MARZIEH GAIL

DAWN OVER MOUNT HIRA
AND OTHER ESSAYS

GR

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Foreword

THE UNION OF EAST AND WEST has been and is the dream of many. Visionaries, statesmen, artists, philosophers, poets and scientists have believed in it and worked for its realization. But it did not become an essential principle of religion until, in the 19th century, Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed the principles of world order. To the unity of mankind, which is the social aim of the Bahá'í Faith, the marriage of East and West is a *sine qua non*.

Marzieh Gail, child of a Persian father and American mother, inherits and successfully combines in her own person, both cultures. She has been able, as demonstrated in her book *Persia and the Victorians*, to interpret each to the other. But, as other devotees of this union have found, the most realistic, powerful and hopeful programme lies in the promotion of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings on the unity of the world. Most of Mrs. Gail's literary activity has been in support of this aim, and the essays in this collection have appeared, over the years, in the chief publications of the Bahá'ís.

Their variety is remarkable. Whether presenting Muḥammad and Islám attractively to Western readers, or relating heroic episodes in that most heroic of all epics, 'The Episode of the Báb', or reflecting on the Persian mystical poets, the emancipation of women, human evolution or the world of tomorrow, she conveys a sense of ever present drama, a heightened awareness of the greatness of the day in which we live, its crisis and its portent. She makes the martyrs and heroes of the Báb's dispensation—the Dawn-Breakers—real and believable to western readers. Above all her portrayal of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Mystery of God, both in these essays and elsewhere, ensures the enduring value of her writing.

DAVID HOFMAN

I

Paradise Brought Near

Dawn Over Mount Hira

'BY THE NOON-DAY BRIGHTNESS, and by the night when it darkeneth! Thy Lord hath not forsaken Thee, neither hath He been displeased. And surely the future shall be better for Thee than the past. Did He not find Thee an orphan and give Thee a home? And found Thee erring and guided Thee, and found Thee needy and enriched Thee?' … For some days before this, the voice had been silent; now again the comforting spirit enfolded Muḥammad, under the stars on Mount Hira. He remembered how the voice had broken through His thoughts, before, and terrified Him. He had heard on the mountain the word: 'Read!'—and had answered: 'I do not know how to read.' 'Read!' 'What shall I read?' 'Read: In the name of Thy Lord who created, Created man from clots of blood: Read! by Thy most beneficent Lord, who hath taught the use of the pen; Hath taught man that which He knoweth not …' He remembered His struggle against the voice; how He had gone from the mountain, thinking Himself possessed. And Khadíjih had believed in Him, and Varaqa, a man old and blind, and versed in the Scripture, had cried, 'Holy, holy, verily this is the Voice that came to Moses. Tell Him—bid Him be of brave heart.' Then for some time the voice had been silent, and now it had come to Him again. And Muḥammad looked down over Mecca, and He thought of His city, and He began to preach against the things men loved.

'Not a blade of grass to rest the eye … no hunting … instead, only merchants, that most contemptible of all professions …' wrote a black poet, of Mecca. No trees, gardens, orchards. Only a

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few spiny bushes. And the black flagstones around the Ka‘bih had to be sprinkled to cool them for the barefoot processions, and the wells were irregular and brackish. Caravans came, with jewels and spices, with skins and metals, and the whole town turned out to meet them; caravans of two or three thousand camels, of several hundred men. And men speculated, winning a fortune in a day, and lending it out for usury, and hoarding, and counting it over; and Muḥammad said to them: ‘The emulous desire of multiplying riches employeth you, until ye visit the graves … Hereafter shall ye know your folly … Again, hereafter shall ye know your folly.’ Then He bade them give alms, telling them: ‘What good ye have sent before for your souls, ye shall find it with God.’ The wealthy merchants lived in the central part of Mecca; they swelled with pride, but Muḥammad urged them to walk not proudly in the earth, because all men are brothers. The common people lived farther off from the Ka‘bih, in the slanting streets, and the rabble beyond them; and away from the town were the desert Arabs, in their goat-skin tents. There was wine and gambling, and Muḥammad forbade them; there were singing girls, and He was chaste. There were brawls and blood feuds and feastings; women playing upon lutes, to welcome such things as the birth of a boy, the coming to light of a poet, or the foaling of a mare. Over this reigned a vague Being, a supreme Alláh, and his three daughters; yet Muḥammad said: ‘He begetteth not, neither is He begotten.’ And closer to earth, a crowd of idols, who lived in and about the Ka‘bih, with their leader, a bearded old man of cornelian, with one hand made of gold; and his name was Hubal. And Muḥammad laughed at the Ka‘bih gods: ‘Is this wondrous world, the sun and moon, the drops of rain, the ships that move across the waters—are these the work of your stone and wooden gods?’ Then He spoke of the true God, saying: ‘The seven heavens praise Him, and the earth, and all who are therein; neither is there anything which doth not celebrate His praise; but ye understand not.’ Here too, set in the Ka‘bih, was the Black Stone; men said it was the only thing from Paradise to be found on earth, and that it had once been white, till it was blackened by human sins. There were other gods to worship in Arabia, and stars and planets, but the Ka‘bih drew all men from near and far on pilgrimage.

Muḥammad’s kinsmen were chieftains in Mecca, and they lived

by the things which He now arose to destroy. He summoned them together, told them of His mission; and they laughed Him to scorn. 'May you be cursed for the rest of your life,' cried Abú Lahab; 'why gather us together for trifles like this?' And when He walked abroad, the wife of Abú Lahab strewed thorns before Him to wound His feet.

And Muḥammad preached to the tribes, when they flocked to Mecca and the neighbouring fairs, during the pilgrimage seasons; then His uncle, Abú Lahab, would follow, and shout: 'He is an impostor who seeketh to draw you from the faith of your fathers …'; and the tribesmen would laugh at Him, saying: 'Thine own people and kindred know Thee best: then wherefore do they not believe?' One day as He prayed at the Ka'bih, men turned upon Him, and mocked Him, saying: 'It is you who pretend that our fathers were in the wrong! It is you who call our gods impotent!' 'Yes, it is I who say that.' And they struck Him, and would have put Him to death. And once He went back to His dwelling without having met that day 'a single man, a single woman, a single child, a single slave, who did not insult Him on His way, calling Him madman and liar …'

And as men do in every age, the Meccans called for signs and wonders, bidding Him turn their hills to gold, or bring them a well of pure water, or prophesy the coming price of goods. 'Cannot your God disclose which merchandise will rise in price?' He answered, saying, 'The miracle that I bring you is the Qur'án, a Book revealed to an illiterate man, a Book no other man can equal.' Then He taught them of the life after death; and one, who owed money to a Muslim, said that he would repay him in the next world. Then He warned them of the terrors of the 'Last Day,' and said strange things about the coming of 'The Hour': 'Whosoever can find a refuge, let him hide … On that day humble herders of camels will sprawl about in palaces; people will be set to work building houses of extraordinary height … The Hour will come upon us so quickly that two men having unfolded some goods, shall not have time to conclude their bargain or fold up the goods again … 'And they reviled Him, saying, 'Know this, O Muḥammad, we shall never cease to stop Thee from preaching till either Thou or we shall perish.'

To kill Him, member of a ruling clan, would have meant a civil

war; so they put to death His followers, the weak and poor, or tortured them. Among them was Balál, the African slave, who lay many days in the Meccan sun, stretched out with a rock on his breast; they told him to forsake Muḥammad or die, and leaned down to hear him whisper: 'There is only one God—one.' He lived, and was the first muezzin. Of him Bahá'u'lláh has written: 'Consider how Balál, the Ethiopian, unlettered though he was, ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude.' And Muḥammad sorrowed over the wrong that was done His disciples, and He cried out: 'I fly for refuge unto the Lord of the Daybreak, that He may deliver Me from the mischief of those things which He hath created … I fly for refuge unto the Lord of men, the King of men, the God of men …'[1]

And He sent His followers into Ethiopia, to the pious Christian king. The Negus questioned them, and bade them speak, and they answered: 'O King, we adored idols, we lived in unchastity, we ate dead bodies, we spoke abominations … when God raised up among us a Man … and He called us to the unity of God, to fly vices and to shun evil.' And the Negus traced a line on the ground with his stick, and he said: 'Truly, between your faith and ours there is not more than this little stroke.'

Then the Meccans gathered to plot against Muḥammad: 'Would you say He is a sorcerer?' 'No, He hath not the emphatic tone, the jerky language.' 'A madman then?' 'He hath not the bearing.' 'A poet inspired by a jinn?' 'He doth not speak in classic verse.' 'A magician?' 'He doth not perform wonders.' And since great converts had now been made, they bargained with the Prophet, offering gold and honours in exchange for silence, saying, 'We shall make Thee our chieftain and our king.' He answered them, 'I am only a man like you. It is revealed to Me that your God is one God: go straight then to Him, and implore His pardon … Do ye indeed disbelieve in Him? … Do ye assign Him peers? The Lord of the worlds is He!' So they shut Muḥammad and His people out of Mecca into the mountains, and forbade that any buy or sell with him. And after three years were passed and Muḥammad and His disciples had hungered and suffered, the ban was lifted. Then the black days came, when the Prophet lost the two whom He loved dearest, His chief defender and His wife. 'When I was poor she enriched Me. When all the world abandoned Me, she comforted

Me.' They had lived together over a score of years, and contrary to the way of His times He had married no other. And yet He taught and none listened, and He put His agony into the words of the Prophet Noah: 'My cry only maketh them flee me the more.'

He spoke with the tribes, who came into Mecca for trade and to circle around the Ka'bih. And once He went to the beautiful mountain town of Ṭa'if, where the fruit trees grow, and the people stoned Him, shouting, 'If God had wanted to send a Prophet, could He not have chosen a better one than Thee?' But later in vision He journeyed by night to where the Lote-Tree flowers beside God's invisible throne; and He found thousands of choirs of angels, bowed down and motionless, in utter quiet, and then He felt Himself in the light of His Lord. He beheld God with His soul's eyes, and He saw what the tongue cannot express.
Now at last the men of Yathrib asked of Him to come and rule among them, so that He sent His disciples ahead, out of Mecca. And the Meccans gathered around His house in the dark to kill Him, but when the dawn showed white, they saw that He had gone. And Yathrib became Medina, which means 'The City of the Prophet.'

Muḥammad never first withdrew His hand out of another man's palm, nor turned away before the other had turned. He visited the sick, He followed any bier He met, He accepted the invitation of a slave to dinner. His food was dates and water, or barley bread; the people of His house 'did not eat their fill of barley bread, two days successively, as long as He lived.' He mended His own clothing and sandals, and milked the goats, and wiped sweat from His horse with His sleeve. He gave alms when He had anything to give. Once a woman brought Him a cloak, which He needed sorely, but they came and asked for it to make a shroud, and He gave it up, 'for He could refuse nothing.' He loved perfumes, and dyed His fingernails with henna, and was immaculate. Men said He was more modest than a virgin behind her curtain. Those who came near to Him loved Him. His countenance shone 'with a majestic radiance at the same time impressive and gentle.' A follower said of Him: 'I never saw anything more beautiful than Lord Muḥammad; you might say the sun was moving in His face.'

Medina was an oasis, rich in palm groves, an agricultural centre, not a place of trade like Mecca. (Its malarial fever was notorious,

its water tainted so that even the camels sickened of it.) And now the Prophet became a temporal as well as a spiritual Lord. And Arabia rose against Him, to kill belief in the one true God, so that Muḥammad prayed: 'O Lord, forget not Thy promise of help. O Lord, if this little band were to perish, there will be none to offer Thee pure worship.' He who had never wielded a weapon, who wept at the sight of pain, whose heart was so tender that His enemies called Him womanish, had now to drive back Arabia by force of arms. Mecca and her idols marched against Islám, and her women too came singing to battle, their skirts tucked up, the bangles flashing on their legs, and they tore and mangled the Muslim dead. But at last Hubal, the old man of red agate, lost to the Prophet of God, and 'Arabia that had never before obeyed one prince, submitted to Him … His word created one nation out of hundreds of warring tribes.'

At Medina, Muḥammad built a mosque of brick and earth, and He preached in it, leaning against a tree. One day they asked, 'What is the greatest vice of man?' He answered, 'You must not ask Me about vice, but about virtue;' and He repeated this three times, after which He said, 'Know ye! The worst of men is a bad learned man, and a good learned man is the best.' Again He said, 'If the unbeliever knew of the extent of the Lord's mercy, even He would not despair of Paradise.' And at other times: 'Death is a bridge that uniteth friend with friend … Misfortune is always with the Muslim and his wife, either in their persons or their property or children; either death or sickness; until they die, when there is no fault in them … Act, as regards this world, as if you were going to live forever; and as regards the other world, as if you were going to die tomorrow … You will not enter Paradise until you have faith; and you will not complete your faith till you love one another … Trust in God, but tie your camel …' One day as He walked with His disciples He said, 'The Garden (Paradise) is nearer to you than the thongs of your sandals; and the Fire likewise.' They came to a woman suckling her child, and He said, 'Do you think this woman will cast her own child into the fire? Verily God is more compassionate to His creatures than this woman to her child.' Once on a journey, when His companions were praying with loud voices, Muḥammad told them: 'Be easy on yourselves … Verily you do not call to One deaf or absent, but verily to One

who heareth and seeth … and He to whom you pray is nearer to you than the neck of your camel.' He said these things and many others, and He talked to His disciples of kindness to the Jews and Christians and other 'People of the Book'; of the rights of women; of gentleness to animals; of the Last Day; and of the life beyond this.

Now the Prophet, clothed as a pilgrim and wearing a black turban, rode into Mecca. He circled the Ka'bih, and entered, and He wiped away the frescoes from the walls—the pictures of Abraham and Ishmael, and the female angels; and He struck Hubal from his place, and tore down a wooden dove that hung from the roof. Then He prayed in the Ka'bih to His Lord; and leaving He touched with His stick each of the three hundred and sixty stones surrounding the holy place, and said: 'Truth is come and error is gone.' He drank from the well of Zamzam out of a goblet that men have kept, and He prayed at Khadíjih's tomb. Then He sent His disciples abroad to break every idol and to teach Islám.

One day while Abú Bakr sat in the mosque at Medina, Muḥammad suddenly appeared before him; and Abú Bakr said, 'Ah, Thou for whom I would sacrifice father and mother, white hairs are hastening upon Thee!' And the Prophet raised up His beard with His hand and gazed at it; and Abú Bakr's eyes filled with tears … Long years now Muḥammad had suffered and struggled, been hunted and stoned, been wounded in battle, and He carried as well the mark of the poisoned feast they had spread Him at Khaybar. And Muḥammad wrote to the rulers of the earth, proclaiming His mission. Many replied with gifts: silk and honey; a white mule; from the Negus a pair of black boots, which He wore several times while praying. But Khusraw, the Persian emperor, seeing Muḥammad's name ahead of his own on the missive, tore it to shreds; 'God will tear up Khusraw's kingdom in the same way,' said Muḥammad. And He had men pitch a tent of red leather, and here He received the deputations who flocked from all over the land to pledge Him allegiance.

Then for the last time Muḥammad stood on the hills over Mecca, and His voice rang out and the multitude listened: 'I do not know whether I shall ever see you again as today … but I have made it possible for you to continue on the straight Path …

This day and month shall be held sacred … ye shall have to give account for your actions before your Lord … Ye have rights over your wives and your wives have rights over you … Feed your slaves with such food as ye eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff ye wear … All Muslims are brothers—nothing which belongeth to another is lawful unto his brother.' Then He cried, 'O Lord, have I fulfilled My mission?' And the multitude answered, 'Yea, verily Thou hast!' And the prophet concluded, 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, bear Thou witness to it!'

On the long way home, He stopped the caravan, and taking the hand of 'Alí, husband of his dearest child, He said: 'Whoever hath Me as his Master hath 'Alí as his master … God be a friend to his friends and a foe to his foes.' Then He told them of two treasures He was leaving them: 'The greatest is the Book of God … The other is the line of My descendants.'

And He went one midnight to the graves of His old companions who lay at Medina, and He prayed for them. The last time He entered the mosque, He was supported by two of His kinsmen; and after the service, He said: 'If I have wronged any one of you, here I am to answer for it; if I owe aught to anyone, all I possess belongs to you.' A man in the crowd claimed three dirhems which Muḥammad had once bidden him give to a beggar. The Prophet paid him, saying, 'Better to blush in this world than the next.'

As Muḥammad lay dying, He called for writing materials to appoint His successor again; but 'Umar said, 'Pain is deluding God's Messenger; we have God's book, which is enough.' And they wrangled at His bedside, whether to bring the materials or no. And the Prophet sent them from Him. He was praying in a whisper, when He ascended.

Bahá'u'lláh says of Him: 'How abundant the thorns and briars which they have strewn over His path! The … divines of that age … pronounced Him a lunatic and a calumniator. Such sore accusations they brought against Him that in recounting them God forbiddeth the ink to flow, Our pen to move, or the page to bear them … For this reason did Muḥammad cry out: "No Prophet of God hath suffered such harm as I have suffered."'[2]

From Sa'dí's Garden of Roses

A KING WAS SAILING IN A SHIP with his Persian slave. The slave had never been on the sea before; he began to weep and cry out and to shudder with fear, and however much they sought to quiet him he would not be still. The king's excursion was in a fair way to be spoiled and none knew what to do. Then a wise man who was on the ship said to the king, 'If thou wish, I shall quiet him.' The king answered, 'Truly this were a gracious deed.'
The wise man bade them throw the slave into the sea. After he had choked down some water they seized him by the hair and drew him toward the ship. He clung to the ship with both hands, and once out of the water he sat in a corner and was still. The king was astonished, and asked, 'What wisdom lay in this?' The wise man answered: 'The slave did not know what it is to drown, and thus he did not value the safety of the ship. Even so doth a man value security who hath known calamity.'

A THIEF CREPT INTO THE HOUSE of a holy man, but wherever he sought, he found nothing to steal. The holy man woke. He rose from his mat, and threw it to the thief, lest the latter's heart be saddened.

I REMEMBER ONE NIGHT that my beloved came into my house, and I leapt up so swift that my sleeve brushed the lamp and put it out.

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He sat and chid me, saying, 'Why didst thou put out the light when thou sawest me come?'

I said, 'Because I thought the dawn had broken.'

I HAD NEVER COMPLAINED of the ways of the world, nor had I drawn together my brows over the accidents of life, until once when I found myself barefoot, with no money to buy shoes.

I went into the mosque at Kúfih, bewailing my lot. And then I saw a man who had no feet. And I thanked God for my blessings, and I went barefoot.

I SAW AN ARAB AMONGST the jewellers of Basra and he was saying: 'There was a time when I had lost my way in the desert, and my provisions were gone, and my mind was fixed on death. Then I found a bag full of pearls. I shall never forget my joy when I thought the bag was full of roasted wheat, nor my despair when I saw it was pearls.'

THEY ASKED OF ḤÁṬIM-I-ṬÁ'Í, 'Hast thou ever seen or yet heard of any man nobler than thyself?'

He answered, 'Yea. There was a day when I sacrificed forty camels and summoned the chieftains of the Arabs to a feast. Then it chanced that I went out to the desert's edge, and I saw a thorn-gatherer bearing a bundle of thorns. I said, "Why goest thou not to the feast of Ḥáṭim, since many have gathered at his banquet-cloth?" He answered, "Whoso earneth his bread by his own hand hath no need of bounty from Ḥáṭim-i-Ṭá'í."'

IN FULFILMENT OF HIS VOW, a king gave a purse of dirhems to his slave, and bade him divide the sum amongst all the holy men … Each day the slave would set out with the purse, each night he would return and kiss the purse and lay it (still full of gold) before his master; then he would say: 'No matter where I sought, I found no holy men.' At last the king said: 'How can such a thing be? To my knowledge there are four hundred holy men in

this city.' The slave replied: 'O Lord of the world, those who are holy will not take the dirhems, and those who will take them are not holy.'

A MAN CAME UNTO NAWSHÍRAVÁN the Just, and he brought glad-tidings, saying: 'Almighty God hath taken thine enemy from off the earth.' The king answered: 'Hast thou heard any rumour that He will leave me upon it?'

A DISCIPLE ASKED OF HIS MASTER: 'What shall I do? For the people flock to my dwelling and leave me no peace.' His master replied: 'When the poor come, lend them something; when the rich come, ask them for something. Neither will visit thee again.'

‘Alí

HIS BED, THEY SAY, WAS A RAM skin, and his tunic was too thin to protect him from the cold. When his day’s work as Caliph was over, he would blow out the candle that was paid for by the State, and sit in darkness. In prayer he would say to his Lord: ‘How then can ‘Alí lay him to rest, if there be yet a soul who suffereth injustice in any Muslim land?’

He was only a boy when he came to believe in the one true God, and he had never bowed himself before an idol; for this, men called him ‘Him whose face was never sullied.’ He was cousin to the Prophet, but he was son-in-law as well (for his wife was Fáṭimih, who is known as ‘The Lady of Paradise’ and ‘Our Lady of Light.’) The deeds he did, the words he wrote, have lasted thirteen hundred years.

When the Meccans gathered, that white dawn, to kill the Prophet, it was ‘Alí they found, wrapped in the Prophet’s cloak. He was with Muḥammad at the Battle of Badr, he received sixteen wounds at Uḥud, he fought single-handed at the War of the Trench, when Arabia and her idols rose against God. He carried away the banner at the storming of Khaybar.

He was with Muḥammad on that last loving pilgrimage to Mecca. And on the long way back, Muḥammad stopped the caravan, and stood up on a pulpit of pack-saddles, while the multitude gathered in the thorn trees’ shade; and He spoke, and said: ‘Whoever hath Me as his Master, hath ‘Alí as his Master … God be a friend to his friends and a foe to his foes.’ Then Muḥammad said, ‘I have been summoned to the gate of God, and I shall soon depart

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to God, to be concealed from you;' and He told them of two treasures He was leaving them: 'The greatest treasure is the Book of God … Hold fast to it and do not lose it and do not change it. The other treasure is the line of My descendants …'

And so it was that 'Alí became the first Imám, the 'Guardian of God,' the divinely ordained, divinely inspired, Interpreter of the Faith, the 'Commander of the Faithful;' and through him 'the eye of God's mercy shone upon men.'

But when the Prophet lay dying, men wrangled at His bedside, and when He called for materials to write His will, they said He wandered; and in the confusion following the death, another was made Caliph. And 'Alí stood aside, to protect the Faith from schism. The years went by. Three Caliphs reigned. Then 'Alí was appointed to his rightful place.

His wife had gone long since of a sorrowing heart; the shadow of martyrdom lay over his sons, for one was to die by poison, one to be hacked asunder on the plains of Karbilá—on days so harsh that men still wear mourning for them. Now enemies stood against him, and masses seethed around him, and he rode to battle again; ahead of his troops again, with his flashing black eyes, his long white beard, his high, white Egyptian hat for the enemy to see.

And his men left him, and betrayed him. And there came a Friday when he went to the mosque at Kúfih, to summon the people to prayer, and a man stood hidden, with a drawn sword, and the man stabbed him.

He lingered till the Sunday night, gasping that his murderer be killed without torture, with but a single stroke.

Men say he left only a few dirhems, a Qur'án and a sword.

From the Sayings of ‘Alí

A wise man trusts in his work, a fool in his dreams.
Books are the gardens of the wise.
Knowledge is a tree that grows in the heart and flowers from the tongue.

The covetous is poor though he own the earth.
Thrift is half thy store.
Jealousy is the soul’s jail.
The wise liveth, even after death; the ignorant dieth, even before.
The tongue is a wild beast: loose it—it bites.
The learned seeth with his mind and heart, the ignorant only with his eyes.
The hypocrite hath a sweet tongue and a bitter heart.
He who preacheth what he doth not practise is a bow without a string.
Beware of anger for it beginneth in folly and endeth in remorse.
The cloak thou givest to another lasteth longer than thine own.
You are the game that death stalketh; stand and he seizeth you, fly and he followeth.
The stalwart is he who overcometh himself.
The depth of the earth is peopled with dead, and its rim with sick.
The slightest of foes is he who showeth his hate.
It is better not to sin than to seek absolution.
Be not the friend of him who blameth men, for how shall his friend escape his censure?

Translated by Marzieh Gail, the first twenty are reprinted by permission from *World Order*, 3, no. 10 (Jan. 1938), 390

This life and the next are as a bigamist's two wives; when one doth smile the other sulketh.

He who knows mankind withdraws into himself.

To a fool, the best answer is no answer at all.

To praise the sinner is the worst of sins.

Gaze upon the world as a hermit does, not as a lover does.

Beware lest you injure him whose only defender is God.

The wise man knoweth the ignorant, for he came out of ignorance himself; but the ignorant knoweth not the wise, for he came not out of ignorance.

Ask not, who is the speaker; ask what is the speech.

Script is the tongue of the hand.

Fortune turns her back as she approaches; life breaks the limb it binds.

Better a lame tongue than a false.

The miser is the banker of his heirs.

The world is a poison, drunk by the unaware.

Seek knowledge, to be your ornament if you are rich, your bread if you are poor.

The wise man's guess is more to be relied on than the fool's conviction.

The wise seeks to perfect, the ignorant to enrich himself.

Whoso digs a pit for his brother shall fall into it himself.

He who spendeth not his wealth storeth it for his widow's spouse.

Better loneliness, than an evil companion.

Man's every breath: another step toward death.

O world! Delude some other than I! I need thee not. I have divorced thee thrice, I shall never wed thee again.

II

Take the Gentle Path

There Was Wine

SOME MEN LOVE WOMEN, AND SOME love money, and some love fame. One can judge a man by what he loves. There is one type of man who loves a certain presence moving in his heart; a presence which he calls God; this type of man has always enriched his fellows, and when he dies, the flowers are a little fresher over him, and other men come, and sit by his grave, and remember what he was.

There was once a young Englishman named George Herbert; a young man more or less like any other; a well-dressed young man, slightly aloof because of some pride of birth, who wrote home regularly from Cambridge University to ask for more money, who had ambitions, who hoped that through his ability and his powerful connections he would some day become Secretary of State. A favourite of King James, he used to read the royal literary efforts to his classes at the University, and to demonstrate w herein both Cicero and Demosthenes were inferior; so that James, naturally enough, pronounced him the jewel of Cambridge. There was a careless, early-in-the-morning joy about him; he could see his life ahead, full and splendid.

And then one day King James died. Then Herbert's other patrons fell away, and his health broke and death jostled him; and he found himself racked by an imperious passion for this world and a quiet, half-starved agony for the next; until gradually he began to listen to some voice in his heart, and to turn away from all but the most spiritual of worldly things. A nobleman, he turned priest, a calling then in disfavour. He forgot old hopes and desires, and

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spent the days in guiding his congregation toward religious beauty; in savouring the countryside around his church at Bemerton, in listening sometimes to the music in Salisbury Cathedral. And so it was that he became one of the company of the lovers of God, more favoured than many lovers, perhaps, because he could handle words, and he knew how to shape them till they meant what he felt. Love made a saint of him, till he must have worn a halo—not a painted one but the kind that shines around one's shadow on bright grass, when the sun has just come up. He grew from a somewhat usual brilliant young man, furnished with neat, verbal virtues, to an incarnation of priestliness, but his path was the way of the cross; he grew in pain, he had to struggle every step, to beat down his passion for worldly things, to master conflicting desires and doubts, to govern his reluctant, consumptive body. He has left us his books, to show us the way he went.

In the beginning, he wrote *The Church Porch*, and reading it we find a man who is still outside the Temple. He has some thought of mounting heavenward, but on red velvet carpet. He is here a courtier and scholar, admired of King James and Francis Bacon, a gay young man cleverly denouncing a great number of sins which seem only objectively realized. Only buds of qualities here, later to be forced open by suffering or blighted by prosperity, one cannot tell which. For example, he speaks of temperance:

Drink not the third glasse, which thou canst not tame
When once it is within thee …

Here is his feeling on mirth:

Pick out of tales the mirth, but not the sinne …

And here, his pride:

Do all things like a man, not sneakingly …
Towards great persons use respective boldnesse

His detachment:

Envie not greatnesse …
Be not thine own worm

His consciousness of fine clothes:

Kneeling ne'er spoiled silk stockings

His ecclesiastical method:

Resort to sermons, but to prayers most

And his tact:

draw the card
That suites him best of whom thy speech is heard.

These views and attitudes are typical of Herbert and of many another; they present a man who thought heaven was as easy to win as a mistress—that only hope and a few bright lines were requisite. They do not set us trembling with the agony of Herbert later on when he was older and tired of fighting, longing for the presence of his Lord.

People said the labourers would leave their ploughs to come and hear him preach; he has left us his ideals of priestliness in a book, *The Country Parson*—a study which ranks in a way with the world's utopias, the *Nouvelle Héloïses* and the *Atlantises*, but it rings truer than they, perhaps because Herbert was living the saintly life he described—his ideal community had at least one real inhabitant. The Country Parson regards as 'the two highest points of life … Patience and Mortification'. He is forever aware of his parishioners, and constantly adapting himself to their needs—'he hath thoroughly canvassed all the particulars of humane actions …' He is temperate, 'For sins make all equall whom they finde together; and then they are worst who ought to be best'. This last he emphasized because of his crusader's wish to uplift the priesthood and re-establish its honour, having said, 'I will labour to be like my saviour by making humility lovely in the eyes of all men'. The Country Parson is 'full of all knowledge … even tillage and pastorage', but as for the Scriptures, 'there he sucks and lives'. He is never fanatical, and accepts the culture of other nations: 'Neither hath God opened or will open all to one, that there may be a traffic in knowledge …' Herbert includes even stage-craft and church-setting in his directions for the Parson, and advocates the use of 'gestures … that being first affected himself, he may also affect his people'; but he adds that 'The Parson is not witty, or learned, or eloquent, but Holy' and says that every word of the sermon must be 'hart-deep'. Moreover the duty of training the congregation is undertaken with all seriousness; they are to learn not as 'parrats', but

reasonably; their responses are to be given 'not in a huddling, or slubbering fashion, gaping, or scratching the head, or spitting … but gently and pausably'. If unmarried, the Parson 'never talks with any woman alone, and that seldom, and never jestfully or sportfully'. If circumstances decree his marriage, 'the choice of a wife was made rather by his eare than by his eye …' In his home, 'even the wals are not idle', and cleanliness and thrift, fasting and prayer, predominate. The Parson, then, is father and doctor, comforter and judge, and has his being in a diurnal round of model activity. So much for the Herbert of *The Country Parson*. Here we find him accessible, easy to set forth on paper: the gentle heart untorn by struggle; the confident, directing will; the alert mind sensitive to every need of well-lived life. But this is not the Herbert of the love lyrics, the one whom posterity has cherished, the one with the nails through his hands.

Today's readers who subscribe by preference to publications dealing with women who 'have a right to their happiness', with men who 'make good', will fail, perhaps, to understand why Herbert chose as his main literary theme the love he felt for his Creator:

My God…
Why *are not Sonnets made of Thee, and layes*
Upon Thine altar burnt …
Will not a verse run smooth that bears Thy name?

If we remember him, it is because he revolted against contemporary poetry, which he felt to be conventionalized and fabricated and low in aim; because he redirected the love lyric, addressed it to his Lord:

shall I write
And not of thee through whom my fingers bend
To hold my quill?

And again,

Who sayes that fiction onely and false hair
Become a verse? Is there in truth no beautie? …
I envie no man's nightingale or spring,
Nor let them punish me with losse of ryme
Who plainly say, 'My God, My King …'

And further,

Farewell, sweet phrases, lovely metaphors:
... when ye before
Of stews and brothels onely knew the doores,
Then did I wash you with my tears, and more
Brought you to church well drest and clad.

Herbert's life, like many another's, was a transition from young joys through torturing hopes and doubts, to weary trust. In Affliction, he writes,

At first thou gav'st me milk and sweetnesses ...
There was no moneth but May.
But with my years sorrow did twist and grow ...

In reference to his desire for worldly glory, strengthened by environment and high lineage, he says:

Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
The way that takes the town,
Thou didst betray me to a lingering book
And wrap me in a gown …

And his autobiographical *The Pilgrimage* is still hard to read calmly, though the pain it embodies was quieted three centuries ago:

And so I came to phansie's meadow strowed
With many a flower
Fain would I here have made abode,
But I was quicken'd by my houre ...
... to the Wilde of passion which some call the wold;
A wasted place but sometimes rich ...
At length I got unto the gladsome hill ...
And climbing still ...
A lake of brackish waters on the ground
Was all I found ...
My hill was further. So I flung away
Yet heard a crie
... 'none goes that way
And lives!' If that be all, said I,
After so foul a journey death is fair
And but a chair.

His verse shows us all the phases of his change from a man of this world to a man of the next. Studying him, one gathers that at death there should be only the merest tracing of the personality left, like the empty gold hoop which is all that shows of the full moon when the moon is crescent; that death should find men emptied of this life, and already one with eternity. If we still read him, it is because millions of us shall change as he changed.
He began to believe that

Man's joy and pleasure
Rather hereafter than at present is.

And to speak of earth-delights as

Foolish night-fires, women's and children's wishes
Chases in arras ...

He upbraids his love of life:

Poore silly soul ...
To whom the starres shine not so fair as eyes
Nor solid work as false embroyderies.

And says, with some bravado, of women:

What is this woman-kinde, which I can wink
Into a blacknesse and distaste?

He seems gradually to have shut out of his life all but the most objective of pleasures, and to have felt that even they kept him from heaven. Perhaps he would have been greater as a poet if he could have lingered with Spenser in the bowers of earthly delight, or stoppped as Milton did to watch Eve glowing among the rose-bushes, or loved God with the buoyancy of an Emily Dickinson—but he was too ill for mental temperance, and lived with the fevered concentration of the consumptive:

Joy, I did lock thee up, but some bad man
Hath let thee out again …

Considering him as priest, we find that if he won his battle, he knew the value of desires he had killed; he did not bring to the priesthood qualities that were unmarketable elsewhere; he had been a success in the outside world, had tasted what the world can give:

I know the wayes of learning, both the head
And pipes that feed the presse, and make it runne …
I know the wayes of honour, what maintains
The quick returns of courtesie and wit …
I know the wayes of pleasure, the sweet strains,
The tunings and the relishes of it …
Yet I love thee.

And though he felt himself constantly unworthy,

… both foul and brittle, much unfit
To deal in holy writ, …

he was an ideal priest, evanescent, compassionate, tolerant. He was much more concerned with spirit than with theology, perhaps because he felt that his life was too short for argument; he turns ironical at theologians:

As men, for fear the starres should sleep and nod
And trip at night, have spheres suppli'd …
just so the other heaven they also serve …
'Love God and love your neighbour.
Watch and pray
Do as ye would be done unto.'
O dark instructions! Ev'n as dark as day!
Who can these Gordian knots undo?

He had a generous affection for other religionists, writing for example to the Jews:

Oh that …
… your sweet sap might come again!

Moreover he never thought himself free of the human burden of wrongdoing:

Lord, let the Angels praise thy name.
Man is a foolish thing, a foolish thing …
A lump of flesh, without a foot or wing …
My God, I mean myself.

But it is Herbert as lover that we still remember. His passion for God was not an unwavering light, but a wilderness of emotions

from agony to joy, from revolt to submission; an adoration still flaming after the lapse of centuries. Sometimes this relationship was intimate, conversational:

My God, a verse is not a crown …
But it is that which while I use
I am with thee …

Again the emotion is intensified:

How sweetly doth 'My Master' sound! 'My Master!'

or rises into more fiercely happy expression:

My Joy, my life, my crown!
My heart was meaning all the day
Somewhat it fain would say;
And still it runneth mutt' ring up and down
With onely this, 'My joy, my life, my crown.'

Until the love is so jubilant that we know mourning must follow:

Rise, heart, thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise …
Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
Pleasant and long …
I got me flowers to strew thy way
I got me boughs off many a tree;
But thou wast up by break of day
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

And then he is steeped in pain; he loses his Beloved:

Whither, O whither, art thou fled
My Lord, my Love?

He feels that sin has thrust him away:

I know it is my sinne which locks thine eares …

Sins like the following:

Yesterday
I did behave me carelessly
When I did pray.

He festers with self-condemnation—

Sorrie I am, my God, sorrie I am
That my offences course it in a ring

and even poetry cannot relieve his agony:

Verses, ye are too fine a thing, too wise ...
Give up your feet and running to mine eyes
And keep your measures for some lover's lute
Whose grief allows him musick and a ryme.
For mine excludes both measure, tune and time.
Alas, my God!

Until finally he flings himself down and begs forgiveness:

O do not use me
After my sinnes! Look not on my desert
But on thy glorie! ...
O do not bruise me!

Dulnesse and Denial' have their share:

My soul lay out of sight, untuned, unstrung.

Then rebellion, as an inevitable variation of such a love. He writes in Longing:

Thou tarriest, while I die
And fall to nothing. Thou dost reigne ...
While I remain
In bitter grief. Yet am I stil'd
Thy childe.

And in a poem called *The Collar* he summarizes the whole story of his adoration. He revolted here against the yoke he bore; said that his bonds were 'pettie thoughts', wondered with a layman's wonder at his self-forged cage, beat against his love, until exhausted with anger and at the climax of passion, a single word from the Master draws him to sainthood again. We can hear yet his abrupt and laboured breathing—

I struck the board and cry' d, 'No more:
I will abroad!'

What, shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free; free as the road,
Loose as the winde, as large as store …

Then the dry sobs of

Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did drie it; there was corn
Before my tears did drown it;
Is the year onely lost to me?
Have I no bayes to crown it?
No flowers, no garlands gay? All blasted?
All wasted?

And the war-like ring of

Not so, my heart! But there is fruit,
And thou hast hands.
Recover all thy sigh-blown age
On double pleasures; leave thy cold dispute
Of what is fit and not. Forsake thy cage …

And the galloping thoughts of escape—to the bowed, hushed reverence of the last line:

But as I rav'd, and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methought I heard one calling, 'Child';
And I reply'd, 'My Lord'.

Herbert is dust now under the altar of his church at Bemerton. We like to think of this man who forsook a seventeenth century world for a seventeenth century heaven; who could leave a court for a village, to see, in his dying years, that his church was 'stuck with boughs and perfumed with incense,' and that his farm-labourers made their responses during service; who was lacerated by the love of God, until death healed him. We could address him with the words of another man who also loved beyond this world's horizons; of Thomas à Kempis, saying, 'Thou shalt rest in the Lord always, for He Himself is the everlasting rest of the saints.'

‘For Love of Me…

IN THE OLD DAYS, A PAGE carried one’s red velvet cushion and another page carried one’s book; and one knelt devoutly in the heliotrope fog of some cathedral. A king wore his favourite saints pinned to his hat, and bowed to them when times were bad. The poor could worship Mary the Madonna when she came to them in dreams, and day and night the cloister bells tolled regiments of cowled figures to their prayers. Prayer was as usual as bread.

Perhaps today muezzins lean from minarets and priests still bless the holy wafers and the wine, but prayer has lost its savour and the majority of people pray because it is a habit or else do not pray at all.

Our intelligentsia assure us that prayer is an aberration, something on the order of talking to oneself; and our fashionables remember that they did not get their little slam when they prayed for it at bridge; and if sorrow forces men to pray, they pray in doubt, and desperately, and they take Providence with a grain of salt.

To Bahá’ís, however, prayer is ‘indispensable and obligatory’, and no one is excused therefrom ‘unless he be mentally unsound, or an insurmountable obstacle prevent him’.[1] This law is great glad tidings—it is one of the most fruitful blessings ever conferred on humanity; and an investigation of even a handful of the wisdoms of prayer can only increase our amazement.

The secret of life is detachment from everything except God. This is because there is a quality in human nature which imperiously demands something permanent to love and work for, and only God is permanent.

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We go through life hitching our wagons to stars that fall; whereupon we are miserable, and lasso the next ones. Our leaves shrivel, our moons wane, the marbles we build our statues of are crumbled. Only God is always strong, always there, always permanent. Only God is worthy to be worked for.

And to achieve this detachment from everything except God we require prayer. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh says:

> *O Son of Light! Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is of the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it.*[2]

Again, the desire to be understood is common to us all. And yet no one understands us. We do not understand ourselves. We all know what we mean by being 'understood' but the term is hard to define. In fact, it means just the opposite of what it says, because certainly none of us wish to be seen through.

A noted writer has said that human beings are each on individual islands, shouting to each other across seas of misunderstandings. But prayer is a great simplifying factor and a dispeller of confusion. Through our communion with God we become explained to ourselves and enabled to express our best and truest selves to others.

There are, too, a great many people who have no courage to keep on living, because they are weighted with the consciousness of having sinned. Their life becomes a retrogression, and they stay at home with their sorrow—why should they attempt anything, when everything they touch is tainted? They are afraid of the justice of God, and they have forgotten the ocean of His mercy (an infinite, sunlit, peaceful ocean). They have not read the glad tidings of Bahá'u'lláh, and the prayer which He has revealed for those who have sinned.

Here again the vital importance of prayer is demonstrated because it is primarily through prayer that human beings may recover from wrong-doing. And as for avoiding wrong-doing, mere discipline is not enough; we need the courage and faith engendered by prayer. This is true because although we know right from wrong we often drift into sin and repent at leisure, unless we are held in check by daily prayer; also because it is impossible and indeed undesirable for us to be forever spying on ourselves—people are as mistaken in their mental hair-shirts as any fanatics of the Middle

Ages, and we therefore need the guidance of God, which is obtainable in proportion to our prayerful receptiveness.

Benjamin Franklin kept a notebook with all his sins in it, but Confucius said, 'I can do as my heart lusteth and never swerve from right'. That is, we should learn to do right naturally, as rain falls or dew forms, and such spontaneity becomes possible only after a life inspired by prayer and supplication.

Then there is the question, 'To Whom shall we pray?' Nations have prayed to the souls of their ancestors, to stones or stars or sacred cattle. Many of our modern thinkers pray to some exalted figment of their own imaginations, which, however grandiose in appearance, is obviously no more God the Creator than is the church artist's depiction of some middle-aged gentleman in a pink robe. Who God is eludes our finite minds. We must therefore pray to the attributes of God in their fullest and most clearly represented form—we must seek them in His highest creation—man. And among men, we must turn, if we seek God, to the most perfect man—His Manifestation.

It is undeniable that the beauties of God appear in every phase of creation—in comets or fishes or little hairy palm trees. But Nature only mumbles—Man speaks. And so, although we may announce that we have found God in a twig or in the curve of the horizon, it is only in His great World Teachers that we see Him clearly and indisputably mirrored. Without His Manifestations, God is lost to us,—'And idle is the rumour of the rose.'

The desire to pray is, like everything else, strengthened with practice and atrophied through disuse. In the latter case, people are forever restless and longing for something and dissatisfied with every new possession. But if one prays, one is always refreshed and reinterested. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, 'When a man turns his face to God he finds sunshine everywhere.'[3]

And yet people inquire why they should pray, why God does not come to them—remarks as logical as sitting in a darkened room and wondering why all the sweep and glitter of the summer sunlight does not penetrate.

And if, as often happens, people are longing for God, trying to pray and yet not succeeding, they will easily find Him through service in accordance with the dictates of His Manifestations.

It is not surprising that a prayerless people are driven to drugs

and stimulants and a hundred forms of useless activity. They have no antidote for life, and no effective means of achieving the 'respite and nepenthe' for which they long. It is not surprising that people cheat one another, desert one another, kill one another, because only universal prayer can make the world safe for us to live in.

No doubt future generations will look back at this prayerless age with the same uneasiness with which we contemplate the unwashed courtiers of Queen Elizabeth.

Notes on Persian Love Poems

ARTHUR GUY TELLS US THAT Ḥáfiẓ, Persia's great fourteenth century poet known as the 'Tongue of the Invisible World,' found his way into Latin in 1680: Meninsky got out the translation in that year. A hundred more years went by and European versions appeared, mostly fragmentary. A number were, Guy says, 'beautiful but unfaithful'—but at least that of von Hammer in 1812 attracted the attention of Goethe, who wrote:

If you call the words a 'bride',
And for the groom,' say soul,
You have a wedding known to those,
Who this Ḥáfiẓ extol.

'Great is the divergence,' continues Guy, 'between the purest mysticism with its symbols, predicated on a transcendental solution to the problem of existence, which some find there—and the cynical epicureanism strongly tainted with pessimism, which others do not hesitate to take literally in his verses. Is Ḥáfiẓ the poet of sensual love—of woman, wine, nature, unbelief? Or rather of Divine Love, of the joys of contemplation, of self-surrender, and a purified faith ?'[1]

Showing the wit with which Ḥáfiẓ manipulates his symbols, Guy then repeats the often-described confrontation between Tamerlane the earth-shaker and Ḥáfiẓ the poet. The reason for the interview, which, if it happened at all, took place in 1387 when Tamerlane first entered Shíráz, was the poet's having written these lines:

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If but that lovely Shíráz maid
Would take my heart in her fair hand,
For that black mole of hers I'd trade
Bukhárá *town and Samarqand.*

The king summoned the poet and roared at him: 'What! With my sword I have conquered most of the inhabited world. With the plundered spoils of a thousand realms I have adorned my two capitals of Samarqand and Bukhárá. And was all this so that a miserable insect like you should offer my cities up for a single mole on the cheek of a girl?'

'Sire,' answered Ḥáfiẓ, 'it is this very prodigality that has reduced me to my present straits.'

'A lower degree cannot comprehend a higher although all are in the same world of creation … Degree is the barrier …'[2] 'Abdu'l-Bahá says. The animal is at our side but his degree of existence keeps him out of our world. A child's degree keeps him from understanding what constitutes an adult mind: you need make no effort to hide the nature of adulthood from him, his degree of consciousness automatically keeps this a well-guarded secret. No need, for example, to hide private documents from an infant. In the same way many things all about us are secret simply because of our own limitations. The afterlife is one of them. The love of God as passionately felt by the mystics is another. The secret itself is visible everywhere, to every eye: 'Every eye,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá once said, speaking of the promise that every eye should see the returned Christ: 'But not the blind.'[3]

Since degree is the barrier, those who have progressed farther than others in God's love are hard put to it to initiate the rest. This seems to be what the mystics, the ṣúfís, the lovers of God, mean by their eternal symbols and cryptic pronouncements. They try, this way and that, to communicate (while yet hiding) what they see mirrored in their hearts, and feel running in their veins. They write, even monotonously, about 'the secret'. They hopelessly try to embody their knowledge in the vocabulary of human love, since none other will serve: 'Often the same ode,' R. A. Nicholson says, 'will entrance the sinner and evoke sublime raptures in the saint.'[4]

Typical of countless other verses, this fragment from the great Jalál-i-Dín Rúmí explains itself:

Our desert has no end, our heart no bed.
World within world is with Form's image sealed;
Which of the images to us is wed?
If on the path you see a severed head,
Rolling along its way to our wide field,
Ask it, Oh ask it what we never said,
And let it tell the secret we concealed.

Rúmí's own love for God pours out in his verses to Shams-i-Tabríz, 'weird figure, wrapped in coarse black felt, who flits across the stage for a moment and disappears …' This man was a Persian, so often on the wing that they nicknamed him *Parandih*, the Flier. Shams, who is likened by Nicholson to Socrates, felt he was the chosen mouthpiece of the Lord—for the mystic's love makes him identify with the Divine, and his insights make him seem arrogant. He used to call his learned disciples 'oxen and asses.' His theme was ecstasy and rapture, and he spread everywhere 'the enchanted circle of his power'.

Nicholson goes on to quote Von Kremer: 'The real basis of their [the ṣúfís'] poetry is a loftily inculcated ethical system, which recognizes in purity of heart, charity, self-renunciation, and bridling of the passions, the necessary conditions of eternal happiness … a pantheistic theory of the emanation of all things from God, and their ultimate reunion with Him … and frequently the thought … that all religions and revelations are only the rays of a single eternal sun; that all Prophets have only delivered and proclaimed in different tongues the same principles of eternal goodness and eternal truth which flow from the divine Soul of the world.' One night when Rúmí and Shams were seated together, there was a knocking at the door and a voice calling. Shams rose and said, 'I am called to my death'. He left Rúmí, and walked out to the darkness, where seven murderers fell on him with their knives.

It was in memory of him that Rúmí founded the order of dancing dervishes who spin and spin down the centuries, copying the motions of the planets and listening to music sung by the stars—all because of that long dead love.

Browne explains that to the ṣúfís the doctrine of Divine Oneness

(tawḥíd) means not only, as Islám has it, that 'There is no god but God'—but that 'there is nothing but God.' God 'is Pure Being, and what is "other than God" … only exists in so far as His Being is infused into it, or mirrored in it. He is also Pure Good … and Absolute Beauty: whence He is often called by the mystics in their pseudo-erotic poems, "the Real Beloved."' Beauty desires to be known, Browne continues, and a thing can be known only by its opposite. Thus Evil 'is a necessary consequence of this manifestation [of Eternal Beauty] so that the Mystery of Evil is really identical with the Mystery of Creation, and inseparable therefrom. But Evil is merely the Not-Good, or … the Non-Existent.'[6]

About here in a commentary of this type the usual procedure is to mention John of the Cross, but for a change we shall remind the reader of Catherine of Siena or any number of others resembling those saints. George Herbert, in England's seventeenth century, was still another mystic to whom God was a lover, seeking and being sought; he writes:

My God, what is a heart,
That Thou shouldst it so eye, and wooe,
Powring upon it all Thy art,
As if that Thou hadst nothing els to do?

Or this:

How sweetly doth 'My Master' sound!
'My Master!'
As amber Breese leaves a rich scent
Unto the taster:
So do these words a sweet content,
An orientall fragrancie, 'My Master.'

Or again:

When first Thy sweet and gracious eye
Vouchsaf'd ev'n in the midst of youth and night
To look upon me, who before did lie
Weltring in sinne;
I felt a sugred strange delight,
Passing all cordials made by any art,
Bedew, embalme, and overrunne my heart,
And take it in.

Manifestations of God are not as the mystics—for Manifestations in the Bahá'í context are 'something not ourselves' and differ from us in kind, the mystics only in degree—but Their writings do take on a mystical cast, and whatever Divine love is, They are 'the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable.' The Báb exchanged this love with Bahá'u'lláh, Whom He never met. Nabíl, Their chronicler, says: 'Such love no eye has ever beheld, nor has mortal heart conceived such mutual devotion. If the branches of every tree were turned into pens, and all the seas into ink, and earth and heaven rolled into one parchment, the immensity of that love would still remain unexplored, and the depths of that devotion unfathomed.'?

This kind of ecstasy and single-minded love has determined many a believer's life and death. 'Many a chilled heart, O my God,' writes Bahá'u'lláh, 'hath been set ablaze with the fire of Thy Cause …'[8] Among the Persians, one who caught on fire was a young thug, the refuse of the streets. He was standing in a crowd, watching some believers being pushed and mocked and tortured along to their graves. What he saw in their faces we do not know; only that he broke from the crowd, ran to the executioner and shouted, 'Take me with them—I am a Bábí too!' Another was the son of a high-ranking officer. He embraced the new Faith, saying that to him the world was carrion. He is the one who, to drums and trumpets, walked through a screaming mob with lighted candles burning in his wounds. Passing there he chanted from Persian odes. When they heard him sing, the executioners laughed. One of them said, 'Why not dance?' And so as he died he danced, raising his arms, snapping his fingers, moving his red body to a song that Rúmí had written for Shams-i-Tabríz

In one hand the winecup, in one the Loved One's tress,
So would I dance across the market place!

It was such martyrdom that years afterward 'Abdu;l-Bahá described, almost re-enacted it for Juliet Thompson (who wrote about it in her diary) and other Bahá'ís on a veranda in Montclair. As He spoke He was transfigured for an instant; and lifting His arms, 'With that godlike head erect, snapping His fingers high in the air, beating out a drum-like rhythm with His foot,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá danced a wonderful brief dance and 'triumphantly' sang the martyr's song. Then He sank back into His chair. 'Tears swelled in my

eyes,' Juliet says, 'blurring everything. When they cleared I saw a still stranger look on His face. His eyes were unmistakably fixed on the Invisible. They were filled with delight and as brilliant as jewels … This was what the Cause meant … This was what it meant to "live near Him"! … So low that it sounded like an echo He hummed the Martyr's Song. "See", He exclaimed, "the effect that the death of a martyr has in the world. It has changed my condition."'[9]

There was another among thousands changed by this love. He was born in Káshán, Persia, about 1879. His family moved to the capital—Ṭihrán—and his father became Mayor of that city. The boy received a good schooling which included French and English. Because of some inward prompting he used to trot after his English teacher on the street, asking him words and carefully writing them down. When the boy was fourteen, however, his father died. This was a disaster in the Persia of that day; a widowed mother, an older brother and various other relatives, some influential, could not compensate the loss. More studies, and working as a tutor in his uncle's home, and becoming aware of the condition his country was in, increased his restlessness. His father had prophesied that one day the boy would become a Bahá'í; at this time, however, seeing what the Islamic hierarchy had done to Muslim Persia, he believed religion was only for the ignorant mass. When some of his sophisticated young friends began attending secret meetings, held late at night in rooms giving onto the back alleys of Ṭihrán, the young man came along to expose the Bahá'í teachers, to show how wrong they were and win his friends back to more mundane pursuits. As the months passed, he found himself listening. Some were travellers, with current news of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, far away in the prison city of 'Akká on the Mediterranean Sea. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own Father, still a prisoner and exile, had very recently died, left a world which had scorned and rejected Him. But He had made a compact with His followers that they should turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Centre of His Covenant with them. Here was the Master, with strength and love and a world vision of hope. Here now was a Cause to live and die for; a point toward which a youth could direct his heart.

The young man, who had gone on a journey by then and was in the town of Senna, capital of Persian Kurdistán, wrote a poem in which he offered his life to the great Son of Bahá'u'lláh and begged permission to be there with Him in the prison city. The lines of this ode show his familiarity with Persian mystic poetry and also his ecstatic love. Students of this poetry will recognize the classical style and terminology, will note the Joseph story from the Qur'án, the lover's madness and ill-repute, the lover's disregard of reason, the Zoroastrians' secret drinking place (wine was forbidden to Muslims), the symbolic wine, the Majnún story, the Beloved's tangled hair, the Beloved's likeness to a cypress tree, the author's pen-name in the closing lines. The present writer (translator of the ode and daughter of the poet) would like to call particular attention to the Sun of Truth stanza which refers to the youth's recognition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's station, then recently conferred by Bahá'u'lláh.

Now that I am tied and tangled in Thy floating hair,
Am become Thy half-crazed lover, with peace of mind at war,
Life in hand I stray and wander, looking for Thee everywhere.
Thou art Egypt's beauteous Joseph, I the wife of Potiphar;
Like that grayhair who bought Joseph, I would suffer for Thy face.

When the pangs of longing for Thee struck the knocker on my door,
From within me faith and reason fled their home.
Then in the wineshop of Thy love I drank my own heart's core.
All for Thee, O spirit's guide, I emptied out this room—
Now behold me mocked and mad and half seas over for Thy face.

In the Magians' secret tavern, O sweet the brimming glass,
O sweet it is to seize Thy snaring hair.
O sweet for me to weep out my blood as along love's way I pass,
Sweet to receive this cup from Thee with no outsiders there,
And my eyes athirst since time began, drinking in Thy face.

Except for Thee, for neither world have I a care,
From any words save Thine, from all desire free,
A distracted lover I—of men's lives I've no share,
I but the dust beneath Thy feet, O swaying cypress tree,
For me there is no place of flowers except Thy face.

O good is this tossing and turning on the sickbed of love,
Sickness that never will heal, but by love's crying.
Though reason warn me as to the perils of love,
Against the anguish of love I am not one to be sighing—
I, bound from time's dawning to the hyacinth hair that frames Thy face.

When like Majnún I fled to the desert of the mad,
I set the sand on fire with my burning sighs.
I put all men out of my heart but Thee, and was glad,
And my cupped hands brimmed with tears from my weeping eyes,
And I thought, let all men know that I love Thy wondrous face.

The day I filled my glass with Thy love's wine,
This tavern-corner gloried over Heaven's dome.
Yes, the envy of Heaven would be this ruined heart of mine
Should Thy bright brow but shed its rays into my lowly room—
Therefore my soul's eye never leaves Thy matchless face.

As the Sun of Truth rose out of this earthly world of His,
He opened up before Thee His secret treasure-store.
The effulgence of Thy beauty flashed from that world into this,
And from nothingness, the Divine Decree stood humbly at Thy door,
And said: 'Obedient to Thy wish and will, I bow before Thy face.'

O people of Bahá, the Covenant hath come, be glad!.
He is the balm for every aching heart,
And now is the earth in His Father's splendour clad.
When He unto my soul a welcome did impart,
It answered: 'Save me! for I drown in the ocean of Thy face.'

Save me, great Mystery of God, I faint and fall.
Save me, without Thee I only burn and sigh.
Save me, I am as nothing in the eyes of all,
Save me, in every city: 'He is mad!' they cry,
Of this lost, distracted wanderer in the desert of Thy face.
O Thou, O Thou from whose sunbright brow the moon hath drawn her rays,
The thought of whom illumines many a weary lover's soul,

But to behold Thy face I have no dream in all my days.
Then fulfil my hopes, in grace, grant me leave to reach my goal,
A desert wanderer I, and yearning for the garden of Thy face.

Without Thee, only a prison to me is Heaven and its flowers,
Without Thee, only a place of thorns, the blissful bowers.
O Thou whose brow so moonlight fair is the envy of spring hours,
In his love for Thee,
He is torn free,
Is Ishti'al, from all that be,
And again and again,
Cries this refrain:
I am lost in the glory of Thy face.

'Abdu'l-Bahá understood. He did not turn the youth away. His answer, the original of which, illuminated by a Persian artist, now hangs on a wall in New Hampshire, said to praise not 'Abdu'l-Bahá but Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation of God. This is the text:

He is the All-Glorious of the All-Glorious!
O thou who art drunk with the wine of the Covenant!

Thy verses were full of savour; they were running waters, a fount of learning, and most sweetly eloquent. Reading them cheered and refreshed us. From the consuming blaze of that yearning heart a flame was kindled in ours and our whole being responded and caught fire.

Light up Love's fire,
Throw on the pyre
All things that be.
Then with one step (it is not far)
Enter the place where the lovers are.

The way to praise this servant is to adore the Holy Threshold, to worship humbly at the doorstep of the one Lord. This is perpetual grace; this is heavenly bestowal; this is achieving the uttermost goal; this is 'the Sadrah tree that marks the boundary' (i.e., the Manifestation of God). Speak thou of this almighty Height, this wondrous Station, open thy lips in praise of Him. Pluck thy strings on the theme of servitude to Him, and with the song of this bondage awaken thou a world.

... These are the cleansing waters; this is the flaming up of splendour;

this is the laudable grace; this is the paradise of all delights; this is bounty pressed down and running over; this is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's most burning wish—the supreme desire of this embodiment of indigence, of nothingness ... Al-Bahá be upon thee.[10]

He signed it with His initials, Ayn-Ayn, and affixed His seal, that reads: 'O my companion, the prison.' An older person was present, when the youth's Tablet was read. 'It is too great a Tablet for him,' this person commented. 'There must be some mistake.' Yet the name, Ishtí'ál Ibn-i-Kalántar, was on it, in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own unerring hand. And although the young man was unaware of it then, he would in after years indeed help mightily to awaken a faraway world to the message of Bahá'u'lláh. (He would be known in that world as Ali-Kuli Khan. His other name, Nabílu'd-Dawlih, was a title given him, for services to his country, by the Sháh. But his pen name was Ishtí'ál—Aflame.)

Many a time, before he finally did get to 'Akká, he must—being literary-minded—have remembered these lines from Ḥáfiẓ:

There'll be no end to longing till I find my heart's desire
Either I'll win my own Heart's Life or lose my life entire.
But this I know, though I be dead, my body will burn on
Open my grave when I am gone
And see my shroud on fire.

Such thoughts must have moved him when he set out, one snowy afternoon, left his home with no good-byes and walked away through the city gates. Part of his journey was on foot to the Caspian, by ship to Bákú, then steerage from some Caucasian port to Constantinople, and finally at long last, to the prison of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It is a long time ago now, and he and Those he sought have left this earth, but the letters and verses are still here; the love is still alive.

Current Mythology

A POPULAR MODERN BELIEF, AND one which characterizes the present in every age, is to the effect that our ancestors were benighted people. This idea is paralleled in individual experience—we look back pityingly at our last year's self and wonder how we could have been so inferior to our present exalted condition; and the faults of our present status come to light only in the retrospect of another year. Now it is true that our ancestors were, in comparison with us, benighted, and that their ignorance expressed itself in superstition: they burned witches and before that they practised black magic, and before that they sat on pillars for years at a time. Whereas we, benefiting from the encroachments of science on the unknown, realize that life on a pillar is unhealthful, and that even if we did conjure up mountains of gold, they could not solve our economic problem. Speaking from a materialistic standpoint, the average educated man of today, who is not afraid of goblins and does not wear asafoetida around his neck, can look patronizingly on the past and call it benighted, superstitious; scientists have cleared the world of figments, so that roosters can crow now without sending ghosts to their graves again, and the lights that flit over marshy cemeteries are only phosphorus.

And yet, we of the present have our superstitions too, and are bound to fictions infinitely more harmful than those of past ages, because these are mental fictions, rationalizations, supposedly approved by modern wisdom, and therefore not to be sprinkled away

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with drops of holy water. For example, many educated people imagine that members of other races or communities are inferior, that war is necessary, that individuals may sin without hurting the group, that progress is an illusion; they believe that man is an animal, the universe self-made, and religion a means of quieting the masses; that immortality is only perpetuation in the race, and prayer only an expression of fear, or a demand for a timely violation of natural law; and the basis of their thought is this—that God is a collectively fashioned Goodness, which has evolved from a tree or a star into a depersonalized Idea.

The love of God, which is the mainspring of the Bahá'í life, and which constitutes that love for humanity whereby the old world is to be made new again, is not a love built up on theories or grown out of fears; it is not a synthetic philosophy or a refurbished superstition; it is the adoration which haloes knowledge. This earth today is holy ground, fragrant with the footsteps of One Who has proved for all men to see that God is near us—'Nearer than the jugular vein'—that our lives are His, our deeds accountable to Him, our growth through all His worlds by His permission.

If our ancestors worshipped through faith alone, their faith collapsed with the coming of the new science—their faith which had long since changed to imitation, and functioned only with the impetus of time. The nineteenth century shows us two groups of thinkers: those who, terrified by biological discoveries, withdrew into hermetic orthodoxy; and those who studied the sciences, lost God, lost immortality, but went down bravely, 'with unreluctant tread … into the darkness'. These two survive today, except that the glamour has gone from some, and others, like the Phoenician dead, are feeding on dust in a sorrowful city. But this new love of God which has broken into life surrounds the farthest reaches of men's thoughts; it is a foreshadowing of this which made Bacon feel that he did 'but tinkle a little bell …' and Newton that he was only playing with pebbles on a shore, and Pupin that 'Sound is the voice of God'. It is the love born of the Manifestation of God among men, the perfect human being who reflects to humanity the omniscience, the tenderness, the justice of God.

The love of God through His Manifestation is not to be lightly assumed and lightly laid aside. It is not a human love, withering to old flowers and faded ribbons. It is the life blood of the soul, without which we cannot develop the higher consciousness which is our existence when the body has died. Those of us who do not strive, through service in the love of God, to form this consciousness, cannot live fully beyond death. As Emerson says in the *Journals*, we know already whether we are to be immortal; if our life is centred about materialisms, it must cease with death. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says:

> *This stone and this man both exist; but the stone in relation to the existence of man is non-existent ... in the same way, the souls who are veiled from God, although they exist in this world and in the world after death, are in comparison with the holy existence of the children of the Kingdom of God, non-existing and separated from God.*[1]

Certainly, if our interests are not earthly, they are turned toward reality; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá tells us that the farther we go from one, the nearer we are to the other.

Our modern world is orphaned by its superstition. We must go back to the love of God, to the love that flowers in the world’s springtimes when God walks with us again. We must learn that what men have always hoped is not a makeshift of the human ego, but reality; that God leads us by the hand, and earth is a road to heaven; that our hungering is not in vain, our dreams not the mere wrack of the centuries. We must unite again in the love of our God—

> *For, lo, the winter is past;*
> *The rain is over and gone.*

III

Headlines Tomorrow

The Carmel Monks

A waxen Virgin hovers in the gloom
Lit with red gems and candles, and the fume
Of agate clouds of incense; heavy sighs
Hang listless in the air, and upturned eyes
Are straining for the brazen trump of doom.

The monks are waiting yet for Christ to come.
On Carmel mountain they have made their home,
Over the shore where the wan ocean dies.

To beautify His coming roses bloom,
And tuberoses, and yellow Spanish broom,
And in the chapel singing voices rise;
But Christ has come, and gone again, and wise
Were they who kissed His feet and saw Him home.

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Headlines Tomorrow

A COLUMNIST ONCE SAID THAT the biggest scoop of all time would be the news of the return of Christ. He was mistaken. The return of Christ would never make the front page. The reason is this:

When a man appears calling himself the Messiah, he does not look as people expect him to look. There is no light around his head—the light is added by painters, long after he has died. He eats, walks, talks. He comes from a community where he has been known for years. And when he suddenly announces himself as a prophet, as one with a new message from God, his community laughs at him. Everybody knows, people say, that the Messiah will come seated on a throne, or riding on a cloud, and will preach the same religion that the priests are already preaching in the temples.

They laugh. The man continues to say he is the agent of a spirit that he cannot resist. The laughter grows to anger. Why is he so obstinate in his claim, this man they have known since he was a child? A few listen to him, and bear the hatred of the rest. The laughter stops. The hatred rises. The prophet is shut away—chained—perhaps killed.

But his voice goes on. People far away listen to it. Then painters draw the circle of light back of the head that is now earth, and men and women in countries across the world build temples in the name of the man whose own people put him to death.

This drama is played all over again, every once in a while in human history. It has been played again, almost in our time. It did not make the headlines.

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1.

Shíráz is in southern Írán. It is a city of mosque domes and flower gardens, of nightingales and singers, of streams slipping over blue tiles into blue pools.

On a May evening in 1844, two men, one a merchant of Shíráz and the other a traveller, were talking together in a white-washed room above a courtyard. The words spoken by the young merchant to his guest are now over a hundred years old. They have already changed the course of the world's life.

He said that He was the Báb, the Gate. That he was the Prophet of God, and the Herald of 'Him Whom God Shall Manifest—the Well-Beloved One'. For six years, following that evening, the Báb spread His teachings throughout the East. By then, thousands were waiting for 'Him Whom God Shall Manifest'. Terrified, the priests and nobles conspired against the Báb. He was arrested. He was tortured. On July 9, 1850, He was bound and publicly shot. The Persians have never forgotten that the first volley of shots, from seven hundred and fifty rifles, did not touch Him.

2.

There is a garden in Baghdád where the trees grow tall and hundreds of doves flutter in the branches, so that all day the place is clamorous with the noise of the doves. In this garden, on April 21, 1863, a Persian nobleman gathered His followers around Him. He had come to Baghdád as an exile of the Persian Government. His crime had been that He was a follower of the Báb; His punishment, that He was chained underground in the Black Pit of Ṭihrán, that His home and lands were seized, that He and His wife and young children were finally sent out of the country, over the desert in mid-winter, here to Baghdád. Now He was to be exiled still farther away, no one knew where.

He called His followers to Him here in the garden, and told them that He was the Promised One of the Báb, that He was 'Him Whom God Shall Manifest'.

Almost thirty years more of exile and prison lay ahead for Bahá'u'lláh, as He stood under the trees that day with His disciples. Years of humiliation and anguish. The martyrdom of His followers; the treachery of His half-brother. The thick walls of the

prison at ‘Akká, Palestine,—with Napoleon’s cannon balls still embedded in them—were to close around Him and those He loved. But before He was to leave the world, in 1892, He was to establish His Faith. He was to address the then custodians of society—the Pope, Queen Victoria, the Kaiser, the French Emperor, the Sháh, the Czar and the rest—calling them to world peace, and proclaiming His mission as the Manifestation of God for our day. He, Bahá’u’lláh, the Glory of God, the Well-Beloved One.

3.

If you pass through Wilmette, Illinois, along the shore of Lake Michigan, you will come to a great House of Worship that has been built there. There are no priests in this House, and the nine entrances are open to followers of all religions and of no religion, to black and white, to well-dressed and shabby alike. It looks like a white rainbow, curving over the town, and you remember that the rainbow is the sign of the Covenant that God made with man, long ago.

In 1912, a man who had come out of a prison in Palestine laid the cornerstone of this Temple. This man was the centre of the Covenant that Bahá’u’lláh made with His followers. He was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Son of Bahá’u’lláh, appointed by His Father as the interpreter of the Bahá’í Faith, and as the Exemplar of the Bahá’í way of life. Some Americans who later became Bahá’ís remember having seen ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as He walked in His white turban and shining robe, through the streets of American cities.

We think we are alone in the universe, that we are born to live a few years in the daylight, and disappear. But the Prophet of God says no. He says that there is love in store for us, and everlasting life. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the living sign of these things.

4.

Mount Carmel stands over Haifa, and juts into the Mediterranean Sea. There are cypresses down its slopes, and pomegranate and olive trees. Here, in the landscaped terraces, are Bahá’í holy places: the tomb-shrines of the Báb and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; of Bahá’u’lláh’s wife; of His son who died in prison; of His daughter, Bahíyyih.

The tomb-shrine of Bahá'u'lláh Himself lies across the bay, near 'Akká.

It was an autumn day in 1921 when they carried the body of 'Abdu'l-Bahá up the mountain and laid it to rest in the Shrine of the Báb. They wept, both for Him Who was gone, and for the fate of His Cause. How could they, left alone in the world, establish the World Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. How could they form the Assemblies, build the Houses of Worship, spread the teachings around the earth.

Perhaps, they thought, the Báb faced the firing squad in vain; perhaps the body of Bahá'u'lláh was scarred by chains to no purpose, the blood of the martyrs spilt for nothing, the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived only for memory. Perhaps this Faith, too, would scatter into sects, like the Faiths before it, and its power run out and be lost.

Then they opened the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and read: 'O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one … turn unto Shoghi Effendi … as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God …'[1]

And under the guidance of Shoghi Effendi, great-grandson of Bahá'u'lláh, the Bahá'í Faith has circled the planet. It has won to itself Jew and Buddhist; Christian and Muslim; occidental and oriental; black and white; rich and poor; old and young; academic and unlettered.

These Bahá'í communities are a way of saying that the past, with its local hatreds, its regional prejudices, its distrust of peoples from across a line, is gone. Today we live in a new world, the world of airplanes and radio and television, the world of the good neighbour, the world that is on its way to becoming one commonwealth. Bahá'í communities are a way of repeating, now and forever, the words of Bahá'u'lláh: 'O well-beloved ones! regard ye not one another as strangers …[2] The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.'[3]

These things have not made the front page today. But they will be in the headlines tomorrow.

IV

Bright Day of the Soul

That Day in Tabríz

A PERSIAN WILL SIT FOR HOURS under a tree by a stream, watching the water flow by. The Chinese, they say, like glassy water, flat and pale; but a Persian likes the struggle of a narrow white stream.

He may have a clay jug of wine cooling in the water. He sits on a rug, slanting on the hill: out of perspective, like the Persians now dead, who sit in the miniatures. He has a dish before him, lined with mulberry leaves, piled with apricots. He sings to himself, a verse from Ḥáfiẓ perhaps, who lived long ago in Shíráz, and whom they call 'The Tongue of the Invisible': 'I have hooded my eyes like a falcon from all in the earth, That my eyes may be fixed on naught else but the light of Thy Face.' Around him the yellow desert; and he under a blossoming cherry tree, or perhaps a willow, because this is away from the town; and behind him, miles, away, the bare, shining, Venetian-glass mountains.

His eyes are drugged by the wine and the verse, or more likely by the pull of the stream. He can touch the pale green down that rims its edge; this last is what 'Umar-i-Khayyám refers to in the quatrain:

And that delightful herb whose tender green
Fledges the river-lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely lip it springs unseen!

This green, poets tell us, is like the first down over an adolescent mouth.

Persians like to leave the city, because in the city one sees only

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walls; honey-coloured walls of sun-baked mud. Within the walls are pools, and sweet-lemon trees, and jasmine bushes; mud houses with flat roofs. In winter the roofs are shovelled free of snow, and rolled; in summer nights they blossom with mosquito-nets. Inside the houses, white-washed walls; rugs glowing like cathedral-windows, and woven from the ninth combing of the wool. There are women, too, with henna on their finger-nails and pearls in their hair. In the streets, dust. Nobles on Arab horses; the royal horses white, with their tails dyed a bright purple. And there are beggars, their faces eaten away with sores, gathered at the gateway of a noble's garden. These beggars are often used in Bahá'í prayers, to describe the poverty of human beings, standing at the Gateway of the Invisible.

This is Persia sometime between the last century and ours. The Báb must have seen it, something like this; He must have watched the moon come up through the acacias, as we watch it now. He must have heard the Hag bird crying, the bird that cries 'God! God!' all through the night, till—legend says—it bursts its throat at dawn.

Of the eighteenth century in Europe, William Bolitho has written: 'Europe had locked itself in and lost the key … Imagine an explosion in a locked room …'. That would be a fair description of the coming of the Báb in Persia. Persia then was a spiritual prison, blacker than a Bastille, but men were looking for release and light. Traditions had been handed down, telling them not to lose hope, because a great day was in store. There was a verse in the Qur'án, in the Chapter of Adoration, and it said:

> *It is God who hath created the heavens and earth ... Ye have not patron or intercessor besides Him. Will ye not therefore consider? He governeth all things from heaven even unto the earth; hereafter shall they return unto Him, on the day whose length shall be a thousand years ...*

The Muslims knew that the last Imám had disappeared in the year 260 A.H.; they felt that in 1260, their thousand years of waiting would be over.

Certain men were teaching these things to the people, just as in western countries such men as William Miller were teaching them, though using different prophecies and another Book. One day the

Báb walked into the classroom where these prophecies were being explained. He sat down and a ray of sunlight slanted across Him. The teacher stopped. He looked at the Báb. He said, 'Lo, the Truth is more manifest than the ray of light that has fallen upon that lap.'[1]

A mosque is much busier, more lived-in than a cathedral. There are people there, praying, any day of the week. There are fountains running, for the ablutions—real water, not a shallow inch of holy water, dwindled to a symbol. The floors burn with rugs. There are men kneeling, rising, bowing down, and no statues or pictures to impede the mind in its upward search. The Báb went often to the mosque, and tears would flow from Him, and He would say, 'O God, My God, my Beloved, My heart's Desire!'[2] He was a merchant by profession. On Fridays when His shop was closed, He would go up to the flat roof of His house, and stand and kneel in the white sunlight, worshipping as the Muslims worshipped.

He was good to look upon. Fair for a Persian; rather short, with a memorable voice. We think here of the fourth Imám, the half-Persian Zaynu'l-'Ábidín, who would pray and chant on the roof of his house at night; it is said that even men carrying heavy water skins in the street below would stop to listen. His walk, too, was memorable. Virgil tells us that the gods were known by their gait; the same is true of the few great human beings who come amongst us. Once when a stranger was seeking out the Báb, and a disciple barred the way, the man saw Him as He passed and said: 'Why do you seek to hide Him from me? I know Him by His walk.' The Báb was a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad and must have looked like Him, of whom a companion has said, 'I never saw anything more beautiful than Muḥammad; you might say the sun was moving in His face.'

The Báb married. A child was born to Him. The child died. The Father dedicated His child to His Lord: 'O My God, grant that the sacrifice of My son … may be acceptable unto Thee. Grant that it be a prelude to the sacrifice of My … self, in the path of Thy good pleasure.'[3]

Then a handful of men were drawn to Him. He did not summon them—they came to find Him, over the desert wastes. Some rode on donkeys—white donkeys, perhaps, stamped with henna-coloured hands, and wearing turquoise beads; there are still such donkeys left in Persian streets—the automobiles and the trains

have not yet driven them out. These men came because they had had visions and dreamed dreams; indeed, many Americans have become Bahá'ís in the same way. Such things are for scientists to investigate, for we do not understand them in laboratory terms. We do know that at the time of the coming of a Prophet, certain disciples are waiting for Him. We know, too, that there are true prophets, as distinguished from the hundreds of 'incredible messiahs' who recur through the ages—that there is a source-Being, a type of Being who reinspires every phase of human life. Carlyle says of Him, writing on Muḥammad:

> *Such a man is what we call an original man; he comes to us at first-hand ... We may call him Poet, Prophet, God;—in one way or other, we all feel that the words he utters are as no other man's words. Direct from the Inner Fact of things;—he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that ... It is from the heart of the world that he comes; he is portion of the primal reality of things*.[4]

The Báb sent these disciples out and they awakened the East, and left their bodies charred and mangled in a hundred cities. They gave their Master's message, and no bullets stopped their lips. They gave glad tidings of the corning of a great world Saviour. The Báb said, 'I Myself am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest.' Then He journeyed to Mecca, the holiest city of Islám, and proclaimed His mission before the sacred Black Stone of the Ka'bih, fulfilling prophecy. And He sacrificed nineteen lambs of the finest breed, as is the custom; lambs carefully decked, with sugar in their mouths, perhaps, and collyrium in their eyes. A great blessing to the poor, this sacrifice, for the meat is distributed to them. The Báb refused to partake of this meat Himself, which recalls the story of how a goat had been sacrificed in the house of Muḥammad, where usually there was little to eat. The carcass was being distributed to the poor, and 'Áyishih, wife of the Prophet, came and lamented, because all the meat was being given away. She said, 'Nothing but the shoulder remaineth.' He answered: 'The whole goat remaineth save only the shoulder.'

In Persia again, the Báb preached in the mosques. When He entered, men crowded around Him. It was as Sa'dí said, long ago by the water in Shíráz: 'Wheresoever be a spring of sweetest water,

there will men and birds and insects crowd together.' When He stood on the pulpit, they were quiet while He spoke.

And there, in the heart of Islám, He rose, and struck. He called out as men call who know they are going to die. He cried out against the clergy, the lords of all men. The mullás, who knew the Qur'án by heart, the Book which no Persian can read in his own tongue. The mullás who knew what was lawful and not; who even knew when a medicine should be taken, and a journey be made, and a daughter be given in marriage. Who knew all truth, where other men are blind. And He denounced them; just as His ancestor, Muḥammad, had denounced Arabia's gods: 'Ye rub them with oil and wax, and the flies stick on them,—these are wood, I tell you!' Just as Jesus had called the men of His time: Hypocrites—dogs—generation of vipers—adulterous.

All Persia was talking of Him now. They shut Him in a fortress on a mountain, where He wrote: 'There is no one even to bring Me a lamp at night. The fruit of Islám is to accept the Báb, yet they imprison Him.' Then He wrote: 'All the atoms of this place cry out, "There is no God but God!"'[6] And he began to dictate the greatest of His works, heralding the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. His voice echoed down the mountain and across the valley as He chanted. He suffered cruelly from the winter cold. The water He used for His ablutions froze on His face.

And men loved Him, and sought Him out. They came, even from India, travelling on foot. He was taken away to another prison. His followers were being killed in the streets.

Then they summoned Him before the Crown Prince and the clergy, assembled in Tabriz. There was only one chair left in the Assembly Hall; one chair, reserved for the Crown Prince. The Báb took this chair, and such power shone from Him that the assembly fell silent. Then one of the clergy said, 'Who do you claim to be?' He answered: 'I am the one whose name you have for a thousand years invoked, whose advent you have longed to witness … and the hour of whose Revelation you have prayed God to hasten. Verily I say, it is incumbent upon the peoples of both the East and the West to obey My word …'[7]

We know the rest. But these are the days of His triumph. We do not want to remember how He was hanged to a wall and shot, that morning in Tabríz. We see Him living today, around the world.

Bright Day of the Soul

AT A TIME WHEN THE VAULTS OF the United States Treasury contained 'only a pitiful surplus of $394,000,000,' it was nevertheless, by Act of Congress, decreed that an American Legation should be set up in the capital of Persia. Accordingly, President Arthur selected and dispatched to Ṭihrán a diplomat who, with his wife, remained in Persia from 1882 to 1885, at which time the Democrats returned to power and the Minister gracefully resumed private life. His book,[1] brought out by Ticknor and Co. in Boston in 1887, contains perhaps the second public mention of the Faith of the Báb in the United States—the first was a letter published in the *New York Sun* on December 10, 1883.

The Minister's account also includes what can only be an oblique reference to Bahá'u'lláh, whom the Báb called 'Him Whom God Shall Manifest.' He speaks, too, of Azal, that nominee of the Báb, who as readers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *A Traveller's Narrative* are aware, was chosen as a provisional figurehead to distract attention from the Promised One. So inconsiderable was the nominee that his name does not appear in the royal edict that banished Bahá'u'lláh from Persia. He was always hiding, and it is, interestingly enough, this secretiveness of his which the Minister emphasized: 'As his belief in the Báb is a secret,' the text, naming him, says, 'his name is not mentioned in this connection.'

Of the new Faith in general the diplomat states: 'The Bâbees present one of the most important religious phenomena of the age … their activity does not cease, and their numbers are

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increasing rapidly …. They are found among all conditions of society, and, strange to say, adherents are gained among the priesthood as well as the laity.'

It was the old, long-dreaming Persia of another age which the first American Minister noted down in his book. He told of fairy gardens, unsuspected back of blind mud walls—walls without windows, so that none could spy out should the Sháh, his Court and his ladies come driving by. You entered such a garden from a lane through a shabby door, came into a dark passage, and suddenly there you were in a great court, where, reflected in a vast pool, you found a palace richly ornamented with mouldings of brick, and stucco and carved wood, about it waving cypresses and pines, beds of fragrant herbs, jasmine bushes and sweet-lemon trees. Here was only the bird-broken, water-broken quiet, so that the great city around you was blotted from your mind. You knew, too, that the palace was double, that beyond a second wall was another garden, another pavilion, a place of secluded mystery, barred to all men but the man of the house, where the women decked in their diaphanous costumes lived out their secret days.

He told of floor-to-ceiling windows intricately filled with small panes of coloured glass; of lavish, stucco ornamentation painted in green, scarlet and gold; of shimmering-diamond walls covered with hundreds of bits of mirrors, like 'crystal and burnished silver,' set in floral and geometrical designs; of down-soft, almost flying carpets, of ceilings with carved and tinted crossbeams, the deep panels between them blue, and spangled with golden stars; of wall niches and silver hubble-bubble pipes, of high verandas floating over beds of roses. Of wind towers on the roofs, to circulate a cool current of air. Of pomegranate trees, the fruit scarlet sparks in the dark green leaves. Of thirty-four underground courses of mountain \\rater, marked by hillocks of upthrown earth where vertical shafts had been dug to guide them, all down the long miles to the city; of the lavender sunset stain on Damávand's high, white cone to the northeast.

And always, he said, the silence. No clangour of traffic and church bells as in the West. Only the floating cry of the muezzin at his stated times, or street vendors' calls, or the clink of camel bells. And at night, under closely-gathered stars, wind washing through the trees, or the nightingale's intermittent, tremulous airs,

or maybe a boy singing his high soprano as he passed, or maybe from some ruin the guessed-at hoot of an owl.

He went to the Sháh's grand audience chamber, 'one of the most imposing in the world,' floored with priceless glazed tiles, in its centre a vast table overlaid with beaten gold. At the end of the great hall, streaming with gold, quivering with the lights of a thousand jewels, stood the Peacock Throne. In a glass case the Sháh kept 'a large heap of pearls dense as a pile of sand on the seashore.' He saw a globe of the world turning on a frame of solid gold, its oceans all turquoise, its countries varied jewels, and Persia 'a compact mosaic of diamonds.' He knew, too, that locked here in a double iron chest was the 'Sea of Light,' the second diamond on the planet. 'One ruby there is in that mine of splendour,' he added, 'which, on being placed in water, radiates a red light that colors the water like the blood of the vine of Burgundy.'

In his wanderings he came, as well, on a deserted pavilion built by a Sháh of other years, lapsing into oblivion now, where he found a circular pool in a subterranean hall. Here, from an upper storey, was a steep slide of polished marble leading into the pool. At its foot, His Majesty was wont to stand in the water, while down from the upper story would slide one of his wives, into the royal arms.

'No more,' the diplomat wrote, 'no more are peals of laughter heard there, nor the song warbled by ruby lips. All are gone … The livelong summer-day the nightingale trills in the rose-bush, and the turtle-dove coos in the plane trees, and the murmuring water dashes down its marble channels, but no one dwells there now…'

He saw much, this American Minister, but he missed more, for he was there in Persia only three decades after the climactic events of early Bahá'í history. Clearer was the vision of France's Count de Gobineau, who was there from 1855 to 1858, again from 1862 to 1864, and made that country 'one of his fairest intellectual conquests'; clearer that of Cambridge University's E. G. Browne who, inspired by Gobineau, went to Persia for a year in 1887, and later even saw Bahá'u'lláh. And most enlightened of them all was the French Consul at Tabríz, A. L. M. Nicolas, who began his Bábí studies in 1889, and ultimately accepted both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as the two Revelators of this age.

Turning old pages, looking at drawings and rare photos, you

can get yourself back into mid-19th century Persia again, feel yourself under that tender sky, sheathed in that very silence, breathing the warm smell of summer roses, setting your lips to tea with the lime juice and sugar, and since it was in a holder of silver filigree, not burning your fingers on the glass. You can look off across the gold plains of Ṭihrán, that were studded with green garden clusters, and in season webbed with purple Judas trees, to the almost 19,000-foot, eternally white cone of Damávand. In those days it could be seen from every open point of the city.

Less than four decades before the American would come to that country, a young Persian, Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Bushrú'í, at first quite alone, played there a strange, predestined role. Of all those around the world who then awaited the Lord's corning, he would be the first to find the Promised One—not in New England, not in the Holy Land as had been expected by some, but far away in the heart of Persia, deep in Shíráz, 'the home of Persian culture, the mother of Persian genius.'

Meanwhile in the United States, William Miller got the year right—1844—roused the country and even in apologizing later on, when he had been derided and condemned, would write: 'Were I to live my life over again, with the same evidence that I then had, to be honest with God and man I should have to do as I have done. *I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment*; yet I still believe that the day of the Lord is near, even at the door.'

It was in lost, forgotten Persia that this Door—this Báb—would swing wide to the new age at the touch of Mullá Ḥusayn.

Persian names of the last century were, you might say, a summing-up of the individual, of his birthplace or work, and his station in life. The actual name, in this case Ḥusayn (for he was named after the Imám Ḥusayn, the grandson of Muḥammad, which shows he was a Muslim of the Shí'ih branch) was only a part of his designation. 'Mullá' meant he was a scholar, particularly a religious teacher, cleric or theologian; and the last part of the title referred to his birthplace, a town called Bushrúyih in the province Khurásán.

He was slender, even delicate, and there was a tremor in his hands. He had until this time lived only the life of books, and it was through books of holy Islamic traditions that he had found the signs which drew him to Shíráz. Shíráz, its title 'the Abode of

Divine Knowledge'; founded or else rebuilt in the 7th century, sacked by Tamerlane, beautified again, then under the Qájár Dynasty brought low once more.

Which is how he came, on that immortal evening, in that small upper room over the low, star-silvered roofs of the town, while the orange tree sent up incense from the courtyard, and from a minaret, across the silence, floated the muezzin's call to prayer—to gaze on the Báb, to listen to Him, to be His first disciple.

In any case this young intellectual saw and knew that the Advent had taken place, and he was enrolled by the Báb as the first 'Letter of the Living.' His fellow-adventists soon followed him, for such an explosion of light could not be hidden, and there would be eighteen of these Letters in all—twenty, counting the two Manifestations of God, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh: Letters making up the Word, and all generated, as when you write, from the First Point made as you set pen to page.

After his first ecstasy of discovery, Mullá Ḥusayn was soon dealt a terrible blow. He had thought the Báb would choose him as a fellow-pilgrim to Mecca—where, in fulfilment of age-old prophecy, the Báb had to betake Himself to declare His Advent before the holiest shrine in the Muslim world—the Ka'bih set with its Black Stone. But no, it now turned out that it would be someone else, the Omega of the Eighteen Letters—not himself, Mullá Ḥusayn, the Alpha—whom the Báb would choose as His companion on that journey.

But the Báb gave Mullá Ḥusayn a special mission, and instructed him so lovingly as to the path they all had chosen, the way to their own certain death, that his heart was comforted.

'My Covenant with you is now accomplished,' the Báb told him … 'Be not dismayed at the sight of the degeneracy and perversity of this generation, for the Lord of the Covenant shall assuredly assist you … and shall lead you from victory to victory. Even as the cloud that rains its bounty upon the earth, traverse the land from end to end, and shower upon its people the blessings which the Almighty, in His mercy, has deigned to confer upon you. Forbear with the 'ulamás (divines), and resign yourself to the will of God. Raise the cry: "Awake, awake, for lo! the Gate of God is open, and the morning Light is shedding its radiance upon all mankind"!'[2]

As if looking at him from across the tomb, the Báb continued, 'We have left you behind to face the onslaught of a fierce, relentless enemy. Rest assured, however, that a bounty unspeakably glorious shall be conferred upon you. Follow the course of your journey towards the north, and visit on your way Iṣfáhán, Káshán, Qum and Ṭihrán. Beseech almighty Providence that He may graciously enable you to attain, in that capital … the mansion of the Beloved. A secret lies hidden in that city. When made manifest it shall turn the earth into paradise.'

There had been more as to his perilous mission, which the Báb promised he would accomplish, until which time, the Báb said, should the whole world arise against him no one would be able to harm a hair of his head. There had been the hope held out that he, Mullá Ḥusayn, would look upon the Báb in this world again. And almost at the very last hour of their being together, the Báb had said: 'Grieve not that you have not been chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Ḥijáz. I shall, instead, direct your steps to that city which enshrines a Mystery of such transcendent holiness as neither Ḥijáz nor Shíráz can hope to rival … The essence of power is now dwelling in you, and the company of His chosen angels revolves around you. His almighty arms will surround you, and His unfailing Spirit will ever continue to guide your steps.' 3 And that is how Mullá Ḥusayn came to be standing high on the pass here, looking backward across Shíráz, 'The Green City of Solomon,' to him the jewel box that still held, he knew, the priceless treasure he of all on earth had been the first to find. The road he had travelled ran broad and straight, under the great arch down there in which was preserved 'the Qur'án that weighs seventeen maunds,' down to that bridge over the dry river, and through the Iṣfáhán Gate.

This point where he stood on the road is called the Pass of 'God is Most Great!' because here after long journeying the beauty of Shíráz, through a wide break in the mountains, bursts on your sight and you have to cry out, 'Alláh-u-Akbar!'

He could see the grassy plain, the far grape-blue mountains still under snow, and nearer the cypresses, rounded domes and threading minarets of the vast city below him, drifting up to him in perfumed silence. Way to his left was the silver water of Lake Mahálú, and to his right lay vineyards and gardens, while below the Arch

under which he had come was the ghost of the 'rose-walks' of Ḥáfiẓ, Persia's 14th century 'Tongue of the Invisible World,' buried down there in a white-walled enclosure amid the black cypresses; lying under an oblong stone engraved with his verses, some of which might well have passed through the mind of Mullá Ḥusayn in his exalted state—this one, perhaps, who knows? 'Be a slave, 0 heart, to the King of the world, and be a King!' Or this, from the great Sa'dí, also at rest in the dust of the city down there, for it too would have a subtle meaning for Mullá Ḥusayn at that hour and till the close of his brief life: 'Shíráz,' Sa'dí had written, 'Shíráz that wrenches the traveller's heart from his native home.'

What was it his Lord, his Beloved, had said at the end, not to him only but to the Letters of the Living as He sent them out across Persia to teach and die? Not to them only, but to all the people who would, throughout all the years of the future, not in Persia alone but throughout all the Seven Regions of the earth, come to know and love the Báb as the Eighteen now knew and loved Him? He had gathered them before Him and told them:

> *O My beloved friends! You are the bearers of the name of God in this Day. You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery. It behoves each one of you to manifest the attributes of God, and to exemplify by your deeds and words the signs of His righteousness, His power and glory. The very members of your body must bear witness to the loftiness of your purpose, the integrity of your life, the reality of your faith, and the exalted character of your devotion. For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book: 'On that day will We set a seal upon their mouths; yet shall their hands speak unto Us, and their feet shall bear witness to that which they shall have done.'*[4]

This was the beginning of what the Báb had said. It was time to obey Him now, to look away from Shíráz, to put even the Báb out of his mind, if that were possible, because even love could hold him back, and go on as he had been instructed, to Iṣfáhán. He journeyed forward, up the stony road.

In those days there was more coming and going on the roads than we now think, for merchants, envoys, soldiers and pilgrims have

always put the long miles behind them. People usually banded together in a convoy for greater safety, with armed guards, pack horses, baggage mules, some travellers on horseback; others, veiled women perhaps, sat in covered panniers for two, one balanced on either side of the horse, jolting along, crying out when their animal lurched or stumbled. The muleteers went on foot. A. V. Williams Jackson's muleteers could walk 'forty miles a day … without apparent fatigue.' There were, too, messengers famous for their endurance, who walked. They had their counterpart in Shaykh Salmán, Bahá'u'lláh's courier who, once every year, walked back and forth between the provinces of Persia and 'Akká, on the Mediterranean Sea.

There were regular stopping places where most people stayed overnight—post houses or caravanserais along the way. One such caravanserai on this road between Shíráz and Iṣfáhán was a ruined one of stone. Its central court within the protecting outer walls held carcasses of camels or horses in various stages of decay, besides live animals and their bales. Springtime, it was crowded with tribesmen marching toward summer pastures, driving their donkeys, sheep and goats, bringing along their black hair tents, their babies and infirm and all they owned, the rough beauty of their women's faces not covered by a veil. The average traveller had, perhaps, a prayer rug, which he laid down in an empty, arched niche on the broad platform above the open court. He got out his samovar, made his tea, ate his lumps of goat cheese and flap of folded bread, wrapped himself in his cloak and slept on his rug.

His noontime meal, where maybe a blue runnel of pure water passed, edged with a line of green along the roadside and with a few trees fanning above, and crested hoopoes darting in the clear air, provided another break in the endless hours.

They did not seem endless to Mullá Ḥusayn. He ignored neighbouring Persepolis which Alexander burned—including the Scriptures of Zoroaster, written in golden ink on 12,000 oxskins. He passed uncaring near the 'Rustam picture' carvings, where lie Darius and other Achaemenian Kings. He did not turn aside into that desolate plain where once rose a royal city, mile on mile, for the ruined tomb of Cyrus, of him who, 550 years before Jesus Christ, conquered the Medes and humbled Babylon. He would have seen there, standing in that emptiness, a rectangular house of

stone on a base of giant steps. 'Mosque of the Mother of Solomon,' the muleteers called it. A tree sprouted from its roof, and only scholars remembered that an inscription there once read: 'O Man, I am Cyrus … who founded the Empire of the Persians, and was King of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this little earth …'

He went on, saw a flock of storks, saw gazelles, came to a shepherd in a stiff sheepskin coat, rolled turban and shoes of rough hide, gathering his fat-tailed sheep. In a village he may have passed workmen leisurely putting up a wall of sunbaked brick, singing the builder's song. Used to these sights and sounds, he paid them no mind; nor to the camel thorn along the road; nor to occasional, reptilian caravans that came from another world and passed back into it again, the camels' disdainful heads tilting, floating as the loaded beasts padded purposefully along, a brass bell and tassels at the neck, also wearing blue beads to ward off the evil eye.

He took, doubtless, the summer road that leads through mountains to the south west of Yazdíkhást, unique boat-city that rises out of a sunken river bed, went past Qum-i-Sháh—there was a blue dome here—passed stony plains between raw, black hills, came to a rugged defile, and found himself in the long plain of Iṣfáhán. The city lay under pale blue smoke, miles of ruins about it, for it had shrunk down from former days. He could see pavilions and towers, giant domes, and bridges of old lace at the river. He knew the biggest, pear-shaped, turquoise dome of all was the Sháh's Mosque at the vast royal square; there, a marble goal post at each end still showed where the Princes had played polo in now vanished times, where a golden goblet would be set up on a tall post and shot at for a prize as the royal marksmen galloped by.

He may have rested briefly at the Farewell Fountain, that place, marked by a single tree, to which the people of Iṣfáhán come out with their southward journeying friends, to say goodbye, '*Iṣfáhán, nisf-i-jihán*', he may have repeated to himself: if I rouse this city I have wakened half the planet, for 'Iṣfáhán is half the world.' This was the dazzling capital of Persia two hundred years gone, under Sháh 'Abbás the Great in the days of Elizabeth. As for the city's age, who knows? In the second century after Christ, Ptolemy the Greek geographer called it *Aspadana* (the equivalent of Old Persian for 'having horses as a gift'). In the twelfth, Benjamin of Tudela noted that its Jewish inhabitants numbered 15,000. 'We

came to a towne called Spaham,' Josafa Barbaro wrote in 1474.

Long before, in legend's mists, it was here that Kávih the Blacksmith was born, Kávih, crying out for justice, who stripped off his leather work apron, fixed it to a spear, and carried it against a tyrant who had usurped the throne. For centuries thereafter (till the Arabs took it) this leather apron, set with gold and jewels, was the royal flag of Persia, the standard held out at the head of Persia's armies, and the keeping of this treasured flag was the right of Iṣfáhán.

Over the bridge, the one with the thirty-three arches, below which, on the pebbly banks, the dyers spread out their bright, new cloth, and which was thronged all day till nightfall and the curfew horn, was a wide Christian Armenian suburb called Julfá.

How often had his Lord referred to Jesus Christ. That part of the Báb's farewell to the Letters of the Living came back to him now:

> *Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth to propagate the Cause of God. In words such as these, He bade them arise and fulfil their mission: 'Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain-top. Let your light shine before the eyes of men. Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognize and be drawn closer to the heavenly Father who is the Source of purity and grace. For none has seen the Father who is in heaven. You who are His spiritual children must by your deeds exemplify His virtues, and witness to His glory. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?'*[5]

Here in Iṣfáhán Mullá Ḥusayn betook himself to a religious college, a large, two-storey structure built around a courtyard on which many rooms looked down through tiled archways. It had a rectangular pool of water, sycamore trees, protecting outer walls and a massive gate. The leaders in Iṣfáhán already knew the young voyager as eloquent and a scholar, but had no inkling that he had been transformed and that another man now stood before them. The pulpits roundabout were offered to him, and when he spoke the masses jammed the mosques. He preached to them the Báb made manifest, the advent of the Revelator inspired by God with

new words for the new age. Seeing his success the clergy protested to the lay authorities, saying Mullá Ḥusayn was disrupting Islám. The wise Governor left it up to the ‘ulamás, maintaining this was their concern, so for a time at least Mullá Ḥusayn could reach the people. This governor, the delicate, pale Georgian, who in the years to come would offer his life and all he possessed to the Báb, was a man of vast wealth. The story went that the Sháh had summoned him and said: ‘We hear that you live like a King in Isfahan.’ Whereat the governor answered: ‘Yes, Sire, your governors must live like kings, to justify your title “King of Kings”.’

Tension mounted in the city; under the tongue lashing of the ‘ulamás, the people grew restive. Mullá Ḥusayn was a scholar, not a soldier, he was frail and not armed, but he was safe. They might whip up the mobs against him, running men might turn on him, killers, their lips drawn back, the unseeing glare of hate in their eyes, but no one could harm him. Till his mission was accomplished, not a hair of his head could be touched.

When the time came he went out through the city gate, through the poppy fields, past the high, cylindrical pigeon-towers with their castellated tops, and continued on toward his next city, Káshán. Up and over the long mountain pass he laboured, on and down where the miles wound through stone walls, got to orchards and green fields, passed the wide, half-natural lake built by the Ṣafaví Kings, went on by a deep depression in the rock that people called the hoofprint of ‘Alí’s horse, saw at last the hundred-foot-high minaret that first breaks the level of Káshán, saw the vaulted roofs of sun-baked brick.

Eight centuries before Christ, men say, the city of Káshán was already here. Much as it is now, its summer heat, its collected rain water and the reservoir at Fín, its melons and figs, its neighbouring eighteen villages, were described in the 14th century. According to Odoric of Pordenone (1320), this was the city from which came the Three Wise Men; and from here these Kings got to Jerusalem, with God’s help, in thirteen days. A fine royal city, he says, rich in bread, wine and everything, though ravaged by the Tartars. In the 15th century Josafa Barbaro not only wrote of it but lived here for a while, speaking of it as the ‘well enhabited citie called Cassan, wheare for the moste parte they make sylkes and fustian …’

Here were some, including a prominent merchant, who listened

to the new Message. A famed divine, however, a friend of Mullá Ḥusayn's, could not give up his rank and power for the new Cause. And the messenger was saddened, for he had tried to bring his friend the pearl of inestimable price, and the friend had chosen frippery instead.

Mullá Ḥusayn went on, out of Kásháan. Did he rest, perhaps, by the roadside and have a white, gondola-shaped slice of melon at Nasrábád, or stop further on in the splendid, half-ruined caravan-serai that goes back to the Ṣafaví Kings—glimpse the dimly-vaulted stables, the empty rooms and vacant stair; or did he taste the brackish water at Shúráb? Had you asked him afterward, he could, perhaps, not have told you, in the condition he was in. The Báb Himself, after their first encounter, had cautioned him: 'If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: "This poor youth has lost his mind."' Always within his heart, he could hear that voice which had enslaved him. The universe was a handful of dust in his cupped hands. It was the first morning of creation, and he was the first that awoke.

He repeated over to himself still more of those parting words of his Liege Lord:

> *O My Letters! Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old. Nay, immeasurable is the difference! You are the witnesses of the dawn of the promised Day of God. You are the partakers of the mystic chalice of His Revelation. Gird up the loins of endeavour, and be mindful of the words of God as revealed in His Book: 'Lo, the Lord thy God is come, and with Him is the company of His angels arrayed before Him!'*[6]

Here at hand was the desert in earnest, 'sand, salt and solitude.' Here was the boundless waste that stretches to the eastern frontier—turn off the two-foot track and be sucked down with your load and camel, lost and blotted out forever, sinking, strangling in the salt swamps. But his road lay flat beneath the hills, along its edge. And he came on into Qum, the 'Blue City,' with its manufacture of blue tiles and all its blue and greenish domes, dwarfed by a golden one. Under this rests Fáṭimih, sister of Imám Riḍá, the eighth Imám, eighth victim of the split that cracked Islám at the Prophet's death, so that the Muslim Caliphs murdered the Muslim Imáms down the long years.

The Báb's envoy taught some here, but not till later would the seeds spring up. The earth was not ready for them then. He thought often of the people muttering words they did not understand, making gestures no Prophet had ever taught, mimicking, parroting down the generations, speaking, thinking, doing what other men—no better than themselves—had decided they should. From all such man-made forms, his Lord had saved him. Again he returned in his mind to the Báb's farewell:

> *The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him. 'The good word riseth up unto Him, and the righteous deed will cause it to be exalted before Him.' You are the lowly, of whom God has thus spoken in His Book: 'And We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make them Our heirs.' You have been called to this station; you will attain to it, only if you arise to trample beneath your feet every earthly desire, and endeavour to become those 'honoured servants of His who speak not till He hath spoken, and who do His bidding.'*[7]

The pull of Ṭihrán was stronger than ever, and he passed through the blue-tiled gate and over the long bridge across the river bed and went on, leaving Qum to drop behind him into the salt swamps. The desert, flecked with salt, lay off on his right, to the east. Bare black hills jutted up, knife-sharp, and he came to that place they call the Valley of the Angel of Death, a spot of desolate defiles, where, the muleteers say, monsters appear in the guise of people you love and beckon you away from the caravan to a ghastly death. But he went on unheeding. After a while he could see, like a spark, the gold-flash of Sháh ʻAbdu'l-ʻAẓím, the shrine which rises on the edge of ancient Rayy. This was only six miles south of his goal.

This shrine was a refuge city for hunted criminals; the whole town was a sanctuary. Here not a finger could be laid on a man, no matter what he had done. The only thing was, the greater the crime, the closer in to the shrine must the outlaw remain; a murderer could not set foot beyond the courtyard of the golden mosque, while a debtor could walk free, so long as he kept within the city walls.

Beyond them the earth is covered with a shrub that is pungent when crushed underfoot. You could stand here in the fragrant stillness and look off across the sweep of plains to Ṭihrán and Damávand, seeming far nearer than they are, through the crystal air. You could hear from somewhere, like water dripping down on hollow metal, the rhythmic thunk of camel bells. Beside you rises a high, circular rampart of white stone—the Tower of Silence, where the Zoroastrians expose their dead. In troubled times, fearing molestation, they left no opening in the old tower. They used ropes and ladders then, to work the corpse up over the side, and laid it down within, to the vultures and the sky.

Rayy is old, but Ṭihrán, up there to the north, is 'new.' It has been the capital only since 1788, with the advent of the Qájár Dynasty. Before that, the capital was Iṣfáhán, and before that, in the 16th century, Qazvín—the Casbeen of *Paradise Lost*. Ṭihrán began to go up as a modern city about seven hundred years ago, when Rayy began to go down. The geographer Yáqút, about 1220, mentioned it only as 'a stronghold, one farsakh distant from Rayy,' and said the inhabitants dug their dwellings underground and were always at war with each other. 'With the rise of Ṭihrán to power,' a modern authority has written, 'Media has been able once more to reclaim the supremacy she lost to Persia in the time of Cyrus, and the present capital occupies a site that is almost identical with the ancient city of Rages (Avestan *Ragha*, Old Persian *Raga*), now Rayy … which shared with Ecbatana [Hamadán] in antiquity the honors of supremacy over Iran.'

Up there beyond the roofs and tree tops of the city was the Alburz mountain wall, bare but many-coloured—amethyst, orange, jade green—from the mineral deposits within, and strewn with cloud shadows; and there in the northeast corner rose the cone of Damávand, Persia's white eternal symbol of man's freedom under justice, for in its heart is chained forever the tyrant Ḍaḥḥák, the tyrant that Kávih the Blacksmith brought down. What secret would be disclosed to him in that city, Mullá Ḥusayn wondered. What holy Mystery that neither Mecca nor Shíráz could hope to rival? And where was the House of the Beloved?

He listened again to the voice of the Báb in his heart:

You are the first Letters that haze been generated from the Primal

Point, the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this Revelation. Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits, may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you. I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I, who am now instructing you, may, before the mercy-seat of God, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements. The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed. It can neither be divulged nor estimated. The newly born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time, and the lowliest and most unlearned of that period shall surpass in understanding the most erudite and accomplished divines of this age. Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming.[8]

Guided by chance, perhaps, Mullá Ḥusayn went to live in one of the empty, cell-like rooms of the college of Páy-i-Minár (which means at the foot of the minaret). He stayed here incognito, did not go out to preach, but met, quietly, a great many people. Count de Gobineau says that everybody wanted to see him or to have seen him, and that the Sháh and the Prime Minister summoned him as well, heard out his doctrines and saw the newly-written Texts. (When there was something to copy the Persians sat and copied it, taking out their pen boxes and writing rapidly with their powdered ink and reed pens, from right to left, the paper resting in the palm of their left hand, and many handwritten copies of the Báb's words must already have been going the rounds.)

Early every morning he would leave his room and be gone till after sundown, when he would quietly return and shut the door on his day. Among the instructors at this college was the chief, for Ṭihrán, of that Muslim adventist group to which Mullá Ḥusayn had himself belonged, and among whom he had been so valued that at the death of its leader, Siyyid Káẓim, they had wished to put Mullá Ḥusayn in the departed one's place. By now word of the young Mullá's conversion had spread from mouth to mouth, and his former co-religionists saw him as a Judas, a betrayer of their cause. They could not believe that the Promised One had indeed come, they wanted to go on expecting Him forever. Now the

instructor upbraided Mullá Ḥusayn for preaching the Advent, and said if he kept on this way he would destroy his own former group. With all the learning and passion at his command, Mullá Ḥusayn tried to win this man over to the Báb. Noting it was useless, the convert ended by saying that in any case he would not be long here in the capital, and that he had not been unfaithful to the founders of his original belief.

It chanced that from his neighbouring cell a student overheard all this. He listened in horror to the arrogance and contempt which was his till then much-respected teacher's only answer to the visitor's obviously sincerely-meant account. At midnight while the college slept, he crept to Mullá Ḥusayn's door and knocked. Asked to enter, he found the Mullá seated there, in the Persian fashion, on the floor beside his lamp. Wrought up, close to tears, the student tried to tell him what had happened.

'I know now why I chose this place,' the Mullá answered. 'Where the master was blind, may the pupil see. What city is your home?'

'My home is Núr,' was the reply.

At this a great change came over Mullá Ḥusayn. Eagerly, he asked the boy after the family of the late Mírzá Buzurg of Núr. Was there now, he wanted to know, a new and worthy Head to that illustrious house?

'Yes,' was the answer, 'there is his son. Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí.'

'And what does He do?'

'He cheers the disconsolate and feeds the hungry.'

'What of His rank and position?'

'He has none—apart from befriending the poor and the stranger.'

'How does He spend His days?'

'He roams the woods. He loves the countryside.'

'How old is He?'

'About twenty-eight.'

Mullá Ḥusayn radiated joy. He learned that, himself from Núr, this student often went to pay his respects to Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí. He got out a scroll wrapped up in a piece of cloth, and urgently requested the youth to deliver it the very next morning, at dawn—an hour when many would flock to the door of noblemen's houses.

And this was the second dazzling night in the life of Mullá Ḥusayn. He had found the Báb, Revelator and Herald, in Shíráz. Now in Ṭihrán it would be given him to learn the core of the Báb's

Message, to discover 'Him Whom God Shall Manifest,' Revelator and Founder of a World Faith, who would assure the dawning of the universal Day of God. Again it would be he, 'Mullá Ḥusayn, unworthy though he felt himself to be, helpless against the massed power of the world, facing death anyway, to be the first to know. He must have wept, prayed and exulted that night, and remembered the Báb's last promise in His Farewell to the Letters of the Living:

> *Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty. Has He not, in past days, caused Abraham, in spite of His seeming helplessness, to triumph over the forces of Nimrod? Has He not enabled Moses, whose staff was His only companion, to vanquish Pharaoh and his hosts? Has He not established the ascendancy of Jesus, poor and lowly as He was in the eyes of men, over the combined forces of the Jewish people? Has He not subjected the barbarous and militant tribes of Arabia to the holy and transforming discipline of Muḥammad, His Prophet? Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.*[9]

At daybreak the next morning the student left the college and passed along the shadowy, tortuous lanes between the high mud walls. Already the water carriers were sprinkling the streets from their black, hairy goatskin bags, to lay the dust; already, though the heat was not yet come, the acacia blossoms perfumed the air. He came to Bahá'u'lláh's house, to the house of that Mystery which neither Mecca nor Shíráz, neither Muḥammad nor the Báb, could hope to rival, and found His brother standing at the gate. The brother soon returned with a welcome for him, and bowing low the student was brought in to the Head of the house. He took out the scroll and handed it to the brother, who laid it before Bahá'u'lláh. Asking them both to be seated, Bahá'u'lláh unfolded the scroll, and in vibrant tones, began to read.

He then glanced at His brother and remarked: 'Músá, what have you to say?' He added that if you believed in the Qur'án, and that it came from God, you would have to believe as much of the words now in His hands. They saw that to Him this was a new Faith, come out of Islám as Christianity had come out of Judaism before it. They knew that the Qur'án teaches belief in the long succession of Prophets preceding Muḥammad, saw He was telling them that

just as God had addressed mankind a number of times before, He now had spoken again.

Then He sent the student away with a message and present for Mullá Ḥusayn: He sent him, besides His appreciation and love, a loaf of Russian sugar and a package of tea. Tea and that special sugar were rare in Persia then; they were used as gifts between friends.

Waiting back at the college, Mullá Ḥusayn, seeing the messenger return, leapt to his feet. Bowing low, he took Bahá'u'lláh's gift in his trembling hands, and raised it to his lips. What could it all mean, the student wondered. He knew that to Mullá Ḥusayn, even gold and silver and jewels were children's playthings, and this was only sugar and tea.

A few days after this, Mullá Ḥusayn left the city. As he went, he looked into the student's eyes. 'Divulge not His name,' he said. 'Pray that the Almighty may protect Him, that, through Him, He may exalt the downtrodden, enrich the poor, and redeem the fallen. The secret of things is concealed from our eyes. Ours is the duty to raise the call of the New Day and to proclaim this Divine Message unto all people. Many a soul will, in this city, shed his blood in this path. That blood will water the Tree of God, will cause it to flourish, and to overshadow all mankind.'[10]

Then he left the boy and went away, along that road from which there was no turning back.

The White Silk Dress

THE BODY LIES CRUSHED INTO a well, with rocks over it, somewhere near the centre of Ṭihrán. Buildings have gone up around it, and traffic passes along the road near where the garden was. Buses push donkeys to one side, automobiles from across the world graze the camels' packs, carriages rock by. Toward sunset men scoop up water from a stream and fling it into the road to lay the dust. And the body is there, crushed into the ground, and men come and go, and think it is hidden and forgotten.

Beauty in women is a relative thing. Take Laylí, for instance, whose lover Majnún had to go away into the desert when she left him, because he could no longer bear the faces of others; whereupon the animals came, and sat around him in a circle, and mourned with him, as any number of poets and painters will tell you—even Laylí was not beautiful. Sa'dí describes how one of the kings of Arabia reasoned with Majnún in vain, and how finally 'It came into the king's heart to look upon the beauty of Laylí, that he might see the face that had wrought such ruin. He bade them seek through the tribes of Arabia and they found her and brought her to stand in the courtyard before him. The king looked at her; he saw a woman dark of skin and slight of body, and he thought little of her, for the meanest servant in his harem was fairer than she. Majnún read the king's mind, and he said, "O king, you must look upon Laylí through the eyes of Majnún, till the inner beauty of her may be manifest."' Beauty depends on the eyes that see it. At all events we know that Ṭáhirih was beautiful according to the thought of her time.

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Perhaps she opened her mirror-case one day—the eight-sided case with a lacquer nightingale singing on it to a lacquer rose—and looked inside, and thought how no record of her features had been made to send into the future. She probably knew that age would never scrawl over the face, to cancel the beauty of it, because she was one of those who die young. But perhaps, kneeling on the floor by the long window, her book laid aside, the mirror before her—she thought how her face would vanish, just as Laylí's had, and Shírín's, and all the others. So that she slid open her pen-case, and took out the reed pen, and holding the paper in her palm, wrote the brief self-portrait that we have of her: 'Small black mole at the edge of the lip A black lock of hair by either cheek—' she wrote; and the wooden pen creaked as she drove it over the paper.

Ṭáhirih loved pretty clothes, and perfumes, and she loved to eat. She could eat sweets all day long. Once, years after Ṭáhirih had gone, an American woman travelled to 'Akká and sat at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's table; the food was good, and she ate plentifully, and then asked the Master's forgiveness for eating so much. He answered, 'Virtue and excellence consist in true faith in God, not in having a small or a large appetite for food… Jináb-i-Ṭáhirih had a good appetite. When asked concerning it, she would answer, "It is recorded in the Holy Traditions that one of the attributes of the people of paradise is 'partaking of food, continually'".'[1]

When she was a child, instead of playing games, she would listen to the theological discussions of her father and uncle, who were great ecclesiastics in Qazvín. Soon she could teach Islám down to the last ḥadíth. Her brother said, 'We, all of us, her brothers, her cousins, did not dare to speak in her presence, so much did her knowledge intimidate us.' This from a Persian brother, who comes first in everything, and whose sisters wait upon him. As she grew, she attended the courses given by her father and uncle; she sat in the same hall with two or three hundred men students, but hidden behind a curtain, and more than once refuted what the two old men were expounding. In time some of the haughtiest 'ulamás consented to certain of her views.

Ṭáhirih married her cousin and gave birth to children. It must have been the usual Persian marriage, where the couple hardly met

before the ceremony, and where indeed the suitor was allowed only a brief glimpse of the girl's face unveiled. Love marriages were thought shameful, and this must have been pre-arranged in the proper way. No, if she ever cared for anyone with a human love, we like to think it was Quddús, whom she was to know in later years; Quddús, who was a descendant of the Imám Ḥasan, grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad. People loved him very easily, they could hardly turn their eyes away from him. He was one of the first to be persecuted for his Master's Faith on Persian soil—in Shíráz, when they tortured him and led him through the streets by a halter. Later on, it was Quddús who commanded the besieged men at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, and when the fort had fallen through the enemy's treachery, and been demolished, he was given over to the mob, in his home city of Bárfurúsh. He was led through the market-place in chains, while the crowds attacked him. They fouled his clothing and slashed him with knives, and in the end they hacked his body apart and burned what was left. Quddús had never married, for years his mother had lived in the hope of seeing his wedding day; as he walked to his death, he remembered her and cried out, 'Would that my mother were with me, and could see with her own eyes the splendour of my nuptials!'[2]

So Ṭáhirih lived in Qazvín, the honey-coloured city of sun-baked brick, with her slim, tinkling poplars, and the bands of blue water along the yellow dust of the roads. She lived in a honey-coloured house round a courtyard, cool like the inside of an earthen jar, and there were niches in the white-washed walls of the rooms, where she set her lamp, and kept her books, wrapped up in a hand-blocked cotton cloth. But where other women would have been content with what she had, she could not rest; her mind harried her; and at last she broke away and went over the mountains out of Persia, to the domed city of Karbilá, looking for the Truth.

Then one night she had a dream. She saw a young man standing in the sky; He had a book in His hands and He read verses out of it. Ṭáhirih wakened and wrote down the verses to remember them, and later, when she found the same lines again in a commentary written by the Báb, she believed in Him. At once she spoke out. She broadcast her conversion to the Faith of the Báb, and the result was open scandal. Her husband, her father, her brothers, begged her to give up the madness; in reply she proclaimed her

belief. She denounced her generation, the ways of her people, polygamy, the veiling of women, the corruption in high places, the evil of the clergy. She was not one of those who temporize and walk softly. She spoke out; she cried out for a revolution in all men's ways; when at last she died it was by the words of her own mouth, and she knew it.

Nicolas tells us that she had 'an ardent temperament, a just, clear intelligence, remarkable poise, untameable courage.'[3] Gobineau says, 'The chief characteristic of her speech was an almost shocking plainness, and yet when she spoke … you were stirred to the bottom of your soul, and filled with admiration, and tears came from your eyes.'[4] Nabíl says that 'None could resist her charm; few could escape the contagion of her belief. All testified to the extraordinary traits of her character, marvelled at her amazing personality, and were convinced of the sincerity of her conviction.'[5]

Most significant is the memory of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When He was a child, Ṭáhirih held Him on her lap while she conversed with the great Siyyid Yaḥyáy-i-Dárábí, who sat outside the door. He was a man of immense learning. For example, he knew thirty thousand Islamic traditions by heart; and he knew the depths of the Qur'án, and would quote from the Holy Text to prove the truth of the Báb. Ṭáhirih called out to him, 'Oh Yaḥyá! Let deeds, not words, testify to thy faith, if thou art a man of true learning.'[6] He listened, and for the first time he understood; he saw that it was not enough to prove the claim of the Báb, but that he must sacrifice himself to spread the Faith. He rose and went out, and travelled and taught, and in the end he laid down his life in the red streets of Nayríz. They cut off his head, and stuffed it with straw, and paraded it from city to city.

Ṭáhirih never saw the Báb. She sent Him a message, telling her love for Him:

The effulgence of Thy face flashed forth and the rays of Thy visage arose on high;
Then speak the word 'Am I not your Lord' and 'Thou art, Thou art,' we will all reply.
The trumpet-call 'Am I not' to greet, how loud the drums of affliction beat!
At the gates of my heart there tramp the feet and camp the hosts of calamity ...[7]

She set about translating into Persian the Báb's Commentary on the Súrih of Joseph. And He made her one of that undying company, the Letters of the Living.

We see her there in Karbilá, in the plains where more than a thousand years before, Imám Ḥusayn, grandson of the Prophet, had fallen of thirst and wounds. We see her on the anniversary of his death, when all the town was wailing for him and all had put on black in his memory, decked out in holiday clothing to celebrate the birthday of the Báb. This was a new day, she told them; the old agonies were spent. Then she travelled in her howdah, a sort of curtained cage balanced on a horse, to Baghdád and continued her teaching. Here the leaders of the Shí'ih and Sunní, the Christian and Jewish communities sought her out to convince her of her folly; but she astounded them and routed them and in the end she was ordered out of Turkish territory, and she travelled toward Persia, gathering disciples for the Báb. Everywhere princes, 'ulamás, government officials crowded to see her; she was praised from a number of pulpits; one said, 'Our highest attainments are but a drop compared to the immensity of her knowledge.' This of a woman, in a country of silent, shadow-women, who lived their quiet cycle behind the veil: marriage and sickness and childbirth, stirring the rice and baking the flaps of bread, embroidering a leaf on a strip of velvet, dying without a name.

Karbilá, Baghdád, Kirmánsháh, Hamadán. Then her father summoned her home to Qazvín, and once she was back in his house, her husband, the mujtahid, sent for her to return and live with him. This was her answer: 'Say to my presumptuous and arrogant kinsman … "If your desire had really been to be a faithful mate and companion to me, you would have hastened to meet me in Karbilá and would on foot have guided my howdah all the way to Qazvín. I would … have aroused you from your sleep of heedlessness and would have shown you the way of truth. But this was not to be … Neither in this world nor in the next can I ever be associated with you. I have cast you out of my life forever".'[8] Then her uncle and her husband pronounced her a heretic, and set about working against her night and day.

One day a mullá was walking through Qazvín, when he saw a gang of ruffians dragging a man along the street; they had tied the man's turban around his neck for a halter, and were torturing him.

The bystanders said that this man had spoken in praise of two beings, heralds of the Bab; and for that, Ṭáhirih's uncle was banishing him. The mullá was troubled in his mind. He was not a Bábí, but he loved the two heralds of the Báb. He went to the bázár of the swordmakers, and bought a dagger and a spearhead of the finest steel, and bided his time. One dawn in the mosque, an old woman hobbled in and spread down a rug. Then 'Ṭáhirih's uncle entered alone, to pray on it. He was prostrating himself when the mullá ran up and plunged the spearhead into his neck; he cried out, the mullá flung him on his back, drove the dagger deep into his mouth and left him bleeding on the mosque floor.

Qazvín went wild over the murder. Although the mullá confessed, and was identified by his dying victim, many innocent people were accused and made prisoner. In Ṭihrán, Bahá'u'lláh suffered His first affliction—some days' imprisonment—because He sent them food and money and interceded for them. The heirs now put to death an innocent man, Shaykh-Ṣáliḥ, an Arab from Karbilá. This admirer of Ṭáhirih was the first to die on Persian soil for the Cause of God; they killed him in Ṭihrán; he greeted his executioner like a well-loved friend, and his last words were, 'I discarded the hopes and the beliefs of men from the moment I recognized Thee, Thou who art my Hope and my Belief!'[9]

The remaining prisoners were later massacred, and it is said that no fragments were left of their bodies to bury.

But still the heirs were not content. They accused Ṭáhirih. They had her shut up in her father's house and made ready to take her life; however, her hour was not yet come. It was then that a beggar-woman stood at the door and whined for bread; but she was no beggar-woman—she brought word that one sent by Bahá'u'lláh, was waiting with three horses near the Qazvín gate. Ṭáhirih went away with the woman, and by daybreak she had ridden to Ṭihrán, to the house of Bahá'u'lláh. All night long, they searched Qazvín for her, but she had vanished.

The scene shifts to the gardens of Badasht. Mud walls enclosing the jade orchards, a stream spread over the desert, and beyond, the sharp mountains cutting into the sky. The Báb was in His prison at Chihríq—'The Grievous Mountain.' He had two short years to live.

And now Bahá'u'lláh came to Badasht, with eighty-one leading

Bábís as His companions. His destiny was still unguessed. He, the Promised One of the Báb—of Muḥammad, of Christ, of Zoroaster, and beyond Them of prophet after prophet down into the centuries—was still unknown. How could they tell, at Badasht, that His name would soon be loved around the world? How could they hear it called upon, in cities across the earth; strange, unheard of places: San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Adelaide? How could they see the unguessed men and women that would arise to serve that name? But Ṭáhirih saw. 'Behold,' she wrote, 'the souls of His lovers dancing mothlike, in the light that has flashed from His face!'[10]

It was in this village of Badasht that the old laws were broken. Up to these days, the Bábís had thought that their Master was come to enforce Islám; but here one by one they saw the old laws go. And their confusion mounted, and their trouble, and some held to the old ways and could not go forward into the new.

Then one day, as they sat with Bahá'u'lláh in the garden, an unbearable thing came to pass. Ṭáhirih suddenly appeared before them, and she stood in their presence with her face unveiled. Ṭáhirih so holy; Ṭáhirih, whose very shadow a man would turn his eyes from; Ṭáhirih, the most venerated woman of her time, had stripped the veil from her face, and stood before them like a dancing girl ready for their pleasure. They saw her flashing skin, and the eyebrows joined together, like two swords, over the blazing eyes. And they could not look. Some hid their faces in their hands, some threw their garments over their heads. One cut his throat and fled shrieking and covered with blood.

Then she spoke out in a loud voice to those who were left, and they say her speech came like the words of the Qur'án. 'This day,' she said, 'this day is the day on which the fetters of the past are burst asunder—I am the Word which the Qá'im is to utter, the Word which shall put to flight the chiefs and nobles of the earth!' And she told them of the old order yielding to the new, and ended with a prophetic verse from the Holy Book: 'Verily, amid gardens and rivers shall the pious dwell in the seat of truth, in the presence of the potent King.'[11]

Ṭáhirih was born in the same year as Bahá'u'lláh, and she was thirty-six when they took her life. European scholars have known her for a long time, under one of her names, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, which means 'Solace of the Eyes.' The Persians sing her poems, which are

still waiting for a translator. Women in many countries are hearing of her, getting courage from her. Men have paid tribute to her. Gobineau says, after dwelling on her beauty, '(but) the mind and the character of this young woman were much more remarkable.'[12] And Sir Francis Younghusband: '… she gave up wealth, child, name and position for her Master's service … And her verses were among the most stirring in the Persian language.'[13] And T. K. Cheyne, '… one is chiefly struck by her fiery enthusiasm and by her absolute unworldliness. This world was, in fact, to her, as it was … to Kuddus, a mere handful of dust.'[14]

We see her now at a wedding in the Mayor's house in Ṭihrán. Her curls are short around her forehead, and she wears a flowered kerchief reaching cape-wise to her shoulders and pinned under her chin. The tight-waisted dress flows to the ground; it is handwoven, trimmed with brocade and figured with the tree-of-life design. Her little slippers curl up at the toes. A soft, perfumed crowd of women pushes and rustles around her. They have left their tables, with the pyramids of sweets in silver dishes. They have forgotten the dancers, hired to stamp and jerk and snap their fingers for the wedding feast. The guests are listening to Ṭáhirih, she who is a prisoner here in the Mayor's house. She is telling them of the new Faith, of the new way of living it will bring, and they forget the dancers and the sweets.

This Mayor, Mahmúd Khán, whose house was Ṭáhirih's prison, came to a strange end. Gobineau tells us that he was kind to Ṭáhirih and tried to give her hope, during those days when she waited in his house for the sentence of death. He adds that she did not need hope. That whenever Mahmúd Khán would speak of her imprisonment, she would interrupt, and tell him of her Faith; of the true and the false; of what was real, and what was illusion. Then one morning, Mahmúd Khán brought her good news; a message from the Prime Minister; she had only to deny the Báb, and although they would not believe her, they would let her go.

'Do not hope,' she answered, 'that I would deny my Faith … for so feeble a reason as to keep this inconstant, worthless form a few days longer… You, Mahmoud-Khan, listen now to what I am saying… The master you serve will not repay your zeal; on the contrary, you shall perish, cruelly, at his command. Try, before your death, to raise your soul up to knowledge of the Truth.'[15] He

went from the room, not believing. But her words were fulfilled in 1861, during the famine, when the people of Ṭihrán rioted for bread.

Here is an eye-witness account of the bread riots of those days; and of the death of Mahmúd Khán: 'The distress in Tehran was now culminating, and, the roads being almost impassable, supplies of corn could not reach the city … As soon as a European showed himself in the streets he was surrounded by famishing women, supplicating assistance … on the 1st of March … the chief Persian secretary came in, pale and trembling, and said there was an émeute, and that the Kalántar, or mayor of the city, had just been put to death, and that they were dragging his body stark naked through the bazars. Presently we heard a great tumult, and on going to the windows saw the streets filled with thousands of people, in a very excited state, surrounding the corpse, which was being dragged to the place of execution, where it was hung up by the heels, naked, for three days.

'On inquiry we learned that on the 28th of February, the Shah, on coming in from hunting, was surrounded by a mob of several thousand women, yelling for bread, who gutted the bakers' shops of their contents, under the very eyes of the king … Next day, the 1st of March … the Shah had ascended the tower, from which Hajji Baba's Zainab was thrown, and was watching the rioters with a telescope. The Kalántar … splendidly dressed, with a long retinue of servants, went up the tower and stood by the Shah, who reproached him for suffering such a tumult to have arisen. On this the Kalántar declared he would soon put down the riot, and going amongst the women with his servants, he himself struck several of them furiously with a large stick … On the women vociferously calling for justice, and showing their wounds, the Shah summoned the Kalántar, and said, "If thou art thus cruel to my subjects before my eyes, what must be thy secret misdeeds!" Then turning to his attendants, the king said,—"Bastinado him, and cut off his beard." And again, while this sentence was being executed, the Shah uttered that terrible word, *Tanáb!* "Rope! Strangle him!"'[16]

One night Ṭáhirih called the Kalántar's wife into her room. She was wearing a dress of shining white silk; her hair gleamed, her cheeks were delicately whitened. She had put on perfume and the room was fragrant with it.

‘I am preparing to meet my Beloved,’ she said. ‘… the hour when I shall be arrested and condemned to suffer martyrdom is fast approaching.’[17]

After that, she paced in her locked room, and chanted prayers. The Kalántar’s wife stood at the door, and listened to the voice rising and falling, and wept. ‘Lord, Lord,’ she cried, ‘turn from her … the cup which her lips desire to drink.’ We cannot force the locked door and enter. We can only guess what those last hours were. Not a time of distributing property, of saying good-bye to friends, but rather of communion with the Lord of all peoples, the One alone Beloved of all men. And His chosen ones, His saints and His Messengers, They all were there; They are present at such hours; she was already with Them, beyond the flesh.

She was waiting, veiled and ready, when they came to take her. ‘Remember me,’ she said as she went, ‘and rejoice in my gladness.’ She mounted a horse they had brought and rode away through the Persian night. The starlight was heavy on the trees, and nightingales rustled. Camel-bells tinkled from somewhere. The horses’ hooves thudded in the dust of the road.

And then bursts of laughter from the drunken officers in the garden. Candles shone on their heavy faces, on the disordered banquet-cloth, the wine spilling over. When Ṭáhirih stood near them, their chief hardly raised his head. ‘Leave us!’ he shouted. ‘Strangle her!’ And he went back to his wine.

She had brought a silk handkerchief with her; she had saved it for this from long ago. Now she gave it to them. They twisted it round her throat, and wrenched it till the blood spurted. They waited till her body was quiet, then they took it up and laid it in an unfinished well in the garden. They covered it over and went away, their eyes on the earth, afraid to look at each other.

Many seasons have passed over Ṭihrán since that hour. In winter the mountains to the north have blazed with their snows, shaken like a million mirrors in the sun. And springs came on, with pear blossoms crowding the gardens, and blue swallows flashing. Summertimes, the city lay under a dustcloud, and people went up to the moist rocks, the green clefts in the hills. And autumns, when the boughs were stripped, the dizzy space of plains and sky circled the town again. Much time has passed, almost a hundred years since that night.

But today there are a thousand voices where there was one voice then. Words in many tongues, books in many scripts, and temples rising. The love she died for caught and spread, till there are a thousand hearts offered now, for one heart then. She is not silent, there in the earth. Her lips are dust, but they speak.

The Poet Laureate

NABÍL WAS A SHEPHERD. HE WAS born in the village of Zarand, July 29, 1831. Since his family could not supply him with teachers and books, he memorized verses from the Qur'án and chanted them, walking after his flocks. He liked to be alone in the night, and look at the stars. Off by himself in the desolate countryside, he turned his face toward Mecca and prayed for guidance.

When his father took him to Qum he listened to the sermons of the great mujtahids. He disliked these men. He thought they were hypocrites. He longed for belief, but he could not have the teachers and books he needed to prove things for himself.

One day in the village mosque he overheard, quite by accident, a conversation between two men.

'The Siyyid-i-Báb is on His way to Ṭihrán,' said one.

The other did not understand. The first explained: a Man called the Báb had declared a mission, had won over disciples and done great deeds, been arrested, been condemned to death in Iṣfáhán, and was now on His way under guard to the capital.

The shepherd boy's life was decided from that moment. It was the 12th day of the New Year's festival, 1847. All the wanderings, the suffering, the tests, the dangers, the missions, the collecting of the history, the setting it forth, and then that last anguish which was too much to bear, so that he could not live in the world any more—all those events to come were folded up in that hour.

He went home. He could not eat or sleep. His father wondered what was wrong. The boy said nothing, because he was afraid his father would keep him from this new thing that had come into his

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life—take it away somehow. He made friends with a newcomer to the village and since he had to speak, he confided in the friend. To his great joy, this man was himself a convert to the Báb.

'My cousin saw Him at Iṣfáhán,' the man said. 'It was at the High Priest's. My cousin heard Him revealing a commentary on the Qur'án.'

This new friend had set out on foot, hurrying after the Báb, Who was then a captive, riding under escort to Ṭihrán. Along the way he met a believer stationed by the Báb, with a message for any friends who might be following; the message was, to go their way and serve the Cause, until some day His followers might worship their God in freedom.

After this, Nabíl was more at peace. With his new friend, he read a work of the Báb. Nabíl had been studying the Qur'án with a man who he began to see could not teach him; he wanted to learn more about the Cause and his friend advised him to visit Qum, where there would come a teacher, Siyyid Ismá'íl. Nabíl induced his father to send him to Qum ostensibly to improve his knowledge of Arabic; he was careful not to give his real reason for leaving, because the Muslim leaders in the village would have kept him from going.

The family visited him while he was at Qum—that is, his mother, sister and brother, and on this visit he taught both mother and sister of the Faith. Then at last Siyyid Ismá'íl arrived; Nabíl questioned him closely and was completely won over. The Siyyid talked to Nabíl at those faraway meetings in Qum, much as Bahá'í teachers do now; except that Bahá'ís of today know more of the story than was then dreamed of: the great Beings who were to come, were still, except for the First, undisclosed; Nabíl's own book was then not imagined; most of the events he describes had not yet taken place.

Siyyid Ismá'íl told Nabíl about the continuity of Divine Revelation, that it was never interrupted, but flowed on forever, from Prophet to Prophet—all of whom were fundamentally one, and closely bound up with the mission of the Báb. He also told Nabíl about Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Káẓim, forerunners of the Báb; the youth, who was later to spread their fame around the world, had never heard of them before. Then Nabíl asked what he should do for the Cause. The answer was to go to Mázindarán, to the Fort

in the forest, and join the believers who were starving and dying there, hemmed in by an army. First, he was to await a summons from Siyyid Ismá'íl, himself on his way to the Fort, but destined elsewhere. It was this man who, in later years, would sweep the approaches to Bahá'u'lláh's house in Baghdád with his own turban, and who at last, on the river bank, gave up his life as a sacrifice. If Nabíl had accompanied him to the Fort, *The Dawn-Breakers* would probably never have been written.

The message did not come, and Nabíl, impatient, went on to Ṭihrán. It was 1848 or soon after. The momentous Year 60 was four years past.

At last he received his summons, and was about to leave when news came that the defenders of the Fort had been tricked into surrender and butchered, and the Fort levelled with the ground. There was no more Shaykh Ṭabarsí—except that it will always be with us, living in memory; our stronghold, and posterity's after us, wherever we and they may be. Only the material pattern was annulled; for who can say that the Fort itself was battered down, or that its defenders lost the battle, or that they died?

Siyyid Ismá'íl sent Nabíl back to Zarand. He brought his brother into the Faith. He pled with his father, and got permission to go back to Ṭihrán, where he had a cell in the same madrisih, (school attached to a mosque), as 'Abdu'l-Karím. From the beginning, he had wanted to meet this man, because of 'Abdu'l-Karím's vision of the white dream-bird that had prophesied the advent of the Báb. Placed in his charge by Siyyid Ismá'íl, Nabíl became so attached to him that thirty-eight years later, he recalls in the Narrative the love of 'Abdu'l-Karím, whom Bahá'u'lláh also called Mírzá Aḥmad, and who worked all day as a public scribe, and spent his nights copying out the writings of the Báb, which he then gave away as gifts.

Several times Nabíl carried such copies to a young woman whose husband had left her. She had a baby named Raḥmán, after one of the Names of God; I do not know what became of the child, or whether he lived to grow up, but time has preserved his memory; because the father had left both mother and child to go to the defence of Ṭabarsí.

This is the man who appears suddenly in history, rising above the wall of the Fort. It was in the days when the besieged were

boiling the grass and eating it; when they had made a flour from grinding up bones; when they ate saddle leather and the scabbards of their swords: when they had dug up their leader's horse, dead of its battle wounds, and shared it together. The man on the wall embodies all this. His sword was strapped on over his long white garment; around his head, he had a white band, and the Muslim who had come with a safe-conduct to take him home was frightened of his face: it was as flaming and unyielding as his sword. The Muslim tried to move this man: 'Come back to your child,' he said; 'your little Raḥmán, who longs to see you.' 'Tell him,' said the man on the wall, 'that the love of the true Raḥmán has filled my heart; it has left no place for any love but His.' When the Muslim saw that nothing could take this man from his post, he wept. 'May God assist you,' he said. 'He has indeed assisted me,' said the man on the wall. 'How else could I have come to this exalted stronghold?' And then he vanished.[1]

The young Nabíl learned that Ṭáhirih had been brought to Ṭihrán and imprisoned in the mayor's house. Now he was in the same city with Bahá'u'lláh, with the Master Who was then a Child of six, with Navváb, with the future Most Exalted Leaf, and with Ṭáhirih.

Nabíl had been suffering from an eye disease; the Master's mother, Navváb, healed it, preparing an ointment which she sent him in care of 'Abdu'l-Karím. One day the latter took him to the house of Bahá'u'lláh, and the first one they met there was 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He stood at His Father's door, and smiled at Nabíl, who was led past that room, quite unaware of its Occupant's station, or his own future relationship to Him. He was presented to Mírzá Yaḥyá; seeing and listening to Yaḥyá, Nabíl was astonished at the divergence between the man and the exalted position claimed for him.

Another time they asked him to take 'Abdu'l-Bahá to school, as the servant had not yet returned from market. The Child was very beautiful; He came out of His Father's room, dressed for the street in a lambskin cap and an overcoat, and walked down the steps. Nabíl reached down to pick Him up. Instead, He took Nabíl's hand and said, 'We shall walk.' They went out of the gate, hand in hand, chatting together, the young man and the Child.

Nabíl also met the Báb's uncle, who had been a second father to Him, and heard him say that he longed to die for the Faith—that

he would not leave Ṭihrán, no matter what the danger, but would go to martyrdom as a guest to a banquet. It was not long after this that the leading merchants of Ṭihrán begged this man to recant his faith, and offered to pay his ransom. He replied that whatever he knew of Moses and Jesus and Muḥammad, and all the Prophets of the past, he had seen in the Báb; and that he therefore craved to be the first to die for his well-loved Kinsman.

This man became the first of the Seven Martyrs of Ṭihrán. As he went to his death he called out and reminded the populace that they had longed for a thousand years to see the Qá'im, and that now He was come they had imprisoned Him on a mountain in Ádhirbáyján and were killing His people. Then he prayed for their forgiveness and the last thing he said was a verse from Rúmí: 'Cut off my head that Love may give me a head'—and then the lips closed and were silent.

Our moderns, and particularly Americans, do not care for martyrs. This is because they do not know what a martyr is. To them, a martyr is an individual who could be as happy as the next man, but who prefers to suffer, probably as a self-inflicted punishment for uninteresting sins, and to impose a feeling of guilt on his friends because he suffers. An individual, passively aggressive, who suffers for spite, because he chooses to.

This is a false conception. There are undoubtedly thousands of unhappy persons who make martyrs of themselves as a subtle means of self-chastisement and aggression. But the Dawn-Breakers were not like this. They were normal people, going about their business, until the Báb came. Great numbers of them were successful, leaders in their communities; their American equivalent would be college presidents, popular ministers of the Gospel, substantial men of affairs. They died because, after what they had seen in the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, nothing else in the world could hold their attention. They found what is most desirable, and took it. They wore their lives carelessly after that, and hardly knew whether it was their headgear or their heads that fell. The Master once said to a pilgrim that a martyr in relation to this world is like a man running away from a thief, who strips off his coat and flings it to him and runs on.

The Arabic and Persian word ‘shahíd’ means the same as the English ‘martyr’: it means ‘witness.’ We have forgotten the meaning of our word. The martyr has witnessed; his death is a proof of what he has seen. He is not a wretched, whimpering creature, he is a lover going to his Beloved. The martyr always appears in the early days of a Faith; he is not the dregs of humanity, he is the wine.

One day Nabíl came back to his room and found a package and a letter. The letter was from ‘Abdu’l-Karím; it said that both he and Nabíl and others had been denounced as Bábís, that the package contained all the sacred writings in his possession, that if Nabíl ever got to his room alive he should deliver the package to a certain caravanserai and then, if he could, make his way through the city, now in tumult, and come to the mosque where ‘Abdu’l-Karim had taken sanctuary. Meanwhile Bahá’u’lláh, ever watchful, had sent word to the mosque that since the authorities were about to violate the sanctuary of the building and take the Bábís out, ‘Abdu’l-Karím should leave in disguise for Qum, and Nabíl should return to Zarand.

That year Nabíl kept the Naw-Rúz—New Day—with his family. It was the New Year’s Day that coincided with the day the Báb had declared His mission, six years before. The Báb in His prison wrote of this Naw-Rúz that it was the last He would see on earth. The young Nabíl could not be happy, or enjoy the thirteen days of feasting, the new clothes, the thin gold coins, the fruits, candies and saffron rice dishes that go with Naw-Rúz. His heart was with his friends, back in Ṭihrán. When word finally came from them, his suspense changed to horror.

Fourteen of them had been imprisoned in the mayor’s house—all this time Ṭáhirih was a captive on the upper floor—and beaten and tortured for information. None of them spoke out. One of them, Muḥammad-Ḥusayn, would not utter even a syllable. His torturers questioned the man who had converted him to the Faith:

‘Is he dumb?’

‘He is mute, but not dumb,’ was the answer; ‘he is fluent of speech.’

And indeed, he was eloquent the day they killed him—running

forward and pleading so to die before the rest that he, the seventh of the Seven Martyrs of Ṭihrán, was beheaded at the same moment with the fifth and sixth.

For three days, these seven had lain in the streets unburied. Thousands of devout Muslims during these days circled around their bodies, kicked them, spit on the dead faces, cursed them, stoned them, threw refuse on them, mutilated them in shameful ways. No one protested. At last what was left was gathered up and buried in one grave, out by the moat.

After this, Nabíl left home, trying to find ‘Abdu’l-Karím. He went to Qum, having told his parents he was going to visit the shrine there. Then he went to Káshán, because he heard of a man there who would know of ‘Abdu’l-Karím’s whereabouts. This man took him to another, and finally he was directed to Hamadán, where still another guide sent him to Kirmánsháh, and at last he found his friend, collecting and transcribing the sacred writings of the Báb, as directed by Bahá’u’lláh.

‘Abdu’l-Karím had taught the Faith to a prince-governor, Ildirím Mírzá, who was stationed in the mountains with an army. Now he wished to send the prince one of the Báb’s writings, the ‘Seven Proofs’. Nabíl was elated to be chosen as the bearer of this gift. With a Kurdish guide, he went through forests and over mountains for six days and nights to the camp, delivered the trust and returned with a letter. He mentions this journey quite casually, yet judging by contemporary accounts of travels through Persia, it must have been dangerous and full of hardships. He was young and willing and tough, used to sleeping on bare ground or a bare floor, and his life was always in peril anyhow.

When he reached Kirmánsháh, Bahá’u’lláh had arrived there; with ‘Abdu’l-Karím, Nabíl was taken into His presence; they found Him reading the Qur’án, since it was the month of the Ramadán fast. Of the prince’s apparently friendly letter, Bahá’u’lláh remarked that its writer was not sincere; that the prince sought to win over the Bábís, because he believed that they would one day kill the Sháh, and hoped that when that time should come, they would place him, Ildirím Mírzá, on the throne of Persia. Not long afterward this very prince tortured and killed a believer, the great, blind Siyyid of India, come to Persia to find the Perfect Man whose advent his ancestors had foretold.

Bahá'u'lláh then directed Nabíl to conduct Mírzá Yaḥyá from Ṭihrán to a fort near Sháhrúd, and remain there with him. 'Abdu'l-Karím was to stay at the capital; he was to carry with him a box of sweets to be forwarded to Mázindarán, where the Master and His mother were living.

But Mírzá Yaḥyá disobeyed, and forced Nabíl to deliver some letters for him in Qazvín. Then Nabíl's relatives again stepped in—they seem forever to have been interrupting his work for the Faith—and made him return home. Two months later he was back in Ṭihrán again, living with 'Abdu'l-Karím in a caravanserai outside the city gates. All winter they were there, the older man occupied in transcribing the writings of the Báb.

By Nabíl's hand, 'Abdu'l-Karím then sent a copy of the 'Seven Proofs' to an official, a siyyid; soon afterward this man denounced the Book at a gathering where the brother of Bahá'u'lláh was present. He said the teachings were 'highly dangerous'. From his description of the youth who had brought the Book, Áqáy-i-Kalím knew at once that he meant Nabíl. Immediately, he warned Nabíl to leave for Zarand, and 'Abdu'l-Karím for Qum; before they left, Nabíl was able to retrieve the Book from the siyyid, an achievement that must have required audacity and tact. The two friends now set out to the South, and when they reached the shrine of Sháh 'Abdu'l-'Aẓím, they parted; they were never to meet again in this life.

The Báb had been martyred in Tabríz. The Prime Minister who had caused His death had himself been killed by the Sháh, his veins opened in a public bath. Bahá'u'lláh had left Ṭihrán for Karbilá and had returned. Then two believers, ignorant, confused, in despair at all the blood they had seen, stood waiting one morning along the Sháh's line of march. When he rode past, they checked his horse and shot him. The pearl tassel around the horse's neck was severed; the Sháh, slightly wounded in the arm and side, was carried into a garden; for an hour Persia was in chaos: trumpets, drums, fifes, called up troops; officers shouted commands; couriers galloped here and there; nobles crowded into the garden.

After that rivers of blood flowed in Persia. Two irresponsible youths had attempted a crime; therefore, every real or imagined

follower of the Báb in Persia must be rooted out. The clergy saw their chance, and the Sháh's mother was insatiable of revenge: life after life was cut down, in exchange for her son's slight wound, and still it was not enough and still she wanted more. Of the great massacre at Ṭihrán, Renan was to write that it was a day perhaps without parallel in the history of the world. Clergy, nobles, high officials, killed the believers with their own hands.

Then Persia trembled, and for those who loved the Báb there was death, dungeons, the whip, the sword, the candles burning in jagged wounds, the red-hot screws, the cannon's mouth. One of the two youths who attacked the Sháh was murdered on the spot; they tore his body in two halves, and suspended them at the city gates. The other, with a third accomplice, was obscenely tortured, and at last died. It was then that Ṭáhirih was killed, and Ḥájí Sulaymán Khán, and the amanuensis of the Báb, and a thousand others. Bahá'u'lláh's palace in Ṭihrán was despoiled; the lovely house at Tákur was stripped and ruined, the village itself sacked and burned, the villagers shot down. Bahá'u'lláh was chained four months underground in the dark, criminals beside Him, on the earth filth and vermin. And still the mother of the Sháh was not appeased, because the prize life, the One she wanted to destroy, the One for whom all the rest were only substitutes—still lived; and at last, preserved from death, He was taken from the dungeon, exonerated from all blame, and banished forever.

Nabíl hastened after Him. When he reached Baghdád, he found that Bahá'u'lláh had gone away—for this was the period that He spent alone in the mountains of Kurdistán. The Faith seemed quenched. Mírzá Yaḥyá, nominee of the Báb, cowered behind locked doors. Nabíl left for Karbilá and lived there. Bahá'u'lláh returned, the friends revived, Nabíl hurried to Him and wrote odes for Him, so that later an Englishman, writing of Nabíl, was to describe him as the poet laureate of Bahá'u'lláh.

Afterward Nabíl went to Persia and was severely tested by association with Siyyid Muḥammad, but he triumphed and returned to Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád, and was sent on a mission to Kirmánsháh and again returned. When the Manifestation was exiled to Constantinople, Nabíl put on the dress of a dervish and followed

on foot and caught up with the exiles. From Constantinople he was directed to return to Persia, teach the Cause and inform the Friends of what had taken place. His mission fulfilled, he went to Adrianople where the public declaration of Bahá'u'lláh was made. He taught widely and fervently all this time. Then Bahá'u'lláh was exiled again, and Nabíl followed Him to the Most Great Prison; he came through the 'Akká gate in disguise, dressed as a man of Bukhárá, but the Covenant-breakers, always on the alert, found him out and betrayed him to the authorities and they banished him. Heart broken, he went to Ṣafad; then he went over to Mount Carmel and lived alone in a cave, weeping and praying. At last the doors of the prison were opened and Nabíl hurried to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh and spent his time composing poems for his Beloved. Here are lines from one of his odes, especially praised by the Master:

Though the Night of Parting endless seem as Thy night-black hair,
Bahá, Bahá,
Yet we meet at last, and the gloom is past in Thy lightning's glare,
Bahá, Bahá!
To my heart from Thee was a signal shown that I to all men should make known
That they, as the ball to the goal doth fly, should to Thee repair,
Bahá, Bahá!
At this my call from the quarters four men's hearts and souls to Thy quarters pour:
What, forsooth, could attract them more than that region fair,
Bahá, Bahá?
The World hath attained to Heaven's worth, and a Paradise is the face of earth,
Since at length thereon a breeze hath blown from Thy nature rare,
Bahá, Bahá!
Bountiful art Thou, as all men know: at a glance two Worlds Thou would'st e'en bestow
On the suppliant hands of Thy direst foe, if he makes his prayer,
Bahá, Bahá![2]

Nabíl wrote *The Dawn-Breakers* for Bahá'u'lláh. He started the chronicle in 1888 and finished it in about a year and a half. Mírzá

Músá helped him with it; some parts of the manuscript were reviewed by Bahá'u'lláh, and some by the Master.

He lived in 'Akká then, and when he had brought his narrative down to the point where the story of the Seven Martyrs was ended, he submitted the finished portions to Bahá'u'lláh, Who sent for him on December 11, 1888, a date Nabíl records as one he will never forget. On that occasion, his Lord gave him an account of various historical episodes, including the gathering at Badasht.

Nabíl was very exact, always citing references, cautious in his appraisals, frank as to the degree of his information, hunting for eye-witnesses and survivors, eagerly questioning: 'Many, I confess, are the gaps in this narrative, for which I beg the indulgence of my readers. It is my earnest hope that these gaps may be filled by those who will, after me, arise to compile an exhaustive and befitting account of these stirring events, the significance of which we can as yet but dimly discern.'[3] He was not omniscient, rhetorical, boastful, as contemporary Eastern historians were; and he offers precise detail rather than the rhyming generalizations so often preferred by them.

It is amazing, the rapidity of his accomplishment, and the care; and too, the variety of his work—it takes a copious writing vocabulary to range from military campaigns to poetical expression; and then the skilful timing and pacing, the deploying of events, the massing of facts.

Especially, we notice the feeling and life in the work; authentic everywhere, he is particularly sensitive when recording tenderness and love, which he understood so well that in the end he could not live with the knowledge of it, could not contain it. There is, for instance, that passage where he explains the bonds between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and shows how they matched agony for agony; then he says: 'Such love no eye has ever beheld, nor has mortal heart conceived such mutual devotion. If the branches of every tree were turned into pens, and all the seas into ink, and earth and heaven rolled into one parchment, the immensity of that love would still remain unexplored, and the depths of that devotion unfathomed.'[4]

These were not to him only Persian words. His life story shows that he was not like the people who know all the words, none of the meanings. Nabíl must have been acquainted with the Persian story

of the moths, for he typifies it. It seems that the moths held a meeting to learn about the flame; they sent out a messenger to investigate it; he circled around the candle and returned and explained it most eloquently, but they could not understand. They sent another moth and this one flew close to the flame, and when he came back they saw his wings were singed arid they began, dimly, to know. But they were not yet clear in their minds as to the nature of the flame. They sent a third moth to the candle; this one flew straight into the centre of the flame, and he never came back; and then they understood.

How happy he would be now, if he could see his book; the admirable English text, enriched with further sources, photographs, and explanatory data, presenting his story to the West. Never during life could Nabíl have known that in a few short years leading public, university and privately-owned libraries in the faraway American continent would include his work. 'He who is associated with a great Cause becomes great,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá once told a pilgrim.[5] Here is the shepherd of Zarand, on the same shelves with Ṭabarí and Ibn Khaldún and the others who will never die.

And then Bahá'u'lláh fell ill. Once during this sickness, this last of all the sufferings that life inflicted on the Glory of God, Nabíl was allowed to enter the room and be there alone with his Lord. He must have known when, with a lover's keenness of sight and his own natural awareness, he looked on the face of Bahá'u'lláh, that this was the last time. He must have seen, when he came in the doorway and stood there by the bed, what no one in the Household would say, that this fever was not like another, and would not pass and be forgotten. Here was the only thing they had really been afraid of, during forty years of constant peril, and now it had come. There must have been a horror over Bahjí in those days. The plains and mountains, the trees and sky, must have looked fixed and strange, as if jutting out from a dream.

Nabíl was inarticulate when he tried to tell it. 'Methinks,' he wrote, 'the spiritual commotion set up in the world of dust had caused all the worlds of God to tremble …'[6] Trying to explain, he looked from the Event to its effects, and shows us the villagers of 'Akká and other towns, crowding around Bahjí and sobbing and beating their heads. Life arranges that there shall be universal mourning when it is due.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, with His own anguish, and with the fate of the Cause in His hands, and everyone’s burden to carry, was mindful of Nabíl. It must have been to console him that the Master gave him something to do for Bahá’u’lláh; he was chosen to select those passages which constitute the “Tablet of Visitation” now recited in the Most Holy Tomb.

Surely Nabíl went over and over, in his mind, the wrongs that the world had inflicted on Bahá’u’lláh. The utter rejection; the cruelty and mockery and scorn; the spittle and stones; the bastinado, the chaining in the Black Pit, the exile, the poison; the stopping of His lips and of His pen, the calumnies, the humiliations, the prison. He must have felt the wounds and seen the scars again, and seen how there was nothing he could ever do to make up for it or atone for it, or cause it not to have been, or bring even some little joy to his Lord to mean that he was aware of it and that his heart was broken.

And then he must have gone back in his memory to other days: perhaps to the times when, returned from a journey, he was permitted to see Bahá’u’lláh; or the evenings, carefully recorded in the Narrative, when he had come to Him. Or to the long-ago, happy days in Baghdád, when the self-exiled, impoverished believers were so drunk with the new Revelation that the outer world meant nothing any more; palaces looked like spider webs to them, and they held celebrations that kings never dreamt of. The days when Nabíl and two others lived in a room with no furniture. He must, many a time, have seen Bahá’u’lláh entering that room again, and heard Him saying again,

‘Its emptiness pleases Me … it is preferable to many a spacious palace, inasmuch as the beloved of God are occupied in it with the remembrance of the Incomparable Friend …’[7] He must have remembered how Bahá’u’lláh Himself, in those days, had no change of linen, so that the one shirt He owned would he washed, dried and worn again.

He must have recalled, and the joy of it must have mocked him now, how ‘many a night no less than ten persons subsisted on no more than a pennyworth of dates. No one knew to whom actually belonged the shoes, the cloaks, or the robes that were to be found in their houses. Whoever went to the bazaar could claim that the shoes upon his feet were his own, and each one who entered the

presence of Bahá'u'lláh could affirm that the cloak and robe he then wore belonged to him. Their own names they had forgotten, their hearts were emptied of aught else except adoration for their Beloved … O, for the joy of those days, and the gladness and wonder of those hours!'[8]

Never before had he been lost; his Lord had been there always, waiting for him. Now there was the unanswering grave. Always before, he had known he would come back to Him somehow; during all those separations he had patiently waited—'Though the night of parting endless seem as Thy night-black hair, Bahá, Bahá!'

It is not for us to take our own life. If Nabíl longed for death, and could have stopped to think, he might have gone away to a savage country and taught the Faith and been killed for it. Anyone who thinks about it can throw himself into some battle and either die or get beyond the need for death, so that it is no longer a matter of any concern and may come when it wishes. It is not for us to interrupt time, impede the general rhythm, disrupt the infinite interrelated events of the planet, open the way for others to follow us into illicit death; or to leave our bodies as a reproach, an accusation against our fellows and an extra burden which they will carry around with them as long as they live.

But look at his face, flaming and longing; he could not weigh or calculate. This time it was not something to write in a history, it was not an extra syllable in a verse, it was his life. He only knew that he must hurry into the sea and find Bahá'u'lláh. When he was sure of this he wrote out the date of his death in a single Arabic word. The number-value of the letters totalled the year 1310. The word was: 'Drowned.'[9]

How it was, there, when he came to meet his Beloved, I do not know. Whether the sea lay ivory and shell-coloured then, as it is twilights and dawns, with the sunset wind or the dawn wind blowing, and the harp in the pines; or whether the soft night waited for him. However it was, we of the future who read his book and know and love him were there. It was a moment that time will always keep, when he came to his Lord.

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR ON THE BASIS OF CONVERSATIONS WITH HER FATHER, ALI-KULI KHAN

AFTERNOONS, HE AND I WALKED in the old cemetery in up-town New York. We walked up and down under the trees, with the gravestones around us. I would ask him about life after death, and he would not answer. One day I burst out:

'The Master told me that I would learn things from being with you, and now I am not learning … I ask you again: In this world we are known by our physical forms; how will we be known in the next? The Master told me you would teach me.'

He said: 'Since you force me, I must answer. But you will not like what I shall say.'

'Why not?'

'Because the answer is this, that you would not understand how life after death will be.'

I said, 'But I understand Schopenhauer, and Kant. I understand the Greeks. Why do you say I would not understand?'

He answered: 'The proof that you would not understand is this: that you ask.'

Then he told me that on every plane of existence, one needs the use of a language to describe that plane. On earth, he said, there is no language that will tell of the soul's condition on a higher plane. Then he tried to describe immortality for me, in various ways. One example he used was maturity: there is no language, he said, by which you can describe the conditions of maturity to a child. The

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child must evolve into maturity before he can understand it.

'How can we evolve into the understanding of immortality?' I asked.

'Through sustained devotion to the Cause,' he said. 'One gradually becomes aware. You are serving; you are on the way. I pray Bahá'u'lláh to assist you to understand that station. But it is not to be grasped through study. A man's knowledge of that condition is expressed through his deeds. People feel that he has attained that knowledge. But no words can describe it.'

This journey to America was not by any means the first of Mírzá's travels. Born at Gulpáygán, Persia, in 1844, Abu'l-Faḍl was to spend some thirty years of his life in going from place to place, at the behest of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master, to spread the Faith. Eastern readers will not need to be reminded that he was an outstanding scholar; that he headed one of Ṭihrán's leading Arabic universities, the School of Ḥakím-Háshim, where he also lectured on philosophy; that he was referred to as an authority by professors at the famed Al-Aẓhar in Cairo—the thousand-year-old seat of Muslim learning—who brought him their works to revise; that he was unexcelled in both old and modern Persian, was a master of Arabic, was thoroughly versed in the cultures of both East and West. Following his conversion, the result of eight months of debate in 1876, he became so fearless an exponent of the Teachings that he was several times imprisoned and threatened with death. Before coming to the United States, he had travelled, taught and written in Persia, Turkey, Russia, the Caucasus, Tartary, Syria and Egypt; and he had even taken the Faith as far as the confines of China. He attributed his teaching gift to a prayer revealed for him by Bahá'u'lláh: 'I beg of God to enable Faḍl to teach His truth, and to unveil that which is hidden and treasured in His knowledge, with wisdom and explanation. Verily He is the Mighty, the Bestower!'

If I had never seen 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, I would consider Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl the greatest being I ever laid eyes on. When the Master told me I must leave Him, and go to America, I sobbed. My grief took hold of me in the Persian way, and I beat my head against the wall of the Master's house in 'Akká. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, 'It is a real opportunity for you to be with Mírzá, because of his great learning and his great devotion to the Cause.'

In those days the Master's helpers were few, and the burdens of the Faith increasingly heavy. My service as amanuensis and English translator were urgently needed, and I worked for Him night and day, but because He felt the American mission to be of supreme importance, He gave me up to that work. In the spring of 1901, I reached Paris with Lua and her husband, and found Mírzá there, with May Bolles (later Mrs. May Maxwell), Laura Barney, Juliet Thompson, Charles Mason Remey, little Sigurd Russell and other believers. The Master cabled me to go on to the United States immediately. In New York, I received a second cable from Him, to go on to Chicago. Two months later Mírzá joined me there.

What had happened in Chicago was this: the Syrian, Khayru-'lláh, had been teaching the Cause, adding to the Faith many beliefs of his own, such as reincarnation, dream interpretation, occultism and the like. He had written a book incorporating these beliefs with the Teachings, and had gone to 'Akká and asked permission to publish it. The Master told him to abandon his superstitious beliefs, saying further that he would become a leading teacher if he would give them up and spread the Faith. But he returned to America and published his book. A rift resulted among the believers; Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and I were sent to heal the rift. In Chicago we found Asadu'lláh, who had come to America with the two devoted Bahá'í merchants of Egypt, Ḥájí 'Abdu'l-Karím and Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥasan-i-Khurásání; although still a recognized teacher he was busily interpreting dreams for the believers and hemming them in with superstition. After listening to Mírzá for awhile, some of the believers said he was 'cold and intellectual'. They said Asadu'lláh was 'spiritual', because he interpreted their dreams. They would walk down the hall, past Mírzá's door, and go on to Asadu'lláh. They would come and tell us that they were personally led by the spirit, or had had a vision warning them against a fellow-believer, and so forth. (Mírzá's name for them was jinn-gír—'spook chasers'.)

We saw that all this occult confusion would lead to divisions among the friends, especially as many of them were not yet well grounded in the Cause. We talked the matter over and decided on the following procedure: when anyone came to us, saying he was guided by the spirit to do thus and so, we would answer, 'The Universal Spirit is manifested today in Bahá'u'lláh. If you have

visions or experiences urging you to some action, weigh this action with the revealed Teachings. If the act conforms with the Teachings, it is true guidance. If not, your experience has been only a dream.'

Mírzá held classes three times a day in Chicago, and in addition we taught once a week at the Masonic Temple. Our house, a headquarters for Eastern Bahá'í teachers, was on West Monroe Street. Some of the firm and devoted believers whom we met there were Thornton Chase, his secretary, Gertrude Buikema, Miss Nash, Dr. Bartlett, Dr. Thatcher, Arthur Agnew, Mr. Leish, Albert Windust, Mrs. Brittingham, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ioas, Greenleaf, the brilliant attorney, and his young wife, Elizabeth. At the Master's written direction, Mr. Peter Dealy came up from Fairhope, Alabama, to study scriptural prophecies and other aspects of the Cause with Mírzá.

My first memory of Thornton Chase, America's first Bahá'í, is his taking me to the corner drugstore opposite our house and introducing me to Coca-Cola, which I hated. 'This is medicine,' I told him. 'No,' he said, 'this is a good drink; you will like it later on.' His prophecy has since been realized.

When my father, the early believer 'Abdu'r-Raḥím Khán, was Lord Mayor (*kalántar*) of Ṭihrán, and also head of the police, Mírzá had known him well. Once he told me the following story: when he, Abu'l-Faḍl, became a believer, he was on fire with the Faith. He used to go to a coffee shop in the afternoons, sit there in an alcove which was a few feet above the ground, and publicly teach the Cause. One day an Armenian convert to Protestantism, who was connected with the Protestant Mission at Ṭihrán, entered the coffee shop and said some evil thing of Bahá'u'lláh. Mírzá was so incensed that he jumped down out of his alcove and struck the Armenian. The man appealed to the Board of Foreign Missions, who sent to the Police and demanded that Mírzá be punished. My father, the *kalántar*, said, 'This is the sort of case which I must handle myself.' He then took Mírzá into his own custody; he told him that the offence was serious; that he appreciated the nature of Mírzá's faith, but that the times were dangerous and that in any event a man should control himself. He placed Mírzá in his own office and sent for the Armenian. 'Do you remember,' he said to him, 'how His Majesty closed the Catholic Mission just a little

while ago? Now you know what a high position Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl enjoys among the clerics of Islám. His Majesty might well be angered at any complaints against him, and then he would surely close the Protestant Mission as well, and you would lose your job. Which do you prefer? That I punish Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl or that you keep your job?' The charges were hastily withdrawn.

One day Mírzá called me to him and spoke to me in a very humble way. He said that, being acquainted with my family and background, it was only with the greatest hesitation that he was going to exact a promise from me: that I would cooperate with him in all matters pertaining to the Cause, but that I would never interfere in his private affairs. I said, 'Dear Mírzá, since you know my family, you know well that none of its members would interfere in the private concerns of such a glorious being as yourself.' He answered, 'Anyway, promise.' So I promised, but I did not know what was coming.

In December 1901, we left for Washington where Miss Laura Barney had arranged quarters for Mírzá and myself. Our rooms were on the top floor of a four-storey apartment house. He could not endure noise; in fact, during the three or four years when we spent the fall, winter and spring in Washington, he changed his residence many times, escaping from noise. He had to concentrate on the book he was writing, and dreaded the downstairs, where there might be dogs (he was very fond of cats, however) or other confusion.

His meals were to be provided by the landlady, but as time went on I discovered he was living on practically nothing at all. He brewed, and drank all day long, a delicate Oriental tea; he smoked Egyptian cigarettes (later he gave these up because some of the friends criticized his smoking and he did not wish to be a test to them); once in a while he ate a thin biscuit. This was his nourishment. Naturally, in the unaccustomed cold and the strange surroundings, he grew frailer and frailer. I had to beg him to keep on with his book—the *Bahá'í Proofs*—which the Master had commanded him to write; but it was obvious that he was getting too weak for the task, and meanwhile, since I had promised to keep out of his private affairs, there was nothing I could do.

Mírzá was almost continually in a state of prayer. His mornings, noons and evenings were taken up with devotion. Once I went to

his door and found it locked. I rapped, there was no answer. We forced the door, and found that Mírzá had fainted away as he prayed, and that his jaws were locked together. The reason he prayed with such fervour, and such weeping, was his concept of the greatness of God and his own nothingness; his belief that his very existence, bestowed on him by Divine mercy, was a sin in this Day 'whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord …' I would say to him, 'You, a holy being, weeping like this. If you are a sinner, then what hope is there for the rest of us?' He would answer: 'The day will come when you, too, will know the degree of devotion worthy to serve as a language by which we can praise Bahá'u'lláh.'

Finally, a time came when Mírzá was dying. I went to Mrs. Barney, Laura's mother, for whom Mírzá had great respect. I told her of my promise, explaining that I had not understood why he exacted it; she promptly had a chicken cooked, and brought it to the house on De Sales Street. On arriving, she asked the landlady if Mírzá had been accepting any food. 'No,' was the answer, 'he pays for it but does not eat.' She then went up to Mírzá. 'They tell me downstairs,' she said, 'that you are refusing food. How can you write your important book unless you eat?' From under his eye-brows, Mírzá darted his very small, very keen black eyes at me.

As soon as Mrs. Barney left he began: 'You promised—'

I said, 'The landlady told her.'

Mírzá said, 'You had a hand in it.'

I answered, 'I can't see you die.'

Mírzá said, 'I shall ask you a question: which of two people would know better about a house? The man who has lived in it sixty years, or the one who has just come upon it?'

I answered, 'Yes, the man may have lived in it sixty years, but he has never had any repairs made, and the roof and walls are falling to ruin, and the house is now almost unlivable.'

That is how it was. Mírzá sick from not eating, and unable to adjust to American food and American life. He would not let me serve him in any way. If we went shopping, he would not even let me carry the packages. Finally I wrote to the Master, because the responsibility for his life and work was more than I could bear, and I told of the difficulty of expediting Mírzá's book and described everything just as it was. Then I added that it might be a Persian

attendant, who could prepare food for Mírzá and look after his needs, would solve the problem. When I had come through Port Sa'íd on my way to America, there was a boy around fifteen who worked in Aḥmad Yazdí's store there. His name was Aḥmad-i-Iṣfáhání (later he took the name of Sohrab). This boy had begged me to request the Master to send him to America. I now suggested that he come here to look after Mírzá. The Master sent him here, to serve Mírzá and return with him to the East. However, when Mírzá sailed for home in 1904—with the MacNutts, Mrs. Julia Grundy, and the Woodcocks and their daughter—Aḥmad-i-Iṣfáhání did not accompany him. He remained in the United States until 1912, when the Master Himself took him back to the East, although he seemed loath to go.

Somehow, our work went on. Besides our classes, we would address Bahá'í gatherings in the old Corcoran Building opposite the Treasury Department. Mírzá would stand as he spoke, with me at his side. He was a great, spontaneous speaker; he talked with ardour, his voice varying according to his subject, and sometimes very loud. He knew no English, but had an uncanny way of finding out whether my translation was as he wished, and whether it was clear; he could tell from my gestures, and from the effect on the audience. He would speak perhaps five minutes at a time, before pausing for the translation.

When explaining a difficult point, he would repeat himself, to drive it home. One day a young believer came to him and said, 'You know, dear Mírzá, we are an intelligent people. If you tell us a thing once, we grasp it. But if you keep repeating yourself, the way you did last night, people will surely criticize you, and us.' He thanked her, very humbly. 'It was only to make the matter clear,' he said. 'But I appreciate what you have told me. Now, just one question. What was I repeating, last night?' The young woman thougth for a while; then she said, 'I don't remember.' 'That is why I repeat myself,' said Mírzá.

Mírzá was a master of reasoning—he built a wall around people and trapped them so that they had either to accept his statements or acknowledge their ignorance. All kinds of scholars matched their minds with him here, but I never saw him defeated. He was deeply read in Church history, European theology and metaphysics, works on which he had studied in Arabic at Al-Aẓhar. I remember once

a churchman came to him and violently attacked the Prophet Muḥammad. Mírzá said to him: 'Your leading authorities state that none of the Jewish or Roman historians of the First Century even mention Jesus, and many do not believe in the historicity of Christ. Certain Christians inserted a reference to Christ in the writings of Josephus, but the forgery was exposed. Others buried a tablet in China, which said that Christianity had been brought to that country in the First Century. This, too, was exposed. But as for the Prophet Muḥammad, He not only proclaimed the existence of a historical Christ, but He caused three hundred million people to believe in Him; to accept Him not only as a historical figure but also as the Spirit of God (Rúḥu'lláh). Was not Muḥammad, whom you condemn, a more successful Christian missionary than your own?'

Mírzá never encouraged any talk which might lead to inharmony. Once, a friend came to him and said that another believer was doing harm to the Faith. Mírzá listened carefully. Then he told me to translate his answer word for word:

'Do you believe that Bahá'u'lláh is the promised Lord of Hosts?'

'Yes'.

'Well, if He is that Lord, these are the Hosts. What right have we to speak ill of the Hosts?'

I had a hard time of it, getting Mírzá to write the *Bahá'í Proofs*. It seemed to me that I had to extract every line and every page of it by force. The American friends wonder why it consists of 'Introductions.' This is not only the classic convention of Eastern scholars, but in addition, Mírzá contemplated a greater book. What we have here is nothing compared to the flow of his knowledge. The Master directed Mírzá to write the book and me to translate it, and in spite of failing health and every difficulty he did not leave America until it was finished. He was a careful, pain-. staking stylist, and yet he wrote very rapidly, with no corrections, no crossing out. He would put up one knee, and lean his paper on it in the Persian way, and write with a reed pen.

Mírzá was truly a divine scholar. He told me that he had read the Íqán with 'the eye of intellect' seventeen times through, and it had seemed to him a meaningless string of words. That later, he had read it with 'the eye of faith,' and had found it the key with

which he could unlock the secrets of all the sacred books of past religions. His work, the Fará'id, which deals with these subjects, has not yet been translated into English. The Master, in a tablet to the Washington believers written after Mírzá's death in 1914, says of him, 'His blessed heart was the spring of realities and significances, allaying the thirst of every thirsty one.'[1]

That the work went forward slowly was not always Mírzá's fault. We had a great deal to do—classes—meetings—innumerable visitors to see. Speaking of visitors, whenever they brought flowers and fruit to him, he was violently displeased. He would say: 'Why do they bring these things for me? I am only the slave of the slaves of Bahá'u'lláh!' I would not translate these expressions of his humility, because I knew that our guests would only attribute them to pride. I would thank the givers, and explain to Mírzá why I could not translate what he had said.

On trains and in other public places people would look at Mírzá and he would smile at them, with those keen, deeply set, jet-black eyes. I never knew a man who saw every corner of a thing the way he did. And he was never mistaken. I remember one year I was reading Lavater, the German physiognomist, although I knew that Goethe himself had given the subject up, saying it was not a science. That year I saw an old man at Green Acre who looked something like Emerson; he had the same high forehead and projecting nose, although his jaw was weak. I told Mírzá that according to the principles of Lavater the man was a genius. Mírzá looked at me and smiled. 'He does not even have the intelligence of an average man.' 'How do you know?' 'By my knowledge of physiognomy.' 'Well, judging by *my* knowledge of physiognomy, he has both high intelligence and philosophic grasp.' The next morning, following our class, the man asked a question which at once exposed his remarkably low mental level.

The future must evaluate what Mírzá brought to the Cause in America. I have written these lines only to suggest a little of our life here together; only to set down phases of his journey that hardly anyone else was aware of. The future will appreciate how, when Mírzá returned East, I was overwhelmed by the Master's command to carry on his work in this country.

It is a long time now since he died, and the Master and the believers mourned his going. But I can see him still, as if he were

here before me. A rather tall, spare figure, in a white turban and light-brown robes. Beautiful hands—artistic and sensitive, but at the same time intellectual and executive hands. A high forehead, somewhat high cheek bones, an ascetic look, a faint smell of rose water. And then the small, very black, very keen eyes.

Yes, but really to know his greatness, you had to watch him when he was in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then his knowledge reduced him to nothingness, and you thought of a pebble on the ocean shore.

V

Age of All Truth

The Goal of a Liberated Mind

'"WHAT IS TRUTH," SAID JESTING Pilate, and would not stay for an answer.' Pilate, it would seem, was much given to washing his hands of things. Truth, if it existed at all, was something which other people could take care of—just so long, of course, as it did not interrupt his meals or his business. And so, he would not stay for an answer.

The world has always been full of Pilates—of people who wash their hands of truth. Our present day problems are their legacy. They are those who live along comfortably, safe in their ruts, careful to use as few of their faculties as possible. And when they die, they sleep beneath complacent epitaphs—unless of course they are fashionable, in which case they are reduced to ashes and repose sedately in marble bureau drawers. And alas, they are not remembered. To be remembered, a man must have had a tussle with truth. He must have sat under the Bo tree with Gautama, or gone up to Mount Sinai, or dreamed over the crucibles in Leonardo's laboratory. He must have investigated truth for himself, refused to conform to his surroundings, dared to do his own thinking. 'I think, therefore I am.' It is equally true that if I do not think, I am not. And to think means independently to investigate truth.

Bahá'u'lláh has commanded His followers to do their own thinking, and to 'look into all things with a searching eye.'[1] He says in the

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Words of Wisdom, 'The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancies and imitation …'[2] It is, then, through justice—best beloved of virtues—that we are to know things by our own understanding and see them with our own eyes. But the question arises, how are we to achieve this justice, how are we to recognize the truth once we have started on our search. To this, 'Abdu'l-Bahá answers that there are four standards of judgement, four ways of proving a thing true. The first is sense perception, the second is the intellect, the third is traditional authority, and the fourth is inspiration. When applied individually, these tests are obviously inadequate, for the senses are frequently unreliable, even the greatest intellectuals are often at variance, traditional authority is easily misunderstood, and the 'still small voice' may at times be quite other than divine. But when all four tests are brought to bear and result in a convergence of evidence, we have satisfactorily proved a truth.

Bahá'ís, then, are commanded to seek independently for Reality, and are told how to recognize it. They are forbidden to take anything for granted. Even a child born into a Bahá'í family must begin, so to speak, from the bottom and work up. He cannot be fed truth with his cereal, and must prove to his own satisfaction the reality of what he is taught. But it is obvious that a search started in an atmosphere of faith is more readily successful, because 'faith seeking understanding' will achieve, where unbelief seeking understanding must fall by the wayside.

And now, what is Reality? 'Why, Reality is water,' says Thales. 'Reality is a sphere packed solid,' insists Parmenides. Reality is convergence of evidence,' drones the psychology professor. Some of our moderns deliver beautifully patronizing definitions of Reality, as if they had it at home in a test tube. Others stutter when confronted with the unwelcome question.

The Bahá'í view of Reality presents the only one that is impregnable and withstands the test by the four standards of judgement.

Bahá'u'lláh proclaims that Reality is the Word of God. The significance of this statement is recalled by the opening lines of the Gospel of John: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God, and the Word was God.' This Word is revealed to humanity by a Divine Manifestation—by one of those all-illuminating Beings whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to as 'Suns of Reality'—a Buddha, a Christ, Moses, Muḥammad. Reality, then, constitutes the teachings of the Divine Manifestations,—and Reality in this day consists of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Having found Reality, realities are not far away. The true in art, in science, in every phase of human activity, is that which is in accordance with the Word of God, and that which is like God. Therefore, a study of the Word of God, and a knowledge of God Himself as revealed through His Manifestations, are infallible determinants of Truth. And as learning is nothing more or less than discovering and applying the truth of phenomena, it is absolutely essential—if we wish to be learned—that we should attain to the knowledge of God—that we should investigate Reality. Bahá'u'lláh says 'The source of all learning is the knowledge of God,'[3] and 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that the origin of all learning can be traced to religion.

The failure to seek for Truth results in lasting and increasing peril to the human race. 'The greatest cause of bereavement and disheartening in the world of humanity is ignorance based upon blind imitation … From this cause hatred and animosity arise continually among mankind. Through failure to investigate Reality, the Jews rejected His Holiness Jesus Christ.'[4]

That no one is exempt from the search for Reality is proved by the further words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; after saying that each human being is equipped for the investigation of Reality, He continues, 'each has individual endowment, power and responsibility … Therefore depend upon your own reason and judgement and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation… . Turn to God, supplicate humbly at His Threshold … that God may rend asunder the veils that obscure your vision.'[5] Henceforward no one should expose himself and humanity to the dangers of ignorance.

Originality is one of the thousand refreshing outcomes of the independent investigation of Truth, for the simple reason that if we look at anything, we look at it in a way peculiar to ourself. We have to. We will all see the same Reality, but at different angles. A change from the past, when originality has been so rare as to be a matter of comment, and we have praised people as 'original

thinkers.' And with so many such thinkers in circulation, the impetus to all the graces of civilization is self-evident. Besides which, when each of us has to discover life for himself, each will be as exultant as Columbus when his first redskin glittered through the shrubbery.

This Handful of Dust

ACCORDING TO AN AGED RELIGIOUS official in Constantinople, who wore a lavender velvet skull-cap and had never spared himself wrinkles in toiling after knowledge, Eve was made out of Adam's rib for this reason: that all humankind might be known to have sprung from one father. He felt that had Eve been specially created as was Adam, some amongst men might have gone back to their mother, taken her side, established and maintained a duality. As it was, Eve herself was only a component of Adam, the world had only one parent, and from the beginning the principle of unity was asserted.

College-bred Westerners who profess modernity may be only amused at such a statement. Since Darwin, the Book of Genesis is not often read in non-sectarian colleges, except in Bible courses, where it is treated at arm's length, or on Sunday evenings, if chapel attendance is compulsory. Conditions indicate that the professorial world is in doubt regarding how to proceed in the matter. The situation is almost embarrassing, because 19th century science has proved that the events related in Genesis cannot be read literally, and the professorial world is still so taken up with this discovery that it will not countenance the possibility of spiritual significances in the age-old record. On the other hand, mothers who grew up in a Matthew Arnold tradition desire the Bible for their offspring because of its literary beauty and its cultural value; hence the Bible courses, where the sacred lines are read as gingerly as possible, and their meaning contradicted by the biology across the hall.

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Our professors' attempts at releasing their charges from orthodox faiths are of course sincere; except for the old-school pedagogues, dreaming their lives away in a mid-Victorian afterglow, every instructor feels that he must share with his classes, however implicitly, what he considers to be true; and so he gives to them the doctrines of our present age, an age bitterly disillusioned since the 19th century struck down, in a generation or so, the truths by which humanity had lived two thousand years. So much was then found untrue that human beings, with their characteristic exaggeration, are now inclined to deny everything. One remembers the modern child who not only did not believe in Santa Claus—he did not even believe there was a Lindbergh. At best, the most educated and tolerant of our contemporaries outside of Bahá'í communities consider everything to be relative, shifting; at worst, we see humanity embracing the most fantastic faiths conceivable, and reestablishing the medieval criterion of 'I believe it because it is impossible'—until, with all our modern illumination, we find such things as star-gazing and celery water elevated almost to a principle of life. Society, then, offers countless examples of the educated, who believe nothing, and of the quasi-educated, who believe anything, providing it is not true.

To Bahá'ís, the Book of Genesis embodies profound spiritual realities, and is sacred. We may, then, accept the words of the old wise man of Constantinople, who sat under a shaft of sunlight in his darkened room, and said that all mankind were born from a single father. It is interesting in this connection to remember Darwin's concluding remarks in the *Origin of Species*, to the effect that animals and plants are respectively descended from at most four or five progenitors, and that both are possibly issued from one prototype. Here were two men, examples intellectually of countless others; one deep in the lore of the Torah, a follower of the Book; the other at variance with orthodoxy, interested only in natural phenomena, opposed to a teleological view of the universe (writing, for example, 'I am in an utterly hopeless muddle. I cannot think that the world … is the result of chance; and yet I cannot look at each separate thing as the result of Design'); and yet each coming after years of search to a doctrine of original unity, however differently regarded: the priest rejoicing in the knowledge that human kind are one family; the scientist interested in what he considered

a true explanation of origins, and saying, although he was probably not much concerned with any spiritual implications which others might draw from his work, that his theory and its connotations apparently 'accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator.'

Whatever our attitude toward the human race may be, it is evident that thought must bring us to a belief in the basic oneness of humanity. Such a belief is an indispensable corner stone in any ideal life-structure that we may build; we cannot symmetrically lodge in the divine pattern of the world unless our thought is founded on the knowledge that the human family is one; that at most existing differences are superficial, indicate varying opportunity, varying degrees of adjustment; and that, stirred by a new heavenly force, every race will arise at last to fulfil its promised destiny. For within every race is latent the power to develop toward perfection, and wherever there is man, there is potential reflection of divinity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that 'The greatest bestowal of God to man is the capacity to attain human virtues.'[1] He does not restrict this capacity to white men or yellow men, or to any so-called superior race; he tells us this bestowal is granted to 'man.' We must, then, honour the gift of God to man, and live in the certainty that all human beings are divinely endowed, however various may be the expressions of this endowment.

The understanding of human oneness is thus an all-important article of successful belief, but should it remain merely a philosophical conception, it is of little practical value. The violence of modern race-hatred is not to be quieted by the mere reiteration of an axiom. Our library shelves have been lined for centuries with splendid thoughts, and the dust is thick upon them. It is for this reason that Bahá'u'lláh has made it mandatory for His followers to live the principle of world unity, saying, 'It is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest.'[2] Bahá'í communities include members of every race and colour, and Bahá'ís are forbidden to turn away from any human being; they are bidden, rather, to see the face of God in every face.

This practising of oneness comes often as a shock to those who

are unacquainted with the Bahá'í Cause; such people express a physical aversion even to sitting in the same room with members of some race or races which they are accustomed to disdain; they feel this physical distaste to be in a measure even divinely ordained by the Creator; something on the order of that other physical manifestation, the antipathy to snakes, which many cherish in a spirit of righteousness because of what happened in Eden. As a matter of fact, the dislike of one race for another, far from being an ordained protection to the chosen and justly imposed punishment on the rejected, is the accumulated result of an age-long practice of tyranny; we are averse to those whom we have mistreated, just as we love those to whom we have been kind; the first recall to us our ugly and inharmonious action, while the second reminds us of happiness which came from fulfilment of function; it would seem that service is prerequisite to love. Again, dislike of the unknown is a cause of racial antipathy, and explains why people select some races to accept and others to repel. Moreover, a scandalous tradition grown up around a race and fostered by enemies often prevents the welcome of the victimized. Most important of all, perhaps, as a source of race hatred, is a feeling that members of some other race are unclean; uncleanliness is often the greatest barrier between human beings; the idea of uncleanliness is so closely associated with hate that every language includes in its vocabulary of profanities terms imputing uncleanliness to those detested; and every people feels that other peoples are relatively dirty. The stressing of immaculate cleanliness in the Bahá'í teaching is thus of great importance: an unclean humanity can never be united. It is interesting that when a Westerner learns of the Bahá'í injunctions regarding cleanliness he usually comments on the great benefit to Easterners of this teaching; and in the same way, the Easterner, often a Muḥammadan who washes five times a day, (whatever the water) feels that at last the West is to be clean. In any event, an attempt to adopt the Bahá'í standards of cleanliness is highly spiritualizing, one knows that future peoples will be dazzlingly clean.

'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that 'Man can withstand anything except that which is divinely intended and indicated for the age and its requirements.'[3] Conditions imply that the asserting of human oneness is become indispensable to livable existence, and we may there-

fore confidently believe that a time of perfect human solidarity is upon us. Our love for others may no longer be selective—selective love is indirect hatred. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that 'When reality envelops the soul of man love is possible,'[4] and by reality is intended the Word of God as revealed through the great teachers who appear among men when hearts have faded and minds have crystallized in cruelty. He says, regarding human relations, 'Never become angry with one another … Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God … the imperfect eye beholds imperfections,'[5] and again '… if you have an enemy, consider him not as an enemy. Do not simply be long-suffering, nay, rather, love him … Do not even say that he is your enemy. Do not see any enemies.'[6] This love, this centrifugal power by which hostility will be destroyed is impelling to its service people of every religion and belief. This love is neither a pasty sentimentality nor an hysteria, but an unfaltering practice of waiting on humanity; and humanity is not a vague abstract with a capital 'H,' it is the family, and the man going by in the street, and the chance acquaintance. Such a service is not exercised with any hypocritical hope of reward either in this world or the next—one does not accept pay in exchange for love. The offering it, is considered a privilege, like a tree's privilege of blossoming when the spring comes.

A leading anthropologist recently advocated intermarriage between the white and yellow races, saying that the union would result in a superior type of human being. This statement is encouragingly in advance of popular belief, demonstrates that informed men are approaching a conception of human oneness; and since ideas born in the laboratory are found to influence people at large, and to show them where they have erred before, it is interesting that scientists are unsaying past criteria and substituting principles that are more in harmony with the spirit of a modern age. Again, psychologists find in their study of gifted children that many such cases are products of mixed races. Obviously, were humanity not essentially one, and were certain races inferior *per se*, a cross could not be beneficial, and results would belie the above conclusions. Furthermore, we have recently heard of some distinguished people among the professional class here in the United

States who are beginning to advocate intermarriage of coloured and white races, asserting that in view of the outstanding progress among coloured peoples, the old exclusion policy is no longer workable. Everywhere, apparently, the cause of human oneness is winning adherents, and the 'forts of folly' are battered down.

Oneness, of course, should not be confused with sameness, which is a tedious, artificial thing, entirely alien to a world where no two grains of wheat have ever been alike. The peculiar curse of the times is an effort at standardization; gum is chewed on the Himalayas, and everyone is trying desperately to be like everyone else, or more so. This situation results from the advent of machines, and will doubtless be corrected little by little, as humanity grows accustomed to machines and has them subservient to beauty. A Persian cobbler never dares to make two shoes identical in every respect, because he thinks such an act will kill his wife; he may be harbouring a superstition, but artistically he is quite sound. Individuality is precious and refreshing; the world presents subtle blends of endless variations; there must be orchids and hills, roads and tuberoses, intimacy of sunlight and the mystery of fog. Spiritually, too, every human being has his candle to burn, his spire of blue incense smoke to offer as a gift and a worship in the temple of humanity. Does it matter what colour are the fingers curved in prayer? Or whether the music be a honey-slow spiritual from Louisiana, or the flute-song of a Persian shepherd, watching in a turquoise dawn? The sacred gift of an obedient life is treasured-up for all eternity, and every giver is beloved. In this dawn of a new humanity, no one is rejected. There are no untouchables, no social lepers, no spurned and remnant peoples any more; 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that the love of God haloes all created things.

The oneness of the world of humanity is to be established because it is God's will that 'this handful of dust, the world,' should be one home. No materialistic endeavours, however sincere, can be of any permanent assistance here, because they cannot stir the hearts of men; no ethical practical 'system,' no legions of deft clerks and catalogues of statistics, no cheques and after-dinner speeches, can right the hatred of one man for another. No smiles can cup the blood that centuries have shed. Only a God-inspired

effort, functioning through the knowledge that all humanity is equally beloved, that all are precious in the sight of God and wear the emblems of His beauty, will build the alabaster cities where the races of the future are to live united.

'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us that 'the fundamental teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the oneness of God and unity of mankind',[7] and He says: 'Just as the human spirit of life is the cause of co-ordination among the various parts of the human organism, the Holy Spirit is the controlling cause of the unity and co-ordination of mankind. That is to say, the bond or oneness of humanity cannot be effectively established save through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the world of humanity is a composite body and the Holy Spirit is the animating principle of its life.'[8] Let us, then, be servants of the Holy Spirit, and live hour by hour the knowledge that humanity is one.

The Rise of Women

AFTER 'WOMBAT' IN THE BRITANNICA, we come to 'Women, Diseases of'.

This is the first reference to 'Women'. The idea of women being chronic invalids seems to the Encyclopedia the most pertinent fact about them.

Man, of course, fares very differently. He is not pluralized, but occurs proudly in the singular. His first heading is: 'Man, Evolution of'. He stands for all humanity, and he isn't even sick. The Britannica was written primarily by men. We live in a man's world; that is the matter with it.

No religion prior to the Bahá'í Faith taught sex equality. The Old Testament says to woman, of her husband 'and he shall rule over thee'.[1] Under Mosaic law, it is true that mothers are to be honoured along with fathers, and daughters may inherit—in the absence of sons. But women are of less account than men. They may not even serve as witnesses in civil or criminal cases. They pray to give birth, not to daughters, but to sons.

Marriage according to the Old Testament is polygamous. There is no legal limit in Mosaic law to the number of wives and concubines a man may have. If a man wishes a divorce, he carries out the provisions in Deuteronomy 24:1, as follows: 'When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.'

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Even after the express prohibition of polygamy by Rabbi Gershom B. Judah, 'The Light of the Exile' (960–1028 A.D.), many of the Jewish peoples continued to practise it; the Jews of Spain, for example, were polygamous as late as the 14th century A.D. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, under polygamy, states:

> *In spite of the prohibition against polygamy and of the general acceptance thereof, the Jewish law still retains many provisions which apply only to a state which permits polygamy. The marriage of a married man is legally valid and needs the formality of a bill of divorce for its dissolution, while the marriage of a married woman is void ...*

There is no justification for reading sex equality back into the New Testament. It is not there.

Jesus healed women along with men; He praised a woman's faith and her love, He condemned the scribes 'which devour widows' houses'; He conversed with a woman in the same tones He used to men; He gave such women as do the will of the Father the rank of His mother and sister; He reiterated the Old Testament commandment to honour father and mother; He forgave the woman taken in adultery; and He softened the curse of the Old Testament: 'in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children' with: 'as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world'.[2]

He protected women from the lust of men; and He saved them from being cast aside in divorce, except for adultery: 'And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.' Again: 'And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another she committeth adultery.'[3]

But nowhere in the New Testament do we find any slightest indication as to the sexes being equal. On the contrary, the New Testament declares woman the inferior: '[man] is the image and glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.'[4] 'I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.'[5] 'Let your women keep silence in the

churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak … And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home.'[6] 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.'[7]

Christian practice down to our times has been based on the belief that woman (Eve) is the destroyer of God's image, man; that she is the devil's gateway and a painted hell—see the Church fathers for these and other metaphors; that she is mentally and physically deficient; that marriage is evil, although preferable to licence; that children are born in sin. Chivalry and the worship of Mary, both imports from the East, had little appreciable effect on the status of the average Christian woman.

Anyone who believes that Christianity teaches sex equality has only to study the history of the Woman Suffrage movement. The dates alone tell the story. An early, revered landmark in the evolution of women's rights is Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, inspired by France's 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' and brought out in 1792. On July 19, 1848, the first Women's Rights Convention met at Seneca Falls, New York, at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. However, the famous gathering at Badasht, Khurásán, Persia—which posterity will recognize as an irrevocable break with the past, and in the course of which woman's equality with man was unforgettably proclaimed—antedated this by a few days, or weeks.[8] It was at Badasht that the great Ṭáhirih (Qurratu'l-'Ayn) appeared without her veil, and with solemn triumph, in the heart of a Muslim nation, addressed the stupefied gathering, crying out: 'This day is … the day on which the fetters of the past are burst asunder.'[9]

Freedom for women was so dear to Ṭáhirih that she died for it. She was 'the first woman suffrage martyr'. In August, 1852, she gave up her life, executed for her life's work. In her last moments she said, 'You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women.'[10]

In 1867, in the case of Chorlton v. Ling, it was sought to establish that women were persons and as such entitled to the Parliamentary vote. The Married Women's Property Acts were passed in

Great Britain in 1882 and 1893; prior to this the wife's legal existence was merged with her husband's: 'My wife and I are one, and I am he,' expressed it. (The reader should, however, refer to Mary R. Beard's *Woman as Force in History* for a thorough study of the field; as her title indicates, the author shows that women, far from being at all times a subject sex, have actively shaped history. This thesis is familiar to Bahá'ís; see for example a discourse delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1912.)[11]

In the United States, the 19th Amendment, enacted August 26, 1920, gave American women the right to vote. It reads: 'The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

The New Testament does not teach monogamy nor condemn polygamy. John Milton's brilliant *Treatise on Christian Doctrine* establishes this. He states:

> *In the definition which I have given [of marriage], I have not said, in compliance with the common opinion, of one man with one woman, lest I should by implication charge the holy patriarchs and pillars of our faith, Abraham, and the others who had more than one wife at the same time, with ... adultery; and lest I should be forced to exclude from the sanctuary of God as spurious, the holy offspring which sprang from them, yea, the whole of the sons of Israel, for whom the sanctuary itself was made. For it is said, Deut. xxiii.2. 'a bastard shall not enter into the congregation of Jehovah, even to his tenth generation.' Either therefore polygamy is a true marriage, or all children born in that state are spurious; which would include the whole race of Jacob, the twelve holy Tribes chosen by God.*

Milton denies the 'twain shall be one flesh' verses, so often advanced as meaning monogamy (e.g. Matthew 19:5), any such connotation; he says in part, 'the context refers to the husband and that wife only whom he was seeking to divorce …' He advances Exodus 21:10 as clearly showing the sanction of polygamy: 'If he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish.' And he adds: 'It cannot be supposed that the divine forethought intended to provide for adultery.'

Milton continues:

That bishops and elders should have no more than one wife is explicitly enjoined I Tim. iii.2. and Tit. 1.6. 'he must be the husband of one wife,' ... The command itself, however, is a sufficient proof that polygamy was not forbidden to the rest, and that it was common in the church at that time.[12]

Muḥammad was the first modern feminist. The Qur'án gives women many and specific rights. As learned Muslims and Islamists have not failed to point out, this Book grants spiritual equality to believers of either sex:

Truly the men who resign themselves to God (Muslims), and the women who resign themselves, and the believing men and the believing women, and the devout men and the devout women, and the men of truth, and the women of truth, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the men who give alms and the women who give alms, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the chaste men and the chaste women, and the men and the women who oft remember God: for them hath God prepared forgiveness and a rich recompense.'[13]

In the Qur'án, Adam is as guilty as Eve; Satan seduced them both and in another passage Adam is the one deceived. In women God has placed 'abundant good'. Men are bidden to 'reverence the wombs *that bear you*'.[14]

Women inherit and own property and act as witnesses; they receive alimony and widows also receive a provision. Divorce is discouraged; according to a ḥadíth (oral tradition) it is lawful, but abhorred by God; arbitration is enjoined to forestall divorce: 'And if ye fear a breach between man and wife, then send a judge chosen from his family, and a judge chosen from her family: if they are desirous of agreement, God will effect a reconciliation …' The love between man and wife is one of the signs of God: 'And one of His signs it is, that He hath created wives [mates] for you of your own species, that ye may dwell with them, and hath put love and tenderness between you.'[15]

Women are to be protected from lust;[16] men are to live 'chastely … and without taking concubines'.[17] Monogamy is enjoined, since the Text states: 'marry *but* two, or three, or four; and if ye *still* fear that ye shall not act equitably, then one only'.[18] Elsewhere

the text of the Qur'án states that such equitable action would be impossible: 'And ye will not have it at all in your power to treat your wives alike, even though you fain would so do …'

In spite of woman's tremendous advance under Islám, in the law of Muḥammad, as in that of Moses and Jesus, men are superior to women and the wife is subject to the husband; the Qur'án teaches:

> *Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other, and on account of the outlay they make from their own substance for them … chide those for whose refractoriness ye have cause to fear … and strike them: but if they are obedient to you, then seek not occasion against them.*[19]

Other verses show that women 1300 years ago had not achieved equality with men.[20]

We cannot foresee where the Bahá'í principle of sex equality will lead; it is new, and connotes vital changes in the social structure. Up to now, man—and at times, perhaps, women, for the matriarchate in its broader sense is arguable—has been dominant. Now at last a male-female check and balance system is established.

Anyhow, the implications are important for world peace. Man's domestic dominance may well have been a contributive cause of war; the home pattern of aggression, resentment and retaliation is similar to that which on the world scale develops as war. Moreover, most languages are weighted with the idea of male superiority, and the child is taught to disparage female opinion, which means also to disparage woman's antipathy to war.

Here are some aspects of the picture as envisaged by Bahá'ís: 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms that not only man, but woman, is created in the image and likeness of God: 'The "image" and "likeness" of God applies to her as well.' He shows that stages of life lower than man do not treat the female as inferior:

> *Among the myriad organisms of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, sex exists but there is no differentiation whatever as to relative importance and value … If we investigate impartially we may even find species in which the female is superior or preferable to the male … The male of the date palm is valueless while the female bears abundantly … The male of the animal kingdom does not*

glory in its being male and superior to the female. In fact equality exists and is recognized. Why should man, a higher and more intelligent creature deny and deprive himself of this equality the animals enjoy?[21]

'Abdu'l-Bahá says:

God does not inquire 'Art thou woman or art thou man?' He judges human actions. If these are acceptable at the threshold of the Glorious One, man and woman will be equally recognized and rewarded.

And elsewhere:

In some countries man went so far as to believe and teach that woman belonged to a sphere lower than human. But in this century which is the century of light ... God is proving to the satisfaction of humanity that all this is ignorance and error; nay, rather, it is well established that mankind and womankind as factors of composite humanity are co-equal and that no difference in estimate is allowable ... The conditions in past centuries were due to woman's lack of opportunity ... She was ... left in her undeveloped state.[22]

Few persons or institutions today practise the Bahá'í teaching of educating the daughter rather than the son if it is impossible to provide education for both; during the war, for example, crowded American schools were not unknown to favour male candidates, neglecting the female. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says:

The education of woman is more necessary and important than that of man, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy ... The mothers are the first educators of mankind; if they be imperfect, alas for the condition and future of the race.[23]

'Abdu'l-Bahá does not accept the argument of male superiority based on the size of the brain:

Some philosophers and writers have considered woman naturally and by creation inferior to man, claiming as a proof that the brain of man is larger and heavier than that of woman. This is frail and faulty evidence inasmuch as small brains are often found coupled with superior intellect and large brains possessed by those who are ignorant, even imbecile.[24]

The Master affirms that woman should not be considered inferior because she does not go to war, and adds:

> *Yet be it known that if woman had been taught and trained in the military science of slaughter she would have been the equivalent of man even in this ... But God forbid! ... for the destruction of humanity is not a glorious achievement ... Let not a man glory in this,—that he can kill his fellow-creatures; nay, rather, let him glory in this, that he can love them.*[25]

'Abdu'l-Bahá describes a striking difference between man's psychology and woman's. He states that man is more inclined to war than woman; that woman, once she becomes fully effective in society, will block war. Women, then, do not derive from warfare the psychological satisfactions obtained from it by men, and their repugnance to war should be implemented to keep the peace:

> *Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of Universal Peace.*[26]

> *The mother bears the troubles and anxieties of rearing the child; undergoes the ordeal of its birth and training ... Therefore it is most difficult for mothers to send those upon whom they have lavished such love and care, to the battlefield ... So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world ... war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. This is true and without doubt.*[27]

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá teaches regarding the effect of constant negative environmental suggestion on woman should be especially pondered. Everywhere woman is battered down by depressing suggestion—that she is sick, rattle-brained, incompetent, that she ages quicker than man, and so on. One sees here the same type of poisonous social suggestion which attacks black American citizens.[28] This gifted people (whom North America will some day recognize as one of her most valuable population elements) is continually being told in thousands of subtle ways—in books, linguistic expressions, movies, the theatre, from lecture platforms—by the majority that they have no future, must stay in their 'place', are

biologically unfit, etc. The wholesome suggestion established by black leaders—successful artists, writers, educators, sports champions and the rest—is extremely important. A fact is irrefutable; it is there for people to see. In the same way one successful woman gives the lie to all the old husbands' tales of woman's inferiority:

> *The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification ... the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible ... If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow-pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance ...*[29]

Since work in future will be allotted only on the basis of knowledge and skill, there is no need to particularize here; it is interesting, however, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá especially recommends the 'industrial and agricultural sciences' for women.[30]

Polygamy inevitably connotes woman's inferiority. Monogamy is Bahá'í law. The marriage contract is a partnership of two equals; neither agrees to obey the other, and neither belongs to the other; one individual cannot own another.

Women, under Bahá'í law, are accorded a few exemptions in their religious observances. Furthermore, a few restrictions apply to women: women inherit a lesser share than men, although this is not mandatory if an individual prefers to distribute his property otherwise,[31] and women do not serve in the Universal House of Justice, although they serve on the Local and National Houses, and the members of the last-named elect the members of the Universal body. Of this non-membership in the Universal House of Justice, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said the reason 'will presently appear, even as the sun at midday'.[32] It does not affect woman's status of equality, since the highest rank a Bahá'í can attain, that of Hand of the Cause, is open to women as well as men.

Till Death Do Us Part

ONE EVENING IN 1667, SAMUEL PEPYS, 'returning home to find his wife vexed by his absence … "did give her a pull by the nose and some ill words"'; in consequence of this the lady followed him to the office in "a devilish manner", so that he had to take her "into the garden out of hearing, to prevent shame". On another occasion, obliged by an acquaintance to attend church when he had been on his way to what the biographer calls 'a more secular appointment,' Pepys stayed there "in pain," consoling himself by turning his perspective glass on "a great many very fine women" in the congregation, with which and sleeping he "passed away the time till sermon was done …". Domestic scenes naturally resulted. Mrs. Pepys, 'burning a candle in the chimney piece into the small hours … made night a torment with her reproaches.' Pepys went down on his knees "to pray to God … alone in my chamber … I hope God will give me the grace more and more every day to fear Him, and to be true to my poor wife!" Not long afterward, however, we find Mrs. Pepys threatening her husband with red hot tongs. Eventually she settled her problem by passing away.[1]

Subtracting tongs and candle—and perhaps the prayer—the Pepys' family relationship continues to be repeated in millions of current households across the planet. We are today more than ever victims of a worldwide maladjustment between the sexes, a disorder resulting in unnecessarily broken hearts and in a lamentable misapplication of psychic energy. The world's work is being carried on by individuals whose attention is to a dangerous degree concentrated on the turmoil in their domestic relationships; unavoidably,

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current humanity is distracted from its task of building a new civilization, by the tremendous disturbances in present-day emotional life. Although, lacking a uniform standard of behaviour, human beings are at odds in all their dealings today, the man-woman situation is probably the most embroiled of the lot; certainly the inharmony between the sexes is the most popular trouble in the world.

Like other phases of life in the machine age, sex inharmony can perhaps clearest be observed in the United States, where for territorial and chronological reasons—for the expanse and quantity of the phenomena presented, and their relative isolation from the past—our current civilization is easily read. Studying the situation in the United States one gathers that lack of factual sex equality is responsible for much of the suffering at present so noticeable. The woman problem is somewhat analogous to that presented by any minority group—to that, let us say, of the black in the United States, or of the minority peoples in various countries; like these, women come birthmarked, born to redundant struggle. Women are treated not as individuals, but as women. Compare, for example, the lower salary paid a woman with the one paid a man for identical work. In courtship it is the man who establishes whether the marriage shall take place or not; to paraphrase, woman disposes but man proposes. It is woman who is expected to be physically attractive, not man—to spend hours in the Dante-esque torment of a beauty parlour, while public opinion derides the man who devotes more than a few minutes of the day to his personal appearance. In the average home, it is woman who does the menial tasks.

'Truth is the name we give to errors grown hoary with the centuries,' said Spinoza, and the Vaertings quote him to this effect in their book, "The Dominant Sex."[2] Anyone who believes that woman belongs in a sphere predetermined by traditional notions on the respective roles of the sexes, should in fairness refer to the work of these and similar investigators. According to the above anthropologists, one sex or the other has been dominant down the ages; moreover '… the contemporary peculiarities of women are mainly determined by the existence of the Men's State, and … they are accurately and fully paralleled by the peculiarities of men in the Women's State.'[3] The authors show, for example, that where women were dominant, men remained in the home, engaged in

house work and caring for the children; they spent much time in self-beautification, 'curled the hair and the beard, wore plenty of gold ornaments, and were diligent in the care of the teeth and the finger-nails;[4] their youth was highly valued, whereas the age of a woman was of no great importance, and they were physically the weaker sex, for '… the women of the Women's State have very different physical aptitudes from those possessed by the women of the contemporary Men's State. Where woman rules, she is no less superior to man in bodily capacity than man is superior to woman in this respect where man holds sway.'[5] Menial tasks were left to the men, while even the army was recruited from the women, and even the Fall was attributed to a man, he having tasted of forbidden fruit. Descent was reckoned through the mother, money was controlled by women. In courtship woman was the aggressor; Robert Briffault tells of 'a love poem of the period of Rameses II, addressed, as was usual in Egypt, by the lady to her beloved. The former opens her heart thus: "O my beautiful friend! My desire is to become, as thy wife, the mistress of all thy possessions!"'[6] We learn from the same authority that the chief provision of an Egyptian marriage contract was, "If I leave thee as husband because I have come to hate thee, or because I love another man, I shall give thee two and a half measures of silver … ."'[7] and further, 'Where, as in Thebes, the domiciles of husband and wife were sometimes separate, the man might find himself in danger of starving. He accordingly took the precaution to stipulate that the wife should "provide for him during his lifetime, and pay the expenses of his … burial."'

Pleasant as it is for the feminist to remember past grandeurs, to think of Zenobia or of Queen Tomyris who conquered Cyrus, or even to contemplate the new and still unrepresentative groups of women achieving contemporary prominence—we should bear in mind that authorities warn us against either type of monosexual rule. Paul Bousfield even says; '… as long as there is any sex dominance such a thing as world peace may be psychologically impossible',[8] this because there is a tendency to displace primitive desires for power from one sphere to another. The Vaertings conclude, 'It is absolutely essential that humanity should discover ways and means for the permanent realization of the ideal of sex equality, and for the permanent prevention of either type of monosexual dominance. In default, the millenniums that lie before us will be

no less wretched than those which are now drawing to a close.'[9]

Modern sex equality implies monogamy, not the verbal monogamy to which the West has long been accustomed, but that defined by the Vaertings as involving 'premarital chastity in both sexes; and faithfulness after marriage in the case of both parties.'[10] Incidentally these investigators believe that monogamy 'is only impossible where monosexual dominance prevails,'[11] and that '… in human beings the monogamic trend is stronger than the polygamic.'[12] The general practice of monogamy doubtless presupposes an environment entirely other than that in which we now live. Today our food, our music, our books, our clothing, the stage, the museum, even the billboards along our streets, tend to forestall a monogamic system. Authorities such as Bousfield urge drastic changes: Non-differentiation in clothing, in education, in general treatment, is an essential factor in equality … it is important that the exclusive male and female names should be discontinued … A revised idea of courtesy on a non-sexual basis is essential.'[13] Bousfield likewise inveighs against such practices as modern dancing, the pairing off of men and women partners at table, the exclusive personal adornment of either sex, and other social factors based on sex differentiation.

Monogamy, it should be remembered, is generally speaking a modern institution. When Muḥammad appeared, He found polygamy universally practised; Moses had imposed no definite limit on the number of wives a man might have, and polygamy was not formally prohibited among the Jews until the eleventh century, A.D., numerous Christian emperors, members of the clergy, nobles, were polygamous, the commoners following their example. Since the institution of concubinage was permitted and regulated in the Old Testament with a "Jahveh said unto Moses," early Christianity, bound by its literal interpretation of Scripture, found it difficult to abolish it. Concubinage was actually sanctioned by the Synod of Toledo in 400 A.D., and was not actively suppressed as social impurity until the fifth Lateran Council in 1516.[14] Briffault tells us: 'Muḥammad, who in the ecclesiastical imagination of the Middle Ages was credited with having invented … polygamy, confirmed, in reality, the general tendency of advancing economic development by reducing the permissible number of legitimate wives to four.'[15]

As a matter of fact, Muḥammad taught monogamy; He made the marrying of a plurality of wives conditional on their being treated with justice, and showed that a man could not act with justice toward more than one wife. However, even the briefest acquaintance with source materials will convince one that strict monogamy has existed heretofore chiefly as an ideal, and even today, the only difference between Eastern and Western polygamy would seem to be that the Eastern variety is simultaneous, the ‘Western progressive.

Currently in most parts of the globe the husband is dominant, and the happy marriage is almost a museum piece. A state of tension, resulting from woman’s dissatisfaction with the limited scope allowed her by tradition, and from her resentment against the privileges which her husband has arrogated to himself, is set up in countless families, and it is well known that a child reared under such conditions may be psychically maimed for life. Some authorities, indeed, believe that the family—so often a reluctant amalgam of uncongenialities—is doomed to extinction, but surveys show that institutional life is unsuited to the proper development of the child, and the family unit is found to be most in accord with natural requirements; it is obvious, however, that with women emerging to equality, the family will be greatly altered in future; the ideal will be reached when neither parent is dominant.

A vast accumulation of literature—its very bulk proving that something is wrong with the holy state—exists on the subject of contemporary marriage. From Judge Lindsay to Léon Blum, to the Iranian intellectual who blithely insists that marriage is about to disappear altogether, every other thinker urges a solution. The man in the street asks whom he is to believe. According to Bahá’í doctrine, the standard of behaviour is set in every dispensation by the spiritual Educator of the time; this is not didacticism, but description, for it is Moses, it is Christ, it is Muḥammad who have founded civilizations that have endured for centuries; it is Beings such as these who are the law-makers; who do not compel, but who induce, obedience.

Studying Judaism, Christianity, and Islám—which according to the Bahá’í teachings are essentially one, representing, like the other great Faiths, like the Bahá’í Faith itself, successive expressions of the will of God—we find that the condition of woman gradually

improved, until, under Islám, she achieved rights and privileges previously beyond her reach in a Men's State environment. Under the Muslim code the woman is not her husband's possession but enjoys rights as an independent human being; she acts regarding herself and property without intervention of husband or father, has a definite share in inheritance, can sue debtors in the open courts, is treated with consideration in the matter of divorce. Aside from the nature of these and the other Qur'ánic laws referring to woman, their very number, as compared with the few laws regarding woman in the Old and New Testaments, is highly significant. Muḥammad could be called the first modern feminist. He decreed respect for woman and gave her a legal status which women of the West are only now attaining—this at a time when her position was anything but favourable. Of woman in the Christian world, Ameer-Ali points out that 'Father after Father wrote on the enormities of women … Tertullian calls women "the devil's gateway … the deserter of the divine law, the destroyer of God's image—man." Chrysostom, says Lecky, "interpreted the general opinion of the Fathers when he pronounced women to be 'a necessary evil … a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, a painted ill'"'—and adds: 'the rise of Protestantism made no difference in the social conditions, or in the conception of lawyers regarding the status of women.'[16] The Muslim attitude toward gender is summed up in these lines from the thirty-third chapter of the Qur'án: 'Verily the Moslems of either sex, and the true believers of either sex, and the devout men, and the devout women, and the men of veracity, and the women of veracity, and the patient men, and the patient women, and the humble men, and the humble women, and the almsgivers of either sex, and the men who fast, and the women who fast, and the chaste men, and the chaste women, and those of either sex who remember God frequently; for these hath God prepared forgiveness and a great reward.' [Sale]

One of the signs by which we recognize that phenomenal Being, the Manifestation of God, is that His teachings are opposed to the desires of His time. Muḥammad breaks the idols which are the pride of the Quraysh; Bahá'u'lláh shatters many an idea that the world has long worshipped; one of these is the idea of masculine superiority. In decreeing sex equality Bahá'u'lláh attacks a fundamental concept of society, a concept the tenacity of which psy-

chologists are only beginning to understand. '… man,' says a recent investigator, 'finds pleasure in all ideas of woman as a "weaker vessel" … any slight weakness which is already hers is greatly exaggerated … he carries her little bag or her parcel—not because she is too weak to do any of these things for herself, but because it produces in him a feeling of difference and superiority … He hates the idea that she should compete on equal terms with him at his work …'[17]

'It is not to be denied,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us, 'that in various directions woman at present is more backward than man, also that this temporary inferiority is due to the lack of educational opportunity … In the vegetable world there are male plants and female plants; they have equal rights … In the animal kingdom we see that the male and the female have equal rights … In the world of humanity we find a great difference; the female sex is treated as though inferior … This condition is due not to Nature, but to education.'[18] Elsewhere He says: 'Inasmuch as human society consists of two factors, the male and female, each the complement of the other, the happiness and stability of humanity cannot be assured unless both are perfected … there must be no difference in the education of male and female, in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world. The education of woman will be a mighty step towards its abolition and ending for she will use her whole influence against war … In truth she will be the greatest factor in establishing Universal Peace and international arbitration.'[19]

In the Bahá'í system, marriage is made difficult at the outset. While in some parts of the United States a three-day delay has proved beneficial in preventing unwise marriages, a much more effective check is provided by the Bahá'í teaching that the consent of all four parents involved is prerequisite to the union. One reason for this law is that the whole purpose of the Bahá'í Cause is to establish world harmony, and a marriage that tends to alienate a number of people necessarily obstructs this. In practice it has been found that this law provides an enduring basis for married life, stressing as it does the importance of the marriage as related to the group. The law applies whether or not the parents are Bahá is.

While marriage is made difficult, divorce—permissible in exceptional cases—is easily obtained, its main prerequisite being a year of separation. 'The thing which is lawful, but disliked by God, is divorce,' said Muḥammad, and the Bahá'í attitude is similar in this respect. The emphasis in the Bahá'í law is on the careful selection of a mate and on the importance of perpetuating the marriage.

Another feature of Bahá'í marriage is that the procreation of children is its 'sacred and primary purpose.'[20] Childless marriages are viewed with anxiety by many leading thinkers. They involve too little responsibility; they lack solidity; husband or wife is apt at any moment to fold his tent like the Arabs and as silently steal away. Whatever the further consequences of the childless marriage —economic, social, physical—it is unquestioned that this system tends to popularize divorce, and that divorce constitutes a serious break in the community.

Like his health, an individual's happiness is the concern of the group. Bahá'ís believe that in the World Order which is forming within our contemporary chaos, the individual's happiness will be assured by equal opportunities for the sexes, strict monogamy, love marriages motivated by the desire to further the interests of the community. The reader is reminded that according to the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, our modern world is capable of developing as facts, through the power of the Bahá'í Faith coupled with scientific knowledge and equipment, the hopes and dreams of the past; hopes and dreams that hitherto were realized only in germ.

Atomic Mandate

IT WAS 5.30 OF A DARK MORNING, July 16, 1945, on the New Mexico desert. The head of the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory stood tensely waiting. Six miles away, mounted on a robot-controlled steel tower, an unknown thing was poised. This thing had cost two billion dollars; it had cost the toil of thousands of scientists over many years; whole cities had been built to build it, and great factories spreading over miles of countryside. Now they would set it going. If the test failed, all their work was lost. If it succeeded too well, this scientist and his waiting colleagues might be the first victims of an uncontrollable force, released by them to roam the earth.

Time signals, broadcast by radio, remorselessly measured out the last moments. The man held onto a post, steadying himself as the time ran out. Then a voice called: 'Now!'

And there came a great explosion of light, many times brighter than noonday sun. Then there came a shock wave, knocking men down. And after that, with a long roaring, a multicoloured cloud boiled seven miles high. The man recognized that sound: it was the last death cry of many human beings, still alive then across the planet, matter-of-factly going about their business in the quiet July night. At this moment he heard in his mind two lines from Hindu Scripture: '*I am become death, the shatterer of worlds*.'

Someone lit the first fire, long ago. About a million years ago, man was already using it. In our time, man has just come upon atomic energy. Like fire, it can mean life just as well as death. And like fire, it is here to stay.

People seem to feel, these days, as if a genie had been let out of a

bottle and were lying in wait to kill them. But there is really no new danger in the world. There is just the same old one: the human mind and heart. Man is dangerous; his tools are not.

The answer to the Bomb is not another Bomb. The only possible answer is a new kind of man.

There is a way of living in the world now which will make the Bomb as harmless as a toy bow and arrow. There is a new way of putting the individual and the nation and all nations together in a pattern which makes peace.

There are now local, national and international Bahá'í communities on the planet which are islands of world peace.

The people in these communities all feel the same way. They are Chicagoans or South Americans or New Yorkers. East Indians or Ethiopians or San Franciscans; they are black, white, yellow, brown, any colour; they are rich or poor, schooled or unschooled; their parents were Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muḥammadans, free-thinkers, of any religion, of no religion. They are citizens of many countries, but they take no political sides. They all feel the same way now.

Here are some of the things Bahá'ís want:

All races equal and non-segregated

Men and women equal

The nations united, as states in a world government

A world police

A world language, taught in all schools

A world calendar

World education: the same chance for education everywhere

Science and religion equally important

Work for all; no idle rich and no idle poor; no extremely rich and no terribly poor. A single standard of right and wrong for everyone. Justice for everyone. The love of God and His Prophets. Prayer. Preparation now for life after death.

One of the loveliest buildings in the 'Western Hemisphere, the Bahá'í House of Worship at Wilmette, Illinois, was built by

Bahá'í communities as a symbol of their purpose: to create one world, united under God.

The design of these communities was drawn almost a hundred years ago by the Persian nobleman Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God). He showed how all religions promised peace on earth; He said the time for that peace had now come. He showed how world peace would begin first in the individual, then in the group, and then spread over the whole earth.

He had nothing to gain by bringing a new religion, everything to lose. He lost His rank in Persia; His palaces and possessions; His freedom. Driven away from His country, He was a prisoner and exile nearly forty years. Twenty thousand followers were killed in Persia: homes broken into, whole families butchered, dead bodies left to be trampled and stoned.

His voice, at first, made no more stir in the world than that first roaring of the Bomb across the desert. But, today, people are listening to both voices, and one says *Die*, and one says *Live*. Here are some of His words:

> *Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other.*
>
> *Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner.*
>
> *The best beloved of all things in My sight is justice; turn not away therefrom…. Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.*
>
> *Thou art My dominion and My dominion perisheth not, wherefore fearest thou thy perishing?*[1]

He says 'I' and 'We', as the mouthpiece of God. He speaks directly to man, with the authority of all God's Prophets. That is why religious and worldly leaders, jealous of their own authority, rose up to destroy Him. But they failed. Though He died still a prisoner, in the Holy Land in 1892, His Cause will never die.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote a hundred books. He knew our modern problems, and discussed them, showing the solution. He knew the questions of our time, and answered them. He knew, prophetically, about the Bomb. After Him, His son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, knew of it. In 1911 'Abdu'l-Bahá said this to a Japanese Ambassador, Viscount Arakawa:

There is in existence a stupendous force, as yet, happily, undiscovered by man. Let us supplicate God, the Beloved, that this force be not discovered by science until spiritual civilization shall dominate the human mind. In the hands of men of lower material nature, this power would be able to destroy the whole earth.[2]

In 1920, He wrote to friends in Japan:

In Japan the divine proclamation will be heard as a formidable explosion ...[3]

Here are others of Bahá'u'lláh's words, showing how to live in this atomic age. These nine sentences were chosen by Shoghi Effendi, world head of the Bahá'í Faith, to be inscribed under the great dome of the Temple at Wilmette:

All the Prophets of God proclaim the same faith

Religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold

Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch

So powerful is unity's light that it can illumine the whole earth

Consort with the followers of all religions with friendliness

O Son of Being! Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee

O Son of Being! Walk in My statutes for love of Me

Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home reunion with Me

The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun

Bahá'u'lláh was used to wealth and ease. In His Persian gardens, attendants spread silken carpets for Him, by a stream twisting down from the snow mountains. White-mulberry trees dropped their fruit into dark pools there, and nightingales sang in the jasmine flowers, all through the sapphire night. His companions were princes, delicately nurtured, wearing their jewels and brocades.

Then He was seized because of His beliefs, and chained underground in the Black Pit of Ṭihrán. This Pit, an abandoned reservoir, was three flights down in the earth. It was peopled with criminals, most of them naked, covered with vermin, sitting on the bare

ground in their own filth. No light ever fell there, through the cold dark. No sweet air ever came. It was during the months He was condemned there, His feet in the stocks, His body wasted and bent under His chains, that He slept and heard a voice say:

> *Verily We will aid Thee to triumph by Thyself and by Thy pen … . Ere long shall the Lord send forth and reveal the treasures of the earth, men who shall give Thee the victory by Thyself and by Thy Name wherewith the Lord hath revived the hearts of them that know*.[4]

There is nothing new about killing. Men have always killed one another and the Bomb is just a better way of doing it.

But living without inflicting death on others is brand new. It has never been done before. It calls for a brand new way of thinking and acting; for new behaviour which will create a new kind of people.

Such behaviour can only result from religion. Religions begin in the east. They arrive periodically, as they are needed, down the ages. Today, answering man's desperate need, the Glory of God has come.

VI

The Divine Encounter

Echoes of the Heroic Age

MOZART WAS NOT YET BORN, AND the world—showing how man suffers from deprivation without knowing it—went its way without him. George Washington was twenty-one years old; two years from this time he was to fight under Braddock in the wilderness of Pennsylvania, and later on to write his brother: 'I have heard the bullets whistle, and believe me there is something charming in the sound.' Samuel Johnson was working on the second volume of his Dictionary. He began this year of 1753 in prayer, asking that the recent loss of his wife would dispose him to live out the rest of his own days in the fear of God. Franklin's works on electricity, praised by Buffon, were attracting the attention of France, and the American's experiment to 'draw lightning from the clouds' had been performed at Marly, before Louis 'the Well-Beloved'. This year Britain's Royal Society presented Franklin with a gold medal. Boucher was painting cherubs on the ceiling. Voltaire had abruptly departed from San-Souci, vacating the room whose walls were exuberant with monkeys, leaves, and fruits, leaving his host, Frederick the Great, to write his verse alone. Newton had died in 1727. Darwin, Freud, and Einstein were far into the future. A few years more and the *Universal History* would be published in London, fixing the date of Creation as September 21, 4,004 B.C.

In this year, 1753, in a remote corner of the Arabian Peninsula, a child was born who grew up to become what the West would call a saint. His name was Shaykh Aḥmad. Through dreams and intimations he fell so much in love with God that this world, not

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the next, was the unseen world to him, and he could hardly remember to dress himself or even to eat. Guided by his inward light, he began to show the people how their religion of Islám had been hopelessly betrayed and perverted until it was now beyond reform. He called on all the followers of Muḥammad, of whatever sect, to prepare the way for a Saviour, the Qá'im, soon to be made manifest.

He gave up home, family, and possessions and went away to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbilá, where he became a famous mujtahid, an authorized expounder of Islám and doctor of the law. He had thousands upon thousands of devoted followers. Clergy and people alike revered him but he could remember nothing but his mission, and he despised the honours they tried to lavish upon him.

After a time his light guided him to Persia. He passed through Shíráz and told the people: 'Among you there shall be a number who will live to behold the glory of a Day which the prophets of old have yearned to witness.'[1] He settled down in Yazd, where he wrote most of his books; historians credit him with ninety-six volumes. By then his fame had become such that the Sháh of Persia wrote him a letter. Whatever land the holy one's feet should consent to touch was a blessed land, the Sháh wrote. He, the King of Kings, ought rightfully to visit the saint in Yazd; but the Sháh was held in the capital by high affairs of state, and should he travel he would have to be escorted by an army of 10,000 men. Yazd was too small to contain them, and the fields about the town too poor to feed them; a famine would be the result. 'I feel sure,' the monarch wrote, 'that although in comparison with you I am of small account, you will consent to come and see me.'[2] The saint replied that he must first go on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Imám Riḍá in Khurásán.

Ever more loudly, Shaykh Aḥmad's heart informed him that the longed-for dawn was breaking. There were two Muslim traditions which he continually repeated: 'Ere long shall ye behold the countenance of your Lord resplendent as the moon in its full glory …' And: 'One of the most mighty signs that shall signalize the advent of the promised Hour is this: "a woman shall give birth to One who shall be her Lord" .'[3]

After his pilgrimage he went on to Ṭihrán and was royally welcomed by the Sháh, dignitaries and officials coming out of the

gate to meet him. It was then November, 1817; on the twelfth day of the month the wife of a favoured minister of the Crown had a son. The saint's heart recognized this Child: it was Bahá'u'lláh.

Now the Sháh's eldest son, governor of Kirmánsháh, begged for Shaykh Aḥmad, and the king surrendered him. Sadly, Shaykh Aḥmad left the city that lies in wide, gold plains, at the foot of a glittering, cone-shaped mountain. As he went, he prayed 'that this hidden Treasure of God, now born amongst his countrymen, might be preserved and cherished by them, that they might recognize the full measure of His blessedness and glory, and might be enabled to proclaim His excellence to all nations and peoples'.[4] When the saint drew near to Kirmánsháh, the prince sent the whole town out to meet him.

Inevitably, disciples crowded to his lectures and eagerly shared his writings. Then one day the prince died, and Shaykh Aḥmad was free to leave Persia for Karbilá, for Mecca and Medina. Toward the close of his life he wrote: 'The mystery of this Cause must needs be made manifest, and the secret of this Message must needs be divulged. I can say no more, I can appoint no time. His Cause will be made known after Hín.'[5] *Hín* is an Arabic word that means time. As the saint's followers were aware, each Arabic letter has a numerical value; they knew that the letters in this word *Hín* totalled 68, and they therefore looked ahead to the year 1268 of the Muslim calendar. (In that year Bahá'u'lláh was chained in the Black Pit of Ṭihrán, and there He received the first intimations of His world mission.)

When he was eighty-one, Shaykh Aḥmad died and was buried near the Prophet Muḥammad in the holy city of Medina. A picture shows him wearing the robe and turban of his day, kneeling on a flowered carpet, his hands clasped, his whole body immobilized in contemplation. His nose is aquiline, and he has a white beard flowing down. The eyes look upward, showing the whites, seeing the unseen; his whole presence diffuses gentleness and peace.

Thousands listened to Shaykh Aḥmad, the founder of the Shaykhí School; few heard him. He left his disciples in the hands of the one individual who understood him, Siyyid Káẓim of Rasht. When Siyyid Káẓim was a boy of eleven, he had memorized the entire Qur'án. When he was twelve, he dreamed that he must become the disciple of Shaykh Aḥmad. At twenty-two, when

he had given up his home and family and friends and gone to Shaykh Aḥmad, he became the Saint's most trusted follower; later on, he became his successor. When the Shaykh left him for the last time, he confided his secret to the younger man, saying: 'The Hour is drawing nigh, the Hour I have besought God to spare me from witnessing, for the earthquake of the Last Hour will be tremendous … neither of us is capable of withstanding its sweeping force.' To his followers, the Shaykh said: 'Seek for knowledge after me, from Siyyid Káẓim of Rasht, who received it directly from me, who have it from the Imáms, who learned it from the Prophet [Muḥammad] to Whom God gave it.'[6]

Often and often, the Siyyid repeated his master's doctrines: that the prophetic signs of the coming Judgement Day were allegorical; that Muḥammad did not make His Night Journey to Heaven in His physical form; that the physical bodies of men would not rise out of their graves at the Resurrection; that the Promised One was even now alive and in their midst.

Millions of Christians believe that Christ rose into the sky after the crucifixion and will in the last days appear to all the world, descending from the sky on a cloud. In spite of all that is now known about the sky, they believe this. Millions of Muslims think that the Twelfth Imám disappeared into an underground passage at Samarra a thousand years ago and is waiting in one of the mysterious cities of Jábulqá and Jábulsá (reminiscent of that Jewish city of Baní Músá, that lies at the ends of the earth, cut off by a round river of flowing sand)—to come forth at the end of time and fill the earth with justice. No geographer can convince them that these cities are not on the map.

Where his master had been cherished by royalty and clergy alike, the disciple was left to bear alone the massive batteries of hate. Harassed, lonely, a target because of his unorthodox views, he nevertheless knew how to find consolation. Once he got up at dawn and went out through the streets of Karbilá in the cool shadows until he came to a house where a young man in a green turban stood waiting at the door. This Youth embraced him tenderly, and led him into an upper, flower-filled room; here the young Host filled and handed him a silver cup, repeating as He did so a verse from the Qur'án: 'A drink of a pure beverage shall their Lord give them' (76:21). Gold and silver vessels are forbidden to

the faithful in Islám; still, the Siyyid took this cup in both his hands, raised it to his lips and drank. Nothing more was said; the guest returned whence he had come. Some days later this same Youth entered the Siyyid's class and sat in a darkened corner; a spear of light shot across Him in the shadows. The Siyyid fell silent. Urged to resume his talk, he answered, 'What more shall I say? Lo, the Truth is more manifest than [that] ray of light …'[7]

His enemies were those entrenched powers who were determined to maintain their stranglehold on the minds of the people. Light creates shadow; this is a law. Light speaks, and the shadow arises to silence it. The Qur'án says: 'Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths; but God desireth to perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it' (9:33). Merely by living and teaching, he was a threat to them, because he set the people free by showing them the truth. The Bible tells us, 'Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free' (John 8:32).

A great number of his enemies in their attempts to destroy him ultimately destroyed themselves. It happened in this way: they banded together and began to stir up the city. The mischief spread until they evicted the envoy of the Ottoman Government and took over his revenues. The Sublime Porte duly responded by despatching a force to pacify the town, and Karbilá was besieged. The Turkish commander who was conducting the siege then chose a mediator—out of all the inhabitants of Karbilá he chose Siyyid Káẓim. The Siyyid called in the ringleaders of the disturbance and persuaded them to surrender in exchange for amnesty. Peace seemed assured, but then the 'ulamás stepped in; to them the honour that had been shown Siyyid Káẓim by the Ottoman Government was an unbearable thing, and so they went among the populace, shrieked for a holy war, and demanded an attack on the Turks by night. Informed of this, the commander announced that he was going to force the gates of the citadel and take the town, and that he would consider only one place as a sanctuary: the house of Siyyid Káẓim. Whipped to a frenzy by the clergy, the mob only laughed; but when dawn came, the Turks attacked, bombarded the ramparts of the citadel, tore down its walls, entered Karbilá, plundered its rich mosques and killed thousands of people. So many now ran in panic to the house of Siyyid Káẓim that he had to take over his neighbours' houses to make room for them all; they

crowded in so fast that twenty-two of them were battered and stamped to death. Others ran to the Shrine of Imám Ḥusayn and the mausoleum of ‘Abbás, places inviolate since time out of mind, but they were hacked and butchered till the holy precincts were slippery with blood. True to his promise, the Turkish commander recognized only one sanctuary in Karbilá: the house of Siyyid Káẓim. This happened on January 13, 1843.

Siyyid Káẓim continued to herald the Promised One. Among his prophecies was this, that the Promised One would be put to death. As with Shaykh Aḥmad, many listened, but few heard. ‘I am spellbound by the vision,’ he said; ‘I am mute with wonder, and behold the world bereft of the power of hearing.’ He knew that many of his disciples would in the future deny the Truth. They were false lovers, he said, and added: ‘By the tears which he sheds for his loved One can the true lover be distinguished from the false.’[8]

As he felt his days closing, he gave his followers one of the strangest assignments in history: they were to leave their families and possessions, to scatter, to discover the Promised One wherever He might be, and if possible to die for His Cause. He repeated the words of Shaykh Aḥmad, that a double revelation was imminent, one to follow the other in rapid succession. This, he revealed, was what was meant by the ‘Mystery’ and the ‘Secret’. And again he told them: ‘after the Qá’im the Qayyúm will be made manifest.’[9]

It chanced that he went on a short journey to visit a shrine. On the way, as he finished his noonday prayer under a palm tree by the side of the road, a shepherd came up and called him by his name. While his disciples listened in consternation the shepherd delivered a message—words which he said Muḥammad had, through him, addressed to the Siyyid in a dream. ‘Tell him from Me,’ Muḥammad had said in the dream, ‘“Rejoice, for the hour of your departure is at hand … On the day of ‘Arafih, you will wing your flight to Me. Soon after shall He who is the Truth be made manifest. Then shall the world be illuminated by the light of His face.”’ The Siyyid smiled. He turned to his terrified friends and consoled them. ‘Would you not wish me to die,’ he asked them, ‘that the promised One may be revealed?’[10] He serenely completed the pilgrimage, returned home and took to his bed. On the day of ‘Arafih, which was the very last day of the year 1843, his heart stopped. Then,

from the house which only the year before had been a place of refuge from death, there rose the sound of loud weeping.

Messianism has been a factor in all religions, since each promises a Return. In the Christian world the claim to be the return of Christ has been met with so often as to be commonplace; and in fulfilment of Matthew's prophetic words many false Christs have arisen. That imitations are present in quantity does not prove the absence of the rare Original nor excuse the failure to seek Him; each mind and heart must decide among them all, human life being in this, as in everything, a sequence of choices.

Sporadically down the centuries among the followers of this or that faith the messianic claim would be raised, but never had the messianic interest been at white heat around the world as it was in 1844. Not only in Shíráz was the Promised One awaited, but in New England as well, among Christians who knew nothing of their Muslim counterparts across the globe.

William Miller of New England was a man of ordinary education who had been an army captain and a justice of the peace. Prolonged study of dates in the Bible had convinced him that all prophetic time except the Millennium would inevitably run out by 1844, perhaps as late in that year as October 22. A shy, unassuming man, he felt no urge to spread this belief until one day a voice within him said: 'Go and tell it to the world.' He struggled against the voice but was defeated; by the end of 1843 he had delivered 3,200 lectures on the coming of the Lord. Tens of thousands of Millerites were, in that year, proclaiming that the Lord would come in a cloud, that every eye would see Him, and that He would come as a thief in the night; the fact that these prophecies were contradictory bothered no one.

Miller was not certain of the season, only of the year, of the Return. His followers waited, often in small groups in the night, watching for the Lord to come from Heaven as He had the other time (forgetting that He had been born the other time), riding on a cloud, to catch up the righteous, purify the earth with fire, and then reign there with the saints for a thousand years. Each time they prepared themselves as if for death; each time they bore public laughter and their own doubt. The poet Whittier once happened

on a Millerite camp meeting in the New England woods and found over a thousand people sitting on logs and singing a hymn at fever pitch. The pulpit of rough boards was carpeted with leaves; sheets of canvas hung from it, showing dragons out of the Apocalypse. Afterward Whittier recalled 'the white circle of tents—the dim wood arches—the upturned, earnest faces—the loud voices of the speakers, burdened with the awful symbolic language of the Bible—the smoke from the fires …'[11]

Suddenly those great days were over. Miller was old, sick, and blind; the nation had mocked him, but worse was his feeling that he had misled a multitude of believers. Still, he never renounced. His final message to his people, before he died in 1849, was this: 'I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the Day of the Lord is near, even at the door.' When he closed his blind eyes, the last word he breathed was 'Victory!'

Shoghi Effendi refers to the chosen disciples of Siyyid Káẓim as a 'handful of students, belonging to the Shaykhí school, sprung from the Ithná-'Asharíyyih sect of Islám … .'[12] This reference is to the Islámic 'Sect of the Twelve,' that section of Islám which believes in the Twelve Imáms—divinely-ordained and inspired successors of Muḥammad—as differentiated from the Sunnites, who believe the successorship of the Prophet to be an elective matter, not particularly connected with divine grace. The Caliph of the Sunnites was 'merely the outward and visible Defender of the Faith,'[13] while the Imám of the Shí'ihs was one endowed with all perfections, whom the faithful were bound to obey. The Shí'ih Muslims had long awaited the return of the Twelfth Imám, and they called Him the Qá'im-i-Ál-i-Muḥammad—He Who arises out of the family of Muḥammad.

The western world still, in the middle of the twentieth century, is reluctant to learn that an independent Faith has again appeared, a Faith as authoritative in the West as in the East. The West still tries to describe this Cause of God as a sect of Islám—a description that applies to the Shaykhí school but ceases to have validity after 1844 when the phenomenon of the Prophet, the Personage qualitatively different from the rest of mankind, the One who has three planes of being while the rest have only two,[14] re-entered history in the person of 'Alí-Muḥammad, the Báb. To maintain that such

a world figure is only for Persians would be like saying that Mozart is only for Austrians.

On January 22, 1844, Mullá Ḥusayn, the departed Siyyid's leading disciple, who had long been absent on a mission, returned to Karbilá. As the mourners gathered around him, he asked them what the Siyyid's last instructions had been. To disperse, they answered, 'to seek out the Promised One.' 'Why, then,' he asked them, 'have you chosen to tarry in Karbilá?' He approached their leaders, begging these to set the example and go. One answered, 'We must remain in this city and guard the vacant seat of our departed chief.' Another said, 'It is incumbent upon me to stay and care for the children whom the Siyyid has left behind.'[15] Mullá Ḥusayn left them then and went out of the city, and prepared himself to search by retiring to a mosque for forty days; he spent this time in fasts and vigils, contemplation and prayer. When he was ready, he went to Búshihr on the Persian Gulf. Probably he chose Persia because of the prophecy: 'The ministers and upholders of His Faith shall be of the people of Persia.'[16] Down the centuries, hidden in a mass of sacred traditions, had come other specific references to the Promised One: the date of His arising, which was to be the year 60 (1260 of the Muslim calendar, or 1844); His lineage; His age; His personal appearance; even His name, for the prophecy stated: 'In His name, the name of the Guardian ['Alí] precedeth that of the Prophet [Muḥammad].'[17]

The Persian chronicler Nabíl writes that when Mullá Ḥusayn was in Búshihr he smelled the fragrance of the Promised One, and that he was drawn as if by a magnet towards the north, to the city of Shíráz. It was May, and the city is one which surpasses the descriptive powers even of Persian poets. Ḥáfiẓ, 'Tongue of the Invisible,' says that not in Paradise itself will you find the edges of its brooks nor its flowering plants. It lies in a long green plain, a city of sky-blue domes and long gardens. Snow mountains hem it round; it is criss-crossed by lines of purple judas-trees and black cypresses, and in May its mild air is a blend of orange blossoms and roses.

Mullá Ḥusayn was walking outside the gate of this city when a stranger approached and greeted him. The Mullá, who in spite of his youth in a country that favours age, was widely known and honoured, took Him for some disciple of Siyyid Káẓim's. The stranger was a descendant of the Prophet—He wore a green turban.

There was a special, luminous quality about Him; perhaps it was His young, manly beauty or the immaculacy of His clothing. In any case He seemed to shine in the slanting afternoon sun.

The stranger invited Mullá Ḥusayn to His home. The Mullá demurred, saying that his travelling companions were waiting for him at the mosque, but the stranger as courteously insisted. His presence, His gait, His vibrant tones exerted a powerful influence on Mullá Ḥusayn who could not but follow Him. They went through a lane and came to a wooden door set in a wall of sun-baked brick. An Ethiopian attendant opened the door. As they crossed the threshold the young Host repeated some words from the Qur'án: 'Enter therein,' He said, 'in peace, secure' (15:46). The Mullá's spirits lifted; he could not tell why.

They climbed to an upper room, where the Ethiopian brought a ewer and basin for the guest's ablutions. A cool drink was given him; then the samovar was carried in, and tea was made. After that the Mullá rose to go, saying it was time for the evening prayer and he must rejoin his companions at the mosque. Gently, his Host urged that he remain and pray where he was, in the upper room, and according to the Muslim fashion they stood together and prayed. Mullá Ḥusayn was now deeply troubled, not only because of this strange encounter, but because he was exhausted from his unsuccessful journey; during the prayer, however, he reaffirmed his faith in God's promise and his own mission. It was twilight now and the darkness drifted in with the smell of evening flowers.

About an hour after sundown the young Host asked: 'Whom, after Siyyid Káẓim, do you regard as his successor and your leader?' Mullá Ḥusayn described the Siyyid's last instructions. No successor had been appointed, he said; the disciples one and all had been bidden to disperse, to seek, until they should at last discover the Qá'im. 'Has your teacher,' the Host resumed, 'given you any detailed indications as to the distinguishing features of the promised One?' Earnestly setting them forth, Mullá Ḥusayn named over the signs, which he knew by heart: he knew the lineage of the promised One, knew His age, His innate knowledge, His qualities, His physical appearance. There was a long silence in the room. Suddenly it was broken by the Host. 'Behold,' He cried, 'all these signs are manifest in Me!'

Courteously, Mullá Ḥusayn began to explain; he was looking,

he said, for One unsurpassed, One transcendent, wise, holy, filled with power. But his own words choked him off. Brooding, he went over the prophetic signs, testing them out. Then he considered the secret tests he had stored up in his own mind. One of these had been confided to him by Siyyid Káẓim: without being asked, the true promised One would reveal a commentary of the 'Best of Stories,' the Súrih of Joseph in the Qur'án.

Again his young Host said: 'Might not the Person intended by Siyyid Káẓim be none other than I?' The signs were enumerated again; the questions and answers began; and then, abruptly, the Host said: 'Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the Súrih of Joseph.' He took up His pen and, unbelievably fast, began to write, His voice gently rising and falling, His pen flashing, and He did not pause until the entire first chapter of this work which was to become known as the Qur'án of the Bábís, '*the first, the greatest, and mightiest*' of their books, was finished.[18]

Outside, the night had fallen; the smell of blossoms was as insistent as drums. Mullá Ḥusayn could neither speak nor move. At last, in the silence, he slowly got up and, not wanting to, asked permission to go. His Host smilingly refused: 'If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: "This poor youth has lost his mind."' Then He added: 'This night, this very hour will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals.'[19]

Soon after, the Ethiopian brought them food. The special love of the Host, the reverence of the attendant, were qualities Mullá Ḥusayn had never met with before. He lost all track of time. He was in the Heaven he had read about in the Qur'án: 'Therein no toil shall reach us, and therein no weariness shall touch us … Their cry therein shall be, "Glory be to Thee, O God!" and their salutation therein, "Peace!" And the close of their cry, "Praise be to God, Lord of all creatures!"'[20]

'O thou who art the first to believe in Me!' the Youth told him. 'Verily I say, I am the Báb, the Gate of God, and thou art the Bábu'l-Báb, the gate of that Gate.'[21]

Mullá Ḥusayn now felt such power rising in him that, if all men in their massed force had come against him, he could have withstood their attack. Afterward he said of that night: 'The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp.'[22] It was dawn, and over

the gardens of Shíráz floated the muezzin's thin, tremulous cry. Mullá Ḥusayn rose to leave the One whom he would never leave again, not even in death. He went down the steep stairway leading from the upper room; since he had climbed it a few short hours before, his life and the world's life had changed forever.

Millennium

A RECENT ARTICLE BY A MAN well versed in current trends proclaims the coming of a new era. According to this authority, people are no longer interested in what have been, for the past decade, burning questions; a cynical attitude toward religion, a patronizing slant on spirituality and idealism, an avidity for the brutal in thought and conduct, may no longer be classed as modern; rather, we are recovering from 'post war materialism,' and are on the eve of a period when the chief issues will be idealism, the seeking of 'a religion which will satisfy the unchurched,' and a more scientific attitude toward science, whose hypotheses we will accept with discretion, rather than immediately revolutionize our mode of life on the basis of some new theory which may later be disproved.

The Bahá'ís have known of this imminent new era for over a hundred years. It was in 1844 that the Báb appeared in Persia and awakened the East to the coming of 'Him Whom God should manifest,' and this Coming occurred when the world was in the deepest misery and was sunk in a sea of materialism. What the cited article referred to as post-war materialism was in a larger sense not post-war at all, because the war itself was the result of hideous materialism accumulated through centuries of growing away from divine truths. A study of the climactic nineteenth century would substantiate this. The times were ugly with the suffering occasioned by a mismanaged Industrial Revolution, a heartless, destructive society, a Napoleon; human beings were crowded into poor-houses and left to die; children were working

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seventeen hours a day in the mines; families were living on 'potatoes-and-point'—hanging a bit of meat over their table and watching it while they ate. The pages historians have left behind bring us not only details of intense physical suffering, but also describe the spiritual torture which fell upon men; death was all around them, and they cried aloud for help, and ran from one ark of deliverance to another.

This was a new thing in history, this awaiting a millennium. The Western Middle Ages had looked back over their shoulder at the Ancients and the Bible; if they expected a new era, it was only one in which all things would be destroyed and the world would cease to exist; and even in life, they looked for death, mortified their flesh, and retired into solitude. With the Renaissance and the coming of humanism, an intellectual, materialistic development began, which culminated in the brilliant eighteenth century, a period in which men could see through existing conditions but not above and beyond them, and in which patronizing intellects disported themselves in their own technique. As every text book shows, the second half of the eighteenth century saw a wave of sensitive idealism which swept upward to the chaotic nineteenth. From the last of the eighteenth century, men began to prophesy a new era, a millennium, and it would seem that there was not a thinker who did not anticipate the coming of a new day. Carlyle thundered of the abomination of desolation and saw a phoenix rising from a world in flame; to Ruskin, a beneficently ethical Beauty would moralize society; Arnold thought that culture, that sweetness and light, would ensure a new order; Emerson awaited the Master Poet who would open up new horizons; the followers of Saint-Simon wore their vests buttoned backward as a sign of new brotherhood and inter-dependence; Musset, the burning young Romanticist, shouted, 'Which of us will be a god?'

We all know what happened. The Millerites went up to their hill and Christ did not come floating down; the ardent New-Era-ists were quenched in 1848 with the political reactions which took place; haloes were broken, one by one; and after that men were ashamed to hope any longer, and gradually turned to the coldest realities available; we had a man like Zola, a theory like Darwin's, an unhoping, subdued, invertedly defiant attitude which is now called modern.

All this time, while the world was in torment and waiting for deliverance, the New Era was dawning in a lost, forgotten country. In 1844, in that decade which historians call the dividing line between our times and the dead past, the Báb announced the coming of a great World Teacher. In Persia, though of old the king of kings had bequeathed the whole known world as legacy to his three sons, there were now only shattered columns, only dust heaps left of his palaces. Persia in 1844 was a synopsis of all the diseases which can afflict humanity: there was despotism, poverty, ignorance, mutual hatred; the masses entirely relying for guidance on a grasping, tyrannical priesthood; the women, the educators of humanity in its most impressionable years, degraded to a menial position; a despotic government; a country where idealism and spirituality had guttered out; a people hermetically sealed against salvation. Yet even there, a group of men awaited a millennium, felt the imminence of a spiritual rebirth. These recognized the Báb, not only from the prophecies which they had studied and which His coming fulfilled, not only from their years of prayers and meditation, but also from His radiant, majestic bearing, His inspired knowledge, His triumphant message. And so it was that the East was awakened and prepared for Him Who was heralded, for Bahá'u'lláh.

Prophecies are proofs of a new era to students of the various sacred texts; but to the unchurched, to agnostics, or atheists, or the indifferent, equally impregnable proofs reiterate the advent of a spiritual millennium.

The modern world is divided against itself, and a world divided against itself cannot stand. The only possible way out of present day conditions is by arbitration, and yet this is null and void when the arbitrators have the old divisions in their hearts. A religion is the only power intrinsic and compelling enough to amalgamate humanity; unity means religious unity; where faiths are at variance, there is always a point beyond, a secret room in each man's heart where his brothers may not enter, a shekina where he bows his head in hostile superiority. Humanity needs one religion, one standard of right and wrong; at present there are no standards at all; what is moral in one house is a life and death offence in the next; when a society no longer believes in an indivisible, ultimate Good, which is one just as the colour white is one, that society is in its death throes.

The Will of God, revealed throughout the ages by His Manifestations, is the ultimate Good. God is fullest revealed in the noblest of men, the highest creation, His Manifestation. He can be clearly known only through the Great Teachers who are His living exponents. It is idle to say that we can construe God for ourselves; our imaginations belong to us, and we cannot even avoid being patronizing toward our belongings because they are ours, much less worship them; even an Emerson or a Dante cannot see farther than an 'oversoul' or a 'great white rose.' But among the Manifestations of God, since only through these shall we find the standard, there is no previous one whose teachings in their present form will bring peace.

Missionaries will tell us that they have been obliged to divide up their sphere of activity into zones, each zone receiving the faith according to the interpretations of a different schism; this can hardly be termed a dissemination of unity.

Centuries have passed away, and no one has been able to make a conclusive choice from among the 'two and seventy jarring sects.' It is doubtful whether we should guard a flame of sacred fire, or bathe in the Ganges, or lead a holy bull to pasture. Our thousand schools of thought, offshoots of religious belief, are equally unable to bring men together. Philosophy cannot be lived without religion. Agnosticism will not satisfy an active mind. Atheism expounded is nothing less than theism with some changes of vocabulary, and the atheist is also groping for a standard.

It is only in obeying the command of Bahá'u'lláh that we worship one God and serve one humanity, following the essential oneness at the heart of each religion, that the world can be at peace.

Everyone agrees that peace among nations is imperative, that castes and races must be reconciled, must heal the wrongs they have done each other, that universal education of a spiritual as well as material quality is essential, that true science and true religion are in harmony, that men and women are equal … It is easy to agree with the Bahá'í principles, but not to obey them.

The Bahá'ís are those who, not content with mere agreement, spend their lives in striving to obey the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh; they have chosen a path which leads to martyrdom, to loss of fortune, to the constant setting aside of personal desires. The acceptance of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh is a serious thing; there is no

turning back from such acceptance, for there is no individual who can be at rest with himself once he has renounced his soul's highest truth. This is a Cause for the courageous; for those who can give even their tired hours, their broken, reluctant bodies, in service; for those who can win victories and never see their laurels; for those whose hearts shall not waver, though all the heavens and the earth arise against them.

But isolated courage, sporadic sacrifice, is not enough; it is only through coordinated effort, through symmetrical, rhythmic activity, that the kingdom of God shall come upon earth. World regeneration is ensured by the establishment of the Bahá'í Administration, through which channel alone can a Bahá'í life be led. Were it not for the order and discipline maintained among us by the impregnable institutions which Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have founded, our efforts would cancel each other, and, as is adequately illustrated by the history of former religious dispensations, our very power and spirit would assure disintegration.

When Bahá'u'lláh passed away in 1892, the enemies assailing the Cause expected immediate victory, but to their astonishment the Bahá'ís rallied in solid phalanxes around the Centre of the Covenant, and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh were spread to every country; again in 1921 with the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the world awaited an end to the progress of the Cause, but instead the Bahá'ís, now infinitely more numerous and widely distributed than in 1892, turned with one accord to the Guardian of the Cause, Shoghi Effendi, and under his guidance set themselves to carrying out the injunctions in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The result is that today the Bahá'ís are a disciplined, united group working together in powerful harmony, demonstrating the truth that human beings may retain their widely differing personalities and yet function collectively as 'one soul in different bodies.'

And just as each Bahá'í has seen the dawn of a millennium in his own soul, has felt himself changing, developing, casually accomplishing what men hold impossible, so will the whole world find itself transformed, the old materialism pass away, the new spirituality be established.

Easter Sunday

THERE IS A POEM BY Vachel Lindsay called 'The Chinese Nightingale.' It has a refrain that says 'spring came on forever.' That is a lovely line—spring came on forever. It expresses the season—its lack of finality and its recurrence.

Emerson says something like it in his famous address to the senior class of the Harvard Divinity School, which he gave in 1838. He speaks of 'the never-broken silence with which the old bounty goes forward …'

Spring comes on and the old bounty goes forward. Men seem to have forgotten this. They have lost hope—they are milling around in the shadow of the atomic bomb and they have forgotten the bounty and the yearly rebirth of hope.

About 2,000 years ago this Easter day Mary Magdalen had bought spices to anoint the body of Jesus the Christ. She went to the sepulchre in the garden and found it empty. The linen that had wrapped Him lay in the tomb, and the cloth that had bound His head—but His body was gone—and all these 2,000 years we have not known where it was laid to rest.[1]

That dawn in the garden was the beginning of hope. From then on the theme of the disciples was not death, but life. And now, our theme is no longer death, but life. We have seen enough death. This is the day when, to borrow a phrase from Thomas Mann, the Beloved has returned. The life of the spirit has been reintroduced into human affairs. The Prophet of God has come again. He is called in Bahá'í terminology 'the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable.'

Reprinted by permission from *World Order*, 12, no. 12 (March 1947), 353–8, "The Coming of the Beloved".

The Persian writer Sa'dí compares the coming of the Beloved to the sunrise. He says: 'I remember one night that my beloved entered the door and I leapt up so quick that my sleeve caught the lamp and put it out. He sat down and began to chide me, saying, Why did you quench the lamp when you saw me? I said, "Because I thought the sun had risen".'

People often ask for the Bahá'í teachings on what is heaven. Bahá'u'lláh says: 'O Son of Being! Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not.'[2] 'Abdu'l-Bahá's favourite Christian hymn was 'Nearer my God, to Thee.' He tells us that nearness is likeness—it is to be characterized with the characteristics of God, and we find them in the Divine Manifestations. World peace must be founded on these facts.

Today is the Bahá'í Festival of Riḍván. Riḍván may be translated as 'the paradise of the good pleasure of God.' On this day in 1863 Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed His mission—in a garden of Baghdád, called by Bahá'ís the garden of Riḍván.

Baghdád is a city of brown rivers and domes and palm trees. The garden of Riḍván is a hospital now. It is shadowy and cool, and all day long there you hear doves—thousands of doves.

Bahá'u'lláh was a nobleman, exiled from Persia—and shortly prior to His Declaration He began to give forth—reveal—remarkable teachings. His companions knew that some great thing was about to happen. The historian says that 'Many a night would [His amanuensis] gather them together in His room, light numerous camphorated candles, and chant aloud to them the newly revealed odes and Tablets in his possession. Wholly oblivious of this … world, completely immersed in the realms of the spirit, forgetful of the necessity for food, sleep or drink, they would suddenly discover that night had become day, and that the sun was approaching its zenith.'[3]

This process of revelation is the gift only of the Prophet of God. It is different in kind from poetic inspiration and from academic and other types of thinking. It is the great contribution of the Bahá'í Faith to present-day problems—the supplementing of human thought with the thought of a Prophet of God. The writings of Bahá'u'lláh are available and you can study them and evaluate what this means.

And so this Easter coincides with another scene in another

garden—also in the East, for all religions come from the East—but this time the garden was in Baghdád. It was during the season of roses. Visitors came to Bahá'u'lláh from all over Baghdád to say good-bye to Him—for He was about to be exiled again. And early in the mornings, the gardeners would pick the roses and pile them in the centre of Bahá'u'lláh's tent—and He would give them to various of His followers to take to His Arab and Persian friends in the city. This custom is still followed in Haifa; I have seen the Guardian of the Faith give flowers or handfuls of petals from the holy shrines on Mount Carmel, to the friends.

This 'Most Great Festival' took place during the twelve days prior to Bahá'u'lláh's being exiled out of Baghdád. During those nights the moon was growing toward the full, and the nightingales were so loud that as He walked up and down the flower-bordered paths in the moonlight, only those followers who were near Him could distinctly hear His voice.

There is a remarkable Tablet about the Festival of Riḍván—it is in the *Gleanings*. In it the Prophet or Manifestation of God is referred to as the Pen—because He is moved by the Holy Spirit (if this terminology is too theological for you, say He is moved by the tremendous power which stirs the Prophet of God), and writes as He is irresistibly moved to write. It is in part a colloquy between the Spirit and Bahá'u'lláh. It begins:

> *The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things may be regenerated and made new ... This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful ...*

And later the Pen halts, and this colloquy occurs:

> *We have heard the voice of thy pleading, O Pen, and excuse thy silence. What is it that hath so sorely bewildered thee?*

And the Pen answers—

> *The inebriation of Thy presence, O Well-Beloved of all worlds, hath seized and possessed me.*[4]

The mystics would understand this: St. Theresa and John of the Cross and Rúmí and ‘Attár. This love is something that the mystics understand. It was St. Theresa who wrote: ‘Let mine eyes see Thee, sweet Jesus of Nazareth, Let mine eyes see Thee, and then see death.’

In the *Saturday Review of Literature* Elmer Davis brought out a now famous article called “No World, if Necessary”. It is a discussion of the book One World or None, described as a report to the public on the full meaning of the atomic bomb. This book is a collection of articles on the bomb and its implications, by American atomic scientists.

Elmer Davis emphasizes that the scientists state the problem but offer no solution—and he ends, ‘Has it occurred to them that if their one world turned out to be totalitarian and obscurationist [I looked up this word and it apparently means “striving to prevent enlightenment’] we might better have no world at all?’

Davis sees the need for a world language—which is one of the principles of our Faith. He also wants a world armed force, as the Bahá’ís do—this would be the most advanced army the world has ever known, serving the entire planet somewhat as a fire department puts out fires in a town. Davis says, I think very acutely, that the thirteen original states which federated had a common background as to institutions, traditions and thought.

It is precisely the function of the Bahá’í Faith to supply humanity with this common background. The Bahá’ís all have it, in the three hundred and thirty countries where the Faith has penetrated. To me it is miraculous that already a Persian peasant in a mountain village and a San Francisco matron walking down Post Street for instance, should have one and the same goal.

When I saw the representatives of the different nations together at the first United Nations Conference, they were many people, and they stayed many. When I attended the Bahá’í Convention I saw many different people who had become one.

How the unification of the human race has already been accomplished by Bahá’u’lláh is something for you to investigate. The world plan of Bahá’u’lláh is set forth in two short pages, in a wonderful statement by the Guardian of the Faith—called *A Pattern for Future Society*. There is nothing vague about the Bahá’í world of tomorrow. Although only the future can develop the

infinitely varied and complex picture, we know the general outlines as Bahá'u'lláh taught them to us in the second half of the 19th century.

The oneness of religions will be a vital factor in this world unification. Because it is not generally known in America that to be a Muslim you have to believe in both the Old Testament Prophets and Jesus, Whom the Muslims call the Spirit of God—Rúḥu'lláh—I shall quote this statement of the Muḥammadan belief from Qur'án 2:130:

> *Say ye: We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down to us, and that which hath been sent down to Abraham and Ismael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes: and that which hath been given to Moses and to Jesus, and that which was given to the prophets from their Lord. No difference do we make between any of them: and to God are we resigned.*

And to show the harmony between Jew and Muslim, there is this, from Qur'án 16:121, 124:

> *Verily, Abraham was a leader in religion ... We have moreover revealed to Thee that Thou follow the religion of Abraham, the sound in faith.*

Whenever people work to separate faiths, to revive old hatreds and further antagonisms, we should work to demonstrate their oneness.

The Bahá'í civilization is based on the fact that once again a Manifestation of God has appeared among men. It is through approaching Bahá'u'lláh that we have all become unified—however diversified we were before.

Our loyalty is to something beyond the horizons of this world—it is to something not ourselves that makes for righteousness, as Matthew Arnold says.

The fanatical Persians who opposed Bahá'u'lláh thought He attracted people through magic or through a substance which He mixed with the tea He served to His guests. But we whose eyes have never seen Him, for He died an Exile and Prisoner near 'Akká in 1892—know that the magic was not in the tea.

In His Tablet to Pope Pius IX, Bahá'u'lláh says:

> *The Word which the Son concealed is made manifest. It hath been sent down in the form of the human temple in this day. Blessed*

be the Lord Who is the Father! He, verily, is come unto the nations in His most great majesty ... My body longeth for the cross, and Mine head waiteth the thrust of the spear, in the path of the All-Merciful, that the world may be purged from its transgressions.[5]

It is very difficult to tell about the Bahá'í Faith; the teachings are so rich, so vast. Bahá'u'lláh wrote a hundred volumes—and there are also the writings of the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi. It is hard to tell anything adequate of all this. It is like the Persian story of the holy man or mystic who was sitting under a tree, lost in meditation. His disciples sat around him, and when he returned to himself they asked: Out of that garden whence you have come, what gift did you bring us? He said: 'I had in mind when I should come to the rose-tree, to hold out my skirt and fill it with flowers as a gift to the friends. But when I reached there, the scent of the roses so ravished my senses that my robe fell away from my hands.'

Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*

THIS IS THE LAST OUTSTANDING Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh. The last He wrote before He left us; before that happened of which the Báb has written, 'all sorrow is but the shadow of that sorrow." This is the last of the hundred books He revealed for us.

It was written to a priest in Iṣfáhán, a priest called the 'Son of the Wolf'. His father had spoken the words that sent the 'twin shining lights,'—the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs—to their death. They were laid in two sandy graves near Iṣfáhán. (Years afterward, an American woman named Keith Ransom Kehler knelt there and wept and brought them flowers; then in a few days she was stricken and died, and the friends carried her back to these same graves and buried her beside them.)

This priest, Áqá Najafí, had committed the unforgivable sin: he had violated the Covenant and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit; that is, he had hated, not the lamp, not the Prophet of God as an individual—from ignorance, or because he did not recognize Him—but the light itself, the perfections of God which the Prophet reflects; he had hated the light in the lamp—and 'this detestation of the light has no remedy …'[2]

This priest was, then, the most hopeless of sinners. His evil found expression in many ways, and among them was this, that with his pupils, he kicked at and trampled the martyred body of Mírzá Ashraf, in Iṣfáhán (not the Ashraf of whom we read in *Gleanings*,[3] Siyyid Ashraf, whose head was cut off in Zanján).

And yet, Bahá'u'lláh begins this Tablet with a prayer of repent-

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ance for Áqá Najafí to recite. He offers this breaker of the Covenant forgiveness; just as, in His Most Holy Book, He offers forgiveness to Mírzá Yaḥyá, the treacherous half-brother who tried to destroy him. This offering is a demonstration of 'Badá'—of the principle of the free operation of the Will of God, Who doeth whatsoever He willeth and shall not be asked of His doings. It proves how mistaken is that large group of human beings who believe that everything is on a mechanical basis—that this much sin brings this much punishment, and so much good buys so much reward. To them, God is a blind force, operating mechanically—something like the third rail in the subway. They themselves, however, would greatly resent being called a blind force. (The Báb develops this principle of 'Badá' in the Persian Bayán.)

> *Thou beholdest, O my God, him who is as one dead fallen at the door of Thy favour, ashamed to seek from the hand of Thy loving-kindness the living waters of Thy pardon.*
>
> *Thou hast ordained that every pulpit be set apart for Thy mention ... but I have ascended it to proclaim the violation of Thy Covenant ...*
>
> *O Lord, my Lord! and again, O Lord, my Lord! and yet again, O Lord, my Lord!*[4]

Throughout the Tablet, he is several times directed to pray; is addressed as would be one of Bahá'u'lláh's own sons; is told to arise and serve the Faith; to believe, serve and trust; to enter the presence of Bahá'u'lláh (Whom he had never seen);[5] to save men from the 'mire of self,'[6] to 'seek the Most Great Ocean'[7] and that 'thereupon, will the doors of the Kingdom be flung wide before thy face …'[8] He is told: 'O Shaykh! We have enabled thee to hear the melodies of the Nightingale of Paradise … that thine eye might be cheered …'[9]

As Dr. Ali-Kuli Khan has pointed out,[10] the varying titles by which Bahá'u'lláh addresses Áqá Najafí indicate that the Letter is intended for a much larger audience than he. It is 'a presentation of the Faith to humanity'; many aspects of man are singled out and addressed. These titles include: 'O Shaykh'; 'O distinguished divine'; 'O thou who has gone astray!'; 'O thou who hast turned away from God!' Occasionally, too, others are specifically named: 'O people of Bahá'; 'O Hádí'.[11] Many aspects of man are singled

out and addressed. You find here, not only the evil priests who in every dispensation hold men back from their Lord—the 'blind mouths' of *Lycidas*—but the good divines, who are 'as eyes to the nations,' reminiscent of the ''Ulamá in Bahá' of the Most Holy Book. You find here the king and the scholar, the everyday believer, the saint, the sinner.

This Tablet, then, is much more than a letter to an individual. It is an important general presentation of the Faith. In this Work, as the Guardian tells us, Bahá'u'lláh 'quotes some of the most characteristic and celebrated passages of His own writings, and adduces proofs establishing the validity of His cause.'[12]

Most books bring you closer to the author. But when you study the work of Bahá'u'lláh, He eludes you. As the Guardian has told us in *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*, He is 'unapproachably glorious'. Goethe says, 'Above all peaks there is rest.' I have read this book three times and studied it over a long period; it seems to me more likely that above all peaks there is another peak.

You want, though it is almost impossible, to read this at one sitting. It comes rapidly, and the English translation by the Guardian is flawless. You want more and more of it and are too impatient to stop and think over this and this, as you are urged along, and you mark things to come back to. It contains sentences like these:

I belong to him that loveth Me ...

... others had, at times, to nourish themselves with that Divine sustenance which is hunger.

In the treasuries of the knowledge of God there lieth concealed a knowledge which, when applied, will largely, though not wholly, eliminate fear.

Man's actions are acceptable after his having recognized [*the Manifestation*].

He is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of My love ...

A just king enjoyeth nearer access unto God than anyone.

These, verily, are men who if they come to cities of pure gold will

consider them not; and if they meet the fairest and most comely of women will turn aside.[13]

It offers historical material which in future will stimulate the keenest research. We learn, for example, of the Master's first betrothal; of Bahá'u'lláh's arrest in Níyávarán and of the kind of chains He was bound with; of the machinations against Him by Persian officials in Constantinople and of the suicide there of Ḥájí Shaykh Muḥammad-'Alí; the fact that Mírzá Yaḥyá was not exiled out of Persia; that he abandoned the writings of the Báb in Baghdád; that Hádí Dawlat-Ábádí tried to destroy every copy of the Bayán; that the Azalís tried to claim Siyyid Javád-i-Karbilá'í as one of themselves, pasting his picture under that of Mírzá Yaḥyá; that Bahá'u'lláh had never read the Bayán; that in 1863 (this date is given in *God Passes By*) Bahá'u'lláh suggested to a Turkish official, Kamál Páshá, that his government convene a gathering to plan for a world language and script.[14] (In this connection, Volapük was invented by Johann Martin Schleyer of Konstanz, Baden, about 1879; Esperanto, by Dr. Ludovic Lazarus Zamenhof, was first discussed in print by him in 1887.)

It gives us a moral code, including such precepts as:

If anyone revile you, or trouble touch you, in the path of God, be patient, and put your trust in Him Who heareth, Who seeth. He, in truth, witnesseth, and perceiveth, and doeth what He pleaseth, through the power of His sovereignty.[15]

The sword of wisdom is hotter than summer heat, and sharper than blades of steel ... withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess.

If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin.[16]

Be ... thankful in adversity ... Be fair in thy judgment and guarded in thy speech ... Be a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression ... a home for the stranger ...[17]

The fear of God is continually stressed:

We enjoin the servants of God and His handmaidens to be pure

and to fear God ...[18] *The fear of God hath ever been a ... safe stronghold ...*[19] *Their [the Bahá'ís] hearts are illumined with the light of the fear of God ...*[20]

Students of the Qur'án will remember how strikingly the fear of God is likewise extolled in that Book: 'God loveth those who fear Him,' and 'Whoso feareth God, his evil deeds will He cancel …'[21] Among many such precepts, Bahá'u'lláh states here: 'Regard for the rank of sovereigns is divinely ordained …'[22] and interprets 'Render unto Caesar' far differently from the current meaning given this verse in Christendom, where it is made to imply that Caesar is a sort of reversal of God, a concept at variance with the Bahá'í teaching on kingship.

Bahá'u'lláh also answers, in this Work, a question often asked: Why a new religion? He says, by implication to the Muslims, that if they prefer what is ancient, why did they adopt the Qur'án in place of the Old and New Testaments? And He states that if bringing a new Faith be His crime, then Muḥammad committed it before Him, and before Him Jesus, and still earlier, Moses. He adds:

And if My sin be this, that I have exalted the Word of God and revealed His Cause, then indeed am I the greatest of sinners! Such a sin I will not barter for the kingdoms of earth and heaven.[23]

(Strange, how often the public asks this question, forgetting today's universal wretchedness; the mind's loneliness, that is crowding those brick buildings with the barred porches, that you see as you travel through the country; the enslavement of human beings by other human beings like themselves; the moral rottenness —you have only to look at the sidewalks of any big city early in the morning, and the debris in its gutters, you do not even have to read the doctors' case histories, or the newspapers. And if you are one of those 'nice people' so many persons claim to be, who do not drink to excess, nor harm anyone, and therefore do not need a God to obey—or need only some sterile deity of their own choosing, a selection from whose precepts they will follow when they see fit, and whose synthetic thunder, listened to, or not listened to, once a week, does not fool them for a moment—then you are empty, you are ineffective, you make no impact on society; and those discarded men sprawling in the streets are your glass of wine, and those piles of dead bodies you turn away from in the press, are your professed

goodwill, and all that useless agony in so many men's and women's hearts, is your sexual sophistication.)

The Bahá'ís of the West are gradually learning more about the Báb; through *The Dawn-Breakers*, *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*, and this present Text, they are drawing closer to Him, and to the story of His life, which is the story of His love for Bahá'u'lláh. Among His utterances here is the striking plea to His followers that even should an impostor arise after Him, they should not protest against the man, nor sadden him.[24] In time, twenty-five persons, most of whom later begged forgiveness of Bahá'u'lláh, claimed to be He Whom God Shall Manifest.[25] This was because of His longing to protect the True One. He is His own proof, the Báb told His followers: '… who then can know Him through any one except Himself ?'[26] The breath of the Báb's despair is here, and His beautiful words, 'I … am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make Manifest …'[27] Bahá'u'lláh links the Heraldship of the Báb with that of John the Baptist, and shows how John's companions as well 'were prevented from acknowledging Him Who is the Spirit (Jesus).'[28]

Not only are we brought near to Him Who was the return of the Twelfth Imám, but to all the Imáms, and—since the Guardian is as the Imám—to the institution of Guardianship in our own Faith. The reference to the 'snow-white' hand of the Qá'im goes back to Moses' sign in the Qur'án.[29] By the 'Impost'[30] is meant the tithe, payment of which is a religious duty, as are the Fast and the Pilgrimage: 'We are the Way … and We are the Impost, and We are the Fast, and We are the Pilgrimage, and We are the Sacred Month, and We are the Sacred City …' says the Imám Ja'far-i-Ṣádiq. In connection with the Imámate, E. G. Browne's brief summary is valuable: 'According to the Imámite view … the vice-regency is a matter altogether spiritual; an office conferred by God alone, first by His Prophet, and afterwards by those who so succeeded him … the Imám of the Shiites is the divinely-ordained successor of the Prophet, one endowed with all perfections and spiritual gifts, one whom all the faithful must obey, whose decision is absolute and final, whose wisdom is superhuman and whose words are authoritative.'[31]

Swiftly, in this Book, the scenes pass. There is the dungeon, and the dream there, and the promise:

Verily We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen ... Erelong will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee ...[32]

There is the dramatic suicide in the mosque, of Ḥájí Shaykh Muḥammad-'Alí. There is the 'city, on the shores of the sea, white, whose whiteness is pleasing unto God …'[33] The mood varies, the tempo shifts. You can hear these swift questions and answers in music, as a kind of spiritual:

Hath the Hour come? Nay, more; it hath passed ... Seest thou men laid low? Yea, by my Lord ... Blinded art thou... Paradise is decked with mystic roses ... Hell hath been made to blaze.[34]

There are the thought-inducing lines on the moan of the pulpits:

I was walking in the Land of Ṭá (Ṭihrán)—the dayspring of the signs of thy Lord—when lo, I heard the lamentation of the pulpits and the voice of their supplication unto God, blessed and glorified be He. They cried out and said ... Alas, alas! .. Would that we had never been created and revealed by Thee![35]

This reminds us of the Qur'ánic verse, referred to earlier by Bahá'u'lláh: 'God, Who giveth us a voice …'[36] And then the earth-quaking apostrophe to the She-Serpent:

Judge thou equitably, O She-Serpent! For what crime didst thou sting the children of the Apostle of God ...?[37]

This refers to the martyrdom of the 'twin shining lights,' descendants of Muḥammad; you would need Michelangelo or Milton to comment here.

People who must choose often ask whether they should add this or that book to their private library. My reasons for owning this one are: Its beauty of text, translation, and format; its brevity; its richness from the academic point of view—the materials it offers for study; its comprehensiveness—for, although it is an independent creative work, having its own unity of form, its own personal spirit—it is almost an anthology, and one selected by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. And then, there is the totality of its impact on the reader, and the eternal gift it holds out to him, of the mercy of God.

Yes, it helps us to enter His presence; it brings us to 'Him Whom the world hath cast away and the nations abandoned …'[38]

Where has Áqá Najafí gone now? Where has he gone in his enormous globular turban and his curled-up shoes? He was, as Bahá'u'lláh called his fellow, 'the last trace of sunlight upon the mountain-top.'[39] Where has he taken all his hatred? In any event, it became the occasion of this Book, this last earthly gift to us from Bahá'u'lláh; His enemies brought Him poison, but He changed it into honey for His loved ones.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in America

ADDRESS DELIVERED ON THE BAHÁ’Í CENTENARY, WILMETTE, 1944

ONE OF THE POEMS OF William Blake centres around the legend that Jesus visited the West. This poem has been set to music and Paul Robeson sings it unforgettably. Blake says among other things: ‘And did those feet in ancient time Walk upon England’s mountains green? … And did the countenance divine Shine forth upon our clouded hills?’

Almost in our time, a world faith has been born. One of the Central Figures of this faith journeyed to the West. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s western journey will mean more and more to this hemisphere and to the whole world, as the years go by.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá sailed on the *Cedric* from Alexandria, and He reached New York April 11, 1912. The reporters went aboard the *Cedric* at quarantine. The ship was held up several hours because there was smallpox and some typhoid aboard. They found the Master on the upper deck, standing where He could see the pilot; one of the interviewers, Wendell Phillips Dodge, wrote an especially fine feature article which the Associated Press later spread throughout the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s face, the account says, ‘was light itself’. He was ‘strongly and solidly built … alert and active … His head thrown back and splendidly poised … A profusion of iron grey hair bursting out at the sides of the turban and hanging long upon the neck; a … massive head … remarkably wide across the forehead and

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temples…'. He was wearing a long black robe over a second robe of light tan, and His turban was pure white.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was always at home with everyone. When the reporters approached Him He talked to them about newspapers. He said: 'There are good and bad newspapers. Those which … hold the mirror up to truth, are like the sun: they light the world …' During the crossing, the Master had spent much of His time standing beside the wireless operator. He was greatly interested in modern inventions; He was to say: 'Science is not material; it is Divine … every other blessing is temporary. Science is a blessing which man does not have to give up.'

The reporters were pleased when 'Abdu'l-Bahá told them a story about a pilgrim going to Jerusalem; 'Abdu'l-Bahá had said to the pilgrim that love for God should be to him as a telegraph wire, one end in the heavenly kingdom, the other in his heart. The pilgrim answered that his telegraph wire had broken down. The Master had replied: 'Then you will have to use wireless telegraphy.'[1] There was a memorable moment when the *Cedric* passed alongside the Statue of Liberty. As you know, the Statue seems almost a living presence. There is a definite feeling of holiness about it, because it embodies the hope of so many millions of people around the planet. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, standing on the deck before it, 'held His arms wide … in salutation and said, "There is the new world's symbol of liberty and freedom. After being forty years a prisoner I can tell you that freedom is not a matter of place. It is a condition … When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed a release."'[2]

The reporters asked Him about women's suffrage. He told them that women should be given the same advantages as men—that if you had to choose between educating a boy and a girl, educate the girl—that even physical inequalities are due to custom and training. He added that the world of tomorrow will be much more a woman's world than now, because 'the spiritual qualities … are gaining ascendancy'.[3]

All this time, and since early morning, hundreds of Bahá'ís had been waiting on the pier. 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not wish a public welcome, and when the ship docked, He sent word that they should meet Him that afternoon at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. Kinney.

In looking over the records of that journey, we find that the American clergy, both rabbis and ministers, gave ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a special welcome and paid Him many tributes. A few sacrificed their pulpits to become declared Bahá’ís.

His first public talk in America took place in a church. It was the Church of the Ascension on lower Fifth Avenue in New York. This old church is open day and night, and some of us like to go there and remember the days of the Master, because His presence is always immediate there. A light always burns on the altar between two white candles. There is a low, carved wooden pulpit. The stained glass is aquamarine and amber, draped Gospel figures and sky and blossoms; much pale gold, and an Oriental feeling; pale gold organ pipes, like bars of sunlight moving into the shadows. The rector, Percy Stickney Grant, said when he introduced ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: ‘In Him we see a master of the things of the spirit.’

Another early talk was at the Bowery Mission in New York. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told the poor that they were His companions. He told them that Jesus lived in the fields, exposed to rain and cold. He said happiness does not depend on wealth. At the close He shook hands with each of the three or four hundred men present and gave each some pieces of silver, so that none of them went without food and a bed that night. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself was poor to the end of His life, because He gave everything away. During His last night on earth, they wanted to change His night robe to cool Him from the fever; they looked for His other robe, but He had none because He had given it away.

Soon after coming to America the Master visited Washington. He was greeted at the railway station by Persia’s envoy, Ali-Kuli Khan. Banished from His native land, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was nevertheless welcomed across the world by Persia’s representative.

In Washington many leading personalities of the day were presented to the Master at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Parsons and also at the Persian Legation. The Red Cross was having its ninth international meeting, and its Secretary, Miss Mabel Boardman, generally left her office only to consult with President Taft, but she came to the Legation to meet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; among others present at this reception were Admiral Peary, just back from the North Pole and the celebrity of the hour, and Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone. The Master met each one and said

something specially directed to each. To Admiral Peary He said, smiling: 'You have been afar off, in those northern regions. What did you find there, except ice and cold? If you journey in the regions of heaven, you will find the Divine Presence.'[4]

Alexander Graham Bell was so impressed by the Master that he invited Him to attend a Wednesday night symposium at the Bell home, where every available scientist of note was a frequent guest. In the course of His talk there, the Master said that the telephone was vitally important, but that His own work was to teach men how to communicate with God.

In Washington, 'Abdu'l-Bahá also spoke to over one thousand of the faculty and students at Howard University. He always seemed happiest when both black and white were present, as on this occasion. The audience listened breathlessly. His talk was 'followed by a positive ovation and a recall.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá always approached the question of human varieties without sentimentality. He simply declared that all human beings are made of one substance. That day at Howard He said: 'Today I am most happy … I see the white and colored people together. In the estimation of God there is no distinction of color; all are one in the color … of servitude to Him … I pray in your behalf that there shall be no name other than that of humanity among you.'[5]

There was a famous children's meeting held in Washington, typical of many that followed. (The Master had time for the children. One child printed a letter to Him, and He answered it on the back, in His own hand, and returned it to the family to keep.) He blessed and embraced the children and gave them gifts: rock candy, or perhaps an envelope full of flower petals. He taught the giving of presents. A Bahá'í who sat outside His door told me that from dawn till midnight, people would stream in with fruit or flowers, and each person would leave with some gift another had brought. Costly gifts He would not accept. He did not permit the American Bahá'ís to pay His expenses or to give Him things. He said you should even shake the dust of a town off your shoes and not carry it away with you.

Late one afternoon in Washington He said: 'Today from morning until this moment, I have been speaking. From dawn even until now.'[6] Looking back, we wonder how His body could bear

the load. In New York alone, during the seventy-nine days He was there, He made public addresses in, or formal visits to, fifty-five different places. He was sixty-eight; He had been a prisoner forty years. Once He said to Juliet Thompson: 'I work by the confirmations of the Holy Spirit. I do not work by hygienic laws. If I did I would get nothing done.'[7] That afternoon in Washington, He spoke of the sinking of the *Titanic*; He was grieved that some of His fellow-passengers had transferred at Naples, from the *Cedric* to the *Titanic*. He said: 'At first it is very difficult to welcome death.' Then He told them: 'These disasters sometimes take place that men may know that God is the real Protector.'[8]

In Chicago 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke before the Fourth Annual Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He said that being made in the image and likeness of God was not meant in a physical sense, but that 'the perfections of God, the divine virtues, are reflected … in the human reality'.[9] He spoke at Hull House, saying 'There is need of a superior power to overcome human prejudices …'[10] He addressed the Federation of Women's Clubs and the Theosophical Society.

A photograph shows. 'Abdu'l-Bahá here, on this ground, laying the cornerstone of this Temple. The Master is seated, perfectly natural and at ease, holding a wooden implement of some kind. Every one in the picture looks serious, and aware. In the corner you can see Lua, the Mother Teacher of the West. The Master broke the earth with a gold trowel; then He called for more workmanlike implements and they brought an axe and shovel. The nations whose citizens helped break the ground that day were Persia, Syria, Egypt, India, South Africa, England, France, Germany, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Jews of the world, and the American Indians. When the Master set the stone in its place He said, 'The Temple is already built.'

In the same way, we Bahá'ís know that the federated world of the future—the Most Great Peace—is already built.

Speaking at the Plaza Hotel in Chicago, the Master said this about the destiny of America: '… because I find the American nation so capable of achievement, and this government the fairest of western governments, its institutions superior to others, my wish and hope is that the banner of international reconciliation may first be raised on this continent and the standard of the "Most

Great Peace" be unfurled here. May the American people and their government unite in their effort in order that this light may dawn from this point and spread to all regions …'[11]

He loved to walk in Lincoln Park. There is a photograph showing the Bahá'ís seated on park benches around Him and listening to Him teach. One day in the park He said: 'Some of you have observed that I have not called attention to any of your individual shortcomings. I would suggest to you, that if you shall be similarly considerate in your treatment of each other, it will be greatly conducive to the harmony of your association.'[12]

Somewhere in America 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a memorable talk with a rabbi. The rabbi finally said, 'Indeed, you are one of the greatest logicians of the world. Up to this time I have been talking to you as a man; now I will address you as a rabbi.' As always with the Jewish peoples, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained the station of Christ and urged them to accept Him. He showed how Jesus spread the Old Testament around the world. He said that if they would declare that Christ was the Word of God their troubles would be over. Of their persecutions He once prophesied: 'You must not think it is ended. The time may come when in Europe itself they will rise against the Jews.'[13] The rabbi objected to the Christians worshipping Jesus and the Master replied: 'Christ was the mirror; God was the sun.'

Among the interviews one of my favourites is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talk with Hudson Maxim, the inventor. Maxim invented a high explosive called 'Maximite'; he was the first in America to make smokeless gunpowder; he built a dynamite factory, and so on. The Master showed on this occasion that He could speak with humour even about the central purpose of His life—world peace; He said: 'During these six thousand years there has been constant war, strife, bloodshed. We can see at a glance the results. Have we not a sufficient standard of experience in this direction? Let us now try peace for a while. If good results follow, let us adhere to it. If not let us throw it away and fight again. Nothing will be lost by the experiment.'

Maxim said our industries kill more men than war does, through preventable accidents. The Master replied, 'War is the most preventable accident.'

Maxim kept minimizing the dangers of modern warfare. He

said, 'War is no more dangerous than automobiling.' The Master kept insisting on the terrific power of modern war, describing results which have only been realized today. He said, '… in modern times the science of war has reached such a stage of perfection that in twenty-four hours one hundred thousand could be sacrificed, great navies sent to the bottom of the sea, great cities destroyed … The possibilities are incalculable, inconceivable …' Maxim replied by making a diagram to show one's relative safety when in the neighbourhood of an exploding bomb.[14]

One minister who came was not friendly. 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered all his questions with reserve and patience. The minister asked by what authority Bahá'u'lláh is placed with Abraham, Moses and Jesus—and 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, 'Today we believe Bahá'u'lláh to be an educator … If He has opened the doors of human hearts to a higher consciousness, He is a heavenly educator. If He has not accomplished this we are privileged to deny His claim …' Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave the minister an armful of white roses.[15]

In the pine grove at West Englewood, New Jersey, the Master founded a commemorative meeting which will last always. He said, 'The very words I speak to you today shall be repeated … for ages to come.'[16] There were black and white present—there were Jews, Christians, Moslems. The Master was Host. As always when He was present, there was love present.

He brought something back to the world that had died out of it. He brought love back. His stay on earth with us reminds me of something Swedenborg has written: 'There was a certain hard-hearted spirit with whom an angel spoke. At length he was so affected by what was said that he shed tears, saying that he had never wept before, but he could not refrain, for it was love speaking.'

When the Master first came to America a moving picture company requested Him to pose for them. He replied 'Khaylí khúb' (very good). The Bahá'ís were horrified. They told Him that His photograph would be shown in moving picture houses all over the country. He replied 'Bisyár khúb' (most good). The company made a wonderfully impressive short of Him; as He was photographed, He was praying that God would bless this means of spreading the Faith.[17]

Later the Bahá'ís requested Him to have a longer film made and this was done in the Howard MacNutt home in Brooklyn. Many of

you have seen it. The Master is all in white. He strides up and down in the garden, reminding one of what the ancients said—that the gods were known by their walk. He also shows His absolute meekness and servitude—going here and there as the Bahá'ís asked. You may have noticed that in the film, a lady kisses His hand; His reaction is instant disapproval. He did not wish such demonstrations, because He said we are all servants. In one shot He is almost completely hidden—by hats—ladies' hats. A long line of people pass before Him, many of them women, each one supporting a 1912 hat. (I privately call that scene the Clouds which obscure the Sun of Truth.) A recording was later made of His voice, speaking the same words as in the film, but everyone agrees that it does not affect one as did His living voice.

At first it seemed as if the Master did not plan to visit California. He said that He had already worked very hard in the United States. He said He had 'breathed on the souls … of all the Bahá'ís in such a way that had it been upon bone, it would have taken on flesh …'[18] One day in Dublin, New Hampshire, He told how the California Bahá'ís were urging Him to visit the West Coast. He loved Dublin; He said in English: 'Good mountains, good green, good meadow, good plain, good view …'[19] He always responded to green trees. Once on the train, going past trees, He turned to a fellow-passenger and said, 'The green—the green'! The prison-land around 'Akká had been very barren.[20]

Somebody in Dublin wanted to know: 'What shall we say when they ask, "Of what use are the flies and mosquitoes?"' 'Abdu'l-Bahá told him to answer: 'Of what use are you? What benefit have you given to the world? The same benefit that you have given to the world, the mosquito has. You say that the mosquito … sucks human blood; but you kill animals and eat them … Therefore you are more harmful than the mosquito.'[21]

And 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to California and other western states. America's first Bahá'í, Thornton Chase, died in Los Angeles before the Master reached there. 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to the graveside and scattered flowers over it—took the flowers and scattered them. It was like Shakespeare's word 'to strew' ('Sweets to the sweet … I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd … And not have strewed thy grave.'). Even from Beirut, Syria, people wrote to America about this episode. The Master said that the Bahá'ís should visit

the grave of Thornton Chase every year on His behalf and feed and give alms to the poor.[22]

There were many unforgettable days in California. In Sacramento, the capital, the Master said: 'May the first flag of International Peace be upraised in this state.'[23]

In Oakland He spoke before the Japanese Y.M.C.A. A Japanese poet, Mr. Kanno, read a poem composed in His honour. The Master's talk was translated from Persian to English to Japanese. There were many scholars present. Mothers held out their babies to Him and He smiled and blessed them and said: 'Good baby, Japanese baby.'[24]

He addressed nearly two thousand of the students and faculty at Stanford University, being introduced by the president, David Starr Jordan. As at Howard University, they gave Him an ovation. The November 1st, 1912, issue of the *Palo Altan* is entirely devoted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit and His California addresses. The editorial is titled: "The New Evangel".

People will always remember the day He spoke in Temple Emmanu-El, the great synagogue in San Francisco. He stood in the pulpit, between pillars of palms, and the sunlight filtered down through coloured windows. As ever, He urged the Jewish people to believe in Christ, and gave them logical reasons for so believing. In the same way, He always urged the Christians to believe in the Prophet Muḥammad. He did not always tell people what they wanted to hear—He told them what they had to hear—and made them like it.

In San Francisco He spoke to the blind. He said 'sight is only for a time, but insight sees the beauty of God. May you not see the dust …'[25] He showed special favour to East Indian university students who visited Him. He loved Golden Gate Park, and used to walk along the shore of a little lake there.

And there was the great Feast in Oakland, at the home of Mrs. Goodall. The rooms were decorated with yellow chrysanthemums and pyramids of fruit. 'Abdu'l-Bahá walked about, speaking to the Bahá'ís as they sat at the table and ate.

Here in California too, as in New York, He affirmed His function as the Centre of the Covenant. He showed how every Prophet entered into a Covenant with His people: promised a future Prophet. Abraham promised Moses; Moses promised Jesus; Jesus,

Muḥammad; Muḥammad, the Báb .and Bahá'u'lláh. But Bahá'-u'lláh's Covenant is unique in human history, because it is two-fold: He tells of a Promised One who will not appear before a full thousand years; but He also appoints in writing the Interpreter of His Faith, the Centre of His Covenant, His Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Today we know what they did not known in 1912—that 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His turn appointed a Centre, around which the Bahá'í Faith revolves: His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause.

New York is called the City of the Covenant, because in New York 'Abdu'l-Bahá climaxed His life work by establishing for all time the character and implications of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant. This fact of the Covenant protects the Bahá'í Faith from schism, all over the world.

In Boston, exactly thirty-two years ago tonight, the Master spent His Birthday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Francis W. Breed. Mrs. Breed baked the birthday cake herself, and she planted tiny flags all over it, representing as many nations as she could find … The main lesson He taught, I think, was love. You could say He was all mind, all magic and sensitivity and laughter, but still the main thing was love. Everyone understood it. A nun going by on the street looked tenderly at Him; He spoke to one of the Bahá'ís in His party and said, 'Tell her who I am.'[26] In California He gave a talk and as always He stopped every few moments for the interpreter to put the words into English. There was an American in the audience, a poor man, an uneducated man; he hated the interpreter; he said: 'Why does that fellow interrupt the Master all the time?'[27]

On the *Celtic*, that last day, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was to sail away, He told His followers that they must love all mankind. He said, 'Beware lest ye offend any heart, lest ye speak against anyone in his absence, lest ye estrange yourselves from the servants of God … You must consider your enemies as your friends … Those who are not agreeable toward you must be regarded as those who are congenial and pleasant …'[28]

This western hemisphere will always carry the mark of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's footsteps; always remember His coming out of prison, in His old age, to sow the seeds of peace in the West. Because it is as one of the poets has written—'The years are very long, but love is longer.'

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Portrayals from East and West

MATERIALS FROM THE PAPERS OF ALI-KULI KHAN AND THE CONVERSATIONS OF JOHN AND LOUISE BOSCH

ALI-KULI KHAN (NABÍLU’D-DAWLIH) was born in Kásh<u>h</u>án, Persia, about 1879. His father was Mírzá ‘Abdu’r-Raḥím <u>Kh</u>án Ḍarrábí. About the year 1898, Ali-Kuli Khan became a Bahá’í and from that time on served the Faith for almost seventy years, till his death in Washington, D.C. April 7, 1966. In 1909 he was sent by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the United States as a Bahá’í translator and teacher. Later, marrying an American lady, he headed the Persian Legation at Washington. It was he who selected and dispatched W. Morgan Shuster to Persia to reorganize, as Treasurer-General, the country’s fiscal structure; and who persuaded President Woodrow Wilson to make it possible for Persia to send a mission to the Peace Conference at Versailles. A member of that mission, Ali-Kuli Khan later served his country in various other capacities and became Head of the Court of the then Crown Prince Regent (Qájár). His life goal, the linking of Persia and America, can be summed up in these words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from The Promulgation of Universal Peace:

‘For the Persians there is no government better fitted to contribute to the development of their natural resources and the helping of their national needs ... than the United States of America; and for the Americans there could be no better industrial outlet and market ... It is my hope that the great American democracy may be instrumental in developing these hidden resources…. May the material civilization of America find complete efficacy and establishment in Persia, and the

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spiritual civilization of Persia find acceptance in America … . Surely there will be great harvests of results …'[1]

WHEN I WAS SEVEN WE LIVED IN Ṭihrán, where my father was Mírzá ʻAbdu'r-Raḥím Khán the Kalántar (Mayor). A mullá taught us children in school. We sat in a row on the floor, each with his book before him on a bookstand. We read the Qur'án without knowing what it meant, and Saʻdí, and Ḥáfiẓ. The mullá had a long, slim, flexible pole (*falak*); whenever he thought best, a child's feet would be strung to it by a rope; each end of the pole was held by boys who twisted it so the feet were held fast, soles up; the mullá himself did the whipping, beating the soles of the victim with his club (*chúb*) till, sometimes, the blood came. This was the bastinado. The children were terrified of it; panic made me study extra hard. Like most boys everywhere, the boys were cruel enough. They used to carry black Japanese reeds that had a string-like fibre inside; with this fibre, they would, when the mullá's attention wandered, thread a live fly, and watch it fly off, trailing its thread. Sometimes they were punished for that. Another favourite thing was, using the two forefingers, to shoot white beans at the mullá or another boy. Nobody would ever give anybody away; the source of the bean was impossible to trace. Since we always read our lessons aloud in a kind of murmuring chant, the boys, whatever else they might be up to, would keep on with their murmuring, to convince the mullá that all was well.

I was born with a tooth, which in Persia is supposed to mean precocity. I was always the youngest. This was bad enough, but later on when we were sent to the Sháh's college my studious habits, coupled with the fact that I always told the truth, got me into real trouble: the others would beat me for studying. A teacher would ask a question, and each boy would say in turn, *man balad nístam*—'I don't know.' The teacher would get to me and I would come out with, 'I don't know, …' and then I would weep and say, 'I know but I'm scared of *them* …' One time this led to twenty of them being bastinadoed—all my older brother's—Ḥusayn-Qulí Khán's—best friends. That night I didn't dare sleep at our house. When it seemed wisest I would sleep over at my uncle's; he and his wife, a granddaughter of Fath-ʻAlí Sháh, treated me as their son. In any

case I kept on memorizing most of the pocket edition of Samuel Johnson's dictionary and after a while the others realized that my industry could be put to practical use: in our English class they would force me to write compositions for the whole class; thirty compositions, each one different. However, on their outings, they wouldn't take me along, saying I was too little.

By then, our father was dead. He had become a Bahá'í, but our mother continued to be a strict Muslim throughout her life. Father used to say, 'I know my boys will become Bahá'ís.' And we did, but our two sisters remained Muslim. My brother was, to begin with, a strict Muslim himself, and he was an athlete and very strong. Then another athlete, Ustád Qulám Ḥusayn-i-Banná, taught him the Bahá'í Faith. My case was different. Because of all that schooling I had no interest in religion at all. What engrossed my mind—crushed me, in fact—was the way foreigners were exploiting my country. I could see how they were setting up their puppets, making use of the mullás, and preventing the Sháh from sending students abroad. By now, what with speaking English and French and being known as a serious scholar I had become a kind of student leader, with my own little group. At the time I was one of five Persians who were fluent in English, and received an appointment as chief translator to the Prime Minister. But my brother began to draw my friends away.

In those days I would drink my fill of *'araq*—ardent spirit. It looks like water but there the resemblance ends. By night my friends and I would visit an old graveyard strewn with rocks and planted with clover. We used to sit there in the bright moonlight, breathe the crystal air, recite poems, and drink, and play the *tár*—a kind of guitar with six strings, played by plectrum—and beat the *dunbak* or one-headed drum, played with the fingers and palm. Our poems were our own, or from the classics—Rúmí, perhaps ('*I drunk and you crazed, who will carry us home?*'). There were no girls; the girls were all veiled, all shut away in the *andarún* (the 'within'; that is, the gynaeceum or women's apartments, often, in Persia, a separate house).

Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh had a handsome son-in-law, Prince Ẓahíru'd-Dawlih. This prince had inherited the mantle of the great murshid or spiritual guide, Ṣafí-'Alí Sháh; he was a dervish, and belonged to the order of the Sháh Ni'matu'lláhí. His dervish headquarters,

that is his seminary or *takyih*, had become a fashionable retreat; and learning the mystical dervish terminology was now the style. When frequenting them I would use all their terms but with my own—and I am afraid often ribald—meanings. For example to their term '*Gazer*', (one who contemplates mystic beauty, *ahl-i-dídár*) I would append my secret definition: voyeur. The dervishes who conversed with me noted that my terms were always perfectly correct; the code meanings were only for me and my fellows. I also invented meaningless but impressive terms which gained respect; words, say, like khusvázíyár. If anything, I was a kind of diabolist in those days; it was my *défi* to the world. My fellows and I used to say that all those Muslim believers sitting around killing fleas in Paradise were good-for-nothings, and that the progressives were all in Hell.

Meanwhile the Dervish Prince and his intimates would foregather and repeat their *Dhikr* (remembrance or mentioning; the plural is *adhkár*; Shoghi Effendi translates *dhákirín*, from the same root, as rememberers). '*Alláh-hú*,' they would recite, '*Alláh-hú*:' God—He! God—He! And they would smoke their hashish, either in hubble-bubble pipes or ordinary pipes or cigarettes. The drug was made essentially of *chars*, Indian hemp juice, and the users were called *charsí*.

I knew where my brother was leading my friends astray. At night, after the curfew, they were crowding in with him to secret meetings in remote houses along the back lanes of Ṭihrán. Obviously if we were to keep on with our excursions and parties, I would have to act. I decided to attend their meetings, expose the foolishness of the teachers who addressed them and win back my friends. We had had good sport with the mullás and the dervishes; now I would show up the Bahá'ís. And so, hurrying along with the others, in almost total darkness, single file, I felt my way through the walled, uneven, pot-holed lanes of the city. If the youth at the front chanced to stumble into a hole, it was a point of honour with him to say nothing about it; the rest should also have their chance to stumble in.

For something like six months I attended these clandestine meetings. My servant waited at the door with my bottle of *'araq*, and once in a while I would stroll over to the door. Following hours

of talk, the hosts would bring in pulaw. I would grumble: "Must I listen all night, for one dish of pulaw?" But the truth was, after a while the Bahá'í teachers began to make sense; and I fell in love with 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

I made a secret vow, not ever to sleep in a bed till I should see the Master. This vow I kept for over a year, always sleeping on the ground, or the floor. With two friends I wandered off, all three disguised as dervishes, hoping to reach the Holy Land. We avoided the main caravan routes, and sometimes our lives were in peril. Then I was forced back to Ṭihrán because the way was barred by what seemed to be 'political plague'—plague, often non-existent, but conjured up by the colonial powers to close this or that frontier. Then in the dead of winter I simply walked off without saying good-bye to anyone. Somehow I got across the Caspian to Bákú and lived there in the cellar of the not-yet-built Bahá'í Travellers' Hospice. Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí (the Angel of Carmel) was there, aged prematurely because of his terrible imprisonment in the Sudan. He used to let me address the meetings there, and I spoke in Turkish. At last permission came for me from the Master. I went steerage, and disembarked from the ship by a rowboat, off Haifa. The believers met us there and took us to a coffee house where we were served tea, bread and cheese. I asked them, 'Where is the Master? Do we go to 'Akká now?' 'No,' they told us. 'The Master is in Haifa. He is now laying the foundation of the Holy Tomb on Mt. Carmel, and He spends a week in 'Akká and a week in Haifa.' They told me He had recently rented a house on an avenue roughly parallel to the sea, near a sort of embarcadero where the German Emperor, visiting Haifa, had landed the year before, in 1898. This avenue led to the street of the German Colony. (By 1906 when I was again on pilgrimage, the house was gone, or changed into an apartment house.)

I began to shake. 'The Master is here in Haifa? Am I going to see Him? Am I about to look upon His face?' 'Yes,' they told me. 'But how can I gaze upon the Master?' 'You will be happy to see Him,' they said. 'But when I look at myself, I know I do not deserve to enter His presence.' 'He invited you to come,' they said. 'And the Master is forgiving; and once you are in His presence your worries will be over.' We started out for the Master's house, I weeping all along the way. We got there and went up the steps.

Then came His voice, calling for the travellers. I never heard a sweeter voice; and yet it had authority; there was a ring to it; it was the kind of voice that would grow and reach out and still it was so melodious. At every moment, even now, that voice is in my ears. And I remember it together with the faint scent of attar of rose that He used; He had the attar, and the essence of rose too—they would send it to Him from places like Kásh<u>h</u>án and Iṣfáhán and Sh<u>h</u>íráz.

He had come over early from the small house in the German Colony, where He would spend the night, looked after by one or another of His daughters in turn, or by His sister, the Most Exalted Leaf. Very early, He had come over to receive the pilgrims. It was about sunrise, and not yet fully light. Following the others, I entered His room. I saw Him standing there. And suddenly, in my own mind, I was seeing Bahá'u'lláh, Who had passed away seven years before. I did not expect this age, this beard and hair (though there was still much black in it, mixed with the steel gray). The only picture we had ever seen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the one taken in His youth. Still, this was not an aged man who stood before us, but lithe and powerful. He wore a white turban, like a fez, only white, with a crisp white cloth wound about the base of it; usually He had on light gray robes, or beige or light brown. I think that day He wore a mantle called *jubbih* (not an *'abá*, an *'abá* has no sleeves), and it was gray. Only half-conscious, I fell to my knees and kissed His feet. He lifted me up and embraced me, kissing me on both cheeks. And seeing that I could not bear the intense power of His presence, He told His servant, Ustád Muḥammad-'Alí, to lead me to the travellers' room and give me refreshments. There I had some tea, and hardly ten minutes afterward, I felt strong again. At that moment Ustád Muḥammad-'Alí came in and said, 'The Master wants you.' This time when I entered His room the scene had changed. I was strong now; I heard Him say, '*<u>Kh</u>u<u>sh</u> ámadíd. Marḥabá, marḥabá* … .' A blessed arrival—welcome, welcome. Then He addressed me, speaking words such as these:

'The Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, may my soul be offered up for Him, promised this Servant that He would succour me from His All-Highest Realm; that He would raise up souls who would assist me to spread far and wide this Covenant and Cause. You are one of these souls, raised up to this end. The Cause of God has reached

America. Thus far, however, only a few pages of the sacred Writings have been translated into English, and not in the best way. Now that you have arrived, your knowledge of the English language and your eagerness to serve the Faith—expressed in so many letters—will enable you to accomplish this important work. I therefore wish you to remain in the Holy Land with this Servant, to translate the sacred Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and to serve as my amanuensis and interpreter. There are many letters which come in from America, and a number from American and other Bahá'ís in France and other parts of Europe. I wish you to translate these so that I may dictate the answers.'

'How wonderful that He desires me to stay on,' I thought to myself. For I had believed that like other pilgrims I would, after the long journey, be permitted to remain for a time and afterward I would return to my own country or leave for some other place which He might indicate. Then from the table He gathered up a sheaf of Tablets—written in glossy, black ink on cream-coloured paper, folded in three—placed them in my hands, and directed me to retire to the travellers' room and translate them. I looked at them. They were addressed to American believers and as was customary in those days, when the Master had had only occasional Syrian translators to serve Him, they were written in Arabic.

I found there were times when I could speak to the Master; there were other times when one did not dare. I never saw Him in the same condition: on occasion He was most approachable; again He was majestic, inaccessible, and one hardly dared breathe in His presence. But always He showed a great dignity, combined with courtesy and humility. For example when He desired to impress a person with the necessity of obeying the Teachings and rectifying his life, He never said: You must do thus and so, be self-sacrificing, see no fault in others, and so on—He always said: *We* must …

Now I could speak and I said to Him: 'But these are in Arabic!' He smiled in a divine way; His face beamed with light. He reached over to His table (throughout this interview He remained standing) —on which He had flowers, papers, rock candy, rose water—and with both hands full of candy He told me to hold out my hands. I laid the Tablets on the table edge, stretched out my cupped hands and He filled them with candy; and still smiling, He took my face in His two hands and said: 'Go and eat this candy, and by the grace

and power of the Blessed Beauty thou shalt be enabled to translate from Arabic into English. Indeed, thou shalt in time find it easier to translate from the Arabic than from the Persian.'

I cannot describe what strength was bestowed on me by that action of His, and those words. All I know is, I withdrew to the next room and then and there began to translate the Tablets. And yet—although the script is the same—Arabic is a foreign language to Persians, and my training had been in other tongues. In time I procured Arabic-English dictionaries but I found them so limited that they were of little help. Then I drew on translations made by Professor E. G. Browne and other Occidentals, and I discovered that their work touched only the surface; and I came to the conclusion that the first essential for a translator of Bahá'í sacred Writings is that he be a believer, a follower of this Faith.

After that, the Master said: 'This is your bed. Sleep in it.' And I remembered my vow. He meant the bed in His corner room, facing the street, at the front of the rented house, the room where He received guests and would occasionally rest. But for four or five nights I still slept on the floor. I was afraid to sleep in the bed of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then Ustád Muḥammad-'Alí, the Master's servant who had been a builder, came to me and said: 'Do you know, Jináb-i-Khán, that you are disobeying the Master?' 'What do you mean?' I cried. 'Here I am, working night and day translating the Tablets.' 'That is not what I mean,' he said. 'You haven't slept in the bed.' So, for some time, I did. And often, in later years, I thought over a Muslim ḥadíth which says that a day would come when God would appear in His Divinity and all men would be struck with awe and flee away. Then He would disappear, and reappear in the garment of Servitude; for it is written: 'Servitude is an essence the substance of which is Divinity.'

Back of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's reception room, at the rear of the building, was the travellers' room, a kind of hospice. Next to it in back, with a barred window giving on another street, was the room of Siyyid Taqí Manshádí, to whom the Master entrusted all the mail. Manshádí's handwriting was well known everywhere; and with the Tablets he sent out, he would enclose a brief, bare account of all the Bahá'í news. Between 'Abdu'l-Bahá's reception room and the travellers' room at the rear, was a kind of storeroom, about fourteen by sixteen feet. All kinds of things were stored in there:

brooms, odds and ends, and especially the beautiful marble sarcophagus sent from Rangoon, Burma, to contain the remains of the Báb (destined at last, fifty lunar years after His execution in Tabríz, to be entombed 'in spite of the incessant machinations of enemies both within and without,' on the Holy Mountain of Carmel in 1909.[2]) Close to the one barred window, which gave onto the courtyard, there stood against the wall an unpainted wooden table and beside it a backless bench. This storeroom was my room in Haifa. On the wall were a few pegs for my few spare clothes. Here I slept, on the wooden bench. Years later I learned that the casket containing the sacred remains of the Báb and His companion, who was shot while trying to shield Him, was hidden in that very room of mine, at that very time.

I remember several occasions when the Master dictated five different Tablets—often in different languages: Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Old Persian—answering five different letters from as many parts of the world: Persia, India, the United States, Europe. He would dictate one paragraph to me, one to the first son-in-law, one to the second son-in-law, one to Mírzá Ḥabíb, then back to me. To each, without the slightest hesitation, He would follow up the sentence last dictated, as if He were reading it all from a book. One afternoon in Haifa he was receiving the great Muslim Judge of 'Akká. An urgent letter had to be answered, in Arabic. Courteously explaining to the Judge that He had to finish the letter, 'Abdu'l-Bahá kept on dictating. I was a very rapid writer; the Judge was surprised to see how rapid. He asked the Master if I could read what I had written. 'Certainly,' replied the Master. He then asked the Master to bid me read it back; and so I did, at top speed. Often, as He was on His way to Mt. Carmel He would stop and dictate, and I had to be ready. I learned to write with the paper on my lap or the palm of my hand.

Once when I dropped from weariness, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred me to the story of the cruel blacksmith and his apprentice. It was the child's task to blow the bellows, hour after hour. The exhausted boy would cry out, 'I die! I die!' and the blacksmith would answer: 'Die and blow! Die and blow!'

* * *

JOHN DAVID BOSCH WAS A SWISS from Canton St. Gall who emigrated to the United States in 1879. Later he returned to Europe and studied wine-making in Germany, France, and Spain. He became a Bahá'í in 1905; with his wife Louise he pioneered in Tahiti (see The Bahá'í World, New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1930, III, 368–71), and they were present in Haifa at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing. In 1927 he and Louise dedicated their northern California property to the formation of the Geyserville Bahá'í Summer School. The material we give here consists of conversations with John at Geyserville, written down as he spoke, and of documented information supplied by him and Louise, often copied in their presence, in preparation for a (as yet unpublished) biographical account which they desired me to write and which is currently on file in the archives of the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland. We begin these excerpts with the days shortly before he became a follower of this Faith.

JOHN INVESTIGATED EVERYTHING, looking for truth, but could not seem to find what he wanted. Every two or three weeks he travelled from Geyserville to San Francisco, in connection with his work for the Northern Sonoma County Wineries. One day in 1903, coming home on the Cloverdale train, John saw an acquaintance—a Mrs. Beckwith of Chicago, a woman of about his age (forty-seven), who used to go up to a sanatorium near Santa Rosa, and whom he had also met at Theosophical meetings in San Francisco. She called to him. He saw that she had a book.

'I said, "If I sit alongside of you, I'm not going to let you read—we're going to talk." She laid the book down. I picked it up and started to read. I forgot to talk to her. I said to myself: "This is just what I wanted. The connecting link I was missing."'

The book was Myron H. Phelps' *Life and Teachings of Abbás Effendi* (New York: Putnam's, 1903), just published. Mrs Beckwith told him, 'To hear of this is the greatest of privileges, but will be followed by the greatest obligations. You had better not know of it if you cannot follow it up.' She referred John to Mrs. Goodall of Oakland for further investigation.

It was his busy season, the time for picking grapes. For three months he couldn't go. Then, one November afternoon, he went to Mrs. Goodall's; he had no introduction, but mentioned Mrs.

Beckwith and Phelps' book, and that was enough. Kathryn Frankland was there. The two women talked to him. He bought all the available pamphlets, mostly by Thornton Chase (the first American Bahá'í), and the book *The Hidden Words*.

From that day on, he attended meetings. He told me that sometimes he had to choose between his Masonic club (he was a thirty-second degree Scottish Rite Mason), the saloons in San Francisco, and the Oakland meetings.

'I would have one foot on the ferry and one on the wharf, but something inside would say, "I'd better go over to Oakland." Sometimes they had from twenty-five to forty-five women there and I was the only man and never said a word. I let them all talk by themselves. I kept going; I stuck with it.'

In those days Thornton Chase had an important insurance position in Chicago, with a salary of $750 a month which diminished every year because the Faith meant more to him than his business. Whenever he was coming to San Francisco he wired John; they would stop at different hotels, but dined together. 'He was very tall—about six feet two. He always ate two or three ice creams after supper; he always dug a big bite right out of the middle of it to start with. Around eleven o'clock, he used to say, "Now, John, I guess it's about time to take you home."' Arm in arm, they would go to John's hotel, talking steadily about the Cause. They would sit in the parlour. 'About one o'clock I used to say, "Now, Mr. Chase, I guess it's about time to take you home." We used to wonder what the policeman on the beat thought about us. One night we brought each other home till four in the morning.'

And John became a Bahá'í. On May 29, 1905, he went down to the winery office very early and wrote 'Abdu'l-Bahá: '… may my name be entered in the Great Book of this Universal Life … My watchword will be "Justice." Humbly Thy servant …' Afterward it turned out that the Master sent John a message on June 11, in care of Mrs. Goodall: 'O thou John D. Bosch: Raise the call of the Kingdom and give the glad tidings to the people, guide them to the Tree of Life, so that they may gather the fruits from that Tree and attain the great bounty.'

Luther Burbank was one of those to whom John gave the Bahá'í Message. In 1907 John asked him for an appointment to tell him something new; he said to John and Mrs. Brittingham, 'I can only

give you five minutes.' 'We were there an hour and a half,' John told me. Burbank read the books, and was addressed jointly with John in at least one Tablet (June 24, 1912). Another visit to Burbank which John remembered took place March 30, 1913, when he called on the scientist with the Howard MacNutts and Julia Grundy. The Governor of Colorado and his wife were there, sitting in the parlour; Mr. Burbank took the Bahá'ís through folding doors into an adjoining room, and an hour later he was still carrying on an animated conversation with them. John glanced into the other room and saw the Governor and his wife fast asleep in their chairs.

There were many Tablets and messages for John Bosch, through all the years. On August 17, 1909, the Master wrote to Mrs. Goodall; 'Exercise on my behalf the utmost kindness and love to John D. Bosch. With the utmost humility I pray … that that soul may become holy, find capacity to receive the outpouring of eternity and become a luminous star in the West.' Early in 1910 (the date on the envelope is May), the Master wrote to John: 'According to the texts of the Book of Aqdas both light and strong drinks are prohibited. The reason for this prohibition is that it [drink] leads the mind astray and is the cause of weakening the body … I hope thou mayest become exhilarated with the wine of the love of God … The after-effect of drinking is depression, but the wine of the love of God bestoweth exaltation of the spirit.' John had forty men in four wineries under him. In one year, he crushed up fifteen thousand tons of grapes, which makes over two and a quarter million gallons of wine. 'I thought it over,' he said. It was not long before he decided to retire.

From a Tablet jointly addressed to John Bosch and Luther Burbank, and dated June 24, 1912, at Montclair, New Jersey, an extract reads: 'As to my coming to California it is a little doubtful, for the trip is far and the weather hot and from the labors of the journey the body of 'Abdu'l-Bahá hath not much endurance. Nevertheless we shall see what God hath decreed.' On August 1, the Master wrote John from Dublin, New Hampshire: 'O thou who art longing for the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Thy yearning letter was wonderfully eloquent and its effect on 'Abdu'l-Bahá was inexpressible. I greatly long to fulfil the request of the friends, but am as yet in these parts, until later the requirement of wisdom will be

revealed. If the western cities demonstrate their infinite firmness in the Covenant, this will act as a magnet to draw 'Abdu'l-Bahá …' On August 10 John wired: 'I made special trip to San Francisco today. A great spirit of prayer, thankfulness, joy and hope filled the Assembly. Tonight anticipating the coming of the Center of the Covenant unity and firmness are manifest. This supplication begs earnestly for Thy personal presence, from D'Evelyn, Lua [Getsinger], [Bijou] Straun, Bozark and [Thornton] Chase, John D. Bosch.' 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered John by wire August 13, from Dublin: 'Your telegram was the cause of much happiness. God willing I will depart for the western part. Give these glad tidings to each and all.' John told me this was the first telegram announcing the Master's journey West. Mrs. Goodall received the second. John's was sent him in care of Mrs. Goodall's daughter, Mrs. Ella G. Cooper (wife of the noted San Francisco physician, Charles Miner Cooper), who forwarded it to him with this note: 'Awful temptation to open this! Do let us know if it is very encouraging—Greetings, E. G. C.'

But it was not the same with Thornton Chase. That great man, who had been a captain in the Civil War, a student at Brown University, and later Superintendent of Agencies for the Union Mutual Life Company, and was 'the first to embrace the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the Western world'[3]—felt that the Bahá'ís, himself included, were not worthy of the Master's visit.

'John, don't you think it's too soon? The Bahá'ís aren't ready.'

'Well, I'm ready for Him,' said John.

As the Master reached San Francisco, down in Los Angeles Thornton Chase died. 'It was too much for him,' John told me. All Thornton Chase's Bahá'í papers and books, and five or six calligraphies by Mishkín-Qalam, were willed to John. Mr. Chase had sent on most of his Tablets to the Chicago archives, but John received about ten of them in a tin box. Mrs. Chase burned some fifteen hundred of her husband's letters (not Tablets) before John could get to Los Angeles.

John remembered the minutest details of the things that were important to him, and generally in the same words. Papers were in carefully marked envelopes, Louise would be called in for more memories and documentation; they had long since worked out between them how their life had been.

Before urging the Master to come West, John, unable to wait, had been East to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and this journey was always present in his mind. When he heard that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was on the high seas, he went to San Francisco to get permission from the president of the California Wine Association, Percy T. Morgan, to go East. Morgan said, ‘Why do you want to go, in this bad April weather?’ John said: ‘Because I feel like it.’ ‘Very well,’ said the president, ‘if the wineries are in shape.’

John took the first train East, fretting because it didn’t go fast enough. In Washington he phoned one of the believers and learned that the Master was still in New York. John left on the night train. At five-thirty the next morning he was at the Hotel Ansonia, and he went upstairs to see the door of the Master’s room. Dr. Getsinger (Lua’s husband) was there and recognized John from a photograph. John asked for an appointment and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent word, ‘In a few minutes.’ Then Dr. Getsinger called John in. ‘I went as a business man. I had some questions to ask. When I saw Him I forgot everything. I was empty.’ Then, in the conversation that followed, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told John all the things he had wanted to know.

‘Foolishly I said, “Oh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, I came three thousand miles to see you.” He gave a good hearty laugh—you know what a wonderful laugh He had (here John laughed as the Master had, that faraway morning, and I caught the sound of that world-shaking laughter: Olympian—knowledgeable—the laughter of omniscience—I don’t know how to say it. This was not the only time John seemed to me like a reflection of the Master. There was something about his presence; something spotless or fragrant, but not as we know the words. I had noted this in Ḥájí-Amín, too, in Persia). And He said, “I came eight thousand miles to see you.

‘I told Him I was in the wine business and grossed fifteen thousand tons of grapes in one season, which makes over two million gallons of wine. “Oh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” I said, “I am a foreigner, born in Switzerland, and have not the command of the English language. I would love to be a speaker. All I am doing is to give away pamphlets and as many books as are printed.”

‘He looked serious. He said, “You are doing well. I am satisfied with you. With you it is not the movements of the lips, nor the

tongue. With you it is the heart that speaks. With you it is silence that speaks and radiates."

'We had tea together. I was there about half an hour. He said, "You are one of the family; you come in and out anytime you want to."'

It was a cold, snowy day. In the forenoon John was in and out of the room, watched people coming by the dozens to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, listened to 'Abdul-Bahá's words to them. Around noon, he circled the block to look at the Hotel Ansonia. Back at the front door, he saw many people rising in the lobby:

'When His Majesty came—how straight He walked!—they all rose.

''Abdu'l-Bahá walked to the first of three waiting automobiles. The other two were already filled with Bahá'ís and their friends. All at once I saw the Persian in the first machine pushing the air at me so I backed up, thinking he wanted me to go away [this Persian gesture for "come here" looks much like the American one for "go away"; it often confused the early American Bahá'ís]. Then I saw Mountfort Mills standing there making a pulling gesture at me so I went forward. 'Abdu'l-Bahá grabbed my hand and pulled me into the rear seat; Mountfort closed the door and I was alone with 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'The believers had planned to show the city to the Master; the stores, hotels, banks; to give Him a good time seeing New York. Just as I stepped into the machine and was seated, 'Abdu'l-Bahá looked at me. He just looked at me, and all at once with an immense sigh—or what you call it better than a sigh—like the whole world would be lifted from Him so He could have a rest, He put His head on my left shoulder, clear down as close as He could, like a child, and went to sleep.

'I was still as a mouse; I didn't want to move—I didn't want to wake Him up. The trip was nearly a half hour and often I wondered what the others thought—that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was looking out of the window all the time. He woke up just as we stopped at the Kinneys' home.'

John had not been invited, he told me, but he went in, met the Edward B. Kinneys for the first time, and remained for lunch. At three the Master addressed about one hundred and fifty people in the large studio, speaking perhaps a quarter of an hour. Edward

Getsinger placed an armchair in the middle of the room for Him but the Master did not sit in it. People were standing along the walls and 'Abdu'l-Bahá walked from one to the other, and took their hands to say good-bye. A young girl was on John's right. 'Abdu'l-Bahá smiled at her and walked past John to another young woman on his left. 'He just turned His head and He didn't look at me, just passed me and took the girl's hand. If I ever had cold feet and weak knees it was then. It took me a few seconds till I remembered the words He had said in the morning: "You are one of the family now." That was why He didn't say good-bye to me. It was one of the worst punishments I ever had in my life, till I remembered.'

I asked John to describe the Master. He told me that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's eyes had a luminous white ring around the iris; that He had a wonderful smile and also a very serious look. John looked in the glass, trying to explain the Master's complexion: 'His skin was the colour of my forehead.' John's fair skin was lightly tanned by the California sun; I would have described his skin with a Persian term—'wheat-coloured.'

'I never paid any attention to how He looked. I only know every time I was with Him I was way down below Him—way down in the bottom. Like nothing. His hair was gray and white and shining; a little curly. You always felt a nearness to Him even when He was far across the room.'

John said a person's atmosphere or presence affected him strongly; he called it their aura.

John went to most of the meetings for about five days in New York and then someone put him in the same pullman car on which the Master travelled to Washington. The Master would leave His compartment and come out into the main 'palace' car. Going through Pennsylvania an interpreter called John. All at once the interpreter called out and addressed John as Núráni, and John requested the Master to write his new name down. John would linger on the vowels when he said the word, and I could hear the Master's echo; vigorous, positive, in the Persian way. It means filled with light.

Again, John was on the same pullman when the Master left Washington for Chicago, For three days John attended meetings. He was present when 'Abdu'l-Bahá laid the cornerstone of the Bahá'í House of Worship at Wilmette, but with his usual diffidence

he let ‘an elderly woman’ represent Switzerland on that occasion, neither of the two, however, taking an active part. Many Californians had come to Chicago to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He called them all to Him and they were with Him about an hour.

Just before leaving for the West Coast—John did not give me the date; I assume it was May 2, a day when the Master had delivered five public addresses—he was paying his hotel bill at the Plaza when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came in. ‘One of the Persians in His party called to me. The man at the desk said, “Those people want you.” I stepped over to the elevator, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá seized my hand and wouldn’t let go, and pulled me into the elevator and up to His room on the fifth floor.’ Nobody was there except Dr. Baghdádí. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not speak until they were in the room. Then he went to His bed, lay down, and began talking with Baghdádí; He told how He had addressed four hundred women, and described how the ladies looked. The Master had found them terribly funny; with keen enjoyment, He described them to John and the Doctor. Anyone who remembers the ladies of 1912, not as Hollywood films them but as they were, mostly plain and dumpy, with stiff skirts, jutting bosoms, ‘rats,’ (these were hair pads with tapering ends) and to crown all, hats that were wedding cakes and nesting birds, knows. Then He said, ‘Now it’s time for you to go.’ Somebody had given Him a big cake. He put that in John’s arms, with apples and bananas, so many that John had to get somebody else to push the elevator button, and John left.

John Bosch was one of those whom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá chose as a companion for the time when He should leave the world. Afterward, the friends saw that the Master knew the moment of His passing and had prepared for it. Some who had asked permission to visit Him at that time, He had gently turned away. But to John He had written, ‘I am longing to see you,’ and when John and Louise, responding, asked to come, His cable replied: ‘Permitted.’ They reached Haifa about November 13, 1921.

John was present on November 19 at the Master’s last public talk; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pointed to John on this occasion and addressed the talk to him: He spoke of divine love, and how different it is from human love, which fails in the testing and in which there is no

element of self-sacrifice, He told John that the Persian believers loved him, although they could not speak their love, and that if John went to Persia they would if necessary give up their own lives to protect his. He said: 'When lovers meet it may be that they cannot exchange a single word, yet with their hearts they speak to one another. Thus do the clouds speak to the earth and the rain comes down; the breeze whispers to the trees; the sun speaks to the eyes of men. Although this is not actual speech yet this is the way in which the hearts of the friends communicate … For instance, you were in America and I was in the Holy Land. Although our lips were still yet with our hearts we were conversing together.'[4]

Surely besides the universal meaning, there was a special message here for John, something for him to remember over the long future before he could again be in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'You were in America and I was in the Holy Land … yet with our hearts we were conversing together.'

Three days before the last, John was in the garden and all at once he saw the Master. 'He walked as straight as if He had been a young man. He looked well and strong. He walked like a general. When we had made one short round, about fifty steps, He left me. He went up to the garden, and came down and brought me a tangerine. In English He said: "Eat … Good." I didn't do like the Americans and put it away for a keepsake. I peeled it and ate it and put the peelings in my pocket.'

It was in the early hours of Monday, November 28, that John and Louise were awakened to the agonizing news that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was suddenly gone from their midst. Curtis Kelsey with another believer was sent to 'Akká with the terrible word. John saw people weeping as he went to the Master's bedroom. He knelt down beside the bed. Then the Most Exalted Leaf, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, took his hand and placed him beside her on the built-in divan along the window. With her he kept a vigil there from two until four o'clock. Once, he rose, walked the two steps to the bed, took the Master's hand and said, 'Oh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá!' It was about three o'clock then. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's hand was still warm. He seemed alive. 'I still hoped He lived,' John told me.

The Most Exalted Leaf wept far less than the others, at all times maintaining her great dignity and composure. But many times she sighed, through the night, and many times uttered the words,

Yá Iláhí—O God, my God!' Two years younger than her beloved Brother, Bahíyyih Khánum was the 'most precious great Adorning' of Bahá'u'lláh's house.[5] '… all her days she was denied a moment of tranquillity,' 'Abdu'l-Bahá had written; 'Moth-like she circled in adoration round the undying flame … .'[6] Her life had spanned the Conference at Badasht, the martyrdom of the Báb, the birth of the Bahá'í Faith as her Father lay chained in the Black Pit of Ṭihrán, the peril, destitution and humiliation of years of captivity and exile, the death of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892, the Great War—when the enemy had determined to crucify 'Abdu'l-Bahá and all His family on the heights of Carmel. She had stood by her Brother when their Father left the world, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, because He was named the Successor, was deserted by His people, 'Forsaken, betrayed, assaulted by almost the entire body of His relatives … .'[7] Now, for a brief period, Khánum at seventy-five was the *de facto* head of the Bahá'í world; she was the custodian of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, and her loving, sorrowing messages rallied the grief-obliterated Bahá'ís of East and West. Now she was destined to stand beside and support yet another crucial Figure in Bahá'í history, destined to be, Shoghi Effendi wrote, the 'sole earthly sustainer, the joy and solace of my life.'[8] Small wonder that her Father had revealed for her lines such as these: 'Let these exalted words be thy love-song … O thou most holy and resplendent Leaf: "*God, besides Whom is none other God, the Lord of this world and the next!*" … How sweet thy presence … how sweet to gaze upon thy face… .'[9]

Three days later John was up on Mt. Carmel at the Shrine when he saw a veiled lady walking slowly, painfully from the Shrine to the gardener's house. She seemed inexpressibly weary. He wondered if it would be permissible to help her. He went forward, took her left arm and helped raise her a little up the steep hill. Suddenly she swung her veil back and looked deep into John's eyes. 'I looked back into the most beautiful blue eyes. Like an angel's. It's very hard to express or define the looks of an angel. I really thought she was a young woman.' Later Riḍváníyyih Khánum came over to the Pilgrim House. 'I am going to tell you something,' she said. John thought it might be something very serious, since he, a western man, had taken the arm of a veiled lady. Instead, Riḍváníyyih conveyed to John the thanks of the Most Exalted Leaf.

They had wrapped the Master in five separate folds of white silk and on His head they had placed a black mitre given to Him by Bahá'u'lláh. His coffin had been placed on two chairs beside the bed. John was present when His sheeted form was lifted into the coffin; while others held the Master's head and shoulders and arms, Mírzá Jalál held His feet, and John His knees. His body seemed natural, John said, not rigid. John helped the others to close the coffin down. He said he knew the living Master was there. 'I felt He was there. Not in the body—even now I feel that again—His presence. I am sure He was there.' When others started to raise the casket up, John didn't understand at first, but did as they did, and lifted it to his right shoulder. Then all at once he remembered that time in New York, long past, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá had leaned down on his left shoulder and gone to sleep.

On the long way up Mt. Carmel, Sir Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner, walked directly ahead of John. Once John looked back, and saw all the carriages, empty and left behind: the ten thousand mourners were all coming on foot, although the cortège took an hour and five minutes to reach the Shrine. Once when the tall Sir Herbert stopped suddenly, John stubbed against his heel; afterward he recalled the gentleness with which Sir Herbert asked his pardon.

John told me that already by seven that Tuesday morning soldiers were lined up on both sides of the street and some were in the Master's compound. As John entered, on the left going up the steps, he saw an Arab soldier standing guard; the man was leaning on his gun and the tears streamed down his face.

Some time after that, Louise Bosch was in the 'Tea Room' at the Master's house, alone. The ladies had disappeared. Preparations had been completed for the arrival of Shoghi Effendi, expected home from Oxford University that day. 'Then I heard what must have been his footsteps coming up to the front door and coming in; when he gave—I don't know how to describe that cry—an outcry of greatest grief—pain—*ache*. It was *loud*. And then I remained in the room. Although I did not see Shoghi Effendi I knew for certain

it was he. So I remained quiet in the Tea Room. Then I heard some further footsteps of his, and the closing of a door.'

On Wednesday, the day after the funeral, the mother of Shoghi Effendi told Louise that the Most Exalted Leaf and the Consort of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had opened a sealed letter left by the Master. This letter bore Shoghi Effendi's name; in his absence they were obliged to open it, not knowing where to bury the Master or what, for a waiting, despairing Bahá'í world, His instructions might be. Thus they found out that Shoghi Effendi was the Guardian even before he did. Shoghi Effendi's mother confided this to Louise, not under a seal of secrecy but just as one believer to another, sharing the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Both the institution and the term—Guardian—were new to the Bahá'ís of that day.

'They didn't show him the Will at first. He was all right. He came to lunch at the Pilgrim House. But from the third day on, I didn't see him. Then on the fifth day past sunset I went over, and what I saw I shall never forget. He was coming out of a room and walking through the door of the Most Exalted Leaf's room. He was like an old man, bent over and he could barely speak, but he shook hands with me, and looked at me for a moment. He spoke like a person who cannot hear anything now or doesn't want to see any one now. He was wholly changed and aged and walking bent and he had a little light or candle in his hand. I think he said to me, "It is all right."

'But I saw something terrible had happened. He had reacted just the way the Family had known he would. That's why he didn't come back to the Pilgrim House. He got ill. He couldn't eat; he couldn't drink or sleep.

'After the first three days had passed and he had seen the Will he couldn't at all accept it. He seemed to make such remonstrances that his mother felt called upon to recite to him a history of a similar time after Muḥammad when one of the Holy Imáms would not serve. [Louise was not sure which Imám; we assume it was Ḥasan.] So Shoghi Effendi's mother said; "Are you going to repeat the history of that Imám, who also felt that he was not qualified?" I felt extremely privileged that the mother of Shoghi Effendi told me of this.'

Shoghi Effendi was then twenty-four years old. He had gone to

Oxford to better prepare himself as a translator to serve 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Already reeling from the blow of his Grandfather's passing, he was dealt this 'second blow … in many ways more cruel than the first …'[10] A vital office, described by him in later years as carrying a staggering weight of responsibility, was suddenly loaded onto his young shoulders.[11] In the opening pages of his book *Bahá'í Administration* there are brief references to his prolonged illness, during the early days of what became a ministry lasting thirty-six years.

Although the Guardianship-to-be was a well-kept secret, it was, strangely enough, not a total one. A Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's to Miss F. Drayton of New York City contains a strong clue; it states: '… Verily that Infant is born and exists and there will appear from His Cause a wonder which thou wilt hear in future … there are signs for it in the passing centuries and ages.' When the National Bahá'í Assembly of the United States referred this Tablet to the Guardian, he verified that he was the infant mentioned here. These lines close the second volume of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's published English Tablets.

But more explicit was the Master's confiding, to an individual who was not a Bahá'í, the fact that Shoghi Effendi was to be His successor. On August 6, 1910, when a little serving girl in the Household had to have her finger lanced, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent for the Family's German physician, Frau Doktor Fallscheer. Afterward the Doctor sat with Bahá'u'lláh's daughter, the Most Exalted Leaf, drinking coffee and conversing in Turkish; then, summoned by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Doctor repaired with Bahíyyih Khánum to the Reception Room, which soon crowded up with pilgrims and others, coming and going. The two ladies, continuing their conversation, sat down apart from the rest. At that point a son-in-law of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's entered the room, and the Doctor noticed that his eldest son, Shoghi Effendi, whom she knew by sight, followed him. The child, who seemed about twelve or thirteen, greeted and took his leave of the Master and his great aunt Bahíyyih Khánum with wonderful courtesy, in the Persian way; and the Most Exalted Leaf confided to the Doctor that this child was to be the Master's successor and 'Vizier'. The Doctor was much impressed with his grown-up, solemn courtesy in entering and leaving the room, and with 'his dark, candid, trusting eyes, not swerving for even a

moment from the magical blue glance of his Grandfather.' 'Abdu'l-Bahá came over to the ladies and as they rose, He told them to be seated, settled Himself informally on a Persian stool and said: 'Now, my daughter, how do you like Shoghi Effendi, my future Elisha?' (The reference was to 2 Kings, chapter 2.) 'Master,' she answered, 'if I may say it, in his young face I see the dark eyes of a sufferer, of one who will have much to bear.' That day the Master also informed her that He would send Shoghi Effendi to study in England. In later years the Doctor returned to Germany and, not long before she died, became a Bahá'í. Her memoir was published in the German Bahá'í magazine, *Sonne der Wahrheit* (1930–31).

When Hand of the Cause Dr. Hermann Grossmann and Mrs. Grossmann consulted the Guardian about the Fallscheer notes, Shoghi Effendi 'expressed the opinion that 'Abdu'l-Bahá must have had great confidence in Frau Doktor Fallscheer inasmuch as He, at the time before the beloved Guardian went to England, that is, when the Master may have first considered the idea of sending him there, talked to her about it and on that occasion mentioned that Shoghi Effendi was to be His "Vizier", as she expressed it.'[12]

Before leaving Haifa, Louise wanted an Eastern street costume and veil such as the ladies of the Household then wore, in deference to the time and place. Riḍváníyyih Khánum helped to make it and they dressed her in it. Few sights were funnier to Easterners than a Western woman trying to wear the veil. They led Louise, striding along in her wrappings, to a room where she found the ladies at prayer. An aunt of the Guardian's said: 'You must go and see Shoghi Effendi.' Then she opened a door to the next room and announced through the crack: 'A Turkish lady wishes to see you.' Feeling like a child in fancy dress, Louise went in. 'I stood maybe four or five feet from his bed. He sat up in bed and when I could not contain my laughter he said, "Oh, it's Mrs. Bosch," and he pointed to my shoes. Then he laughed a little and I and his aunt laughed. She told me this was the first time Shoghi Effendi had even smiled since his return.'

The last words that Shoghi Effendi spoke to Louise when she and John took leave of him were: 'Tell the friends, time will prove that there has been no mistake.'

VII

Where’er You Walk

In the High Sierras

DAYTIMES THE TROUT STREAM WAS like a big trout, slippery, dappled, now and then flashing white, easing under the watery aspens. At night it was pale in the blackness. Sitting by the campfire one could only hear it and see a vagueness down there under the bank where it ran. One could not distinguish between the moths brought into the flame, and the sparks flying out, and higher insects catching the light as they passed, and shooting stars, and stars. One could not keep track of these things.

Except that the stars were campfires again. This used to be Indian country, here under the incongruously Swiss-looking snow crags, along the trout stream; here you can still pick up Indian arrowheads of dark bottle-green obsidian, with the hairy chisel marks. When the white man drove the Indians away, they went up there in the sky, over our heads, and lit those campfires. So we have peace between the two again, with the red man up there the winner. His spirit is always seeping back into America, like the blood of the heart seeping back, and it never wipes away. (That time we saw Boulder Dam, the least Indian of all things, we found that Indian patterns had been worked into the massive floors; soft moccasined, his spirit had come back.)

You would look into the redness of the campfire, and there, standing on its tail and watching you with white, piteously smoking eyes, was the ghost of the trout you had caught in the morning and fried at noon; fried it so fresh that it leapt in the pan.

That particular night something was going to happen, up there in the mountains. Everything was waiting for it. The wind had

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lowered, the hot ashes fell softly, the stream quieted and the aspens stilled. Now it was happening. We looked up out of our well of blackness to the ridge: the trees along the ridge were catching fire, they were burning, like hair in a nimbus on some old saint's picture. Flaming hair of trees along the ridge. We waited not moving, and we saw the white fire growing, and then we saw it was the white moon burning and rising up there over the fall of the ridge. Then the night went on as before. It resumed.

Later in the night we went over to the little store on the lake for a couple of bottles of milk. This place is listed on the map as 'primitive area,' and it is safely far away from any towns, but even so we were only around the corner to milk 'from non-reactive tuberculin tested cows.' That is America.

No moon during the mile's walk, only the black wind to lean against. The lake was rimmed with a beach piled with tree limbs, twisted satiny-white wood that made good burning. We could have sworn the lake was an ocean with China just beyond it, its further shores were so lost and unattainable.

On our way back we punched the dark now and then with our flashlight. Everything was black and quiet. Something was going to happen. We looked up to the hilltop, above the road, and there suddenly was the moon, dawning again, with all the freshness and drama, the ceremony and pause, of its dawning an hour ago, over our campfire.

I had never known before that the moon has many dawnings in a single night. It comes up as many times as there are hills and valleys and eyes watching.

An idea in the world is the same—it has many risings, each authentic and new and especially for the people it shines on. When you describe it, the people do not only hear what you tell them, they get the idea at first hand. It rises for them as it did for you.

The great world ideas are like that. For instance, about the time Jesus rose over England—597—Buddha rose over Japan, 552. A new world idea comes, this time from Shíráz and Baghdád, and it is only beginning to rise, say over the western seas.

'I do not see the new world idea coming out of the East as you describe it,' people comment. It is perfectly all right for them to say this; they are telling you the truth. But then other people, apparently no more brilliant or stupid than the first, do see it. It

rises for them, a special dawning for them, and their faces begin to glow with it. It is not only your moon any more, it is theirs too. You don't have to repeat any more, 'See the moon coming up'—or 'Wait a minute and you'll see the moon coming'—They would only look at you and say, 'Are you crazy? Of course I see it.'

Back at the campfire, the tamaracks had turned to cypresses in the moonlight. You had to force yourself not to imagine an Eastern palace there, piling lightly into the sky, poised above seven cloudy pools, tiled and terraced, one below the other, one spilling into the other. You had to hang on to yourself not to feel a nostalgia for something long ago that you never knew about; this is much worse than missing something that was once yours. Probably, through a twisting of time, it is a homesickness for what will come later on, perhaps in the world beyond this. Anyhow it takes hold of you if you sit by a trout stream in the summer moonlight.

Midnight Oil

A COLLEGE PROFESSOR ONCE returned a paper on philosophy with the marginal comment that, after all, true happiness is to be found only in a state of complete nonexistence. The words of professors are frequently so profound that the ordinary mind had best make no attempt to fathom them. However the remark is an interesting one, because it reminds us again of the innumerable philosophies and systems of existence which are quietly flourishing about us, often in the least likely places. Philosophers write conscientiously tedious tomes on how to live life, and our libraries are crammed with utopias and paradises, each representing someone's solution to the problem, ranging from descriptions of a world where the houses are edible and the streets are paved with sapphires to the heaven of the Divine Comedy, where triumph the joys of the intellect. Nor is the average human being's mind entirely idle; for as the world goes on in its impulsive way, counting calories and puzzling comfortably over the latest murder mystery, each individual is yet evolving for himself, as a sort of by-product, a philosophy of life; this he will confide on occasion to friends in need. He will tell them, for instance, to return to Nature, and there they will find peace—out under the great redwoods balm is awaiting them; or he will insist on the contrary that the spectacle is always within the spectator, and induce them to abandon the redwoods and take up mind-reading or Swedish gymnastics. Should he quote Scripture, he will do so with the pointless charm of Rabelais' pilgrims, whom Gargantua ate in a salad and who found in the Old Testament a literal reference to their experience; he will regard the

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essence of Scripture only with indulgent respect, and dismiss it as counsels of perfection. He prefers to invent some sleight-of-hand method of living, some system of philosophy, either original or derived from a fellow mortal to whom he has entrusted his judgement.

Man desires a complex and obscure solution to existence; he would rather go bare-foot, subsist entirely on carrots or listen to the voice of his departed uncle issuing at midnight from an aluminium horn, than prefer his neighbour to himself, or confine his business activities to honest ones. Moreover his conduct is not unreasonable, for a peculiarity of the universe is that it may, logically, be made to fit any theory whatever; Schopenhauer, disappointed in love, had little difficulty in blaming the female sex for the French Revolution; while some of our modern scientists could with equal justice attribute the disturbance to a pandemic dysfunctioning of endocrine glands.

Such are human attempts at directing existence. They are by definition imperfect, for obviously a finite mind cannot hope to settle the infinite business of living, any more than unconscious natural phenomena could organize themselves into a disciplined whole. A study of every philosophy, whether home-made or recognized, will prove that for one acceptable tenet there are ten to be rejected; that every human leader of a school tacitly obliges his followers to disregard many clearly established truths because these happen to conflict with his doctrine; and that even should he bring the moon out of a well, he wears a green veil which none may lift.

In the whole range of human experience there is no fellow human being, however great, who can claim us unreservedly; we invariably find, after reading his book or watching him live, that he suffers as we do from human inadequacy; and so it is that Flaubert warns us not to touch our idols, because their gilt comes off on our fingers; and Emerson grows indignant when we exalt another human being and seek our truth from him, because our ideas are easily as valuable as his, we too are subject to ‘gleams from within,’ we find in every work of genius our own rejected thought.

We all, then, have our gleams from within, even though they are often but the vague phosphorescent lights which skim over graveyards after dark. But if we would see, we must stand in the full

beating force of the Sun of Reality, which alone gives truth to the known and the power of knowing to the knower. We must go to the source of all knowledge, which is the knowledge of God; it is only in this light that a science or a philosophy, an act or an event, may be estimated; and this knowledge, which is our only true standard, is embodied in the words and deeds of the Divine Manifestations, Who come to us at Their appointed times and make the world new again. They are the Truth which all men seek, and all other doctrine is true only in so far as it approaches Their divine explanations. They unravel for mankind the significance of human endeavour, and light up the waste and chaos which men have made of former religious dispensations; and learning is sterile without them. They are the soul of life, and the rest is only technique. Their words are the blossoming trees and the pools white with dawn, and men's words are at best like those Japanese bits of paper that develop into flowers when they are dipped in water.

There are those who say that if the Prophets of God bring with them a new springtime, while scholars and thinkers do not, it is because the Divine Messengers appeal to the emotions, and they speak simple truths which all can understand, while philosophers have their being on a high intellectual plane to which only the chosen few may hope to ascend. This thought is comforting to our so-called intelligentsia, but unfortunately it does not bear investigation. Those who have watched mysogynists warm to Schopenhauer and the bellicose to Nietzsche, patricians to Plato and politicians to Machiavelli, intuitionists to Kant and cynics to Voltaire, must conclude that emotions are strongly engaged. As for the second point, that the average mind is unable to understand the great truths in our libraries, it is undeniable that some of our writers are involved and tedious; but after painfully ferreting out their meaning we usually find that it could have been expressed in a few simple words, and we decide that what is obscure in a philosopher is his vocabulary. Moreover a thoroughbred thinker is apt to be meticulously lucid; Socrates blamed himself when his pupils failed to understand him, and was at pains to clarify; and Descartes addressed his Discourse to the layman, saying that good sense is the best-shared thing in the world.

But the words of a Divine Manifestation are so perfect in regard to form that the meaning lies open before us; here we do not see

as through a glass darkly; the window is flung wide, and we may look as long and as far as our capacity allows; and with each new experience, each new fact learned, the vista develops, and the horizon recedes. The intellectual stimulus is indeed such that it brings to birth new civilizations, driving thought toward reality; while the higher emotions, without which no good act is ever accomplished, are awakened—the heart speaks and is answered.

The Bahá'ís are commanded to engage in the most strenuous endeavour, both mental and spiritual; our education may never be spoken of in the past tense; the lines laid down by His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh stretch to infinity, and there is no profitable learning from which we are excluded. For the difference between truth and opinion is this, that the first is a setting-free of the mind, and the second a postponement of wisdom.

Will and Testament

ONE DAY I WAS OUT ON THE BACK porch painting a table. An insect settled on the table and stuck in the paint. It thrashed and floundered but only sank deeper. Feeling like Providence, I gave it my finger to climb out on, and transferred it to the porch railing, where it sat infinitesimally in the sunshine, scraping off the yellow paint. It was not grateful; it didn't know I existed. A few minutes later another insect landed on the tabletop and stuck. I gave it my finger and it heaved itself out. However, this time I found that I was not Providence; I was only an agent; I was not a dispenser of life and death. Because this time the insect was too badly damaged to survive, and I destroyed it. Then I remembered that Muḥammad says in the Qur'án: 'God maketh alive and killeth.'

With this reservation I shall explain why I am a Bahá'í and give such reasons for it as I know. And with this preface: Menninger tells us that the conscious mind, in relation to the unconscious, is 'a thin shell or fringe, perhaps as much in proportion as the skin of an apple is of the whole fruit.' We live in mystery, we don't know much. We are shapes fashioned out of something very perishable—mud. We are taking a ride in the sky.

The non-believers I meet, think that to believe you have to have a thing called faith. They say they wish they had it, but you know they don't; in fact, while they are talking, their faces and hands are telling you how superior they feel in their non-believing, and how immature, how naive they find you. They discovered some time back that Santa Claus is only a device to sell the goods in a store, and they say that God is only a device to keep you quiet; a way of shutting your mouth so that you will let the world go on. Then if

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you stir them, they turn on you, and rage against God (in Whom they do not believe) for allowing such things as venereal disease and poverty and war.

I don't know why some people have faith and others don't. The Báb says, 'The difference which separates believer from non-believer is knowledge." If present-day intellectuals are often unbelievers, it is because they see religion in its decay. Religion to them is strange clothing, robes and trappings, hocus-pocus; and strange ideas, complicated and irrelevant. However, in the ages of faith it is the intellectuals who believe, and lead the others: Augustine, Rúmí, Dante, for instance; highly sophisticated, highly intellectual.

My grandfather in New England gave a stained-glass window to his church, and my grandfather in Káshán went daily to his mosque. One hoped to be saved by the Blood of the Lamb, and the other to cross over the bridge that spans hell—the bridge narrow as a hair and sharp as a knife. One lived in the salt New England weather, against the white houses and the leafy streets; the other lived where the Wise Men came from, Káshán with its heat and scorpions and its fields of roses. According to family records, this latter was in the mosque one day, and the Báb came in, and my grandfather saw Him and believed; he heard that voice which afterward people could never describe, 'except with a kind of terror.' Well, this may be one reason why I am a Bahá'í.

Although I believe in Christ, I could not be an orthodox Christian, because the Church rejects Muḥammad. Personal study, which is the only legitimate basis for my thinking, has convinced me that a being of Muḥammad's dimensions could not be less than what we call a Prophet of God. For what He was, for what He said, for what He achieved, I believe in Him. For Islám's centuries of culture, when the West was in darkness; for Islám's solution of problems which drove Christian minds to madness and with which the West is still tortured—the problem of the nature of God; the problem of faith versus good works; the problem of celibacy and puritanism; for Islám's insistent promotion of science, which the Church suppressed; for Islám's statement of the rights of women—for all these I accept Islám.

Another reason why I am not an orthodox Christian is this: if I read my eyes out, I still couldn't decide which denomination is the

true one. Conservatively there are hundreds of divisions in Christianity; I don't have time to become entangled in all that theology. Besides, the New Testament is two thousand years away from me, and scholars are not decided as to what it says. I can't overlook the fact that the Gospels were not written by the Apostles but by another generation of men; that the earliest, the Gospel of Mark, was set down thirty or forty years after the Crucifixion; that the oldest extant manuscript of the New Testament dates from the fourth century; that they have counted no less than 175,000 variations in the available texts; that in short, as one author says, 'Jesus never heard of the New Testament …' I cannot even read Shakespeare, who wrote in my language only three hundred years ago, without glossaries and commentaries and learned disquisitions —how can I judge the Greek and Aramaic of two thousand years back? They tell me I must reconstruct that period, know those times to understand the teaching—well, I am busy with my own times.

Nevertheless, I believe in the Christ. His breath is on those pages. Besides I have seen Him in hospitals and breadlines, in some art forms and in some people's eyes.

All right, why am I not a Muslim? The text of the Qur'án is clear; it is not hearsay, it is the revealed work of Muḥammad, brought down to us across thirteen hundred years. Well, I do not find my century in the Qur'án, any more than I found it in the Gospels. The spiritual problems, yes. The command to work and pray, to be humble and to fear God, yes. And the Golden Rule. But I do not find my century there. What should we do with a world in arms? What about the machines displacing the men? What about women, with their new, disruptive, agonizing equality? What about the ends of the earth brought close together? I do not find these things in the sacred books of thirteen hundred or two thousand years ago. I am not satisfied when a mujtahid reads them into the Qur'án, when a priest reads them into the Gospels.

The most intelligent of my non-Bahá'í friends, I mean of my friends who were born since 1900, are, generally speaking, agnostic. They are interested, not in theology, but in world reform. If they go to church it is for the Bach and the stained glass. But what they want, heart and soul, is justice; food and jobs; money for books and microscopes, instead of bombs. Beauty, and love, and some kind of achievement for every one.

I want these things, too. I want a new world. Today we have the brains and we have the equipment to get it. Thirteen hundred years ago, two thousand years ago, there were still centuries of slavery and blood and pain ahead. Today we have the planet in our hands—almost. Today we have hope.

But here is where I differ from these young, agnostic friends—I believe in God. The reason is that I cannot explain away Moses and Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus, Muḥammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Who are They—what is the strange eloquence They possess, which we call revelation, how is it that They subjugate the world? They are not academicians, taking notes out of books; They are not philosophers; They are not madmen; They are not poets or generals. How is it that They know what will work; how is it that They always founded a new culture; how is it that They are specialists in civilization? To me, They have an other-worldliness which proves that there is another world; in fact They Themselves are heaven, and Their ways prove God. A belief has to take into account all the facts; agnosticism excludes the greatest fact, the appearance amongst us of these superhuman personalities.

And then, I differ with them as to method. Let us assume that, as they wish, a non-religious group takes over the planet: what is to hold that group together? Religion, as I understand it, is the only cohesive force there is. This process of common belief in God, and common obedience to His Prophet, unites the most discrepant and recalcitrant peoples; as a result of their single inspiration and of their clubbing-together, a new civilization develops. But a non-religious group must inevitably break into factions under this and that leader. If you reject the rule of heaven, then you are under the rule of earth, which is that the strongest always wins. My friends don't want the strongest to win, they want democracy. But democracy can exist only in a believing society; it is Christianity, it is Islám, that teach democracy; it is only in the light of faith that all men are brothers—only in the light of the next world, where money and brains will cease to matter; otherwise, most men will always be slaves to the strong. We Bahá'ís have felt, over and over, the tug of our individual wills, and have known—perhaps better than anyone else, since world unity is our business—that only the terrific pull of the Faith has held us together.

Incidentally, lots of people say that they will believe in religion

but not in the Manifestations of God. They want to accept the Sermon on the Mount but not Jesus. They want to accept the Bahá'í teachings but not Bahá'u'lláh. Well, the teachings without the name won't work. The name is the life element. It is for the name that men will die. Because principles do not move the heart. That is why they have to pin bits of ribbon and metal on soldiers. Principles in themselves are not creative; the brain watches, but the personality as a whole does not respond. Our race has spent much more time in the jungle than the laboratory, and we are infinitely more than rational, and the magic is in the name. Remember what Saint Theresa wrote for Jesus, fifteen hundred years after He was crucified—Let mine eyes see Thee, sweet Jesus of Nazareth—Let mine eyes see Thee, and then see death.

I am not, then, a believer in world reform by secular legislators, because I think that a group which denies God can never love men enough to establish world unity. Neither do I think that people of differing religions, each secretly considering the others as either damned or incomprehensible, can ever make a world state. And I do not belong to any of the previous great religions because they are divided into sects, and because their scriptures, although necessary and inspiring, do not practically relate to modern times. I know that they all teach the Golden Rule but that is not what I mean. I want enlightenment on such practical points as the following: How can we stop war? Should we have public ownership of the means of production? Is divorce permissible? Should we use alcohol? I also want fuller explanation as to what we are doing in the universe; I want to know more about God, and the life after this, and the function of prayer.

There is still something else. I mean there is the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith. The secret of Bahá'í strength is the tie between the individual and the Guardian. We obey our elected representatives, our Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, because our interest is centred in him. Because of the Guardianship, then, I believe in the Bahá'í plan for establishing a world federation. I have heard of no other plan which would work.

After 'Abdu'l-Bahá, it was love for the Guardian that built our world order. It was because of his clearly spelled-out instructions that, since 1963, the Bahá'í world has revolved around The Universal House of Justice.

With the sudden passing of Shoghi Effendi, the first Guardian, in London, November 4, 1957, the administration of the Bahá'í Faith moved into a new phase. Conformably to the Book of Aqdas and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Faith came under the jurisdiction of Shoghi Effendi's Chief Stewards, the Hands of the Faith, and the various National Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies. In due course these two institutions arranged for worldwide elections whereby the first Universal House of Justice was established in 1963. World jurisdiction of the Bahá'í Faith is vested in this body. The world headquarters of the Faith are in Haifa, Israel.

The great forward surge of the Faith under the administration of the Universal House of Justice and the counsel and encouragement of the Hands of the Cause of God is proof of God's continuing guidance. But it should never be forgotten that the momentum for this advance, the pioneering movement that spread the Bahá'í Faith over the entire globe, and the organization of the believers into a responsible, responsive world body, all were the result of Shoghi Effendi's devoted, tireless, selfless, divinely-inspired ministry of thirty-six years.

When I first saw Mount Carmel it was mostly weeds and rubble. I like to think of the Bahá'í Shrines there now, there and at Bahjí. I remember the white pathways spattered with red geraniums. The terraces high over Haifa, over the blue curve of the Bay; oranges glinting in their leaves, and a hundred black cypresses. I think of handfuls of tuberose petals, piled on the Holy Thresholds inside the Shrine rooms. And I remember a night at Bahjí when a blue moon came up through the blue flowers of the jacaranda tree, and blue blossoms fell on the grass. I think of the inner garden of the Shrine; and the small inner room, set with precious rugs and lamps, which is the holiest place in the Bahá'í world. I think again of the red geraniums streaming over Mount Carmel; red geraniums, the willing blood of many martyrs.

Where'er You Walk

HE LEFT THE WOMAN AND HER CHILD in the sand hills, gray under the burning sky. He gave her a skin full of dates and another of water, and turned and left her. She followed, calling to him, but he went on, not turning back, not answering. At last she cried out: 'Is it God who has bidden you to do this?' And he spoke the one word: 'Yes.' He went on, and left her and his child in the empty hills. He saw the spring that would bubble up there out of the sand, and the House he would build in a time to come; a square House that would stand through the ages as a sign for all men. And he saw that the child would not die; he saw it living, and the stream of his posterity shining in the world for ever and ever. But he knew, too, as he went away over the fiery hills, that he would never see again this woman that he loved …

The land lay out beneath him. The silver plains, the palm trees blowing, and far against the sky, the feathery blue sea. He watched it for a long time; it was all as he had known it would be. It was all there as he had dreamt it long ago: honeycomb, and wheat; white flocks, fields of white lilies; doves nesting; green figs on the boughs. It was all as in his dream. But he was not to enter the land; he was not to set foot down there in the valleys. He was to stay here always, laid in a grave in the sand where no one would find it. Before, it had been refused him to see the glory that his heart longed for; now he was not to go down into the land …

He stood at the altar in the darkness, sheltering the fire. The

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flames burned in his eyes and wavered over the walls. He could hear the soldiers coming nearer; they had fought their way into the city, burning and pillaging, cutting the inhabitants down. Now their cries swelled around the Temple; now they were beating at the door. It gave, and someone was panting down there in the darkness. He stepped in front of the altar, guarding the flame, placing his body between the flame and the man working towards him in the shadows. Then the light struck on a curved blade swinging over him. As he fell, he hurled his rosary at the man and it made a bright circle in the darkness. His blood spurted into the flame and smoked on the altar …

He came in from the garden to the bedroom of his wife and looked down at her as she slept. His eyes clouded, until her face was only a paler shadow in the shadows. The child lay in her arms. He wanted to kiss it one last time, but she clasped it so tightly he was afraid to waken her. He turned from them both and left them, and went out into the dark …

He heard them casting lots for his clothing as he hung above them. Their spittle had dried on his cheeks. They were calling to him to come down from where he was, they were shouting: He saved others; himself he cannot save. He could taste the fruit of another vineyard on his lips. He could see, two thousand years to come, women still wearing this hour against their breasts. He hung, outspread against the sky, and the blood was slipping from his hands and feet …

When he walked through the street they turned to laugh at him; sometimes they struck him; once when he was bowed at prayer they covered him with entrails from a sheep. Even their idols seemed to mock him as he passed; idols that stood, insolent and firm, after ten years of his preaching, and looked down at him. He said the idols were only wood and stone; he said there was another God, one God, that no man could see; but only beggars listened to him, while the idols had thousands of worshippers from far and near, and stood plain in the sunlight. He left his home and went away to another place, a city in the mountains where fruit trees grew. He thought the people would listen to him here, because they

were not his people. But when he opened his lips, they stoned him …

Thousands of oil lamps were burning in the mosques. In the fire temples, flame went up from the tripods, and priests in mouth-veils and long yellow robes were tending it. In cathedrals, white tapers were lighted, tips fluttering like moths in the shadows. Every church had its lights; every synagogue and temple; even the darkest shrine had its floating wick or its red spark of incense. But here in the bare room on the mountain, no lamp, no candle, no light. Only the blackness, only the slow cold eating into the brick of the walls and floor. The world lighted its lamps and its tapers and censers for him: and he here on the mountain, alone and a prisoner in the night …

They straightened as best they could the broken young body and washed the blood from it. Before His eyes they tore the garments from the shattered limbs and cleansed them. He leaned above His son and spoke to him: should He spare his life; should He make him well again? The memory of the answer was here in the cell, would always be here: The son would have his blood pour out on the prison floor, if only the people who were far away could come to their Beloved; if only they could come to his Father, and stand before Him, and be in His presence; so the priests and kings, the mountain wastes, town walls and bars, should no longer keep them back.

They had carried him away now, tight in his shroud. They had gathered up his stained clothing; his poor, tattered clothing, not the embroidered robes he would have worn, as a young prince in the faraway gardens at home. The place was empty where he had lain. It was as if tuberoses had fallen here, maimed and broken on their stalks.

He has come to us many a time, from the realms of the placeless, where the maids of heaven live, each in her house of pearl; where the ever-blooming youths go round with their jewelled flagons. He has come, many a time, and taken on our life, and suffered our human days as we suffer them.

The Letters of Negation have denied Him when He came, and if you asked them what is the secret of the universe, unless it be He?—they have had no answer to give. There is nothing, they have answered, it is all shifting confusion, like a dream. And if you said, what is a dream—they have had no answer.

But the Letters of Affirmation have declared Him, whenever He has come. He is the mystery, they have said, He is the meaning of the universe.

When He spoke, the first door of fire opened before Him, and also the first door of light. And the Letters of Negation withered away; and the Letters of Affirmation saw their joyous and clamouring blood flow down for Him.

He has come, many a time, and walked among us, so that hardly anyone lives who was not born under one or another of His laws, however dimly remembered; and hardly anyone has thought or written except in the breath of His words.

Who is He, this One who has come, and loved us for ourselves, and not as human lovers do, in search of their own good. Why has He loved us, who are busy with our little day of life, as animals and insects are busy, so that we have no time to listen to Him. (We have plenty of time for other things—the letter that will fade in a box, the money that will be lost, the book that will gather dust.) In the end, we have always bowed down to Him, long after we have put Him to death. He has said, 'Am I not your Lord?' (*A-lastu bi-Rabbikum?*)[1] and in the end we have answered, 'Yea, verily.' (Balá)[1] And we have at last believed in His name, that He was the Friend of God, or the Interlocutor of God, or the Son of God, or the Messenger of God, or the Glory of God. And all men will in the end kneel down to Him: 'And thou shalt see every nation kneeling.'[2]

How can we draw close to Him, in this day when He has been amongst us again? Sometimes, reading His words, we hear His voice as He first recited them, as they flowed from His mouth, far away in the narrow prison over the sea. We hear the beat of the rhyming Arabic and Persian syllables, and the suffering voice, unending as the waves below the barred window.

We remember the divan where He sat in His last days, His white felt cap on the cushion, His ewer and basin, the small leather slippers by His bed. But how can we approach Him, shut out as we

are by His light. How shall we know Him, if our eyes see Him in the placeless world beyond this one …

We go outward, away from time. We step off the rim of the universe. We pass onward, as those whose equivalents we are, passed onward before us. We bequeath our living to those who come after, in this hand-me-down planet. (If we have beauty, others had beauty before us, and will have it again; if we have a singing voice, they were singing in Persepolis and Thebes.) We pass, like the shape of fog in the wind.

And against the body in the ground, and the grass fading over it, and the stone effaced; and against our ways gone in such a short time from anyone's memory—against this, we have His word. And out in the placeless regions beyond time, we have His voice. Perhaps that is why, wherever He walks, the light slips round from face to face. And we shall know Him by the welcome, the swift penetrating mercy, the concealing grace; by the splendour, the obliterating glory. So let them have the darkness who desire it. But let us have the light.

A-lastu bi-Rabbikum?
Balá!

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9. Gharíq. The year 1310 A.H. began A.D. July 26, 1892, and ended July 14, 1893.

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This Handful of Dust

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The Rise of Women

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2. Luke 13:12; Mark 5:34; Luke 7:47 and Matthew 26:13; Luke 20:47; John 4:10; Matthew 12:50; Matthew 19:19; John 8:I I; Genesis 3:16; John 16:21
3. Matthew 12:50; Matthew 19:19; Mark 10:12
4. I Corinthians 11:7–8
5. I Timothy 2:12–14
6. I Corinthians 14:34–35
7. Ephesians 5:22–24
8. The incident of Níyálá, which occurred just after the Conference at Badasht, took place about July 17, 1848. (*Dawn-Breakers*, p. 301)
9. *Dawn-Breakers*, p. 296
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13. Qur'án 33:35. Rodwell's translation.
14. ibid. 7:20; 20:118; 4:23; 4:1
15. ibid. 4:8 and 4:13; 2:282; 2:233 and 2:242; 2:241; 4:39; 30:20
16. ibid. 24:30
17. ibid. 5.7. This is Rodwell's translation; Sale parallels Rodwell here; A. Yúsuf 'Alí translates, 'Chastity, not lewdness, Nor secret intrigues.' A fourth version is, 'Without taking (other) companions.'
18. Qur'án 4:3. A. Yúsuf 'All's note on this reads: 'The unrestricted number of wives of the "Times of Ignorance" was now strictly limited to a maximum of four, provided you could treat them with perfect equality, in material things as well as in affection and immaterial things. As this condition is most difficult to fulfil, I understand the recommendation to be towards monogamy.' (The Holy Qur'án I, 179, n. 509)
19. Qur'án 4:38. A. Yúsuf 'Alí translates: 'beat them (lightly).' Sale: 'and chastise them.' Wife beating was of course legal in Christian countries. Yúsuf 'All's translation of 4:38 begins: 'Men are the protectors … of women, Because … They support them'; he translates 2:228: 'But men have a degree (of advantage) over them.' His note on 2:228 shows clearly the non-equality involved: 'The difference in economic position between the sexes makes the man's rights and liabilities a little

greater than the woman's … in certain matters the weaker sex is entitled to special protection.' (op. cit., I, 90, n. 255). The Bahá'í Faith, it goes without saying, does not consider one sex 'weaker' than the other. (Cf. *Promulgation* pp. 72–3)
Sale translates the passages: 'Men shall have the preeminence above women …' (4:38) and 'the men ought to have a superiority over them' (2:228). A leading contemporary Islamist translates: 'Men are in charge of women (lit., they are standers over them)' (4:38) and comments on the meaning of 2:228: 'Man is the creditor, woman the debtor.'

20. Qur'án 43:17–18; 2: 228
21. *Promulgation*, pp. 72–3
22. ibid. p. 129
23. ibid.
24. ibid. p. 277
25. ibid. p. 72
26. ibid. p. 278
27. ibid. p. 130
28. In the United States, the rise of women is in fact bound up with the rise of the American Negro race. It was to emancipate the black that early women leaders needed public platforms—and were opposed by the churches, who suffered them not to teach. This parallel development is thought-provoking: one oppressed group arising to serve the other; both, so far and to a certain extent, victorious.
Certain of the words addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to women are identical in sense with those He spoke to the black people; to the latter He said: 'In the estimation of God there is no distinction of color; all are one in the color and beauty of servitude to Him. Color is not important; the heart is all important … The mineral kingdom abounds with many-colored substances and compositions but we find no strife among them on that account. In the kingdom of the plant and vegetable, distinct and variegated hues exist but the fruit and flowers are not in conflict for that reason … In the animal kingdom also we find variety of color … They do not make difference of color a cause of discord and strife … They know they are one in kind.' And again: … the accomplishment of unity between the colored and whites will be an assurance of the world's peace.' (*Promulgation*, 41–43). And further: '… every man imbued with divine qualities … is verily in the image and likeness of God.' (ibid. p. 67)
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22. ibid. p. 65

Easter Sunday

1. The Bahá'í Faith teaches that the resurrection is a symbolic, not a 'literal truth: 'The resurrections of the Divine Manifestations are not of the body.' (SAQ p. 96) The Bible tells us that Jesus said He came from heaven—although all knew He was born of Mary. Obviously, 'heaven' has a spiritual significance. Just so, His 'disappearance under the earth for three days has an inner signification, and is not an outward fact.' 'In the same way, His resurrection … is also symbolical; it is a spiritual and divine fact, and not material …' 'Beside these explanations, it has been established … by science that the visible heaven is a limitless area, void and empty, where innumerable stars and planets revolve.' (SAQ p. 97) The meaning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, is that at His crucifixion His cause was like a lifeless body; the believers were troubled and agitated; then after three days they became steadfast, began to arise and serve—and the reality of Christ became resplendent. '… science and the intelligence affirm it.' (SAQ, p. 97)
2. *Hidden Words*, Arabic, no. 6
3. *God Passes By*, pp. 152–3
4. *Gleanings*, no. xiv, *passim*.
5. *The Bahá'í Revelation, A Selection from the Bahá'í Holy Writings*, (Bahá'í Publishing Trust, London, 1955), p. 30

Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*

1. *Le Bayán Persan*, translated by A. L. M. Nicolas, (4 vols., Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1911–14), vol. II, p. 118
2. *Some Answered Questions*, p. 146
3. *Gleanings*, p. 35
4. Nicolas, op. cit., II, pp. 97, 6, 8, 4
5. *Epistle*, pp. 9, 18, 93, 88, 97, 103, 113, 130, 131
6. ibid. p. 131

7. ibid. p. 139
8. ibid. p. 140
9. ibid. p. 103
10. unpublished manuscript notes.
11. *Epistle*, p. 17
12. *God Passes By*, p. 219
13. *Epistle*, pp. 25, 35, 32, 61, 83, 91–2, 124
14. ibid. pp. 170, 20 et seq.: 77, 106 and 123; 108, 166, 167, 165, 161, 165, 138
15. ibid. p. 24
16. ibid. p. 55
17. ibid. p. 93
18. ibid. p. 23
19. ibid. p. 27
20. ibid. p. 122
21. Qur'án 9:4; 65:5
22. *Epistle*, p. 89
23. ibid. p. 27
24. ibid. pp. 159–60
25. *God Passes By*, pp. 125, 131
26. *Epistle*, p. 62
27. ibid. p. 155
28. ibid. pp. 171 and 157
29. Qur'án 28:32
30. *Epistle*, p. 113
31. E. G. Browne, ed. *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Báb*. (2 vols., Cambridge, 1891), vol. II, p. 296, Note 0
32. *Epistle*, pp. 20–21
33. ibid. p. 179
34. ibid. p. 131 et seq.
35. ibid. pp. 127, 163
36. *Epistle*, p. 9; Qur'án 41:20
37. *Epistle*, p. 100
38. ibid. p. 36
39. ibid. p. 99

'Abdu'l-Bahá in America

1. W. P. Dodge, *Star of the West*, April 28, 1912
2. ibid.
3. ibid.
4. Reminiscence by the author's mother who was present at the meeting.
5. *Promulgation*, pp. 41 and 43
6. Reminiscence; the same sense is given in *Promulgation*, p. 44
7. Thompson, unpublished diary.
8. *Promulgation*, p. 45

9. *Promulgation*, p. 66
10. ibid. p. 65
11. ibid. p. 80
12. Reminiscence.
13. *Promulgation*, p. 409 records this interview.
14. *Star of the West*, September 8, 1912, records this interview.
15. Reminiscence, also recorded in Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, (George Ronald, Oxford, 1943)
16. *Promulgation*, p. 209
17. *Star of the West*, September 8, 1912
18. ibid.
19. Reminiscence.
20. Reminiscence by the author's father.
21. Reminiscence.
22. *Star of the West*, November 4, 1913
23. *Promulgation*, p. 371
24. Reminiscence.
25. Reminiscence.
26. Reminiscence by Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. Kinney.
27. Reminiscence by Mrs. Ella G. Cooper.
28. *Promulgation*, pp. 465–6

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Portrayals from East and West

1. *Promulgation*, pp. 32–3
2. *God Passes By*, p. 276
3. ibid. p. 288
4. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The Universal Language of the Spirit", *Star of the West*, October 1922, p. 163
5. "The Passing of Bahíyyih Khánum, the Most Exalted Leaf," *The Bahá'í World*, (Bahá'í Publishing Committee, New York, 1936), vol. V, p. 169
6. ibid. p. 172
7. *God Passes By*, p. 247
8. "The Passing of Bahíyyih Khánum," p. 169
9. ibid. p. 171
10. Rúhíyyih Khánum, "Twenty-Five Years of the Guardianship", *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XI, p. 113
11. Shoghi Effendi, The *World Order* of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 150
12. Personal letter.

Will and Testament

1. *The Persian Bayán* 6:4; excerpt translated by M.G.

Where'er You Walk

1. Qur'an 7:171
2. ibid. 45:27