being far from Thee, is restless and inconsolable.
 Through being so distant from Thee, my heart is on fire,
 Being away from Thee has inflamed my whole being,
 Help, O King, of the Kingdom of hearts!

Being far from Thee has put my heart into flames;
I am burning, O King, from being so far from Thee.
Here, in this desert of loneliness and longing,
Liberate this bird from the trap of sorrowfulness
O King of Bounty and Sovereign of Favour!
Do not look unto my station and capacity
But look unto Thy Favour, O Bountiful One!"

XXIII:8, November 1932 [XXIII:8:255]

White roses of Persia

Part IV

Martha L. Root

This is the fourth and concluding part in the serial story of the martyrdom of 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá and his little son, Rúḥu'lláh, early Persian Bahá'ís. The preceding chapters gave a summary of the family history, copies of Tablets (letters) of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to them, a brief account of the wonderful pilgrimage of the father and his two sons to 'Akká to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and in the last number the poem which the little son, Rúḥu'lláh wrote in connection with his desire for martyrdom.

O Bahá'u'lláh: you are worth a thousand Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháhs! Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh was the Sháhansháh King of Kings) who ruled when the Báb was shot with a thousand bullets, when Bahá'u'lláh was exiled with His family; and he was the Ruler in Rúḥu'lláh's day.

Persecutions quickly increased in violence in Zanján and 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá was urged to bring his family and come to Ṭihrán to teach the Bahá'í Cause. He sent 'Azízu'lláh, who was then fourteen years old, on ahead to stay with the grandfather, and he and Rúḥu'lláh started one month later. They were arrested with other Bahá'ís when they were about half way to Ṭihrán and were taken back to Zanján with heavy chains about their necks and their feet in stocks. The governor of Zanján spoke with them and asked if they were Bahá'ís. 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá spoke first and said, "Yes." Little Rúḥu'lláh when questioned said, "Yes, I am a Bahá'í." But one old man denied the Faith saying "No, I am not a believer." The Governor in disgust struck him saying, "Everyone knows you call yourself a Bahá'í and now you deny it; but this little boy who is just at the beginning of his life and has so many hopes in the world, has had the courage to say he is a Bahá'í."

The Governor asked the Mullás to come and talk with these Bahá'ís. The Mullás said that they must be killed because their faith, their Teachings were against Islám. The Governor sent to ask the Prime Minister in Ṭihrán what should be done and the Prime Minister said to send the Bahá'í prisoners to the capital. So they were sent in their chains to Ṭihrán and a photograph was taken as soon as they arrived. It was the custom to take photographs of prisoners and send them to the state. The description was written on the picture. Rúḥu'lláh's 'abá' (coat) and kuláh (cap) had been taken away from him and the ones that appear in the photograph were hastily borrowed from another prisoner and put on the child. They were much too large for him. They are not his own clothes at all. Now the family actually has the original photograph that was filed with the prison record. (In the revolution of 1908 when all the old archives and records were thrown out, a Bahá'í official saw this photograph and took it to 'Azízu'lláh Varqá and the indictment, the crime, written is that they had become Bahá'ís, Bábís). After arresting 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá the policemen had gone to his home and carried off his beautiful painting of the Báb (and there is only one other in the world) taken many of his precious Tablets, plundered the family books, even the register that gave the dates of [XXIII:8:256] their birth so that some of the family do not know when their birthdays are. They confiscated their property.

When all this had taken place and they were settled in the prison, ‘Azízu’lláh succeeded in getting permission to go and see his father and brother in the prison. “Rúḥu’lláh, what do you need, what can I bring you?” asked ‘Azízu’lláh and the little brother said eagerly: “Please bring me a Book of Tablets and the Book of Prayers to read in the prison, for they took away all my books.” The food was very bad in that prison and the child had very few clothes, but he did not ask for any material things.

One of the prisoners who is still living told ‘Azízu’lláh Varqá that one night in the dungeon when all the others were sleeping he saw ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá lean over his little son, Rúḥu’lláh, look at him so long and so lovingly, pray, and then he said: “O Bahá’u’lláh, I thank Thee that Thou hast accepted our sacrifice.” This was not human love for his boy. It was divine love!

‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá was thirty-eight years old and his little son, Rúḥu’lláh, was just beginning his twelfth year. They had been in the Tīhrán prison just two months when one Friday, Náṣiri’-d-Dín Sháh, ruler of Persia, went out to Sháh Zádih ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím, a village near Tīhrán where there is one of the Muslim holy Shrines. He had ruled from 1844 until this Friday in 1896, when at the holy Shrine he was shot and killed by a Muslim revolutionary.

Everything that ever occurred in Persia at that time was blamed upon the Bahá’ís. The Prime Minister knew that the murderer was a Muslim and said so. However, the Chief of the Court without consulting the Prime Minister commanded the executioner to come into one room of the dungeon with him and the Bahá’í prisoners to be brought into the long dark corridor leading to this room. There the men stood in a row waiting their turn to enter. First to go in was ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá while his little son Rúḥu’lláh stood in the open doorway as he was second. The Chief of the Court cursed ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá, saying: “It is you Bahá’ís who have murdered the Sháh!” The prisoners had had no news, they had not heard that the Sháh had been shot that day. ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá answered him: “Bahá’ís would never kill His Imperial Majesty the Sháhansháh.” Angered by this, the Chief of the Court ordered the executioner to put ‘Alí Muḥammad’s head into the stock and to cut his body to pieces. Rúḥu’lláh witnessed the marvellous heroism of his great father as he suffered this horrible death. Then the Chief of the Court turned to the child who had stepped into the room to receive his own death, and said: “You must curse Bahá’u’lláh; if you do, you can go free and I will give you whatever you wish.” Rúḥu’lláh, looking into his eyes said solemnly: “I have seen Bahá’u’lláh! I could never curse Him! I will go with my father.”

The Chief of the Court whispered to the executioner to strangle the boy well in order to frighten him, but not to kill him. This was done. They put the rope about his neck so tightly he swooned and it looked as [XXIII:8:257] if he were dead, but after some time he slowly regained consciousness and the Chief of the Court again ordered him to curse Bahá’u’lláh, “No, I will never curse Him, I will go with my father,” said this child and intuitively he threw himself on his knees and began to pray to God. The Chief of the Court was so unnerved and upset, that he shouted to the executioner to kill the child quickly and he himself ran out of the room past the other Bahá’í prisoners and out of the place to his own home. The executioner quickly cut Rúḥu’lláh’s throat and the supreme sacrifice of two of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s great heroes was over.

Many have been martyred in the Cause to establish the Bahá’í religion, but the eternal glory of ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá and little Rúḥu’lláh is, that they voluntarily offered to give their lives to help establish the Teachings of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The other Bahá’ís in that corridor were never killed, they were set free. The Prime Minister was very angry with the Chief of the Court. He called him and demanded why he had done this hideous deed. The only answer was: “I thought perhaps Bahá’ís had killed the King and I wanted revenge!” The

Prime Minister replied: "You knew the murderer was a Muslim!" That Chief of the Court still lives, a miserable, unhappy, trembling man when the Varqá name is mentioned. He still walks the streets of T̄ihrán.

The story of the martyrdoms of 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá and Rúḥu'lláh is absolutely true. It is told by the third prisoner in that line in the corridor who was standing on the threshold just behind Rúḥu'lláh and he was still residing in Zanján until his death two years ago.

Also, the Chief of the great Bakhtiyári Tribe whose son today has an important place in the government, wishing to hear the truth about this atrocious crime, a few year ago invited that former Chief of the Court to dine in his home. His sons were present and a few other men relatives. They asked him to tell them the whole story about the killing of the Varqá father and son. There was a reason why they wished to hear because the host's own brother had become a Bahá'í years earlier through the teacher, 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá. The former Chief of the Court did tell them everything and it was exactly as the third prisoner had related it. The Bakhtiyári Chief and his relatives wept, and they were so angry they beat the former Chief of the Court and kicked him out into the street.

In the thirty-three years since the holy blood of these two martyrs was shed, a new white rose has begun to be cultivated in Persia, a rose whose perfume will be more heralded than all the 'aṭṭár of Írán, for this is the rose of "tolerance in religion". For more than a thousand years Persia had not known this rose.

I had longed to visit the graves of these two great martyrs, to bow my head in humblest, tenderest reverence where their dear hurt bodies are laid to rest. One day the opportunity came very unexpectedly. We were driving out to see the Bahá'í cemetery and friends said "There in the distance where you [XXIII:8:258] see the trees and the garden is the mausoleum of 'Alí Muḥammad Varqá and his son Rúḥu'lláh; we are going to take you there after we visit the Bahá'í cemetery." I had expected to go there with the Varqá family, but in the busy days of speaking and writing there had never been a free hour, so it seemed good to go now and we went. In the days of the passing of these martyrs there was no Bahá'í cemetery and in fact their bodies were hid for a number of years. Then 'Azízu'lláh Varqá and his younger brother Valíyu'lláh bought a little estate near T̄ihrán (about twenty minutes ride by motor car from the Yúsuf Ábád Gate of the city. It is enclosed by high walls and divided into two parts by another high wall. The first part is like a miniature farm or very large garden with little houses for the caretaker and his family. Each member of this peasant family was so clean, so sweet, so spiritual, one could but feel that they had been refined and ennobled by their cherished task of caring for the garden where such glorious saints are resting.

Going through the first garden into the second was like stepping into paradise. It was still winter, but the trees, the vines, the rose bushes showed plainly that in the spring and summer the place is a haven of shade and perfume. It was a typical Persian garden with a stately little lake and the birds were singing softly. The mausoleum is a beautiful nine-sided building approached with nine paths through the garden and within are nine sides and the whole is in pure white.

O, what a real peace in that place! The sun poured through the windows as if it loved to come and dwell there! I knelt to pray and whispered first: "O Bahá'u'lláh Thou art here with them! It is the same kind of peace that I experienced in Bahjí at Thy Tomb! Thou hast never left them, living and dead Thou art with them always!" Truly it was a spiritual communion to pray in this holy spot!

Silently we passed out from that holy shrine, pressed the hands of the kind caretakers, and

came back into the world of service in Ṭihrán.

It is lives like these of ‘Alí Muḥammad Varqá and little Rúḥu’lláh that mirror forth the power and the beauty of the Bahá’í Teachings.

As the aftermath to this story, would you not like to hear of the two other sons, ‘Azízu’lláh and Valíyu’lláh? They are two of the most spiritual and efficient Bahá’ís of Ṭihrán. ‘Azízu’lláh went to Paris to help ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when He journeyed to Europe, and Valíyu’lláh was called to be one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s secretaries during the historic journey to the United States and Great Britain, in 1912. Friends in New York will remember that the night before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá started to California, a great many friends had called to say good bye. Valíyu’lláh Varqá was down in the drawing room greeting them and serving tea to each one. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came down the stairs from His apartment into the drawing room and called out: “*Valíyu’lláh, come my soul, my dear!*” He took his hand. Then He went over and sat down by the window and addressed the friends, saying: “*Tonight I shall introduce [XXIII:8:259] to you Mírzá Valíyu’lláh Khán Varqá. He is my son, whatever he says it is true. Believe it.*” Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told the story of the grandfather of Valíyu’lláh, the story of his father and little brother Rúḥu’lláh ending with their martyrdom. When He had finished He went upstairs and below the silent guests heard Him weeping. So, darling little Rúḥu’lláh, you and your good father were not only teaching the Bahá’í Cause in Persia, you are teaching it down the ages and in every continent. Every eye that reads of you, every ear that hears of you is urged forward to action!

XXIII:9, December 1932 [XXIII:9:266]

The meaning of Christ

A compilation from the revealed Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the divinely appointed authoritative Interpreter of the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

Christ’s birthday is a glorious day. It is necessary that these anniversary celebrations be observed, else man in his negligence would forget all about his Creator. But we should seek to penetrate the dark veils of custom and imitation of ancestors, perchance we may discover the reality of the meaning.

The advent of Christ on this earth was a blessed day for it was the day on which the Sun of Reality dawned; the day on which all beings were revived. In the world’s calendar, it was the beginning of a Heavenly Spring. ... When He was on earth He was not thought much of notwithstanding they were awaiting His coming with great impatience. They thought that they would be His intimate friends. When He came they knew Him not; they persecuted Him and finally killed Him.

(Unity Triumphant, p. 111.) [XXIII:9:268]

Christ said that nothing could ascend into heaven except that which came down from heaven. He also said, “I came from heaven and will return to heaven,” and “The Son of Man is in heaven.” He said this while still upon the earth and notwithstanding the fact that he had been born from Mary. There is no doubt Christ came from heaven and always was in heaven, but when He spoke He did not mean the literal sky. What then is meant by heaven? Science proves that there is no heaven or sky, but all is limitless space and one universe. In this limitless space the heavenly spheres revolve and have their orbits. But the “heaven” of Christ is that invisible world which is beyond the sight and comprehension of mere man. It is the spiritual condition. Therefore the “heaven” of Christ is the Will of God. The Sun of that heaven will never set. In it the moon and stars are always shining. It is the limitless Kingdom of God. It is sanctified from all place. Christ is always there.

(Ten Days in the Light of ‘Akká, p. 26.)

Count Leo Tolstoy and the Bahá'í movement

Martha L. Root

When I was in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1927, I met the secretary of Count Leo Tolstoy, Mr Valentin Bulgakov; we had a long talk about Count Tolstoy and his contact with the Bahá'í Movement. Later, in December 1930, I met Miss Alexandra Tolstoy, the youngest daughter of this great Russian writer and humanitarian. She said to me then, "What Mr Bulgakov has told you about my father's interest in the Bahá'í Movement is true. He was with him during the last four years of my father's life; he was his secretary and arranged his library." Then, too, I corresponded with Mrs Isabel Grinevsky of Leningrad in 1927 and she wrote me about Count Tolstoy.

It is through these kind friends that I have the facts for this article. An added interest was given to the subject for me when only a few days ago, 31 May 1932, I interviewed the president of a Roman Catholic university in Poland who had met 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1914, in Haifa, Palestine. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to him that there was no greater writer in Europe than Count Leo Tolstoy. "What a pity that Tolstoy, who so admired the Teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, never had the privilege of meeting Him."

"Count Tolstoy knew the Bahá'í Teachings through literature. I think he did not know any Bahá'ís personally," said Mr Bulgakov in his talk with me. "He first heard of the Bahá'í Movement in May 1903, when Mrs Isabel Grinevsky brought out in Leningrad (the former capital of Russia that then was called St. Petersburg) a great drama called *Bab*; it was in verse and gave the illumined history of the Forerunner of the Bahá'í Movement, a young man called [the] Báb and His disciples called *Letters of the Living*; the scenes were laid in Persia. This drama was played in one of the principle theatres of St. Petersburg, in January 1904, and given a remarkable reception. Some of the critics went far in its praise. For example, the poet Fiedler (who afterward translated the drama into German) said: 'We receive from the five acts of the poetical drama *Bab* more information about the Bahá'í Movement than from the deep, scientific researches of Professor Edward G. Browne, Gobineau and Russian scientists and historians. As the *Herold* has already published two full feuilletons¹ about the poem, we shall speak only of the performance of the play. Rarely has the renown of any play preceded the performance as has this of Mrs Grinevsky."

The *Herold* of January 1904, printed the following:

"The drama appeared in May of last year, 1903, the most inconvenient time for the coming out of a book, but nevertheless pens of critics began to move in the journals and magazines in praise of the author's work. Moreover, enlightened Persian society sent an inspired letter of thanks; and above all, Isabel Grinevsky had the high spiritual satisfaction that among those who praised her drama was the lion of contemporary Russian literature, Leo Tolstoy."

Mr Wesselitzky, a Russian journalist and president of the Foreign Press Association in London, gave an address about this drama *Bab* in London, in English and the lecture was published in pamphlet form in French and English. I quote one paragraph from this speech: "Amidst the sorrows of disastrous war and those dreadful inner troubles, that book, *Bab*, was my only happy impression and it has remained since a permanent source of joy and comfort as a manifest proof of the vitality of Russia and its creative genius."²

¹ Feuilleton: a piece printed in, or that part of, a French newspaper that contains serialized fiction, light reviews, etc.

² Taken from a pamphlet, the speech delivered by Mr Wesselitzky, President of the Foreign Press Association of London, published in French and English. London, 1907, at the press of 'Chronide', 29 Besborough Street, London, S.W.

“Count Tolstoy read this drama *Bab* with great interest,” Mr Bulgakov told me, “and sent a letter to Mrs Grinevsky praising her work and telling her he was in sympathy with these teachings of the Bahá’í Movement.” His letter to her was published in the press of Russia. Mrs Grinevsky also wrote me about this letter from Count Tolstoy which she has preserved.

Next Count Tolstoy read a booklet by Mr Arakewian that described further the history of the early followers of the Báb and gave a short account of the teachings. He studied it with eager interest, his secretary told me, and sent a copy of it to one of his friends, Mr Boulanger, who was writing a book about all religions. Count Tolstoy urged Mr Boulanger to include a chapter on Bahai-ism in this new [XXIII:10:304] book. Unfortunately the book was not published before Count Tolstoy passed on, then came the world war and it was never printed. “Count Tolstoy’s heart and soul were in all universal movements like the Bahá’í Movement that aim at the unity of all mankind,” said Mr Bulgakov.

He also told me that Count Tolstoy read with deep appreciation the book, “The Voices of the Peoples” by Ivan Nagivin, in which the author writes much about different religions, the old Christian sects in Russia, the Indian Religions, and about Bahai-ism. Tolstoy liked this work because it opposed militarism and all fighting and stood for universal peace. He gave copies of this book to several of his friends sending them from his home in Yasnaya Polyana.

When I asked Mr Bulgakov if Count Tolstoy had Bahá’í books in his library, he replied: “Certainly, he had Bahá’í books in several languages. After he had read the drama *Bab* and knew of the Bahá’í Movement, he sent and bought what books he could get. I remember a picture in one of the English books—a picture of a young man who looked like Christ, and was the Founder of this movement.”

The secretary said that Count Tolstoy had studied the Bibles of all religions profoundly.

As one of the principles of Bahá’u’lláh is a universal auxiliary language, I asked the secretary what Count Tolstoy thought about such a language to help promote world peace, and quickly he replied: “He thought it was very important, and when he heard for the first time about Esperanto he was so delighted that he took an Esperanto grammar, studied it two hours and wrote a letter in Esperanto! He was then about seventy years old. He knew many languages, Russian, English, French, German, Italian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin.”

Count Tolstoy, I feel, was a Bahá’í in spirit, for the word signifies in the Persian language “Light-bearer”, even though he heard of the Teachings late in life.

He was born 10 September 1828, and so was nearly seventy-five when he first learned through the drama *Bab* of this universal religion for peace which had its rise in Persia about the middle of the nineteenth century. He passed on 10 November 1910, but in one of his last writings, I hear, he penned these words which will be read not only by this generation but by millions yet unborn: “We spend our lives trying to unlock the mystery of the universe, but there was a Turkish Prisoner, Bahá’u’lláh, in ‘Akká, Palestine, who had the key!”

XXIII:12, March 1933 [XXIII:12:374]

Glimpses of the New World Order

Part I

Notes on a visit to Haifa and ‘Akká
Mabel and Sylvia Paine

“The sea has innumerable pearls in its depths. A good and trained diver will obtain therefrom abundant pearls.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

A little party of four boarded the *Carnaro* at Trieste on 4 November 1931. We were bound for Haifa, Palestine, where we expected, through meeting Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the

Bahá'í Cause, and the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and through visiting the shrines of the Founders of the Bahá'í Faith—the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá—to gain light on the problems that so vex the world, to make contact with the universal love that had instilled into those who associated with Him and to deepen our faith in the invincible power which has characterized that Faith from its inception.

On 9 November, in the afternoon, the city of Haifa came into view. It lies at the foot of Mt. Carmel, the mountain famed in Old Testament annals as the abode of the Prophets of God. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it has again become the centre from which spiritual teachings have gone forth. And its spiritual revival has been accompanied by considerable material progress, for it is already the chief shipping centre for Palestine. Our first impression on entering its harbour was of a commercial activity which had been distinctly lacking at the older and more Oriental port of Jaffa, where we had anchored a few hours earlier. Work on the deepened harbour is in constant progress and 'ere long ships will dock at Haifa.

After landing, some of us chose to walk through the narrow crooked streets with Rúhí Afnán, grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and cousin of Shoghi Effendi, who was at the dock to greet us. Haifa streets show a mingling of the Oriental and the cosmopolitan. Its inhabitants—Jews, Arabs, Germans, French, English, Persians, and Americans—all retaining to some extent their distinctive dress, language, and customs, give the city the charm of diversity. It was interesting to note the disappearance of one former Oriental feature, the traditional black dress and veil covering the whole head and face of the Arab women. Of the Arab women we saw nearly all were unveiled.

Our walk brought us at last to the Bahá'í Western Pilgrim House situated near the edge of the city a little way up Mt. Carmel. About this house is a very delightful blending of the Orient with the Occident, the beautiful and dignified with the homey and comfortable. The circular central hall with its marble pillars, the lofty ceilings, the fiat roof, sun-drenched by day and moonlight bathed at night, seem apart from our workaday world of the West. But the furnish- [XXIII:12:375] ings of bedrooms, reading, writing, sitting, and dining rooms are Occidental. In the gardens on three sides of the house are magnificent poinsettias, roses, jasmine, chrysanthemums. Soon the freesias will be blossoming. We are indebted to Fugeta from Japan for these carefully tended gardens as well as many a kind personal service. Effie from Australia, of Scotch ancestry, is responsible for the beautiful order of the interior of the house. Both help to maintain the pervasive atmosphere of kindly cheer which is neither of the Orient nor the Occident, but, of the Kingdom.

Tuesday, 10 November. Today at luncheon Shoghi Effendi was present and, through his conversation, we were given a view as from a mountain top of present conditions in the world and the relations of Bahá'ís to these conditions. Bahá'ís, he says, are loyal to the government, but eschew party politics. They are eager to serve their country through devoting themselves to the welfare of the people. They hold administrative posts only when these are not dependent on party politics. Some Bahá'ís in Persia have been appointed to important posts of this type. One is chief magistrate in a city, one head of an imperial bank. Gradually, as the Bahá'í Faith develops and spreads, it will number among its supporters outstanding citizens. The early history of the Bahá'í religion in Persia reveals the fact that it had many notables in its ranks.

In each country the Bahá'ís have an especial problem. In Germany it is the Semitic question; in Persia polygamy and opium; in France, alcohol; in England, class prejudice; in America, racial prejudice. The teachings 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave on interracial relations are so sound, kind, and sincere, and the Bahá'í teaching of the oneness of mankind so thoroughgoing that Bahá'ís have a stronger programme and deeper sincerity than other workers for harmony

between races. The Bahá'ís need to be more courageous in applying these principles. Especially should they convince the Negro and the world at large that they stand for lack of prejudice in social ways.

At three in the afternoon we went to the Shrine of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on Mount Carmel. It is only five or ten minutes walk from the Pilgrim House. The road brings one to the foot of some terraces. One enters a gate and climbs alternately by flights of stone steps and paths of red crushed stone. On either side are scarlet geraniums and palms. The approach to the shrine is steep. And this steepness I liked, thinking of it as a bit of symbolism.

Near the shrine is a circle of cedars where Bahá'u'lláh used to sit. A larger circle has been planted outside to protect the original trees. The view from here is one of extreme beauty, embracing this part of the Mediterranean, 'Akká Bay, and, nine miles across the bay, the city of 'Akká which is always catching the light and reflecting it in some new way—truly like a jewel on a diadem.

Coming down the mountain we went into the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, now Shoghi Effendi's. Here [XXIII:12:376] we had the privilege of meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sister, His widow and two of our stay in Haifa, we realized more what the true beauty and nobility of womanhood may be. The face of the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bábíyyih Khánum, although shadowed by age, was so full of love and a genuine interest in life and people that we did not think of her as old, but rather as ageless and eternal. The freshness of the beauty of love radiating from her captivated us. And from all these women one sees an intensely bright reflection of the Spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The fact that there are several of them and that each one has a strong individuality helps to broaden one's conception of the ideal Bahá'í character, for each is thoroughly lovely in a different way.

When we were in Geneva earlier in the autumn we had the great privilege of meeting Munírih Khánum, the youngest daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She showed us then both in word and deed the nature of the love which 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life exemplified. For nearly eighty years, she told us, 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived a life of perfect love, each thing He did being a lesson to teach us how to love. Realizing how difficult it is to attain such love, we questioned her a little further. It must be real, she answered. In this quality of genuineness it is like the love we have for our children. If they do wrong we are eager to excuse them.

Then, dwelling a little also on the intellectual side of love she pointed out how necessary is understanding. Most hatred comes from lack of understanding. It is to aid in understanding that Bahá'u'lláh decreed the "parliament of nations, the federation of the world". She spoke in a simple and profound way of the condition of the world. It seemed to her like a wayward child. Through Bahá'u'lláh God has shown it the way of salvation, the same way that Christ and other great religious Founders have pointed out, the eternal path which every religion in its pure and early stages shows. But the world is slow to recognize the old path made new by the clearing away of the debris of age-long superstition and imitation. And because of this slowness of apprehension God allows suffering to come in order that through suffering this child may learn. In the same way a kind parent would allow his child to suffer in order that its understanding might increase.

But to come back to this afternoon in Haifa. The conversation turned on relations with people, and the importance of not interfering with the religious beliefs of others was brought out. "Leave them alone as to their religious belief, but be very kind to them." Words like these were spoken by the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She told an incident to illustrate what she meant. When a young girl she wanted to keep both the Muslim and the Bahá'í fast, but her mother

thought that this would be too great a strain on her health as one fast followed immediately after the other. Her father said, "Leave her alone and it will come to her." [XXIII:12:377] And so it did, when she was fifteen or sixteen. She said *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Book of Certitude) by Bahá'u'lláh helped her much. She wanted us to be sure to read it in the new translation by Shoghi Effendi.

Rúhá Khánum, one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's daughters, spoke of joy and sorrow, wondering which brought us nearer to God. She thought, sorrow. She told of an American woman who came a long way to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá because she had heard that He was a great spiritual teacher. She was suffering intensely because her loved ones had died. Her love for them consumed all other thought and she longed only to have them again. But in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá she obtained the real comfort none else had been able to give.

That evening at dinner Effie told a story illustrating another side of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His love of fun and happiness. He and His entourage were staying in Lady Bs¹ house in London. One evening there was a sound of much laughter below stairs. It was so gay and arresting that Lady B. went down to find the occasion of the mirth, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá followed. They found Khusraw, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's servant, and one of the maids laughing and joking very happily. Khusraw was telling how women in the Orient have to obey the men and how if he and the maid were there she would have to do just what he told her and the maid was answering that in England things were different and, since they were in England, he must do what she said, etc. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave them each two shillings for being happy.

(To be continued)

XXIII:12, March 1933 [XXIII:12:378]

Letters home

Persia: Visit to a Bahá'í village

Keith Ransom-Kehler²

In her world travels in behalf of the Bahá'í Movement the author takes time to write to friends impressions derived from her varied experiences. These "Letters home" we have been privileged to present to the readers of the Bahá'í Magazine at different times during the past year. The first "letter" appeared in the January 1932 number [XXII:10:310–12], and described the author's visit to Nikko and other places in Japan. The April number [XXIII:1:10–14] gave some of her impressions of China; the December issue [XXIII:9:270–4] contained an interesting description of her contacts with the Maoris of New Zealand; and the January number [XXIII:10:308–12] her observations while traveling through India. Herein begins a new series on her fascinating material and spiritual experiences in Persia.

Crossing the western boundary of Persia, from 'Iráq, we behold at once the gaunt and troubled grandeur of her sterile mountain chains. Her landscape presents this profile wherever we may go; a thousand valleys past which the mountains are ever marching, sometimes stepping imperiously across our path and forcing it to fling its tortuous way to their very summits; often lifting their lofty peaks and snowy diadems to peer majestically over the clouds; in Mázindarán luxuriantly wooded—elsewhere barren and wrinkled; in Khurásán, now ancient and indifferent, their transfixed writhings bear mute testimony to the agony of

¹ Lady Sara Louisa Blomfield (1859–1939).

² Keith Ransom-Kehler (1876–1933), born Nannie Keith Bean (known later solely by her mother's maiden name of Keith). American Bahá'í lecturer and world traveller; designated by Shoghi Effendi as the first American Bahá'í martyr and, posthumously, the first woman appointed as a Hand of the Cause of God. Shoghi Effendi sent her on a special assignment in Iran to 1. represent the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, and on behalf of Shoghi Effendi; 2. to petition Riḍá Sháh Pahlaví to remove the ban on the entry and distribution of Bahá'í literature in Iran and also to secure the lifting of all the limitations that had for years been imposed on the Iranian Bahá'í community. Died of smallpox in Iṣfahán.

earth's youth. Purple at dawn, blue at midday, rosy at dusk, feeding the countless rivulets that fling diamonds when spurned by our flying wheels, these mountains—which are Persia—have listened for ages to the inarticulate prayers sent up, from her desert valleys, in verdure and gardens and produce for the divine bounty of water. You have to get the feel of this landscape, before you can know Persia.

Her people, still pastoral and archaic, have for ages been surrounded by these almost insurmountable physical barriers. Caught as it were in a geographical back-wash, Persia has not been on the beaten path of travel, except for slow-moving caravans, or exploitation and conquest, since those ancient days when “Ships in thousands ... and men in nations” attested to her unchallengeable grandeur.

Even a short journey in Persia today is arduous. The mountains are jealous guards of the secrets and mysteries that lie beyond their confines. How infinitely more difficult was communication in days before improved roads and methods of transportation had arrived. Unfriendliness, timidity and provincialism have ever been the price of segregation and homogeneity.

Due to this isolation Persia up to the time of the Báb's proclamation was in a pre-logical, pre-scientific, pre-international condition. The magical progress that has taken place since that date has been enormously heightened in the past few years under the *regime* of Riḍá Sháh Pahlavi.

In order to understand what the Bahá'í teachings have done for [XXIII:12:379] Persia it is only necessary to visit a Bahá'í and a non-Bahá'í community.

Tucked away in the mountains of Ádhirbayján is the Bahá'í village of Saysán,¹ a community of about fifteen hundred souls, I would say, of whom twelve hundred and fifty are Bahá'ís. So great is their reputation for justice, understanding and enlightenment that the Muslims of the community frequently submit their conflicts and problems to the Bahá'í Assembly rather than to the Muslim Courts.

In arranging my program the Spiritual Assembly of Tabríz included a day in this heavenly place. A farsang² back from the main-travelled highway, a road built for Martha³ two years ago leading to the village, had been rebuilt and newly repaired for the large convoy of motors that accompanied me on this occasion. Any path is good enough for a donkey, and a camel needs none at all; so I suppose the road will lapse again until the next western visitor is expected.

A little group of villagers were waiting at the fork of the road to direct us, and then began a triumphal progress so extravagant that it will remain forever, not an episode, but an acute emotional experience.

As our car turned into the crude new-made roadway, from every field and farmstead, from every lodge and pasture they came running—all those who perforce must remain at their work, unable to join the holiday-makers in the village. “Alláh-u-Abhá”⁴ rang from every side: “Alláh-u-Abhá” joyously cried the little shepherd as his frightened flock fled away. “Alláh-u-Abhá” pealed the stalwart young farmer leaving his stolid bullocks in the half-finished furrow; old men ran breathlessly from their herds calling “Alláh-u-Abhá” as they came; “Alláh-u-Abhá

¹ A Bahá'í village (37.827427, 46.734777) 46 km SE of Tabríz, East Azerbaijan Province. All of the Bahá'ís of the village were cleared and their houses razed to the ground by bulldozers in an operation of ethnic cleansing after the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

² About 5.5 km—the distance a laden mule can travel in an hour.

³ Miss Martha Root.

⁴ “God is Most Glorious”.

was the shout of the donkey boy, and “Alláh-u-Abhá” the glad greeting of the camel-driver who had hurried all night to arrive at this rendezvous until at last the very birds, trees, streams, yes, rocks, had joined the mystic chorus and the earth herself was pulsating with the power of the Greatest Name. It was as if the Heavens had descended and all the company of men and angels had joined “the four living creatures” and “the four and twenty elders” bowed before that august throne and chanting with them, in incommunicable ecstasy, their eternal song “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy Bahá.”

And then, turning sharply to enter the main road of the village there in two mighty rows were drawn up before us these hundreds of men and women rocking the houses with their joyous welcome of “Alláh-u-Abhá”.

I still have the feeling that this day is something that I have read somewhere; it doesn't seem as if it could actually have happened.

Unlike the hideous black chuddar worn by the women of the towns and cities, these villagers were alive with colour, and vivid, almost barbaric, it gave a very dramatic background to the scene. [XXIII:12:380]

We stopped in front of a villa set on a hill with a very long narrow garden in front. Not only was the entire facade of the house covered with choice rugs but the whole garden wall around the entrance gate had been similarly decorated, and lovely rugs had been spread upon the dusty pathway leading to the residence.

Seating myself in an upper window I watched with dazed awe the happy, reverent throngs who crowded through the gate to do me honour. Strangely enough the women came first, every one of them carrying a baby, the mothers their infants, the grandmothers the “second youngest”.

Above the marvel of this sight my senses danced with delight at the gorgeous colourings, orange, red, grass-green, magenta, Chinese pink—it was none too brilliant for the occasion.

It took about twenty minutes for the women to file in, in orderly fashion; they stood to the right, around the pool. The men followed more rapidly to the opposite side and then I was to come down to the garden and speak.

Turkish is the vernacular of the whole province of *Ádhirbayján*. It was very complicated: Mr Cayvais, the interpreter who accompanied me from *Ṭihrán*, translated to Mr Frután¹ (a national teacher stationed in the village at the time) who in turn rendered it into Turkish.

When I had finished I came from the terrace down several steps to the garden level in order to mingle with the friends and have a picture taken with them. Alas! the whole roll of films was a complete failure so that the pictorial record cannot accompany my letter, as I had hoped.

As I was standing with the men's group the chanting of the final *munáját*² started; I was astonished, after a little while, to feel shy hands touching my dress, my scarf, my shoulder. One boy, with a radiant face, had placed his finger-tips on my arm. I warmly covered his hand with mine, until the prayer was finished.

Then just as picturesquely, just as dramatically as they had come they melted away, and we were called to the feast that had been prepared for us.

This village was significant to me not only because it has already established a reputation for Bahá'í justice and progress, not only because for three generations it has stood firm and

¹ Furútan?

² *Munáját*[h or t], pl. *munájáthá*: secret conversation; confidential talk; whispering, prayer, longing or yearning.

staunch in the Covenant of God, not only because of the loving kindness which was so bountifully showered upon me, but because it is the native village of my dear friend Yadu'lláh, caretaker of the mansion and Shrine at Bahjí. He had long since endeared himself to me as a sincere, selfless and devoted Bahá'í, and it was like meeting those already near to me to meet his brothers and sister here.

A pathetic little group stood apart on an adjoining housetop as I was speaking. Who are those? Why don't they come into the garden?" I asked. "They are Muslims," I was told. "Alláhu-Akbar,"¹ I shouted to them to the delight of the Friends. [XXIII:12:381]

Luncheon over and high mountains to climb before we could find a resting place for the night, I went at once to the Ḥazíratu'l-Quds to meet the Spiritual Assembly and say farewell.

The place was packed and lined with old and young, many who had been in the fields having been replaced by those who had attended the morning session.

As I walked between these rows of shining faces the real meaning of Bahá'í solidarity suddenly penetrated me. Here were Persians speaking Turkish, fixed in a tiny town in the mountains of Ádhirbayján, and I, a sophisticated and effete Occidental, peripatetic, artificial, cosmopolitan; but we were bound together by ties "more lasting than bronze and higher than the exalted site of the Pyramids". For knowledge of the coming of Bahá'u'lláh and knowledge of His All-enfolding Covenant is not a question of locality, education or preferment but an unshakable spiritual reality that welds those who know it into an indissoluble human brotherhood. Here is a true solidarity that can withstand all the forces of disruption in the universe.

Yadu'lláh's sister came in for a few moments to the Assembly meeting and on her behalf and theirs I was presented with two beautiful pieces of hand-woven jájim,² embroidered with my name.

As I was leaving the assembly room a little idiot child, who had been causing some confusion, ran up to me and pulled at my clothing. I remembered the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that mental disorders may be healed by the power of prayer. And in a dim, remote way there stirred in my soul a faint shadow of the mighty compassion that must have seized our blessed Lord Jesus, that stern Master of tenderness, when He healed the demoniac boy. Dropping on my knees beside him I lovingly clasped the little fellow in my arms and repeated the healing prayer. He seemed mystified, quieted and happy; while in the breasts of all of us was cemented that essential unity that is attained when we touch "the depths and not the tumults of the soul". In face of such great verities as prayer and love and divine compassion, we realize that "there is neither East nor West, border, nor breed, nor birth."

The farewells were just as moving as the welcome had been. I was tremendously agitated for fear someone would be hurt; women running, with babies in their arms, to touch my hand as I waved from our moving motor, men jostling, boys under the very wheels it seemed to me, shouting their goodbyes.

And once again the two long brilliant lines raising the glad paeon "Alláh-u-Abhá". Once more the fields streaming with those leaving their occupations to give "Alláh-u-Abhá" as their Godspeed; babies in their mother's arms swelling the chorus "Alláh-u-Abhá"; again the skies were raining back the great refrain with which these simple, earnest, devoted souls were assaulting heaven.

All Persians are poets. Our Bahá'í chauffeur was stilled with [XXIII:12:382] the significance

¹ "God is the Most Great"; the opening words of the Adhán or Muslim call to prayer.

² Jájim, jájím: Pers. a fine bedding or carpet (often wool and with vertical stripes).

of the wondrous. "I never realized before," he said, "that nature could speak, but tonight the universe is crying Alláh-u-Abhá."

"The quiet-coloured end of evening" approached as we said farewell to our kind convoy of friends from Tabriz.

Our faces set once more toward Tīhrán, the solemn lovely tone of camel bells rang from the passing caravans; the donkey trains were afoot again after the noon-day rest; the sky was peach and amethyst with the recollection of sunset; the mauve mountains, remembering their age, grew chilly; kneeling by the roadside offering the evening prayer, the resigned figure of a devout Muslim symbolized the spirit of ancient Persia. But I had seen that today which assured me that Persia was arousing from her age old lethargy, from her fanaticism, from her resignation, and that through the assistance of this great Bahá'í army of faith and strength she was already moving forward to conquer the old evil things of her past—"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."¹

(To be continued)

XXIV:1, April 1933 [XXIV:1:10]

Letters home

Persia

Keith Ransom-Kehler

In her world travels in behalf of the Bahá'í Movement the author takes time to write to friends impressions derived from her varied experiences. These "Letters home" we have been privileged to present to the readers of the Bahá'í Magazine at different times during the past year. The first "letter" appeared in the January 1932 number [XXII:10:310–12], and described the author's visit to Nikko and other places in Japan. The April number [XXIII:1:10–14] gave some of her impressions of China; the December issue [XXIII:9:270–4] contained an interesting description of her contacts with the Maoris of New Zealand; and the January number [XXIII:10:308–12] her observations while traveling through India. Last month [XXIII:12:378–2] appeared the first instalment in a new series on her fascinating material and spiritual experiences in Persia. Herein she describes certain historic points and principles "which are essential to a full understanding of the spirit animating the followers of the Báb."

In an hour I must be on the platform and I am not even dressed, but I have an irresistible urge to start this promised letter to you; for once I have started a thing I write until it is finished; and the stories of Persia within me are struggling to be told.

If ever I undertook to write anything formal on Persia I would be nonplussed as to whether I should call it "White Rooms", "Dream Gardens", or "Mud Fences". For this country is one astounding and fascinating contradiction. The ugliest thing on earth, a mud fence, encloses the most beautiful, a Persian garden; the (to us) shocking dislocation of taste, a white room, houses the matchless design of a Persian carpet; in an old ramshackle, tumble-down bazaar one finds the loveliest things inlay and lacquer from Shíráz, brass or silver from Işfahán, silk and prints from Yazd, the turquoise tiles and pottery of Hamadán, embroideries and rich brocades—all divinely beautiful.

God has conferred upon Persia an unquenchable spirit; to whatever depths she may descend she carries with her a mysterious redemptive power. Within the brief confines of history she has given to the world three Manifestations² of God: Zarathustra, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. In less than a hundred years after the coming of the Promised One³ profound, yes,

¹ Zechariah 4:6.

² God's Messengers: the Founders of new religions; the Revelators of new sacred commands and books.

³ The Báb declared His mission 28 May 1844.

fundamental changes, are wiping away the obvious evidences of her fanaticism, her cruelty, her ignorance and her degradation, and are preparing her not slowly, but with magical rapidity, for an era of enlightenment, urbanity and fluent self-expression.

To the Bahá'í the most venerated spots are not those where the two Manifestations of our Faith lie buried¹ but Shíráz in Persia, and Baghdád in 'Iráq where their respective missions were revealed. Surely no other place than Shíráz on Persian soil is more sacred to us than the Shrine at Shaykh Ṭabarsí where first "The Dawn-Breakers" of our Revelation gave "the last full measure of devotion", entrusted to history her most lustrous and heroic page, and "rapt in holy [XXIV:1:11] ecstasy, writ with their life-blood upon the tablet of the world the verses of God's Divine Unity."

Ṭihrán, the birthplace of Bahá'u'lláh, is indeed a Holy City, and Núr,² His family seat, but we are told to reverence Baghdád especially in His commemoration.

The names of those exalted beings who happily wooed death and were wedded to the Station of self-sacrifice in the Pathway of God have left the overwhelming evidence of their sanctity and devotion forever enshrined within the humble little memorial at Shaykh Ṭabarsí.

As we were quitting Khurásán I recalled how Mullá Ḥusayn and his small but valiant band of followers, encamped under the "Black Standards", awaited Divine Guidance and then went down the rocky deifies into Mázindarán—their Karbilá.

It seems a thousand pities that only the special student of history or comparative religion should know those events and episodes in the great religions of the world that, through the centuries, have made their adherents ready to die for them.

Certainly one of the outstanding events of secular as well as of religious history was the martyrdom of the younger son of Fáṭimah (the only daughter and the only child of Muḥammad) the Imám Ḥusayn.

All sects of Islám agree that the Prophet informally appointed His cousin and son-in-law 'Alí, together with His lineal descendants, to succeed Him. But since the words of the Prophet were oral and traditional, since they were not written, a group of His followers after His death feeling that Muḥammad has been too much swayed by His affection for His family, and fearing their influence, at once swept aside His command and elected those democratically—[XXIV:1:12] the Caliphs—who were to act as defenders and custodians of His Faith.

'Alí, finally, after three predecessors had been chosen, was elected Caliph. His tempestuous career ended with his murder, his older son Ḥasan, according to the explicit utterance of Muḥammad, succeeding him as the second Imám. 'Alí was the first Imám and the fourth Caliph.

Hasan was poisoned by order of Mu'avíyih, leader of the opposing party, and when some years later his younger brother who had now returned to Arabia was summoned to send his allegiance to the newly elected Caliph, an office not provided for by Muḥammad, he quite deliberately and with the sublime intent of giving his life in obedience to his Grandfather's behest set out to Mesopotamia with seventy-two of his followers there to offer up his soul for the great principle of the Imamate.

For Imám means Guardian and the Imamate alone could have protected the Cause of

¹ After years of arduous effort the mutilated remains of the Báb intermingled with those of Muḥammad 'Alí-i-Zunúzí who was martyred with Him, were finally removed to Mount Carmel. Bahá'u'lláh lies buried at Bahjí on the plains of 'Akká where He died a titular prisoner.

² Bahá'u'lláh's ancestral home (36.198842, 52.010238) is in the village of Tákur (36.200164, 52.010178), 40 km south of Núr and 47.5 km NE of the village of Afjih.

Muḥammad from schism, sectarianism and strife. If, in the Qur'án, Muḥammad had written this succession as an indubitable part of His Teaching; if His followers were constrained to recognize one authorized person to whom they must give allegiance there could, of course, never be any division, any disunity, for division or challenge of the explicit written word of the Founder would at once put them outside His Faith; so there could be no split within it.

The sincere follower of every religion must see that the weakness of His Faith lies in this fact: that it has no authoritative interpreter, none to whom the faithful can turn as representing the authentic successor of its Founder.

The statement of Jesus concerning Peter is subject to half a dozen interpretations including the charge of interpolation in the Gospel, and the great majority of Christians reject His statement as establishing any unchallengeable succession or as conferring the right of interpreting His words. Nobody, whom all alike will accept, can tell us what He really meant. We have in Christendom three hundred and fifty-two sects, each insisting that Jesus meant a different thing. And to whatever degree these sects may protest against succession and interpretation, each has arrogated to itself the letter, excluding any who dare question its interpretation, and hands down through succeeding generations its own decision and decree concerning the Teaching of our Lord. So that every sect is practicing interpretation and succession however much it may deny it.

If Jesus, Muḥammad, or the Founder of any other religion, had written an unassailable document in which He specifically named an individual, together with his successors, and said to His followers, "What these say I meant, you must accept as what I did mean; to reject him or them is to repudiate me"; we see, with perfect clarity, that the rivalries, misunderstandings and bloodshed promoted in the name of religion would have been absolutely impossible.

It was to defend this great prin- [XXIV:1:13] ciple of an Interpreter, a Guardian, a Rallying Centre which would obviate schism, that the Imám Ḥusayn became a voluntary martyr.

As he neared Kúfih,¹ the great Islamic stronghold where his father had been martyred, he was informed that an army of twenty thousand was marching out against him. He deflected his course to the then small settlement of Karbilá, and there his little band was practically annihilated and he became the great redemptive figure of Shí'a Islám.

Three times before Shimr, his murderer, dispatched him, he cried to those assembled, "Is there any who will assist me?" extending to them their last opportunity for submission and obedience to the request and desire of Muḥammad.

On several occasions Mullá Ḥusayn referred to Shaykh Ṭabarsí as Karbilá.² Those who cast in their lot with him had no illusions as to the outcome of their enterprise. They, too, deliberately sacrificed their lives to prove to a negligent and vicious world the Reality of that One in Whose Pathway suffering was a joy and death a triumph.

It is a long time since, at the beginning of my letter, I mentioned the Bábu'l-Báb's³ descent into Mázindarán; but an understanding of the historic points and principles to which I have been referring are essential to a full understanding of the Báb.

For many years in those strange hallucinations that come with encroaching sleep, in reveries, and in dreams, I have seen, not a score of times but a hundred times or more those now familiar mountain passes that wind down into Mázindarán. Once when we were driving

¹ al-Kúfah, city on the west bank of the Euphrates River 110 km south of Baghdád.

² Karbalá', Karbilá', Pers. Karbalá, Karbilá. In CE 680.

³ "The Gate of the Gate", the title given by the Báb to Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Buḥrúyih.

in California I remember telling you that I had seen that road before, although it was the first time I had traversed it. But it was not until I travelled from Ámiriyyah to Shahíd ('Alí-Ábád) that a profound inner delight and agitation coupled with scene after scene of my well-remembered fantasy assured me that this was the place of my visions. Suddenly we shot between high stone cliffs that the sun would only penetrate for half an hour at noonday, and the mysterious sense of unreality that seized me brought back the thought of heavy lids and drowsiness; and then a stabbing joy of recollection. To see luxuriant verdure again—Mázindarán is sub-tropical after the starved, stark mountains of Khurásán—added to my sense of unreality. Being, as you have often said, a realist, I am not in the least addicted to this sort of thing, which made it all stranger.

(To be continued)

XXIV:10, January 1934 [XXIV:10:308]

Letters home

Persia

Keith Ransom-Kehler

The second to last instalment of Mrs Ransom-Kehler's "Letters" giving an account of her missionary travels in Persia—brought to an end by her tragic and untimely death—here find posthumous publication. The reader will note in this article a description of the strain and stress incident to travel in the East, to which she lent herself a willing martyr, but which lowered her resistance and made her susceptible to the contagion which caused her demise.

As I lay in a state of collapse from the rigors of my journey between Bábul and Rasht, I opened my Moffatt Testament and read the words of Paul to the Corinthians:

"I have been often at the point of death. Five times have I got forty lashes (all but one) from the Jews; three times have I been beaten by the Romans; three times ship-wrecked; once pelted with stones, adrift at sea for a whole day and night; I have been often on my travels, I have been in danger from rivers and robbers, in danger from Jews and Gentiles, through danger of town and desert, through dangers on the sea, through danger among false brothers, through labour and hardship, through many a sleepless night, through hunger and thirst, starving many a time, cold, ill-clad, and all the rest of it. And then there is the pressing business of each day." ... "I am satisfied for His sake with weakness, insults, trouble, persecution and calamity."¹

It was now the middle of November and the winter rains had started relentlessly by the time we were ready to leave Bábul. Dr Bassár and the Spiritual Assembly urged us to stay lest we meet great difficulty on our journey but we decided that it was wiser to start before conditions got worse.

We left in a downpour at nine o'clock Friday morning hoping to reach Shabsavar,² after a brief meeting with the believers enroute, in that evening.

The rain stopped again miraculously, as it had on our return from Arabkhayl,³ while I spoke from the porch of my host's home to what seemed to me the entire village of Fraidunkavár.⁴

A great procession of cars convoyed us to the next town and there, with tears, I parted from the glorious Bahá'ís of Bábul.

Soon our road was skirting the beach of the Caspian Sea and so continued until we crossed

¹ II Corinthians 11:24-28; 12:10.

² Tunukában, a city on the south coast of the Caspian Sea (134 km NW Tíhrán), formerly known as Shabsavár.

³ 'Arab Khayl is a village (36.6962440, 52.751382) in Mazandaran Province near the Caspian Sea.

⁴ Firaydúnkinár (Firaydún Kinár), also known as Qaşabih, is a city (36.684245, 52.524089) on the Caspian Sea.

the Sefridroud (Wide River)¹ in the Province of Gílán.

Throughout the length and breadth of Persia there is no such thing as a navigable stream; but in Mázindarán hundreds of creeks and rivulets flow from the perpetual snows of the Alburz range into the great sea.² These are spanned by as many bridges, rather flimsy, temporary affairs; for the road commissioner at one point told us that that particular bridge was being replaced for the fourth time in a year. The earth is a rich loose gravelly alluvial soil that gives way under any undue pressure.

After an hour or two of rain the creeks and streams begin to roll like torrents, gutting their banks and even washing rocks along to the furious sea. Both the works of nature and the works of man combine in threat and insecurity, that very soon become a menace and a devastation. The bridges range from three or four loose boards to about sixty feet in length, and fly by when “the going is good”, like telegraph poles past a train. But at this season and [XXIV:10:309] under these circumstances we had to stop and examine every structure.

The first bridge that we attempted to cross, after parting from our friends, had lost from its centre enough planks to permit the front end of the car to drop through. Here began the tedium and exertion of searching for heavy boards and putting them in place. That continued to be a quite regular part of our journey from then on.

By now the rain was pouring and the car was heaving through sheets of muddy water. It was an old model loaded to the gun-holes with our luggage, camping kit, bedding and all the necessities for just such an emergency.

Stopping every few hundred yards to examine roads and bridges we found their condition growing steadily worse as we neared the sea, for the whole push and weight of the torrents were dashing to their outlet with cumulative violence. We came to the first of many bridges dismantled and crumpled by the flood. A crude temporary structure had been thrown over the stream twenty feet lower than the bridge bed, which spanned it on a trestle at the level of the highway. To go from this level to the water’s edge in the deep mud of an unpaved descent, and on the opposite bank to reach the highway again was problem enough in itself; but the temporary bridge, only loosely anchored on the crumbling banks, presented a very grave danger.

‘Alá’í and Najmiyyih³ crossed first on foot; Váḥid and I stood in the rain and mud on the near side praying fervently. Water was already dashing furiously over the tottering boards and as the heavy car rolled onto it, it began to wave like a flag.

“Alláh-u-Abhá! he is clear,” we cried to each other as the car miraculously mounted the opposite bank, and we followed across with mincing steps and baited breath, hoping to be equally fortunate. As we step- [XXIV:10:310] ped ashore Váḥid and I agreed that the bridge couldn’t last much longer, and in a short time, we later learned, it was washed out to sea.

The car stalled on the hillside: finally enough stragglers appeared to push it over the crown on to the road. All of them were dripping and plastered with the mud and filthy water showered over them from the rear wheels trying to get traction. ‘Alá’í looked like an Abyssinian chieftain. But this, which would ordinarily have seemed a bad experience, went

¹ The river flowing north on the west side of Bábul is the Bábul Rúd. The Gilan Province is over 200 kilometres to the west. The next main river to the west is the Firaydúnkinár Rúd. The Sifíd-Rúd (Sefid River, “white”) is the main river in Gilan Province.

² Caspian Sea.

³ Najmiya[h], najmiyya[h]: fem. name; “star-like”, one who is like a star in radiance and beauty. Author refers to Najmiyyih (Pers.) as “Najjie”.

almost unnoticed in the midst of the actual dangers that confronted us.

Ḥasan Áqá ground his brakes and jammed on the emergency just in time to keep us from plunging into a deep stream where the road approach to the bridge had been swept away by the chafing eddies of a backwash.

Another interminable wait while road-menders, who luckily were passing, found long stout timbers to cover the gap. When these were nailed to the exposed beams of the bridge that were barely the width of the wheels apart, the car made a perilous crossing without two inches to spare, right or left.

But we still had the cheering thought that though late we could arrive in Shahsavār—only one hundred kilometres from Bábul—that night, and rest from our labours.

The rain nagged wearily on; the sea on our right was turgid and wild, the mountains on our left sodden and gravy, the road beneath us spongy and treacherous, and all man's friendly efforts were nullified by the elements. We made a conscious attempt at cheerfulness and nonchalance, which deceived neither ourselves nor each other, and as each fresh danger was passed chanted a prayer of gratitude.

For two kilometres we ploughed on without mishap, then another devastated bridge confronted us, but this time with no temporary structure to replace it.

Raḥmatu'lláh (whose other name is 'Alá'í) and Ḥasan Áqá went to find a ford in the stream but returned to say that it was rolling higher than the car and that crossing was absolutely impossible.

So here we were hemmed in by the now impassable bridge that we had miraculously crossed behind us and this furious wall of water before us to a little spit of land about a mile wide. There was no village in sight. A man on horseback passed us going inland and we told him to send food and aid.

As a bounty of Providence an old deserted tumble-down shack by the roadside offered shelter for the night. An abundance of wood, left in a corner by its former occupant years before, enabled the men speedily to build two fires, one in the enclosed room, and one in the open thatched pavilion adjoining, where food was cooked, water heated and clothes dried. Camp cots were opened and our bedding, all too scanty for five adults on a bitter night, was spread in the enclosed room.

At length we saw lanterns coming through the wood, and by-and-by three men from a distant village appeared. We hastily sent them back for samovar, utensils and provisions, and after an unconscionable time spent in coming and going a great steaming pilau¹ was served and life took on a brighter aspect.

The villagers brought tea, chicken [XXIV:10:311] and a huge bowl of mást² or clabber with sticks of charcoal crossed on it.

"Why the charcoal?" I inquired. "Nothing black must be brought into the house after sunset," they explained, "and nothing white must be taken out of it." So they covered the mast with charcoal to deceive the evil spirits into believing that no opening had been left for them by the removal of a colour which they hate.

Váḥid and Ḥasan Áqá slept in the car. They said that it would have been stripped by morning, even in this uninhabited place, if they had not done so.

¹ Píláv (píláv), boiled rice and meat.

² Mást (US clabber): sour, coagulated milk.

The skies wept their last and through the serried yellow clouds of their troubled recollection a dazed, bleared moonlight fell. The sea throbbed and beat like a mighty engine, and the superstitious visitors, who are very weather-wise told us that that sound betokened the end of the rain.

We were all nipped to the marrow with the stabbing cold and were early astir to rebuild the fires, breakfast, and thaw out before our next adventure.

True to its reputation Mázindarán was rapidly forgetting the sullen violence of her storm, for the sun was now shining brilliantly and the waters were rapidly subsiding.

Our dilapidated shelter was only a few hundred yards from the creek and when we arrived we found the road-force already busy repairing the bridge. 'Alá'í and Váhid walked the beams of the dismantled structure to the opposite shore, had the heaviest luggage carried across, and left Najjie and me in the car to ford the stream. As we started to mount the banks after crossing, the engine stalled, the rear of the car not only formed a dam that sent the water mounting but also was sinking in the muddy bed of the river. The road-menders hastily came to our assistance as the water swilled over the floor of the car. As many as could find hand space lifted, while a dozen of them pulled violently on a rope attached to the front bumper. With a mighty effort they heaved up the rear wheels, the men in front pulling the car ashore; Ḥasan Áqá started his engine while the men at the ropes, uninitiated in the Life and Habits of the automobile, continued to run ahead pulling, even after it was under its own power. I was frantic lest some of them be hurt, and at last as the car gained momentum they all cast loose and we reached the highway without accident. At the very moment that we passed, the superintendent received instructions from the engineer to permit no one to cross there until the bridge was repaired.

Whenever a Persian undertakes anything difficult it is to the rhythmic refrain: "Yá 'Alí! Yá Muḥammad! Yá Alláh!" (Oh 'Alí, oh Muḥammad, oh God), very much as sailors cry "Heave ho". As the car was visibly sinking I kept repeating with great fervour "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá." When they heard me they all stop- [XXIV:10:312] ped dead in amazement wondering perhaps if this was the familiar name of one of the Imams. They would have left us to drown I suppose if I had told them that it was the Name of the Promised Ḥusayn who had come to establish peace and justice in the world.

Full of hope and gratitude for clear weather and sunshine we passed a little thatched village and came to the Amír Rúd (river of the Minister). The heavy mail car was stuck fast near the shore, the lighter road car had been turned over three times and lay on its side in the swollen current; the bridge was gone.

So we turned back to find accommodation in the village¹ until the flood abated or the bridge was finished.

(To be continued)

XXIV:11, February 1934 [XXIV:11:338]

Letters home

Persia

Keith Ransom-Kehler

This concludes the series under the title "Letters home" begun by Keith Ransom-Kehler in the January 1932 issue [XXII:10:310-12] of this magazine. In this series we have traced her world pilgrimage through Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, the Holy Land, and then her prolonged

¹ This must have been the Najjár Dih village on the right bank of the Amír Rúd.

travels in Persia, a pilgrimage terminated by her sudden and tragic death in that land last October. Following is the second part of the author's description of difficulties encountered in her travels through rural districts between Bábul and Rasht.

The keeper of the Coffee House welcomed us to his home, the most pretentious in the village. The better houses are built of logs plastered with thick mud; the roofs are high gabled (not flat as in the desert portions of Persia), and thatched. When I inquired how much it would cost to build such a house the man said thirty túmán; the túmán at par is worth one dollar.

There were two rooms and a partially enclosed porch. We took the living-room and kitchen-porch where all the cooking was done. There were no windows in the house and even Najmiyyih had to stoop to pass the low lintel. This small opening furnished the only light and ventilation, making the room warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

At one side was a mud ridge under a mud mantel and a hole in the ceiling just above the door some distance from this hearth furnished the only outlet for the smoke of the newly kindled fire. The opening led to the attic reached by stairs improvised from an oblique tree-trunk in which regular notches had been cut for a foot-hold. The light from the opening in the roof, where the smoke finally emerged, revealed the rafters hung with dried fruit and vegetables, pickled I would think, beyond nourishment from hanging in that chimney.

The wood stood upright against the wall the thick flange of dried mud holding it in place. The beams and ceiling were burnished the most beautiful vivid black by constant incrustations of smoke. I never knew that black could be so vibrant and lovely!

There was a narrow mud platform or dais on one side of the room, on which stood a chest, the only piece of furniture in the house; a triangular shelf about four feet from the ground spanned every corner and a little thick lip of mud extended from the west wall marking the Kiblah, or direction of Mecca; on it was kept the mohr¹ or sacred earth from the blessed spot compressed in a tablet on which the forehead is pressed at the time of the frequent daily prayers. An iron kettle suspended by three chains from a rafter kept the dried meat from marauding animals.

Once more the cots were set up, and since it had now begun to rain again and walking was impossible, we reclined nearly all day to keep below the level of the smoke whose stinging acrid bite penetrated eyes and nostrils with a sharp hurtful tang.

The women of this village of Amirrud (named for the river)² are extremely comely. Our hostess had refined regularity of features and beautiful even teeth. The costume was picturesque: a very full bright skirt reaches the knees, a loose [XXIV:11:339] blouse covered with a sleeveless Eton jacket embroidered in silver or strong colours is worn atop, while a snug little pill-box of a hat from which dangles the woman's dowry in silver is covered with a small head-shawl.

When we first arrived, while 'Alá'í was making the arrangements, I sat in the car the cynosure of un-cramped village curiosity. The woman nearest, with her brood hovering round her, announced frankly, "In the village we don't see many sights!" And I certainly looked one with my unwashed face, uncombed hair and muddy, mussed clothes.

When I told our hostess that she is pretty she said simply, "Sorrow has aged and changed

¹ Turba (Pers. muhr), dust; earth; soil. Also a small piece of soil or clay, often a clay tablet, on which the forehead is pressed at the time of the daily prayers (ṣalāt, Islamic daily prayers) to symbolize the earth.

² Amír Rúd: a village (36.633470, 51.567460) on the Caspian Sea coast, Mazandaran Province. It named after the river to its east. The village they stayed overnight in must be Najjár Dih, since they had not crossed the Amír Rúd.

me; I have never been able to bear a child; five have now been taken; but *Inshá'alláh* (God willing) this one will live.”

The women do all the hard work, the men idly watching as they tug their lives away.¹ Children are not an economic responsibility but an actual commercial asset, and the family fortunes are built by having one every year. It is a common sight to see a young woman, an infant tied to her back, one astride her shoulders, a third, the eldest trudging behind, a fourth expected, walking with her produce or weaving to the distant village fair.

Our hostess climbed up the steep tree-trunk ladder to transact business in the attic, twenty times a day. She lifted enormously heavy containers of water or rice for the coffee-house, brought wood for the fireplaces, washed, cooked, carried, never sat down. Hordes of women in America of a corresponding social class would pick up the first loose object and break a man's skull if he ever suggested her working like this.

Once she came into our room and with great ceremony unlocked the chest with a key tightly fastened on a cord to her girdle. It seemed a quite solemn occasion as she un-hasped and unstrapped it lifting the lid carefully removing what appeared to be very precious objects, until she found a small bag which I thought must contain the family wealth if not diamonds or pearls. After everything had been painstakingly replaced and the chest secured again, I discovered that she had extracted a package of black pepper! If by accident I ever found any of that vile condiment in my possession I would hastily bury it for fear the dog might get it, since I do not consider it fit for consumption by man or beast; and here was this dear soul treasuring it.

The corner shelf nearest the fireplace contained a copy of the Qur'án. “My husband can read it, but he can't read anything else,” said the wife naifly.² When questioned he said that though a Muslim he knew nothing about the history of Islám, nor when or where Muḥammad lived. We tried to speak to him of Bahá'u'lláh, but he had no idea what we were talking about.

The long rainy day drew to a close and a muggy night fell. We could neither go nor return. Our gasoline had been greatly depleted by our frequent stalling and heavy going. We paid no more attention to punctures and engine trouble than to mosquito bites under such circumstances. Reports from the river told us that the mail car was still washed by the rolling waters; the road car drifting nearer the sea. [XXIV:11:340]

'Alá'í hired a man to go with his son to a nearby village across the river, one of the king's villages, supervised by a young Bahá'í. “Tell him of our plight and don't return without gasoline,” was the command.

At four o'clock, the rain having again stopped and the sun come out, we were delighted to have the rescued road-car draw up and say that the river was now passable. “Then we ought to go right away,” I said, “before the rains start again.” “And spend another night like last night by the roadside?” inquired Raḥmat.

“I'm sure we were all very happy by the roadside,” I said smilingly. “We were so grateful for warmth and shelter, so thankful to God for having safely passed such dangers, so joyful for any experience in the pathway of His service. But it is true that we might not be so fortunate another time. Whenever there is any question or doubt among Bahá'ís they must invoke the great principle of consultation,” I continued.

Though Ḥasan Áqá left Ṭihrán a Muslim he was by now a Bahá'í, so the five of us prayed, offered our opinions and voted. There were the two opposite views; first, that the man hadn't

¹ ... as their lives drift away.

² In a naif (free from guile, cunning or deceit) way; naïvely.

come with the gasoline; it was late and the road-menders had gone; so that if we stuck we would have to stay there; and secondly, the possibility of being confined to this village for a week if the rains started again.

There were three votes to stay against two to go, so we settled down with perfect satisfaction to fleas, inadequate covering, smoke-saturated atmosphere and all the comforts of home, for another night.

Great cosmic forces are evidently embraced in consultation. It never fails that where it is used exactly as directed "all its ways are happiness and all its paths are peace". Though this was one of the most formidable streams that we crossed we forded it easily and without assistance the next morning.

About fifteen kilometres farther on there was a three day accumulation of cars on either side of the stream. If we had left our village the night before we would have had only the ardour of loading and unloading for our pains for we could have come eleven kilometres and no further, provided we had safely crossed the Amír Rúd.

Here was a wide river¹ with the bridge partially swept away. The ford was a 400 meters from the highway nearer the sea. An army of men were lined up to reap a harvest pushing the cars across.

Najjie and I rode over on horseback, 'Alá'í and Váhid were carried pick-a-back by stout peasants, the car was stripped, the engine muffled and with a great shout of "Yá 'Alí" the dangerous passage was begun. It rolled three-fourths of the way without trouble and then all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't budge it. I couldn't bear to look at the strained and futile efforts of the crew to start it. At last after I had given up the idea of its completing the passage, they pulled an enormous bundle of drift wood from under the front wheels and made the shore.

The greatest peril that we encountered was still ahead of us, however: reaching the highway again. The grade to and from the river brink to the road had been [XXIV:11:341] hastily made by loose, fresh, wet loam carried in donkey panniers and lightly dumped to form a fill down the hillside. As the car started up, the men still pushing, the road simply rolled away under the weight of the car and there was imminent danger of its turning over and crushing the men on that side. They had no firm place on which to stand to steady the car and it was inclining at a treacherous angle. "Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá," I cried in a frenzy of apprehension lest someone be killed. By another evident miracle it righted itself and made the highway.

We had now spent three nights, cold, bedraggled, covered with fleas, without removing our clothes, half suffocated with wood-smoke, on flimsy cots, but except when in actual peril, we had managed to keep remarkably cheerful and happy. Some way, in our hearts we felt that such hardships were a very little thing to gauge the reality of our devotion to the service of Bahá'u'lláh; and remembering the "last full measure of devotion" offered by thousands at His Threshold in martyrdom that His Faith might live, this all seemed very trivial and ordinary. Whatever apprehension we had was quite evidently for each other. All except me had families of growing children; I was the only one who could really be spared for my family is grown and scattered; each felt a great responsibility for the other, however. In the whole course of our adventure I did not hear one complaint—one regret; though I confess we were all too preoccupied to laugh when 'Alá'í, like a motion-picture comedy, turned pot-black with mud in a twinkling while trying to push our mired car, which showed that our attitude at last was not superficial.

¹ Chálús Rúd.

This is only the merest outline, the high-lights of our experience; there were a score of other things that seem too slight to mention although ordinarily we would think that they had spoiled a trip. Unfortunately we were unable to get the right films for our camera in Bábul, so that this experience must go unrecorded except as I have written it.

At last by the grace of God we found the Friends waiting for us in Shabsavar, where I rudely left them to bathe and sleep the clock around in a quiet little room high in an orchard of orange blossoms.

How grateful we were to Bahá'u'lláh for providing against every need of our journey. How near such experiences bring us to Him. The promise of the Báb that "God will assist all those who arise to serve Him", had been spectacularly fulfilled.

XXIV:1, April 1933 [XXIV:1:14]

Russia's cultural contribution to the Bahá'í Faith

Part I

Martha L. Root

The author, well known as a Bahá'í travelling teacher and lecturer, here relates the story of the Russian poet who gave to the world three celebrated writings about the Bahá'í Teachings. Miss Root has succeeded in giving us a marvellous bit of history and a story of surpassing interest. The second part will follow next month.

Mrs Isabel Grinevsky, a Russian poet in Leningrad, gave a great impetus to the Bahá'í Movement and to world art in her three celebrated writings, the two dramas, *Bab* and *Baha'u'llah* and a narrative called *A Journey in the Countries of the Sun*. The last named is an account of her visit to in 1911 when He was in Ramleh, Egypt. While the last is in prose it has verses introduced so that we might almost say that the three form a trilogy in poetic form presenting the new universal religion of the oneness of mankind proclaimed by those three heavenly personages, the Báb the Forerunner, Bahá'u'lláh the Revealer of the Word and 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Centre of the Covenant of the Bahá'í Movement.

From the point of view of art the dramas rank high. Russian critics affirm that these works have proclaimed their author a poet of the first order. One of her countrymen, Mr Wesselitzky, President of the Foreign Press Association of London, said that he read the drama *Bab* on a railway train when he was returning to England from Russia in August 1905. His own words were: "I was at once attracted by the rare combination of philosophical thought with a great power of expression, beauty, imagery, and harmony of verse. I keenly felt the delight of reading a new, great poem and discovering a new first rate poet. I should have felt so on broad, general grounds from whatever country the poet came! However, my joy was intensified by the fact that the poem had been written in my own language and that the author was a country woman of mine."

This article purports to give a little history of these works, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself praised these dramas. (I do not know that He saw the narrative.) When He held the manuscript of the drama *Baha'u'llah* in His hands, He blessed it and prophesied to the author that these two dramas would be played in Tíhrán!

The drama *Bab* was published in May 1903, and was played in one of the principal theatres in St. Petersburg in January 1904. It was this drama that first brought to Count Leo Tolstoy a knowledge of the Bahá'í teachings. He read the book and at once wrote to Mrs Grinevsky his appreciation of her great drama and his sympathy with the Bahá'í Movement; the letter was printed in the Russian press and the poet has his letter in her possession now.

I have before me as I write a clipping from the *Herold* of [XXIV:1:15] January 1904: "The play

Bab appeared in May of last year, 1903, the most inconvenient time for the appearance of a book. Nevertheless the pens of the critics began to move in the journals and magazines in order to compose hymn songs of praise to the author. Moreover an enlightened Persian society sent her an inspired letter of thanks; and above all, Mrs Isabel Grinevsky had the spiritual satisfaction that among those who eulogized her drama was the lion of contemporary Russian literature, Leo Tolstoy. The impression was such that it made us think that amidst the statists representing the Persian throngs were real Persians; it seemed as if the scene exhaled the perfume of the roses of Shiraz!"

Mr Wesselitsky, whom I mentioned earlier in this story, gave a lecture in London in 1907 about this drama and his speech was afterwards published in pamphlets in English and French.¹ I quote two paragraphs: "Amidst the sorrows of disastrous war and those dreadful inner troubles, that book *Bab* was my only happy impression, and it remains since a permanent source of joy and comfort as a manifest proof of the vitality of Russia and its creative genius.

"The romantic side of this drama, too, is quite original. The plot is not based on adultery as in French drama and not on seduction as in 'Faust' but on renouncement and self-sacrifice. The romantic side of the *Bab* is closely allied with the metaphysical-ethical side. The drama has so much of the latter that every act may seem to be a sermon and the drama itself a suite of sermons. Yet all that preaching is relieved by genuine enthusiasm, eloquence of the heart and real passion. The conflict in the soul of the hero is not between passion and reason, but between two passions—human love and love divine—the latter being stronger and more ardent than the former. It is that manifestation of the power of the higher aims in the heart of man which is the chief feature of this book and the secret of its irresistible charm."

Celebrating the decade of the first performance of *Bab* in January 1914, Mrs Grinevsky gave a great conference on the drama in one of the most beautiful concert halls of Leningrad. The "St. Petersburg Informations Paper" gives the event a long review praising the author and her reading of selections from the poem and her address. One paragraph particularly I remember: "As a characteristic of the frame of mind of the poetess during the creation of her poem, the following words of her own may serve as an illustration: 'A well-known professor told me that the name of my poem, *Bahai* does not sound well to the ears of Russians. I answered that the names of the people who preached the ideals of love, paying for those ideals with their lives, must sound well to all those who have ears to hear. All noble ideals are so few in these days that it [XXIV:1:16] would be worth while to renew the performance of *Bab* in order to awaken the remembrance of these ideals. We, the people of the West, rise too late, we do not know the East where the sun shines!'"

The play was presented again in the Folk Theatre in Leningrad in April 1917, after the Russian Revolution. People came even from Moscow and Turkistán to see it. Diplomats from foreign countries were in the audience; the ambassador from China was one. A second edition of the drama had been published in 1916, and these books were sold at the entrance of the theatre; many spectators sat with the open books in their hands during this performance. It is a long drama in five acts, equal in the number of verses to "Don Carlos" of Schiller and "Cromwell" of Victor Hugo.

When I wrote asking Mrs Grinevsky about these dramas she sent me several letters. I should state that she has written many works along different lines of thought and lectured on many subjects in Russia, and had often spoken in conferences on these two dramas, *Bab* and

¹ Pamphlets in French and English, London, 1907, at the Press of 'Chronide', 29 Besborough Street, London. S.W.

Baha'u'llah. She was a member of the former Philosophic Society of the University, an active member of the former Oriental Society, and is a member of the present Bibiological Society and several literary societies and unions. She said that before she wrote her poem *Bab* the Russian public generally had not heard much about the Bahá'í Movement. She herself knew about it only from reading. The critics thought she had travelled much in Persia, she was so well informed about the life there, but as a matter of fact she had not been in Írán. She had heard that some Bahá'í believers from Persia had been driven out of their land into Turkey and India, and that some had come to Turkistán and were residing in the cities of Tashkent, Ishqábád and Mary and in the city of Baku in the Caucasus.

"Still, I thought" she says, "these believers in the Báb now called Bahá'ís had mingled with other nations, and perhaps had ceased to exist as a religious entity. The description of Professor Edward G. Browne seemed to me a fairy tale. How astonished I was when, after my drama *Bab* made its appearance in 1903, I received one day a letter with the following address: 'To the author of the book *Bab*, Mrs Isabel Grinevsky in St. Petersburg.' Neither street nor number of the house was marked, yet thanks to the careful postal authorities, that letter though unregistered, reached me safely."

Both the handwriting and signature proved unknown but she relates: "That letter was from Ali-Akbar Mamedhanly from Bákú who wrote that he was a believer in the Báb, that he had read in the *News* of Bákú about my poem, the account of which had interested him greatly and that he would like to get the book. He asked that if he found any mistakes against the Teachings of the Báb, could he perhaps point them out? It was like a star falling from heaven at my feet! As if I had found a precious stone where I [XXIV:1:17] had not expected to find one."

The book was mailed to him at once and she explained to that Bahá'í that she had had to deviate just a little from a few of the historical facts for the sake of a dramatic whole. She added: "I wrote for a public all unprepared to hear moral, religious and philosophical ideas from the stage; it was accustomed to lighter plays, not a theme about God, of religion, especially about the conception of a new religion or rather, I would say religion renewed!"

The Bahá'í from Bákú politely replied to Mrs Grinevsky's letter as follows: "The impression which I received in reading your drama was such that I could not see any mistakes of any kind, even though I read it many times. We read it in the Bahá'í Assembly (meeting) and the believers send you sincerest thanks. They feel sure that the literary world will soon unite in a general solemnizing of your creative powers."

She said that he also wrote beautifully about the Bahá'í life in Caucasus stating among other points: "We live here cherishing the tenets for which our grandfathers, fathers and brothers shed their blood maintaining the chief principles: pardon, patience and love to mankind." Mrs Grinevsky said that these letters were written in Russian and showed that the Bahá'ís were very enlightened in literature and science. She also added: "It was such a joy to me to find that there are in the world people so congenial to me in feeling and in vision. I loved with my soul those spiritual people who, just like the people in my drama, were holding those principles of pardon, patience and love to all mankind, holding them not as a dead dogma but as a living truth!"

(To be continued)

XXIV:1, April 1933 [XXIV:1:18]

Glimpses of the New World Order

Part II

Notes on a visit to Haifa and 'Akká

Mabel and Sylvia Paine

"We cannot conceive of a star without light, a tree without seed. If we claim to be followers

of light we must diffuse the light through our actions. To label ourselves will not be sufficient. ... One who is wise in the ways of God sees that his words and deeds reflect the glory of God.”¹

In the first instalment of these “Diary Notes” of a visit to Haifa and ‘Akká, published last month, the authors told of their arrival at Haifa and of their meeting with Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá’í Cause; with Bábíyyih Khánúm, the sister of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and other members of His family, and of their conversations with them concerning Him. The present instalment definitely concerns a visit to ‘Akká the old Prison quarters where Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and seventy followers were incarcerated with unspeakable hardships and sufferings.

Saturday, 14 November. Today at luncheon the subject of the divinity of Christ came up. This phrase, Shoghi Effendi pointed out, is ambiguous. If it means God incarnate it is unscientific. A truer word is Manifestation. This word implies the true Trinity, which consists of God, Whom we may compare to the Sun; the Prophet—as Christ, Moses, Muḥammad, Bahá’u’lláh—is like a perfect mirror catching the sun’s rays and reflecting even its disc; and the Holy Spirit, which may be compared to the sun’s rays connecting sun and mirror.

In the afternoon at tea with the ladies the talk was about bringing up children. One of the ladies counselled, “Don’t force them to take a certain course, however praiseworthy and desirable, but take the stones out of that path, make it as easy for them as you can.” She told how her children were taught to pray. She didn’t tell them to pray, but they saw and heard her pray. One day when she was praying her little boy asked what she was doing. She told him she was talking to God, asking Him to help them to be good. After a day or two he said he would like to talk with God.

She said she thought what was needed, even more than people to talk and write about the Bahá’í teachings, was people to live them. “How sad ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was,” she added, “when He heard of one who professed to be a Bahá’í yet did not live in the right way. She told of a Persian Bahá’í who spoke rudely to his wife. His little son noticed this and one day remarked to him, ‘You can’t be a Bahá’í, or you wouldn’t speak in that way.’”

Another story she told was of a young Bahá’í in Persia to whom the cashier in a bank gave by mistake fifty pounds too much. As soon as the young man discovered the mistake he returned the money. The bank official was so much impressed that he asked the young man what his religion was. [XXIV:1:19]

No one who witnessed the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá could doubt that the Bahá’í Faith is first of all the noble living of life. Still, the memory of His teachings, reinforced by His life of loving service, remains in Haifa. The other day this conversation was overheard in a Haifa shop. A woman came in to make a purchase and asked the storekeeper how he was getting along.

“Just well enough,” he replied, “to keep soul and body together. But I am contented. Life is short and happiness is not dependent on having many material things. Abbas Effandi² used to tell us so and make us realize it.”

“Yes,” answered the woman, “it seems to me ‘Abbás Afandí is still living with us. His body passed away but His life and influence still go on among us.”

A Christian came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s house shortly after His passing. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life, he said, impressed him more profoundly than did the life of Christ. He told his bishop this and the bishop reproved him for not being more loyal to Christ. He replied that it was simply that

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 42.

² The name (‘Abbás Afandí) by which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was known in Palestine.

Christ's life was further removed and so did not touch him so closely. The quality of life he believed was the same.

One of the ladies described the evening when 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned to Haifa after His long journey through Europe and America in 1912. When the ship anchored almost everyone in Haifa was down at the water's edge to greet Him, although people had been requested not to come because He was so very tired. Some went aboard the ship, lifted Him in their arms and carried Him to the small boat for landing.

Friday, 13 November. Today at luncheon the subject of institutions was discussed. Any idea or movement, Shoghi Effendi said, needs an institution. For instance educational ideas must be carried out in schools, social and political movements find expression in institutions. Inherently an institution is a necessary and a good thing. The trouble creeps in when institutions, with the lapse of time, become corrupt. Then they need to be renewed.

In the same way any movement needs a creed. A creed is not a bad thing. What is bad is when men add non-essentials to a creed.

The supposed quotation from 'Abdu'l-Bahá that the Bahá'í Cause is not an organization should read, "*You cannot limit the Bahá'í Cause to an organization.*" The Bahá'í Cause must be organized just as everything must be. Institutions are necessary. All institutions now are decadent, but without institutions we should have nothing but anarchy. Bahá'ís regard institutions not as ends, but as means.

Monday, 16 November. Late this morning we drove in an automobile the nine miles drive around the edge of the Bay of 'Akká to the vicinity of 'Akká.

'Akká, the ancient fortress and prison city is a scene of some of the greatest tests as well as triumphs of the little group of leaders of the Bahá'í Cause in its early days. Here [XXIV:1:20] seventy Bahá'ís, exiles from their native land, were sent by the Sultán of the Ottoman Empire in the hopes that this greatest prison would prove to be the end of the leaders and the religious faith which they were spreading. Vermin infested, filthy in the extreme, it was a place where the worst criminals were sent to languish and die. Strangely enough the little band of Bahá'ís after living herded together in an unspeakably filthy room in the prison for two years, suffering from malaria, as well as insufficient food and water, were given more liberties. Instead of being forgotten, the Cause for which they were sacrificing their freedom spread.

The road lay along the sandy beach by the sea. The day was clear and it was an especially impressive experience to ride on the sand with the sparkling blue sea on the left, past Arab fishermen drawing their nets, travellers on donkeys and camels as well as in motor cars. The white buildings of the ancient city of 'Akká gleamed out as our journey's goal. 'Akká was Napoleon's goal when he came with his army from Egypt. He hoped to make it the gateway to conquering the Near East, but found it instead an insurmountable obstacle which turned him back.

We had left Mount Carmel, where the Jewish prophets and Jesus walked, and ahead of us in the far distance we could see the snow-capped mountains of Lebanon. Soon we arrived at the gates of the city of 'Akká. At one time there were three walls around the city and the gates were closed at sundown. Although now the entrance to the city is open at all times, we noticed as we went in the "needle's eye" a small opening in the wall beside the main gate about five feet high. Late travellers could enter through this opening and their camels, too, if unloaded, could get in by a process of kneeling and squirming through. The streets of 'Akká are narrow and dirty, paved with worn stones and filled with men and women, mostly in

Oriental garb, and children playing and fighting or going to the bakery with enormous flat trays filled with loaves of bread of a tannish hue, looking something like our pancakes. The children's clothes, the streets and bread all shade into a light greyish tan hue and perhaps it is just as well not to be too germ conscious.

(To be continued)

XXIV:2, May 1933 [XXIV:2:57]

Russia's cultural contribution to the Bahá'í Faith

Part II

Martha L. Root

This is the concluding part of the author's story of the Russian poet who gave to the world three celebrated writings about the Bahá'í Teachings. Herein we find reference to the poets book on Bahá'u'lláh, her visit with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Ramleh, Egypt, and further comment on the remarkable reception her books have received.

Now I shall speak of the tragedy poem *Baha'u'llah*. Mrs Grinevsky wrote me how she received the inspiration to write it. She said: "Among the many letters which I received from unknown people, all writing me about my play, *Bab* was one from a gentleman who to my astonishment had a profound knowledge not only of the Báb but also of Bahá'u'lláh. Like the Báb, until 1903, Bahá'u'lláh was generally unknown even among the cultured classes, professors sometimes asking me who my hero was. Even one (Czarist) politician had once asked me, 'What is Bahá'u'lláh?' Not who, mind you, but what! So I was all the more impressed to hear from my Russian provincial correspondent the name of Bahá'u'lláh. He said in his note: 'I was fascinated by the poem *Bab* like a youth though I am not a youth in years. I have passed two faculties of the university and have in my library all the available works which appear in the literature of the world.'"

"He counselled me" Mrs Grinevsky says, "to compose a tragedy about the life of Bahá'u'lláh. I myself had thought of it but had been so occupied I had never attempted it; now I determined to undertake this big work. I always remember with gratitude the memory of this Russian gentleman who was not a Bahá'í but a man of great heart. He passed on before my work was published, and I never met him. His name was Nicolas Zazuline; he, as I knew, was president of the nobility in Kishinef and the author of several philosophical treatises."

She continues: "When my work was finished and notices about it appeared in the press, a number of people who had assisted at the representations of my poem *Bab* and had heard my conferences about that poem which I gave many times, asked me to prepare a lecture about my new composition. The first address about it was given in our summer capital Siestroretzk and afterwards I also lectured in the capital itself at the Society of Oratorical Arts' Hall, in the year 1910."

Mrs Grinevsky explained that when her Bahá'í correspondent of Bákú, Mirza Ali Akbar Mamedhanly, read in the newspapers that the work was finished, (he had known from her that it was being written) he asked to have a copy sent to him. She mailed to him several excerpts from the poem. A few weeks later she was amazed to receive a telegram from him saying: "'Abdu'l-Bahá permits us to visit Him in Egypt.'" 'Abdu'l-Bahá was at that time making a short stay in Egypt.

She writes in her letter to me: "That had been my secret, my innermost desire, to see with my own [XXIV:2:58] eyes those people whom I had described, who, as my correspondent said, 'love all mankind'. I had thought it absolutely impossible, and yet, unexpectedly, wonderfully, it had come to pass that I could go to see even the greatest of those people! I started from Russia with my manuscript of the poem *Baha'u'llah* in December 1910, my aim being to see the surroundings of my dreams, of my fancy, about which my former respectful correspondent

and present fellow traveller in that journey to Egypt had spoken—to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!”

Seven years had passed between the appearance of the drama *Bab* and the concluding of the tragedy *Bahá’u’lláh* followed by this memorable journey. Mrs Grinevsky spent two weeks in Ramleh, Egypt, as the guest of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. After she returned to Russia she had several letters or tablets from Him. In one of these He speaks of an article which He had just received about her poem *Baha’u’llah*. From the Tablet (or letter) addressed to Madame Grinevsky and signed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, I quote:

“The article which was published in the Saint Petersburg Journal about thy recent book (Baha’u’llah) was in the utmost eloquence and fluency. It was an indication of thy praiseworthy services. The publication of such articles is very useful. They are conducive to the promotion of the divine Call. Praise be to God that thou art assisted in the service of the world of humanity and art spreading the summons of the Kingdom of God. Day and night thou must praise God that thou art assisted to perform such a great service. Rest thou assured that that which is the utmost desire¹ of thy heart shall come to pass concerning this matter.

“This seed which thou has sowed shall grow. If the means are not available at present, unquestionably they will become realized. I pray in thy behalf that thou mayest become confirmed in the uninterrupted service of the Kingdom of God.”

The article which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions in His tablet had been published in the French newspaper *Journal de Saint Petersburg* January 1912. The headline was *Baha’u’llah*. I quote paragraphs from this review: Bahá’u’lláh means the Glory of God—such is the title of the new tragedy with which Mrs Isabel Grinevsky has enriched Russian dramatic literature. We must praise without restriction a work whose high, dramatic significance is combined with admirable form. The author of the drama *Bab*, that work of such strong thought, has never attained such a powerful conception as this poem.

“The mind of the reader, attracted by a rhythm of an unspeakably harmonious poetry, rises imperceptibly to summits where the most grave problems are discussed, problems over which thoughtful humanity bends with fear and despair, helpless to solve them. The characters are analyzed with great psychological insight.

“Bahá’u’lláh, the central figure, is depicted with the clearness and power of an antique high-relief. The complexity of that elect-nature is presented with the authority and truth of the great masters of the classical theatre. What a lofty lesson, what eloquence *Sursum corda*² in that life of pure bounty, of selflessness in that wide desire to spread peace!

“How not to be moved, fascinated by the nobility of this Apostolic character? [XXIV:2:59]

“As in the *Bab*, the events touch the great religious movement which roused the country of Persia in the middle of the last century. The historical part is exact. Mrs Grinevsky did not limit herself to the studies of documents, the great quantity of which we can hardly imagine; she knows the country very well. Her knowledge gives to the characters an intensive life and a warm colouring.

“The origin of a faith analyzed with the help of true science is carried forward with great art beginning with the first thought which moves the heart of the Apostle, who loves mankind as He loves His family and His own country.

¹ In a footnote Mrs Grinevsky adds that her utmost desire which she had expressed in Ramleh had been that her poems might be translated into European languages. The poem *Bab* has been translated into German and French, but the poem *Baha’u’llah* is still untranslated.

² The words addressed, in Eucharistic liturgies, by the celebrant to the congregation at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer: “Lift up your hearts”.

“The author gives a vision, a revelation of all that is hidden of moving, precious depths in that supreme struggle. The liberating pain, the majesty of effort, the active bounty—all these elements of that struggle remain ordinarily unattainable for the crowd which cannot fathom under their austere dogmas, one of the beautiful forms of human unity.

“The love, the deep necessity which lives in each human heart passes throughout the tragedy as an undercurrent, the fountain-head of which, never drying, remains hidden to the exterior world.

“That beautiful and bold work points a return to the school of majesty and aesthetic morality, the aspiration to the eternal truth, which are the indelible character of permanent works. We foretell for this book a most merited success. Humanity, be it to its credit, is tired of the histories of the impure which spoil the taste and soil the mind. It cannot but receive with enthusiasm a work of which the most civilized countries of Europe will be proud.”

Mrs Grinevsky, returning from Ramleh in January 1911, gave interviews to the press at Odessa, the Russian port of the Black Sea, and as soon as she reached home she began her book, ‘A Journey to the Countries of the Sun’, which is an account of her visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This was interrupted because in the summer of 1912 she was called to Paris by the French translator of *Bab*, Madame Halperin. When she came again to Leningrad she immediately began the publication of the drama *Baha’u’llah* so that it was not until 1914 that she completed the manuscript of “A Journey to the Countries of the Sun”. It is interesting to note that when she completed it, three Persians, Asadu’lláh Namdor of Moscow, ‘Alí Akbar Kamalof of Tashkand and an old Persian Bahá’í friend whom she had met at Port Said came to call upon her and she read to them many parts from the “Journey”, the central figure of which is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This book of 550 pages has not yet been published because at this time the world war commenced; neither has it yet been translated into other languages.

May this great Russian poet, Mrs Isabel Grinevsky, who has made such a cultural contribution to literature and to the Bahá’í Movement someday see all her works translated into European languages! The English reading world eagerly awaits them, I know, for many inquiries come from the United States asking where it is possible to get these books in Russian, in French, or in German!

XXIV:3, June 1933 [XXIV:3:84]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to Budapest

Martha L. Root

The following article, which was translated into Hungarian by Mrs Irma Szirmai, appears as an introduction in the first Hungarian edition of Dr Esslemont’s book, Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era, recently published in Budapest. The translation of Dr Esslemont’s book into Hungarian was made by Mr Georgy Steiner of Győr, Hungary.

The readers of the Bahá’í Magazine will be interested to know of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s historic visit to Budapest, Hungary, from 9–18 April 1913. Several distinguished statesmen, scholars and business men of Budapest hearing that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Son of Bahá’u’lláh the great World Educator, was passing through Europe from the United States enroute to His home in Haifa, Palestine, sent a most cordial invitation urging Him to come to the Magyar Capital and speak of His Father’s Teachings for the oneness of mankind and universal peace.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, this great teacher belonging to one of the noblest families of Persia, the illumined expounder of the Bahá’í Teachings, arrived at the railway station with His party, He was met by Dr Ignatius Goldziher, the renowned Orientalist; by Professor Julius Germanys, professor of Persian, Arabic and Turkish languages in the Oriental Institute of Budapest

University; by Director Leopold Stark, a very well-known engineer, and others. They escorted Him to the Ritz Hotel¹ where He took rooms facing the beautiful Danube River. With Him were His Persian secretaries, Persian interpreter and two or three other companions.

A few minutes after their arrival, a delegation of citizens came to welcome this Eastern Visitor officially and He met them in a most friendly way in the lounge. The group included Prelate Alexander Giesswein, one of the most honoured and learned thinkers and pacifists of Hungary, then President of the Peace Society and of the Hungarian Esperanto Society, Professor Robert A. Nadler, the renowned painter, the family of Director Stark and several others, among them an American and an Indian notable living in Budapest. They addressed 'Abdu'l-Bahá saying: "In the name of all present we welcome the blessed Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We admire your great life and we offer You our thanks and deep gratitude, that at Your age, You take upon Yourself these long journeys for the sake of helping and comforting humanity. Such labours, such sacrifices as 'Abdu'l-Bahá endures are our great examples, that we may know how to live and to serve humanity."

This beloved Visitor responded that thanks be to God, He hoped all of them would be confirmed in the service to humanity! He said that we can render no greater service to man than to spread unity in the world of mankind, and to work for universal peace. He showed how, when the East was in black dark- [XXIV:3:85] ness and was surrounded on all sides by the gloom of fanaticism, Bahá'u'lláh arose like a sun from the sky of the East and proclaimed the unity of mankind.

Reporters were present and asked many questions about the Bahá'í Teachings for world understanding. Members of the Theosophical Society invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to speak at their meeting the next evening, 10 April. Also, a joint invitation was extended to Him to give a public lecture 11 April, the event to be under the auspices of the Theosophical Society, the Women's organizations and the Esperantists. 'Abdu'l-Bahá smilingly accepted.

Early the following morning 'Abdu'l-Bahá prepared tea Himself and praised the marvellous view from His window overlooking the broad, blue glistening Danube with its immense and wonderfully ornamented suspension bridges, its gaily decorated steamers and the beautifully laid out promenades. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá took a walk across one of these large bridges to Buda. His personality and dignity attracted the attention of all who saw Him; many stopped to greet Him with reverence and to ask questions.

All day people visited Him in the hotel and He spoke with them about the spiritual unity of the East and the West. He voiced to them this remarkable thought that *it was his hope that Budapest might become a centre for the reunion of the East and West, and that from this city the light might emanate to other places.* He also said that thanks be to God the conception of spiritual life was alive in Budapest, that men search for truth, that they care for the Word of God and long to be guided to the Kingdom Everlasting.

When callers spoke to about the buildings and the sights of the Hungarian Capital, He kindly replied to them that He came to Budapest to see the objects of interest and buildings of human hearts, and not the buildings of stone and of the city. He said to them speaking symbolically, that He knew of a Country in which there are glorious cities; that in that Country there is but one universal language spoken, and therefore, they would all understand one another without an interpreter. He said they would see There His Holiness Christ and the Prophets and would find good people There just as were around Him here. He told of the delicious fruits There and said they were for them. His visitors were astonished, but when asked if they would like to go with Him to that beautiful Land, they replied: Yes, we will go

¹ Now known as the Dunapaleta Hotel.

with you willingly!

Professor Germanus, a young but already celebrated Orientalist, brought a group of young Turkish students to call upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá and these youth presented Him with a letter of solemn welcome signed by all students of the Turkish language in Budapest. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to them in perfect Turkish. They marvelled at His eloquence and His command of this tongue. He told them that it was His highest hope that the East and West might be united completely. He made it very clear to them that in [XXIV:3:86] reality, East and West do not exist—that each point on this terrestrial globe is equal, with the same rights; that any point in relation to another point is either East or West; that all are points of one sphere, one country, one humanity. Therefore, He said, He was very happy to visit this country of Hungary which is the standard bearer of progress to the East, and which unites with the Western culture the Eastern feelings of cordial hospitality to people of other countries. He blessed them and hoped they would, day by day, become more confirmed in service and progress.

Others called and in the afternoon 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the homes of several families. He went, in the evening, to the Theosophical meeting where fifty people were awaiting Him. The Chairman greeted Him in these words: "We welcome 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the name of all our brothers and sisters, we are extremely happy that this blessed One has visited us. ..."

"'Abdu'l-Bahá replied that He was greatly pleased to address such a noble spiritual assembly. He called them a noble, spiritual gathering because they were most diligent in their endeavours for peace and fellowship, and He spoke to them about the oneness of mankind. His words were so appealing that the Chairman again thanked Him and in the name of all present invited Him to come to them again on Saturday evening, 12 April. (He did go to this second meeting and all present again felt His mighty spirit, especially when He prayed for the people of Hungary; in closing He prayed that God would give them heavenly strength, surround them with heavenly happiness!)

Only glimpses of events can be given in this brief introduction, but on the evening of 11 April, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in the old Parliament Building to more than one thousand people. This great hall was formerly the Hall of the Parliament; it has two platforms, a higher and a lower, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood on the higher one directly underneath the coat of arms of Hungary—those ancient, historical arms held by two white winged angels. This great holy teacher was introduced to the audience by Prelate Giesswein as Dr Goldziher stood at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's right. Suddenly the people, as if sensing the deep significance of the moment, burst into tremendous applause. They felt, if they did not understand, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá standing between the Catholic Prelate and the Jewish Orientalist represented the reconciliation of these two great religions.

Dr Germanus who interpreted 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words into Hungarian said that he never saw a more interesting audience. He said that all seats were occupied while many stood in the gallery; aisles and corridors were crowded and a line extended even to the street! Members of Parliament, members of philosophical and philological societies, university professors, artists, Catholic priests, Protestant clergymen, representatives of modern religious movements, women's organizations, Esperantists, members of social and humanitarian so-[XXIV:3:87] cities, many nationalities, many races were present—in a word the gathering reflected the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh: one must unite everything that is good and precious in mankind, one must give equality to women, must help the ignorant and oppressed and must lead all humanity to mutual understanding!

After the lecture many approached 'Abdu'l-Bahá to express to Him their reverence and their delight in what He had said to them. His reply had in it one of the great truths of the

Bahá'í Faith. He told these eager listeners that the influence of the words spoken and the confirmation from the Kingdom of God are two perfectly different things: the influence of spoken words on the soul, and the elevation of the soul which can be attained only by the blessing of the Heavenly Kingdom. Words alone cannot bring the great spiritual transformations, only Bahá'u'lláh's favour and help and the victory of the Holy Spirit can give that great spiritual experience.

After the lecture a dinner was given for 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Hotel Pannonia.

'Abdu'l-Bahá saw many friends at His hotel the following day, 12 April. Mr Alajos Paikert, founder and Acting Vice President of the Turanian Society called and invited this great Visitor to give an address before the members of their society and friends, on Monday evening, 14 April, Mr Paikert who is also one of the founders of the Society for Foreign Affairs and organizer of the celebrated Agricultural Museum in Budapest (also of the Agricultural Museum in Cairo, Egypt) praised 'Abdu'l-Bahá's high aims for peace. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told him He hoped that he would attain great spiritual power and do much to promote peace and universal brotherhood. He showed how many ways there are to unite souls but none has such a power as the Word of God.

This lecture arranged by the Hungarian Turanian Society took place in the majestic hall of the former House of Magnates in the National Museum Building. As Mr Paikert told me: "Abdu'l-Bahá was introduced by me, and as He ascended the tribune and began to speak, the entire audience of two hundred prominent gentlemen and their ladies, listened breathlessly to Him. He spoke in Persian and His thoughts were interpreted into English, and then Mr Leopold Stark gave them in Hungarian language. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke of the high culture of Turan about which He knew so well, and showed how it was destroyed by religious inharmony and conflicts. He outlined a constructive plan for enduring peace. When asked which place would be chosen for the centre of peace, 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied that it would be the country in which the standard of peace will be established first, that will be the centre! After the lecture 'Abdu'l-Bahá took supper in the home of 'Alí 'Abbás Abhá Tabrízí, and the Turkish Consul was one of the guests.

"Abdu'l-Bahá, next day, accepted the invitation to honour my home in Budapest with a visit," said Mr Paikert. "He came with His friends and we gathered in our [XXIV:3:88] reception hall in my villa on the slope of God's Mountain, overlooking the Hungarian Capital. He spoke with my family and friends in His mild, dear voice, about the high virtues of family life in the different countries, of lofty moral and spiritual ideals and of understanding among the nations. We listened, deeply impressed by the extraordinary spiritual personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

Several visits were made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He went to the homes of Professor Nadler and of Mr Stark, and He visited the late Count Albert Apponyi in Buda. These two discussed the highest problems of mankind. The writer of this introduction interviewed Count Apponyi and heard him speak twice. He said that his aim too, is an assured peace, based upon justice, peace of soul not at the mercy of unforeseen political changes. He said: "Hungary has been, as it were, on the high road of the conflicts that have shaken the world for centuries past. If there is any nation to whose interest it is that a new order should be set up, based upon law and not upon force, upon concord and co-operation, and not upon rivalry, if there is any nation to whose special interest it is that peace should be established and consolidated, that nation is Hungary. Peace is not an isolated problem. It is a central star around which all other social problems revolve, as the planets revolve around the sun."

Professor Arminius Vambery, the outstanding Orientalist and erudite scientist, whom both

Queen Victoria and King Edward of Great Britain distinguished for many years with their friendship, invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to his home several times. In a subsequent letter of Professor Vambery to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, one feels the heat of a flame breaking forth from the heart of a man who has always sought for the great Truth.¹

Professor Robert A. Nadler who in 1913, was Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy of Art (and later became Professor in the University of Technical Sciences) has painted a wonderful portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He said to the writer of this introduction: "When I saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá, He was in His seventieth year. I was so impressed and charmed with His Personality that I had the great longing to paint His portrait. He consented to come to my studio, but said He could not give me much time because He was so busy. I marvelled at His expression of peace and pure love and absolute good will. He saw everything with such a nice eye; everything was beautiful to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, both the outer life of Budapest and the souls of all. He praised the situation of our city, our fine Danube in the midst of the town, good water, good people. Oh, He had so many beautiful thoughts I was inspired, and I knew I did not have much time, so I concentrated very much. He gave me three sittings."

It will interest readers to know that 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself and His Persian companions said that the portrait was a success. Professor [XXIV:3:89] Nadler is one of only two painters who ever had the opportunity to have 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself sit for a portrait. This painting is not only a strong likeness of showing His spiritual power and majesty, but every detail is pleasing. His hand which has blessed and helped so many thousands is shown full of tenderness, the whole portrait vibrates in harmonious colours. In the centuries to come, Hungary will be distinguished as the home of this historical portrait. It now hangs in the Studio of Professor Nadler in the University of Technical Sciences in Budapest, and he says that he is so happy to have the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá always with Him in his studio!

'Abdu'l-Bahá was ill for two days as the cold weather and a sudden snow storm so unusual at that time of year, brought on a severe grippe. However, He insisted on dressing and meeting all the friends who knocked at His door. All the friends, including several families, came. Among the many words that 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to them were these, that they must never forget the history of Bahá'u'lláh which He had related to them. He showed them how much Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings had spread in the past sixty years, how the Bahá'í Movement is known in the East and in the West. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that since He had been in Budapest He had set a flame aglow, and the day would break when its light would shine visibly to everybody. He explained that the origin of a tree is only a small seed, but if it develops and begins to grow, it will bear a beautiful fruit. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them that souls would come who would rejoice their hearts and the Cause of God would make great progress in Hungary. He assured them that if they arose in the service of the holy Teachings as they should, that the Hosts of the Omnipotent would come to their assistance and they would be victorious. When asked about meetings, He told them very clearly just how to arrange Bahá'í meetings.

On the morning of 18 April, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His party went to the railway station to leave Hungary. A great number of devoted friends were there to bid them farewell—many Hungarians and also some Turks, Americans, and Indians. They were very sad that He must go, but He consoled them and asked them to follow the Holy Teachings, spread the Glad Tidings and lead people to unity. Each one in his own language begged for a blessing in his endeavour to serve. Then as the train moved out, they continued to gaze at His holy countenance with their arms outstretched in longing!

¹ This visit will be described in a subsequent article on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Budapest.

Glimpses of the New World Order

Part III

Notes on a visit to Haifa and 'Akká
Mabel and Sylvia Paine

“Yet in spite of all difficulties, he [Bahá'u'lláh] was ever in an exalted state; his face shone continually. He had the presence of a king. One cannot imagine such majesty. One never thought of him as a prisoner—on the contrary, one would have said that he was enjoying the greatest triumph, for he drew his strength from divine power.”¹

The first instalment of these “Diary Notes” was published in the March number. Therein the authors told of their arrival in Haifa, their meeting with Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause, and the members of the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The second instalment published in the April number gave a description of their visit to 'Akká and the old prison quarters where Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá were incarcerated for so many years. Herein is a further description of the barracks at 'Akká and a brief description of Bahjí the house in the country outside of 'Akká occupied by Bahá'u'lláh during the later years of His life.

From 'Akká we drove to the Garden of the Riḍván, the garden which Bahá'u'lláh had made and which He frequented during all the latter years of His life after He had been freed from the strict imprisonment of 'Akká and when He occupied the house in the country known as Bahjí.

He Himself describes this garden in one of His works:

“One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst.”² The vision which He there beheld was such that “the pen fails to describe”. Later He beheld in holy vision in this garden, “... one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. ... I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.’”³

With such associations is the Riḍván Garden hallowed. The island which Bahá'u'lláh refers to is made by the separation and confluence of the river Belus.⁴ The flowing streams are little runlets of water from a fountain which plays at intervals. These runlets flow through the centre of the garden under a large mulberry tree. It was here Bahá'u'lláh used to sit. Surrounding this central, most sacred portion are green lawns, borders of scarlet geraniums, lofty palms and other sub-tropical trees. In the gardener's house is the room which Bahá'u'lláh sometimes occupied containing His chair kept in a cedar box. [XXIV:3:91]

From the Riḍván we drove back to 'Akká.

The barracks where the Bahá'ís were thrown on their arrival in 1868 are thus described by the sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

“The season was summer (1868) and the temperature very high. All our people were huddled together on the damp earth floor of the barracks; with little water to drink, and that very bad, with no water with which to bathe, and scarcely enough for washing their faces.

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 71.

² Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 136.

³ Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 136–7.

⁴ The Riḍván Garden is a small island in the Na'mayn Stream that once flowed into the Nahr Na'mayn (Hebrew Na'aman River), the river that was once known as the Belus or Belos River of Phoenicia.

Typhoid fever and dysentery broke out among them. Everyone in our company fell sick excepting my brother, an aunt, and two others of the believers. We were not allowed a physician; we could not procure medicine. My brother had in His baggage some quinine and bismuth. With these two drugs and His nursing, He brought us all through with the exception of four who died. These were two months of such awful horror as words cannot picture. Imagine it if you can. Some seventy men, women and children packed together, hot summer weather, no proper food, bad water, and a general attack of the terrible diseases of typhoid and dysentery.

“There was no one with strength to be of any general service but my brother. He washed the patients, fed them, nursed them, watched with them. He took no rest. When at length He had brought the rest of us—the four who died excepted—through the crisis and we were out of danger, He was utterly exhausted and fell sick Himself, as did also my mother and the three others who had heretofore been well. The others soon recovered, but ‘Abbás Afandí¹ was taken with dysentery and long remained in a dangerous condition. By His heroic exertions He had won the regard of one of the officers, and when this man saw my brother in this state he went to the Governor and pleaded that ‘Abbás Afandí might have a physician. This was permitted and under the care of the physician my brother recovered.”²

Bahá'u'lláh was confined in a separate room in these barracks and this room is now much altered and used as part of a prison hospital. Over the door is a brass plate with a statement of Bahá'u'lláh's confinement there from 1868–1870. One might think of the change in this scene of suffering as symbolic of the kindly action of the hand of time, which so often covers and beautifies a place otherwise too horrible for weak human hearts and minds to contemplate. But surely the sincere soul cannot gaze upon the scenes of such dire sufferings and recall that they were endured patiently and even joyfully, without becoming very thoughtful concerning a faith thus cradled.

After two years spent in the barracks the Bahá'ís were removed to a fairly comfortable house with three rooms and a court. The Governor of ‘Akká had been so impressed with their lack of resentment, their kindness and uprightness, and their sorrow at being unable to meet the Bahá'í pilgrims who were constantly coming from Persia in order to meet Bahá'u'lláh that He allowed them this change and freedom to go and come in the city. To this first real dwelling [XXIV:3:92] place of Bahá'u'lláh in ‘Akká we now directed our footsteps. Here we saw the room where Bahá'u'lláh wrote *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* or Book of Laws.

Although the others had the freedom of the city Bahá'u'lláh was confined to the house. Here He remained for seven years. One day He remarked “I have not gazed on verdure for nine years. The country is the world of the Soul, the city is the world of the bodies.” When ‘Abdu'l-Bahá heard this remark He felt moved, in spite of the strict imprisonment, to prepare a place for Bahá'u'lláh in the country. This He accordingly did, renting a large house on the plains of ‘Akká from an absentee landlord at a very low price, sending labourers to put the garden in order and repair the house and finally, in spite of the strict injunction to the contrary, walking out through the city gate.

Father and Son both seemed possessed of the same kind of power that shone out from Christ, the power that the people felt when no one dared to lay hands on Him for His hour was not yet come. At first Bahá'u'lláh was reluctant to use this power, but finally yielded to the entreaties of a certain Muslim Shaykh, who loved Him very much and pleaded persistently that He go out from His long imprisonment. There the rest of His days were spent in that “world of the soul” He so loved.³

¹ Known universally by His Spiritual Name, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, which means “The Servant of God”.

² Myron Phelps, *Abbas Effendi*, pp. 62–3.

³ See J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, for a full account in the words of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá of this beautiful incident.

It was to Bahjí the second house He occupied on the plain of 'Akká that we next drove. This house has within a few years come into the possession of the Bahá'ís and has been restored by Shoghi Effendi to the condition in which it was during the time of Bahá'u'lláh. Here we spent the evening and night. Near Bahjí is the shrine in which lie the remains of Bahá'u'lláh. Its court contains an indoor garden of fresh greenness, trees pushing up to the open skylight which lets in the gentle motion of outdoor air, vines embroidering all with luxuriant leaf and blossom. Between the shrine and the house are broad stretches of lawn, lofty trees, flowered borders. Everything shows signs of perfect care and cultivation, such care and cultivation as come from deep devotion. About all is an atmosphere of deep, creative peace. One is reminded involuntarily of the scriptural lines with their beautiful symbolism: "the Valley of Achor¹ (shall be) a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me."²

In these beautiful gardens and lawns around the shrine one sees a new and unique kind of place of worship, one which extends the atmosphere of the sanctuary to the surrounding out-of-doors. The spiritual charm of this arrangement at Bahjí is that the brilliant and stately beauty of the surrounding gardens gently woos the soul away from earthly thought and prepares it for the yet more intense spirituality of the shrine itself. Just in front of the shrine are many interlacing paths where one may prolong the time of preparation before stepping from the kindly beauty of nature to the more lofty and searching worship which the shrine itself inspires. [XXIV:3:93]

It was in the house at Bahjí that Bahá'u'lláh received Prof. Edward G. Browne the distinguished Orientalist from the University of Cambridge who was the first person to come from the Western world to investigate the Bahá'í Faith. Before entering the room in which this significant event took place, the visitor may pause and read from the framed copy hanging beside the door Prof. Browne's account of this meeting. The large apartment with its low divan and few chairs is just as it was on that memorable occasion. Fresh jasmine blossoms strewn on a white square of cloth mark the place where sat the wondrous and venerable figure of Bahá'u'lláh. Of this meeting Prof. Browne wrote: "The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read ones very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!"³

As we entered the room we seemed to realize somewhat the tremendous power which sustained those early followers of Bahá'u'lláh, the *power* which centred in Him placing Him among those few who, as Carlyle puts it, "through having a higher wisdom, a hitherto unknown spiritual truth are stronger than all that have it not."

The words which Bahá'u'lláh uttered on this memorable occasion reveal this higher Wisdom which He possessed. They have been often quoted but are so great and timely that they should ring in the ears of every one in these disastrous days, spurring us on to attain a new world order!

"We desire but the good of the world and happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment. ... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity

¹ Also known as Acca, 'Akká and Akko.

² Isaiah 63:10.

³ Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. II, p. 12.

between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? ... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come. ... Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold?”¹

(To be continued)

XXIV:3, June 1933 [XXIV:3:93]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“O ye people of the world! The virtue of this Most Great Manifestation is that We have effaced from the Book whatever was the cause of difference, corruption and discord, and recorded therein that which leads to unity, harmony and accord. Joy unto those who practice!”

XXIV:4, July 1933 [XXIV:4:103]

An interview with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Mary Hanford Ford

The author, a pioneer American Bahá’í, has made the teaching of the Bahá’í Cause her life work.

In these difficult days when the entire economic system of the world is in confusion, and when ordinary life has become so hectic as to be almost unbearable, I am reminded again of the memorable visit I made to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the prison of ‘Akká, Palestine in 1907. He had been held there as a prisoner ever since He was incarcerated with the family of Bahá’u’lláh after their exile from Persia.

The great story of the Bahá’í Cause was just beginning to be recognized at that time, and very little of its spiritual and economic teaching was translated and known in the Western World. People who heard the strange tale of the distinguished prisoner of ‘Akká often hastened to visit Him. He was held there by the Sultán of Turkey because He taught ideas out of harmony with the prevailing creed of Islám though in perfect accord with the system of Muḥammad Himself.

These people returned to the Western World with such strangely varying accounts of their interviews, so evidently coloured by their own previous conceptions and theories, that one felt confused and realized that any sacrifice was desirable through which one might visit the prison of ‘Akká and speak face to face with its illumined inmate.

So like many others I journeyed across the seas and presented myself at the door of ‘Akká on the date upon which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had given me permission to come. I did not know then, what I only learned some time later, that at this very moment, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was enduring especially rigorous persecution. He had been living for some years as a political prisoner in His own house within the walls of the town and was even permitted at times to visit Haifa and the Bahjí, where was the tomb of Bahá’u’lláh. But the powerful Muslim priesthood of Persia and Turkey had long been determined to accomplish His martyrdom and, enraged at His continued escape from this, they finally sent the police to His home, just one month before my arrival, commanded every guest to leave the place instantly, and forbade ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to receive any western friends henceforth. Meanwhile a questionnaire was drawn up to be sent to ‘Akká by a special committee. According to its plan if ‘Abdu’l-Bahá filled out the questionnaire His answers would be so incriminating, that there could be no difficulty in obtaining the Sultán’s signature for His sentence of death. All these danger threats were in the background of my rendezvous with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but I knew nothing of them.

¹ Bahá’u’lláh in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II (Peace), p. 157.

At that time I had heard various histories of the emotional experiences of those who came into the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at 'Akká. [XXIV:4:104] Some had fainted, some had fallen at His feet in uncontrollable weeping, all of which behaviour I was sure disturbed Him greatly. So I considered carefully how I might avoid such calamitous exhibitions. I was familiar with the story of Victor Hugo and his antagonists of the classic drama in 1830. I remembered that the young Romanticists selected the word Iron as indicative of their invincibility and self-control in contact with their classic opponents. Cold, impenetrable as iron, they met their enemies, successfully. So I decided when I came into the presence of if my lips began to tremble and my knees to shake, I would mentally repeat the little word *Iron, Iron* and become unimpressionable as its black substance. Of course had I prayed at such a moment the emotional disturbance would have been intensified instead of eliminated.

Sure enough as the wonderful figure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá appeared in the doorway the expected result arrived with Him, but I gazed upon Him, squaring my shoulders, while my mind fastened itself purely upon the black little word Iron, Iron! Can I ever forget how He looked at me with laughing eyes, and began to relate all the tortuous journey that had brought me to 'Akká, meeting plague and quarantine at every port, and pouring out the contents of my thin pocket book, until it seemed as if nothing would be left in it if I ever reached the bleak walls of the ancient town.

He laughed at me saying: *"Many people come here in a gala journey. They stop at the best hotels. They come here when they have nothing to fear, they travel in a company of friends and are a gay crowd! They do not realize they are on a pilgrimage to a holy place—and that they must pray much before they can understand it. If they do not pray before arriving, they must pray after they come here, but you have been forced to pray for guidance during the entire route, and so you are filled with the sense of prayer. You have lived and attained only through prayer."*

Then he went on telling one amusing story after another, perceiving all the perturbation of my poor nerves, until my knees no longer shook and I was at peace.

But one thing was registered disconsolately in my mind: This radiant and powerful person, this centre of wisdom and love! I knew that I could never ask Him a question, and how should I ever discover all the facts I wanted to know about His great teachings, those teachings which were not yet in printed words for the world to study, but the realities of which were constantly pouring into my consciousness.

Then began the marvellous days which followed, days which transformed and rebuilt, creating certainties from doubts, and eternal realities from ephemeral possibilities.

Can I ever forget the setting of this phenomenal drama? A little gallery ran all around the second story upon which the family of 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived, and each chamber opened upon the gallery. Also the door of each room was a different and gay colour. There were pink, yellow, green and white doors, but no black ones. I asked once why the [XXIV:4:105] doors were all different colours, and was told it was because the family never had money enough for more than one door at a time in those dark and dubious days of imprisonment!

The little room in which I stayed and in which the significant conversations with 'Abdu'l-Bahá took place, was of the simplest description. The floor was covered with matting, the narrow iron bed and the iron wash stand with larger and smaller holes for bowl and pitcher were of that vermin proof description with which I had become familiar. Everything was scrupulously clean, and there was an abundant supply of sparkling water for bathing and drinking. A wide window looked over the huge town wall upon the blue Mediterranean and before this stretched a divan upon which 'Abdu'l-Bahá sat when He came to see me.

Upon my arrival in 'Akká my mind was filled with pain caused by the vivid description I had heard in Paris of another terrible martyrdom of Bahá'ís that had occurred in Persia. These martyrdoms continued from the period of the Báb's Declaration until the advent of the present Sháh of Persia, who put an end to all religious persecutions. The description of these particular atrocities was so detailed that finally I could bear no more and cried out my protest, exclaiming "but don't you realize that the martyrs are in a state of bliss from the moment the torture begins, and feel none of the pain inflicted upon them?"

Where upon the assembled company turned upon me in deep disgust, and reproached me severely saying: "How dare you say such things! You are taking away all the glory of martyrdom!"

I remained abashed but not convinced, and felt that I must ask 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the settlement of this disturbing question, but I never asked it. The first morning that He came into my little room He did not sit down, but walked back and forth in the narrow space and presently remarked, while I listened with awe, *"There are many kinds of martyrdom. How many times have I prayed for it, but instead of that I have lived on in prison as if with the sword of Damocles suspended by a hair over my head! Each morning as I waken I feel that before the day ends I may be dragged to the public square and shot to death. But nevertheless I have been very happy in this long martyrdom, for no victim suffers from the cruelties inflicted upon him. The instant the torture begins he is in a state of bliss, and feels nothing but the joy of Heaven which surrounds him."*

He paused, looking out through the wide windows at the blue Mediterranean, the view of which beyond the huge walls seemed to eliminate their imprisoning power. Then he added, *"So Christ never suffered upon the cross. From the time the crucifixion began His soul was in Heaven and He felt nothing but the Divine Presence. He did not say, speaking in Aramaic: 'O God; O God why hast Thou forsaken me?' But this word Sabacthani¹ is similar in sound to another which means glorify, and he actually murmured, 'O God! O God! How thou dost glorify me.'" [XXIV:4:106]*

Then He repeated to me such a story of martyrdom as I have never heard elsewhere and which I have not time to relate here. But I can never forget its dramatic expression of joyous deathlessness.

Of all these hours spent with 'Abdu'l-Bahá however, the most memorable and eloquent were those in which He described the economic future of mankind. At that period, in 1907 the labour saving machines had not yet affected the labour market to a serious extent, nor produced what must be generally recognized as a high degree of permanent unemployment but the change was working and 'Abdu'l-Bahá well understood its righteous conclusion.

Sometimes He sat still as He discoursed, speaking in that marvellous, colourful voice, such as none has used I am sure since Christ talked upon the mountainside or in the homes of His friends. Then He would rise in the excitement of what He portrayed, and walk back and forth conscious of nothing but the ideals which possessed Him.

He said: *"Today the dynamic energy of the Holy Spirit has poured in such volume through the Messenger of God that even the masses of men have received it, and that was not possible before. Always in the past specially sensitized souls received the influence and acted upon it. But today for the first time the minds of all people have been touched by the spirit, and the result is that the designs of labour saving machines have been clearly revealed to them. It may seem strange to*

¹ Aramaic: Shavaktani or Shevaqtani (Greek sabachthani, Sabacthani or Sabakthani). Four of the 6 words (all in Aramaic) recorded as spoken by Jesus: "elohi elohi lama shavaktani". Sabaḥānī "glorify me" may be the word that sounds like sabacthani.

you that the Holy Spirit should give designs for labour saving machines," he added, "but in reality every creative impulse of the brain can arise only through contact with the spirit. Without that the brain is merely capable of conventional and traditional action.

"The civilizations of the past have all been founded upon the enslavement of mankind and the poor working class has suffered every oppression for the sake of the enrichment of the few. This limited wealthy class has alone had the privilege of developing individuality. The down trodden worker after labouring long hours each day, has not had sufficient mental capacity at the conclusion of his task to do anything but eat and sleep.

"That all mankind might have opportunity, it was necessary to shorten the hours of labour so that the work of the world could be completed without such demand of strain and effort, and all human beings would have leisure to think and develop individual capacity.

"The labour saving machines were given to create leisure for all mankind." 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeated this several times. He was so deeply impressed with this fact that as He spoke He arose and walked back and forth in the little room, His face and eyes shining with joy over the happy future into which He gazed.

"The first decided shortening of the hours will appear," He declared, "when a legal working day of eight hours is established," and this of course took place in 1917 when Woodrow Wilson enacted the legal day of eight hours for all federal workers, and really for the workers of the United States.

"But this working day of eight hours is only the beginning," went [XXIV:4:107] on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. "Soon there will be a six hour day, a five hour, a three hour day, even less than that, and the worker must be paid more for this management of machines, than he ever received for the exercise of his two hands alone."

Speaking in 1907, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, *"You cannot understand now, how the labour saving machines can produce leisure for mankind because at present they are all in the hands of the financiers and are used only to increase profits, but that will not continue. The workers will come into their due benefit from the machine that is the divine intention, and one cannot continue to violate the law of God. So with the assurance of a comfortable income from his work, and ample leisure for each one, poverty will be banished and each community will create comfort and opportunity for its citizens. Education will then be universal at the cost of the state, and no person will be deprived of its opportunity."* All these eloquent words and many others which I have not time to note here, were spoken to me by 'Abdu'l-Bahá without the asking of a single question. His utterance, as always, was directed toward the inner urge of the mind He addressed, and He was perfectly aware that the mentality seeking Him at the moment was deeply interested in the problem of banishing poverty.

There is not space to mention many incidents connected with this visit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. One was very curious. Invariably as I sat with Him I was conscious of a growing lightness of body, so that I said to myself, if He stays much longer, I shall not be able to keep my feet on the floor, I shall float up to the ceiling! Invariably then He rose and swiftly left the room with that rapid gliding movement which made one feel He was flying rather than walking. On the last day of my visit He left me in this fashion, and I stood by the little table in the centre of the room. As I gazed after Him the words flashed through my mind, "I have been here, I have seen Him, and everything is just as I knew it would be." 'Abdu'l-Bahá paused on the threshold looked back at me with His eyes full of laughter and repeated the words that had in the same instant passed through my mind: *"You have been here, you have seen me and everything is just as you knew it would be!"*

The wonderful words He said to me in farewell I can never forget. In expressing my

profound appreciation for all His gracious kindness to me and the wealth of knowledge and illumination he had given me, I finally cried out, "O 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Why cannot all the world come here to see You as I have done and receive this understanding of life and its meaning, this light of the Spirit!"

He looked at me for a moment with a sort of sadness, and then replied, "*Dearly beloved, many people cross the ocean and cross the desert and come here to see me. They stay sometimes a week—a month—a year and then they go away. They have not seem me at all.*" He paused a moment with a far away look in His eyes and added, smiling as He took my hands—"It is better to meet me in the worlds of *love!*"

XXIV:4, July 1933 [XXIV:4:126]

Glimpses of the New World Order

Part IV

Notes on a visit to Haifa and 'Akká
Mabel and Sylvia Paine

"O ye people of the world! The virtue of this most great Manifestation is that We have effaced from the Book whatever was the cause of differences, corruption and discord, and recorded therein that which leads to unity, harmony and concord. Joy unto those who act in accordance therewith!"¹

*In this fourth instalment, the conversation of Shoghi Effendi to the pilgrims is on the subjects of international government and education, especially with reference to an important letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the American Bahá'ís, later published under the title *The Goal of a New World Order*. The first and second instalments of these "Notes" were published respectively in the March and April numbers, and told of their arrival in Haifa and the meeting with Shoghi Effendi and the members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family; also of their visit to 'Akká and the old prison quarters where Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Their followers were incarcerated so many years with unspeakable hardships and sufferings. The third instalment which appeared in the June number gave a further description of the barracks at 'Akká and a brief description of Bahjí.*

Tuesday, 17 November. Shoghi Effendi told us a little of the last and happiest part of Bahá'u'lláh's life spent at Bahjí, visited by us the previous day. It was there that He wrote the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* in which He summarized His former Writings. He died in that same room in which He met Prof. Browne. His death was the peaceful ending of a life Whose constantly extending influence our generation but faintly comprehends when it comprehends at all.

The conversation dwelt a little on prayer and Shoghi Effendi emphasized the importance of an unconstrained approach to God. Pour out your heart freely and fully. Then do something. God cannot work through you unless you act. Of prayer for health he said that prayer helps, but we must not lose sight of the fact that ill health may be good. Suffering, he thought very helpful both to individuals and nations. What is important is to pray always with a willingness for God's will to be done.

Apropos of the recent death of Dr Forel, the distinguished Swiss scientist, and the publication of his will, in which he declared himself a Bahá'í, we discussed Dr Forel's idea of God and the Bahá'í idea of God. Bahá'ís believe in a personal God. This of course does not imply an anthropomorphic God, but a conscientiousness God.

Wednesday, 18 November. At tea with the ladies the talk was about our plans to go to

¹ Bahá'u'lláh in *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 179.

Nazareth, Jerusalem, and other places of interest in Palestine. The ladies told how 'Abdu'l-Bahá always longed to go to Jerusalem but never was able. One time He asked someone who was going to Jerusalem to touch its walls for Him, to touch the walls of that city made sacred by Christ's sufferings. I have heard a Bahá'í returned from a visit to Haifa in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life time tell how 'Abdu'l-Bahá told him when he was in Jerusalem to walk the Via Dolorosa. This Bahá'í said he never could describe to any one the depth and the poignancy of the experience as he trod that way. [XXIV:4:127]

But today all who had been to Jerusalem agreed there was another side to it. One said she always felt oppressed with another sorrow when she came near Jerusalem, a sorrow caused by the strife of the sects. Not so different a sorrow after all from what pierced the heart of Christ as He walked His Via Dolorosa, for did He not pray that same night before He parted from His followers, "Not for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one?" The strife of the sects, not the oneness for which the world is sick unto death, we found in Jerusalem.

But the open country with its simple villages, its vineyards, the survival of ancient modes of travel and labour, its rugged hills, still are the ideal setting for Hebrew and Christian story[s] and many a cherished phrase from the Psalms and many an incident from the life of Christ came vividly to mind as we drove from Nazareth to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Jordan River, and the Sea of Galilee.

Monday, 23 November. Shoghi Effendi is writing a general letter¹ to the Bahá'í friends of the Occident. We have the privilege of getting glimpses of its growth. Evidently it will emphasize political conditions of the world at large, show their inevitable progress toward another world war, after which will emerge the new world state. He spoke of Bahá'u'lláh's prophecy revealed in 1878, in which He refers to the turmoil and agitation of the world, its waywardness and irreligion, as it hastens to a plight too grievous to be disclosed. The prophecy ends with a beautiful promise of the unfurling of the Divine Standard.

At last appears on the horizon the "parliament of nations" the "federation of the world". Americans particularly should be much interested in two passages in this great document which has just come from the pen of Shoghi Effendi: one giving the interview between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and an American congressman, in which answers the congressman's question, "How can I best serve my country?" with the reply, "if you strive, in your capacity as a citizen of the world, to assist in the eventual application of the principle of federalism underlying the government of your own country to the relationships now existing between the peoples and nations of the world,"² and the passage in which Shoghi Effendi compares the formation of the future world state to the unification of the states of the North American continent. "It would indeed be no exaggeration," he writes, "to say that the absence of those facilities which modern scientific progress has placed at the service of humanity in our time made of the problem of welding the American states into a single federation, similar though they were in certain traditions, a task infinitely more complex than that which confronts a divided humanity in its efforts to achieve the unification of all mankind."³

In this latter passage one sees the [XXIV:4:128] dominant spirit of faith which animates the Guardian of the Bahá'í Cause as it did 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who replied to those "*few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavour, consider this matter [true civilization, universal peace through a federation of the governments of the world] as highly impracticable, nay even beyond the scope of man's utmost efforts. Such is not the case, however. On the contrary, thanks*

¹ Later published under the title "The Goal of a New World Order".

² Shoghi Effendi in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II (Peace), p. 177.

³ Shoghi Effendi in *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II (Peace), p. 179.

to the unfailing grace of God, the loving-kindness of His favoured ones, the unrivalled endeavours of wise and capable souls, and the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of this age, nothing whatsoever can be regarded as unattainable. Endeavour, ceaseless endeavour, is required. Nothing short of an indomitable determination can possibly achieve it. Many a cause which past ages have regarded as purely visionary, yet in this day has become most easy and practicable. Why should this most great and lofty Cause—the daystar of the firmament of true civilization and the cause of the glory, the advancement, the well-being and the success of all humanity—be regarded as impossible of achievement? Surely the day will come when its beauteous light shall shed illumination upon the assemblage of man.”¹

Monday, 23 November. The conversation at tea this afternoon was about schools. The Bahá’í teachings emphasize universal education and the equality of men and women. As these principles are new to Oriental Bahá’ís and difficult for them to apply, the women of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s family feel an especial obligation to observe them conscientiously by giving their children a very complete education. This often means sending them to Europe, as educational opportunities there are greater than in the Near East. Often these young people have to transfer from one school to another. These transfers are difficult, as there is not even so uniform a curriculum as in Europe and America. One of the interesting points in the Bahá’í educational program is that it calls for “a standard, universal system of instruction.” This will certainly make for greater convenience as well as furthering the attainment of the more important ideals of mutual understanding, sympathy and unity among different nations, races and between the sexes.

(To be continued)

XXIV:5, August 1933 [XXIV:5:144]

Glimpses of the New World Order

Part V

Notes on a visit to Haifa and ‘Akká
Mabel and Sylvia Paine

This instalment will conclude these “Diary Notes” which have appeared from month to month consecutively beginning in the March number. We regret that we were not able, for lack of space, to publish these informing “Notes” in full.

Tuesday, 24 November. A young pilgrim asked advice about studying the Bahá’í literature. Shoghi Effendi recommended an intensive study of *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* by Bahá’u’lláh and *Some Answered Questions* by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. These books will repay thorough study, mastery, even to the point of memorizing certain passages. It is well, too, to read contemporary books, selecting the best, dealing with the same subjects, in order to become thoroughly acquainted with the subject and be able to clarify the Bahá’í teachings. *The Dawn-Breakers*, a narrative of early events in the Bahá’í movement recently translated by Shoghi Effendi will also repay careful study. This book was written between 1890 and 1892 with the encouragement of Bahá’u’lláh, Who made some suggestions to the author, Nabíl. [XXIV:5:145] ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revised certain passages in the book. It shows that the Bahá’í Faith has already its noble army of martyrs and the parts which introduce Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb are priceless material translated with extreme beauty and power.

Someone asked whether Bahá’ís should support the League of Nations and Shoghi Effendi replied that the League is not on the foundation that it should be to be the ultimate league, but that it will develop into that. As far as possible, without becoming involved in politics Bahá’ís

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 66-7.

should support it.

Wednesday, 25 November. Today we talked a little about food and health. In *Some Answered Questions* 'Abdu'l-Bahá shows that health is a matter of proper balance of the numerous elements in the human body. When this balance is disturbed disease enters. The readjustment can be effected by foods or by medicines. When the science of medicine becomes perfected, doctors can supply the missing element through foods. But in the meantime, Shoghi Effendi pointed out, we are in a confused and transitional state. Consequently it is better not to be dogmatic on the subject. The Bahá'í teachings, in this as in other matters, stress loyalty to science. Thus 'Abdu'l-Bahá always advised people in ill health to consult an expert doctor.

Friday, 27 November. This is the tenth anniversary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. About six pm we went across the street to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house. We were to enter His room, the room whence His spirit passed to the heavenly realm. A group of women were gathered outside the door, waiting to go in. They went in one by one and knelt with beautiful reverence at the bedside where the tired body of the great Servant of God and of mankind last lay. Little incidents of His last days came to my mind. How full of generous kindness and servitude, though the body was well-nigh exhausted! His insisting on gathering the garden fruit with His own hand, though He ate it, seemingly, largely to please the gardener. How having eaten of the fruit He turned to the gardener and asked, "Do you desire anything more?" Then with a pathetic gesture of His hands touchingly, emphatically and deliberately said: 'Now, it is finished, it is finished!'"¹ His receiving visitors and showing them extraordinary courtesy on the last evening of His life, giving them presents, going with them to the door.

As 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away at one-fifteen in the morning, the memorial service held each year occupies the evening and night up to about two. About eight-thirty we walked up the side of Mt. Carmel to the shrine. It was a night of full moonlight with many soft white clouds. Across the bay 'Akká looked like a diadem in the heavens. We found gathered around the shrine and on the broad south terrace a considerable group of Bahá'ís. This terrace, we were told, was a favourite walk of the Master's. Soon all went within the shrine and listened while different Bahá'ís, one at a time chanted prayers. One of the most beautiful prayers chanted was the one re- [XXIV:5:146] vealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be chanted at His shrine beginning:

"He is the All-Glorious!

"O God, my God! Lowly and tearful, I raise my suppliant hands to Thee and cover my face in the dust of that Threshold of Thine, exalted above the knowledge of the learned, and the praise of all that glorify Thee."²

After coming out from the shrine all sat on benches and chairs on the terrace and listened to the chanted recital of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's last days and His funeral, as related in the touching account written by Shoghi Effendi and Lady Blomfield. The funeral, we recalled, had drawn together an immense concourse of mourners from all over Palestine from the High Commissioner and other officials and heads of various religious communities to the vast multitude of all sorts and conditions who revered and loved Him. For 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been a kind father to all in that region.

After this long and beautiful chant on the terrace, beautifully lighted both with electric lights and with the soft moonlight, all went again into the shrines and, during exquisite chanting of prayers, felt again the mighty power of the Servant of God, Who through His

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá in H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá—The Centre of the Covenant*, pp.459–60.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 319.

supreme and lifelong exemplification of the spirit of servitude made plain to the world the very heart of the Bahá'í teachings.

Tuesday, 1 December. At luncheon today Shoghi Effendi spoke of the great future which lies ahead of Germany and Russia. A reaction will come eventually in favour of religion and against democracy.

Touching upon the main idea of his letter to the Bahá'ís of the West, called the "Goal of the New World Order" that "the principle of the Oneness of Mankind—the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve" is more than "the enunciation of an ideal" and "stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence",¹ he spoke of the necessity for a new world order. This new world order cannot rise while national sovereignty is still so strong.

The immediate future for humanity, he said, is indeed dark, but in the not very distant future shines an infinitely better social and political order. Thus our last days at Haifa gave us bright glimpses of "the New World Order visualized by Bahá'u'lláh—a World Order that shall reflect, however dimly, upon this earthly plane, the ineffable splendours of the Abhá Kingdom."²

XXIV:9 December 1933 [XXIV:9:261]

'Abdu'l-Bahá

"The advent of Christ on this earth was a blessed day for it was the clay on which the Sun of Reality dawned; the day on which all beings were revived. In the world's calendar, it was the beginning of a Heavenly Spring."

XXIV:10 January 1934 [XXIV:10:303]

Haifa calling

Florence E. Pinchon

'Abdu'l-Bahá, as early as 1914 when Syria was still in the possession of the Turks, made remarkable prophecies about the commercial development of the harbour of Haifa. As so significant a part of the prophecy has now come to pass, it is easy to conceive as its complete fulfilment the vision of the magnificent metropolis which will one day arise from the slopes and approaches of Mt. Carmel. Haifa, because of its geographic situation, possesses such immense advantages for commerce with the Hinterland of the Near East that in the future it may well become the chief emporium of Western Asia.

"Some day 'Akká and Haifa will be connected as one large city, with a long breakwater sheltering harbour and docks, and a driveway, through orange groves, skirting the sea. The ships of all nations will be seen here, commerce will thrive, and the Bay of 'Akká will be the centre of the pilgrimage of the world the sovereignty of world reverence." 'Abdu'l-Bahá

It was a thrilling moment when, on the morning of the 31 October 1933, we paused in the business of the day, to listen to the voice of Haifa, Palestine, calling the British Isles.

The broadcast was taking place on the occasion of the opening, by the High Commissioner of Palestine, of the new harbour, whose construction now makes the port of Haifa one of the finest and most sheltered havens in the Mediterranean.

However, to Bahá'ís generally, the ceremony meant something far more than the mere inauguration of a harbour. For not only does it mark the opening of a new door between the

¹ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 42–3.

² Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 46–7.

Eastern and Western worlds—in itself an event of outstanding consequence both to world communications and world relations—but to those who could trace, however dimly, the working out of a divine plan and purpose, the happening seemed fraught with a profound spiritual significance.

The masterly description given in the broadcast of the beautiful and historic scene in which the ceremony took place, with all its ancient and sacred associations, and now its new world importance, filled one with a deep content. For were we not actual witnesses of the beginning of the fulfilment of those glowing predictions, uttered long ago by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, concerning the brilliant destiny that awaited this, the home of His lifelong exile and labours?

Authoritative writers suggest that the immediate future is likely to witness a re-awakening of the whole of the region formerly known to us as Asia Minor. In Palestine this renaissance is already well begun, with its radiating point at the port of Haifa. Symbolic of this progressive spirit, the new harbour here will constitute a landmark in the annals of world intercourse, and play a leading part in the developments that are taking place in the Near and Middle East.

The ancient town of Haifa lies on the southern horn of a magnificent bay, three miles deep and nine miles wide, just where the green promontory of Mt. Carmel breaks the two hundred miles of inhospitable coast line and yellow sand dunes stretching northwards from Port Said.

At the other extremity of the bay, the grey fortress of ‘Akká—the Acre of the Crusades, and Christianity’s last stronghold in Palestine—stands out into the blue Syrian Sea. The great semi-circular harbour so formed is now spanned by a breakwater about one and a half miles long, which runs out from Rasel Kerim¹ at the northern extremity of the base of Mt. Carmel, eastwards, in a line parallel to the town front. The leese side of the harbour is formed by another breakwater, about half a mile long, running out at right angles to the main one. The sheltered haven so constituted encloses an area about the size of Genoa harbour, and can afford accommodation to every class of vessel navigating the Levant.

Yet contrary to what has happened in the case of most other seaports, the harbour does not overshadow the town, but has been designed to suit the landscape and fit with due proportion into the whole noble picture.

All who have visited this spot seem to agree that, as Sir Cunliffe Lister observed in his reply from London to the High Commissioner, it is a monument to British engineering genius, and an achievement of which they may be justly proud. And, in this connection, it may not be without interest to note, that if two imaginary lines were drawn across the globe, passing through the widespread British dominions and colonies, they would quite naturally meet and intersect at this point of the Holy Land. While Haifa, in the near future, is likely to become an important naval, land and air base of the Empire.

Yet in spite of its unique position and rich associations, until [XXIV:10:305] within quite recent years this particular part of the Near East has lain all neglected and forgotten by men.

In the days of the Canaanites, Haifa was known as Shikmona,² and later, to the Jews, as Hephah or haven. Among the Medes and Phoenicians it was famed as an important station on the highroads of the nations. For Nature appears to have endowed it with advantages granted to no other seaport on the Eastern Mediterranean.

About half a century ago, a group of prominent Englishmen, recognizing the immense possibilities of this locality, agitated for the cession of Haifa to Great Britain. And later, the

¹ Rás al-Krúm is marked on some old maps.

² Shíkmoná (Tel Shikmona) is on the Haifa coast just south of Rás al-Krúm.

author of “New Old Land” and founder of the modern Zionist Movement, sailed along its shores and envisioned for it a brilliant future.

But it was in 1868, at the time when the whole country lay under the indolent Turkish rule, that the first flush of another dawn broke above these ancient hills of God, and a breeze of a new morning ruffled its sleeping waves. For when ‘Akká was but a grim penal settlement—a home of the owl and the bat—and Haifa, a small obscure town, a Messenger of God was sent here by the Persian and Turkish governments, as a life long prisoner and exile. And so, here, beneath the shadow of Mt. Carmel, in the land of Jesus Christ and of the Prophets, Bahá’u’lláh lived and suffered, and finally triumphed, delivering to men His message of world unity and peace, and pointing out the spiritual and practical means by which such a consummation might be achieved.

Visiting pilgrims tell us that, from this time onward the whole district began to change; that even the atmosphere seemed charged with a purer and more vibrant quality. So intimately related are the things of earth and heaven, things temporal and things eternal.

Amid these fateful days of darkness and chaos, we find ourselves turning, with ever increasing longing, towards the heavenly Light that once shone from that lonely fortress, hearing again across the world’s troubled waters the reassuring voice of the Counsellor of Nations: “Be not afraid.”—“These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away and ‘the Most Great Peace’ shall come!”

Today we are witnessing in the steadily growing importance of Haifa and its magnificent harbour, the materialisation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s predictions, and the justification of all those who have dared to dream greatly concerning her. Planted at the feet of green and majestic Carmel she is beginning to blossom like the proverbial rose.

One of the principal causes contributing to this prosperity is, of course, the fact that at Haifa the gigantic pipe-line of some 600 miles, through which will pour the petroleum from the oil fields of Mosul, will find its outlet to the refineries and to the sea. This vast enterprise and the implications that oil—the igniter of the nations—brings in its wake would alone entitle Haifa to be called the “City of Light and of the Future”.

It is also anticipated that for economic, political and strategic reasons, ere long a railway will follow the route of the oil pipes, crossing the wide stretches of desert that lie between Haifa and Baghdád, and tapping the trade of Upper Meso- [XXIV:10:306] potamia, the Euphrates valley and Eastern Turkey, and so forming a truly golden link between the Eastern and Western Worlds.

A link that, as some of us realize was forged spiritually long ago, when Bahá’u’lláh journeyed across these same deserts in hardship and suffering in order that a path might be blazoned for the kinship of East and West, and differences of race be annulled.

So comes today the wheel of destiny full circle, and Haifa is again about to fulfil her ancient purpose as a highway for the nations, as well as a great distributing centre for the world’s merchandise. Soon, as a certain writer has predicted, “We shall hear of wool from Mosul, barley and grains from ‘Iráq and Palestine, dates from Amara, potash and phosphates from the Dead Sea, rice, skins and hides from Persia, oranges from Jaffa ... precious articles from Central Asia and India, all passing through Haifa to the markets of the West.” In short, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá foretold, it will become one of the first emporiums of the world.

And the story does not end here. It is, indeed, only the beginning. Few of us can imagine the high destiny that awaits this “radiant white spot” from which has flashed forth, in this new cycle of human power, the guiding Light of the Spirit.

*"The flowers of civilization and culture from all nations will be brought here to blend their fragrances together and blaze the way for the brotherhood of man."*¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá prophesied in 1914: *"The entire harbour from 'Akká to Haifa will be one path of illumination. Powerful searchlights will be placed on both sides of Mount Carmel to guide the steamers. Mount Carmel itself, from top to bottom, will be submerged in a sea of lights. A person standing on the summit of Mount Carmel, and the passengers of the steamers coming to it, will look upon the most sublime and majestic spectacle of the whole world."*²

The searchlight, that shines across the harbour from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's shrine on the mountain side, is itself a witness that the word of God is being accomplished. As the Psalmist sang: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mt. Zion"—because it has been and is destined increasingly to become—"the City of the great King".

XXIV:10 January 1934 [XXIV:10:307]

The Mount Carmel of the future

Various prophecies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning the development of Haifa, Palestine.

"In the future the distance between 'Akká and Haifa will be built up, and the two cities will join and clasp hands, becoming the two terminal section of one mighty metropolis. As I look now over this scene, I see so clearly that it will become one of the first emporiums of the world. This great semi-circular bay will be transformed into the finest harbour, wherein the ships of all nations will seek shelter and refuge. The great vessels of all peoples will come to this port, bringing on their decks thousands and thousands of men and women from every part of the globe. The mountain and the plain will be dotted with the most modern buildings and palaces. Industries will be established and various institutions of philanthropic nature will be founded. The flowers of civilization and culture from all nations will be brought here to blend their fragrances together and blaze the way for the brotherhood of man. Wonderful gardens, orchards, groves and parks will be laid out on all sides. At night the great city will be lighted by electricity. The entire harbour from 'Akká to Haifa will be one path of illumination. Powerful searchlights will be placed on both sides of Mount Carmel to guide the steamers. Mount Carmel itself, from top to bottom, will be submerged in a sea of lights. A person standing on the summit of Mount Carmel, and the passengers of the steamers coming to it, will look upon the most sublime and majestic spectacle of the whole world."³

[Refer to *Star of the West*, XII:8, page 220, November 1922, for an additional prophecy.]

XXIV:11 February 1934 [XXIV:11:334]

'Abdu'l-Bahá visited by great Catholic scholar

Martha L. Root

"Through each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men. We have erewhile declared—and Our Word is the truth—'Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.' Whatsoever hath led the children of men to shun one another, and hath caused dissensions and divisions amongst them, hath, through the revelation of these words, been nullified and abolished."⁴

When this generation is gone, none will be left who can tell the world about meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá, [the] Centre of the Covenant of the Bahá'í Movement, and what He said to them

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá in J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, pp. 250–1.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá in J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 251.

³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá in J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, pp. 250–1. Haifa, 14 February 1914.

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 87.

and how His great and gracious presence impressed them. It was on 31 May 1932, in Lublin, Poland, that I met a distinguished Roman Catholic, Dr Joseph Kruszynski, President of the celebrated Roman Catholic Theological University, Lublin University. What he told me of his visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1914, what the latter prophesied for Poland, and the conversation of these two men about the relation of the Bahá’í Movement to Roman Catholicism is thrilling and I relate to you very simply.

I found President Kruszynski a tall, handsome, scholarly, kindly interesting man with eyes full of light. Any one just to look at him would say: “He lives the life!” His whole expression beamed a welcome and hospitality to the writer because he knew that she too, had known ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

“Please tell me all about your meeting [with] ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” I said, “and may I ask too, if you are the Roman Catholic priest who visited Him in Palestine in 1914 and was the first, so far as is known, who ever knew and wrote about the Bahá’í Movement in Poland?” He replied that he was that priest. This University President said that on his second visit to Haifa, Palestine, in 1914, a Russian Doctor one day mentioned to him about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, such a world renowned spiritual teacher living there. The Roman Catholic Priest said: “I shall go to call upon Him;” and the Russian Doctor pleaded: “O father, if you go, I wish to accompany you!” Together they went to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s home in Haifa.

“How well I remember that day,” said President Kruszynski, “it was 14 July 1914, the fete day of the French Revolution; I went at eleven o’clock in the morning, to visit Him. My card, I recall, read “Joseph Kruszynski, Roman Catholic priest, Doctor and Professor of Old Testament in Włocławek Roman Catholic Seminary, Włocławek, Poland.” He received me so courteously and with such friendliness. He led me to his drawing room and had me sit at His right, beside Him on the divan. He expressed how glad He was that I was in His home and we spoke of many matters; our discourse was very interesting!” [XXIV:11:335]

The President explained to me that with them, that morning, was a secretary who was also an interpreter, but they did not have him interpret as both the Catholic and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knew Arabic. “And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knew Persian and Arabic extremely well; I was impressed by His command of these languages,” said the President, “and He always used the intimate word ‘thou’ in addressing me, it was very pleasant.”

First they spoke of Poland and Polish writers, and the Catholic said He was astonished that this Persian scholar knew so much about the history and sufferings of the Poles and that He had read their literature. He said that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told Him that Sienkiewicz’s works had been translated into Arabic, he had read them and considered Sienkiewicz a great man, but added: “Tolstoy was a great man too; there was no greater writer in Europe than Tolstoy.”

Dr Kruszynski asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá what He thought of conditions in Europe and the latter replied: “There will be a great war in all Europe and after the war, Poland, thy fatherland shall be free. I will pray to God that thy fatherland shall be free!” The President said that this touched him profoundly and he always remembered it. He related to me how, on the voyage when the Russian ship on which he travelled had left Constantinople, some Russian passengers had loudly proclaimed that there must be war and that Constantinople must belong to Russia; it was necessary for the greatness of the Russian Empire.

These remarks about political, national affairs and about writers only were the introduction to the real topic of the visit which was religion. “I asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” said Dr Kruszynski, “what is Bahai-ism?” And He told me that it is a religion of brotherhood. He explained to me about a Mashriqu’l-Adhkár, a great Bahá’í Temple which is being built near

Chicago, and He gave me a picture of it; I have it here. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that after many years the Bahá’í Faith will be very great, that there will be many believers in this religion; He said it was His hope that all people can be united in these Teachings. He foretold that many in America, later, will believe. [XXIV:11:336]

The President told me how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá served them Persian tea and then after many farewell greetings, they left. They visited His beautiful garden, and later they went to ‘Akká to see the Prison where Bahá’u’lláh, His Father, had been incarcerated, and they went last to Bahjí, just out from ‘Akká to visit the Tomb of Bahá’u’lláh. Dr Kruszynski said that the custom in the Orient is that the first born son bears the name of his father, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás had taken the name of the Servant of His Father. “You see,” he said, “Bahá was His Father’s name and ‘Abdu’l means servant; so He was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—the ‘Servant of Bahá’. ‘Abbás His last name means Master. He was evanescent, selfless, humble; He always spoke of His Father, ‘not My Teachings, but those of My Father Bahá’u’lláh’.”

Dr Kruszynski said that as soon as he returned to Poland he wrote an article describing his visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Haifa, Palestine; he stated in this article that there would be a great world war in all Europe and at its close, Poland would be free, because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said so. He took this article to the editor of a Warsaw paper, but the editor did not wish to print it, he refused it. “Just one week later the war exploded,” said President Kruszynski, “and I kept the article in my library till the end of the war and when Poland attained her independence, I took this same article to a Polish editor and it was published in full in *Słowo Kujawskie*, in Włocławek. I have seven volumes of this newspaper, I shall try to find the article and send it to you.”

Certainly it was illumining to hear from one of the great Catholic University Presidents of Central Europe that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had made this prophecy about the independence of Poland and that this Rector of the university had seen it fulfilled before his very eyes. This New Poland, this nation of 32,000,000 people, statesmen think, is becoming a bulwark of Western civilization and a powerful factor making for the equilibrium of Europe and the peace of the world.

This gracious President showed me his university, introduced me to some of his students and then I dined with him before taking the train back to Warsaw. He was so hospitable, so thoughtful, it gave me a picture of Polish courtesy at its highest. During the dinner we spoke of religion, of Roman Catholicism and the Bahá’í Movement. “What do you, a Roman Catholic scholar, think of the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh?” I asked, and he replied: “Bahá’u’lláh as a reformer of religion and as a philosopher is very great. From my viewpoint as a Catholic, I can say that I like this Bahá’í concept of religion because it is a religion of brotherhood, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wished all men to be united as brothers.”

“I asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘who is Christ?’ and He answered that Christ was only one of the great Prophets, World Teachers, that Moses was a great Prophet but that Jesus Christ was greater than Moses and came to make the world better than it was in the time of the Jews. He said that Muḥammad came to make the people better and now in our time all these religions are not sufficient, and Bahá’u’lláh [XXIV:11:337] came (‘not I, but My Father Bahá’u’lláh came’, He said to me) to make better the Muslim religion, the Christian religion, the Jewish religion, all the religions. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also said that Bahá’u’lláh’s religion was better for this epoch than Christianity and Islám.”

“I told Him,” continued Dr Kruszynski, “that the correction of His Father is very great, but only for the Islamic religion, because the Islamic religion is an exclusive one, but His Father has made religion less exclusive and more a religion of brotherhood. However, in the

Christian religion, we believe in a revealed religion; we believe the Bible is a Revelation direct from God and that Jesus Christ is God and man in one, and this cannot be changed. I know that among the Christian believers are abuses, faults, but the idea of our religion is correct. And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá considered that the religion of His Father, Bahá’u’lláh, is the last and best religion.”

“So between our viewpoints,” the President concluded, “there was just this difference, that I cannot think that Bahai-ism is the last and best religion. I honour the religion of Bahá’u’lláh but I cannot believe it is the best and the last. I believe the Bahá’í religion has many principles for the social life. I believe the foundation of Bahai-ism is suited to our times; questions of the social life in our age are very great. The relation of Bahá’u’lláh to Moses and Muḥammad I think is correct, but the relation to Christ is not correct. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knew very well about Christianity, I was convinced of this, but the Teachings of Christ are inspired, the Books of the New Testament are inspired and I believe in these Revelations.”

Again Dr Kruszynski said: “I believe the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh are the Teachings of a very great philosopher. I consider that Bahá’u’lláh has been the greatest philosopher in our times. He has given the world a system uniting religious beliefs with social foundations. I remember one sentence I said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, I believe your reformation is very great, very good for Muslims because they are intolerant, very exclusive, they will not participate in or associate with other religionists; Christians are more tolerant. For example, I believe in my religion, but I myself honour your religion. A Muslim would be intolerant to all other religions. You have reformed religion so that your believers will be more friendly, more cordial to the Catholics. I thank you very much, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, because you are bringing people nearer to the Catholic religion than Muḥammad brought them.” And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “Yes, yes, you are right! Our believers are more cordial to the Catholic faith than Muslims are!”

My conversation with this kind, great Catholic President was so interesting that the hour came all too quickly to leave Lublin, but it was train time. He had served me so generously with delicious Polish foods, though he himself had eaten only yogurt. He blessed me, wished me success and put me into his own carriage and his own coachman drove me to the station. Sitting in the railway carriage returning to Warsaw from this ancient city of Lublin, I pondered in my heart all that he had told me.

XXIV:11 February 1934 [XXIV:11:334]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“A man begins with a little selfish view of Good limited to himself; after a time he learns more wisdom and his view of Good enlarges to his own household. Then with more wisdom comes the realization that Good must include his family, no matter how large. Again more wisdom, and his family becomes his village, his village his city, and in turn, his city his country. But this is not enough; as his wisdom grows, his country becomes his continent, and his continent the world his family has become mankind. It is the duty of the Press to teach this wisdom to mankind for it is the wisdom of God. It is the work of a true Press to teach this wisdom of God.”

XXV:1 April 1934 [XXV:1:8]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá—the Servant of God

Part I

Z. N. Zayn¹

¹ Mírzá Núri’-d-Dín-i-Zayn?

The author, a teacher in the American University at Beirut and a graduate of said institution, presents herewith a brief, but intensely interesting picture of the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. What Mr Zayn states about his article gives it great historical value. "I have made an attempt in this article, very imperfectly perhaps, to record some of the impressions of my childhood days when I had the privilege of meeting almost daily in Haifa. When once one had met 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whether old or young, one could not forget Him.

"The personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the magnetism that permeated Him and radiated from Him, will always remain a mystery. Even those around Him did not and could not understand Him. Indeed it will be long before mortal and limited minds can grasp the real entity of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's divine nature."

The second and concluding part of this article will follow in the May number.

Ever since the dawn of history, I whenever there have been famines, plagues, earthquakes and eclipses, whenever a barbarian invasion or a terrible war has devastated a country, whenever terror and distress and misery and corruption have increased in the world, people have believed that "the world was dying, passing away, falling to pieces" and that the millennium, the dawn of a new age was at hand. Here are a few instances.

In the sixth century CE it is said that Pope Gregory the Great, urged the building of the Church of Apostles at Rome, "although the world was ending". During the tenth century, the phrase "the end of the world drawing near" was frequently used at the beginning of donations and charters to monasteries. The opinion of the thirteenth century is voiced by Dante: "We are already in the final age of the world." In the latter half of the seventeenth century, Abbot Joachim of Fiore a mystic visionary, believed in religious progress and dreamt of a new age when "the knowledge of God would be universal, because revealed directly in men's heart by the Spirit, without the need of teachers."

Two hundred years later, in the nineteenth century, the age of scientific achievements and mechanization of life, the belief in the millennium becomes even more intense. William Miller interpreting the "two thousand three hundred days" mentioned in Daniel 8:14, as 2,300 years, calculated that this period would come to a close about 1844, "at which time the world would fold up, the righteous be transported directly into Heaven and the rest of the race destroyed."

By a most remarkable coincidence 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who was destined to become the recipient and the promulgator of a new Spiritual Light, was born on the twenty-third of May 1844.

This article is not intended to be biographical in nature. But it is almost impossible to write about 'Abdu'l-Bahá without at least referring to the sufferings and privations which He endured for sixty years, from the time He was a child of eight. If Christ on Calvary once said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do", 'Abdu'l-Bahá could have said it almost every day of His life, so great and numerous were the oppressions showered on Him. At eight years of age, is brought before the dusty [XXV:1:9] and rusty iron bars of an underground cell to see His Father, Bahá'u'lláh, then a prisoner of Násiri'd Dín Sháh in Tíhrán, and persecuted for teaching such "seditious" messages as, the following:

"O ye beloved of the Lord! Commit not that which defileth the limpid stream of love or destroyeth the sweet fragrance of friendship. By the righteousness of the Lord! Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancour. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind."¹

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138.

A year later, we find in a caravan accompanying His Father on His journey of exile to Baghdád. At that tender age, He is already entertaining the princes and the ‘Ulamás of Islám who could not resist the temptation of calling on Bahá’u’lláh to listen to His teachings. When He was nineteen, He is banished again, this time to Constantinople. Shortly after He is in Adrianople. At twenty-four He is sent with a guard of soldiers to the fortified city of ‘Akká with Bahá’u’lláh and a small band of followers, children, men and women. For a time they seemed to be buried alive, for they had no communication whatsoever with the outside world. “During the intense heat, malaria, typhoid and dysentery attacked the prisoners, so that all, men, women and children, were sick at one time. There were no doctors, no medicines, no proper food, and no treatment of any kind.”¹ Only one man remained in good health and that was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Speaking of those days, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said laughingly: “I used to make broth for the people, and as I had much practice, I made good broth.”²

For a brief account such as this, we cannot go into details. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent the flower of His youth in the Prison City of ‘Akká. Twenty-three years passed dwelt-well-nigh a quarter of a century!

On 14 April 1890, the monotony of events in ‘Akká was temporarily broken by a non-Bahá’í traveller, an English scholar and professor in Cambridge University,³ who came to visit Bahá’u’lláh for the first time. His description of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Who was then forty-six, is worth being repeated here:

“A tall strongly-built man holding himself straight as an arrow, with white turban and raiment, long black locks reaching almost to the shoulder, broad powerful forehead indicating a strong intellect combined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk’s, and strongly-marked but pleasing features—such was my first impression of ‘Abbás Afandí, ‘the master’ (Áqá) as he *par excellence* is called by the Bábís. Subsequent conversation with him served only to heighten the respect with which his appearance had from the first inspired me. One more eloquent of speech, more ready of argument, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims, could, I should think, scarcely be found even amongst the eloquent, ready, and subtle race to which he belongs. These qualities, combined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the circle of his father’s followers.”⁴

Then came 1892. Bahá’u’lláh ascended to the Kingdom of Light whence He came. He left a Will in which He declared ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the Centre of the Covenant. On His shoulders fell the mantle of leadership and the great responsibility of promulgating the Most Great Peace advocated by Bahá’u’lláh, of “hastening thereby advent of the Golden Age” anticipated by Him, and in short of establishing a New World Order “Divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, equitable in principle”.

But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was still a prisoner, still surrounded by enemies and spies and ungrateful friends. Nay, His enemies became now more [XXV:1:10] dangerous, their hatred increased while at the same time the government’s restrictions multiplied.

“Sometimes we were better off and sometimes very much worse,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “It depended on the governor, who, if he happened to be a kind and lenient ruler, would grant us permission to leave the fortification, and would allow the believers free access to visit the house

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 116.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 116.

³ Professor Edward G. Browne.

⁴ Edward Granville Browne in *‘Abdu’l-Bahá—The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 4–5.

[where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and family were permitted to stay]; *but when the governor was more rigorous, extra guards were placed around us, and often pilgrims who had come from afar were turned away.*¹

Sixteen or seventeen more years passed.

Meanwhile ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had ordered the erection of a building on Mount Carmel to become the resting place of the sacred remains of the Báb, the Forerunner of the Bahá’í Faith. But His enemies stirred the government to bring against Him the ridiculous charge of building fortifications on Mount Carmel “armed and garrisoned secretly”. Whereupon the neurotic and suspicious Sulṭán ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd sent successively two commissions from the Sublime Porte. The second one was “an extremely overbearing, treacherous and insulting Committee of investigation”. It included commanders of varying ranks, one of them a general.

The Committee, helped by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s enemies, drew up a long report full of seditious libels and false accusations against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He was even threatened that upon the return of the Committee to Constantinople, the Sulṭán would issue an order to either send ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Fízán² or to have him “hanged” at the gate of ‘Akká.

As the time was drawing nigh for the Sultan’s farmán to reach ‘Akká and the sorrow and anxiety of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s family and His friends grew more intense, one evening a mysterious person presented himself to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and said that an Italian ship was at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s disposal. He could leave on it that same evening if He wanted to, and could choose to land at any safe place He desired. But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Whose courage was ever unyielding and Who never ran away from justice or refused to meet His enemies smiled and said: “The Báb did not run away; Bahá’u’lláh did not run away; I shall not run away”. For three days and three nights the ship tossed up and down on the waves some miles off the coast of ‘Akká. But ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not change His mind and the ship sailed away.

However, before the members of the Committee reached Constantinople, revolution had broken out. The Chairman of the Committee “was shot with three bullets, the general was exiled, the next in rank died and the third ran to Cairo where he sought and received help from the Bahá’ís”. ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd lost his throne. Constitutional government was declared in Turkey. All political prisoners of the Ottoman Empire were set free and amongst them was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

It was 1908. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s family moved to Haifa, at the foot of Mount Carmel.

Three years later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, bearing still the indelible marks of fatigue and sorrow on His face, [XXV:1:11] after forty years of imprisonment left the Mediterranean shores for Europe and America. He was a youth of twenty-four when He entered the Citadel of ‘Akká. He left it with the weight of sixty-four years of age.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá toured Europe and America for two years, from 1911 to 1913. Wherever He went, people of all denominations and social classes gathered around Him to listen to His words. With His unusually charming diction and most remarkable versatility, He conversed with those who had sought His presence. One instance picked out of many will convey to the reader some idea of the popularity and the respect that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá enjoyed in Europe and America.

“Arriving at Vanners,³ he found a large, strangely mixed crowd, assembled about the gate to

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 116.

² A caravan station on the boundary of Tripoli in Fízán, Libya, north Africa.

³ Vanners Farm house (51.337947, -0.473281) on the corner of High Road and Brewery Lane, was demolished in the early 1960s. It was on the old royal manor in Byfleet, a village about 32 km SW of London.

welcome him, from the quite poor to the wealthy who had motored over from their country places.”¹

“All day long people of every condition gathered about the gate for a chance of seeing him, and more than sixty drove or cycled to Vanners to see him, many wishing to question him on some special subject. Among them were the clergy of several denominations, a head master of a boys’ public school, a member of Parliament, a doctor, a famous political writer, the vice-chancellor of a University, several journalists, a well-known poet, and a magistrate from London.

“He will long be remembered as he sat in the bow window in the afternoon sunshine, his arm round a very ragged but very happy little boy, who had come to ask ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for sixpence for his money box and for his invalid mother, whilst round him in the room were gathered men and women discussing Education, Socialism, the first Reform Bill, and the relation of submarines and wireless telegraphy to the new era on which man is entering.”²

In America, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed for nine months and visited no less than thirty-two towns and cities spreading day and night the message of love and universal peace. He addressed people of all denominations and social classes in schools and universities, in clubs and halls, in private homes and grand hotels, in churches and synagogues.

And then came 1914 when the so-called God fearing and God loving nations of the world plunged into the dreadful holocaust of the Great War, when man fought against man with more than beastly and pagan cruelty. And the tragedy of it all was that every side prayed for divine assistance to win the war! Indeed it was not prayer but a shameless blasphemy! And what eloquent expression of our folly and stupidity is found in the following words uttered by a field marshal of the Allies towards the close of the war:

“With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our Cause, each one of us must fight on to the end. ...”

At no time, perhaps not even during His long imprisonment was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s heart so pulsating with grief and sorrow as during the World War when a high percentage of fallacy and irrationality darkened the human mind and when the poison of hate filled the soul of man—man ‘whom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá believed to be “the highest creature of the phenomenal world, is endowed with continuous bounty bestowed by divine generosity without cessation.”³

‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not live long after the World War. “I have done all that could be done,” He wrote. “I have served the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh to the utmost of My ability. I have laboured night and day, all the years of My life.”⁴ He passed away on the 28 November 1921, in Haifa, Palestine, shortly after mid-night. “His face was so calm, His expression so serene, they thought Him asleep.”⁵

(To be continued)

XXV:2 May 1934 [XXV:2:52]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá—the Servant of God

Part II

Z. N. Zayn

In this second and concluding part of his article, the author, who had the privilege of many

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 86.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 90.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 89.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *God Passes By*, p. 309.

⁵ H. M. Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá—The Centre of the Covenant*, p. 462.

intimate contacts with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, describes His mission and its expression toward humanity as seen at first-hand.

As we study the life of we cannot fail to realize that it was a strange kaleidoscope of events. The pendulum of His days swung from episode to episode unparalleled and unrivalled in the history of the world. A prisoner in the citadel of 'Akká, surrounded by spies, enemies and evil wishers, we find Him later a free man in the western hemisphere addressing great and heedful audiences in places of worship and of social service. In England, at St. John's Church, Westminster the congregation kneels to receive 'Abdu'l-Bahá's blessing! In 1920, Great Britain confers upon Him the honour of Knight of the British Empire, so profoundly impressed were the government representatives by His noble character and His great work in the interests of peace, conciliation, and the prosperity of the people!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá seemed to have one great task to live for, the task of loving mankind and teaching mankind to love one another. *"The lovers of mankind,"* He wrote, *"these are the superior men, of whatever nation, creed or colour they may be."*¹ One of the western believers visiting 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká wrote:

"Five days we remained within those walls, prisoners with Him Who dwells in that 'Great Prison'. It is a prison of peace, of love and service. No wish, no desire is there save the good of mankind, the peace of the world, the acknowledgment of the Fatherhood of God and the mutual rights of men as His creatures, His children."²

A native of 'Akká hated for well-nigh ten years. And yet 'Abdu'l-Bahá showed him every kindness and amiability. At last, one day, the man came into His presence, helpless and bewildered: "Master," He said, "why is it that you are kind to me when you know that I hate you?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá laughed cheerfully and said: "My son, it is because I love you. But you don't understand me." 'Abdu'l-Bahá loved man because He believed that man was created in the image of God.

One of the familiar sights witnessed in Haifa was the Master walking in the streets accompanied by a group of followers and friends. But what a picturesque and colourful group it was! Men in red fezzes, in black caps, in felt hats; men in oriental cloaks, in European dress, in Indian attires; brown men, yellow men, black man, fair men! What a variegated agglomeration of assorted members of the human family accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá! And all of them with folded arms, bowed heads and responsive hearts walked behind Him and listened to Him. It has been truly written:

"To 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as a teacher and friend, came men and women from every race, religion and nation, to sit at his table like favoured guests, questioning him about the social, spirit-[XXV:2:53] ual or moral programme each had most at heart; and after a stay lasting from a few hours to many months, returning home, inspired, renewed and enlightened. The world surely never possessed such a guest-house as this."³

At times, early in the morning, at noon or towards sunset, would be seen walking alone with firm steps and in a pensive mood. Where was He going to? Where was He coming from? Perhaps one could read the answer in the eyes of the little children who stopped their play and looked at Him with tender and reverent eyes. "He is the father of the poor," one would whisper to the other.

Much has been written about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's giving alms to the poor. Little has been said

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 148.

² J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 58.

³ Horace Holley in Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 56.

about the way He did it. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá knew the poor, knew them by their name. And many indeed they were, of all sects and groups, orphans, blind, crippled, sick and suffering, they all came to Him. Whatever He gave them, food, corn, clothes or money, He gave it to them with a sunny smile and a cheerful word. His was not a cold, passive, mechanical and impersonal way of helping the needy. He was never too busy or tired to stop and say a happy word to the miserable pauper who rushed to kiss the hem of His cloak. How often in rainy, cold and dreary winter days, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be visiting unexpectedly the dingy shed or dilapidated shelter of some poor and wretched human being! How truly people could say of Him: “We love him because he first loved us.”¹

It is futile to make any attempt to describe the joy, the feeling of exaltation, of wonder and awe, of spiritual tranquillity, of elation that one experienced when in the presence of the Master! What utter oblivion of self one plunged into when one met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! And with what inexhaustible energy insisted on meeting, night after night, in His own house, the handful of sorrow stricken believers that stayed around Him, His guests, and His visitors! He never refused to see anyone, friend or foe, no matter at what season of the year, or at what time of the day one called.

Those meetings were unique and unparalleled in the spiritual history of the world. The friends would gather in the drawing room of the Master’s house, and occupy all the places on the floor and on the chairs, except one sofa, half way up and to the left of the entrance, which was the habitual place where sat. Eagerly and longingly the eyes would be looking towards the open door and the ears would be strained to be the first to see the Master approaching and to hear the rhythmic sound of His footsteps. But it was most remarkable that often none of those present could even tell how the Master had come. For He would appear suddenly as if from nowhere. And at times, before, one had time to spring to one’s feet, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s voice would be ringing in the room: “Marhabá, Marhabá” (You are welcome, greetings be upon you.) And then for the rest of the hour, the soul in communion with the Spirit forgot its self, and was utterly unconscious of the material world around it. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá often closed His eyes in meditation and remained for a while as if in communion with the [XXV:2:54] Universal Spirit of creation which permeated His own being. Then after an hour or so, one would be conscious again that there were people in the room, that in fact one’s self was in that room, that outside the windows it was black and the wind was blowing—then one realized that the Master had left the room!

About the greatness of this man and His power,” wrote Professor Edward G. Browne, “no one who had seen Him could entertain a doubt.”

Perhaps it was His remarkable understanding and grasp of human suffering and misery and discord and hatred, His patience, long and enduring, His most lucid and penetrating insight, the depth of His knowledge and wisdom rivalled only by His own spiritual way of life, and His humility so compelling and so mighty—perhaps these were some of the attributes that made of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the perfect Exemplar of the quintessence of creation—Man.

But great and inspiring as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the truest sense of the word, He never referred to or admitted His greatness. Nay, on the contrary, His greatest joy was being called ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, i.e. the “Servant of Light”.²

“My name is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” He wrote, “my identity is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, my qualification is

¹ 1 John 4:19.

² Bahá’u’lláh—‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Father—literally means the “Light or Splendour of God”.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, my reality is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, my praise is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ...”¹

A believer once asked Him, saying: “Master, who art thou? Art thou the Christ?”

“Verily, I say unto thee, that I am indeed an humble, submissive and imploring servant of God; a servant of His Beloved; ... a promoter of the greatest peace among all nations and tribes; ... a herald of the Kingdom of God among the sects of all horizons. This is my station and condition; ... because my servitude to the Holy Threshold is my brilliant light, my shining star and my drawn sword; and beside this I have no other name.”²

‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived at such a remarkable period in the history of civilization that one cannot help stopping a moment to review very briefly some of the most important incidents of world history between the years 1892 and 1921, when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá alone and single-handed faced humanity with His message of peace and love and light.

In 1894, the Sino-Japanese war broke out. Four years later, Germany, Great Britain and Russia seized Chinese provinces and thus “a flame of hatred for the Europeans swept through China”. With remarkable intelligence and energy, Japan westernized its people in an astonishingly short time, until in 1899, it was “on a level with the most advanced European powers”. In 1905 Russia declared war on Japan. At this time, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was so disappointed with the Hague Peace Congress that He said later: “*It resembles many drunkards gathered together to protest against the drinking of alcohol. They say drink is horrible and they straightway go out from the house to drink again.*”³

Three years later came the fall of Sultán ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd, and the establishment of constitutional government in Turkey. From 1914 to 1918, the world witnessed the spiritual, moral and physical collapse and bankruptcy of the nations. Two Western monarchs, the Emperor of Germany and the Tsar of Russia, dramatically lost their thrones. In [XXV:2:55] 1919, Russia in particular suffered from disorganization and revolution. In 1920, one year before the passing away of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the League of Nations met for the first time.

Thus a keen observer cannot fail to notice that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived at one of the most momentous periods in the history of the world, at a time of narrow and obsolete moral creeds, dead and dying political ideas. In fact it was a time when people lived on ideals of autocracy, of brute force, of triumphant capitalism, of physical and spiritual slavery. No wonder then that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote:

“Today the world of humanity is walking in darkness because it is out of touch with the world of God. That is why we do not see the signs of God in the hearts of men. The power of the Holy Spirit has no influence.”⁴

Well-nigh thirteen years have passed since ‘Abdu’l-Bahá left this travailing world. Where do we stand now? To begin with, let us remember these prophetic words written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in January 1920:

“The ills from which the world now suffers will multiply; the gloom which envelops it will deepen. The Balkans will remain discontented. Its restlessness will increase. The vanquished Powers will continue to agitate. They will resort to every measure that may rekindle the flame of war. Movements, newly born and worldwide in their range, will exert

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 430.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. III, pp. 658–9.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 61.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 305.

their utmost for the advancement of their designs.”¹

We do not need to stretch our imagination in order to understand the foregoing passage. Even a casual observation of the events of the last fourteen years reveals to us most glaringly the astounding truth underlying ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s pregnant words.

Whether we admit it or not, economically and politically, we still consider the injury of others the measure of our success and welfare. We still believe in the military catechism which says: “The way to make war impossible is to make victory certain,” in other words that “when each can beat the other, both will be safe”. False and nugatory² promises that self respecting nations give each other are not things of the past, yet.

We have seen months and years of endless conferences, congresses and conventions to remedy the ills of our social, political and economic conditions, not to mention the “vast mountains of documents, reports, discussions, accusations, counter charges” which are stored in drawers and safes and do not seem to get us anywhere.

There is so much passion in the world, at present; passion of individuals against individuals which makes them hate one another and the organized passions of nations which make them responsible for the wholesale murder of innocent people. It was this passion which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá condemned when He said:

“All the peoples of Europe, notwithstanding their vaunted civilization, sink and drown in this terrifying sea of passion and desire, and this is why all the phenomena of their culture come to nothing.”³

To sum up, no words better describe the conditions of the present age than those of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith when he writes of “... disintegrating institutions, the discredited statesmanship, the exploded theories, the appalling degradation, the follies and furies, the shifts, shams and compromises”⁴ [XXV:2:56]

We cannot help saying with Sir Norman Angell:

“Are we to continue to struggle, as so many good men struggled in the first dozen centuries of Christendom spilling oceans of blood, wasting mountains of treasure to achieve what is at the bottom a logical absurdity; to accomplish something which, when accomplished, can avail us nothing, and which, if it could avail us anything, would condemn the nations of the world to never-ending bloodshed and the constant defeat of all those aims which men, in their sober hours, known to be alone worthy of sustained endeavour?”⁵

How long will it take us to learn that “... *human happiness*,” as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote, “*consists only in drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race ...*”⁶

And again, He said:

“True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace.”⁷

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 88–9.

² Nugatory: trifling or worthless; alternatively, not operative or invalid.

³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 60.

⁴ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 79.

⁵ Sir Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion*, p. 263.

⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 60.

⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 64.

As this brief and all too inadequate account of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life draws to an end, we cannot fail to remember His last and stirring words addressed to a group of believers and friends gathered around Him on board the steamship Celtic, the day of His departure from New York on the 5 December 1912. These words sum up the mission of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on this earth and the principles of love and peace and unity for which He lived and died:

“This is my last meeting with you, for now I am on the ship ready to sail away. These are my final words of exhortation. I have repeatedly summoned you to the cause of the unity of the world of humanity, announcing that all mankind are the servants of the same God, that God is the creator of all; He is the Provider and Life-giver; all are equally beloved by Him and are His servants upon whom His mercy and compassion descend. Therefore, you must manifest the greatest kindness and love toward the nations of the world, setting aside fanaticism, abandoning religious, national and racial prejudice.”¹

“Until man reaches this high station, the world of humanity shall not find rest, and eternal felicity shall not be attained. But if man lives up to these divine commandments, this world of earth shall be transformed into the world of heaven, and this material sphere shall be converted into a paradise of glory.”²

XXV:6 September 1934 [XXV:6:166]

The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh

Hasan M. Balyuzi

“The creative energies released by the Law of Bahá’u’lláh, permeating and evolving within the mind of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, have, by their very impact and close interaction, given birth to an Instrument which may be viewed as the Charter of the New World Order which is at once the glory and the promise of this most great Dispensation.”³

While in London, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked by a journalist to relate His experiences of prison life. He smiled and said: *“There is no prison save the prison of self.”*⁴ Perhaps this sentence may give us a clue to the remedy for the world wide ailments of the body politic today. We need only to glance around us to realize that today individuals live in self, families reside in self, communities dwell in self and nations abide by self. All are deaf and blind to realities surrounding them. What can be the first and foremost task of the Bahá’í Cause but to liberate the human race from the bondage of self?

Someone might say that ascetics and hermits have had this same end in view. In the seclusion of their caves and cells they have struggled to purge themselves of “self”. Their object has been the elimination of the ego but with no thought of their fellow men—a stupendous and impossible task, as impracticable and harmful as undesirable. *The Bahá’í Cause aims at mastering and subduing the ego and employing its huge reservoirs of initiative and energy and its colossal potentialities in the service of humanity.* Fierce competition is a natural corollary of selfishness. It is the fashion to call it “struggle for existence”, and wrap it in the gossamer disguise of biological necessity. Nothing is more alien to the spirit of Bahá’u’lláh’s World Order than unbridled competition. This must be abandoned and co-operation must take its place.

Some of the basic instructions of Bahá’u’lláh concern work. Work done in the right spirit is ranked by Him as worship. *“The basest of men,”* He asserts, *“are that yield no fruit on earth.*

¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 468.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 470.

³ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 144.

⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 23.

*Such men are verily counted as among the dead, nay better are the dead in the sight of God than those idle and worthless souls.*¹ “The best of men,” again He says, “are they that earn their livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.”² What stronger indictment against social parasites need we have?

This at once brings us to the cardinal question of capital and labour. Let me dispel all doubts by stating at the outset that the Bahá’í Cause stands on a higher and vastly larger plane than either of our principal schools of economic thought. Whereas Capitalists are impelled by the interests of the more favoured few, and the Socialists demand the rights of the great mass of workers, the Bahá’ís take a detached view, and consider the two contending factions of capital and labour as inevitable and indispensable organs of the body politic. It is both disastrous and criminal to suppress one at [XXV:6:167] the expense of the other. No solution can be obtained, unless both the capitalist and the labourer admit frankly their interdependence, and start afresh on that solid and firm basis. Bahá’u’lláh’s thesis is a wise and just system of taxation and of distribution of public funds, combined with voluntary sharing in industry. Bahá’u’lláh would dismiss from human minds the very idea of deprivation whenever the social well-being of all conflicts with individual comfort and luxury. The rich should not be stripped of their property and wealth. The poor man must not be in want of necessities. Rather the rich should feel in themselves that no ease and peace can be imaginable as long as abject misery is the lot of millions of their fellow men.

But how can this spirit of responsibility of the fortunate for the unfortunate be brought about Human nature, we are told, cannot be changed. But if mankind is to live on, it must undergo a great unprecedented transformation. What we term human nature and view oftentimes with resigned repugnance is only a faint shadow of the ruling traits of jungle life. However appalling and beastly man was years ago, his predatory and wicked instincts were limited in their application by the lack of efficient method and instrument. Today we live in a world rampant with dangerous possibilities. Man has in his possession the most devilish means of destruction. Thus the very preservation of the human race decrees subordination of this dreaded human nature.

There are people who believe that under harsh discipline and external pressure, man can be reformed. They assume that force and suppression can induce men to visualize the common weal. These zealots lose sight of a secret. We can blow air into a balloon but not indefinitely. A limit passed, it will burst. If we wish to proceed with our pleasure, we have first to increase the capacity of our plaything. And so it is with humanity.

The only way to correct conditions is through just laws; but, in order to have just laws, and also complete obedience to law, man must be changed from within. This change of human nature makes possible a willing and intelligent obedience. Without this inner growth some become scheming and resentful.

Both Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived long lives of suffering and deprivation in order to show us that the spirit within can conquer so-called human nature and substitute love for hate and justice for greed.

But a desire for justice for all does not mean absolute equality. This is a chimera that has decoyed men into baseless assumptions and deleterious experiments. Bahá’u’lláh is emphatic on this point: we cannot have absolute equality. But the fact that ranks and degrees are

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 81.

² Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 82.

inevitable does not entail oppression and irresponsibility. Bahá'u'lláh declares unequivocally for equality of opportunity and absolute, unconditional equality in the sight of God. Compulsory universal education affords equal chances to all.

Furthermore, God recognizes no distinction of colour, race, language, nationality religion, wealth and [XXV:6:168] position. *“O children of vainglory! For a fleeting sovereignty ye have abandoned My imperishable dominion, and have adorned yourselves with the gay livery of the world and made of it your boast. By My beauty! All will I gather beneath the one-coloured covering of the dust and efface all these diverse colours save them that choose My own, and that is purging from every colour.”*¹

This oneness of humankind, which in the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, is *“the gift of God to this enlightened age”*,² constitutes the cornerstone of Bahá'u'lláh's dispensation. Here a pitfall should be warned against. Unity and uniformity are two different themes. Uniformity is deadening. It paralyzes human faculties, and dries up all fountains of originality and creative thought. Bahá'u'lláh never supported the idea of uniformity. By comparing the world and its multi-forms of race, nationality and language, to a garden effulgent with varieties of plant life, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá showed the undesirability of reducing all to one type. One of the glories of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order is the fact that it sanctions “unity in diversity”.

The Bahá'í Cause, then, champions universal tolerance and appreciation rather than the enchaining of the human intellect to produce one type. No violent move, however, against political order and social equilibrium is permitted. But as long as a movement is *peaceful and works through befitting channels*, no person or persons should have the right of prevention. Men are free to express what they think and feel. But if on a vital point two should disagree and drag others into the vortex of their conflict, both are deemed wrong. Thus demagogues and charlatans lose their standing.

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh ordains the establishment of a Supreme Tribunal, a supranational fully-sovereign body exercising control over any and every affair, problem or occasion that affects international relations. The words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will best explain the nature of this tribunal:

“... although the League of Nations has been brought into existence, yet it is incapable of establishing Universal Peace. But the Supreme Tribunal which His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power. And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation—that is to say parliaments—should elect two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity of this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation. [XXV:6:169]

When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority-rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations in the execution of the

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 74.

² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 19.

irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal. Consider what a firm foundation this is! But by a limited and restricted League the purpose will not be realized as it ought and should.”¹

From these words it is evident that Bahá'u'lláh inculcates the notion of collective responsibility, even in world affairs. More than sixty years ago, He foretold and foresaw the present sad plight of a bewildered humanity. Now, we are beginning to comprehend that no nation can act as the sole judge of its conduct and behaviour. Now, the full connotation of Bahá'u'lláh's warnings and exhortations is being revealed to us. Now, we are forced to admit that unity is the urgent need of the hour. Today we stand at the cross roads, face to face with a critical and momentous decision. Which path are we to take, order or anarchy?

Looking in perspective at the projected World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, three salient features command our immediate attention—Justice, Unity and Love. The followers of Bahá'u'lláh aspire to a new order in which war, discord, jealousy and competition are eliminated, not merely because they are banned and tabooed, but because the human soul will rise to such an elevation of justice and wisdom that greed and carnage will seem childish, brutish and outgrown. The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh is not a negative system. It does not simply forbid. Its richness, potency and animating, revitalizing spiritual power, have not failed those who have enlisted on its side. A structure founded on justice, unity, love and appreciation will inevitably have peace within its walls.

XXV:8 November 1934 [XXV:8:236]

In the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

(An early pilgrimage)

Rosa V. Winterburn

“Grieve not because of my imprisonment and calamity; for this prison is my beautiful garden, my mansioned paradise and my throne of dominion among mankind. My calamity in my prison is a crown to me in which I glory among the righteous.”²

“You are going to your greatest test,” said a friend as we drove to the station to commence the trip to 'Akká, Palestine, the “White City by the Sea”. The words were unintelligible to me then, and it was not until some weeks later that their real meaning became clear. Scarcely heeding them, in fact, in the happiness of making the start, they were forgotten until their truth came back to me when the visit in 'Akká was moving slowly into the past.

Six days in 'Akká! Six days in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Six days in an atmosphere of the most perfect love and peace that it has ever been mine to know. Others may have spent six weeks there, six months. That is nothing, for time is nothing in the presence of the Servant of God. If a thousand years are but as a day in the sight of the Lord, is it not equally true that a day may be as a thousand years? We lived a lifetime in those six days. The outside world disappeared. The past had never been. There was no future. It was as if the moment in that Presence were all of life and that it was eternal. Peace, happiness, calm joy enveloped us from the moment 'Abdu'l-Bahá took our hands in His in a welcoming grasp until He said “Go back and serve,” and we left His Presence, perhaps forever in this world.

Before starting on our journey I had feared being overwhelmed with sadness at the sight of the imprisonment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; so I had prayed earnestly that I might be enabled to look

¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to the Hague*, No. 1, p. 10–11.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas*, Vol. II, p. 258.

into His dear face only with smiles. Once in 'Akká the prayer was as completely forgotten as if it had never been breathed, and I found myself wondering at the readiness with which I smiled into those eyes that always smiled back at me in tender love. It was not until 'Akká was fading into the distance beyond the blue waters of the Mediterranean, that I remembered my prayer and marvelled at its complete realization.

The entrance into the Presence of the One called by so many "Mas- [XXV:8:237] ter"—came as simply and naturally as into that of some dear friend. We wondered somewhat, my husband and I, for we had thought it impossible to see Him whom our hearts so revered without being overcome with emotion. Hours passed, we met Him face to face, felt the touch of His hands, basked in the light of His smiles, and still we had not been overcome by any mighty wave of irresistible feeling, and still we wondered. Days passed, the life in 'Akká had received us, had taken us into its loving arms, and still we were wondering when and how was to come that mighty sweep of power. It did not come. The dominance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to us only through His love. His influence expressed itself to our mortal senses in the peace around us that was always unbroken. His wisdom was manifest in the grey haired men who bowed before its decisions in unquestioning acceptance. The efficiency of His teaching was illustrated in the eagerness of those who had been Zoroastrians, Muslims, or Christians to live all together there in perfect peace and unity, under His sheltering care; and in their determination to carry with them to the ends of the world the same peace and harmony that wrapped them in its folds in that dreary, but gorgeous, little prison city of 'Akká.

The day of departure came. The doors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home closed upon us. The grim walls and the defiant gates of the crumbling old city of the Crusaders were behind us. The world and the service upon which we had been sent out were before us. Slowly driving away, two questions perplexed us: What was the "greatest test" to which we had been subjected? We had been unconscious of it. Why had we not felt some overpowering conviction of the sanctity of that Presence in which we had spent six such bliss filled days? Then we almost laughed at our simplicity in asking ourselves the latter question. What experience could we have had more overwhelming in its conviction than the steadily cumulating proof of those six days? For now we realized, as had been impossible while still in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that every hour, every interview with Him, every observation of the life around us had brought conviction to the reason, to the judgement, to the emotions, to the whole mental, moral, and spiritual nature, that this was indeed the Servant of God for Whom we searched, that this was the Divine Exemplar Who could show the world the way into life eternal.

We realized now that when we first entered His Presence so quietly, it was as if we had been taken up by the first swell of a great tidal wave, raised so tenderly that we had scarcely been conscious of its uplift; we had been carried on and on, higher and higher, until, as the tidal wave may sweep over coast, rocks, and even cities, we had been carried high over all worldly consciousness and it had been as if the world were not. As this realization came, we prayed that we might never again be upon the spiritual level where we had been standing when that wave lifted us and bore us so high into the realms of absolute, common sense, unquestioning con- [XXV:8:238] viction. "By their works ye shall know them," and it was through the works of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and of those who served Him that we had attained to the heights of our conviction of the truth of the Bahá'í Teachings.

There still remained the thought, What had been our "greatest test"? It had sunk into insignificance. That incorporation of the living Spirit of God in a human body could never be a stumbling block now to our steps. We had met a *man*, it is true, a man with all the needs and elements of humanity. But it had been to realize how perfect an instrument of the Lord the human body may become. How else could God have spoken to us so forcibly as through those

human lips, that let fall Divine Wisdom; as through those human eyes, whose tender glances bore into one's soul a conception of the love and tenderness of God; as by that human tongue that never uttered a harsh or an unkind word; as through that stately form, unbowed by all the grievances of the world or by the sufferings of long years of prison life and deprivation? Surely, if man is the greatest work of God, man must also be the most perfect Messenger of God to man.

There had been but six days in 'Akká; but the human world was behind us, before us was the world of God. They had been separated by a faint conception of Eternity, lived in the Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

XXV:11 February 1935 [XXV:11:332]

A Bahá'í doctor

Luṭfu'lláh S. Ḥakím¹

"Souls have appeared in the world who were pure and undefiled, who have directed their attention toward God, seeking the reward of God, attaining nearness to the threshold of God, acceptable in the good pleasure of God. They have been the lights of guidance and stars of the Supreme Concourse. Consider these souls, shining like stars in the horizon of sanctity forevermore."²

There has recently passed from this world in Ṭihrán, Persia, a man whose noble life and ancestral history give us occasion to pause and reflect upon the influence and widespread importance of the Bahá'í Cause in Persia and upon the many ties which bind Persia with America.

Dr Arastú Khán Ḥakím belonged to the third generation of Bahá'ís. His grandfather, Ḥakím Masīḥ was court doctor to Muḥammad Sháh and the first Jewish Bahá'í. Ḥakím Masīḥ's life takes us back to the very early history of the Cause for he had learned something of the new faith when he was in Baghdád through Ṭáhirih³ herself, during the early days of the Báb's manifestation. From that time on he had searched for the source of her power. Later in Ṭihrán, when Muslim doctors refused, he had offered to visit the prison and treat a Bahá'í child. The father of the child was the famous Ismu'lláhu'l-Aṣdaq and in the course of these visits Ḥakím Masīḥ became a Bahá'í and later achieved much fame in the Cause.

Dr Arastú's father Ḥakím Sulaymán was likewise a Bahá'í and Dr Arastú himself gradually increased his services in the Cause as he grew to manhood. Meanwhile he was carrying on the family tradition, as are his sons today, of practicing medicine. About 1897 he graduated from the American School in Ṭihrán and was working in the American hospital, where he already showed signs of that healing personality which later made him one of the foremost doctors in the capital. At this period knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's Cause often ended in a martyr's death, and so we find him studying the Bahá'í teachings unobtrusively in out of the way houses in the back streets of Ṭihrán. Soon he began to teach on his own account.

DR ARASTÚ'S BROTHER, AFLÁṬÚN, WAS ALSO AN ARDENT BAHÁ'Í, MUCH LOVED BY 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, WHO WROTE HIM MANY TABLETS. IN 1900 AFLÁṬÚN DIED AND SHORTLY AFTER THIS ARASTÚ KHÁN WENT TO 'AKKÁ, WHERE IT WAS HIS PRIVILEGE TO REMAIN WITH 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ FOR ONE YEAR. DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF HIS VISIT CONTINUALLY ADDRESSED HIM AS "AFLÁṬÚN". THIS PUZZLED HIM CONSIDERABLY, UNTIL ONE NIGHT WHEN HE AND DR YÚNIS KHÁN-I-AFRÚKHTIH WERE FOLLOWING 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ THROUGH THE NARROW CROOKED STREETS OF THE PRISON CITY, WHEN 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ AGAIN ADDRESSED HIM AS "AFLÁṬÚN" AND SAID, "DO YOU KNOW WHY I CALL YOU AFLÁṬÚN? IT IS BECAUSE I DESIRE HIS TRUTH AND

¹ Luṭfu'lláh Sulaymán? Ḥakím.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 186.

³ Qurratu'l-'Ayn

Dr Arastú developed rapidly in ‘Akká studying ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s way. He worked with Dr Yúnis Khán translating letters from the American and other Western Bahá’ís. [XXV:11:333] ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had hoped to send him to America, but family concerns necessitated his return to Persia. Here he worked devotedly for the Cause, founding a weekly teaching meeting which continued till his death, and which according to his will is to be perpetuated. He received his medical diploma and became known throughout the capital as a physician most generous to the poor and as one gentle and considerate toward all.

During the very last year of his life his activities were linked with America again through his work of advising and assisting Mrs Keith Ransom-Kehler¹ who was at that time labouring devotedly to bring before the Persian government petitions to insure justice in every way to Bahá’ís, especially in the matter of free circulation of Bahá’í literature. Right here in connection with Mrs Ransom-Kehler’s association with Dr Arastú we find a bit of romance mingling itself with the more serious duties of her service, for it was she who arranged for the betrothal of Dr Arastú’s son, Dr Qulám Ḥusayn Khán and the sister-in-law of Raḥmat ‘Alá’í and officiated at the wedding which will long be remembered in Ṭihrán.

Dr Arastú’s death made a deep impression in Ṭihrán where he was mourned alike by Bahá’ís and non-Bahá’ís. A long procession of several hundred people followed his coffin up one of the main thoroughfares of the capital mourning their loss and honouring his life of loving service and sacrifice. Engraved on the stone which marks the resting place of his body are the well-chosen words from the Qur’án: “O well assured spirit, willing and blessed go thou back to thy Lord.”

Persia is full of such glorious souls as this man who are professionally and practically successful in their careers yet deeply spiritual and mystical in their complete devotion to the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh, willing to sacrifice everything, not only career, but life itself in order that world brotherhood should be carried forward. All the rest of the world of Bahá’í brotherhood know that it is due to the faith and self-sacrificing devotion of such Persians that the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh grew to the point where it could become a world message and a world movement.

XXV:12 March 1935 [xxv:12:379]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Music is one of the important arts. It has a great effect upon the human spirit. Musical melodies are a certain something which prove to be accidental upon etheric vibrations, for voice is nothing but the expression of vibrations which, reaching the tympanum, affect the nerves of hearing. Musical melodies are therefore those peculiar effects produced by, or from, vibration. However, they have the keenest effect upon the spirit. In sooth, although music is a material affair, yet its tremendous effect is spiritual and its greatest attachment is to the realm of spirit. Voice is the vibration of air and is like the waves of the sea. The voice is produced through the instrumentality of the lips with the tongue, etc. These cause a wave in the air, and this wave reaches the nerve of the ear, which is thereby affected.

¹ An American Bahá’í who carried the Bahá’í Message throughout the world and laboured extensively in Persia where she sacrificed her life.