

Extracts from notes taken at Acca, Oct. 1907
by Aline Siano-Devin.

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With Abdul Beha in Acca.

Yesterday, Oct. 13, 1907, word came from Mirza Jallal that Abdul Beha would receive me at Acca, where Miss Bingham had already preceded me. Today we had several short interviews with Abdul Beha and in reply to our questions He spoke first of prayer.

Q. "Is it right to address prayer to a Manifestation of God?"

A. "It is as difficult for the human mind to understand the Essence of God as for the watch to understand its maker, but through the Manifestations it becomes easier to understand His Spirit, and, therefore, to draw near to it. Otherwise, we must form for ourselves a mental conception of God, which may be a false one. The only test of its truth lies in the influence this conception has upon our lives; if it makes us kind and loving in our relations with our fellow-men, we may know it is a true one. In other words it must produce in our hearts a love of God, which must be transmuted into love for man."

Asked if it were right to pray to Him, Abdul Beha, He shook His head positively, made a negative motion with His head, then replied with emphasis. "No, not to me, but to the Glory of God (Baha'u'llah) whose light I reflect."

Asked if each new born soul was newly created, Abdul Beha replied; "Yes, every soul has a beginning, but, once created, is immortal."

Asked the difference between soul and spirit, He replied, "The spirit results from the union of body and soul; this spirit becomes immortal, always remaining with the soul and forming for it, after death a sort of eternal body." He added, "There is a human and a divine spirit, the latter coming through knowledge of and belief in God. The human spirit is superior to the body and struggles with it for control of the soul; when the body obtains the control, the soul becomes degraded."

Asked to the punishment that awaits those who have refused to accept the knowledge and light of God, He answered; "Their punishment will be a deprivation of God."

Asked if this condition would be eternal, Abdul Beha replied; "No for God's Mercy is never wearied."

Asked if how men who do not know God feel it to be a punishment to be without that knowledge, He replied: "No man can be happy without God, though he may not know why he is miserable."

Asked if the dead passed entirely away from the earth losing all consciousness of and interest in the people and affairs of the world, Abdul Baha said: "No, the dead retain both remembrance of and interest in those they love."

Asked if disembodied souls could communicate with embodied ones, He replied, "Yes, but they do not do it through mediums nor in material ways, but in spiritual ways." (Miss Bringham suggests that these may be "the cloud of witnesses" spoken of by Paul, Heb. 12:1)

Asked if the Bahai Revelation taught "reincarnation" Abdul Baha answered, "No, a soul, once freed from its body, never again takes shape in this world."

At the conclusion of this talk Abdul Baha arose and, walking up and down again He spoke, said that, while all these questions were interesting and might be endlessly discussed, the only thing of supreme importance is that we may learn to know and love God. Going up to a mirror that hung on the wall, He laid His hand on it saying, "Make your hearts as bright and shining as this mirror, so that they may reflect God. If you do this, all questions will become clear to you, all doubts be set at rest."

In answer to a question, asked at supper this same day, He replied:

"God has made all mankind of one family; no race is superior to another."

Asked if intermarriage between the races was right and advisable, He replied:

"Yes. As in the vegetable world the best results are obtained when one kind of fruit is grafted upon another so in the human family, the best and strongest children are obtained by intermarriage between different races."

Asked what is true civilization, He answered that true civilization exists only where the spiritual and material combines to reach their highest development. For example, a good man, without any development along material lines does not represent true civilization; on the other hand, the man who is developed on the material side only, with no thought of the spiritual does not represent the true civilization.

Just before retiring that evening, Abdul Baha came in

and we asked if a soul is ever annihilated, and He replied: "No. It will be placed in different conditions by God's mercy and will eventually progress."

Asked if Jesus was immaculately conceived, He replied: "It is not impossible that He should have been, though it is not necessary that all Manifestations should come in that way."

Asked if Baha'llah were of the blood of Abraham, He replied, "Yes, not through Isaac nor Ismael, but through one of his other sons of whom he had six."

- Oct. 15th.

This morning Abdul Baha sat with us while we drank our coffee, We asked Him if Jesus Christ was the first Universal Manifestation, and He replied:

"No. Melchizedek, who was without beginning or end of days, was the first one," adding that Melchizedek was the instructor of Abraham.

Asked if Baha'llah was subject to earthly potentates, Abdul Baha said:

"Yes, in Persia to the Shah, in Turkey to the Sultan, though in reality He was not subject to any, for, though His body was in prison, His Spirit was in Heaven."

Oct. 15th

In the course of a short conversation this morning with Abdul Baha, we asked if it were necessary to believe in all the Manifestations, and in reply He quoted the words of Jesus to the Pharisees:

"Had ye believed in Moses, ye would also believe in Me." adding, "If a king send many different governors to rule a city and the people obey all but the last one it will be to the king as though they disobeyed all."

Asked if it were ever right to rebel against earthly ruler, He replied, "Yes, if he deals unjustly and tyrannically with his people he forfeits the right to govern them."

Symbolism of Religion

"All religions are written symbolically. This is the only way which truth can be written to withstand time and its changes. Languages change, the meaning of words is lost, for these are but the expressions of periods. Symbols never change, since they are the

expressions of man's spirit. The realities encased in them are handed down as long as the symbols are preserved. These realities the spirit reawakens.

Baha'u'llah was no exception in this respect to all other Divine Manifestations. He used the symbols and the metaphors, and if we would understand Him, we must interpret these. At the time of Christ men were not accustomed to abstract thinking; therefore the symbols and metaphors of His teachings were to a great extent misunderstood and the truths lost.

Those who were the fathers of Christianity Religion gave to the world His literal speech without explaining the meaning which it was intended to convey. But this is the day of general enlightenment and, therefore, the symbols used by Baha'u'llah will be read and interpreted with the highest conceptions of truth and His teachings will throw light upon those of all the former Manifestations."

Abdul Baha Abbas