

THE LIFE OF
Dorothy Baker



from
Copper
to *Gold*

DOROTHY FREEMAN GILSTRAP

NEW EDITION



Dorothy Baker, a photograph taken in the late 1930s, and one of her favorites.

from *Copper* to *Gold*

THE LIFE OF
Dorothy Baker

"Is it ever possible," they ask, "for copper to be transmuted into gold?" Say, Yes, by my Lord, it is possible. — Bahá'u'lláh

BY
DOROTHY FREEMAN GILSTRAP

Researched by Louise B. Matthias



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*This books is dedicated, as was the life of Dorothy Baker, to the Guardian
of the Bahá'í Faith,*

Shoghi Effendi

*Whose vision for humankind continues to inspire in myriad hearts the
longing to give their all to the Cause for which he so nobly and selflessly
lived.*

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RESEARCHER'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Within days of Mother's passing people began to urge me to write her biography. To each I gave the same answer. I could write about her as my mother, but by the time I was grown and her work expanded to more than local teaching, I was away at school, then in Latin America, and later in Portugal as a pioneer. We were usually in different countries and even on different continents. There were others, I felt, who were more directly involved and knew far more about her later life and work.

For twenty-two years I did little more than tell occasional stories about her. On January 26, 1976, our daughter Dorothy again asked me to write about Mother's life. She didn't want to know her grandmother simply as a two-dimensional, paper cutout angel. For some reason the penny finally dropped. When she left the house, I sat down and wrote to the secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Lima, Ohio, to ask the friends there to gather information and stories they remembered about Mother. Sealing the envelope I thought, "Well, I might as well write to a few other people, too," and I started a list. In the next few days the project snowballed, and I settled

down to the task of gathering as much information as I could still locate, some twenty-two years after Mother's passing.

Many, many people sent eulogies. I explained in a sort of general letter that, while the eulogies were deeply appreciated, they were not useful in creating a biography. I needed stories—action, conversation, description of actual events, and detail whenever it could be recalled.

Collecting information on Mother became my fulltime occupation for the next year and a half. From one person I might receive a partial account of some incident important in Mother's life which would trigger a memory of my own. I might remember the event, but in no detail, and only enough to see the mistakes and to know how very much was missing. Each time this happened I dropped everything else to say prayers. Time after time, about a week after my prayers several letters would arrive, each recounting some aspect of the event until finally it would fall into place, complete and clear.

Toward the end of my research I felt that I was not the person who should write the book. I thought of several people and after prayerful consideration narrowed the choice to three individuals, all women. Two had known Mother intimately and had worked closely with her at various times. The third was our twenty-seven year-old daughter Dorothy, who, so far as I knew, had never considered writing as a career. Nonetheless, for some reason I could not fathom, I kept her on my ever-shortening list of possible biographers. When I prayed for guidance, I invariably found myself absolutely sure that she was the one who should write it. Finally, I gave in and asked her. As it happened she had been working in television news and had become very interested in writing. So the die was cast. She was delighted and honored to accept my offer.¹

In 1929, when Rosemary Sala attended her first Bahá'í national convention, the convention chairman called on Mother, who was still a young woman herself, and announced, “We have among us Dorothy Baker, the granddaughter of Mother Beecher. Dorothy, won't you come forward and say a few words?”

Dorothy stood before the assemblage and spoke about guidance: how to achieve it, how to recognize it, and the importance of following it. At the end of each thought she concluded, “Blessed is he who follows guidance.”

In choosing the author of this biography of my mother, Dorothy Beecher Baker, I was surely and unmistakably guided, and the world is blessed by my choice.

LOUISE BAKER MATTHIAS

January 1996
Grenada, West Indies

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

What a pleasure it was to delve back into the life of Dorothy Baker and to be able to add the many stories people have shared since the first edition of the book. If you are a returning reader, I think you will find new insights into her life, particularly her years of greatest service. If you are a new reader, welcome. We are a large and happy family, those of us who hold Dorothy Baker dear, and we welcome you to join us. May her story inspire your service and fill your heart.

DOROTHY FREEMAN GILSTRAP

March 10, 1998
Arlington, Texas

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Every life is unique in its sensations and intensity, its boredom and its restlessness. No human effort can hope to faithfully represent the experience of life, even of one's own. The reality lives on in memory or heart, but the moment escapes. The arts live, in part, to reconstruct for our eyes, our ears, our spirits, the essence of experience and perceptions. Biography, if it is to reveal the essence of a person, must do the same.

Mocking those life stories written as the dulllest sort of history, Virginia Woolf defined the biographer's task as "to plod without looking to the right or left, in the indelible footprints of truth; unenticed by flowers; regardless of shade, on and on methodically till we fall into the grave and write finis on the tombstone above our heads."² It is not my purpose to denounce exact chronologies where every known fact is recorded without interpretation or comment.

The purpose of this book, however, is different. After reviewing and categorizing by date and subject approximately two thousand pages of research material, after culling and melting it down to find the most telling incidents, the effort was made to discover connections between Dorothy Baker as legend and Dorothy Baker the striving, struggling child of God. This biography's purpose is to reflect not only the chronology of Dorothy Baker's life, but also the drives, the suffering, the delights, and the peak moments of decision that helped make her who she was.

In the endeavor to reach this end, parts of the book are written from the vantage point of Dorothy Baker's understanding. This liberty was taken partly because many of the experiences that changed her life's course were originally told to various individuals by Dorothy herself; therefore, details of her feelings and attitudes were available. Obviously, within these scenes,

many of the words attributed to Dorothy and others, the exact details of setting and mood, cannot be told precisely as they were.

The merits of this approach have been discussed by biographers and critics of biography ad infinitum. Some writers have taken extreme stances on the subject of exact replication, arguing that only those details which can be categorically proven should be included. This raises the question of whether the most thoroughly documented materials available to the researcher really contain the most vital information on the subject or, as Dr. Leon Edel asks in his excellent book on biography, whether “those (documents) preserved are not the trivial ones and those which have disappeared the important ones.”³

It is left to future scholars to compile a strictly documentary biography of Dorothy Baker and to the spiritual intuition of individuals around the world to know her in their hearts. Instead, I have tried to combine mind and heart, basing this book on solid source material while still following Lewis Mumford’s admonition that the biographer “must be able to restore the missing nose in plaster, even if he does not find the original marble.”⁴ This does not leave room for careless invention, but does leave the writer freedom to find the missing pieces. Passages from the Bahá’í sacred writings appear in their exact published form, except where they are quoted in documents such as letters or talks.

Sons and daughters, husbands, cousins, grandchildren, and namesakes of well-known people, of well-known Bahá’ís, are sometimes asked, as I have been, what it is like to have that connection. Halfway through the writing of this book, the question’s answer no longer seems so troublesomely vague.

Dorothy Baker was spectacular; she was a woman who made every effort to mirror divine attributes. She worked endlessly to cleanse her soul from dust—from egotism, from self, from envy, from whatever human foibles were hers. But the attributes she mirrored forth did not belong to her; they were and are only God's. For each of us, burnishing the soul is a charge that cannot be accomplished by anyone else. We each accumulate dust from the hard road of living, and as individuals only we are responsible or able to dispel it, as Dorothy Baker did.

Bahá'ís who have given their lives in service also serve in another way. They are examples of perseverance in the task every human being shares, of freeing the true self from the bonds of the lower nature that mask potentially God-like qualities. They show us how someone, sometimes weak, sometimes worldly or lost in self, can be transformed by learning and acting on that spiritual knowledge, regardless of his or her limitations.

With this said, I must add that not to be grateful for any relationship with an individual as magnificent as Dorothy Baker would be absurd; to have had the feeling of her protective presence has been a salve for many pains. But she is there, as are Martha Root, Enoch Olinga, or Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí, for all of us. In large part our connection with them is of our own making. Not that it is imaginary, but rather that it demands from us a desire for inspiration, an acknowledgment of our helplessness, and an attraction to the spiritual beauty of God's creatures, whether they are in this world or in the next.

It has been an intense pleasure to be associated with this unique woman through exploring her spiritual transformation. The original purpose of this book was simply to tell the story of a life, but if readers can find new

inspiration and determination for their own lives, they, as I, have Dorothy Baker to thank for living her life as she did.

DOROTHY FREEMAN

March, 1983

Grenada, West Indies

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First those individuals who contributed their memories of Dorothy Beecher Baker deserve genuine thanks, especially her fellow Hands of the Cause, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, Paul Haney, ‘Alí-Akbar Furútan, Ugo Giachery, John Robarts, and Rahmatu’lláh Muhájir. I would also like to recognize the contributions made by Elsie Austin, Edna Andrews, Annamarie Baker, Dwight and Glenda Baker, William K. Baker, Shirin Boman, Eunice Braun, Paul and May Brown, Garreta Busey, Louise Caswell, Ivan Louis Cotman, Marguerite Firoozi, Margaret Hildreth, Marion Hofman, Annamarie Honnold, Doris McKay, Hazel Mori, Gene Pritchard, Isobel Sabri, Rosemary Sala, Monira Sohaili, Edna True, Barbara Welsh, Marion Yazdi, Gayle Woolson, and most especially Mary Lou Ewing, Edmund and Muriel Miessler, and Margaret Ruhe. There would be no record without these individuals and numerous others who made the effort to record their recollections of Dorothy Baker or to forward source material.

Very much appreciated are the materials of vital importance sent by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of India, and by Roger M. Dahl for the National Bahá’í Archives of the United States. Sincere thanks also are extended to the typists and proofreaders who worked so diligently and patiently: V. Susan Rogers, Margaret Postlethwaite, and their assistants in Dallas, Texas; Mary Smith and her staff in Bridgetown, Barbados; and for their work on the

second edition, Angela Wilson and Elaine Field. Mary Lou Ewing, William K Baker, Shirley Yarbrough, and James Blake read the manuscript and contributed their thoughtful suggestions and personal responses for which I am deeply grateful.

Goddard College created the atmosphere of courageous investigation and stable support that allows projects such as this one to take root and begin to grow. I would most especially like to thank Dr. Richard Herrmann for his stalwart and generous confidence in this project from its inception, John Turner for his unique understanding, Dr. A. V. Goynes and Dr. Charles Green at the University of Texas at Arlington for early and valued encouragement.

Marion Hofman and May Hofman Ballerio were sources of knowledge, inspiration, and fearlessness without which this work would have suffered greatly. I most admiringly thank them. Loving appreciation also goes to the friends whose wisdom and encouragement have been like the bread of life many times, not the least of whom are Kim Dawson and Nancy Dobbins.

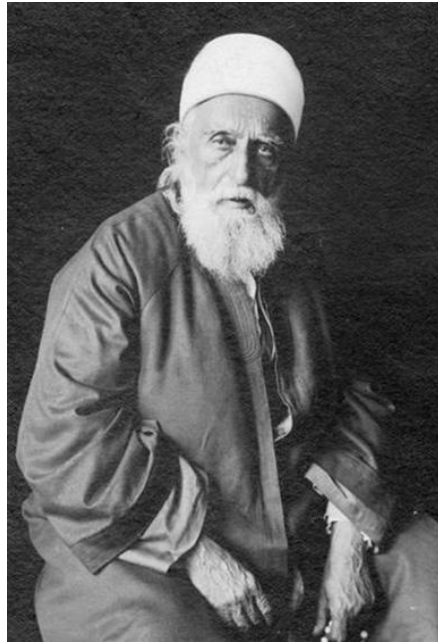
I wish to thank the United States Bahá'í Publishing Trust for bringing out this lovely second edition. And I especially extend my appreciation to the editors Terry Cassiday, for her calm and delicate hand, and Ladan Cockshut, for her willing and able assistance throughout the whole process of this edition. Working with them was a distinct pleasure.

My father, Dr. Hubert Matthias, is gratefully acknowledged for the thoughtfulness of his conversation which caused those around him to consider the patterns of our human lives. I wish to acknowledge the vast contribution Louise Baker Matthias made to this project. Her own written memories of her mother and her pursuit of the stories and memories of close to two hundred

others gave the personal depth to this book that allows readers to feel as well as know Dorothy Baker.

In closing, my husband Frank Gilstrap has been like the steadiest of ships, strong and true. My son Chuck Freeman has taught me a tender love I never knew that has helped me understand the potent role motherhood took for Dorothy Baker. Also, I would like to thank the Bahá'ís in every community where I have lived, in Ireland, the West Indies, and the United States. I've learned so much from them and hold them each in deep admiration and affection.

DOROTHY FREEMAN GILSTRAP



1. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in New York, 1912.

This photo appears to be a cropped version of the Schloss photo taken in New York, which has been inadvertently reversed.



2. Dorothy King Beecher, circa 1911.

PROLOGUE:

Autumn 1912

A gust of wind off Budd Lake reached the wide veranda; the empty rocking chairs pitched back a bit, then rolled forward and back again as if their occupants had just stood to leave. Dorothy's chair was still. At thirteen she was tall enough to rock herself, feet on the plank floor, but instead she sat as she had when smaller, chair pulled up tight to the edge of the covered veranda, her legs stretched up to meet the railing that surrounded the porch on three sides, as the porch surrounded the house.

It was early enough in the day for the sun to reach under the long eaves of the Beecher summer lodge and cast the shadow of the railing's crossed wood on the painted gray boards beneath Dorothy's chair. As she sat, eyes closed, elbows resting on the rocker's flat arms, she felt the sun warming her legs through the white cotton stockings.

Most mornings that summer had found Dorothy dressed in plain muslin, barelegged, playing on the acreage that surrounded the Budd Lake lodge. Some days she went rowing on the lake with her older brother David, or with the Beecher cousins and godchildren who came up for a few weeks at a time during the warm months. Today was different.

She stared out past the lawn and through the trees to the glistening lake, the wind breaking water and light on its surface like an endlessly moving kaleidoscope. Sliding forward to lean against the railing for an unobstructed view, she felt her face flushed by the same sun that speckled the water and wished she could stay. As Dorothy moved, the book she meant to be reading fell from her lap, but with a quick motion she caught it. With its heroine Elsie Dinsmore in mind, Dorothy reached up to retwist one of her carefully rolled sausage curls. She wondered if they would last the day. Elsie, who was perfect in the estimation of thirteen-year-old Dorothy, was blessed not only with what she felt was the most essential attribute of feminine beauty, naturally curly hair, but also with a maturity Dorothy found remarkable for someone her own age. She longed for both.

As Dorothy sat, looking out at the lake two hundred yards away, she thought, as she often had before, of the fictional Elsie's amazing strength of character, half imagining it as her own. On a Sunday, after dinner, Elsie's father asked her to play the piano for their guests. Elsie was accomplished at playing parlor music, as she was at most proper girlish endeavors. However, being a good Christian, she refused to play on the Lord's day. Unwilling to have his authority undermined, even by God, Mr. Dinsmore ordered her to sit at the piano until she played. Elsie sat there obediently until toward dinner time she fainted.

Dorothy smiled as she thought of herself sitting at their piano, her own family wondering in silent admiration at her tremendous willpower. Then she heard wooden heels on the porch and her grandmother's voice.

"Don't wait for us," Ellen Beecher called back through the front door. "We won't be home for lunch. Just make sure the others go ahead. I don't want to

hear Henry's complaints about starving so the women in his family can get religion."

From inside the house came the maid's objection to the task of explaining their absence to Dorothy's father, but Ellen Beecher had already focused her attention on her granddaughter.

"Dottie, you look like you've melted into that chair. Anybody would think you don't want to go. Oh, I've left my papers. Run around to the carriage and tell the driver I'll be right there."

She did as her grandmother asked, but then so did most people, other than Dorothy's father, Henry Beecher. Ellen Beecher— "Mother Beecher" to those who knew her best and were not afraid of her firm New England manner— felt strongly about most things. She often stayed with her son Henry and his family when they left the pace and grime of urban New Jersey in favor of the family enclave at Budd Lake. There Mother Beecher spent a good part of each morning studying the *New York Times*. She and Henry had a running dinner-table discussion on everything from French diplomacy to the best methods of education.

It was when the conversation turned to religion that Dorothy saw most clearly the differences in the two generations. Her father explained life in terms of man and his powers, while Mother Beecher, though just as convinced of the importance of the intellect, saw its main function as discerning the will of God and acting on that knowledge. Dorothy's mother would sometimes involve herself, but generally Dorothy was their only audience. After listening to the arguments of each side, having taken in all her young mind could comprehend, she would go to bed sometimes with a

certitude that all was in the hands of an omnipotent and loving God, other nights equally as sure of her father's position: "Man is the measure of all things." But neither thought could be counted on to bring her comfort as she lay upstairs in her gabled room.

There were nights when Dorothy watched the moon through the tall oaks and could see, as plainly as the clear blue light let her see her two hands on the window sill, the brilliant career she, like her father, would have. He knew the absolute power of the individual, and on those nights Dorothy knew it too. She could almost accept Henry Beecher's idea that whatever exists in the universe beyond human perception cannot be denied or proved, that the only indispensable component in life is the power of man. But then she would sometimes remember her parents' life together. They both seemed to feel in control of their future, and her father, at least, believed that control to be absolute. But their unhappiness together was evident, especially to Dorothy. She wondered why, if they could control their lives so well, they were unable to be happy.

Now and then she would dream of her parents. Like most couples, Luella and Henry fought, but they could not seem to resolve their differences. As Dorothy grew older and learned to recognize the subtle but harsh words that aggravated their discontent, her recurring dream would come more often. In it she walked along between the two of them, holding their hands and concentrating with all her strength to pull Luella and Henry together. No matter how she strained, by the end of the dream Dorothy grew too weak. No longer able to hold them, her mother and father would drift apart, from her and from each other.

The dream frightened Dorothy; her powers seemed so limited. If Henry was right, that all strength comes from within the individual, she knew she was right to be afraid. Neither she nor either of her parents seemed able to mend their torn family.

Generally, Dorothy felt more at ease when she went to bed convinced that her father was misled and her grandmother understood the truth: God is all-good and all-powerful. She found comfort in her grandmother's perception of reality until one night, lying under her starched white sheets, Dorothy felt the paralyzing fear of some tremendous, unknowable force at work in the universe and in herself. Anxiety about her family's in-harmony, even about her own limited power, counted as nothing in the face of this fear. The interminable universe drew closer, surrounded her until even her little bed was part of it. She felt suspended on the very edge of the earth and could feel it turning, turning in an endless void at the mercy of an all-encompassing God she could not comprehend.

A few days after that night of paralyzing fear, Dorothy sat with Mother Beecher in the carriage that took them toward New York. Mother Beecher spoke of God and His Messengers, of the luminous, Christ-like man they were soon to meet. Dorothy's last experience with God was still too vivid to allow her to listen with anything but politeness. She saw no reason to risk recalling full memory of that night by concerning herself again with God's power; better to keep a distance from ideas that might renew the devastating awareness.

As the carriage pulled into the drive of a house Dorothy had never seen before, that same fear, unannounced, came rushing into her heart. The unknown was near; the weight of its power made her neck and shoulders

stiffen. She sat staring at the floor below the leather seat, waiting for the carriage to stop, hoping it would not. Too late. The door opened and her grandmother stepped out. Dorothy didn't move. "What if he looks at me?" she thought. "If he speaks to me I will die!"

Inside there were groups of people around the room still talking quietly among themselves, but the attention of each heart was no doubt centered on 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It could have done little to increase the reverent attitude of the assembled Bahá'ís even if they had known that, during the following months of His American visit, the Man about to address them would be sought after by leaders in every arena: J. Pierpont Morgan, Alexander Graham Bell, and Theodore Roosevelt,⁵ to name a few who succeeded in meeting with Him.

The effect of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's loving and radiant nature needed no proof beyond the transformed feelings of the heart that was near Him. A Christian clergyman who also met 'Abdu'l-Bahá later wrote, "... one could not be in His Presence more than a few moments without realizing that His every act, tone, gesture, word was so imbued with wisdom, courage, and tranquil certitude, combined with such humble consideration of His interlocutor, that conclusive Truth was conveyed to every beholder and listener."⁶

'Abdu'l-Bahá turned His majestic head toward the door as more people entered. He smiled at Ellen Tuller Beecher, the woman He had addressed as "Mother Beecher" two months before, and motioned the child with her to a footstool next to His chair. Dorothy, without looking up from the floor, stepped around the people who had by now encircled Him. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued to speak she sat on the stool near Him but kept her eyes on her own little black shoes.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not look at her, nor did she dare even glance at Him. Instead, Dorothy tried to concentrate on the folds of her leggings, hoping they would keep her from falling into the dimension of the unknown that seemed so close, hoping they would remind her the world was real, she was real. But instead of feeling transferred from fear of some immense unknown to the comfortable acceptance of life in the here and now, Dorothy’s fear changed to desperate longing, a longing that felt strange but familiar. She had known it before, but only in dreams. Now she felt again the same intense, overpowering urge for the harmony of united love that exhausted her young heart when she dreamed of her parents. She felt that longing, no more for them, but for herself. Dorothy yearned, in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, for her own soul to be lost in the immensity of His love, melted into the luminous presence that surrounded her.

Anxiety gave way to this greater force. She could not be separate another moment. In ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s loving eyes she found the connection that unites the unknown worlds beyond, that had once frozen her in fear, with the present reality of her life. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá finished speaking, Dorothy, unaware that she had even moved, found herself turned toward Him, elbows on her knees, chin in hands, unwilling and unable to remove her gaze from His face.

Dorothy could never remember the subject of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talk that day, but for days after she could think of nothing but that face, that voice. Finally, no longer able to suffer her love alone, she wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, begging to be allowed to serve Him and the cause of His Father, Bahá’u’lláh. She signed her letter, “Your little follower, Dorothy Beecher.” On the second page of her letter she received an answer written in His own hand. “Dearest child, Your goal is great and God is All-Bountiful. My hope is this: that you succeed in your desire.”

Before His time in New York came to an end, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent a message to Mother Beecher, asking her to visit Him. When she entered the room where He and a number of Bahá'ís stood talking, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá turned toward her, and the room went silent. “I have called you to say that your grandchild is My own daughter. You must train her for me.”

CHAPTER 1

Fifteen years earlier

The fire-lit drawing room felt close and small. Sitting there with her husband, Luella thought it seemed much longer than two years since the day her life took the smooth, swift turn that ended here, in Henry Beecher's Newark home. Manhattan was just across the river, but the days of medical school and residency in New York were lost in a distance that couldn't be measured by years or miles. How, she wondered, after such independent beginnings had she ended up married and now pregnant, too? Still, Luella rejoiced at the thought that, thanks to her, the family line would be carried on, a task in which her brother seemed to have no interest.

There was no denying her conflicting drives. The comfortable satisfaction of following a conventional lifestyle with a proper husband drew Luella away from independent goals, but it did not make her forget them. Henry's success in law made her proud and comforted occasional pangs of guilt or remorse at not continuing in her own career. But the underlying regret would not dissolve. A score of years later she would explain to her only daughter, Dorothy, "Like my strengths, this particular weakness, or rather inconsistency, is in my blood. At the time of the Boston Tea Party half my ancestors were importing tea from England and the other half went down and threw it in the

harbor. It gives me a split personality. I trust you've been saved from the same.”

After graduation from Hunter College, to her mother's dismay, Luella had begun work as a teacher. Within a few years she inherited two thousand dollars, a substantial sum for the day. Instead of buying whatever trinkets and clothes she had been unable to afford on her salary and putting the rest in savings for a dowry or some emergency such as not finding a husband, Luella bet the whole sum on herself. She had seen what a difference self-sufficiency or its lack made in the lives of the women around her.

When Luella's father, Captain Frederick Gorham, died in Yokohama after his nineteenth trip around the Horn, Sara Gorham was lost as to how she could provide for her children, Luella, Susan, and William. Her mother's strength in question, Luella began to look more to her maternal aunt, Susan King, for guidance. Susan was an active businesswoman whose tea trade took her to Korea and the interior of China. She and her French partner, Madame Demerest, produced excellent livings for themselves and supplied jobs for their many agents, all of whom were women. Unlike her mother, Luella's aunt had lived without constant dependence on a man. Luella decided to prepare herself to do the same. She applied to the Women's Homeopathic College of Medicine and Surgery and, when she was accepted, used her inheritance to pay for living expenses and tuition. After graduation, on September 18, 1894, she and Henry married.

Luella sat in the too-warm drawing room staring absently at the newspaper in her lap, contemplating instead the combination of fate and will that had brought her to the comfortable life she now shared with her husband. But she

felt the unease that sometimes accompanied thoughts of their union and its effects on her life.

Seeing him across the room, so steady and content in his own concerns, she quite suddenly stood up from her chair. The rumblings of her mind reflected in her unease had already distracted him from the law book he held, elbows braced on the arms of his chair, but Luella's quick motion brought the final break in his concentration.



3. Luella King Gorham, Dorothy's mother, in 1894. A photograph taken before her marriage, showing her in her graduation gown from Normal College in New York.

"His book, his chair, his room," she thought as he located his place on the page with a long, extended finger before looking up at her. Then, as if his questioning gaze required that she explain the sudden uncalled-for motion, or words were needed to camouflage her thoughts, Luella explained, "I think I'll go out . . . for a walk . . . down to mail my letters, perhaps."

“Couldn’t they wait for the postman in the morning? I’m not sure you should be walking so far.”

“Of course I should. Pregnancy takes place in the uterus, dear, not in the legs.”

Henry made a short laughing sound, nostrils puffing out a bit of air, his head nodding back from the slight force.

“You know what I’m saying, Luella. I just want you to take care of yourself and my son. Dusk is coming on, so watch your step.”

The night air was cooler than Luella expected as she closed the door behind her. The latch clicked shut, and she was instantly off down the street, stirred by the crispness of the evening. The air had a special quality that made her want to breathe more deeply, to fill her lungs with the purity of its coldness. The thought of the drawing-room fire with Henry sitting before it made her smile, not with fondness, at the moment, but with a certain pleasure.

As Luella neared the post box, her mind still on Henry, the pleasure turned to insecurity. She tried to assure herself, “Harvard isn’t everything. His family may have had patriots and pilgrims, but mine did, too. He’s not my only source of glory, after all. I don’t even have to depend on him. Perhaps after the baby’s born I’ll practice medicine again.”

Luella felt the letters in her coat pocket. To distract her mind from its doubts she read over the addresses by the street lamps’ light and failed to notice another woman, a bit older than herself, also approaching the mail drop.

Reaching the box, Luella mechanically flipped it open and slipped her letters inside. Turning to retread her path, she found herself face to face with a woman she did not know.

“Oh, forgive me, I didn’t know you were there.”

The woman, unperturbed, smiled at Luella. Then her look seemed to change to one of recognition. Luella, unaccustomed to silent meetings, graced the unknown woman with a cool smile and moved away from the mail drop and the stranger.

“Wait.” She touched Luella’s arm.

“I’m sorry. I don’t believe I know you, and I’ve got to be getting home.”

Ignoring Luella’s trepidation, the woman continued. “You’re going to have a baby.”

Thinking she at last understood this less-than-graceful behavior, Luella released the breath she’d been unconsciously holding so her staccato speech sounded almost like laughter. “Why yes, who told you?” Only a little under three months pregnant, she was sure physical signs hadn’t given it away. Perhaps the woman was a neighbor who had heard from someone else.

“You will have a daughter.”

Feeling her abdomen tighten, Luella forced her voice to sound relaxed. “Henry and I are hoping for a son.”

“Yes, he will be born first, but he will always be a disappointment to you. The soul I’m speaking of has unusual perceptiveness; she is waiting for the proper time, for your readiness to have a daughter. She will be remarkable; an old soul, a very old, old soul.”

Luella wanted to pull away, but the penetration of the eyes kept her still. A moment passed, then another. She was aware of nothing but the pale face before her. The woman nodded and backed away, stepping off the curb. Luella, thoughts still scattered, affronted but intrigued, could only watch as the stranger crossed the street and was gone. No longer able to follow the now dim figure, her mind returned to present surroundings and she felt again the cold air on her cheeks. As if summoned by a loud noise, she turned her head sharply in the direction from which she’d come and, not looking back, followed her instincts toward home.

Two years later, on December 21, 1898, Dorothy was born, following Chauncey Gorham Beecher, the son Luella was pregnant with at that evening’s strange meeting. It is revealing that in Luella’s two-page summation of her life she wrote, “We had two children. The first a daughter, Dorothy King Beecher.” Although born second, Dorothy ranked first in her mother’s eyes, perhaps because, as predicted that night, she was, in fact, remarkable.

Of all her family, it was Dorothy’s paternal grandmother, Ellen Tuller Beecher, affectionately known as “Mother Beecher” to the American Bahá’ís, who influenced her most. Mother Beecher introduced Dorothy to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and, as He advised, served as her granddaughter’s primary spiritual teacher.

Mother Beecher, Ellen, was born to the Tuller family on July 26, 1840. Theirs was a strictly puritanical home; Ellen's mother, Jeanette Eno Tuller, taught her all the questionable pleasures of adherence to every rule of decorum known to New England. The kitchen was the only place women were supposed to be useful. Ellen's reluctance to abide by the protocol set there was one of the major tests of the mother and daughter's harmony. Once, after preparing her contribution to a church picnic, Ellen had cleaned the kitchen and gone upstairs to dress for the occasion, no small endeavor in those days of numerous underthings layered below dresses secured by tiny buttons and hooks. When Ellen came down again her mother waited in her domain: the kitchen. The code of domestic conduct had been breached; the look of scorn on her mother's face made that obvious. Ellen looked around the room and spotted the sugar bowl she had inadvertently left out. Apologizing that she had been in a hurry to get to the picnic, Ellen reached for the bowl to put it away, but her mother's hand stopped her.

"Is it proper to do kitchen work in your dress things?"

"No, of course not, Mother. I didn't. I've just been upstairs changing."

"Putting the sugar away is kitchen work. In order to help you remember to thoroughly clean the kitchen every time you perform your duties here, it is best that you go back upstairs and put on a plain frock. Then come down and put the sugar where it belongs."

There was no discussion, ever. Ellen, like most young ladies of that particular time and place, did as she was told. It was a confining existence. Then the Tullers moved to Clifton Springs, New York, so that her younger brother could be treated in Dr. Foster's sanatorium. It was there that Ellen's

spiritual potential was first awakened. Eighty years later, in the mid 1930s, Dorothy quoted her grandmother's memories of Clifton Springs in one of five articles she wrote for *The Bahá'í Magazine* on Mother Beecher:

Dr. Foster had, in connection with his sanatorium, a large chapel in which ministers of every denomination were invited to speak every Sunday. One day it was announced that Henry Ward Beecher, his brother, Thomas K. Beecher, and the great Dr. Horace Bushnell of Hartford, a noted writer and preacher, were to be guest speakers the following Sunday. Dr. Bushnell had written, among other famous works, two large volumes on women in the church, always opposing, in no uncertain terms, their taking part in meetings. Needless to say, the Beechers upheld this view. I went to the meeting with joyous anticipation, making sure to have a front seat where I might see and hear everything. As usual, Dr. Foster opened the meeting with a hymn, followed by scripture reading. Then closing the book, he said quite slowly and distinctly, "We will now be led in prayer by Miss Ellen Tuner."

To say that I was utterly routed and completely horrified would fail to express a tenth of my feeling. Everything stopped. I hung suspended in a great void in which all motion had ceased. Nevertheless, I sank to my knees in answer to the direct prompting of my heart, and opened my lips. Immediately all fear left me and I prayed quite clearly, though hearing my own voice as from a great distance. The die was cast. Shame and remorse overwhelmed me to such an extent that I heard nothing of the subsequent speeches. I could only weep and wonder miserably what all these great men must think of me. I thought of my dear mother, of my pastor and of my church. Do you think this cowardly? Perhaps it was, but I ask you to

remember that with the exception of the kindly doctor, I stood alone in a completely antagonistic world.⁷

The head deacon of their church visited the Tuners a few days after Ellen had dared to pray aloud at the service. Repetition of the offense, he instructed Ellen in his most dulcet religious tone, would result in having her name permanently crossed off the church books. Confident of the church's powers to damn her eternally, Ellen was torn between her growing inclination to serve God in whatever way possible, even speaking out, and the obvious sin she committed by doing so.

Later that day, when the pastor of the church visited, Ellen was still in turmoil. All humiliation was already hers, so she spoke freely to him, explaining everything she felt and thought. Ellen's obvious devotion to essential loyalties regardless of manmade doctrine seemed to relieve him of the burden of judgment. When she finished speaking, he didn't question her sincerity or purity of motive. He only said that when, if ever, her name were crossed off the church books, his would follow.

For the rest of her life, Ellen took an active role in both religious and community work. When asked how this stance could possibly be acceptable in God's sight when the Apostle Paul was so clear about women's secondary position in the church, Ellen explained her understanding of Paul's teaching. She said that his interest in the silence of women, as evident from his organization of the first Christian church in Antioch, Syria, was based on a desire for social unity among its members, many of whom were offended by women who spoke out and asked questions. Unlike the eternal law that we must love our neighbor, this rule was not spiritual in nature. It was simply a method of creating unity among the members of an early Christian church by

following the prevailing social customs of the time. In this new age, when women are considered to possess the same intelligence and spiritual potential as men, she saw no reason for the arbitrary distinction between them within the church. Consequently, Ellen felt perfectly at ease with her choice of an active, rather than passive, religious life.

Ellen's interest in the church spread to include the rest of the community. She worked in prison reform and served on the board of the Trenton Reform School for girls. When Mrs. Marshall O. Roberts founded the YWCA in New York, she asked Ellen, who was becoming known for her interest in the advancement of women, to serve as a spiritual guide and counselor to the girls who lived there. Another cause that attracted Ellen's considerable energy was the Temperance League. She gave fiery speeches to thousands about the debilitating physical and social effects of alcohol and also edited a weekly magazine dedicated to the same ideas.

In New York, while working in the slums, Ellen met a young newspaperman, Joseph A. Beecher. He was a grandnephew of Lyman Beecher, father of both Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher. When Joseph and Ellen married on Christmas Day, 1866, the conflict that had begun in Clifton Springs chapel between the presiding patriarchy of the Beecher family and the independence of Ellen Tuller took full bloom. But Joseph, unlike Henry Ward Beecher, admired and encouraged Ellen. Their in-harmony wasn't based on differing philosophies so much as on similarly independent personalities. What they loved of each other in theory—deep commitments, strongly-felt passions—didn't work as a basis for their marriage. Although in theory they might have seemed well suited, their relationship was a volatile one. Ellen's continued zeal to do good was further fired by the pain and frustration of life at home.

By her late twenties her belief that all would be well with the world if only enough people determined to solve the most evident problems had waned. It had turned instead to a consciousness of the apathy of others and of her own powerlessness to redress the never-ending wrongs. She continued to work at the causes she once believed in, but no longer with the conviction that her efforts would have any real effect. Seen through the darkened glass of her own limitations, resolving the problems of mankind, resolving even the difficulties of her own life, seemed hopeless. Still, time with certain friends gave her some solace.

Ellen often visited a Mr. and Mrs. Thompson's home where they spent long evenings together talking or listening to music. On one such evening, although thoughts still rushed in and out of her mind, Ellen felt too tired to do anything but lie on the divan. Finally she closed her eyes, hoping to shut down the thought mechanisms that kept her tormented and instead lose herself in the music Mrs. Thompson played. Ellen couldn't help wishing that, rather than the sweet, innocuous piano piece, her friend would play something forceful—Bach, perhaps—music to drive the demons of doubt from her heart. But no sound of absolution came, no strength of tone that could meet her misery then take her, little by little, from its depths to the relative comfort of understanding. She finally slipped into sleep and, sleeping, dreamed. Again in the articles on Mother Beecher's life, Dorothy quoted Ellen's memory of that evening:

In the corner of the room appeared a Glorious Man, robed in white and wearing a white turban. I dare not attempt to describe the majesty of that Presence. The moment I saw him, he extended his hands to me. "I know that you long to die," he said with exceeding gentleness. "You may go with me now if you wish." The room seemed suddenly flooded with light. How I

longed to arise and go with him! Then he spoke again, telling me that although I might make my choice as I willed, a great blessing lay in my remaining here of my own volition, and that all things would be made plain to me. My soul cried out to go, yet immediately my desire to be obedient to this Shining Person obliterated all other desire. Joy filled my being as I acquiesced to the things he had spoken. Thereupon I began to be aware once more of physical sensation, and found myself being vigorously rubbed back to consciousness by Mr. and Mrs. Thompson who had become greatly alarmed about me. Even after I had opened my eyes, I saw the dim outline of that luminous Presence for a brief moment. Then all too soon the vision faded, leaving me transfigured by a strange joy while at the same time desolate because of its passing; so desolate indeed that I could not forbear crying out in the grievous pain of that parting.⁸

During those moments, timeless for Ellen, Mr. and Mrs. Thompson were unable to find any pulse for a full five minutes. Awake, but still too weak to tell of her experience, Ellen lay silent on the divan. She didn't know who the white-robed man was, but his promise that all things would be made plain gave her the faith to go on living.

During the coming months and years, Ellen investigated every path that might lead to truth: New Thought, Christian Science, Theosophy, Spiritualism. Each supplied her with some new understanding, but after complete immersion in the various beliefs, Ellen had to recognize and admit that "all things," at least for her, were still far from plain.

Almost forty years had passed since her dream. Ellen began to wonder if it really meant what she thought or if perhaps the dream was only a product of her own subconscious desires, of her fading hope that life was worth living.

Experiences with various spiritual groups made her a master at distinguishing sincerity from sham. She became callous to beautiful words that too often concealed beliefs she did not share.

Ellen first heard a fragment of the story of Bahá'u'lláh from a Persian rug dealer around the turn of the century. She was directed to an American Bahá'í woman in New York who gave her a copy of a prayer written by Bahá'u'lláh. With the prayer in her purse, Ellen left the woman's house, wondering, deep in thought, and stepped in from of a train. She seriously injured her leg and had to be hospitalized for several weeks.

Immobilized in her hospital bed, with little else to do, Ellen read and reread the prayer. By the time she was able to leave, Ellen felt fired with the hope that she had found her Beloved and that all things, as promised, would be made plain to her. Each day brought her closer to the certainty that His promise to her, forty years before, was real.



4. Mother Beecher, circa 1925.

Ellen Beecher's obedience at the time of her near-death finally did bring the promised understanding, first through the meetings she attended at several Bahá'í homes, then through translated writings of Bahá'u'lláh and His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She received her first Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1897 and at least ten more. In a Tablet He wrote to her in 1903, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "Be ye not grieved at the censure of the multitude, at the evil of the ignorant, at the derision of the deniers nor at the ridicule of those who are heedless of the appearance of the Kingdom of God." For her whole long life Ellen Beecher remained steadfastly sure that this was indeed the day foretold in the Lord's Prayer, that the Bahá'í Faith would bring the promised Kingdom of God to earth, the goal Ellen Beecher had worked for, consciously or unconsciously, all her life. Even before the shock of seeing a picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and recognizing His countenance from her vision, Ellen knew she had found her long-awaited truth.

But in her dream there was another promise, the prediction of a "great blessing" if Ellen would choose to remain alive and wait to find her Beloved here on earth. After discovering the Bahá'í Faith, she spent the last thirty years of her life traveling on lecture tours, organizing the administrative activities of local Bahá'í communities, and teaching Bahá'u'lláh's message of world unity and spiritual regeneration to numerous people. Perhaps the blessing He spoke of was her service in the broad sense, or perhaps some particular of it.

Two things are obvious: First, Ellen Beecher took action, and her action had direct results; and second, her example served to inspire and edify others. It is in both aspects of this service that her "great blessing" may well be found. Through her training, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed in 1912, and through her example, she raised her granddaughter, Dorothy Beecher Baker, to be a

steadfast Bahá'í. Eventually, Dorothy served as the first woman to chair the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and was appointed by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, as a Hand of the Cause of God, an honor and responsibility conferred on only eight women in history. In giving spiritual life to her granddaughter, Mother Beecher may be counted as having supplied the original impetus for Dorothy's "long record of outstanding service" which, Shoghi Effendi writes, "enriched [the] annals [of the] concluding years [of the] Heroic [and the] opening epoch [of the] Formative Age [of the] Bahá'í Dispensation."²



5. Dorothy, one year old, December 21, 1899.



6. Dorothy "reading" with her doll, circa 1900.



7. Dorothy all dressed up, circa 1904.



8. Dorothy behind the carriage house at Budd Lake, feeding the chickens, 1904.



9. Dorothy, her mother Luella, and brother David, circa 1905

CHAPTER 2

As a young teenager Dorothy went to high school in Maplewood, New Jersey, where she lived with her parents and older brother. But at sixteen she convinced her father Henry of the merits of spending her senior year at a good girls' school. Her choice—Northfield Seminary for Young Ladies—emphasized, along with scholastics, etiquette and household skills, the latter of which Henry was very interested in having his daughter acquire. He already sensed what her years of marriage later proved. She had little patience for centering her life around keeping house.

Even at Northfield, where the girls waited on tables periodically to learn the intricacies of “womanly service,” Dorothy’s main interests were academic. The senior English instructor—“Lady Mac” when she wasn’t within earshot—was a stern woman who prided herself on never having given an “A.” Toward the middle of the spring semester, she told all the pupils in Dorothy’s class to line up against the front wall of the room. Pacing back and forth in front of them, she explained the rules of the game they were all about to play.

“Eight consecutive lines of poetry, repeated intact. I don’t care if it is the words to a nursery rhyme, doggerel, or legitimate verse. When you miss, you sit down.” Taking a front-row seat she silently studied the twenty squirming girls before her and finally said, “Begin.”

Standing near the start of the line, Dorothy was glad to be able to recite something easy that hadn't yet been used. By the time it was her turn again, a full half of the class members were seated, having missed a phrase or, under pressure, been unable to think of another unrecited eight lines. Dorothy took the minutes in between turns to reconstruct the poems she could remember, mentally crossing off those already used as her turn came closer.

The fourth round found only a few lucky ones standing, but as luck ran out and only quick thinking and memory could replace it, all the girls were seated by the fifth round except for Dorothy and one other who, on her next turn, again rose to the occasion. Dorothy's determination wasn't dispelled by the confidence of the young lady next to her. Unflustered, she said her piece. Again to the other girl. The girls in the class hung on every word, listening for a mistake. Dorothy's turn: She almost faltered, then caught herself in time. The excitement of Dorothy's near miss seemed to swell the other girl's hope that she was fated to win. The girl began a poem, only to be stopped by their taskmistress, Lady Mac. "That has been recited." Horrified by her mistake, she pushed her mind to respond—time froze, nothing came.

Their teacher gave a short nod toward Dorothy. If she, too, was unable to find a final verse, the game would be tied. The eyes of the class didn't move from Dorothy's face. Even the devastated contender finally looked over at her. When the squealing encouragement that had been constant for the last three rounds dissolved into a quiet that matched her own, Dorothy began.

Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote,

The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote . . .

Now standing by the window, their teacher's usually erect spine seemed to relax. Leaning on the sill, she gazed out as she swung her pince-nez on its black ribbon, caught by the beauty of the language and the cadence and strength of Dorothy's young voice as she recited the prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. The ability Dorothy would later call on to move great numbers of people had already moved at least one heart. That year Northfield Seminary's senior English teacher gave her first "A."



10. David and Dorothy Beecher, circa 1912.

Henry's hope that Dorothy would come home from Northfield with new direction was fulfilled. But the direction was not what he had expected. At the start of the summer Dorothy seemed to be more help to her mother, but Henry watched her as she quietly ate dinner. Even as Dorothy helped the maid clear dishes away night after night, it was evident her real attention was elsewhere. He asked Luella if she knew what might occupy their daughter's mind, if she might be involved with a young man—someone she met at a school dance, perhaps. But Dorothy hadn't written home about any romantic interest.

Finally Henry admitted that the change in Dorothy might simply be maturity, acceptance of her role as a woman.

A few mornings later he smiled, on coming down the stairway, to find Dorothy waiting by the front door with his hat.

“Thank you, my dear. I am pleased to see the ladies at Northfield succeeded in calming your spirits a bit—something your mother and I had little hope of accomplishing.”

Dorothy smiled back, sincerely glad he was pleased. “Fath, may I ask you something?”

“Of course, Dottie.”

“May I go to the law offices with you someday, just to see what it’s like? I’ve never been, except for once or twice with Muvsy, and then we only stayed for a minute.”

Henry looked at Dorothy’s almost alabaster skin, her hair softly pulled back in loose waves. Her face no longer had the look of a child, but the eyes gave her away. Perhaps the flicker of a little girl’s beseeching gaze brought back images of a small one looking to him for everything, looking to him as the supplier of all needs.

Touched, perhaps not so much by Dorothy’s request as by his own mind’s workings, Henry said, “Would you want to do that? The office wouldn’t provide any kind of amusement for a young lady. I can’t imagine what you could do all day long.” “Oh, don’t worry about that. I could help around a bit.

Surely one of the secretaries would like someone to do little things for her. You might even need me for one thing or another. But most of all I'd just like to see what you do."

Time together for daughter and father had been limited, especially over the last year. Whenever Dorothy was at home all sorts of preparations for going back to school had filled her time—things, as he said, her mother seemed better suited to help with. But Henry had missed Dorothy that year. Now his eyes saw a woman standing before him, but his mind longed to see the child he was losing.

"Dottie, we'll spend more time together—soon. Let's take a long weekend and go up to Budd Lake. Your mother loves it there, and my business won't be able to take me away so much."

"That would be wonderful. In the meantime, though, couldn't I just spend one day at your office?"

Henry laughed at her insistence to be with him. "But we'll have three days together at the lake, not just one!"

"There's more to it than that."

Henry eyed his daughter. What else could she want?

"I'll walk you outside."

Taking his arm, Dorothy opened the door and they stepped out onto the porch together. "Fath, I've thought about this a lot. I'd never bring something

up to you if it weren't really important to me. You know that."

He did.

"At Northfield I did well. I knew I was fairly smart when I made good marks here at home, but Northfield was tougher."

"Your mother and I were both very proud of you at the graduation, Dorothy."

"I know you were. And I want you to be even prouder when I graduate from law school." Stunned, Henry sank down onto the porch swing. He had often wished that his son would take up law, but Dorothy was another matter entirely.

"You're very bright, of course. You might make a fine lawyer."

He distractedly looked across the lawn. Sitting next to her father, Dorothy touched his arm, ready to praise his openness to her plan. Then the wondering quality vanished from his face and voice as he found his way back to well-known territory.

"But I wonder, Dorothy, if you could still be a fine woman?"

Not seeing the connection, Dorothy said, "Of course I could. You see how much better I've been around the house since Northfield, but I'm better at studies now, too. They came together."

“That may be so, but working as a lawyer is quite a different thing from being a star pupil at boarding school.” Henry’s words seemed to bring his own legal training to mind. As he continued, the same pathos built in his voice that he’d so often used in court, his initial sense of his daughter’s ability lost in the rhetoric of a man who knows when he’s right and enjoys hearing himself make a good case.

“I’m afraid of what will happen to you. You are so sensitive to the pain of other people. Either you will constantly be suffering with them or worse, you will become calloused and tough. I couldn’t stand to see either happen to you. Your sweetness would all but disappear.”

Now he was standing above her, looking down. Dorothy strained to see into his face, but the morning light shone so brightly from behind him that his face and eyes were dark. It seemed impossible that he meant what he said. She wanted to look into him and know if he was only sure for the moment or if he spoke the real truth. She raised her head to let the shadow of the porch roof block the glaring light, but just as she saw the lines creasing toward his strong, flat temples and almost focused on the keen eyes, he leaned down and kissed her forehead.

“Have a think about what I’ve said. If you don’t already realize I’m right, perhaps considering the consequences in your life will convince you.”

She watched him go down the steps and stride along the brick walk to the drive. Sitting in silence, Dorothy closed her eyes and let the swing move her in and out of the summer sun.

That night she told Henry his decision would stand; she told herself that whatever she wanted would have to wait for that first objective to be fulfilled—to become the kind of woman a man like her father could love.

CHAPTER 3

From Mother Beecher to Dorothy:

Hamilton, Canada. Dec. 9th 1917

“Royal Connaught Hotel”

My Own Darling Grand daughter—

Have I any hold on your heart these days? Or are you so busy that you have no time to say so? I have written you two letters since you went to Montclair, but I too have been busy, so thought as you knew of my goings possibly through your mother ‘twas not worthwhile to say more. But tonight I am reaching out to you while way off so far from you all. I guess a beautiful long letter from dear Mrs. Carré this morning made me think of home folks, and you constitute a large part of them to me. So here goes once more, in the hope that it will be a welcome message from the heart that loves you very, very deeply.

My experiences have been wonderful of course, meeting so many people of all grades and conditions in a strange land—and I have been more than happy in my work. I have met some very advanced souls from whom I gleaned many treasures—but of course I could not tell of it all by letter. Then I have been so wonderfully inspired in speaking that I have drawn

many people to my feet, yes, and my heart—but this only rejoiced my heart because it gave me influence and power to show them themselves and their needs of a deeper spiritual insight.

In London, Ontario, I had phenomenal success—was there nearly two weeks, and spoke nearly every night in parlors in all parts of the city, to different audiences—but the charm there was that the people who listened to me were all *Church* people. This opportunity to open the Scriptures to Christians I have longed for ever since I began to teach—but I guess I had not been ready before this to do so. . . .

I stopped at a delightful hotel there where I was more than comfortable and happy—had such a nice warm room with private bath—and such a splendid table. Had it not been for the great expense—\$4.50 per day—I should have remained longer in L. for several other parlors had been offered me for meetings—but Mrs. Maxwell¹⁰ is sending me and paying all expenses so it did not seem quite fair to spend longer time in the one city. Mrs. M. also sent me to Chicago and Detroit—but in those two cities I was entertained. In Chicago at the home of a very wealthy man whose family consists of a wife and one daughter just your age. She has finished her school life, but has decided to return to College and prepare herself for “Social Service” life. I have met several very advanced girls on this trip who are either making ready to serve the world, or are actually at work already—the girls are turning away from amusements to the useful and practical life—and all absorbed. Of three girls in one family all of them have entered some useful vocation, leaving a fine home of wealth and many attractions. . . .

Oh! Dorothy it is such a joy to be conscious of the God Presence and be able to help the blind into Light. How everything else pales before the

Realities which are Eternal. They never disappoint one, but grow upon you in power and glory. The things of Earth seem so hollow, so fleeting as they recede before my eyes—but you say yes, Grand Ma but you are old and more ready to let go. That is quite true darling. I am in a position though to see things as they are. But you have your life to live, not to waste. You must mingle with the people of the world, enter into its joys, and work, and interests—but darling, always *shine from within*. Make the old world better, happier and hungry to know more about the light which shines through you. And always keep the Eye of your Soul fixed on God. He is the only Salvation. He only can make you great in all lines. He only can give you a calm peace when all things else fail. So whatsoever you do in life, do it for the Glory of God. When you enter the realm of the world's pleasures, do it for the sake of getting closer to humanity, and then you will not be consumed by them. Be happy always! Do not forget that God has appointed a Centre of His Covenant with man—and that Centre is Abdul Baha and He has chosen you as His dear Daughter—and that means much more than it would mean to have the greatest earthly King adopt you as his very own. One is Eternal—one makes you one with God, and the other has no power to go with you . . . or to love your soul—or to make you happy in or of yourself.

The door to Dorothy's dorm room opened, but she was too engrossed to notice her roommate come in. The sound of the girl's high voice made her start.

“Who is the letter from?”

“Carol,¹¹ you scared me!”

“I’m sorry. You must have been really concentrating.” Carol threw her books onto her own bed. “You’re something when you concentrate like that. It reminds me of when you hypnotize people.”

Dorothy felt the blood rush to her face. Since the beginning of the semester, her first at Montclair Normal School, she and a group of friends had been “hypnotizing” girls in the dorm. Her roommate’s gullibility had added considerable appeal to the act.

Since the school, a two-year teachers’ college, didn’t offer much in the way of after-hours amusements, the show became rather popular with some of the first-year girls. At the chosen time, usually late Saturday night, after the school-organized play or dance was over, they would all gather in Dorothy and Carol’s room.

Sitting in a circle, the girls would begin by explaining to each other the little-known practices of astrology and palmistry. As night slipped further from the safety of the day, they concentrated on the more fabulous details of the occult, conjuring up believe-it-or-not tales of mystical powers. Ready to be scared by anything, the more histrionic types set the mood by letting out little yelps of fear; faces would suddenly disappear into pillows brought along like teddy bears for comfort. Even between stories, fits of gasps and cries came easily and often, inspiration enough found in the scratch of a winter-dry tree branch and the movement of its shadow on the wall, or the door’s sudden crack of light letting in the face of a dubious passerby summoned by their shrieks from her sleep-thick, bathrobed trek to the bathroom.

When panic reached a peak, Dorothy hushed the little crowd with a whisper of something “truly unheard of” of which she, of course, had heard. That night, as was often the case, her story concerned hypnotism. By the end, girls were clinging to each other like baby monkeys to their mothers. Others, the braver ones, those who wanted more than words for proof, resisted the temptation to wallow in fear and instead demanded a display. These were, for the most part, friends of Dorothy’s who were in on the act; they knew their cue and took it.

Putting herself in what she called “the proper mind,” Dorothy closed her eyes. Then, as her audience watched in silence, she sat very still. Just when they had begun to wonder, her eyes opened and she stared at the candle standing in the middle of their circle.

The chosen victim cooperatively went “under” following Dorothy’s monotonous chant or the swaying to and fro of a borrowed locket. Then Dorothy asked questions and elicited responses that were far from the ordinary dormitory fare. She amazed her audience, particularly those like Carol, who didn’t know the act was just that: an act. The girls who were in on the joke got their fun from watching the ingenues and encouraging the atmosphere of haunted suspense.

There was a favorite ploy to end the game. Dorothy would say, “You are still sleeping, but when I say ‘Wake up!’ you will open your eyes feeling refreshed and remembering nothing of this experience . . . now—Wake up!” Nothing. The girl stayed quiet, eyes closed. Dorothy would pretend to make every effort, finally pacing the floor in obvious distress. Carol and the others, almost hysterical, begged her to “do something!” At last, when they were at

the brink of absolute frenzy, ready to call Mrs. Stiles, the house mother, Dorothy found the magic phrase and the poor captive was released.

But now, the unread pages of her grandmother's letter still in hand, those nights passed through Dorothy's mind no longer as nights of mischievous, harmless fun, as a display case for talents untapped by the regular routine at Montclair Normal School. Dorothy let her eyes fall from Carol to the sheets of notepaper lying around her on the bed. One, two . . . six sheets covered front and back with the challenging, insistent handwriting of her grandmother. Even squinting her eyes so the words said nothing, the marks of her grandmother's pen demanded attention. Dorothy's groan was almost inaudible.

She headed north toward the library, grateful for the solitude the gray, uninviting cold provided. Pulling the letter from her pocket she tried to find her place, glancing over the pages already read as she followed the library path. Her eyes stopped at the underlined words, "Shine from within." The indignation of a few minutes before found a further source. Why would her own grandmother, who knew her so well, feel the need to instruct her to shine? Everyone at school thought well of her. She was part of just about anything that happened. As Dorothy walked she reread the paragraph. "The things of Earth seem so hollow, so fleeting as they recede before my eyes . . . you have your life to live, not to waste."

The wind chafed her face and bare hands, but Dorothy didn't shrink from its cold. Eyes burning from what she half felt was undeserved punishment, she walked on, pushing the letter back into her pocket. Even without rereading, Dorothy could remember the other comments. She was a disappointment. Why else would her grandmother write of the "very

advanced girls” she had been meeting and the one just Dorothy’s age who was set on a life of service? What of her own role? She, after all, was the one with the spiritual heritage, if there was such a thing.

The bitter voice of her own mind made Dorothy feel sick. She thanked God no one could hear her thoughts. What was the real difficulty? Not her grandmother’s other favorites—she knew they would never compare, not really, not in Mother Beecher’s heart. Jealousy didn’t help. It only gave her a victim outside herself.

Even with the envy recognized and rejected, she was still angry. But why? For being found out by her grandmother? For finding herself to be nothing outside of the ordinary in her search for friends and fun?

But that was oversimplifying, and she knew it. The problem was no more an incident or two with hypnotism than it was the girls her grandmother mentioned. An attitude, a purpose—something had shifted in her heart. That was the root problem. At some point, maybe not long ago, her commitments had changed, not changed character, but changed emphasis. The questions, the pain, stemmed from that. She hadn’t forgotten being at the feet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, nor had she consciously meant to neglect the service she once was determined to render, but still, how much did that decision now affect her daily life? It was hard to know.

In less than a week it would be time for Christmas break. Then she and Mother Beecher, her physical grandmother but spiritual mother, would talk and find answers to the feelings that made her suddenly doubt herself, feelings which only that afternoon had seemed natural. Together they would

rechart the spiritual territory Mother Beecher had played such a big part in helping her discover.

Back at school in January, Dorothy seemed the same to her classmates—quick and as interested as ever, but with more of the strength and leadership they had already sensed. An obvious difference was that she and Winifred Baldwin became roommates and soon proved to be the two top students. At night they would do their homework together and then, instead of leading the second floor of Edward Russ Dormitory in a session of palmistry or hypnotism, Dorothy would sit and talk for hours with Winnie about their lives and their goals, material and spiritual.



11. At Montclair Normal School, 1918. Left to right: Dorothy Beecher, Mildred Libby Rice, Marion Hamilton, Emmy Lou Koth, and Winifred Baldwin.

Years later Dorothy named her own daughter Winifred Louise after the girl with whom she had shared some of the important times of her young womanhood. Even fifty years later Winifred Baldwin wrote of what they

learned together, of how Dorothy's commitment to "radiant acquiescence" helped give Winifred strength to accept the early death of her mother, pain she couldn't have known was ahead during those halcyon days at Montclair.

At the age of nineteen, everything matters, every moment is the moment of truth. Like a thousand other girls on the eastern seaboard that summer and every summer, Dorothy was ready to do something important, but there wasn't anything to do. June had barely started, and the summer looked endless. Her year of teacher training didn't help; Montclair was out for the summer, but so were all the public schools, so she couldn't teach. Service, service that mattered, that was what she wanted.

In Europe the war went on. Dorothy's brother was in the army, but not overseas. Most of the girls in her class had a brother or father, fiancé or boyfriend in the war—someone whose name they dreaded finding among the lists of war dead, whose mention in letters from home charged them with tremors of uncertainty until, scanning the pages, they found none of the trigger words: wounded, shot, killed. Dorothy's friend Eleanor Browning received the news at school. Her fiancé was dead. Others waited, wondering how closely their turn would follow Eleanor's.

The war, in spirit, was everywhere. So it had been since Dorothy was fifteen, but now she was an adult with time and a new inclination to serve. Service to the Bahá'í Faith was one possibility, but it was hard to define beyond a general approach to life—there was no clear-cut forum in which to practice it. The desire to give to some larger whole, outside herself, appeared to be best fulfilled by participating in the struggle that embroiled most of the world. At the least it would give her a summer job; a munitions factory in Dover, New Jersey, had openings.

Determined to do her part, Dorothy tried hard to settle into the routine of her job as a bomb inspector. But wartime or not, the work was dull and repetitious. The summer dragged on, one day identical to the next. Thoughts of other times and places occupied Dorothy's mind while her hands stayed busy at the workbench. Often her eyes would drift around the room to watch the other women perform the exact function she performed time after time.

As Dorothy stood at her position one day, she noticed that the woman in the nearest corner station was looking around the room as well. Glad to see someone else couldn't keep to the tedium, Dorothy smiled. Oblivious, the young woman returned to her work. Dorothy reasoned that her smile hadn't been noticed, but it didn't seem possible; they faced each other with only the two tables in between. She looked again toward the woman and noticed something else: her station was particularly messy. All of the work tables were strewn with various tools, but hers was unusually cluttered.

The last break over, quitting time still two hours away, Dorothy walked back toward her station, her eyes everywhere but there, where boredom waited. Almost to her place, she reconsidered: why not pay a visit to the shy colleague across the workroom? So instead of getting directly back to work, Dorothy cut around and walked behind the barricade separating their inspection group from the rest of the plant. As she came around the corner the woman's back became visible, then the top half of her torso disappeared from sight as she leaned far over her work bench. "Very thorough," thought Dorothy. Not wanting to interrupt in the middle of an inspection, she stood still, just the other side of the barricade, and waited for her coworker to finish. After a minute or two Dorothy began to wonder if there were some problem. Peering around the movable shelves, she saw the woman's hand inside the bomb. Then the other hand slipped under her work table and pulled out

something long, but she moved so quickly Dorothy wasn't sure what. By the flash of light reflected it looked like a knitting needle, but whatever it was, it was now lodged inside the bomb, and the bomb sat alongside the others that had been inspected and approved.

Back at her own table Dorothy couldn't decide if she had seen anything or not. Her quiet explanation to the plant supervisor at the end of the day was given mainly to free her mind, to pass on the information to someone qualified to decide it was nothing. Instead, the discovery received national attention. A knitting needle, properly placed, could apparently make certain bombs the plant manufactured malfunction. The President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, sent a letter to Dorothy in commendation for her discovery of an enemy agent.

She was not, however, sure of the merits of her action. In later years Dorothy almost never spoke of the episode and then only hesitantly. With the knowledge that what she did was laudable in the sight of many of her countrymen came a sense of the pathos of a situation in which tampering with a bomb and so averting the taking of certain lives was considered pernicious, while the manufacturing of the instruments for human destruction was praiseworthy.

The immorality of civilized life bothered her. Still, instead of closing herself off in her own pure hermetically sealed world of ideals, Dorothy expanded her interests and her activities.

At Montclair the next year, she was editor-in-chief of the school's yearbook, *The Palatine*. She was also elected class president and won myriad honors along with one or two others in each category: most popular, brightest,

student who did the most for the school and class, best talker, joy of the faculty, peppiest, most unselfish, and best leader. A classmate's brother, Dr. Robert E. Fuller, recalled,

As I look back on those few social events that included me, I remember Dorothy in a special way. There was meaning of personal interest when she greeted you, there was character and dignity in her behavior, and when she spoke of life there was eloquence to her words. Instead of deflating me she inspired me to use my mind and think along with her.

Whatever the qualities were that captivated and charmed her classmates and friends, they were developed as a result of Dorothy's growing understanding of the choices life offers and of her decision to depend on an underlying purpose in order to make those choices correctly. As she matured, the threads of her various ideas and aspirations twisted together to form a strong cord that gave her life direction. To one friend, Bernice Nickerson Vanderbilt, "Dorothy gave the impression of being very sure of herself. Her enthusiasm was enhanced by a personal magnetic quality." A sorority sister and close friend in Pi Sigma, Hammie Toner, commented, "For one of her age she had the rare combination of wit, intellect and a great sense of spiritual values. One couldn't have a mean thought or say an unkind word in her presence. One just didn't, that's all."

As Dorothy became more and more sure of the beliefs that would guide her life and influence the lives of people around her, her brother was busy finding a way of his own. Early on he had been independent. Home from his first day at elementary school, he announced to his mother, "My name is not Chauncey anymore, call me David." Later he was no less determined to forge the kind of life he chose, regardless of what his family thought.

While Dorothy was at Montclair, David went to the University of Miami. Technically, he studied engineering, but he became most proficient at attracting members of the opposite sex. When he visited the family at home or Dorothy at college, more than one of his sister's friends found him irresistible.

He combined the charm and mannerliness he had learned at home with the reckless appeal of a marauder. Barely concealed below his respectable Beecher attitudes was a lascivious quality unknown before to the sheltered young ladies he met through Dorothy.

For years to come Dorothy lived through David's loves and marital mishaps, suffering both with him and with the friends whose hearts he broke. Eventually she became adept at anticipating his next attraction and its consequences. This led to some platonic chiding on her part or, when the situation seemed hopeless, to straightforward counseling on the moral responsibilities of love.

Although he never acknowledged that Dorothy's attitudes were anything but prudish, under the veneer of patronizing good humor David, at times, listened. He often mimicked her "precious piety," trying to get through to the real feelings, which he suspected were more like his own, only veiled under his little sister's pointless desire to conform.

Dorothy's convictions troubled David, as David troubled Dorothy. The two formed a perfect counterbalance for each other, too perfect to be easily shifted. At moments, in thought or conversation, their instincts brought them together, but they continued to live their lives with opposite goals.

CHAPTER 4

David let the screen door slam closed behind him, but it couldn't be heard in the airy hall that served as a cafeteria for the Green Acre Bahá'í School. Like all eating places where people enjoy being together more than they delight in the food, the noise level didn't allow for interruption. Looking through the familiar faces, his eyes grew sharp as they found their mark.

Just beyond the third of the tall windows that looked out onto the lawn sat his sister. From his position at the door he watched, rigid, on point. Although Dorothy was apparently involved in animated discussion, the room melted before David as his concentration mounted. The voices were so many and so loud that they mixed together until he couldn't have known, even if he had cared, whether the sound came from humans or from a swarm of sparrows outside.

With his dark blue eyes still focused on Dorothy, David let the sounds of the dining hall neutralize into silence as he watched his sister. Dorothy, perhaps aware of a difference in the mood of the room, perhaps only letting her gaze drift to the double doors at the end of the long, high hall, suddenly connected with his persistent presence. For an immeasurably brief moment nothing changed as they held each other in balance. Then she raised a motioning hand and David, shooting back into the reality of noon at Green Acre, moved toward her.

A shock of light brown hair fell across his brow, catching light, turning to wheat as he passed by the windows between them. Golden from the summer's Maine sun, his face looked alive with wry interest in life around him. David seemed in possession of all the alertness and intelligence his mother saw in him and his father demanded of him.

A quick grin was greeting enough before he spoke his intentions. "I'm off, Dottie, up to Canaan."

"Aren't we both going up after the session? Aunt Susie's expecting us both."

David watched his foot scrape at the grit between his shoe and the oak floor. The pose—head bent down, eyes staring—didn't fit his self-image, but his sister's face would only remind him of perceptions that were harder to define. "I'm off—to marry Lila. That's why I'm going up now I just wanted to let you know."

With his jaw set, he raised his head to catch the impact of the statement on Dorothy. His eyes strong, determined, confident, he looked into her lighter blue ones, now soft as she studied her brother. Was it compassion that made her gaze so tender? It was compassion he had to guard against.

"I'm glad for you, Dave-o. Lila . . . so you asked her."

Dark hands on white cloth supported David's leaning weight. Dorothy reached over and lightly covered one of them with her own. Unable to accept this act of nurturing which it seemed so natural for her to provide, he shook his hand free and bent down as if to comfort Dorothy instead.

“Don’t you start feeling lonely without your big brother.”

“We’ll still be together a lot.”

Dorothy smiled but had the distressing sensation she was saying the words for him rather than for herself.

Aware only of her brother, Dorothy’s mind fill with fear for him. She struggled for some other feeling. Too late. Instinctively, he must have known. He pulled himself away. As sure of his response as he had seemed of hers, Dorothy forced her words to break the silent connection that allowed their minds such insistent understanding.

“I hope you’ll be happy, and Lila too.”

He looked relieved that she spoke as if at ease and, seeming more than ready to finish what was to be done, David, in his own words, was “off.” Just as he reached the door, a voice called him back. No one heard David mutter, “Hell, what does she want now?”

A second later Dorothy looked up from the heavy porcelain to see him walking toward her and wondered why he silently leaned again, head cocked, waiting. For an instant they looked expectantly at one another. When the stillness became uncomfortable Dorothy finally opened her mouth, hoping for words, but they resisted.

David said, “What is it, Dot?”

“Nothing. I . . . I just wondered why you came back.”

“Because you called me back, of course.”

“No, I didn’t.”

David smiled at her mischief. “Come on . . . what is it?”

Laughing, she sputtered her same reply. Whatever the joke, it seemed to be over. David patted her hand and, with a wink, turned and again started out for Canaan. This time Dorothy watched until he disappeared. She saw the screen doors spring shut and heard their bang, audible now that the dining hall had cleared somewhat. But she looked up a moment later and there, again, stood David.

“Dottie, what do you want?”

Nothing. She saw the tight muscles working in his neck. As his hands gripped the table edge, her eyes dropped, not to watch them, but to avoid his pain.

“You called me again!”

“I didn’t call you, I swear.”

“Of course you did, I heard you from outside. You said my name.”

He meant it. He had heard her calling out to him. Fear left her and she stood.

“Dave, I didn’t call you, not the first time and not this time. Maybe it was your own mind telling you . . . to wait, telling you it might be a mistake to marry Lila, at least to marry her now.”

Dorothy, holding her brother’s hands, felt them go wet and saw the stubbled skin above his sharply defined upper lip begin to shine with perspiration. The lips parted to form the silent words of a prayer or a curse. Again freeing himself from Dorothy’s grasp, a grasp too cool and too sure, David stepped back.

He gave a big grin—forget it, “I’ve gotta move. Lila’s waiting.” That summer of 1920, David married. The marriage produced a baby girl, Susie, then ended. A memorable summer for Dorothy too, it began a curious kind of measuring in her life. Inspired by the opportunities Green Acre afforded for intimate contact with outstanding Bahá’ís of the day—people she’d met as a child but had never really known—Dorothy left summer school ill at ease with her life and again, or still, anxious to change.

On August 18 she wrote, for the second time in her twenty-one years, to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Eight years after meeting Him, she longed to see Him once more, this time in the Holy Land, where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived as a result of the exile of His Father, Bahá’u’lláh. Due to their forced residence in the prison city of ‘Akká, the world center of the Bahá’í Faith developed on Mount Carmel, the very place where, according to the Old Testament, the angel Michael revealed to Elijah the mysteries of the time of the end. In Dorothy’s copy of *The Glorious Kingdom of the Father Foretold*, she marked a passage from Isaiah 35:2: “. . . the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the Glory of the Lord.” The power of Dorothy’s attraction to this place and to the

Bahá'í Faith was deeply rooted in her belief that Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled Biblical prophecy regarding the time of the end and the second coming.

But in 1920 Dorothy was not able to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land. The tragedy for her, and for the world, is that by the end of the next year 'Abdu'l-Bahá's earthly life was over.



12. Dorothy about 1919, the year she graduated from Montclair.

Pilgrims for the rest of eternity would be satisfied and, indeed, deeply grateful, to visit the Shrine on Mount Carmel where His body was laid to rest.

The fall of 1920 found Dorothy back in Montclair, having graduated from normal school two springs before and about to begin her second year of grammar school teaching. She moved back into Mr. and Mrs. Ralph's boarding house where she had lived since the beginning of her teaching career. In a letter written to her mother that September, after taking care of a few drudgeries such as how many fifteen-dollar checks Dorothy's mother had

sent versus how many Dorothy received, she got down to the essential in her young life: romance.

It was such fun to arrive today. Aren't people nice to be so cordial? The Ralphs were darling. Also everyone else in the house. Felt just like a regular homecoming. There's a closed-in front porch now, and not one failed to inform me that it was built for me. You see it used to be a joke 'cause my callers had to camp out on the piano stool. Doc Young was awfully funny about it. They roar when I say I'm going to be a staid old schoolmarm. Doc says, "yes—around midnight you *are a very good imitation* of a school teacher. Lord, what is this world coming to?" And then everybody mentions the closed porch again and thinks it's a good joke. Then they mention the people who just *happened* to ask when I was expected back—and howl with Mírzá. Great life. Mr. Ralph reminds me of Dave with his talk of scalps.

Cliff has gone to college in Pittsburg and the Ralphs were lonesome—till I came, they said.

Last night I spent in East Orange at Win's. We went to Summit to a dance at the Buchwood Hotel. Bob and Win,— Dede Holbrook (who owned the car), Louie Levinsohn—boy from Montclair, Alston and last of all—me. Had fun. Got lost coming home, though. Ask Anti Dove if that was "imprudent"?

I'm going to be really awfully good and go to bed early *all* the time and never have any dates. I owe it to my work. Don't you think so? Tell Aunt Susie that. Also, please believe it. I mean it.

By the way, I don't see how I ever liked B— — B— — even a little. I think he's slimy. He's a cat. I told him I wouldn't trust him in a cell. . . . We quarrelled. Biff writes nice letters but is a little conceited.

Haven't heard from Chet since being back. Guess he doesn't know I'm here anyway.

Elliott—as usual.

Ken—quite steady.

Montclair friends—not yet—and besides, I'm being good.

There! Whew! You're up on all the news. Say, do you like it or does it all bore you? Tell me. It's more my nature not to talk about it all anyway, you know. I didn't last year.

Dorothy also sent home the good news that everybody said she looked “much fatter” and that she had been trying and trying to get in touch with her father's office so she could go over to show off what was, for her usually pale skin, “quite wonderful color.” And once again she committed herself, in writing, to her beliefs. Perhaps Dorothy left this for the end of the letter so her parents, who were not yet Bahá'ís, wouldn't be upset by what was already a deep feeling for the Bahá'í Faith. “I haven't forgotten that I'm a Bahá'í now and forever. Think that's what's making me feel so wonderful. Told Winifred all about it. She is quite enthusiastic and is going to help me put it over to Isabel who we think needs it.”

Exactly a month later Dorothy's devotion to the Faith was just as evident in the mail home, but her determination to live a monastic life of all work and no dating was wavering.

Last night, do you know, I was one wee bit sad about something, oh just *one* minute, and right the next minute the Greatest Name¹² came to my lips, and oh, do you think I wasn't happy? Floods. Floods. And then today I whispered it to the empty seats in my little heaven, and *oh*, do you think we weren't happy when they all came filing in? More floods. Lots more. And every time, I think no more can come, but it does — always.

Grandma, have you any beads for a convenience for Muvs to say it too? And for Daddy Darlin? Pooh. Now they'll put their noses in the air and say they don't want them or need them or anything, but never mind, hand them some as you did me, and before you know it, they'll be seeing the idea of them, too. . . .

Am dated up this weekend, but still, please feel a little sorry for me, inasmuch as I always am crazy to see the fambly. I got all dated up on purpose so as not to notice my absence from you so much.

In letters home, Dorothy managed not to dwell on the fact that at least one of the men in her life was providing a deep romantic interest. A bright young lawyer who often came down from Boston to woo her, Elliott was everything Dorothy had ever imagined wanting to find in a mate. He was educated and kind; he even had a sharp wit.

To her delight, he'd asked her to marry him. She had agreed and was sure they would be married by the next summer, but she wanted to give herself

some time before making the engagement official.

Elliott told her he had forced himself to let her be free for the summer, after that first year of teaching. He reasoned that Dorothy needed a chance to prove to herself she could make a go of life, on her own. But by late August Elliott was anxious to pin down the date of their wedding and begin to plan his life. One of the earliest of Montclair's clear fall weekends found the two of them as sure as they had been the spring before that theirs would be a wedding joyful enough to be worthy of the attention both their hometowns would give it.

As he walked her up the house steps that Sunday afternoon, Elliott seemed encouraged by Dorothy's ebullient mood and sweet response to his inquiries into the state of her heart. She was as drawn to him as he was convinced of his love for her. So there, on the very front porch the Ralphs' enclosed especially for Dorothy's suitors, Elliott restated his intention to marry her and promised to be back that evening for a final talk about setting up the particulars. It was time, he said, to begin making their plans. Though she had been putting off setting the date, Dorothy agreed the time to decide had come.

In her room she threw her handbag on the armchair near the foot of the bed and pushed open the curtains to let her proud certitude spread out to the world. There, at the end of the block, she saw Elliott's car, just moving around the corner. For a moment Dorothy's spirits dimmed. Then she realized it was only his driving away that made her sad and so before long she was able to bring herself back, almost to the same high level of confidence in his character, his bearing, in everything about him. But in that instant something was lost. Now, with Elliott away from her, with his enthusiasm and adoration no longer physically present, she couldn't quite relocate whatever it was that

gave her such pleasure when he was there. Still, she wanted him there. It didn't add up.

Distraught, Dorothy sat on the bed's edge, trying to keep her mind from grappling with the thoughts she wanted to let find their own order. She prayed and felt herself distanced from the pressure of Elliott's needs and her own hopes. Then, her eyes open, but only her inner perceptions in focus, she let the pattern of their relationship form. Somehow there was a flaw, a flaw in her love. It was Elliott who provided all the joy. She was simply the proud recipient and mirror of his energetic devotion. Now it didn't show too badly, but as years passed the pressure on the fabric of their marriage would grow. What was now only a dropped stitch would eventually begin the unraveling that nothing could stop.

Startled by a whistle on the street, Dorothy looked at her watch. Six P.M. It must be Elliott. How often she had felt her blood rush at the sound of that familiar whistle and taken the steps two at a time to see him face to face, his always silhouetted by the street lamp. But now she sat still. Bound by feelings she wanted to tear free of, she sat. Elliott, so beautiful and alive. Why resist him? But still, she couldn't let herself move. Another whistle. Pulled to the wall by the force of his will and the power of her own longing, she dared a look from behind the curtains.

He stood, as always, face expectantly turned to the front door, his face that always, even now, made her smile. Unable to resist his presence, she almost stepped between the open curtains, but instead, not ready to go down, retreated farther along the wall, farther from the light. Dorothy let the crown of her head fall back against the flowered wallpaper. Tears drew wet lines over her cheekbones, finally reaching and wetting the hair behind her temples.

They weren't burning waters of lost love, but cold—reminders from inside that she was now alone. And when—just a moment later—she could no longer stand his pain or her own and burst forward to the window, he was gone.

CHAPTER 5

With Elliott come and gone, meeting eligible young men was no longer one of Dorothy's primary concerns. If love and marriage were dependent on finding the most gracious, impressive man available and falling in love, Dorothy saw no point in continuing the search. Elliott was all of that, and she had been, or perhaps still was, in love.

Dorothy didn't forget him. Weeks later her sense of loss was as compelling as it had been the day she rushed to her window in hopes of finding him still standing outside. But the union was wrong; that much was clearly established in her mind. There was little comfort, though, in knowing she had made a sage decision. The reality of living without him was deadly. Life withered without the intense delight of his hand touching hers, without the promise of seeing his clean-angled face looking at her with such devotion and rapture—without his need for her, his desire for her, his enchantment.

The claws of the eagle of love were deeply embedded in Dorothy's heart. Nothing seemed able to change that. Facing the remaining minutes and hours of life that stretched into eternity and realizing they would each and all be lived without him nullified any hope of joy. Ahead was only pain, if she concentrated on self. The only possibility left was to throw her burning soul into whatever service opened and pray that its needs would devour her own.

Dorothy's students, for a time almost forgotten, now dominated her attention. They were children of many races, but most of them the dark-eyed offspring of Newark's southern Italian immigrants. She began to center her life around theirs. Second grade protocol was pushed aside more and more as she discovered ways of exciting their desire to learn outside the standard coloring books and building blocks. She sang to them "Lady Goldenrod," "Yama Man," children's songs, and the hits of the day. The children would sit, listening in silent adoration until eventually they began to learn the words and sing along with the light of their lives, "Miss Beecher."

Many of them, their own clothes sewn on for the whole winter, were fascinated by Dorothy's wardrobe. When she tried to teach her students to identify colors on the chart set up in the classroom, they weren't interested. But Dorothy found they could always identify the color she was wearing, so she taught them that way. A hot pink skirt and orange blouse were favorites, rare colors in the Newark slums.

The school initiated a once-a-week bath program, which meant all the children had to take off their winter outfits at least that often. Dorothy's students were the most cooperative, perhaps hoping their clothes would be replaced by colorful ones like hers. They were not, but at least the children were cleaner and stayed healthier through the cold months.

The steps Dorothy took with her class, deemed small in the eyes of a school system that emphasized rote learning, led to her recognition that spring by the Ethical Culture School in New York. She was offered a job there, but had to turn it down. Life by then had surprised her with exactly what she didn't expect.

Her mind had actually cleared somewhat. The emotions that had once threatened to destroy her were weakened by new understanding. In some ways marrying Elliott would have meant becoming Elliott. With him she would have had to make a full commitment, not just to him, but to his style of life. For many women marriage seemed to be that simple—picking a person whose position in the world was attractive and joining in. Not that Elliott’s “position” was bad. Dorothy knew she had the potential to fit in very well, but swallowing whole his already well-developed sense of self and purpose, his social, moneyed, ambitious though ethical lifestyle, was too easy. There could never have been the chance to find out what she could become without Elliott’s influence. By joining a similar personality already moving in a given direction, she would have given up all other options. The emotional independence that followed these discoveries elated Dorothy. Life began to have its joys once again.

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph’s boarding house—their converted family home—still had the feeling of family, and Dorothy relished belonging. In the evening, the Ralphs sat down to dinner with their “guests” while a hired lady served them all. That September a woman who didn’t live at the house began joining the little group at dinner. She was always accompanied by a young girl and a slightly older boy who were introduced as Sara and Conrad. As it turned out, the woman was not their mother, but their nanny. When the father, a widower, was out of town she had full charge of Connie and Sally, as she called them. Even when he was home and caring for the children himself, their father often brought them to the Ralphs for dinner, so Dorothy, now a master at befriending youngsters, had gotten to know them both quite well.

Sara was becoming very devoted to Dorothy, who, having little else to do besides visit with the other diners after the evening meal, usually stayed

downstairs, often playing and talking with the little girl. One evening Sara announced that their father would be bringing them the next night.

“Won’t you be glad to see him, Miss Beecher?” Of course she would, Dorothy said, trying to remember him, and she’d be especially glad to see Sara. Then Dorothy kissed her goodnight while Sara grinned. As Dorothy walked up the stairs she waved down at the child in the entry hall. But the smile was gone from Sara’s face. She just watched as Dorothy walked toward her room, then finally lifted her hand in a last goodnight. Dorothy couldn’t help wondering if it might not be too hard on Sara to become so attached. Her mother was gone, but Dorothy could hardly substitute.

At dinner the next evening Sara sat immediately across from Dorothy with her father and brother to her right. She talked about her day at school, then asked Dorothy to tell about her students. “Well, they’re a little bigger than you are. Are you six or seven?” “Almost seven.”

“Most of my students are seven or eight, but a few of them are very grown up, or at least they try to act that way.”

“Do they try to read hard books or what?”

“Not exactly. Today one boy was saying some things he really shouldn’t have, out on the playground.”

“Oh, what did he say?”

The adults within earshot, including Sara’s father, turned to hear what Dorothy would answer.

“Instead, let me tell you what he said when I called him inside. He stood by my desk while I talked to him. I said, ‘Joey, you have such a beautiful mouth. It makes me so sad to hear words that are ugly come from a sweet mouth like yours.’ He has eyebrows that look exactly like half circles. The longer I talked, the higher they went on his forehead, until he was looking at me with this astonished expression.”

Dorothy raised her own eyebrows higher. Sara laughed, then became serious. “Did he cry?”

“No, but when I stopped, he walked right over next to my chair so his face was almost level with mine and stared at me for a moment. His eyebrows were still way up here. Then he put his arms around me and hugged me so hard and said, ‘Miss Beecher, when I grow up I’m going to build you a bi-i-ig red castle.’“

Everybody smiled, except Sara, who looked rather desperate. “Please, Miss Beecher, don’t go live in that boy’s castle. Come live with us. If you will, I’ll let you have my turn in Daddy’s bed!”

Because he was gone so much, Sara and Conrad’s father let the children take turns sleeping in his big bed on nights when he was home. Sara was offering her most cherished gift, but to the adults present it was a good joke. As they repeated her offer around the table, everyone laughed again with those who missed it the first time, and Dorothy glanced at the man who sat across the table. She blushed at the implication of Sara’s suggestion but covered it with laughter as hearty as that of the other boarders. Still, when the rest went on to other subjects, she again looked over at the quiet older man who sat opposite. After explaining something to Conrad, he was just turning

back to Sara, and as he did he happened to glance at Dorothy. This time Sara's joke couldn't explain the sudden surge of color in Dorothy's white skin, nor could laughter cover her embarrassment as she lowered her eyes to her plate and wondered, as she fumbled with her fork, if Frank Baker found her foolish.

Frank was a large man, tall and quite heavy. His reserved nature combined with his substantial bulk to make him seem forbidding, yet there was a vulnerable quality about him. When Dorothy and Frank met, he was almost thirty-one years old and was already part of the solid middle class his German father and grandfather had worked so hard to join. Theirs had been lives of durable effort marked by the small and large triumphs that tend to give one's self-image consistency and substance. Frank might have seemed to be a man content with a similar role. He was an able businessman, working as production manager of all the northeastern National Biscuit Company bread bakeries.

Like his forebears, he was good at the bakery business and enjoyed it. However, there was a detached quality about Frank that distinguished him from the rising young executive who sees will as an absolute force, whose boisterous confidence is matched only by the occasional sinking sense of his own inadequacy. Frank had a steadiness not easily shaken.

Frank's grandfather, like five of his eight brothers, had left Germany in 1848 for America. His son, Frank's father, married a Miss Stolzenbach, so Frank's heritage was German on both sides. The family lived in a German enclave in Zanesville, Ohio. Despite his grandfather's and father's success in America, while Frank was growing up the family spoke only the mother tongue at home and retained many German qualities and traditions. He was

taught to be responsible and thorough, to express his thoughts but to suffer his feelings quietly.

At seventeen Frank had almost died of typhoid. Delirious for days, he recovered consciousness enough to wonder at his mother's absence from his bedside. Protecting Frank's weakened nerves, the doctor lied that his mother was in bed, too ill to come to him, but recovering. It was only when Frank was well enough to leave his bed and his room that he learned the truth: She had died of the disease that almost took his life. The fear of unexpected loss never left Frank.

After high school, and following a summer at his father's bakery, Frank went off to Yale like his brother Carl before him, and Robert later. But unlike the other boys, Frank got married during his sophomore year to a New Haven girl, Mary Quentin.

Mr. Baker gave the marriage his blessing when he found out about it the next summer, but told his son the only responsible action was to leave school and begin work so he could support his wife. Frank took a job with his father's Plezol Bakery in Zanesville. Having Mary with him must have made the sacrifice of his education worthwhile. She crocheted and embroidered the linens, bore their two children, and fed them all with her devotion and her dinners. In Mary he found again the steady sustenance that had been missing since his mother's death. Then, quite suddenly, Mary died of pneumonia.

Frank left his hometown for a new life in Montclair, but there was little joy to be found anywhere without Mary. Laconic and disciplined as he was, perhaps no one knew the pain Frank suffered at the repeated loss of the most beloved women in his life—his mother, then his wife. For those who confess

sadness less easily, whose cries are silent, the inner sea of tears must evaporate slowly; it can't be washed away by a violent but mercifully swift storm of anguish.

Despite his loss and his intense personal agony, Frank Baker carried on, coming home to Conrad and Sara as often as business allowed, comforting them on the evenings he was there, sharing their loneliness as they took turns sleeping in his big bed. When he met Dorothy two years after Mary's death, Frank had that special quality of an individual whose suffering has made him outwardly stern and strong, but whose heart is more open than ever to love and tenderness.

Dorothy had never gone out with an older man, but when Frank finally asked her to the theater a few weeks after the dinner matchmaking by Sara, she accepted. He wasn't that much older—only nine years—but they were critical years. Born in 1889, Frank spent his childhood in another era. Even after the turn of the century, life continued to be dominated by old-world mores and ideas in the German settlement where the Bakers had lived for three generations. When Frank was fathering his first family, Dorothy was still a schoolgirl. His experience, when they met, was that of a man a generation older than she.

Whatever the two did not have in common, by the winter of 1920 both had felt the fragility of happiness. Elliott could have supplied Dorothy with everything her background encouraged her to seek, but she had known it would be a fatal mistake to marry him. She saw the flaws in her conditioning and rejected Elliott, as Frank, through tragedy, learned not to trust that the most traditional setting was necessarily the most secure.

The romanticized hero figure did not form the basis of Dorothy's attraction to Frank. Nor could Frank have considered her—a young woman of distinctly absent household skills and a friend, not a mother, to Sara and Conrad—as a substitute for Mary. What Dorothy and Frank found together was something new

Over the next seven months they became aware of their love and the quality of that love. Neither found in the other a mate who fit into the image of what they had once thought they wanted, but their love went beyond that. Each cared not so much for the outer self of the other, the self that is so easily seen and judged, but for the true self, the inner spirit that can be recognized only by the pure and sincere heart.

On the way home from New York one March evening, after a trip to Broadway and dinner at a favorite Italian restaurant, Frank Baker asked Dorothy Beecher to marry him.

June 18, 1921, the green lawns of the Budd Lake house had been trimmed and raked, folding chairs set up to accommodate the hundred or so guests. It was the same house where, nineteen years before, Dorothy had waited on the porch for her grandmother to take her to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Dorothy had explained the Bahá'í teachings, social and spiritual, to Frank. He understood and accepted their veracity.

The ceremony would be in the large living room of the family lodge, but the reception was supposed to be outside. Earlier in the month there had been some rain. Dorothy worried, right up to the day, that her garden party would be forced onto the covered porch.

But upstairs in her room, she didn't even notice that the skies were clear as the guests began to assemble on the lawn. It was a quarter of two, and they were already arriving. Dorothy stared out the window and thanked God she didn't have to be down there yet.

Not that she wasn't ready. She was. Her brown hair, cupped under just at the top of the jaw, was already encircled with a garland of flowers from which a long veil fell below the hem of her mid-calf satin dress. Dorothy had been dressed for quite a while, but kept putting off admitting it. Instead, when her parents were in the room, she busied her hands with final adjustments and made sure her eyes never met theirs.

With her mother and father finally both downstairs, Dorothy stood alone, gazing out of her childhood bedroom, her prison and her protection. In spite of the humid warmth, Dorothy had closed the window that faced onto the side yard where some of the guests stood chatting. Outside she could see Frank's daughter running between the little groups of people, with Conrad close behind. She couldn't see what Sara was doing, but whatever it was, the guests were laughing. Conrad wasn't. He looked angry as he charged around after his younger sister.

With one hand Dorothy touched the dropped waist of her wedding dress, then turned to the mirror. There, next to it, stood her bags, ready to be carried down to Frank's car. She almost smiled in recollection of his dry joke that by marrying him at least she wouldn't have to change the monograms on her luggage.

That would not change. But everything else would, and she wondered why she had ever wanted it to. Her affection for Frank was deep and fond, but

what did marrying him really accomplish? Then she would be able to take care of Sara and Conrad, but their nanny was probably better at it. Dorothy remembered how she and Frank seemed to offer each other comfort and support, but suddenly she didn't feel she needed it anymore.

Tall and lean, her father stepped into the room. "It's a bit warm in here, isn't it, Dottie?" Without waiting for an answer he strode over to the window and opened it. "That's better." Even this small act of wisdom seemed to please him. He stood facing the window, breathing in the moist air that blew off Budd Lake.

"Well, downstairs the state of affairs is just as Luella planned. Everyone is ready and waiting for what she promised will be the prettiest bride, the best cake, and the strongest punch of the pairing season." Henry liked his own jokes and had a good chuckle over this one, his nervousness adding to his normal ebullience.

Dorothy pretended to make use of the mirror's image, straightening the sleeves of her dress. But in its reflection she watched Henry, behind her, looking out at the lawn and talking about the progress of the party. She knew he was trying to encourage her with his plenitude of words, but it wasn't working, and there seemed no reason to go on pretending. She was too tired. Dorothy turned to her bed and, oblivious of the yards of white netting that followed, folded herself up on the end farthest from the door.

"What is it, my dear? Are you ill?" Henry, his long hands more accustomed to aggressive motion than to the soothing that now seemed required, nonetheless reached toward the back of his daughter's head, hesitated, then

smoothed the dark hair. "Please, Dottie, don't leave me here wondering. What's the matter?"

Dorothy sat up and pushed herself into his arms. "I don't want this. I was wrong to say I would marry him." "You're just afraid now You'll feel better."

"No, I won't. I never want to marry him."

Henry was quiet as he held his daughter close.

"Then perhaps you shouldn't."

"How can I? I was wrong to say I would. I don't even know, anymore, if I love Frank. Maybe I don't."

Dorothy's new confidence in her father's compassion let the fear that had been building stream out in her tears. Between jerking sobs she said, "But I have to, I have to marry him now."

"No you don't, not if you don't want to."

The sobs increased and Dorothy held him tighter. Henry leaned down so Dorothy was lying on the bed. He sat next to her. "You're not sure you love the man. You feel under pressure to marry. Well, you needn't feel pressure. There should be no rush to marry him, feeling as you do."

"But everyone's here. Frank's waiting."

“Don’t base your decision on that. A few disappointed guests is nothing compared to years of remorse. I’ll say you’re ill and everyone will go home. That simple. Frank and I will talk it over in private.” He started for the door.

“No . . . no, wait a minute.” Closing her eyes, Dorothy turned her heart away from the immediacy of herself, and of her fears, to God. She tried to isolate what it was she really wanted, but in her distress, she couldn’t. The wind on her face made her open her eyes again, only to see a piece of stationery lifted from the desk by the same breeze. The gentle presence of a force so indifferent to life’s great decisions distanced Dorothy from her choice as well.

The real fear wasn’t of not loving, but of losing something. In the past, life could have gone any way at all, but marriage would bring definitions of her self and her existence that despite Frank’s openness, would be confining. It was marriage that made her afraid; the restrictions, the roles brought on by any marriage. Dorothy was quiet as she followed her thoughts, letting them lead. But marriage to Frank didn’t mean joining some standardized institution. It meant she would live with a man she loved, with a man whose love for her wasn’t based on her personality, but her person. The outer self can find relationships that thrill but don’t sustain. Frank’s love went beyond that to love for her true self, not for some concocted image of Dorothy Beecher as a beautiful woman or perfect wife. And the roots of her love for him—they were growing, grounding her more deeply in the values she and Frank shared.

As she sat, her ringless hand upon the bedpost, these thoughts formed not as an argument for marriage, but as a distillation of fear from fact. The heavy

stone of her anxiety had almost effortlessly been turned over, and there truth lay, plain and real.

In an instant she gave in, not to the pressure of the moment, but to the knowledge that whatever came with Frank would be good.

Calmed, this time by her own hand rather than Henry Beecher's, Dorothy descended the stairs with her father, and nothing was spoken of her moment of doubt.

CHAPTER 6

With her luggage stowed in the trunk of Frank's dark blue Packard, Dorothy was surprised at how secure she felt sitting in the front seat next to her husband, when only hours before she had been ready to continue life without him. The children didn't share her satisfaction. Frank's description of summer camp in New Hampshire had done nothing to relieve their indignation at not being included on the honeymoon.

Both Conrad and Sara stood in the cluster of older ladies that had formed in front of the car. Conrad was more or less waving along with everybody else. Sara had at least stopped crying, but she stood absolutely sullen in the midst of the fluttering grandmothers. Hat feathers and gloved hands waved while the small girl stood straight and still. From behind, Dorothy's mother, Luella, leaned down over Sara and in an effort to help her wave lifted one short arm. The hand hung limp, but the grimly set young face responded to Luella's attention. Pouting lips separated and Sara's brow furrowed into uneven wedges, the course of lines still unset by the myriad frowns and smiles of a lifetime. For a blessed second there was no sound. Perhaps she was only yawning? Then cutting through farewells and whisperings of "What a perfect couple," and "Those two deserve happiness, if anybody does," came Sara's sharp cry. Finally, wrinkled faces drew closer, white handkerchiefs dabbed and fluttered around Sara's eyes and then around older eyes, adding more busy motion to the already waving, buzzing hive of ladies.



13. The wedding party at Budd Lake, June 18, 1921. Left to right: Frank and Dorothy, Frank's younger brother, Robert, and Libby Rice.

From inside the car, Dorothy wondered if she saw Conrad wince or if it was only the wind off the lake that made him turn his head, eyes closed, for a moment. It must have been the wind because a second later Sara's skirt billowed enough to show the matching bloomers that at happier moments that day had made her so proud.

In the front seat Dorothy and Frank had a world of their own, but they exchanged a glance, wondering silently if they should go or stay to again comfort Sara. Neither spoke; Frank started the Packard. The noise was enough to send gloved hands to ears in the little group near the car. Conrad took the moment to break free and run to his father's open window, followed by Sara, despite the soft hands and words that reached to stop her. The children's goodbyes were more intense than any when Frank went away on bakery business. This time he was leaving because he wanted to and leaving with someone Conrad and Sara had trusted as their friend.

Dorothy watched from the passenger side, unsure of how to include herself or even if she should try. She waited through tears and kisses for any sign from Sara or her brother that they needed comfort beyond their father's care. None came. It was Dorothy who winced now and turned to her own window, calling out last thanks and goodbyes to the friends, the old and new relations who came close to the car to give final words of advice and farewell.

The Packard began to roll backward down the drive, and Dorothy felt her breath release. Sara and Conrad, at least for now, must be all right. But her relief was mixed with a new anxiety that made her talkative and giddy: For the first time she was alone with her husband. “Sara with those bloomers! Wasn’t she funny showing them off?”

Frank turned the car into the street, backing farther away from the gathering on the lawn. “To everybody but Connie. Keeping Sara modest kept him busy.”

“Really, busy doing what?”

“Didn’t you see him running after her, pulling her skirts down?”

“Oh, that’s what he was up to. I did see him following her . . . from up in my room.” Dorothy forced her mind to retreat from a replay of her feelings just before the wedding, of the doubts she suffered looking down at the wedding party that almost didn’t include her.

Heading the right way now, Frank put the Packard in first. Moments before, the two of them had formed such a close unit, watching everything from inside the car. Now, as it moved slowly past the house and lawn, Dorothy’s entire concentration locked into the little group that moved with them down the gravel road toward the lake. In her mind she was still there on the grass with her parents and grandparents. But the car kept rolling, past her family and onto Lake Shore Road. No doubt now, she was alone with Frank, and the honeymoon she had longed for, yet feared, was underway. That night she wrote home.

Waterbury, Conn.

“The Baltimore”

June 18, 1921

Will keep you posted along the way.

Darling Muvs and Daddy and Grandma!

We're here, happy as clams at high tide.

Wasn't everything wonderful? I was so proud of everything and everybody, especially Daddy, who marched beautifully. Frank and I agreed that the whole affair was perfect in every way.

How I do adore you all. You are all so perfect a family.

Love—
Dottie

And a few days later Dorothy wrote,

Ritz-Carlton Hotel
Montreal

Dear Muvs,

What a wonderful life we are living! First beautiful hotels with spacious rooms and baths, and then, thru' the day, white clouds, blue sky and green trees—mountains, valleys, meadows. Marvelous weather, campfires for red tenderloin steaks and chicken, ham, potatoes, yes even frogs' hind legs. One night we caught seventeen frogs in the sweetest little brook—over in Vermont.

We are loafing in Montreal for a day or two. Tomorrow—Thousand Islands.

Frank is an Angel. All I do is *look* a wish and behold—it is here.

I have not taken out the little box at all. That is one of my wishes, and that is enough. Isn't it marv?

I love you as always—and dear Grandma and Daddy too.

Dottie

PS.—Later After dinner

. . . Frank drank a whole quart of Burgundy and two dry Martinis. I had a Martini and one glass of Burgundi [sic]. *I'm* not as drunk as Frank.^{[13](#)}

PPS.—Next morning

All's well. Frank dropped a quarter out of the window last night and spilled ice water while I had a bad case of the giggles, watching him, but we pulled through all right. . . .

Back in Montclair after the honeymoon, married life was comfortable and normal. The Bakers received a young visitor, Edris Rice-Wray, Mabel Rice-Wray Ives's daughter.¹⁴ She visited Dorothy and Frank from Vassar College, where she was a student. Afterwards Edris wrote of Dorothy Baker, "She had become a young wife, marrying a man somewhat older than herself, with two children. At that time I could not understand her choice, but she seemed the typical housewife and mother, content to be just that."

If Dorothy's marriage seemed smooth and unruffled to friends and observers, it was because she and Frank were determined to solve any marital problems or else, individually, learn to accept the difficulties marriage presented. During the first year, when they lived in Montclair, Dorothy was afraid to talk about money. Although Frank had a substantial income and included in the monthly budget a forty-dollar clothing allowance for each of the children, Dorothy felt it was impossible to ask for anything extra for herself. It may have been her strict, puritanical upbringing that kept Dorothy from mentioning that the budget, which was initially meant only for keeping the house and children (the housekeeper had received a separate salary for her personal needs), was not sufficient. When single, as a teacher, Dorothy had been able to buy a new dress when she wanted one, but on the housekeeper's budget there wasn't even money left for a scarf.

Though her wedding gifts were elaborate and beautiful, Dorothy didn't receive many practical things. The house was ill stocked, with only leftover and worn linens and household items from Frank's first marriage. It was in real need of refurbishing, but again Dorothy wouldn't ask for the necessary funds. The inflation of the 1920s made matters even worse.

Perhaps Frank's generosity in other areas made Dorothy hesitate to mention mundane necessities. He prided himself on giving her her own car, but because she was so silent about her smaller, more immediate needs, extra money went to buy her the things Frank thought she wanted: new golf clubs or dinner at posh restaurants. One day Sara brought home twenty-five dollars' worth of red roses, bought with money she had saved from her allowance. Dorothy broke into tears, which thrilled Sara, who assumed she was overcome with joy, but in fact she cried because the funds could have been used so readily for essentials.

There were also problems raising her two stepchildren. During Dorothy's first year of marriage Sara and Conrad sometimes treated her as an intruder, someone who was trying, unsuccessfully, to steal the affection they reserved for their real mother. The adjustment was particularly traumatic for Sara, who was used to having the complete attention of both her father and her brother. Another female in their house other than hired help—particularly following Sara's exclusion from the honeymoon—made her moody.

Gradually, however, the problems of the budget and the difficulties of being a stepmother were largely resolved, though not without tremendous strain on Dorothy. For months she woke every morning to find her pillow wet and cold from the tears she'd cried in her dreams.

Dorothy felt the pressure to succeed in her marriage even more strongly because every other marital relationship in her immediate family had failed or was faltering. Her beloved grandmother, Mother Beecher, and her husband Joseph had been separated for almost twenty years before his death in 1917. The tension between Luella and Henry was building, and her brother David's

marriage to Lila, like most aspects of his business undertakings and personal life, was torn apart by stress and misgivings.

So Dorothy kept her own life safe and close. The family came before all else. Her primary interest became raising Conrad and Sara and, after May 24, 1922, her own little daughter as well, Winifred Louise, also known as “Babette.”

1088 Elmwood Ave.

Buffalo, N. Y.

Nov. 7, 1922

Dear Muvsie Wuvs,

Your letter with the Sedatole suggestion came and was read while in the drug store! All I had to do was to read that word out loud and now we have the awful stuff in the house. Thanks very much. It took away the last suggestion of a cough that little Sara Jane had.

Frankie caught no deer but Curlie Oaks gave him one of his—a young, tender one. It tastes wonderful. Nothing like last year’s at all. Wish you bunch were here to try it. . . .

Won’t it be fun to see you and Fath tho’? I can hardly wait. Now don’t let Fath get something else to have to do. Especially after paying Dave a visit he will have to come up here. Can’t let Dave get ahead of us like that. What’s the new news about Dave? Is everything going to be all right anyway, partner or no partner? What got into the partner’s head? Poor old Davo! He will deserve success when he gets it all right. Can I be of any

assistance to him? He never answers my letters so there won't be any use in my asking him.

Babette is on a pillow on the floor; feet standing on an angle of $359\frac{99}{100}$ degrees no longer straight up, but poking in mouth, eye, ear, or only digging pillow about head. She can't see any sense in the straight and narrow way. Her idea is to resemble a crochet wicket or one of the balls. Golf! Oh Boy! Why didn't I start when Larry Korsher begged to teach me? Heavens! I can see Fath with a golf club in his hand. He ought to take it up. It would just suit him. Tell him to book a professional for three lessons and then go ahead.

Tell him also that Connie won the tennis championship in the lower school at Nichols. Next year he will be in the higher school, so this was his last chance to do it. Ask Dad to write Connie a little short note if he has time. It would tickle Connie so if he thought "Uncle Harry" knew and was pleased.

Babette wins the finger-chewing contest but never sucks her thumb. Therefore she will never have buck teeth.

Lovingly,
D.

For Dorothy, every day brought some new fascination: what Babette ate, how long she slept, along with the details of what Dorothy found to be her amazingly well-developed potty abilities. While Connie and Sara were at school and Frank was at work or out of town on business, Dorothy and Louise

spent their days together. That first winter after the family's move from New Jersey to Buffalo, New York, Dorothy rarely left Louise at home with the maid, but if she did it was usually for something she felt was vital for the family. When a friend asked Dorothy to visit a fortune teller with her, it was easy to decline; her mind was attuned to the guiding principle of family responsibilities first.

But after spending most of the time in Buffalo unpacking and organizing the new apartment, Dorothy was ready for a day off. So when her friend again begged Dorothy to accompany her to the fortune teller, explaining all the reasons she was afraid to go alone, Dorothy finally acquiesced, calming her own fears by reminding herself that she was simply going along as a favor to a friend, not to become involved in the hocus-pocus herself.

When they reached the psychic's house, Dorothy concentrated on the immediate and tangible by thumbing through a magazine in the living room that doubled as a waiting room. Rebecca¹⁵ greeted the woman as she appeared through a doorway. Dorothy, feeling fairly protected behind her magazine, couldn't resist a glance at the psychic. She was dressed in rather plain, normal-looking clothes, although the heaviness of the wool skirt emphasized her thickness. Its fabric looked mottled and dark next to the soft blouse she wore. Dorothy watched as she circled her, walking distractedly nearer, her left hand busy pulling on a gold ring that seemed to bind her somehow. The right hand, as if working against the left, wouldn't release the ring. It looked stiff and uncooperative—alien. Then both hands dropped to the front of her rough skirt, palms rubbing down as if to feel the nubby texture.

Dorothy looked up and found the woman's gaze directly on her face. "I'll see you now . . . Mrs. Baker."

Dorothy flinched at the sound of her name, but strained to keep her tone normal, relaxed.

“It’s actually Rebecca who is here to see you, not I.”

“I know, but I’d like to see you.”

“Go ahead, Dottie. I can wait.”

Dorothy was surprised at Rebecca’s matter-of-fact attitude; she had been so fearful before the visit. With the help of the person Dorothy was supposedly there to comfort, the situation had shifted, putting her in Rebecca’s place, afraid and anxious. She realized her hesitation must seem silly, but did not want to go with this woman who didn’t know her, but said her name. Dorothy tried to relax the tightening of her jaw. There was, she reasoned, no real cause for fear. The woman only wanted to talk. Then again Dorothy felt a surge of resistance; she did not want to know her, or the future. She had only recently become comfortable with the present.

“I haven’t any money. Perhaps another time.”

“There is no charge.”

Dorothy put down her magazine; there seemed no path to take but the one the psychic offered. As she stood, the woman turned and went back through the open door from which she had appeared. Dorothy followed.

The psychic led her to a small oak table. Dorothy sat in uncomfortable silence. Their first words sounded like the light chatter of casual friends.

“How’s Frank?”

“He’s fine, thank you.”

Instead of relaxing her, the casual nature of the woman’s conversation increased the incipient unease Dorothy had felt when Rebecca first invited her. What had seemed uncomfortable in the waiting room was now repellent. Dorothy was again distinctly aware that she did not want to be there.

“Frank. He *is* your husband?”

Dorothy nodded.

“And Conrad? Your son? No, he’s not your son. But he is. How is that possible?”

Suddenly determined to find bottom in this woman’s well of information on her family, Dorothy named her children, and explained that the two older ones were by Frank’s first wife. Obviously, the fortune teller had somehow found out the names of her family; Dorothy felt sure that by listing them all, she had wiped out her store of information and ended the display of supposedly supernatural powers. Instead, the woman seemed inspired by the names and began to talk about the children—Conrad, the eldest, first.

“He will be around hospitals all his life.”

Dread of harm coming to her son got the better of Dorothy’s decision to dismiss whatever was said. “You don’t mean he will be ill?”

“No, not that, but he will always be there. Working? . . . Yes, that’s probably it.”

She was quiet, and Dorothy, watching her evident concentration, was quiet as well. “And now Louise. You must teach her to deal with people of every culture, to be able to entertain them and put them at ease. And train her musically. She will live on many continents and entertain people from all parts of the world. As for the child you are carrying now, train him carefully.”

“I’m not pregnant!”

Unimpressed, the woman went on. “Yes you are, but be careful with him. He can be successful in either the spiritual or the material realm. It is up to you, and to him. He is an old soul, but if he’s not properly trained, all his energies may go into the world and the material wealth that can be found there.”

The comments on Connie and Louise interested Dorothy, but the remarks on the character of an unborn child, in fact a nonexistent child, convinced her again that this woman was a fraud, or perhaps just deluded. There seemed no reason to expose the poor creature, but Dorothy couldn’t resist reminding her that she had completely overlooked Sara in her predictions.

“You’ve left out Sara.”

“Yes, her destiny is very different, but quite beautiful. You must be happy for her. Her destiny is very special.”

Dorothy's ambivalence about the woman's abilities and intentions now came to its illogical conclusion. Across the table she sat, still looking down, almost through the floor. In fact for most of their conversation the woman had looked to one side or the other, letting her eyes drop low; her left, active hand sometimes playing with a wisp of hair, then floating near her cheek, fingers working against each other. But now, reflected in the longish face Dorothy saw the look of a person humbly struggling with her powers; missing was the pompous expression of a person impressed with her own strange gifts. Whatever the depth of truth in her predictions, amorphous as they were, save the idea of pregnancy, it seemed to Dorothy the woman had an attitude of unpretentious sincerity about her. Dorothy watched until the woman's distant gaze refocused, then thanked her and stood to leave.

"Give Frank my regards, and tell him one thing. There is a message from 'M.' He must know this woman, 'M.' I see her looking down at her feet. She's smiling and saying, 'I'm all right now. I can walk!'"

As Frank and Dorothy sat at the table after dinner that night, the older children in their rooms with their studies and Louise long since in bed, she began to explain the visit. Frank, to her surprise, was fascinated. He listened to every part of the story, having her repeat the comments about their unborn son. When she finished they sat musing about the possibilities for their children: Sara's special destiny, Louise's full future. If not believing every word, they were at least intrigued by their own thoughts and hopes for the children's lives.

"Oh, and Frank, according to the psychic, someone called 'M' wants you to know she is all right, and she can walk. Who could she have meant? She seemed to see this woman standing there smiling and looking down at her

feet.” His large, square hands folded under his chin, Frank looked at Dorothy then down toward his dessert plate, which hadn’t yet been cleared from the table. She felt a coolness permeate the room. Is it someone you know?”

“My cousin Mary’s dead now; don’t know who else it could be.” His simple logic of remembering a woman whose name started with “M” relieved Dorothy. An instant before she’d had the feeling there actually was something to the message.

“Oh, but Frank, you know a lot of women whose names start with an ‘M.’ I can think of several.”

“Not like my cousin Mary. She had club feet.”

Again she felt the coolness that had touched her before and the psychic’s face came back to her: the thin nose and wide lips, neither dry nor moist but with a kind of dull sheen. She saw how, from time to time, the woman had looked over at her, as if to check that she still sat there. Her eyes weren’t piercing or intense particularly; the commanding quality was subtler.

For the first time Dorothy consciously connected the experience of the afternoon with truth. It was only weeks later that the doctor told her she could expect her second child in seven months.

CHAPTER 7

328 Woodbridge Avenue
Buffalo, N.Y.
Tues. Sept. 11 [1923]

Dearest Muvsie Wuvsie,

Everything is wonderful. This morning completed the unpacking and setting everything to rights. The children cleared their closets, desks and drawers and fixed their own rooms in A condition. I began marking them this morning. Sara got 10- and Connie 10. I told them that just because I couldn't catch them this time didn't mean that some fine morning I'd walk in and not find shoes on the bureau or socks on the back of a chair. So it's quite a game.

We have a cute little fence wired off for Baby, and she spends an hour or two morning and afternoon out there. She does my errands in the car with me and is just as good as gold. You should see her sit up beside me as proud as punch. As Connie says, "Well Muzzie, if only little Brother is as sweet and good as Louise, won't we be happy?"¹⁶ Sara and a little friend are playing with her now, and we must admit that she is right in her element, Baby, I mean. She has gotten used to Sara's ways again, and giggles at all her sudden dives and dips.

The package of clothes came this morning. Thank you. I'll watch out for the RH White package, and in the meantime, Baby seems as merry and happy as a clam at high-tide. But if we say, "Where's Gammy?" she looks around and calls and then looks at us so grievously and questioningly.

Tell G. G.¹⁷ that I am remembering to read a half hour a day and that all the world is rosy. . . .

I am going to call up Heinrick and have a partition put *somewhere*, goodness knows where. Guess we'll let him decide. And Frankie says I must go ahead and have new gas logs or heaters wherever I choose, but I can't tell yet until the cold weather comes in. Besides, we'll see what ready cash we have, by Oct. 1. I do want a couch.



14. Conrad and Sara, 1924.

Sweetest curtains you ever saw arrived yesterday. Am keeping them downstairs, and putting the downstairs ones up.

I fried Sunday's chicken Grandma's way Sunday, and Frank and Connie were crazy about it. Poor little Sara wasn't feeling well and didn't eat, but

she is all right now Am going to make your kind of mayonnaise today.
Must go.

Love—D.

[Spring 1924]
The Onondaga¹⁸
Syracuse, N.Y.

Dear Muvsie,

Am here over tonight with Frank but am going right back tomorrow.

For mercy's sake, don't get frantic when I miss a week writing, because goodness knows I'm busy, and days slip by before I know it. However, it does not mean that we are all having epileptic fits or that the babies have fallen out of third floor windows. To begin with, we don't run to fits, and we have no third floor. Everyone is *great*.

Here are our plans for the summer. Connie and Sara will go back to Zanesville with Father Baker after his visit in the latter part of June. They will spend a couple of weeks. Then, about the middle of July, they will sojourn to Budd Lake where I will have arrived, bag and baggage and babies a few days previously—long enough ahead to get established before their arrival. They will visit Budd Lake two weeks also, if this is O.K. with you, and then run on up to Mother Quentin's at New Haven for the month of August. She always banks on that. Frankie will then drive down and get

me, for little trips just make me over, and we will “do” a few towns, and land in Buffalo for the August horse races, leaving the babies with you if you are sure it won’t tire you, and if we can get one of the Netcong girls to come up again this year. Mary, I believe, was your favorite last year. (We run to Marys.) I may stay in Buffalo a week or two and have the children’s rooms papered and superintend Mary’s Spring cleaning, besides making a few little upstairs curtains. Then I will scoot back for a last week with you, and take the babies back to Buff.

They will not be parked with you more than three weeks without me to make them behave. However, if you think that you might feel the strain of that three weeks in the *slightest* degree, you must ‘fess up, for mercy me! . . . *Anything you say goes*. I think, however, that you will find Louise much more able to take care of herself now, and play around alone. . . . Of course, she appreciates being played with once in a while, and *loves* to have you play ball with her, and show her picture books, etc., but the girl can do that rainy days with her. Billie is good as gold. No trouble at all, yet, but of course may be by summer. They get quite active around that age. Begin to crawl, etc., I s'pose. . . .

I’ll be *so* excited to see the three of you. I’ll bet G. G. will love Billie. He is so sweet and good (Grandma doesn’t mind homely people—she goes out for the soul, and all that sort of thing, you know) but Fath will like Louise. She is a happy go-lucky little codger these days, but full of the old nick. If she’s occupied, she is all right. You ought to see her Spring clothes. She is the cutest thing in them. Darling! Had her picture taken. Am having an oil painting for an anniversary present, and a dozen little photos—4 poses—will bring them down for you to choose. Must close. Lots of love to all—

Dot.

P. S. Haven't told you *any* news. Everything is *plans*.



15. The Baker family at Budd Lake, July 1923.

Well—I still “literate.” The literary club is more a current events club than anything else, and I’m glad of it. Our sewing club still meets—and occasionally sews. The convention [of] the “League of Woman Voters” meets in Buffalo this week, but I can’t go to the meetings because it’s too darn much trouble and besides, I’m busy—awfully busy. Can’t breathe. Getting skinnier all the time. . . .

Got Connie and Sara each a bunny for Easter. They just love them. Buddy¹⁹ nearly killed one. Scared the poor rabbit almost to death, but it was noted that the next day a goldfish died, leaving John Kratz alone again (John was our first goldfish, and he does seem to have a tenacious hold on life). It might have been the psychological effect of scaring the rabbit that

killed the fish. Who knows in this *mah*velous day of vibrations and psycho-everythings?

Aren't Dave's poems rotten? I haven't written him since for fear of mentioning them. Soon, however, I shall take my pen in hand once more. Sent him a little book on palmistry, and will look around for more interesting things of the sort here in town while I have nothing to do. Hug Popsie Wopsie and G. G. for me—D.

Mrs. Frank A. Baker
328 Woodbridge Avenue
Buffalo, N. Y.
Jan. 23, '25

Dearest Muvsie,

Your picture keeps reminding me to write oftener, so here goes for a line. I'm afraid the smile will turn to a frown next time I look at it, if I don't become more dutiful.

The wardrobe has come at last and is perfectly beautiful. With my new spread (the N.Y. one) for which I made a blue underslip to match the rug, and the Italian linen covers for the chest and bureau, we are nothing short of gorgeous. Only I'm not going to send you the bill for the wardrobe because it's outrageously high, and I never dreamed it would be that much when I promised, so the bets are off.

Your picture is the comfort of comforts. Everyone loves it, and oh how *I* love it. I have never seen *any* picture of *anyone* that I liked as well. Just a

small frame, you know, cozy and homey and not lost in big blankness, as some are (Mother Baker's, for instance), and just like you when I love you best.

Louise can say forty little poems if she can say one, and she comes out with them at the funniest times, while bustling about the house, or lying in bed, —and the stories she tells the astute Bill early mornings! “Littule fairy comed in, Bully. Danced all awound and kissed zu. Said, ‘I love Louise! I love Bully.’ Flid out a winna—all gone.” All this in excited staccato. The unmoved and indifferent Bill makes noises that sound like “Go to hell” but which really mean, “your voice is music to my ears; can’t understand a word of it, but I’m just as well pleased,” and smiles benignly upon her, even venturing a backward squeak and raucous giggle. The poor little soul, by the way, is trying to get every tooth in his head through at one and the same time, namely the present. He gets a little fussy at times, and appreciates a little extra loving and attention. Hasn’t lost appetite, however, and is extremely well, except for a regular little series of colds which nothing seems to permanently check. Louise is nowhere nearly as open to them somehow.

Am going to send my picture with my new dress soon. Billie will be in this too, but it is an entirely different mood; more a cuddly, quizzical one than the jolly, mirthful one which you have. I am going to send Dave one, since they are small, and not much trouble to carry around.

Well, au revoir! Best love to Fath. Remind him that I am expecting a few professional lessons next Spring. Frankie sends best love to both.

Yours,
Dot

In Buffalo everything was, as Dorothy said, “good as gold.” She had become an able mother and household administrator. Connie and Sara were adjusting to their new family, Montclair and sad memories no longer their only reality. Business was good for Frank. He was satisfied with his work at National Biscuit Company. Like so many companies in the boom years of the twenties, National Biscuit Company was increasing production, and, consequently, tried and true executives like Frank were sharing the benefits.

Connie went to Nichols Academy and Sara, already eleven by the spring of 1925, was making excellent marks at the Park School. Every morning the school limousine stopped in front of the Bakers’ house and, as Louise watched from the window, Sara disappeared into the car and finally the car itself turned off Woodbridge Avenue and vanished from her sight. Unhappy moments always followed Sara’s departure. Louise, still looking out the window, would moan softly to herself, “Wanna go ‘cool,” until Dorothy, playing her part in the daily ritual, would come in to comfort her. The next year, although Louise was only three, Dorothy gave in and enrolled her at Park School, too.



16. Dorothy and her mother holding “Winnie Lou,” 1922

While her little sister ate cookies and milk and found her place in the playground hierarchy, Sara was taking her studies very seriously. At Park, students were regularly put through a battery of “intelligence” tests. After testing Sara for two years and coming up with the same results, the administration finally called in her parents. Sara consistently scored so high that they were unable to establish her level of intelligence.

Frank and Dorothy chose not to push her toward concentrating exclusively on school work, knowing there would be time for that later in life. Instead Dorothy helped Sara develop a variety of interests so that other potentials would not be neglected. Sara became an active Campfire girl. She learned to sew, her favorite creation being a brown leather-fringed dress, beaded and hand painted with Indian designs. As older sisters often do, she enjoyed sharing the mothering of the babies with Dorothy.



17. Mother Beecher with her son Henry and grandson David, holding his daughter Susan, 1923.



18. At the family's summer "cottage" at Budd Lake, New Jersey, summer 1922 (*from left to right*): Louise Baker, Dorothy, her father Henry Beecher, and grandmother Ellen Beecher.

Life at the Baker house—a large two-story red brick with five bedrooms, two baths, and maid's quarters—was as solid and dependable as the structure itself. Frank, Dorothy, and their four children seemed to have every kind of happiness.

Meanwhile, Mother Beecher, Dorothy's paternal grandmother, was still traveling over the United States and Canada, lecturing on the Bahá'í Faith. In 1925 she attended the "Seventeenth Annual Convention and Bahá'í Congress" held at the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Eliot, Maine. There she joined the program with speakers Mírzá Ali-Kuli Khan, the renowned Frenchman Hippolyte Dreyfus, Alfred E. Lunt, Mountfort Mills, and Stanwood Cobb. Following a prayer by Miss Jessie Revell, Mother Beecher spoke, "eloquently portraying the transforming effects of Divine Love."²⁰

In the cold months Mother Beecher settled down a bit, spending most of the following two winters in Geneva, New York, with Bahá'í friends Rex and Mary Collison and Dr. and Mrs. Heist. Their daughter, Elizabeth Heist Patterson, later wrote, "Mother Beecher came by train to Geneva, traveling alone. On one such occasion she met some ladies in the station. One of them said wearily to Mother Beecher, 'Just think of it, I am seventy-five years old.' Mother Beecher replied brightly, 'I'm eighty-five.'

For the Bahá'ís Mother Beecher had unlimited energy. She told stories of her early religious experiences and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to America. She drilled them in the conduct of spiritual assemblies and gave the young Bahá'ís public speaking lessons, at which she insisted, for the sake of future audiences, that they speak loudly. In fact, she was somewhat hard of hearing and didn't want to miss anything. Her "children" seemed easily to accept her firm directions and her determined concentration on their development. Many early believers took Ellen Beecher's role as "Mother" quite seriously. They listened to the words of the round-faced little matriarch with sometimes bemused but always attentive interest.

Dorothy saw Mother Beecher as a strong Bahá'í but also as the elderly and delicate lady she was. In a letter home Dorothy begged her mother, Luella, not to "sit on poor little Grandma too much, even if it is exasperating. Remember she is very near the end and is bound to show it. Sort of treat her like a pet and coddle her along a little. . . ." There was some tension between Luella and her strong-willed mother-in-law.

It must have been difficult for Mother Beecher to balance her public persona and her private life. She did not have a real home and may have felt she was always "in service" and therefore needed to help her immediate

family with their spiritual growth in the same way she helped others she stayed with during the year. It was her function, and she was, in spite of some adverse side effects with her in-laws, absolutely devoted to it.

When Mother Beecher visited Buffalo from Geneva, New York, in 1925, Dorothy made sure the family treated her with respect while at the same time she managed to keep things moving along fairly normally. Dorothy wrote to her mother,

Connie and I take turns gently guiding Grandma to the den when Hat²¹ is out, or she would be out doing up the dishes or scrubbing all the pots and pans. She's a great old G. G., and is sweeter than ever before. I am enjoying her visit very much. Frank is away so much now that I really need someone with me to pep me up more.



19. Bill and Dorothy, 1924.



20. Louise and Bill with their grandfather Henry, 1927



21. Louise and Bill with their grandmother Luella, 1927



22. Conrad takes Louise and Bill canoeing on Budd Lake, 1927

Frank's business trips multiplied as his responsibilities at National Biscuit Company grew. At times Dorothy felt isolated with only children and the maid to talk to. The repetition of housework left her bored and distracted.

Though she was adept at organizing her household, she couldn't find time for much else. Life was on schedule; everything appeared to be as it should, but something wasn't right. Dorothy did have a few outside interests and activities, but they didn't fulfill her. Bahá'í life consisted mostly of reading the Bahá'í writings on her own. The responsibilities and safety of the family took her hours and years and demanded, she felt, all of her love. Consequently, she was not very active in the small Buffalo Bahá'í community.

Dorothy considered herself a Bahá'í, though she tended to mix Bahá'í ideas with others that had fascinated her since school days. While in Buffalo she had Louise's and Billy's astrological charts, as well as numerology readings, done.

It was Mother Beecher's visit that inspired a more active involvement in the Faith. She encouraged Dorothy to accompany her to a Bahá'í Feast at the home of her friends Grace and Harlan Ober, outstanding Bahá'ís who had been married at the suggestion and in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His 1912 visit to North America. Doris McKay, who later pioneered to Prince Edward Island, was then a fairly new Bahá'í from Geneva, New York. She wrote of meeting Dorothy one evening in Buffalo:

Different people spoke but only one did I remember. A young woman, tall, slim and pale with great gray eyes arose and reminded us by a story she told that we were all "children of God." She was wearing a wine velvet dress that set off her extreme pallor and delicacy. The impact of her personality was stunning.

It is not surprising that Dorothy told a story at the Feast. Her children loved her stories. She would read classics to herself – *Les Misérables*, for one—a chapter a day, then tell them in serial form to her little audience. Also included in her repertoire were stories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to America, learned from Mother Beecher's firsthand accounts. Conrad, who turned fifteen in the summer of 1926, and Sara, now almost thirteen, were ten years older than Louise and Billy, so they followed the stories much better, but neither had met many Bahá'ís. When the renowned Persian diplomat and scholar Dr. Ali-Kuli Khan spoke in Buffalo, Dorothy decided to take the older children.

Dr. Khan lectured on *The Seven Valleys*, a mystical book dealing with the progress of the soul, a topic often overwhelming even for adults.

The three of them sat in the audience, Conrad like an adult, elbows on the arms of his seat, hands clasped in front of him, head politely tilted up and to one side so he could see the speaker without straining to make himself taller. Sara squirmed until the program began, then grew quiet as Dr. Khan was introduced.

Relieved, Dorothy also turned her attention to the podium. After Dr. Khan took the audience through the first several of the mystically explained stages of spiritual growth described by Bahá'u'lláh, Dorothy noticed that Sara, who had been sitting very straight, looking up at Dr. Khan, had now let her head drop low. A sheath of straight dark hair hung almost to her lap, hiding Sara's face from view. Dorothy wondered if she might be asleep and leaned over to try to see her face. Then, noiselessly, Sara lifted her head and the dark curtain of hair fell back. She looked at her mother through lashes clumped together like long grass after a shower. Tears, silent as the sudden thunderless rain of the tropics, still streamed over her high, round cheekbones.

That night Dorothy had just tucked Sara into bed and was closing the hall door when Sara called her back.

“Muzz, I just want you to know, no matter what, that I'm a Bahá'í” A few weeks later the two of them were downtown shopping for Sara. On most of their shopping trips together Sara's excitement kept Dorothy moving at a quick pace toward the next store she had in mind, but this time Dorothy noticed the warm spring weather was making her child move more slowly. She didn't worry until, even after relaxing their pace a bit, Sara complained of

being very tired. Since they were already downtown Dorothy decided to take her to the doctor rather than make another trip the next day.

As they waited to see him, Sara closed her eyes. When the nurse called her name she didn't stir. Dorothy had to wake her to go into the examining room. After tests, the doctor asked them to wait in the lobby again. He reappeared sometime later and said, "All right, young lady, you stay here with the nurse. As long as your mother's in the office, I'll just take a look at her, too." Inside his office he sat down next to Dorothy, his jovial manner gone. As he spoke, explaining slowly, Dorothy felt her mind pull away from the room where they sat. She imagined herself at home with Sara and Frank, with Louise and Bill and Connie—all together—forever safe.

"Sara's white blood count is very high. Her symptoms suggest leukemia, and that blood count supports the diagnosis. As you know, leukemia is a very serious disease. In this case it is acute."

Tears brought Dorothy back to the room where they sat, not a special place, in fact ordinary—street sounds and the conversation of people in the hall, browns and deep reds marking the room as decorated for a man, his voice going on, explaining, keeping the end in limbo. Then the explanation, the medical words, were over. Now the doctor spoke simply, his voice low before the God of truth that science cannot battle. "This disease is fast-acting. I have to tell you that Sara will not live much longer—a week or a little more. That's all." Dorothy called Frank. Their daughter was already resting in her room when he arrived home. Sitting downstairs in the den, she told her husband the details of what the doctor had said.

Frank was a sturdy man, physically and emotionally. But the news of his only daughter by Mary being so close to death left him miserably tormented. The protected hollow of the family and home again proved hopelessly fragile before the intruders disease and death. They could follow anywhere. No distance, no new life, no brick fortress, no happiness could deny them entrance.

A nurse came to live with the family. Sara was not told exactly why, only what she already knew, that she was ill.

All spring she had begged to go to a dude ranch that summer. Sitting on Sara's bed, Dorothy spent hours with her, planning the trip, looking at brochures with pictures of mountain lakes and people sitting on horses. But by the end of the fourth day Sara no longer asked for the pictures. She knew by then how impossible those plans were; no one had to explain to her that she was dying.

Her last morning Sara asked the nurse to call her parents. Not wanting to interrupt their breakfast, the nurse waited until they came up, as always, when they were finished. By that time, twenty minutes later, Sara had difficulty talking, but she was able to express to them her love, to explain what she wanted done with her things—her doll house, she said, should go to Louise. Later that day Sara died.

Without her everyone in the family suffered, but the family unit suffered too. There was suddenly a large gap between Mary's child Conrad and Dorothy's two children, making a division where before there had been none. Frank cried in his sleep every night. Dorothy's pain and that of her family burdened her heart and annihilated her previous contentment with life.

Several nights after Sara's death, Dorothy and Frank went to bed quite early. Both of them were exhausted, but neither had slept well since their child's illness. Well into the night, Dorothy stirred and opened her eyes. A brilliant light illumined their bed. Pushing herself up on one elbow, she looked around the room to find the source of the light, then noticed it was shining straight in through the window, though the sky outside was dark. About to get up to close the curtains, Dorothy stopped. There, skipping down the path of light, came Sara. In her hair she wore garlands of vines and ivy and wild flowers. Over her arms were the plaited handles of two large wicker baskets filled with more vines and flowers, especially violets. Sara was smiling and danced toward Dorothy. "Oh Muzz, I'm so happy! Look, I have all the wild flowers I want!" She looked at her father, who lay sleeping beside Dorothy. In a voice soft with love and pity, she said, "Tell him I'm happy, Muzz. Tell him how happy I am." Then she turned and danced back up the path of light.

Dorothy woke Frank; by then the light was fading. She told him what she had seen as the light faded still more until they were alone again in the darkness. But the incident comforted her, as it did Frank, with the knowledge that Sara was living on somewhere—happy.

About a month later Dorothy sat reading in the living room. The book was *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, by Bahá'u'lláh. She finished one section and began to put it down, then felt compelled to open the book again and slowly read over the last paragraph, concentrating on the meaning of the words. Again she closed it, and as she did, she clearly heard Sara's voice: "Thanks, Muzz, that time I got it."

The years in Buffalo, although they had seemed safe and secure at the start, led the Bakers toward a need for trust and active belief in something other than the stability of physical life. They began hosting the Buffalo weekly Bahá'í firesides when the regular hosts, the Obers, were out of town. For the first time, Frank Baker's name appeared on the Bahá'í roll. In November of 1926, the autumn following Sara's death, Dorothy was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Buffalo in a by-election, her first administrative position after having been a Bahá'í for fourteen years.

CHAPTER 8

For Frank there must have seemed little he could do to change the pattern of death that had formed around him. His mother, his first wife, his daughter —three of the women he loved most—had died, exactly in the order of their appearance in his life. After Sara’s death, hopeless of finding a cure for the constant sense of loss, Frank set out to at least palliate his agony. He became obsessed with locating another town—any place but Buffalo—somewhere his family could move and leave the pain behind. With his marriage to Dorothy the move from Montclair had been a catharsis for the sadness and fear that followed Mary’s death. In 1926 he hoped for the same effect by leaving Buffalo. Traveling the northeast, through New York and New England, he was often gone from home for weeks, looking for a location for a new bakery and a new life for his family.

Just as he and his partner found what seemed to be the perfect location in Rochester, New York, his partner backed out. On January 10, 1926, Dorothy wrote to her mother, “Frank felt rather high and dry for a while, but he has gotten to the point where a blow from a sledgehammer wouldn’t phaze [*sic*] him.” He wasn’t ready, she said, “to start with nothing but an empty building all by himself,” so he began his search again, concentrating instead on already established bakeries he could buy and run on his own. Dorothy stayed at home and waited for him to decide. By Christmas, nine months after Sara

died, she was becoming restless, her loneliness turning to resentment as Frank continued what she called his endless “searching for hidden treasure.”

But when he finally did decide to build a new bakery in Lima,²² Ohio, Dorothy would have given him forever to reconsider. Four years before, the move to Buffalo had been a move “out west” in her mind. But the distance from Ohio to civilization was inconceivable. She wondered where she would shop in Ohio and whether, living so far from everybody she cared about, she would have anyone to talk to.

In desperation, Dorothy even considered Frank’s idea of developing a large poultry farm in California. At least she knew where California was. Although it was far away, it was another coast, America’s left hand vis-à-vis New York and New England as the right. In between was only connecting matter, the rivers and farms and factories that made the country run. In Dorothy’s mind, Ohio was just one squared-off piece of the stuff, dotted, as was the rest, with smaller, smokier copies of New York and Boston. But Ohio was, Dorothy had to admit by January of 1927, where they were “booked for next.”

In the same letter she assured her mother and herself, “I feel that in time we *will* live in California; what doing, I do not know.” As long as she could believe they would keep moving toward some place more habitable, a place where things might actually happen beyond the grinding of wheat into flour and lives into dust, Dorothy could accept a temporary stint in what seemed to her an outpost in the middle of rolling plains that were rolling nowhere. Had she known Lima would be her residence until the end of life, courage might have failed her.



23. Bill, Dorothy, and Louise in the front yard of 615 West Elm Street, Lima, Ohio, circa 1927



24. Bill and Louise Baker at Shawnee Country Club in Lima, 1928.

Frank selected what he thought was the perfect location for his family, a sprawling home near Shawnee Country Club on the west side of town. Dorothy was pleased with the idea of being near golf. At least one thing about Lima was familiar. But the house seemed isolated in its country club surroundings and a long way from most of the children's activities and from the bakery. So she and Frank looked at houses that were closer to the center of town. A large stone house, foursquare and traditional, had just been built by a Mr. and Mrs. Barnard. They had installed, in the center of the wide porch that ran the length of the front, a glass door with an Old English *B*, perhaps nine inches tall, etched into it.



25. Dorothy behind her new home, circa 1927.

Almost fifty years later, Mrs. Barnard was at a tailoring class in Amesbury, Massachusetts, when her teacher, Mildred Hyde, mentioned the Bahá'í Faith. Mrs. Barnard said she had heard of it before, from Dorothy Baker when she and Frank bought their house in Lima. The *B* that originally stood for “Barnard” became the *B* for “Baker,” and even before Mrs. Barnard heard of the Faith again in Massachusetts, it came to stand for “Bahá'í” when the house at 615 West Elm was officially made the Lima Bahá'í Center.

But during the Bakers' first years in Lima there was no Bahá'í community and certainly no need for a center. Dorothy and Frank were typical upper-middle-class citizens, at least it must have seemed so to their new friends. They began meeting people by joining the Shawnee Country Club and, as Frank had been raised a German Lutheran, the local Lutheran church.

When Louise entered first grade in 1928, Dorothy also joined the Parent-Teacher Association, which she initially found time-consuming and useless, but eventually worked hard to improve. Elected as president a few years later, Dorothy said she couldn't serve unless allowed to reorganize the group completely. The members agreed, and during the following two years she played an important part in improving the functioning of the elementary

school PTA as well as the service efforts of all the PTAs in Lima. As president, she involved the fathers as well as the mothers and teachers. By the time of the 1929 stock market crash, and during the following depression, the Lima PTAs were strong enough to be of real assistance to the many people there who suffered from the downward spiraling economy.

The first year the Bakers were in Lima, Mother Beecher came for her annual visit. At eighty-eight she seemed too fragile to continue her travels. After discussing it with Frank, Dorothy asked Mother Beecher to stay and live with them. Mother Beecher was overjoyed at the prospect. She had traveled and taught the Bahá'í Faith, making every effort to fulfill what 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote in a tablet to her, that she and others, "deliver such utterances that they may move and quicken all the American lands." But it was time to settle down. Not only was she happy to have a home, Mother Beecher still saw Dorothy's potential. Dorothy had been active in the Bahá'í community during the last year in Buffalo and Mother Beecher was anxious to keep Dorothy moving in that direction. It was her turn. When Doris McKay visited the Bakers in Lima, she noticed that "the Cause was at that time Dorothy's *other* life," but Mother Beecher moved in and determined that her granddaughter would continue to develop spiritually. She and Ruth Moffett, another frequent visitor and zealous Bahá'í teacher and lecturer, prayed for Dorothy to become an active Bahá'í

Finally, it was the suffering, so incongruously familiar in her safe middleclass life, that took Dorothy beyond her previous understanding. Like the watchman of the Seven Valleys, it chased her, further and further from belief in the security and joy of this world. Her own depression after Sara's death was eclipsed by her fears for Frank and her dread that he might someday have to live through yet another tragedy.

Frank made friends at the Rotary Club and elsewhere, but his main interest, outside the family, was the “Frank Baker Bread Company—Makers of Plezol Bread.” At the start of his new business, he often spent fifteen to seventeen hours a day at the bakery, but it was an improvement on the weeks away from home that National Biscuit had demanded. Being near Dorothy and the children comforted Frank, though he still suffered, missing Sara. Her death not only left him without her, it also rekindled the plaguing fear of loss that was sparked first by his mother’s death, then brought to full flame when his wife Mary died. Although Dorothy hadn’t suffered through those early agonies with him, she understood the depth of his fear and sorrow. Frank began to worry whenever someone complained of an upset stomach at the dinner table or when, at night, on his own weary way to bed, he heard a late-night cough through a child’s bedroom door. Any sign of illness in the family called for immediate attention. Dorothy made sure that everyone had regular physical examinations. Early in 1929 she went in for her own physical, tired from the emotional strain of recent years, but fully expecting a good report. Instead the doctor detected a spot on her lung, which he immediately diagnosed as tuberculosis. Dorothy was stunned. She didn’t tell Frank or anyone else. And only days later, when she found a lump in one of her breasts, she didn’t even tell the doctor.

Sure that the coming spring would be her last, Dorothy told her husband she would like to go to Chicago for the Annual Bahá’í Convention. To him she reasoned that, since they lived so close now, it would be an easy, safe trip. But to herself, Dorothy admitted that her intense longing was that of one whose time is short.

During those three days in Wilmette she sat with the other Bahá’ís in Foundation Hall, the only part of the House of Worship then complete. Above

them lay the flat, tarred surface that would one day serve as the base for the main floor of the upper auditorium, though that spring even the completion of the building's superstructure was two years away.

No one at the convention knew about Dorothy's illness, but her distress over something was obvious. On the third day she, Doris McKay, and Ruth Hawthorne, who later traveled and taught the Bahá'í Faith in Africa for many years, all sat listening in the first row. The convention was nearing its end, and nothing had changed. Dorothy had attended every session and had seen friends of her grandmother and friends of her own. She had prayed and hoped and waited for some sign of relief, some indication that her life was acceptable or that it might be spared, but none had come. Without hope she would go home to the family that would soon be without her. Sitting there, just in front of the speaker's stand, Dorothy began to cry. When she could control herself, she quietly stood and left by one of the side doors as the session went on.

Walking toward the lake, she was alone in the knowledge that her life was at an end. Unasked, Albert Vail, then a well-known teacher of the Bahá'í Faith, joined in her walk. Through Mother Beecher he had been acquainted with Dorothy since her childhood.

Perhaps her grandmother had told him of Dorothy's recent weakness and he decided to follow in case she grew tired; perhaps there was no conscious reason. They walked in silence, but Dorothy's mind was far from still. Thoughts of her future, cut short, mixed with even more bitter sadness for the agony her death would bring to Frank and the children. No matter how happy she made them in the next week or year or month, it would end. Everything she had done in the past, every meal, every goodnight kiss that had seemed

such strong potion for holding home and family together was now only chaff blown helter-skelter by the indifferent winds of death and destruction.

Albert spoke. Dorothy nodded. Words meant nothing. His breath carried sound to her ears but could not invade the privacy of her thoughts. Then he was quiet again, but kept walking with her. More words. This time she heard. “You won’t be here next year, will you?”

Without looking toward him, she shook her head, admitting what she had, until then, kept secret.

Albert stopped and, as he did, Dorothy stopped as well. Through her tears, she looked over to him, sick with sadness, yet glad to think that someone finally shared her misery and could comfort her. But his face was turned out, to the water. Dorothy watched the waves with him, but alone. She felt the dark, low water pulling in and out, charging up the shore, then sucking itself back, never reaching beyond the beach or touching any place it hadn’t been before.

“Dorothy, are you willing to leave this world without rendering some great service to the Cause?” Still turned to the waves, she felt the heavy thud of unexpected, unwanted understanding. Near, then far, then near again. Her commitment had been too much like the water’s movement. Nothing had ever taken her beyond the limits of a familiar pattern: loving God but holding back, relying on the safety of the world she had created for herself. Now there was nothing in that world that could save her. No one was left but her Creator, and she faced Him empty-handed.

When Dorothy turned, Albert Vail was no longer there beside her. A figure bobbing dark against the bright sky took her focus inland. She watched, unable to tell whether he was leaving or coming back, the brightness of the day overpowering the motion of the now small form it surrounded. But soon he was overtaken by light, and she turned to walk on, alone, next to the low foaming waves, their histrionics doing nothing to disguise what she knew: the frantic movement brought them no closer to any destination. Only the sun's heat could move the essence of their moisture up and out of the black pool. Its burning rays could lift and the wind carry; clouds might break and rain finally wash down on something beyond the dark water beach.

Doris McKay, having left the meeting to find her young friend, joined Dorothy on her walk. Dorothy's heart was tortured by her own failings. She said, "Doris, I'm a spiritual criminal, I have lived uncommitted." In a letter written later that spring to Lorna Tasker, who was then busy with work at Green Acre Bahá'í School, Doris described her time with Dorothy.

We walked the shore of Lake Michigan and Dorothy beat herself with self-reproaches. I urged her to draw near to God and forget her crimes. Sometimes she smiled and it was like a nearly drowned person fighting her way back to life.

There was a little shrine outside of Convention Hall, a little oasis in the structural wilderness of columns and beams, a small table covered with a gold and black satin cloth on which had been placed a vase of pink roses. This was near the spot where 'Abdu'l-Bahá had laid the cornerstone. In front of the table was a bench covered by a Persian rug. I sat on that bench with Dorothy, Dorothy sitting like a statue, rapt in the spirit of worship as

we listened to the prayers being read by a young negro couple who shared our nook.

She wrote me after the Convention, “The few minutes at the shrine will never be forgotten. How my throat ached. What those moments taught me cannot be put into words. I think my heart was laid at the Master’s feet there.”

Doris remembered her “like a pale little ghost” at those early conventions, “withdrawn and reticent.” Dorothy was not always at ease leading people. Although she had served her hometown community in various ways, most of the work was organizational, not in the public eye. But following her prayers Dorothy reentered Foundation Hall, remaining at the back of the room. Rosemary Sala recalled that moment.

George Latimer said to the friends, “There is one present whom I think we should hear speak, and that is the granddaughter of Mother Beecher.”

Dorothy arose and walked forward . . . the words just flowed, but all I was conscious of was spirit. She ended every phrase with, “Blessed be those who follow guidance.” And when she finished she stood like a princess, and when she walked down the aisle she seemed to float.

That was her first speech. Her preparation was hardly traditional: suffering, the promise of greater suffering still, the laying down of her life in the hands of her Lord, and finally detachment from this world, and a determination to serve. From these roots sprouted her early eloquence.

She returned to Lima knowing she must, as Albert said, render some great service to the Cause while there was still time. There clearly wasn't time for small offerings that might, over the years, form a life of service. During the last day of the convention and the two days following, Dorothy considered her abilities and her shortcomings and decided on what she thought would be the most useful and important contribution she could make during the part of life that was left to her. Then she wrote, for the first time, to Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, asking that he advise her. Dorothy's desire was to write children's stories about the history of the Faith, as she felt there was little Bahá'í reading material appropriate for them. However, she was concerned by her own lack of knowledge regarding details of that history and asked about material that might supplement her understanding.

Haifa, June 6th 1929

Miss Dorothy Baker

My Dear Friend,

I am directed by the Guardian to thank you for your letter of May 1st.

He was very glad to hear from you and to learn of your eagerness to serve the Cause in a permanent and effective way, especially in connection with Bahá'í children, who will have in future to shoulder perhaps far greater responsibilities than any of us can now realize.

As regards your special plan, however, I will say nothing as I am sure the Guardian will express his opinion in the few words he is appending.

The family all join in love and good wishes to you and “Mother Beecher.”

With warm feelings in His service,

Soheil Afnan

My dear coworker:

An authentic and comprehensive history is being compiled in Persia and I trust that in the not distant future the work may be accomplished and translated.^{[23](#)} It will I am sure when published serve your purpose to a very great extent. I will pray for you at the Holy Shrines that you may be enabled to render distinct services to the Cause.

Your true brother,

Shoghi

Dorothy had asked for several things, one of which was the suggestion of materials that could supply facts as well as atmosphere for her children's stories. This the Guardian answered in his own hand; a translation of the history of the Faith was forthcoming. Indirectly, she asked for his opinion of the enterprise she planned. His secretary made clear how glad the Guardian was to learn of her eagerness to serve “especially in connection with Bahá'í children.”

Lastly, Dorothy asked for Shoghi Effendi's prayers. The Guardian's answer was more than she had dared request. Her hope was only that if he approved her effort, he would pray for her in connection with this one modest though

difficult task. His answer was generous. He would pray, he said, “at the Holy Shrines that you may be enabled to render distinct services to the Cause.”

Dorothy’s hope of writing had to wait for material to be translated. She felt she would not have time so she set about doing what she could. Dorothy arranged two public meetings in Lima inviting others as speakers, of course, so that anyone who was interested could hear the message of Bahá’u’lláh. A few lecture-goers attended, but no one asked questions or requested further information.

Beyond that activity, life remained uneventful except for the ever-present dread. There was so little opportunity for service that Dorothy, despite her new devotion, born on the shores of Lake Michigan, felt plagued by doubt of her own ability to do anything of value for the Cause; she couldn’t even find anyone to teach. Though Dorothy didn’t recognize it, she was having great success in teaching at least one person—herself. During the year immediately following the 1929 Convention, she and Mother Beecher spent an hour together every day studying the writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They often used the Tablet of Ahmad consecutively for nineteen days—a habit Dorothy kept for the rest of her life.²⁴ By the first month of 1930 Mother Beecher clearly understood the danger of losing Dorothy. She wrote to Rex Collison²⁵ about her granddaughter’s condition, spiritual and physical.

. . . she has been going through a real siege which has robbed her of her usual pep and ambition. She over did—and now I am not sure that she will be able to do half of the things which are laid upon her to do. But she is so deeply interested in the lessons that she insists that she *will* go on with them and we will pray that strength may be given her. You see the reading takes so much time, and so many interruptions fill her life. . . . I almost

forgot to tell you that Frank took Dorothy to Columbus for three days this week. While E was attending a business convention, D. was with dear Mrs. Corrodi—and met the few friends there who are partially interested—perhaps really none confirmed except Mrs. C. From all reports, D. did a great work there. She is so on fire in spirit—but so frail of body. If her life and health is spared she will become a great teacher as well as writer—for she is a chosen instrument without doubt. Give worlds of love to all of the group—but especially in your own home. How is your dear father? Tell him I often think of him.

Yours always in Him,

Mother B.

Even though Dorothy was still weak, contrary to the doctor's expectations and her own, life did not end with tuberculosis or from the lump in her breast. In fact, she slowly began to regain her health. But before Dorothy could fully recover, her life was threatened again. In the kitchen on a September evening, she opened a contaminated can of salmon. It looked a bit strange, but Dorothy didn't know why. She tasted it with the tip of her tongue, then rinsed her mouth and threw the can away. By evening she was violently ill from ptomaine poisoning.

The family doctor came but could only tell Frank the crisis would reach its peak that night. There was nothing he could do or say to change the facts. He told Frank, "I can't let it happen without your knowing . . . I don't believe she can live through this."

The sheet lay cool over Dorothy's feverish sleep. Under it, although her eyes were closed, she didn't rest, only fought to find some piece of flotsam from her wrecked sense of reality that would keep her afloat. Images of dreams and fears floated through the expanded darkness of her unconscious, mixing with tangible but familiar voices, one voice predicting her death. "Ridiculous," she thought, but death did hover near; it drew close and almost merged with life, then, picking up speed, whistled by, its force pulling at her will to live.

She held back. For her, there was no choice but life, which she listened for, even through the glaring sounds of death, listened for when there was no sound, when everything was slipping away.

In a chair pulled up close to the edge of the bed sat Frank Baker—a giant who, for all his own strength, could once again do nothing to augment another's. The night deepened; Dorothy seemed just on the rim of another, more impenetrable darkness. Under the sheet, her body moved and the next moment she let out a breath, making a sound, a rough sigh. His hands, which seemed too big to touch a creature so slight without doing harm, reached toward her pale face, but stopped midair. He strained forward in his chair to see movement again, anything; Dorothy's eyes fluttered, then went still. In that moment, who knows the agony Frank felt. He was a man who lived for those he most loved, but he could not make them live. Then a glow of moisture appeared on Dorothy's upper lip. She opened her eyes, and Frank, for once, was not left alone.

CHAPTER 9

Dorothy's determination to be of great service was inspired by the threat of losing her life to tuberculosis and greeted by near death from ptomaine poisoning. Then the depression years spread their discouragement, blocking the way for a country full of individual plans and aspirations. But Dorothy found her horizons lifting. The spot on her lung disappeared, as did the lump in her breast. Whatever the difficulties that arose around her, at least she was alive to deal with them.

The summer of 1931 began with a heat wave that put the already destitute farmers even further from any hope of paying off the bank. What the depression started, the dry heat finished. Bushel prices dropped lower than anyone could remember.

Banks had been closing steadily since the crash—sixty or eighty during each of the first ten months of 1930, over two hundred in November, with the final month of the year closing another three hundred and twenty-eight banks all over the United States.²⁶ Bankers who had loaned farmers money to buy their businesses could no longer afford the sympathy they had once allowed themselves as the almost omnipotent stabilizers of the U.S. economy. During the boom years before October 1929 the small farms hadn't done as well as other businesses, but the banks had been there to supply mortgages and to help the farmers over dry spells and early frosts. By 1931 protecting others

from bankruptcy no longer mattered. Banking institutions were deferring to a bigger need than saving farms: saving themselves.

The transition from an American economy sustained by business and banks to one more heavily influenced by government spending and government regulations had not yet occurred. There was no institution, private or public, strong enough to rescue the faltering economy as J. P Morgan had done two decades before.

Prior to the depression, Washington, D.C. had not been an economic center. The American government was not attuned to solving both political and economic problems. President Hoover made several unsuccessful attempts to influence the economy positively. Then, like many professional economists of the day, he put his trust in the belief that production and consumption would regain their balance. However, as John Maynard Keynes pointed out, the balance at the bottom is just as stable as the balance in an actively moving economy. As government and citizens waited for relief, things grew steadily worse.

In Malinto, Ohio, a banker on his way to foreclose saw a noose hanging from the barn of the farmer whose mortgage was in question. There was no money to pay bank loans, personal loans, or even to pay for life's essentials. In Deshler, a farm community forty miles from Lima, a silent crowd watched as a \$400 debt was settled for \$2.15.^{[27](#)}

A year later, prices for farm goods were no better. The depression had dropped the total wages earned throughout the country to sixty percent below what they had been in 1929. Many people couldn't afford produce, even with farmers' prices at less than fifty cents a bushel for wheat and only thirty-one

cents for corn.²⁸ In some farm communities, prices were even lower. One county elevator dropped the price of corn to minus three cents a bushel.²⁹ The farmer would have to pay three cents a bushel to the elevator; corn had so little value the selling price couldn't cover the handling and transportation expenses. Living at the hub of northwestern Ohio's farmland, Dorothy made a point of putting part of her grocery money directly into the hands of neighboring farmers. She did much of her shopping by driving out into the country where she would buy cream for ten cents a quart and corn for a penny an ear. The Bakers frequented one farm where the family had a novel approach. Since there was no market for their produce, they set up Sunday dinner. For fifty cents per adult and twenty-five cents per child, people with money could have a feast of fresh food served on the land where it was grown.

The Bakers were among the lucky ones who had a cash flow. Frank's Plezol Bakery sold a one-pound loaf of bread for a nickel and a two-pound loaf for nine cents. Because bread was a staple everyone needed, Plezol stayed open during even the worst months of the depression years, supplying jobs and food at a time when employment was scarce. In Buffalo, where Frank and his family would have spent the depression years if not for his driving urge to move, a house-to-house canvass showed that more than half of the people who were ready and able to work could not find fulltime employment, and almost a third of them could not find even part-time jobs.³⁰

Frank enjoyed his business. Work had always been one thing in life he could feel sure about. During the hardest times, after Mary's and Sara's deaths, he had relied on business to give life meaning beyond the immediate suffering. His occupation provided him with a systematic way of giving something, even when he must have felt everything had already been taken.

In the early 1930s, in the faces of his friends and neighbors, Frank saw last hopes doused by news of repossessed land, layoffs, and closing factories. Louise Baker recalled:

A Christmas party was held in the bakery's club room every year, a night or so before Christmas Eve. It was attended by all the men who worked at the bakery and all the members of their families. Each child received a net bag of goodies plus a gift—dolls for the smaller girls, a toy for the boys, often a board game for the older children. The gifts were always identical for all the girls or boys of each age group. Each employee and each man's wife were also given identical presents. One year every woman received a whistling tea kettle. Another year the men all were given a box of Havana cigars! Another year the ladies got a set of mixing bowls. But this was not just catering to their roles as housewives; Dad was an avid baker at home as well as at work and enjoyed giving gifts to use in the kitchen.

And every year he appeared in a Santa Claus suit to give out presents! As each employee received his gift he also got an envelope containing his annual bonus, which I think was computed on a combination of his length of service and his salary. I once asked Dad why he didn't give out a percentage of the bakery's profits. He told me that during the depression, when the men's need was often greatest, the bakery frequently showed a loss, or at best very little profit, so he preferred to build the bonus into the expenses of running the business. That way the men were guaranteed the extra money at Christmas time.

Frank gained a reputation in Lima for being a man people could depend on for the kind of help that was neither condescending nor small.

A farmer stopped at the bakery one day and told the secretary he was there “to talk to Frank.” As the man came into the office, Frank stood to reach across his wide desk and shake hands.

“How’s your land treating you?” “Not as good as it could, but not all bad either. We been keeping our chickens all right.”

“That fence must be holding up.”

“I got a good number of eggs off of the hens, too. We got the roosters thinned out for eating, but we’re letting the hens lay.” “That’s good, eggs ought to bring something.”

“Well, you'd think so, but I been out all day with a couple of crates in the back of my wagon. Even dropped down from a dime to a nickel a dozen, but everybody’s selling and nobody’s buying.”

Frank studied the wall behind the man’s head. His expression didn’t change. He knew the problem. This wasn’t the first farmer who had come in.

“You'd be willing to let them all go, five cents a dozen?”

“Eggs is all we got right now. The wife needs money for other goods. If I come home with these same eggs I left with and nothing to show for a day away from the fields . . .” His head shook slightly as he dropped his gaze to the floor. Then he looked up again, a tightlipped smile on his face. Raising his eyebrows until the thick skin above them furrowed, he said with mock fear, “Let’s just say she wouldn’t take to it. And you know about a woman’s wrath.”

The man nodded as he spoke, agreeing with himself, but his light attitude did little to hide his fear that the end they had been putting off had finally come. “You know, there are folks who won’t sell at all now, trying to make the prices go back up. Right now corn’s so cheap they’re burning it instead of coal some places.”

Frank did know, but he listened.

“This one group stops farmers going to market and dumps their goods. You've seen it like I have . . . eggs, cream, just dumped in the ditches by the road, hoping that’ll force prices up. But I got to sell mine. Nothing else I got is worth anything.”

Neither added the words they were both thinking, “except the farm,” but Frank said, “I think those eggs will sell. Just put them down at the end of the hall next to the back door, where the men can see them when they leave. We’ll make up a sign ‘five cents a dozen.’”

By evening, when the farmer came back, the can next to the empty crates was full of nickels and dimes along with one quarter, deposited by Frank for the last five dozen.

Every day men came to the door at 615 West Elm Street looking for food or work or both. Either Dorothy or Mother Beecher would fix a sandwich or bowl of soup for the man waiting outside. Even when there were no adults at home, Bill and Louise were instructed never to let anyone leave hungry, but also never to let anyone come inside.

Mother Beecher was at home with the children when a particularly frail-looking man stopped at the house. From the far end of the entry hall she couldn't see anybody standing on the other side of the glass door. Then she saw the man leaning against the door frame, his eyes slightly glazed, dark hair combed straight back from a gaunt face. His hat hung loosely from big, rough-nailed hands—hands that seemed too heavy for the thin arms.

As Mother Beecher opened the door, the man pushed himself away from the wall that had supported him, wavered for a moment, then found his balance. He spoke, but not clearly; he had no teeth. She told him to sit on the swing and went inside. While he sat, feet planted on the cement porch to keep the swaying motion to a minimum, Mother Beecher beat together three eggs, some milk, and a jigger of whiskey. Carrying a wooden tray with the large tumbler on it, she pushed open the front door.

“This ought to agree with you.”

Apparently he didn't hear her speak as she came out onto the porch, nor did he hear the door slam as the wind caught it. His eyes remained closed until she was beside the swing and said in a louder voice, “Buzz this down and you'll feel stronger.”

The man came to and took a drink, then, dropping his head back, put the bottom of the perspiring glass on his thigh. Sinking down into the swing, letting his head rest on the top slat of its wooden back, he finally swallowed the rest of that first gulp.

Mother Beecher sat with the tray across her lap, holding its wooden handles. Oblivious, he continued to sit in the same position, looking up,

perhaps at the eaves that tied the porch ceiling into the rest of the house.

Beginning again she said, "I hope you like the eggnog."

"Yes, ma'am, I like it very much." He took another gulp, then swallowed. "This is the first meal I've had I could really eat in maybe two, three days. Most people don't notice my teeth are missing, so I end up with a sandwich and no way to chew it."

The drink finished, Mother Beecher walked back across the porch, empty tumbler balanced on the tray. The old fellow stepped out in front of her to open the front door.

"Thank you."

"I'm the one that should be thanking. Could I sweep your porch for you?"

"If you feel strong enough, that would be nice. I'll bring you a broom."

Frank came home to find the man sitting on his porch, broom in hand, and the porch and sidewalk clean. He heard the story from Mother Beecher and decided to offer the fellow some work around the yard. There were many unemployed people who were better qualified for manual labor, but Frank decided it would be harder for this man to find employment than most. He was thin and obviously not strong but, from Mother Beecher's description, willing to work. For several weeks he did odd jobs for the Bakers, finishing a task, then sitting down to rest before starting the next. Frank got his neighbor, a dentist, to fit him with some discarded false teeth. Able once again to chew, his strength renewed and a little cash in his pocket, the man set out on his

own. He built a shack by the city dump out of flattened tin cans nailed to a frame. With a homemade wheelbarrow he went into the junk business, fixing and selling various scrap he found.

That fall, he stopped by the Bakers' house with his wheelbarrow; a chicken hung upside down from one side. When everyone had come out to say hello, he carefully untied the string that held the chicken's feet and set her upright on the pavement. As he wound the scrap of hemp onto a stick, he announced that the chicken, who was just regaining her balance, was his gift to the family. The Bakers thanked him and watched as he wheeled his cart down the street. That was the last they ever saw of the man, but his life was one of many their unpretentious generosity touched.

A Bahá'í from the Bakers' early days in Lima, Joseph W. Stahl, remembered those times:

One incident which I have never talked about publicly and which I don't think very many persons know about involves Mr. Baker. I remember around fifty years ago when I was working my way through college I needed more money. The only way I could continue college was to borrow money, but from whom? The only one I knew personally who I thought might have a little extra money was Frank Baker. Remember at that time we were still coming out of the big depression. I remember going to see Mr. Baker at his office. After telling him why I was there he said something like, "Well, you know I have Louise and Bill in school and I don't know." Then he asked me how much I needed. When I told him I know he thought I was going to ask for more, but he said, "Well, I think I can do that." The only thing I signed was to endorse the check. Mr. Baker did not require any interest or repayment plan. After the birth of our first

son, I made a small payment toward my debt. Mr. Baker returned my check and canceled the debt.

On Friday, March 3, 1933, banks across the country were locked for a four-day “bank holiday” to halt the growing run on deposits. It was another time of crisis for American business. As President Franklin Roosevelt took his oath of office the next day, millions listened to the voice that became so familiar over the next twelve years:

Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself —nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.^{[31](#)}

The new President’s confidence and optimism had its effect but did not change the immediate fact: closed banks meant no cash to pay employees, no money to buy food. It wasn’t a period when most families had enough to stock their pantries. Working people, those who had jobs, lived from payday to payday.

During that same time, one of Frank’s Yale classmates sat at the Board meeting of his flour mill in Minnesota. All day and most of the night before, they had been there, trying to find a solution to the same problem companies all over the United States were facing: how to help their employees through the long bank holiday when no money could be withdrawn to pay them. It was late in the afternoon—no one wanted to know how late. The Minnesota sky was darkening with the coming of night, or perhaps just from an early spring snowstorm. Those across from the windows gazed out at the thick, gray skies. The loud discussions of earlier in the day—when righteous anger made them sure of finding some common enemy responsible and able to

make amends—had given way to the quiet of resigned brooding. Frank Baker’s college friend, now a middle-aged man, sat in his chairman’s position at the head of the table, working over his fingernails again and again with the sharp end of a letter opener.

Almost unnoticed, an employee entered the room and walked around the perimeter of the group, stopping at the end of the table to hand him a small package. Inside the wrapping was a cigar box and a note. “Hope this will help, Frank.” Reading the note out loud to the rest of the board, he laughed, something he wouldn’t have bet on doing that day, at any odds.

“How about a smoke? It won’t help like a drink, but it’s better than giving up.”

The somber mood seemed to crumble as the dozen men let their minds go free for a moment. He opened the box to pass it around, but instead sat staring at the contents. Inside the cigar box Frank Baker had packed twelve hundred and fifty dollars in small bills, in payment for flour received from his friend’s mill.

In the rural grocery stores around Lima where Plezol delivered bread, the bank’s closing made little difference. The turnover of cash was regular, so the grocers kept their money on hand rather than driving into the nearest large town for constant deposits and withdrawals. On the first Friday of every month, Frank’s delivery men always collected for the month before. The country store owners knew the banks were closed and would stay closed for a while, but they didn’t use them, so it hardly mattered. They paid their February bills right on time. After Frank’s employees received part of their wages to get through the next few days, Frank packed up the last of the

money in the cigar box and sent it off special delivery to pay his Minnesota flour bill. He knew the risk he took in sending off all his cash; not all of his customers would be paying so promptly. But Frank was good for his bills so, like the solid, responsible man that he was, he paid it on time.

He was honest, generous, but practical. Mary Lou Ewing wrote, “I remember when Martha Root was there he wanted to give her something. Of course, money I’m sure he gave frequently to everyone. But he could not think of a way to outwit Martha’s habit of giving away everything given to her. He knew she needed things, so he went out and bought her a bunch of stockings, thinking that she couldn’t give those away, and might really use them.”

During the early depression years, Dorothy stayed active in Lima community life. She and Mother Beecher still studied the Min writings every day. Although Dorothy wasn’t successful in teaching directly, her spiritual awareness was a source of attraction to people who met her.

Mrs. Elma Miessler heard Dorothy review E. Stanley Jones’s book *Christ of the Indian Road* at a PTA meeting. She didn’t rush out and buy the book, but did go home, wake up her husband, and tell him about the inspiring talk Dorothy had given. Ed Miessler had met Frank a few days before at the Rotary Club and put the two together. He had been as impressed with Frank’s good-natured stability as Elma was with Dorothy’s zeal, so they invited the Bakers over for dinner and bridge. Ed and Elma Miessler also invited the Harrods and Lenore and Dudley Bernstein. Ed never forgot that evening.

. . . we had two tables for bridge, and we all seemed to click. From then on we would have bridge parties at our various homes, go out on picnics and

weenie roasts and so forth. . . . we knew Dorothy as a beautiful, charming hostess, as a wonderful card player, as the belle of the ball at a dance, an excellent golfer—in fact a wonderful person. In every field she excelled. Yet we knew very little of the great spiritual potential which was buried deep in Dorothy’s soul.

Dorothy didn’t mention the Bahá’í Faith to any of their new friends. Ed and Elma were both children of Lutheran pastors and members of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. All they knew about Dorothy and Frank’s religious affiliation was that they were members of the Ohio Synod Lutheran Church. Because Bahá’ís believe in the divine foundation of the major world religions and at that time did not, at least in Lima, have an active community of their own, participation in Christian churches was not unusual at that time.

Outside Dorothy’s studies of the Faith, her Bahá’í activity really began in places other than Lima. With Elizabeth Greenleaf, Albert Vail, and Pearl Easterbrook, she taught at a Bahá’í summer school in August of 1931. Lou and Helen Eggleston, new Bahá’ís in Detroit, offered their rolling farm near Davison, Michigan, for the Bahá’ís to use. The whole Baker family went up to enjoy that first session at “Lou-Helen.”

Dorothy at last found something she could do to serve. Her real desire had been to write, but she accepted the service that opened to her even though speaking wasn’t what she had imagined doing.

During the next winter, Dorothy divided her time between family, social life, community service, and her now highly motivated study of the Bahá’í Faith and its history. The stone house on Elm Street had a tiny room at the end of the second-floor hall, just above the front porch. It was meant to be a

maid's room, and it was really only an extension of the hall itself, but Dorothy used it as her study. Heavy green curtains served as the only wall dividing it from the rest of the wide passage off of which, on either side, were the house's four large bedrooms.

Dorothy usually pulled the curtains open when she studied so she could keep better track of family as they came and went. Early mornings when Bill and Louise left their bedrooms to wash up for school, they could see their mother sitting on the floor of the maid's room, books all around her, every book bristling with bits of paper, marking, indexing, organizing. When they were out of the bath and heading back to their rooms, Dorothy would get up and go downstairs to fix breakfast for everyone. But when the children came home again in the afternoon, they always knew where to find her—back in the room at the end of the hall.

In the summer of 1932 the whole Baker family again enjoyed the Louhelen Bahá'í summer school. They stayed in a cabin by the dammed stream. Bill remembered, “Dad and I had a great time at Louhelen. We went fishing in the little stream or in Potter's lake. We would fry them up and the family ate them. . . . Mother gave the classes and we went fishing.”

That summer Dorothy's classes were held informally with the youth. Annamarie and Margaret Kunz, daughters of Anna Kunz, one of the founding members of the Urbana, Illinois, Bahá'í community, were both in attendance. Raised in an active community, they had heard many Bahá'í speakers, but the two girls left Louhelen that summer with a new fire.

In 1921 Anna Kunz had made her pilgrimage to Haifa in the Holy Land. There she received a prayer from 'Abdu'l-Bahá for her two daughters. Both

young women grew up to render significant service to the Faith in many areas. Annamarie Kunz Honnold became an author and has served actively locally and nationally in the U.S. Bahá'í community, and as the representative of the Bahá'í International Community at the United Nations. In 1968 Margaret Kunz Ruhe moved to Haifa, where the Bahá'í World Center is located. There she guided at the Bahá'í holy shrines and the International Archives Building, wrote and served as a hostess to the world as wife of Dr. David Ruhe, a member of the Universal House of Justice from 1968 until his retirement in 1993.

As a teenager, Margaret could not understand why Dorothy hadn't been in her life all along. "Why?" she begged her mother, "Why have we never heard of Dorothy Baker before?" Anna Kunz later said she felt it was in large part because of Dorothy that her two daughters became Bahá'ís.

But what was it about this woman—Luella and Henry Beecher's daughter, Frank Baker's wife, Louise and Bill's mother, Sara and Conrad's stepmother—what made her so special?

In 1933 Dorothy served as counselor and advisor to the young people's "Discussion and Consultation Group," which met every day from 11:00 A.M. until noon at Louhelen. She also taught a daily class called "Studies in Nabil's Narrative." In the same direct, dramatic language she had planned to use for Bahá'í children's stories, she was able to share the lives of the early heroes and heroines of the Faith with the youth and adults in her classes.

Sitting outside on the grass, surrounded by her young students, or in one of the makeshift classrooms in the old barn or farmhouse of Louhelen Ranch, Dorothy had one purpose: to ignite her listeners. But fire must be lit with a

ready instrument or with fire itself. Dorothy's own fascination with her subject and the bond she felt with the early Bábís was intense, and it spread to her audience. The lives of the Dawn-Breakers were not so much recounted as relived in her heart and in her speech.

To the resounding question, "Who do you claim to be?" Dorothy and her young friends witnessed the Báb's reply, "I am, I am, the promised One! I am the One whose name you have for a thousand years invoked, at whose mention you have risen, whose advent you have longed to witness, and the hour of whose Revelation you have prayed to God to hasten."³² Dorothy was not just conveying information. She was taking the youth with her to meet others whose calling, like hers and like theirs, was to become true followers of the Glory and the Light.

Dorothy did not speak of issues and ideas that meant something to her only peripherally. She spoke of her most burning passion, of her Best Beloved. How could those around her not fall in love too? Her message to the youth was that they could, and must, if they wished to live victoriously, throw themselves into the shining sea of truth and the sacrifice that beckoned the early martyrs and now beckoned them.

For twenty years Dorothy had pulled close, then drawn back from that sea. The suffering of recent times and her desperate yearning to serve finally broke the protective barrier that had always kept her separate from it. She at last discovered the brilliant delight of following deep into its fathomless worlds, far removed from the pain and passing joys offered by the shadow kingdom of physical reality. This understanding she offered her students with perfect confidence that they would be unable to pull themselves away from the shores

of that sea of truth until, like her, they at last immersed themselves in its life-giving waters.

CHAPTER 10

At home again, Dorothy was even more energetic in her studies with Mother Beecher. In spite of her teaching experiences at Louhelen and her broadened understanding, when Bahá'í friends visited the Baker household it was never Dorothy who discussed the Faith with them. Mother Beecher spoke; Dorothy would come in to hear what she had to say but never to add her own comments. The exception was with her own children; with them she taught freely. Louise vividly recalled a time when she was eight and Bill was two years younger and at a family Bahá'í children's class in Lima:

One winter afternoon Bill, Muzz and I sat on the floor in the music room. Muzz had been telling us stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and ended with the one about the Master teaching Howard MacNutt to pray. We talked about prayer for a minute or so. It was one of those days when I felt like a sponge, soaking up everything Muzz said. Bill was enough younger that his mind began to wander. One of his bean bags had broken, and Bill was playing with some loose beans. . . . He tried to stuff one of the beans into his ear. Muzz remonstrated with him. "Billy, don't do that, dear. It could get stuck in there, and we might have to take you to the doctor's to get it out." She went back to her story, and Bill went back to pouring his beans from one hand to another. He put one in his mouth and rolled it around,

pushing it across the outside of his upper teeth and gums with his tongue. Again Muzz stopped to tell him, “Billy, dear, when you play with small, hard things like those beans in your mouth, you could easily breathe one down your throat. It could catch in your windpipe and choke you.” Bill stopped, but finally entertained himself by trying to push one of the beans into his nostril. Muzz decided it was time to really impress him with the danger. “Bill, if that got stuck in your nose you might breathe it right down into your lungs, and choke yourself to death. Now stop it!” Bill hastily removed the offending object and gazed down at this surprisingly and unexpectedly dangerous item.

I was still absorbed in all that Muzz was saying, and when she asked if we would like to “say a little prayer,” I was all for it. Bill also agreed, although he was becoming extremely restless. We were sitting cross-legged, facing each other as if we were at three points of a small triangle. Muzz spoke of the need to concentrate and turn our hearts toward God when we prayed; to remember that when we prayed, we were standing in the presence of God. We closed our eyes and Muzz recited a short prayer with the utmost devotion. In the middle of it I opened my eyes to gaze at her, because I loved the joyous, reverent look she often had when she prayed. I glanced at Bill and saw him push his bean up into one of his nostrils. He tried to dislodge it, but only managed to push it farther in. His face twisted in panic. It was obvious that he was convinced that at any moment he was going to “breathe it into his lungs and choke to death,” as Muzz had prophesied he might. So far as he knew, he was facing imminent death. At the same time I knew he felt that he was “standing in the presence of God.” I could not close my eyes. I, too, was sure that Bill might die at any moment. I watched him carefully, ready to interrupt the prayer at the first sign that the end was near, but hesitant to act too hastily

when Bill himself kept silent. Muzz finished the prayer, but sat silent a moment longer, her eyes closed. Only when she opened her eyes did Bill allow his fear to overcome his self-control. “Oh, Muzz,” he wept, “I’m going to die!”

That really jerked Muzz back to earth in a hurry. She rolled forward onto her knees and put her arms around her little son, cuddling him against her breast. “Oh, Billy, what is it? What’s wrong?”

“Mommy,” he sobbed, “I didn’t mind you. I stuck the bean in my nose, and now it’s stuck and I’m going to die!”

Muzz sat back and asked, “Which nostril?” Bill pointed. “Put your thumb over your other nostril, hard, and blow as hard as you can.” Bill obeyed, and the offending bean shot out. “Here, take my hankie,” Muzz added. Bill accepted and used it to good effect. Muzz put her arm around Bill and comforted him. “You’re so brave, Bill, and so reverent. You thought you were going to die, but wouldn’t interrupt the prayer. That is the same courage that was shown by the martyrs. I’m truly very, very proud of you.” She went on praising him, but finally ended by telling Bill, “But if you ever find yourself in such a position again—of course it won’t be a bean in your nose—but if something else happens, you be sure to interrupt whatever we’re doing and tell me *instantly*.” She talked about that, too, a little longer, and Bill and I finally went off to play.

In 1930 Dorothy had hired a part-time secretary for Mother Beecher so that, even though she was too feeble to travel to give talks or even to write for long, she could stay in contact with her Bahá’í “children” around the country. She dictated long letters quoting passages from the Bahá’í writings,

explaining what she understood from them, encouraging her students to peruse the writings themselves, and, above all, to be active.

Mother Beecher also favored catching them up on the spiritual implications of important international situations, which she followed closely by listening to Lowell Thomas's news broadcast on the radio each evening and continuing her lifelong habit of reading the *New York Times* every morning. On Sundays, in Mother Beecher's opinion, Harry Emerson Fosdick's radio sermon was not to be missed by any thinking person. Her efforts to stay current took a great deal of energy, but she continued regardless of the limitations imposed by her ninety-one years.

Dorothy was home from Louhelen by early August, 1932. Sitting in her room one morning, she could hear the squeak of her grandmother's wicker rocking chair as she sat in the next room reading her paper. The noise was one Dorothy was used to and enjoyed hearing through the wall that separated their rooms. Then she heard the creak of wood as Mother Beecher rose, putting all her weight on the rocker's arms. A loud crack, followed by a resonant thud, made Dorothy's chair tremble. Pushing aside her papers and calling out, she ran through the hall and into the next bedroom. Dorothy found Mother Beecher on the floor between rocker and bureau. The simple act of standing had broken her brittle hip bone. The doctor said recovery at her age was very unlikely. After he had left, Dorothy asked Mother Beecher if she would be more comfortable in the hospital, where they were sure to take the very best care of her, or if she would prefer to be in her own room, with family nearby and nurses around the clock. Mother Beecher was definite, even under the influence of the morphine the doctor gave her; she far preferred to stay at home with her family.

During the next week Bahá'í friends and family members visited from everywhere. Dorothy arranged for some of them to stay at the guest house half a block away, but the majority stayed with the Bakers. When Mother Beecher was awake, she visited with each of them, not allowing herself to lose consciousness until after her son Henry arrived from New Jersey. Then she slipped into a coma, and ten days after her fall she died. The funeral was held on August 22, conducted by the family's old and dear friend from Buffalo, Mrs. Grace Ober.

Soon after, Dorothy corresponded with Shoghi Effendi, asking permission, once again, to write, but this time about a subject already well known to her. His response came relatively quickly.

Persian Colony,
Haifa, Palestine,
18-10-32

Dear Mrs. Baker,

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated August 30, 1932.

The Guardian has surely no objection to an account of the life and experiences of Mother Beecher. In fact, he welcomes such an effort, because it is very interesting and very useful to future generations to have on record the activities of those Early Bahá'ís who broke the dawn of the New Era in the West. But such work naturally falls under the jurisdiction of the National Assembly in America, and the Guardian does not wish to

assume to himself duties that are theirs. He wishes you therefore to refer the matter to them and abide by their decision.

Shoghi Effendi is very glad to see that the friends are studying Nabil's Narrative with great care and beginning to appreciate the true significance of the Báb and His Message in this glorious Dispensation. . . .

Assuring you of Shoghi Effendi's prayers and best wishes I beg to remain,

Yours ever sincerely,

Ruhi Afnan

May the Beloved bless, comfort and protect you, and enable you to follow the glorious example of our dear sister, Mother Beecher, whose passing I deplore, for whose soul I will continue to pray, and for whose services I shall ever cherish a lively and grateful appreciation.

Shoghi

Dorothy did write an account of Mother Beecher's life. The articles were published in five issues of *The Bahá'í Magazine* between October 1933 and March 1934 and were originally entitled "The Evolution of a Bahá'í—Incidents from the Life of Mother Beecher." They review Ellen Tuller Beecher's life as a young woman in New England and her search then and later for spiritual truth. The articles deal almost exclusively with important incidents that reveal her early spiritual potential or that mark moments of

realization leading up to her recognition of Bahá'u'lláh, before His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited America.

Mother Beecher's death seemed to add dimension to Dorothy's spiritual longing and perhaps to the development of her own potential. Ed Miessler, a friend from Lima who was not yet a Bahá'í, wrote of Mother Beecher and the effect he sensed her death had on Dorothy.



26. Dorothy's father, Henry Beecher, 1933. He became a Bahá'í in 1947



27 Dorothy's grandmother, Mother Beecher, at ninety, June 1930. A photograph taken while she was speaking at a meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

A short time later we met precious Grandmother Beecher. This was in 1932, after befriendng Frank and Dorothy. We had the great privilege of inviting her to our home. She had supper with us. After supper, she sat us down on the sofa, one on either side of her, and talked to us for two hours.

We loved her. We admired her—her lucidness and brilliance. We thought “Too bad she isn’t a Lutheran!” Within a few days she fell and broke her hip, and within a week after that we attended our first Bahá’í funeral. It was a revelation to us. It was so beautiful! It was really an open door to a new life.

The mantle of Grandmother Beecher seems to have fallen upon the shoulders of Dorothy. I want to read one of the selections of the Báb,

“Death does not separate the soul of the believer from his scene of previous activity, but only increases his powers. All those who work for this Great Cause will continue to do so whether they are in the body or out of it. If martyred, they will attach to those who can best secure their influence, and the power of these will be doubled or quadrupled by the dynamic assistance of those who have already left the scenes of outward action.”

This was copied from Amelia Collins’ prayer book by Luella Beecher, Dorothy’s mother. . . .[33](#)

Perhaps, as the passage above suggested to Ed Miessler, Mother Beecher’s death did influence her granddaughter and increase Dorothy’s power to work for the Cause. Her metamorphosis was certainly dramatic, but whether it was influenced by Mother Beecher’s passing can be known only to God. Certainly, though, Dorothy’s near death in 1929, the confirming moments with Albert Vail and in prayer at the House of Worship, then a second close brush with death a year later combined with Dorothy’s dedicated study of the Faith, her teaching efforts, and Mother Beecher’s spiritual influence to deeply affect her life and commitments. It is clear that, for whatever reasons, when Dorothy’s

day for greatness dawned, she was not found lying on her couch, but awake and ardently wishing to serve.

CHAPTER 11

With Mother Beecher gone, discouragement and despair stayed close. In her family and in her town, Dorothy felt almost alone in her beliefs. But not quite; Frank was a Bahá'í. He was quiet about it though. With her grandmother gone, Dorothy no longer had someone with whom she could explore the depths of the Bahá'í writings and the facets of her own spiritual growth.

Frank was a worker. He lived his life devoted to his straightforward yet noble purposes: providing for his family, running his bakery, and, with his assets, helping local boys with college tuition or improving conditions for the employees at Plezol. Dorothy felt alone with the inner weight of inherited responsibility and the self-imposed, almost self-inflicted, resolve to be of service to the Bahá'í Faith.

School started the month after Mother Beecher died. Frank was always at work; now all the children were out of the house, too. Dorothy sat down to a lonely cup of coffee in the pullman, the little room between the kitchen and dining room just large enough for the built-in benches and table. A double window above the table overlooked the backyard. On the opposite wall next to the china cabinet was the door to the basement where, Dorothy knew, the laundry waited for attention. The kitchen clock, her only companion, clucked like a mechanical chicken. Dorothy opened her folder to one of the last pages

of notes she had made weeks before with her grandmother, before the accident. There on the page was a large circle, drawn as Mother Beecher had shown her, with smaller globes on its circumference. The uppermost and largest of the globes was labeled “God, The Infinite Essence, Unknowable One.” To the left of that globe, descending to the bottom of the circle, the smaller globes were labeled “Mineral,” “Vegetable,” “Animal,” and, at the bottom, opposite the one marked “God,” was a circle labeled “Man.” Half was darkened in, like the circles representing other creations of God on earth, and half was left light like the spiraling arc that stretched up the right side of the circle, ascending to God. Across the top of the chart, on some happier day, Dorothy had written, “The law of life is motion. From God we come and to Him do we return.”

Now life’s motion seemed to have stopped. She felt angry to be stuck in that house, in that town, doing so little that mattered, further than ever from any chance to serve.

Still, it seemed stupid to do nothing. She did have one way to be useful; at least her family depended on her. She decided to go grocery shopping and cook something special for Frank and the children. Dorothy took one long drink from her now cold coffee, closed the notebook, and, picking up her purse, went out to the car. When she reached the garage she was surprised to find she could even smile, just from seeing the roadster, “the banana,” that Connie had brought home from Yale, once yellow, now painted gray especially for her. Louise and Bill thought it had her initials written all over it —DB for “Dodge Brothers.” All cars, according to the children, were family members. Frank and Dorothy always enjoyed their anthropomorphic vision. When Louise was three she could name all the young Bakers: Connie Baker,

Sally (Sara) Baker, Billy Baker, Weezy Baker, and Toody Baker (for Studebaker, an American car).

That night, busy in the kitchen when Frank came home, Dorothy felt better. He sniffed around the oven as he caught her up on his day at the bakery.



28. Louise, Dorothy, Frank, and Bill Baker in 1932, all dressed up for a ride below Niagara Falls on “The Maid of the Mist.”

“Floyd Spahr came by my office.”

“How’s he doing? Still happy at Plezol, I hope, don’t know what you'd do without him.”

“Oh, yeah, it wasn’t business—he and some others are studying something called Unity and thought we might know enough to give a class on it.”

“I’ve heard of it, but that’s all.”

“Well, I told him you were good at talking about religion and you could probably tell him about Bahá’í since they believe in unity, too.”

Dorothy stopped stirring; her spoon slipped into the sauce. “What did he say?”

“He said it sounds good. They’re all coming over next Sunday night.”

It was Monday. That gave her four full days and maybe a little time on the weekend to get ready. Dorothy spent every free hour she could find that week reading and indexing, preparing her talk. She waded through material that seemed to offer no hope of forming a coherent whole. Presenting the Bahá’í Faith in its entirety was impossible. It was too vast—the history, the laws, the huge, world-embracing concepts for a new social order, the myriad answers for the desperate personal questions every thinking individual asks about how and why he lives. She kept digging and finding pieces that seemed to fit, losing herself in the search. Sometimes they seemed to form into a manageable whole; then anxiety about the upcoming talk would make the fragments of information seem hopelessly diffuse.

By that weekend the outline had expanded to include everything her thirty-odd hours of study had touched on. Then a pattern began to emerge and Dorothy followed it, planning, editing, connecting each thought with the next. Stories, insights from time spent with Mother Beecher tied theory into reality so that by Sunday night Dorothy was nervous, but prepared. The group that met that first Sunday consisted of the Bakers, Floyd and Gertrude Spahr, Frank and Charlene Warner, Marie Kramer, and a few others.

Dorothy was able to inform Shoghi Effendi on February 2, 1933, of the formation of the first Bahá’í community in Lima, Ohio. There were eighteen

members, and a second study group had been formed for other interested individuals.

Persian Colony,
Haifa, Palestine
Feb. 17th, 1933

Dear Mrs. Baker:

Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated February 2nd, 1933.

The news that the Bahá'í group in Lima is increasing rapidly and that there are constant additions to your numbers made the Guardian very happy. He sincerely hopes that this progress will be accelerated and that, before long, the people will in throngs cluster under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh.

It is, however, very important that these newcomers should study the teachings and become thoroughly familiar with them, otherwise their faith will be established upon shifting sand and could be easily demolished. The words of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master, however, have a creative power and are sure to awaken in the reader the undying fire of the love of God.

Please extend to all the friends there the Guardian's loving greetings and assure them of his prayers.

With best wishes,

Yours ever sincerely,
Ruhi Afnan

Dear co-worker:

Your letter brought much joy to my heart. The interests of your new-born community are the object of my constant prayers at the holy shrines. I cherish fond hopes for its extension and consolidation. May the Beloved guide your steps and enable that centre to radiate powerfully the light of the Abhá Revelation.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

Through the spring the classes continued, and Dorothy continued to prepare for each by spending twenty to forty hours a week studying the Faith.

Ed and Elma Miessler became interested in the Bakers' new activities. Ed overheard Dorothy inviting mutual friends to a talk by Albert Vail and asked, "Couldn't we come along, too?" Dorothy answered, "Of course, but you are so happy in your church, I didn't think you would be interested."

Ed wasn't too impressed with the whole idea of a religion that extended beyond Christianity, but Albert Vail's talk and their discussion afterwards interested him enough to make him want to read further. Both he and Elma became serious students of the Bahá'í Faith. To their parents' horror they even decided to join the growing Bahá'í community in Lima. When their

parents found out both their fathers, clergymen who knew little but that the Faith was not Lutheran, demanded that their children stay away from “that Baker woman,” go to church, read the Bible, and throw away their Bahá’í books. The Miesslers agreed to all but the last.

Despite the pressure and the forced division between the Miesslers and their Bahá’í friends, a division they abided by for the sake of family peace, “that Baker woman” saw to it that Ed and Elma received all the Bahá’í newsletters, bulletins, and books as they were published. In one issue of *Bahá’í News* they read from the writings of the Guardian that it is incumbent upon Bahá’ís to attend the Nineteen Day Feast, that only illness or absence from the city is considered an adequate excuse. After almost a year of isolation, they could no longer stand to live in half-light. The Miesslers attended the next Nineteen Day Feast and were promptly excommunicated from the Lutheran Church.

Lenore Bernstein, one of the first people Frank and Dorothy met through Ed and Elma, was appalled at the news that the Miesslers had been denied further contact with their church. Years later Lenore wrote,

When Elma told me they were thrown out of their church I asked her what was this “terrible thing they were about to accept that would cause their minister to dismiss them from his flock.” Then she gave me the principles of the Faith and I said—“Well, I can’t see what’s wrong with that. I can certainly accept all that teaching.” She answered, “Well then, you are a Bahá’í,” and I almost think it was that simple in those early days to become part of the Bahá’í family.

Dorothy was particularly vexed during the early development of the Lima community about another woman who seemed very close to becoming a Bahá'í yet hesitated to become a part of the Faith. Finally, Dorothy prayed that Bahá'u'lláh would appear to her friend in a dream; then she would surely be convinced of the truth of His revelation. The next morning there the woman stood at Dorothy's front door, full of the news that the night before she had dreamed of Bahá'u'lláh, Who had announced that He was the Promised One. Dorothy was ecstatic, but her friend was not. "How," she asked, "could He have done that? It was not good sportsmanship. Jesus Christ would never have tried to influence me like that. I'll never accept Bahá'u'lláh." Crushed, Dorothy recognized her own folly and decided never again to pray for anything but God's first choice.

On April 21, 1933, all of the Lima Bahá'ís assembled for their annual meeting. They consulted on electing a Local Spiritual Assembly but decided it might be better to study Bahá'í administration during the coming year, as they had so far concerned themselves mainly with the spiritual teachings. Then they would be ready to elect an assembly at Ridván 1934. In a letter to the Bahá'í National Center they explained their decision and post haste received a very direct reply—in fact, in Dorothy's recollection, "a snippy letter, scolding us for not forming our assembly," and explaining that wherever nine adult Bahá'ís reside they *must* form their Local Spiritual Assembly on April 21.

The Lima Bahá'ís responded by holding elections at their next Nineteen Day Feast for a "Local Spiritual Committee" that functioned as if it were an assembly until the situation was remedied in April of the following year. The month before that election, on March 26, 1934, Dorothy wrote to the Guardian, asking on behalf of the Lima community for his prayers. Twenty-

nine Bahá'ís were active, but Dorothy wrote that opposition from some of the Lima clergy kept many more from participating.

On behalf of the Guardian his secretary wrote, on April 15,

. . . The forces of opposition which the clergy of Lima have used and are still using in order to counteract the continued advancement of the Faith of God will assuredly be vanquished. Their hatred, instead of quenching the flame of faith in the hearts of the faithful, will serve to intensify it. The believers should, therefore, be confident, and encouraged by such an assurance; they should redouble their efforts for the extension of the Cause. . . .

And the Guardian added,

May the Almighty assist you in your efforts to safeguard the interests of our beloved Faith and may He enable you to promote them with increasing effectiveness and power.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

The Lima community suffered some setbacks from the verbal attacks, but for the most part the feeling of the time was vitality. The Sunday night classes were becoming an attraction not only for people from Lima but for visitors from nearby villages. In the spring of 1935 the Bakers decided to take down

the wall between the living and dining rooms of their home so they could accommodate the sometimes fifty or more guests.

Many of the difficulties in Dorothy's growing Bahá'í family were caused by the strains of adolescence, pulling away from the rather priggish status quo of Lima that Elsie Austin³⁴ described as "an insular, reactionary, small town." The Bahá'í Faith was new; it had to be tried on, they had to practice wearing it. In their initial enthusiastic embrace some tended to embellish its clear, exquisite beauty, assuming that something so good could only be improved by their personal additions.

Even though Bahá'ís are guided not to join political parties, during the presidential campaigns of 1936, "Daddy" Gorrell, after a heated defense of Roosevelt, announced to the other Bahá'ís within earshot, "Even if we are supposed to stay out of party politics, no real Bahá'í could vote anything but the straight Democratic ticket!"

On another Sunday night a Bahá'í from one of the outlying towns brought a friend to hear about the Faith. After listening to Dorothy speak about the earlier foundations of other religions, she broke in to remind Dorothy, "You're supposed to be talking about Bahá'í. Why don't you just get on with it?" She had never thought of studying other religions. She considered herself a Bahá'í without ever giving much thought to progressive revelation, a basic tenet of Bahá'í belief that each divinely appointed Messenger of God renews religion and is meant to advance the spiritual and social state of humankind.³⁵

But there were also Bahá'ís in Lima like Dorothy's mother, Luella, who were more knowledgeable. Luella came to live with them in 1933 when she and her husband Henry divorced. Eventually Dorothy's father became a

Bahá'í, too, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, in 1947. Other Lima Bahá'ís included the Miesslers, the Spahrs, the Warners, Lenore Bernstein, and many others, who were deepened and dependable. To this list, in 1935, was added one of the brilliant lights of Dorothy's heart: Mary Lou Ewing. At the same time Mary Lou declared her belief in Bahá'u'lláh, her husband, Tom, and her mother, Edna Andrews, became Bahá'ís as well.

Years later, walking together through a snow storm, Dorothy asked Mary Lou, "Do you realize that the friendship with you was one of the last of which I allowed myself the luxury?" This may seem ascetic, but with the energy Dorothy poured into the Bahá'í communities, first locally, then nationally and internationally, her resources of time and love were completely used. There was no space left for self-indulgence, even in its most constructive and acceptable form. Instead, Dorothy chose what she called "universal love" and asked Mary Lou if she thought the Lima Bahá'ís understood that as she grew in the ability to exercise universal love, she also grew "in the ability to feel personal love." She wanted them to know, later on when she was rarely in Lima, that her personal love for them was enhanced, not reduced, by this new and broader love for humanity.

In those first years, though, the conflict between time, responsibilities, and the desires of the human heart had not yet come to a head. There was energy for everything: the Sunday night meetings, preparing her talks for them, setting up the den for the Friday night Bahá'í Men's Club led by Harry Jay, the weekly luncheon Dorothy gave for the Bahá'í women and their friends, and especially, time for study of the writings and for teaching the children. Bill Baker was about ten in the mid-30s when Bahá'í children's classes were organized in Lima.

I recall the Sunday school classes we used to have at the Miesslers, and for a while at the Bernsteins, and sometimes at our house, and though I dutifully learned the songs and listened to lessons, etc., I much preferred classes in which Mother would tell stories. . . . When Mother was really getting under way teaching in Lima I remember that she would prepare her lessons (I think for the Tuesday night classes) on yellow pads. Every afternoon when I came home from school she would be writing and as she worked; I think she was indexing her Bahá'í books. None of them were indexed then, but she had pages and pages of index references stuck in all her books. I often thought of that time when people said afterwards that Mother has such a gift. She seemed to speak so freely from the writings and always seemed to know just where things were. . . .

Children played a significant part in Dorothy's life and in her service. In 1936, a newspaper article included the following account of Dorothy's interests.

Mrs. Baker is . . . particularly interested in problems of children and youth. In her home city of Lima she has long been actively associated with the educational program of the Parent Teachers Association. For several years she has directed the Bahá'í Young People's Summer Conference at Davison, Mich.^{[36](#)}

Years later, when her children were grown and Dorothy was visiting Ypsilanti, Michigan, she and Junie (Katherine) Faily Perrot talked about being an attentive parent. Junie remembered that Dorothy "told me to take good care of my children now while they are young. She said she didn't go out to teach until her children were old enough."

Dorothy's devotion to children and youth was further proof that she took her Faith seriously. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote, "O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined."³⁷

Dorothy no longer felt remote from the joys of life. In Lima she delighted in the closeness of her friendships, in her family, and in her cozy community. In 1935 Frank and Dorothy were delighted to go up to Bridgeport, Connecticut, for Conrad Baker's wedding. Conrad met Marjorie Wheeler through his roommate at Yale and married her on July 23, 1935, the year after his graduation from Yale Medical School. So the Baker family that at one time seemed so fragile was growing and expanding.

And Dorothy now had purpose in her life. Even the dull repetition of household activities became bearable and, at times, sweet. When Mary Lou ran over to Dorothy's one day to borrow her iron, Dorothy said, "Oh, Mary Lou, what fun! One of the things from my house will go to your house and I will use it even more lovingly because it served you!" Life had been charged with some new energy that made even the ordinary special.

Dorothy had a rather mystical communion with the picture of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in her living room. Mary Lou would see her look at it as if she had moved away, for a moment, into the reality of the picture. Once Dorothy walked over to it, laid her cheek against its glass and said, "I can go anywhere in the world. I can go through anything in the world, as long as I have my Beloved." Mary Lou found her not the least bit self-conscious or theatrical. She was speaking of a very real love.

Because of a problem that had begun at the time of Bill's birth, Dorothy needed surgery, so she entered a Catholic hospital near Lima. Even there her teaching continued. The nuns became intensely interested in the spiritual aura that seemed to surround Dorothy. One nun even asked if she should leave her order to become a Bahá'í. After prayer with the sister, Dorothy considered the situation and answered by explaining how acceptable her service as a nurse was in God's sight, and that God no doubt could also accept her belief in Bahá'u'lláh, even if she stayed on in her nursing order.

After Dorothy's release from the hospital, she went back to her busy schedule. In fact the pressure increased. She had to keep the ever-growing Bahá'í community in Lima on an even keel, deal with the responsibility of seeing Louise and Bill into their teens, plus cope with the beginnings of the tremendous strain on Frank as his business headed toward rocky years that were, heartbreakingly, connected with Dorothy's Bahá'í activities. She also had to consider responsibilities outside of Lima: membership on the Central States Summer School Committee plus preparation to teach summer school classes. All of it combined to shake Dorothy's confidence in her ability to accomplish everything with even moderate success.

Dorothy's upper teeth had been the cause of serious problems for years, but she was unaware how serious. At the same time her Bahá'í workload grew heavier, Dorothy had to have several teeth removed and a bridge put in their place. As she went under the anesthetic in the dentist's office, a round chart seemed to appear on the wall. It turned like a roulette wheel, the different-colored spaces moving clockwise around the perimeter. Each space seemed to fill with letters and words toward the bottom. As it reached the twelve o'clock position, the words vanished. Dorothy heard a voice say, "Pick a space. Watch it." She looked more closely, focusing on a blank space. As she watched the

wheel turn, writing began to appear in the space: “Mrs. Bernstein cannot keep her appointment.” Then the words flicked under a rubber eraser at the top of the wheel, and the message was gone.

When Dorothy began to come out from under the anesthesia she briefly forced open her eyes to see the chart on the wall. Nothing was there. Just then the door opened. She heard the nurse’s voice: “Mrs. Bernstein just phoned. She can’t come in today.” Unsure of what was real and what was not, Dorothy heard another voice, but it did not come from the room where she lay: “You see there is a time for everything.”

In the first short talk Dorothy gave at the Bahá’í House of Worship in Wilmette, she ended every point made with the deeply felt sentiment, “Blessed are those who follow guidance.” Dorothy saw the strange moments of watching the turning roulette wheel as just that—guidance. Instead of dismissing that image as the fictitious effect of exhaustion and the dentist’s anesthetic, Dorothy took the odd cue as a message and very determinedly followed it—there would be time for everything.

Whatever obstacles stood in her way, from then on Dorothy knew that the attitude that would lead to blessings was one of fearless acceptance of her responsibilities without the anxiety that had once accompanied them. The limitations were gone; as long as she didn’t stand in her own way, there would be time in her life for all that she truly wanted to do. Anxiety about finding needed time, fear of failure, these were nets in which she no longer wished to entangle herself.

Turning away from the battles that anxiety and discouragement waged, Dorothy instead chose not to concentrate on what sometimes seemed to be

overwhelming odds against her success. She faced the whole mirror of her heart to God and turned its opaque back to the underworld of creeping doubts and fearful, pointless imaginings, knowing that “vain imaginings” could be illusions based on vanity, but that they could also be imaginings that were in vain, having no base in reality or hope of fulfillment. These floating fears and desires she strictly avoided, calling them useless thoughts.

There were still moments of despair or depression, but Dorothy’s efforts in Lima began to balance out. At times she became overtired, and Frank would ask her to list all her committees and activities. Then he would suggest she consider which of these did not vitally require her presence. Usually, Dorothy came up with at least one activity which, on his recommendation, she would then drop. With Frank’s help she managed to keep her Bahá’í work in its place, as the major interest of her life, but not as a ravenous god to which all else, including the happiness of children and husband, had to be totally sacrificed.

In fact, Dorothy’s enthusiasms included aspects of her work at home. On the way home from National Convention in the spring of each year, Dorothy always stopped at roadside stands to buy whatever fruit the farmers brought to sell. Convention began just before strawberry time, so she usually arrived home with a crate of berries. Dorothy would gather the whole family to help with the jam making. She had a real interest in the whole process and infused the operations with the same sort of intensity she gave to other projects. Rhubarb from the back yard, well sugared, was the base for the jam, or Dorothy used several cans of pineapple. Then the strawberries would go in, and as summer fruits ripened Dorothy added them to the big crock of jam in the cellar, making “heavenly hash,” as the Bakers called it. Later in the year, when Frank came home with a bushel or two of fresh peaches, the family

gathered again as Dorothy organized the canning. A favorite dessert was “fried eggs,” two peach halves with the curved sides up and each surrounded by a circle of fresh whipped cream. She once commented that she needed these activities to keep a balance in her life.

Frank adored the thriving home life Dorothy created, but he encouraged her to take on everything she wanted to do. With real appreciation Dorothy often told people of Frank’s advice to her: “We both love this Cause, and neither one of us wants you to give only your gray hairs to it.”

Just as he encouraged her, Dorothy showed great gentleness toward her husband. When the double living room and the wide entry hall of their home were filled with people during the Sunday night meetings, Frank would settle himself on the comfortable blue couch in the very back of the room and would occasionally fall asleep as Dorothy spoke. But her loving, indulgent smile removed all embarrassment. When a snore or sleepy snort made heads turn, she would laugh and suggest that if it annoyed anyone they should wake him, but otherwise let him sleep.

Frank had his own ways of serving. He and Louis Gregory³⁸ were very close friends, and Frank took pride in being a person on whom Louis could rely. Louis Gregory was an African American attorney upon whose noble character had been left the lasting imprint of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s influence. Louis often stopped in Lima, as many Bahá’ís did while traveling cross country by train or car. Louis was scheduled to speak in Lima one evening, but phoned Frank to say he would be in early. Frank was delighted and told him, “I’ll meet your train and we can have lunch at the Argonne Hotel.”

The Argonne Hotel, the best hotel in Lima, also had the best restaurant. Lima, a conservative small town and a hub for the far-flung farming communities that surrounded it, was also, oddly enough, a sort of off-season congregating place for members of organized crime. Not that organized crime was active there, but certain crime bosses were in and out of Lima from time to time, apparently when Chicago became too dangerous. In fact, one of the heavy, large cars Frank favored was a maroon Cadillac whose previous owner had been, according to the salesman, Al Capone. Louise Baker remembers that the car had a beautiful leather interior, tiny crystal bud vases in the backseat. It was a limousine. Frank always joked that he bought it so he could carry a whole Local Spiritual Assembly.

Perhaps because this criminal element favored occasional retreats to Lima, the best hotels were actually quite elaborate. Unfortunately though, the Argonne did not serve blacks.

When Frank realized he had invited Louis Gregory into a situation that might be embarrassing for him, he quickly decided to take Louis elsewhere, possibly the Kiwanis Grill. He knew Louis would understand. But he would also be hurt. Frank couldn't stand that. He felt it was ridiculous, anyway, denying entrance to a man like Louis Gregory, whose sterling character would shine anywhere.

Louise Baker remembers, "As Dad considered the question he became more and more incensed that such an outstanding man as Louis Gregory could be treated as an inferior by anyone, especially when he was head and shoulders above everybody else who would be eating there. As he thought about Louis his admiration for him increased still further until he finally

ended with a tremendous sense of pride that he, Frank Baker, had the great privilege of taking Louis Gregory to lunch.”

By the time Frank picked up Louis at the station, he had made his decision. He drove directly to the front of the Argonne Hotel in his grand automobile and escorted Louis through the entrance and into the lobby. At the restaurant he informed the maitre d' they had a reservation and required a window table. The maitre d' obediently led them through the restaurant, Frank following Louis. But at the table, Frank insisted on doing the honors of seating Louis himself.

Dorothy was just leaving the house when the telephone rang. She didn't even know Louis was in town yet, so she had no idea what the Lima News reporter was talking about. He said, “Mrs. Baker! You've got to tell me, who is this African prince your husband is entertaining at the Argonne Hotel?”

At home, Dorothy's weekly luncheons were highly popular. Mary Lou, trying to explain Dorothy's charm, said, “She was in such demand because of her high level of interacting with people. I've never seen a woman more at ease with a variety of backgrounds. It was total camaraderie. . . . ‘Born to the purple royal,’ people said of her. She wasn't alien anywhere.”

Because her luncheons were only for women, the guests felt free to discuss very personal concerns. One Saturday the subject turned to men, as it often did. With some hesitation a woman said her husband was involved with someone else. The guests were horrified at the man's behavior, perhaps imagining their own anger and frustration if they were in similar positions. Dorothy didn't mention this, but spoke of her own husband. Mary Lou Ewing was there and listened to Dorothy with amazement as did the others. “I would

be the first person to defend Frank Baker if he decided that he was too lonely to go without companionship when I am away. I would defend him even for his infidelity.” There were a few muffled gasps at her audacity, followed by an even more surprised silence when she added, “A wife should always look to the needs of her husband.” Certainly, she was not advocating breaking the vows of marriage but emphasizing the need for compassion, even in the most trying circumstances. But it is also true that Dorothy and Frank had a healthy, normal relationship, which she neither ignored nor saw as unimportant. She never forgot Frank, nor felt herself somehow above the physical realm.

But it was in the spiritual realm that Dorothy gloried; it was very real and close for her. She knew her strength was tenuous at best without a strong connection to that other world. The Lima community needed more than she could ever give it, so she prayed ardently and often to be strengthened. When Mary Lou had serious difficulties, Dorothy woke up to pray for her every dawn for nineteen days and thanked Mary Lou profusely for the opportunity. She thanked her, not out of some overwhelming desire to sacrifice her sleep, but because she knew that when she prayed deeply for someone else, she also increased her own connection to the power that sustained her. It was a power she believed in totally, the effects of which she saw manifest all around her.

During the ‘30s the son of a Bahá’í couple in Lima had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized. After several weeks of unsuccessful treatment, the doctors advised his parents to take him to the state mental hospital in Toledo, Ohio. Dorothy sat in the backseat with the young man during the drive. He talked constantly, unable to stop the torrent of hysterical ideas that assaulted his mind. Everything drove him to distraction; the stoplight ahead spurred fears that his father would crash through it. He was positive that, if they crossed the railroad tracks, a freight train would appear

from nowhere and crush their car. The compulsive banter did not slow down; his thin body used all the strength it had just to withstand the unbearable strain of the eighty-mile ride to Toledo. When they were clear of Lima's city limits, having exhausted the terrifying resources outside the closed car windows, he suddenly realized that there, right beside him, sat another threat to his peace of mind. He was instantly alert to the danger. For a moment he cowered in the far corner of the backseat, staring at his nemesis. Dorothy reached for his hand. The threat of physical contact was too much. He began violently throwing himself against the locked door.

Unable to force the door open, he scrambled pitifully against it, like a bird against glass, unable to understand what hinders flight. Vainly he groped for the handle, his head turned over his shoulder, eyes fastened on Dorothy as if on a pursuing demon. From the front seat his mother tried, through the tears she could not hold back, to comfort him, to calm him, but he was oblivious to all but Dorothy.

Since his lunge for the door she had been sitting quietly, looking ahead, containing herself, directing all her heart's energy to God. She turned and smiled into his eyes, motioning him to move away from the door. Slowly, in sharp staccato, one jagged movement at a time, he left his crouched position and hitched himself toward her, this time quiet. Dorothy closed her eyes and to herself began to repeat the short healing prayer by Bahá'u'lláh:

Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succor in both this world and in the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.^{[39](#)}

She also used the Báb's prayer, "Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding."⁴⁰ The grown man lay down and put his head on her lap. For the rest of the two-and-a-half-hour trip, they continued as they were, the man resting, Dorothy silently praying.

When they arrived at the hospital he opened his door and got out. His parents and Dorothy walked after him. Midway up the white plank steps to the entrance he stopped, then turned to Dorothy, "I can never thank you for what you have done for me." Thirty days later the doctors released him, having been unable to find any sign of mental illness.

Dorothy's ability to encourage the individual was, in the memory of many, without compare. Susie, her brother David's daughter by his marriage to Lila, came for a visit when she was in her teens. Her parents had divorced years before. David had already remarried twice, leaving Susie to grow up with her mother in Canaan, New Hampshire. Young, alone in a world where she felt neither acceptable nor accepted, Susie had little confidence or hope for her life. At the Bakers' invitation, she ended up spending a year in their home.

During most of Susie's various minor escapades in Lima, Dorothy stayed very calm. When it finally began to look as if Susie wasn't benefiting at all from the family's influence, Dorothy took her upstairs for a serious talk. She recounted, one by one, the many outstanding people from whom Susie, like her own children, descended: several signers of the Declaration of Independence and two who had signed the Constitution: Nathaniel Gorham and Rufus King. Other ancestors included John Tilley and John Howland, who came to America on the Mayflower; Ralph Gorham, who, along with other Puritans, arrived in America on the good Ship Phillip and settled in New

England in 1635; and Captain John Gorham, who, as a result of his service in the King Philip's War, was granted the area later known as the town of Gorham, Maine. She explained that Rufus King was a U.S. Senator and Ambassador to Great Britain, and John King, Governor of New York. She told Susie she was also a descendant of the Beecher family which had produced such luminaries as Harriet Beecher Stowe.⁴¹ When Susan told Mary Lou Ewing about the impressive list, Mary Lou was surprised; Dorothy had never mentioned her ancestry to any of her Lima friends. But the brief recounting of those outstanding lives served its purpose. Dorothy left her niece wide-eyed with a new and vivid impression of her heritage and potential.

Meanwhile, Dorothy's own potential was becoming apparent. Recognition on a broader scale was imminent. But closely following that acclaim came another, less welcome spin-off of her successful work for the Faith. The mid-thirties would make her strong enough for what was ahead or show Dorothy the depths of her own weakness.

CHAPTER 12

In 1934 and 1935 Dorothy began addressing more groups outside of Lima. She spoke in Detroit, where her brother David was now a portrait photographer. He had finally married Adelaide, a girlhood friend of Dorothy's who had loved him since childhood. Dorothy gave a series of seven lectures in Detroit. She also spoke in other cities including Cleveland, Milwaukee, Dayton, and Pittsburgh.

The desire to travel and teach didn't come from confidence in her own ability; Dorothy's voice was still rather weak, and she relied very much on notes. Although she had studied the Bahá'í writings endlessly and tried to incorporate public speaking techniques into her presentations, her lectures remained somewhat stilted. She pushed on, unsure of her abilities, but positive that the propagation of the Faith required the energy of every Bahá'í. There were two basic rules she followed: strive—make the effort—and obey.

Garreta Busey—a long-standing member of the Urbana, Illinois, Bahá'í community—was a writer, editor, and a professor of English at the University of Illinois. She and Dorothy met when Anna Kunz invited Dorothy to come and speak in Urbana in February, 1935. Dorothy's letters of encouragement to Garreta, written the same year, also reflected her own struggle.

Dear Garreta,

Bahá'ís often experience exhaustion, and I rather feel that if we did not, we should never really know our own impotence, and thus we would be deprived of yearning to know and seek use of God's all-pervading power. For a while it is constant exhaustion and exhilaration. Then our ships steady themselves and concentrate on the charted journey. Besides, it is only out of a sense of impotence that we find our fullest destinies. . . .

Be tired of it all. Be so tired that you will shake the bars of your own prisons in rage and hurl yourself upon the Beloved and beseech Him to lift you to your best. When we do less we are always bored.

Come to Summer School if you can, Garreta. We all need you. Besides, I have a strong personal desire to see you and you really ought to gratify me just once.

Lovingly always,
Dorothy

Later

I have read this letter and it sounds wrong. You have done a thousand “bests” and hence you are very tired—Let me explain that my statement is a psychological one, and it applies to us all. I was not finding fault, but just seeing beyond. Your best is an inner thing, it is spiritual passion, perhaps. Bahá'u'lláh grant you the joy of it in great abundance.

DB.

Obedience, always a matter of sincerity and selflessness and the most potent proof of belief, was the theme of Dorothy's next letter.

Garreta dear,

Thank you for sending the letter. That was careless of me.

How lovely that Mrs. M. can turn to you. She is such a dear person, and your stability is exactly what she needs. I do feel that if she makes a consistent effort in this new little group, and refuses to let the world prevent her in one way or another (as it tends always to do) she will have her answers personally also. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to a woman in great trouble, "Try obeying my commands completely and you will be amazed at the results." And it was true. Not once but many times I have seen the friends who gathered to study in Lima arrive at points of sincerity that seemed to sweep everything away that had no place in their lives. "Whoso *maketh an effort*, in Our Ways will We guide him."

As to your problem, you are now set to the task of writing that book,^{[42](#)} and I believe I would pour into it every drop of inspiration, if I were you. There will be times when God will open doors to very beautiful direct service, and you will achieve beautiful results. The spiritual blessing of what you have gained ought to illumine every gift you have by nature. To me you are a truly magnificent soul just finding its wings. Use them joyously. God is not niggardly. He wants you to succeed in everything. You will glorify Him with those gifts.

God bless you always.

Loving Bahá'í greetings, Ever,

Dorothy

Since Mother Beecher's death in August of 1932, the same summer when the Greatest Holy Leaf, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's beloved sister Bahíyyih Khánum, passed on, Dorothy's efforts had been constant. Her resolution was still strong, but the exhaustion of those intense years and her yearning to be near the Holy Shrines and Shoghi Effendi made her decide to write to him in November of 1935, requesting permission to make a pilgrimage to Haifa. She had received a moderate inheritance, and, so for the first time, felt she had enough of her own money to make the expensive trip, but the needs of the National Fund concerned her, too. The Guardian's reply was prompt and direct.

December 6th, 1935

Dear Mrs. Baker,

It was a great pleasure for the Guardian to receive your warm and beautiful message of November 13th, and to learn of the encouraging and inspiring news of the steady progress which the Faith is making in Lima. His gratitude to you is boundless, for your share in this great and historic achievement has been quite preponderating and truly remarkable. The Lima friends should also feel very thankful for having in you such a

devoted and talented co-worker. It is the Guardian's most cherished hope that through the united and sustained efforts of you all, your community will continue to increase in number and in devotion and loyalty to everything the Cause stands for. He is ardently supplicating Bahá'u'lláh to confirm and enrich your labours, and enable you to become constantly more steadfast and effective.

With regard to your wish to visit the Holy Shrines; much as the Guardian would like to extend to you, and to dear Mrs. Beecher,⁴³ a most hearty welcome he feels it, nevertheless, his duty to advise you to defer your visit until such time when the existing deficit in the national fund of the Cause in America has been satisfactorily and completely met. He would suggest that you offer part of the expenses required for such a trip as a contribution to the said fund. Your example will be surely highly-meritorious in the sight of God, and will, no doubt, encourage and sustain the friends in their collective and individual sacrifices for the Cause in America.

In his prayers at the Holy Shrines Shoghi Effendi will continue to remember you, as well as all our dear friends of Lima, that you may daily grow in spiritual capacity, vigour and devotion. He will specially pray that some way be opened enabling you to visit Haifa in the near future, and thus fulfil your heart's long-cherished desire.

With his warmest Bahá'í greetings to you, to Mrs. Beecher and the rest of the believers in your centre,

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am deeply grateful for the many and remarkable services you have been rendering the Cause in recent years. You truly deserve to visit Haifa and lay your head in thanksgiving on the sacred Threshold. I feel certain, however, that it would be meritorious in the sight of God to devote part of the expenses of such a pilgrimage to the National Fund, so that the deficit may be reduced and the national interests of the Faith be thereby promoted. I will specially pray on your behalf at the Holy Shrines. Rest assured,

Shoghi

The suggestion of giving her travel expenses to assist with the costs of completing the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette had been Dorothy's, but the realization that she would not be able to go to Haifa was painful. Still, by the time of her reply of January 6 to the Guardian, Dorothy had completely accepted the idea of not yet making her pilgrimage. Eventually, the only regret she felt over the incident was that her contribution to the building of the Mother Temple would be spent for interior structural costs. In her touchingly romantic way, she wished her money could have bought some of the exquisite exterior ornamentation so she could look at the finished building and know she had contributed to its beauty.

January 25th, 1936

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

On behalf of the Guardian I wish to acknowledge with deepest thanks the receipt of your letter of the sixth instant, and to express his profound appreciation of the spirit in which you have accepted his suggestion regarding your visit to the Holy Land. He is, indeed, fully aware of the sacrifice you have made in this connection, but is confident that the example you have set before the friends is such as to give them courage and inspiration in their labours for the Cause.

The Guardian is fervently praying on your behalf at the Holy Shrines, that Divine confirmations may continually strengthen and guide you in your activities for the Faith. He is specially entreating Bahá'u'lláh to bless your labour in the field of teaching, and to enable you to become a leading champion of His Cause throughout the States.

With his renewed and most loving greetings to you and to all the friends in Lima,

Yours in His Service,

H. Rabbani

With the assurance of my loving prayers for the realization of your highest hopes and dearest wishes in the service of our beloved Faith,

Your true brother,

Shoghi



29. Dorothy at Summer School in the mid-1930s, with a copy of Bahá'í Scriptures on her lap.



30. Louhelen Bahá'í School in the 1930s.

In both of his postscripts the Guardian told Dorothy to be assured. Self-doubt and fear of her own inadequacy dissolved even more. The Guardian, “fervently praying” on her behalf—what choice did she have but to be confident of her future service? Again, obedience would surely bring her closer to the safety of God’s protection and guidance, not simply keep her from the shrines.

The next summer at Louhelen Bahá'í School, Dorothy talked about effort and reliance on God, encouraging the youth and adults to struggle as the Apostles did. Like Emerson, like Tennyson and a host of other important figures of the age who allowed the spirit of God's day to inspire them, Dorothy asked her students "to let the light of God flow through you." She believed what she said: "All men who are alive and awake in this day are geniuses." She felt that, in this divinely ordained time of return and rebirth, the power is flowing and will assist anyone who is open to it.



31. Dorothy and Frank at Louhelen.



32. Dorothy at a class at Louhelen, 1935. She is sitting in the middle of the front row.

As ever, she placed great emphasis on guidance. Outside with the youth on a summer day, sitting next to a little cabin, Dorothy said, “Divine guidance is so essential! If we could but seek it and forget our own petty desires and wishes, all would be well, for God knows your destiny and if we go contrary to what is planned for us, what seems to us the best may plunge us into no end of trouble and grief.” Then she told them about her long-ago romance with Elliott, the promising young lawyer whom she was so tempted to marry. Dorothy explained how she had longed to be with him but felt great doubts when she prayed about it and even heard the name “Frank Baker” in her mind as she prayed, though she didn’t understand why. She had already met Frank at the boarding house, but, she told her young students, ‘At that time marrying him would have been against all of my own desires and hopes—yet God willed it and a most happy married life has resulted. I let God tell me what to do. Though it was against my former desires, it naturally turned out well.’”



33. Bahá'í class on the lawn at Louhelen. Dorothy is facing away from the camera, and is wearing a dress with a "V" pattern.

Even in those young years of her active Bahá'í life, Dorothy often commented that by not marrying Elliott she was "divinely protected from going the way of the strictly 'social' life" and that she was grateful not to have been lured or to have stumbled into that use of her life's energies.

It was not yet as obvious as it would later be how absolutely unique Frank was in his unselfish desire that Dorothy often place Bahá'í service above his personal needs. In theory, many people may believe they can sacrifice precious time together to an interest outside the family, but how many men, particularly in pre-World War II America, would have actually done it? In part, it was a measure of Frank's love.

When Dorothy spoke to her class at Louhelen about the personal attitude necessary to be of the most service, she said, "We cannot be casual Bahá'ís. Even if we have only a crumb to give we must not withhold it. We can keep only what we give." If Bahá'ís purposely do not give what they have, Dorothy felt it was often as a result of "false humility," which she described as "a humility that prevents us from going victoriously ahead for God's sake. We are here to be used by God and we do not have a right to limit that use." Bahá'ís, she told them, must be confident of the Faith and must be active. Doubt and inactivity, even when sporadic, darken the outlook and retard progress. "Doubts of ours bring us into tribulations. We are of the world when we have doubts. If I were on the fence about being a Bahá'í, I would lose the happiness and joy of life. . . . You can't be inactive—a kind of rust can form. The trouble is, we are inspired, lifted, and then drop back again.

Speaking of the struggle demanded to keep on in their efforts for the Faith, Dorothy showed the youth the depth of her understanding for the Guardian, whom she had never met. “Shoghi Effendi has learned the grief of the prophets. He is, though, supremely happy. But he is solemn. Helen Bishop received one smile from him and thought she would go all around the world on foot to win another smile. He knows all about grief. On his youthful shoulders rests this Cause.”

By taking the many opportunities to speak at Bahá'í schools, study classes, and other gatherings, Dorothy eventually became a magnificent speaker. Many say that Shoghi Effendi later called her the greatest Bahá'í speaker of her time. She riveted audiences around the world, inspiring love for the Faith even in people who could not understand the language she spoke. But there was an unseen barrier which threatened Dorothy's success, a barrier not yet recognized during the halcyon summers at Louhelen.

There she confidently discussed how to become a better speaker. Annamarie Kunz Honnold, whose notes from Dorothy's Louhelen classes provided the above quotations, also had the vision to write down Dorothy's casual remarks, made during those early years of her service, on how to prepare and give a talk:

In order to speak on the spur of the moment, prepare a reservoir beforehand and have a supply of information. In preparing a speech have about five times (or so) more material than you will actually need. Divide talk into main and sub points. Every good talk should have a definite thought throughout. Have stories to explain theory and make central theme stand out. Don't repeat except for emphasis—not to collect thoughts. Don't worry about rhetoric while speaking. Trust to God to get you out. Climax

is important. When you have clinched your talk, sit down and be through. Don't forget human element. (Don't make it "a cold proposition.") Make talk living breathing reality.

At home in Lima while doing housework, Dorothy would think of questions she might be asked after a talk and consider possible replies. For each one she constructed various answers so that whether the individual was calling attention to himself, seriously interested, aggressive, or mildly curious, she would have an appropriate reply. Then Dorothy would pretend someone had challenged her illustration and would improve on it until her answers became as close to foolproof as possible.

Early in her speaking career, after researching a subject, Dorothy would write out her entire talk, then make an outline from that. After studying both, she summarized the first outline into a shorter one naming only the more important major points. By that time she understood the flow of her own thinking and could remember it without labored notes. She believed that too many notes would ruin a talk, so she kept them to a minimum. When her outline was familiar enough for her to follow it easily, Dorothy often practiced giving the talk in front of a mirror to train herself to eliminate strange facial expressions.

Dorothy's beloved friend Doris McKay once asked her how to get over the nervousness she felt when she had to speak. Dorothy said, "Speak to one responsive person first. Then think of them as separate people, not a crowd. You couldn't be nervous speaking to one." Almost regardless of the location or the audience, Dorothy opened her talks by reading a prayer aloud. She kept this habit her whole life. Even in the middle of a formal speech Dorothy

would occasionally close her eyes for a long moment to pray. Before approaching the platform she often said this prayer revealed by Bahá'u'lláh:

Praise be to Thee, O my God! Thou hast guided me to the horizon of Thy Manifestation and made me known through Thy Name!

I beg of Thee, by the radiant light of Thy gifts and by the waves of Thy beneficence, to endow my utterance with inspiration from the traces of Thy Supreme Pen that it may attract the realities of all things.

Verily, Thou art the One Who is powerful in all that He wills by His Word, the mighty, the wonderful!⁴⁴

By 1936 Dorothy's reputation had already started to spread among the approximately two thousand American Bahá'ís. With her health largely restored and her mission to serve underway, she began to feel self-confident. Mother Beecher had said she was a "chosen vessel," that she would some day be a great teacher. It now seemed possible.

Dorothy's spiritual battles hadn't been won easily, but having overcome her fears and self-doubts, she was now threatened with a new and subtle danger.

'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

Whensoever ye behold a person whose entire attention is directed toward the Cause of God; whose only aim is this, to make the Word of God to take effect . . . know ye for a certainty that this individual will be supported and

reinforced by heaven; that like unto the morning star, he will forever gleam brightly out of the skies of eternal grace. But if he show the slightest taint of selfish desires and self love, his efforts will lead to nothing and he will be destroyed and left hopeless at the last.⁴⁵

At Louhelen, where she taught classes or met for informal discussions with the youth each summer from 1931 to 1936, Dorothy was totally dedicated to making “the Word of God to take effect.” It was with a change of venue and a new and bigger audience that Dorothy’s efforts were almost doomed to “lead to nothing.

In the summer of 1936, following her classes at Louhelen, Dorothy taught for the first time at Green Acre Bahá’í School in Eliot, Maine. After each class, the audience crowded to the front to ask questions or just to be near the well-dressed, dignified woman who radiated such love and was so knowledgeable. Their adoration flowed over her as her love had washed over them when she spoke. But, day by day, unnoticed, the praise began to sink in. Her classes had been good; she knew that. At last she had done something worthwhile, worthy of recognition. When Dorothy’s listeners spoke of her beautiful analogies, her apt descriptions, she thanked them, glad of their respect and admiration, glad to finally count.

On the last day the meeting room was emptying after a final round of compliments. All that week Dorothy had noticed Louis Gregory in the back of the room. Louis Gregory was one of the most outstanding speakers on the Bahá’í Faith in America. Usually he stepped out the side door of the classroom as soon as Dorothy’s talk ended, but today Dorothy saw him walking up toward her. She busied herself with her papers, feigning an effort to order things, to cover the nervousness she felt.

“That was a very good course, Dorothy.”

She was ecstatic. She wondered which parts he had enjoyed most. She wanted to ask but felt it might seem self-centered. She tried to collect her thoughts for a proper reply, but before she could speak, Louis Gregory continued.

“You thought so too, didn’t you?”

Dorothy was sure she misunderstood, or at least she hoped so. “I’m sorry?”

“Remember, the moment you begin to think it is Dorothy Baker who is accomplishing this work, that moment your service to Bahá’u’lláh ends.”

Horried, she wondered how he could stand there so calmly saying those words. She wanted to deny it, to tell him he was wrong, to believe he had some hidden motive. Louis Gregory continued quietly looking at her, not with the authority she expected from a former member of the National Spiritual Assembly, not even with an expression of superior knowledge on his serene, dark face.

It was true—just a moment before she had felt quite content—but was it self-satisfaction or simply joy at being of service? He smiled; she blushed at the recognition that her self-satisfaction was not only present, but so strongly evident. Everyone must have seen it, all the people before whom she had been proud just moments ago.

Then her embarrassment vanished—replaced by something worse. What difference did it make whether others knew or didn’t? The real horror was

that it was true.

Driving from Green Acre along the road toward Portsmouth, Dorothy's mind couldn't leave the words of Louis Gregory. The strength she had felt from the praise of her audience dissipated instantly while standing there with him. The real source of strength, as he said, is absolute reliance on God, complete awareness of one's own nothingness, which negates individual pride but increases individual power a thousandfold. Dorothy had worked to cleanse the mirror of her soul, but, driving through Maine's summer green, she knew, without a doubt, that the light the Bahá'ís saw there was not from Dorothy Baker, but from God's teachings. She had only turned toward the light, not created it. She, at her best, was a reflection, not a source. In the car, alone, Dorothy made the decision never to give another talk without first begging God to strike her dumb rather than let her speak from the self. Humility, unlike the idle fancies of greatness that rush to fill quiet moments with disquieting suggestions, was not automatic. Louis Gregory was right; vanity had to be overcome.

It wasn't his words that triggered Dorothy's desire for purity of motive. She could have ignored his comments as a reprimand she didn't need, had it not been for his manner, his gentleness. He spoke to Dorothy not as one who couldn't conceive of self, but as an equal, as a human being who battled self every day. He once wrote to a friend, "I know it is all the Will and Power of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which brought success. Every day I ask 'Abdu'l-Bahá not to let me forget that I am dust, and to acknowledge my absolute nonexistence in that Court. The love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the sole magnet that renders life possible."⁴⁶

The great Bahá'í teacher, Martha Root' came to Green Acre for three days later that summer, but Dorothy was already gone. They met within a few months for the first and only time, in Geneva, New York. “The two of them were sitting down to breakfast,” Doris McKay later told a friend. “It was such an experience to see Dorothy, with her wonderful radiance, and Martha with her quiet power of faith, meet one another, like two constellations colliding. It was such a wonderful experience. Dorothy was so humble in the presence of this wonderful Martha Root.”

Humility was needed to learn what she could from the immortal Martha Root. Dorothy often told people it was Louis Gregory who kept her on course. But it was Mother Beecher who first taught her to recognize ego. In a Tablet to Mother Beecher ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote,

. . . when the ray returneth to the sun, it is wiped out, and when the drop cometh to the sea, it vanisheth, and when the true lover findeth his Beloved, he yieldeth up his soul.

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favor and grace; and this place of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth.^{[47](#)}

That week at Green Acre, Dorothy joined forces with the truly great ones on earth—those who, regardless of their worldly station, whether well-known to others or known only to God, wish above all else to be of service to humanity.

CHAPTER 13

If Dorothy had left Green Acre without recognizing the need to begin the long trek toward forgetfulness of self, an essential task would have remained unstarted. The warm and comfortable waters of self-contentment could not have stayed pleasant much longer. Tests were coming Dorothy's way that would chill any love not based on the purest motives.

Along with her work on national committees (the Central States Summer School Committee and the Race Unity Committee), Dorothy was still the mainstay of her home community. The Guardian's cousin, Ruhi Afnan, visited the United States that year and stayed in Lima, with the Bakers, for several days. He spoke to Dorothy about her Bahá'í workload, which he found disproportionately heavy. Casually she answered, "Oh, well, every community needs a workhorse." His immediate reply was, "But, Mrs. Baker, Bahá'u'lláh does not desire emaciated horses."

Supportive as Ruhi Afnan's visit may have seemed, his attitudes throughout the length of his visit were probably colored by the flaws of character and motive that eventually led him to break the Covenant. His gentle, if perfidious, suggestions and remarks could have made Dorothy feel overworked and under-appreciated by the local and national Bahá'í community. Had her self-image been susceptible, had she allowed success at summer schools and public meetings to blind her, Ruhi Afnan's comments

might have added fuel to the smoldering fire of ego. Belief in self as the source of her ability could have left Dorothy open to whatever intrigues surrounded her. But the desire for selflessness had already been awakened. Nothing could turn her around.

In Lima a year earlier, ugly remarks about the Faith and about Dorothy could occasionally be heard, from jealous or simply uninformed individuals, but the sentiments were neither strongly felt nor widely shared. Suddenly in 1937 calumny was being freely spread from club meeting to home, from neighbor to neighbor. It originated with a few members of the clergy, then spread into the community. From three pulpits on one Sunday morning in that little town, the Faith was denounced and congregations were encouraged to shun the Bahá'ís, to keep their distance from "these heathen," even to the extent of firing any Bahá'í employees.

A prominent Lima woman who became a Bahá'í, Charlene Warner, encountered a minister who had once said from the pulpit, "Well, it's perfectly obvious that only uninformed Christians would become Bahá'ís." But privately he told Charlene, "Mrs. Baker is stealing all the best people from our churches." With an innocent look on her face Charlene said, "You mean, Reverend, all your best people are uninformed Christians?"

An elderly schoolteacher who had been attending Bahá'í meetings was told by her superiors that if she joined, her pension would be taken away. A speaker was invited from Chicago to explain what was loudly proclaimed, though never recognized, by anyone outside of Lima, as "the Protestant position" on Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. No reference was made in this lecture to the outstanding Protestant clergymen who had joined the Bahá'í Faith, to the beauty of its teachings, or to the fulfillment of Biblical prophecies.⁴⁸ Instead

the visiting expert warned the large audience to avoid and flee from the unknown, this based presumably on the sophism that anything unknown to him must, axiomatically, be bad or he would surely know of it.

From his pulpit another minister insisted that people entered the Bahá'í Faith only because of Dorothy's more or less "hypnotic spell." He accused her of using her beauty and intellectual acumen to pull his flock away from the fold. Because of this incident and its repercussions, Dorothy told Mary Lou, "I thought I had achieved detachment, but the agony this is causing me shows I haven't become free of self." She was profoundly grieved that anyone could judge the power of Bahá'u'lláh as being her power and that, even in such a convoluted way, her name could be used to detract from the Faith.

For the most part the Baker children escaped the anti-Bahá'í atmosphere in Lima, though the pressure affected them. Louise went away to Radford School for Girls in El Paso, Texas, in 1937. The winter before, she had rested in Florida with her grandmother, Luella. Dorothy drove them down following an unhappy period in Louise's adolescence when she was anxious and ill. Her half brother Conrad had finished his internship and advised Dorothy and Frank to send Louise to a warm, dry climate, or there would be a good chance of further problems—pneumonia or tuberculosis. Radford was in the right part of the country. The next year Bill Baker went away to Castle Heights Military Academy in Tennessee. But the reason he left Lima was directly connected with the repression of the Bahá'ís. Dorothy and Frank felt they could take the pressure, but did not want their teenage children exposed to it anymore.

To most of the Bahá'í community Frank and Dorothy presented a calm and united front of absolute assurance, despite the attacks on themselves and on

their beliefs. Elsie Austin, then a young Bahá'í, wrote, "Since the Bakers never discussed it, none of us ever knew what social and economic pressures they were subjected to because of their convictions. . . . The public opposition in no way intimidated the Bakers."

In mid-March 1937, Dorothy again wrote to the Guardian. Her letter concerned, among other things, the possibility of pilgrimage the following fall. She also asked for prayers that the Bahá'ís in Lima be assisted to spread the teachings of the Faith in spite of clerical opposition which created an unfriendly climate in towns and villages nearby. On April 3, 1937, the month after Shoghi Effendi married Mary Maxwell,⁴⁹ his secretary answered,

Dear Mrs. Baker,

The Guardian has just received your very kind message of March 13th as well as the enclosed communication addressed to him by the friends in Ohio centres, and has been thrilled at the news of the remarkable progress of the teaching work in these regions. His heart overflows with gratitude at the realization of the unceasing and selfless services which you and your dear co-workers are so ably rendering the Cause. Your work is indeed historic and is destined to yield such fruits as you yourself are now unable to adequately appreciate. The Beloved is surely well-pleased with you, and will abundantly reward you for the exemplary devotion, zeal and capacity with which you are spreading His Word.

The Guardian wishes me to assure you of his prayers on your behalf at the Holy Shrines, and of his supplications to Bahá'u'lláh that He may graciously assist you, in the years to come, to render still greater services

to His Faith, and to give you a thousandfold capacity to vindicate the truth of His message.

He also wishes me to assure you that he will remember each and all of the Lima friends in his prayers, that they may be strengthened and guided through Divine confirmations, and in such wise as to be able to withstand and counteract the opposition of the enemies of the Faith in that centre.

In closing may I again extend to you on behalf of the Guardian a most hearty welcome to visit the Holy Land during next fall, together with dear Mrs. McCormick, and to express the hope that your pilgrimage may so deeply quicken and refresh your soul as to give you renewed vision and an added stimulus to labour for the spread of the Message.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings to you, to Mr. Baker and children,

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-worker:

I wish to assure you in person of a warm and hearty welcome. The services you have rendered are worthy of the highest praise and can never be forgotten. Rest assured, be happy, and persevere.

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

Dorothy was greatly encouraged by the Guardian's words of praise and support for the community, and euphoric to realize that at last her longing for pilgrimage was to be fulfilled. That promised joy made the agony of the Lima attacks bearable. The warm summer passed, every day moving her closer to Haifa, but by August the increasingly active opposition of the clergy began to seriously cloud the hope of pilgrimage. In churches and club meetings, even in private homes, strangers and people she had known for years encouraged one another to boycott Plezol Bakery products because the company was owned by the Bakers. The fanatical individuals who instigated the boycott acted on the hope that the power and beauty of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh could be silenced by attacks on the believers.

“During the 1930s,” Allie Monroe Diehl commented, “Floyd Spahr was the Plezol Bakery bookkeeper. He said that the Renz Bakery truck drivers would mutilate the Plezol bread in the stores. They would throw it on the floor, or put it on the back shelves, or even tear the wrappers. . . . Again, during that time of persecution, the story was put around that Frank was pro-Nazi. Later on the story was put around that the Bakers were communists.”

Like the followers of many religions, before and since, from Rome to Persia, the Lima Bahá'ís suffered at the hands of individuals convinced that their particular brand of inhumanity, of cruelty, gossip, and prejudice, was somehow sanctioned by God. The efforts to shame and impoverish the Bakers by defaming their characters and boycotting their business had the planned material effect, if not the intended psychological one: Frank's hard-earned success with his Plezol Bread Company, and therefore the family's livelihood, was seriously threatened.

It was in 1937, in the midst of the turmoil and repercussions of the Lima attacks, that Dorothy was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada.

Dorothy was completely shocked and confided ingenuously to Margaret Kunz, "Why, I never expected such a thing to happen in my life!"

Unsure that money would be available both for travel to meetings of the National Assembly, to which she had recently been elected, as well as for pilgrimage, Dorothy again turned to the Guardian of the Faith, to her Guardian. In her letter of August 13, 1937, she explained that her family's financial situation was such that she could not manage everything. She asked Shoghi Effendi to advise whether it would be best to come on pilgrimage and temporarily use Bahá'í general funds for teaching and administrative travel expenses, which she felt hesitant to do, or to postpone her pilgrimage. She received the following reply:

September 17th, 1937

Dear Mrs. Baker,

The Guardian has read your letter of the 13th August and is indeed sorry to know that owing to Mr. Baker's financial difficulties your long-cherished pilgrimage to the Holy Land will have to be postponed. He can quite realize that the pressure of work and obligations upon you is now such that you have, in the interest of the Cause and of your national Bahá'í work at home, to give up for the present your personal wishes and desires, even though they concern so meritorious an activity as visiting the Holy Shrines.

The Guardian hopes, however, that later on you will find the time and the means to fulfil this dear wish of your heart, and will receive all the spiritual blessings and inspiration which close contact with the Sacred Shrines invariably confers.

In the meantime, he would urge you to concentrate on your Bahá'í work in America, and to endeavour to contribute as great a share as possible to the fulfillment of the Seven Year Plan so splendidly and vigorously launched by the American NSA.

As a newly-elected member to his national body your responsibilities and obligations are most vital and pressing, and you should therefore arise and with unflinching resolve and undivided attention endeavour to carry out your task as thoroughly and effectively as your energies and resources permit.

The Guardian is praying ardently for the confirmation of your efforts, and wishes me to convey to you, and to Mr. Baker as well, his hearty greetings and sincere good wishes,

Yours ever in the Cause,
H. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-worker:

I deeply regret the recent difficulties that have prevented you from fulfilling your long-cherished wish. Your decision I feel is wise, and I will pray that through your services, in both the teaching and administrative fields, you will obtain the blessing associated with a pilgrimage to the Holy

Land. When conditions permit I wish to assure you of a most hearty welcome to visit the spots so dear to a Bahá'í heart.

Your true brother,
Shoghi

The next spring Dorothy still was not over the pain of missing that pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She wrote to May Maxwell on March 7, 1938,

. . . Somehow I can't bear it that I did not go to the Guardian. It is a pretty violent realization. I wonder if I have been marking time this year, and some of the National affairs with me? Will you pray for me, dear Mrs. Maxwell; not that my unhappiness will pass, for our Beloved knows best about that, but that SOMEHOW I MAY MAKE IT UP? The loving words of the Guardian alone save me from a kind of desolateness; that he would supplicate that a confirmation would come that would be the same. . . .

There was no more time for hoping and waiting for a resolution in Lima; Dorothy took action. Contacting a local minister, she boldly asked to be allowed to speak to his congregation about the true nature of the Bahá'í Faith. 'Whether cowed by her courage, charmed by her manner, or simply fair-minded in his attitude, the minister agreed.

Harry Jay led the Friday night Bahá'í men's classes in Lima and was also the newscaster at the town's first radio station. He told Dorothy that the time slot after his noon news had not sold. Since the news director was sympathetic to the plight of the Bahá'ís and Plezol sponsored the noon news,

Harry and Dorothy decided to formally ask if the Bahá'ís could use that fifteen-minute period for the spiritual edification of the listeners. The news director agreed that, until a paying sponsor could be found, they could use it, so on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the Lima Bahá'í community had its own radio program on the only local station in Lima.

A radio committee was formed which gathered prepared scripts from Bahá'í communities around the country. Dorothy gave script-reading classes so that the speakers on the program could rotate. With the first broadcast, questions about the Faith began arriving in the station's mail. After the committee's carefully prepared answers were read on the air, more questions poured in, usually unsigned. In a few weeks, when the supply of prepared scripts was exhausted, Dorothy began to write new scripts that tied together Christian understanding and Bahá'í principles. They are fearless in their diplomatic proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh's station and authority, using stories and imagery yet retaining a dignified language.

The subjects Dorothy wrote about included “Bible Prophecies of Today,” “The Uses of Prayer,” “The Habit of Prayer,” and “The Spiritual Life of Man.”⁵⁰ The radio talks had been on the air for some time when one of the most abusive ministers in Lima was moved to a church in another town. His replacement was a young clergyman who read passages from *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* in one of his first sermons and followed that surprising display by saying, “I understand members of this congregation have spoken against these ideas and the people who hold them. I just want you to know the nobility of the beliefs you condemn.”

As a result of this clergyman's honesty and courage, the radio proclamation efforts, and the openness of the previously hostile citizenry of Lima, the

persecution slowly burned out, though not before it caused the real suffering of many Bahá'ís, the near ruin of Frank's business, and the cancellation, yet again, of Dorothy's much longed for pilgrimage.

But the difficulties of the times also had positive effects, as Shoghi Effendi had predicted in a letter written on his behalf three years before, when the Lima attacks were nascent, "Their [the Lima clergy's] hatred, instead of quenching the flame of faith in the hearts of the faithful, will serve to intensify it." Those Bahá'ís who were on the edge of steadfastness were forced to choose; those who chose well found their faith rekindled and their lives set firmly inside the protective walls of confidence in God regardless of the world's clamor. Sincere seekers surfaced and avidly pursued their interest in the Faith so widely condemned among their neighbors.

The onslaught of calumny, personal and religious, also impassioned Dorothy in her defense and propagation of the Cause. The two publications she wrote during the period, *Hear, O Israel* and *The Path to God*,⁵¹ are both direct and fearless declarations of the prophetic fulfillment of Bahá'u'lláh's mission. Many of the ideas and conclusions in *The Path to God*, written largely at Ruth Moffett's⁵² kitchen table, Dorothy used again in the radio programs that were so effective in challenging and awakening listeners to the validity of Bahá'u'lláh's message.

In *The Path to God* Dorothy asked, "What is that path. . . . Is it a figment of the imagination, or has a merciful Creator given to his creation a planned Way to Him?"⁵³ And she concluded, "once in about a thousand years God in His great compassion clears the path of the accumulation of superstition and imagination that the way may be made plain once more for the sincere seeker."⁵⁴

At the twenty-eighth Bahá'í Convention in Wilmette that same year, Dorothy expanded on the theme of the path to God by discussing the most necessary provisions for its traveler: “The Most High has always apportioned law through His Prophets according to the need of the hour. . . . Every individual travels in an orbit of spiritual law as well as physical.” Dorothy believed that spirituality required the preference of the Will of God over one’s own will.

If a traveler chose to wander or weave into the brambles and ditches along the roadside, though keeping more or less to the direction of the spiritual path, he might eventually reach his destination, but only after expending a tremendous amount of energy fighting to get through the barriers he placed in his own way by not following the laws. These spiritual and social laws, Dorothy believed, are a way of avoiding entanglement in activities and thought patterns that obscure the true course. If a Bahá'í wishes, he may amble casually, ignoring the obvious signs that he is wandering from the path, and possibly losing sight of it. But if he wishes to reach his spiritual destination, rather than spend days and years fighting spiritual battles that could have been avoided, Bahá'u'lláh makes it clear what he must do. “In all these journeys the traveler must stray not the breadth of a hair from the ‘Law,’ for this is indeed the secret of the ‘Path.’ . . . “[55](#)

Even a few years before, in the mid-1930s, Dorothy had longed to know more about the laws of Bahá'u'lláh. At that time, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, or Most Holy Book, the primary repository of Bahá'í laws, had not been published. She spoke with Viva Lismore about her desire to read an unofficial translation of the book. Viva relates:

How anxious she was in those early days to know something about the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. She asked (Louis Gregory), I think, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of America, to lend her the book for a few days which he did on the condition that Dorothy would not comment on it with anyone! After she had read the book, she could not raise her head for a week, so impressed was she at the severity of the Laws!

Her desire to mold herself according to God's will seemed to increase with every experience of obedience, the confirmations of which can only be known by those who have obeyed. Time and again she chose this path of loyalty: to the laws of Bahá'u'lláh, to the Guardian's suggestions or even his hopes, and to her own soul's promptings over personal will and desire. Obedience is a theme expressed repeatedly in her life, her writings, and her talks, as she said at Louhelen, "Liberty is to be sovereign over life with law; one obtains power through discipline."

And so she shared another secret, another key to the understanding that catapulted her efforts into the realm of true service: obedience. Every traveler on the path to God must, Bahá'u'lláh asserts, "cling to the robe of obedience to the commandments, and hold fast to the cord of shunning all forbidden things, that he may be nourished from the cup of the Law and informed of the mysteries of Truth."^{[56](#)}

CHAPTER 14

Dorothy did not meet the challenges of obedience and the consequent opportunities for spiritual understanding in the vacuum of a quiet life apart. Having lived in the vortex of local turmoil, she went on, in 1937, to serve on the National Spiritual Assembly. At her first Assembly meeting, “the clash of differing opinions” lit more than the spark of truth. Tempers flared; harsh words crackled. Still radiant, seemingly ingenuous, Dorothy said to the seven men and one woman who sat around the table with her, “I think we should have prayers.”⁵⁷ Stony silence. The man next to her said, “That is just like a woman!”⁵⁸ But she persisted, her outward gentleness supported by an inner conviction. Eventually Dorothy and the man who chided her became good friends, but not until their obvious differences had been overcome and mutual respect established.

When Dorothy first became a member of the Assembly, meeting breaks were a little like a men’s club with the jokes and chafing that might be expected. Dorothy made a special effort to expand her repertoire of funny stories to tell during breaks, and at the same time keeping the spirit of “the trustees of the Merciful.” Dorothy fought for a balance. She didn’t want to control the Assembly meetings, but neither did she want others to control them. She would not sit quietly by while her comments were overridden or her opinions ignored. Dorothy did not accept this injustice to herself, as she would not have allowed it to happen unchecked to another.

1937 was the opening of the Guardian's first Seven Year Plan. As a newly elected member Dorothy took the Assembly's obligation to make sure the plan was put into effect very seriously. Whenever she drove to Assembly meetings she always said the Tablet of Ahmad nine times as she drove, not picking up any hitchhikers until she finished. In the late 1930s, when the National Assembly met in Wilmette, Dorothy often stayed with Dr. Edris Rice-Wray. Every day, no matter how long the meeting had gone on the night before, Edris noticed that Dorothy got up early enough to say her Long Obligatory Prayer and the Tablet of Ahmad nine times. Her motivation wasn't piety, but a desperate longing for unity and true guidance in the Assembly meeting. Dorothy was convinced of the necessity of prayer and commented to Edris Rice-Wray, "I pray them through the NSA meetings."⁵⁹

Doris McKay, often a roommate of Dorothy's at Bahá'í gatherings, would sometimes wake up and see her friend rise to say her morning prayers. Doris wrote in her diary:

The chime of an alarm clock. The silvery pre-dawn light in the room and Dorothy rising from her bed to say the Long Obligatory Prayer, sometimes childishly rubbing the sleep from her eyes. Then the dignified and graceful movements like the classic postures of a religious dance. She became the Prayer. Every changing mood of the prayer was reflected in her being: the awed adoration, the bowed humility, the anguished moments of contrition, the final meditative calm.

The next year, Dorothy was again elected to the Assembly. New difficulties arose at the 1938 convention and it was, as Dorothy wrote the Guardian, "a storm center." He responded through his secretary on June 17th.

Dear Mrs. Baker:

Your most welcome message of the 19th May addressed to our beloved Guardian has duly reached him, and he has noted with keenest interest your impressions of this year's Annual Convention.

Although, as you rightly describe, that meeting became "a storm center" and was attended by certain regrettable developments, yet the culminating effect of these experiences, he is glad to realize, has been to deepen in the delegates and the attendants the consciousness of their unity, and of their basic and common loyalty to the Administrative Order.

Now that the delegates have dispersed, and sufficient time has elapsed to allow them to ponder, with care and without prejudice, on the outstanding features of the Convention, they will surely realize that its main significance infinitely transcends those petty incidents and storms which have inevitably accompanied some of its proceedings, and should rather be found in the spiritual forces it so powerfully awakened in the hearts of the attendants.

The Guardian feels confident that the forces that have been released are such as to provide the newly-elected NSA with all the energy and guidance it requires for the successful discharge of its manifold obligations throughout the course of this year.

It is for the members, each and all, to prove themselves worthy of such divine confirmations by endeavoring to carry out their work with such unity and determination and with such a spirit of utter consecration to the Cause as to insure the success of all their plans, both in connection with

the Temple work and the expansion of the Teaching force throughout Northern and Southern America.

The Guardian will specially remember you in his prayers, that in the coming year you may be assisted in rendering the Faith services that will even surpass, by their range and character, those which you were privileged to render during last year as member of the NSA.

Yours in His Service,
H. Rabbani

Dear and prized co-worker:

Your welcome and illuminating report cheered and heartened me. The assurances you gave, the analysis you made, the hopes you expressed, are all deeply valued by me. I too cherish great and bright hopes for the contributions you will make to the deliberations, decisions and accomplishments of the National Assembly in this coming year. The noble qualities you possess are assets that I admire and for which I feel thankful. Persevere and be confident.

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

The National Spiritual Assembly sometimes met in different cities in order to facilitate the holding of meetings for the Bahá'ís there and for the public. Dorothy usually took the train, but sometimes drove as she loved driving,

particularly driving fast. She always traveled in one of the big, heavy cars Frank bought her, a Buick or Cadillac or Oldsmobile, and stopped along the way to give talks in various towns she passed through.

During the late thirties Dorothy spoke in New York City and throughout New York state: in Geneva, Jamestown, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, and Binghamton, as well as in Canada: Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and British Columbia. She also gave lectures and firesides in Washington, Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, Missouri, Kansas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington DC, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Connecticut, Maine, and Massachusetts, and continued her regular travel teaching trips throughout Ohio.

Her subjects were varied, among them “The Role of Prayer and Consultation in the Regeneration of Society,” “Race Unity,” and “The World Tomorrow.” One newspaper review commented, “Mrs. Baker has correlated the spiritual and social needs of a new world order and given her hearers not only faith and courage but even joy in the future of our evolving society.” Often the newspaper announcements concentrated, at least briefly, on Dorothy as a “member of the famous Beecher family” and on her approach “as a student of life—its purpose, stages, problem and goal—rather than as a specialist in any one branch of life.”⁶⁰

It was late spring of 1939, during this very busy period of Dorothy’s teaching activities, that she welcomed her son home from his first year at Castle Heights Military Academy. The school specialized in physical fitness. When Bill went there, at fourteen, he was six feet two inches tall and rather plump. He came home at least forty pounds lighter and in excellent shape.

Over the Christmas holidays his older sister had been so struck by the new Bill she offered to get him dates with some of her friends for the Christmas dances. Bill was very hesitant, but with some encouragement from his parents finally agreed. After the first party Louise did not need to worry about finding dates for her little brother. In his dress uniform from Castle Heights, the tall, dark-haired young man who had the same clean angular features as his mother was the center of attention.



34. Bill and Conrad Baker, circa 1936.

That spring he still seemed to be in excellent physical shape though he developed a high fever shortly after coming home. He had what was presumed to be a kidney infection. From June through October, Bill was in bed. Often he would vomit everything he ate for a week at a time and there were long periods of intravenous feeding; his weight dropped below one hundred and forty pounds. Dorothy and Frank were very concerned and of course didn't send him back to school. When Bill felt a little better in late October he began trying to get out of bed more often, only to find himself even sicker by November and no better at Christmas. Finally his condition was properly diagnosed as a stricture in a tube of the urinary system. An operation was performed and Bill at last began to recover.

During this entire period Dorothy managed to be his chief succorer and supporter.

It is true that Mother was away much and for many years, but when I was sick, the moments with people that I remember most clearly were with Mother. She came in and prayed daily when she was home. . . . She had healing prayers for me and we talked about the Writings. She gave me a bed bath every day.

In addition, on December 27, 1937, the Bakers' first grandchild was born to Conrad and Marjorie: Dwight Conrad Baker. Technically, Dorothy was a step-grandparent, but she adored this new addition to family life. And the Bakers' family life was full, with the suffering and the joy ties of love can bring.

This balance between family and the outside world, between spiritual concepts and practical realities, was an integral part of who Dorothy was. A professional speaker, who lived only to be a success at the podium, could not have brought to an audience the depth of understanding and strength of conviction which distinguished her.

One weekend Dorothy was due in Chicago for a meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly. Several weeks before, two new Bahá'ís from Glenview, Illinois, Elizabeth and John McHenry, wrote to ask if she could speak at a public meeting while she was in the area. Dorothy agreed to the time and topic they suggested.

At the railroad station the McHenrys met her, excited that after their careful preparation they now had the honor of driving Dorothy Baker to the meeting.

In the car, chatting together, Dorothy, obviously very relaxed, suddenly asked John, “Now, what was the subject for tonight?”

The McHenrys were dumbfounded. They had tried to make it so clear in their letter, and had assumed Dorothy would have a talk all planned around the subject they requested. That she had ignored, or at least forgotten their request, and obviously not even prepared, crushed them. A lugubrious gloom sank over their spirits as they drove the last few miles to the old converted barn where the meeting was scheduled to be held.

Standing in front of the crowd Dorothy read her prayer, put aside the book, and with no notes gave what seemed to the McHenrys one of the finest and most appropriate talks they had ever heard. Although Dorothy had not specifically planned her program for that evening, she was more than prepared to give the talk. By 1939, having given dozens of thoroughly researched public lectures and summer school courses, she simply no longer found it necessary to gather specific information for each individual talk.

On the way to the McHenrys’ house afterward, where Dorothy was spending the night, she told them about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s way of giving a talk, how He did not decide what to say until He looked into the faces of His audience. They recalled her words, “It has taken me a long time to become deepened enough and knowledgeable enough in the Faith to be able to use His method, even to have the confidence to try it, but now I do, without hesitation or fear.”

When Dorothy spoke publicly in earlier years she often sounded a bit hesitant and seemed rather shy, relying on thorough notes to support her through the ordeal of speaking before an audience. But by 1939, with her

well-grounded understanding and experience, the situation was vastly altered. Still, Dorothy usually reviewed her main points and the stories she would tell, just before leaving to give a talk. In that way she had a strong infrastructure on which guidance and the needs of the audience could build.

The assurance Dorothy felt before a group went beyond any self-image. The self melted back while the light of inspiration shone from a source far stronger; she was opening a channel and allowing something greater to flow through her.

“A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him; and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth. . . .” For thus the Master of the house hath appeared within His home, and all the pillars of the dwelling are ashine with His light. And the action and effect of the light are from the Light-Giver; so it is that all move through Him and arise by His will.^{[61](#)}

Gayle Woolson traveled with Dorothy in several countries on Bahá’í speaking trips. She was a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of South America and was named a Knight of Bahá’u’lláh when she pioneered to the Galapagos Islands. Touched by the clarity and unworldly joy of hearing a soprano sing at a Haifa performance of Handel’s *Messiah* years later, Gayle was instantly taken back to the feelings she associated with hearing Dorothy Baker speak. The poise, the sweetness of the voice, the humbly assured dignity of the singer made Gayle feel as if Dorothy were speaking. “Her talks were on a level with that music. . . . It seemed like a gift from God.”

Although Dorothy developed and used the gift of eloquence, she did not think it was by any means the contribution most needed by the Bahá'í world. At times Dorothy said she felt almost ashamed that so much attention was focused on her because, "I can stand up and talk." Going over some galley proofs of a compilation of the Writings, she told Louise, "This," touching the sheets she had been working on, "is far more important than talks and speeches, and will have a greater effect. People think a compilation is a simple thing, but it takes weeks of effort. And no one ever hears about who worked on it."

The constant focus of attention on her when she was speaking had become burdensome for Dorothy. During her talks she made a point of looking from face to face, from one part of the room to another, breaking the visual connection with gaze and gesture but she was sometimes uneasy with the abundant recognition and admiration, and suffered with the consequences, occasionally because of the jealousy it inspired in certain individuals, but at times directly from the effects of that adulation.

On one trip to an Assembly meeting in the late 1930s, Dorothy, having sent press releases ahead, got off her train to give a lecture in one city. In the audience sat a man who, like others in the past, became enamored with her presentation of the Cause. Pushing against the exiting audience, he succeeded in reaching Dorothy before she had even gathered her things and turned from the lectern. The questions he asked she answered carefully, though she had heard them many times before; they were the standard inquiries of a person mildly curious about spiritual truths, but intensely interested in exposing his own opinions for her approval. In his case the opinions were rather interesting so she didn't mind that he seemed anxious to find ways to keep her there. The one or two others who made their way up to her seemed only to want to listen

in shy silence. His questions and comments at least gave her opportunity to speak on until the quiet listeners gathered confidence to ask their own questions. They never did, but finally with smiles and handshakes were able to express their thanks, then took their leave and Dorothy was left alone with the man.

Feeling the conversation had no further purpose, Dorothy brought their talk to a close. Claiming a need to get back to the train station, she excused herself. He offered a ride; she refused—friendly, calm, but definite.

At the station Dorothy sat on one of the platform benches, her brown overnight case next to her. The distraction of the cab ride and the noisy line at the ticket box behind her, she let her mind drift back to the talk, then to her questioner. Uneasy, almost guilty for not having been more responsive to the man, Dorothy wondered how she could have handled the situation better, by going out for a cup of coffee? There wasn't time for that. Her inclination to escape his overly attentive attitude overpowered what she now felt might have been the logical choice: to simply sit down in the empty meeting room and finish discussing his questions. But there was a quality about the fellow that told her not to waste her time; so she had left. Probably for the best.

Hal Starke,⁶² that was the name he gave. She shifted on her bench, settling down again, back now turned to the smoking engine of the train churning slowly past. Eyes closed, Dorothy placed thumb and middle finger on the bridge of her nose to ease the reverberation of the aching screech—metal on metal—as the train pulled itself to a full stop.

Opening her eyes, she watched as people tumbled down the metal steps at the car's exits. Her memories of that afternoon vanished, lost in the faces and

imagined lives of the people passing by. She let her head turn to watch the last group disappear into the station, then looked back as a few stragglers descended the small metal steps that dropped from the passenger car, the last step hanging in mid-air above the walkway. But her attention for no apparent reason was drawn back to the station door. What was it she had seen? Nothing she could recall but something, nonetheless. Just turning away, she hesitated and looked again toward the open doorway and the glaring reflection of the plate-glass window next to it. There, hands to the glass, peering out, was a face that caught her. For a few seconds her eyes didn't move from the unknown but recognized face; it turned slightly toward her. Before she consciously knew who it was Dorothy heard her own voice say, "Starke." She waited; if she stood now and looked around for the right passenger car, he would be sure to recognize her even if he'd missed her the first time. A plan: she would stand up and just walk along the track toward the other end of the train. No matter if it was the direction of the pullman cars or not. Once inside, unseen, she would find her proper car and seat. Reaching for the handle of her overnight case and pulling it closer to her on the seat, Dorothy glanced down to gather up purse and coat, careful not to turn her face again toward the station window.

Then, inside her sphere of concentrated attention, just above her bowed head, someone spoke.

"Dorothy, I've caught you before you left."

And caught she was. "Just barely, really. I've got to go to my train."

Hal Starke pulled the overnight bag from the seat and walked beside her. She thought of running, but it seemed ridiculous to try to escape her own

valise and the perfectly civilized man who carried it. When they were to the steps he would no doubt hand it to her, say goodbye and she would be saved the indignity of running away from nothing. Still, she felt herself walking faster toward the closest passenger door. Stepping up, she started to turn, but people pushed up from behind. Forced inside the car, Dorothy moved from the aisle to the small space in front of a vacant seat. Her heels made her just a bit too tall to stand comfortably under the luggage rack above her head. Bent slightly at the waist, her left hand supporting her on the headrest of the seat in front, she waited, numbly, for her bag.

A flashing smile crossed his face as he caught sight of her there. Dorothy raised a hand and smiled, then cursed herself for her automated good manners. Starke stopped by her seat; people needed to get by, but he obviously wasn't going to just hand her the case and move on. He stood, squared toward Dorothy, half his smile still left over. Again propriety got the best of her, thoughts of anxious travellers stacking up behind him and she moved in toward the window. Putting the case in the luggage rack overhead, he sat next to her in the aisle seat.

“Excellent talk—really fine.”

“Thank you.”

“I guess this must be something of a surprise—I just couldn't let you get away so fast.”

“Did you have more questions?”

“Yes, a lot more.”

“I’ll be sure to mail you a book the moment I’m back in Lima, that should clear up any gray areas.”

“Thank you, Dorothy.”

The way he said her name, the sincerity of his thanks, made her want to change the subject. But to what? They were only talking about a book, a Bahá’í book at that. The whistle sounded, two sharp cries. “Good,” she thought, “he’ll leave.”

“Well, Mr. Starke, thanks for stopping off to say goodbye and for carrying my case.”

“You are so very welcome. It’s my pleasure.”

“I think you'd better get off now We’ll be pulling out any second.”

“To where, Dorothy?”

“Albuquerque.”

“Sounds great.”

He pushed himself deeper into the aisle seat, the smooth knobs of green velvet upholstery squeaking as he moved. With the slow outlet of breath, his head leaned back against the doily-covered seat back.

Dorothy stared at the conservative, average-looking man next to her, a man with anything but average ideas. His eyes were closed. The train began to

rumble until finally here was a lurch and forward movement. About to speak, Dorothy instead forced herself to sit back and look out her window rather than at Starke. “Not yet,” she thought, then quietly whispered, “Not yet.”

The book in her purse, *The Art of Thinking*, gave Dorothy something to concentrate on. A quarter hour later Hal Starke stretched his arms straight out in front of him and muffled a yawn. The conductor was standing over them, having already exchanged a few words with Dorothy and punched her stiff manila ticket.

It had disappeared into a metal box hanging from the worn leather belt at the man’s waist; but Starke didn’t need a cue. “One, to Albuquerque, please.” While Dorothy stared intently at her book, Starke paid for his ticket.

The conductor moved on to the seat in front of them, Hal Starke turned to her.

“Do you care to smoke?”

“No thanks, but go ahead.”

Starke flicked his own ashtray open and dropped in the still burning match.

“I should have known you wouldn’t smoke, someone so pure.”

“I just don’t happen to smoke.”

“So you’re married, and have children, too?”

“Yes, what about you, Mr. Starke?”

“I used to think I could never consider marriage again, but I’m surprising myself.”

Dorothy couldn’t believe his intentions were what it all too clearly seemed.

“And why is that?”

Hal Starke took a long drag on his cigarette and reached over her to tap it lightly on the ashtray under the window. His forearm barely brushed the folds of her skirt. Dorothy stiffened. He sat back and stared down at the car’s aisle.

“So you know, too. I had heard of soul mates, but I never believed it. Now I know why my marriage didn’t work out.”

Dorothy listened, but didn’t speak.

“It’s because I was supposed to meet you. Now I have.”

Resolutely he put out the cigarette in his own ashtray as Dorothy contemplated the now indisputable fact that this man was way over the line and fully intended to try to pull her over it too.

“Mr. Starke, you are confusing your attraction to spiritual truth and recognition of the Day in which you and I were fortunate enough to be born with an ephemeral, personal attraction.”

He faced her in his seat and in his now plaintive voice said, “Don’t assume I’m wrong until you’ve heard me out. True soul mates meet once in a thousand years. Yes, I love the truths of the Bahá’í Faith, but I love you, too.”

“If you do love these Teachings, you won’t allow your personal desires to trick you into action that is not in keeping with them. In the first place, you know I’m married.”

“Your marriage shouldn’t stop you. How could you ever stay with him when you know I’m here? This is real, Dorothy.”

He clutched her hand. Dorothy stood up.

“I’m going to the powder room. We have nothing to talk about. If you are not out of this seat when I come back, I’ll call the conductor.”

She pushed by him and was gone.

When she left the powder room Dorothy walked into the back of her car. From that vantage point she could see that the two seats under her brown case were empty. Looking straight ahead in case he was sitting nearby, waiting to catch her glance, Dorothy went back to her seat, put her suitcase in the spot vacated by Hal Starke and sat down.

The train stopped in a small town. No one in her car got off.

She didn’t raise her eyes from her book. The next stop was announced just a few minutes later. As the train slowed she heard the voice she’d been bracing herself against.

“Dorothy, I went too fast, let me at least try again.”

Staring at her book, Dorothy was dumb in response to his plea.

“Let me sit down. If nothing else we could at least talk about our real destiny together, even if you won’t let it come true. I can’t just meet you and let you slide out of my life so quickly when real joy together is so close.”

Through tightened jaws, hardly a muscle moving in her face, Dorothy said, “You'd better leave this train.”

“I am . . . I will. I just came to say a real goodbye and to tell you, to make you know, I’m sincere. I love you, you Dorothy the person, not just the ideas and words you spoke of. I knew it from the moment you read that prayer, before you even looked into the audience and at me.”

Resolutely she still stared down. He couldn’t see the tears that filled her eyes; if he had he would have mistaken them as meant for him—for them. She did not cry for that, nor did her tears fall out of anger at his audacity. A romantic approach by a man was not that unusual. She cried for the mixed-up emotions, the tunnel vision of people who live so much inside their own desires, they have no chance of recognizing anything greater. His search was ended by a delusion as to its real object; the longing he felt toward new spiritual understanding was misconstrued so easily in his human heart as passion for an unknown woman. The entire hope of the human race lay in the individual’s ability to perceive the truth, and though he felt its presence, he could not identify its source. Again he spoke.

“When you see me standing outside that window, it’s the last time you’ll ever see me.”

He made his exit. From the edge of her view, she saw him standing plaintively on the platform, waiting for some sign that he should rush back onto the train, and into the arms of his “soul mate.” She didn’t move a muscle. After an excruciatingly long stop the train finally pulled forward and Dorothy, sick with sadness for the Starkes of the world, let her tears fall freely.

From Lima to Albuquerque, from Cincinnati to Ft. Lauderdale and later across the far side of the globe, whether in Lisbon or New Delhi, Dorothy’s spirit and depth of knowledge were enhanced by her bearing, her relaxed dignity and even by her clothes and grooming. A favorite passage, quoted often during her travels, declares that “This is a matchless Day. Matchless must, likewise, be the tongue that celebrateth the praise of the Desire of all nations, and matchless the deed that aspireth to be acceptable in His sight.”⁶³ Dorothy took this to mean that nothing, certainly not material things, should be allowed to detract from the majesty of the Day in which she lived.

Dorothy believed that in the realm of spiritual matters, Bahá’ís should try to make themselves as perfect as possible, but that this excellence should also be reflected, within reason, in the material realm. Margaret Kunz Ruhe was fascinated by Dorothy’s approach. “She was always an elegant creature and while clothing was certainly not her main preoccupation,” she wrote, “Dorothy had a flair for dress and was very outspoken about it. She said that we, as Bahá’ís, dress for Bahá’u’lláh so we must put our best foot forward and must look elegant when the occasion requires elegance.”

Before a talk Dorothy went to a great deal of trouble to be sure that the costume she wore was exactly right. Once in Wilmette, before a program she was participating in, she realized the matching belt to the dress she planned to wear was missing. She drove to Chicago to find a proper replacement. If her hair wasn't clean and curled, Dorothy would spend the morning before a talk at the beauty salon, having her hair and fingernails done.



35. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, May 1938. Back row, left to right: George Latimer, Roy Wilhelm, Horace Holley, Leroy Ioas, Siegfried Schopflocher. Front row, left to right: Allen McDaniel, Dorothy Baker, Amelia Collins, Harlan Ober.

Later in life, when traveling and lecturing became so constant that she couldn't always find time to go to a salon, Dorothy sent a sample of her hair to a hairpiece weaver and had four small combs made, each with a cluster of curls. The first order came back a shade too light, but the second set matched. From then on, if she couldn't have her hair done professionally before an important Bahá'í gathering, Dorothy would pull it back in soft waves, slip the combs in on either side and often wear a hat to cover the part she hadn't properly coiffed. It was her responsibility, she felt, not to detract from the

perfection of the Faith by letting herself look disheveled or even a fraction less than her most attractive.

Though Dorothy was always systematic and thorough in her personal cleanliness, sometimes to the point of exactitude, when she wasn't in the public eye she was relaxed about the style of her clothes, favoring old, comfortable standbys. Still, even at home, she always stood very straight and never slumped. Once Dorothy told Mary Lou, who only weighed ninety-six pounds when they met, "Now straighten up. You can't conquer souls for Bahá'u'lláh if your shoulders are slouched."

Many people have said that Dorothy was an outstandingly beautiful woman, others that she had a great presence that lent to her features more than nature provided. As man has recognized for centuries, *de gustibus non est disputandum*. This is as true in perception of human beauty as in any other matter: there is no disputing about tastes. Regardless of arguments on either side, Dorothy did not find herself particularly special looking, but didn't allow her appraisal of her shortcomings to keep her from making every effort to be as attractive as possible. She was who she was, with the attributes she had and without those she did not possess. In part this is what made her so spectacularly appealing; she accepted herself as she was without pretending some higher persona and also without being a living apology for her insufficiencies. God provided her with the wherewithal to serve humanity not in every way, but in her own way. So she calmly approached the myriad tasks ahead with faith and confidence, fully putting to use her best qualities.

Though God is unknowable, we have faith in Him. We are made in His image so there is something in each of us that is unknowable: not obvious to the eye or even to the mind, but worthy of faith. It is this secret part of

ourselves, our potential, which cannot be held in the hand and examined or computed to figure maximum output.

This confidence in God, and therefore in self, let Dorothy rise to each occasion, not allowing herself to be hurried or intimidated, trusting in her mind and spiritual ability, her soul turned squarely toward her Creator. As she told her youth class at Louhelen, early in her speaking career, “We must all learn to walk slowly though life; hear the undertones. You reflect the world when you are feverish.”

In the late 1930s, at a talk at the YMCA in Toledo, Ohio, a heckler stood up mid-sentence in Dorothy’s talk. From his spot at the front of the meeting room, he yelled aggressively, “Madam, just what are the tenets of your faith?” Without a second’s hesitation Dorothy answered with the noon prayer, “I bear witness, O my God, that Thou has created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth. There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.”⁶⁴ She paused a moment, eyes fixed on the questioner, then, not coldly but seriously challenging, she said, “And now, young man, what are the tenets of your faith?” Not even a whimper sounded from him as he sank into his chair: Dorothy went on to finish her talk.

After she gave a talk in Houston, a non-Bahá’í businessman said, “I would give anything in the world to be like Mrs. Baker.” When asked how she achieved her calm strength and radiant confidence, Dorothy invariably answered that only prayer could bring security. Even before entering a room for a casual talk with friends she used the Greatest Name. Love for God and love for her fellow creatures—not personality, charm, power, or position—

love was her sustainer and her gift to others. Her love for Bahá'u'lláh was reflected in her love for each person.

In the spring of 1939, for the third time in the decade, the fourth time including her 1920 request to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Dorothy wrote for permission to make her pilgrimage. Shoghi Effendi's secretary replied on July 2:

Dear Bahá'í Sister,

The Guardian has received your most welcome message dated May 31st, and noted with deepest satisfaction the very constructive work accomplished by the Nat. Child Education Committee during this past year. The various steps it has taken, and which you had outlined in your letter, with the view of providing Bahá'í children with the maximum of Bahá'í educational and character training available are indeed excellent and most effective, and it is hoped that in the faithful and thorough application of these methods and policies your Committee will receive the wholehearted co-operation and unremitting assistance of all Bahá'í parents, as well as the encouragement and guidance of the NSA. The Guardian attaches the highest value to your Committee's work, and will earnestly pray that each one of its members may be guided in rendering his or her maximum of contribution to the furtherance and extension of the field of its activities. He would urge you and your dear co-workers to persevere in your task, and wishes me to convey to you all the expression of his abiding appreciation of your valued services in this vital field of Bahá'í service.

Regarding your request for permission to visit the Holy Shrines during next fall; Shoghi Effendi thoroughly appreciates the desire you have

expressed to undertake this pilgrimage, and your eager wish to see him, and discuss with him personally various important issues affecting the Cause. He too certainly longs to meet you, but feels that in view of the continued disturbed condition in the Holy Land, and the possibility of further and more widespread agitations in the near future your coming would be inadvisable. As soon as the situation in the country returns to normal you would be most welcome to undertake this long and deeply-cherished pilgrimage.

With renewed assurances of his prayers for the steady extension of the field of your activities on behalf of the Cause, and for your own spiritual advancement and material welfare and protection.

Yours very sincerely,
H. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-worker:

I was so pleased to hear from you and to learn that you are as ever contributing your outstanding share, in the teaching and administrative spheres, to the onward march and the steady consolidation of our beloved Faith. I deplore the unhappy and tragic circumstances that interfere with your projected pilgrimage to Haifa, for I too would rejoice at meeting you and at discussing the various matters that affect the interests of our glorious Faith. Do not feel disheartened, however, for these clouds will lift and your dear hopes will be realized.

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

The decade of the thirties almost ended, the suffering of numerous tests culminating in a final impossible plea for pilgrimage, Dorothy determinedly followed Shoghi Effendi's dear guidance and did not feel disheartened, but began, instead, the most productive phase of her life.

CHAPTER 15

Two things about Dorothy's life in the early 1940s stand out: what she achieved and how she went about it. The list of cities and towns where she spoke during these years dwarfs her previous travel teaching efforts. On average the number and locale of her speaking engagements would suggest a talk every few days with miles of highway between. But the reality is even more overwhelming: Dorothy pressed her speaking engagements together into blocks of several weeks each with much of the remaining time spent on administrative work: the Local Spiritual Assembly of Lima, membership on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, activity on six nationally appointed committees: chairmanship of the National Child Training Committee, the Inter-America Committee, and the National Race Unity Committee; and, membership on the Central States Summer School Committee, the Regional Teaching Committee for Ohio, Indiana, and Western Pennsylvania, and the National Public Meetings Committee.

Among her travel teaching trips were several devoted solely to college lectures. On one trip Dorothy spoke at all the outstanding campuses in North and South Carolina and southern Georgia, and many schools in West Virginia and Florida. Many colleges in Kentucky and Tennessee also received her. Sometimes these lectures were given under the auspices of the College Foundation Committee (later known as the Bahá'í College Speakers Bureau),

which she was trying to help establish, other times as a representative of the Race Unity Committee. Among the subjects were “Achievements of Minority Groups,” “The Cause and Curse of Prejudice,” and “Sharing Civilization,” with many additional talks by Louis G. Gregory on topics including “Racial Amity.”

In the fall of 1941, having received a letter from Shoghi Effendi in August encouraging her to “do as much of this type of work as possible during the present year,” Dorothy traveled to the South-west, speaking at twenty-seven schools throughout Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico, stopping at colleges in Arkansas and Iowa on her way. In New Mexico Dorothy also visited the Isleta Pueblo with Mary Lou Ewing and met with its leaders. At eight of the schools in the southwest the student body was made up entirely of minority students, four schools Indian, four others black.

In the first two years of the new decade, Dorothy visited and spoke at more than ninety college campuses, adding a dozen more the next year. Through lectures given by Dorothy and other representatives of the NSA’s committees, the second month of 1942 brought the total number of college students who had heard of the Faith to approximately sixteen thousand. On July 31 she received a cable, “ADVISE CONCENTRATE COLLEGES FALL. PRAYING STILL GREATER VICTORIES. DEEPEST LOVING APPRECIATION, SHOGHI RABBANI.”

By 1943 the College Speakers Bureau was fully formed and many more Bahá’ís volunteered to travel and lecture at schools across the country. At the end of the year, as Dorothy wrote in *The Bahá’í World* “The total number of schools and colleges to receive Bahá’í speakers is now over two hundred and it is estimated that some three hundred and fifty actual talks have been delivered before chapels, assemblies, classrooms and student clubs.”⁶⁵

Until wartime gasoline rationing went into effect, Dorothy drove on most of her speaking tours, pressing the miles between campuses into whatever time she had, with the result that her driving wasn't the safest. Though many people have commented that Dorothy was a good driver, even when she was not in a hurry she liked to drive fast, and with a certain amount of abandon.

On a trip together a few years before, Mary Lou Ewing surprised Dorothy with a jittery response to her swinging ease in passing other cars and her high speed on hills, highways, and winding country roads.

Initially Dorothy's driving somewhat amused Mary Lou, but when they came into the hills of southern Ohio she had trouble restraining herself even to sudden gasps and stiff-armed bracing against the dashboard. After a particularly rousing lunge past the car in front, the downhill side of the road precariously close, Dorothy put the Cadillac sedan into second gear and roared up the narrow winding highway. Mary Lou, who had been in a state of paralyzed silence, thanked God for saving her one last time and finally spoke up. "Dorothy, will you please drive more carefully? Please don't pass cars on hills. I'm not important to Bahá'u'lláh, but you are, so if we go over the edge you'll be saved, but I'll certainly be killed!" Unconscious that her friend's fear had been sincere, Dorothy was both surprised and amused. She hadn't seriously thought of danger, but laughed and agreed to be more cautious.

In the late fall of 1941, about to start out on one of her college trips, Dorothy asked Mary Lou⁶⁶ to accompany her, this time through the southern states. For various reasons Mary Lou had to decline her friend's invitation to join her on the trip, but Dorothy persisted.

Still she couldn't accept the invitation, even when Dorothy offered to pay her expenses. Though Mary Lou adored Dorothy and would have liked to spend more time together, she felt she had to return to New Mexico. Even Dorothy's beguiling logic and obvious desire for her company couldn't sway her.

Mary Lou could not believe it when two days later, on the way out of town, Dorothy stopped by again and said, "There's something wrong with this trip. I think it's that you are supposed to be with me. Put those clothes in a bag and come."

Still firm, Mary Lou couldn't be convinced. "There may be something wrong with the trip, but it's not that I'm supposed to be with you!"

A day and a half later Dorothy was driving through the Blue Ridge Mountains. Luckily her lane of the mountain road had been warmed by sunlight and was free of ice, but the inner lane, closest to the mountain, looked precarious. As Dorothy rounded a curve and swung back toward the mountain to follow the road deeper into the late fall woods, a massive truck made the turn from the other direction. For a moment it looked as if the truck were driving in her lane, on the outside of the curve. She flinched in horrified anticipation, then realized it must only be an illusion.

But Dorothy's eyes wouldn't let her mind ignore the obvious; the flat nose of the truck was still coming and was not next to the mountain as it should have been. Instinct said to swerve, though her mind still fought for reality as it should be. For a flashing moment of imagined relief Dorothy knew the catastrophe would be averted and the tension broken as quickly as she passed on the inside of the truck. She jerked her steering wheel left, into the inner

lane where the loaded flatbed should have been. Responding faster than her mind had obeyed her vision, the car, still moving at full speed, swung over. In her own rightful lane, the truck kept coming, its clattering roar blocking out every other sound and perception as double wheels and veering load filled her vision, then went barreling away down the mountain road.

Disaster averted, but her car wheels unsure on the icy inner lane, Dorothy pulled the steering wheel to the right to get back on her own side of the road. The turn of her tires threw her car into a skid on the smooth wet ice—the ice the departing truck had successfully avoided by forcing her to drive on the frozen section.

The rumble of heavy wheels on asphalt was disappearing in the distance as Dorothy felt a new panic and struggled to keep her car from careening toward the cliff. Free of Dorothy's control, it twisted wildly to the right, a foreign body spinning her farther from the mountain toward the emptiness of open air. Options gone, Dorothy watched the high treetops coming close, her mind slowed to the speed of wordless motion. But the car still spun in its frenzied circle, not yet ready to hurl itself into orbit. Now the wet, scaly mountainside faced her, melted snow making its rough facets glitter. The vitreous rock caught her staring gaze, coming toward her at top speed as the treetops had a moment before. The car lunged toward the wall of rock as the front end made a futile, hurtling attempt to break through to the other side of the mountain. Dorothy's teeth sent a powerful vibration through mouth and skull as they collided with the steering wheel. Then she felt the car lift off its front wheels. It rolled completely over and landed again.

She lay bleeding on the front seat and woke to feel detritus enamel crumbled on her tongue, matching the fragmentary falling of granular rock

that dropped from the mountainside onto the wrinkled hood of her car. Dorothy touched her wet lips and found warm red blood on her fingers. Right hand cupped under her mouth, she struggled to unlock the door, finally sitting in the car, feet on the ground outside, with bleeding face pushed beyond them to keep her fresh suit clean.

A motorist pulled to a stop and ran toward her, shaken and pale at the sight of the crushed car, the bloody woman slumped out of it. Dorothy looked up from where she let the rich, heavy blood drip and coagulate on the dark asphalt. He saw it too.

She said, “Thank you for stopping. Can you please take me on to the next town? It’s just over the hill and I’m due there this afternoon.”

“You can’t travel, why don’t we just get to my car and I’ll take you back to the doctor?”

The man reached for Dorothy’s arm and supported her by the shoulders as they walked toward his car.

“I think it’s just my lip. If you could just take me along with you, over the hill, I could wash up at a gas station.”

“Your car’s a total wreck and you’re in no shape to go anywhere but the hospital.”

With no more discussion the man put her in the back seat, turned his car around and took Dorothy to the only doctor in the town she’d just left forty-five minutes before.

Dazed but insistent Dorothy tried again with the examining physician.

“When you know I’m all right, I really must make arrangements to go on; there are people waiting for me.”

The doctor took her home number and called Frank. Ignoring her desire to carry on with her speaking tour, they made arrangements for her to get back to Ohio and for the car to be towed home. When Mary Lou stepped into her room in Lima, Dorothy said, “See? I’ve come back to get you!”

Mary Lou was shocked. She said, “You’re not going out again! This trip really may be wrong.”

Dorothy’s answer was, “No, if I weren’t supposed to finish the trip I would have been killed.”

The next week Dorothy did go on with her scheduled tour, this time in Frank’s car as hers was irreparably damaged.

At the following National Spiritual Assembly meeting, some of the members were talking with Dorothy about why the wreck might have happened, guessing at reasons why Providence would have had it occur. Dorothy was considering the possibilities too. Only Louis Gregory sat quietly listening. He watched them all muse over the spiritual significance of her accident.

“Dorothy . . . “

She blinked, pulled herself out of her thoughts and looked up at Louis.

“You were simply driving too fast.”

As he had at Green Acre, he saw that Dorothy’s mind was wandering to vain imaginings and said just the words to pull her away from them.

The flavor of those college trips was adventurous even when Dorothy wasn’t spinning her car into a mountain. After catching a ride with her, an older, dilapidated-looking hitchhiker told Dorothy, as he got out of the car, “When you picked me up I was going to do whatever it took to steal your money and your jewelry, but something stopped me.” Before taking his splay-fingered hand from the door, the man leaned back in so his face, crosshatched with a life of contradicting lines, came close to her and his cracked lips again breathed the same air.

“Whatever else you do driving around these hills, don’t you ever pick up anybody that looks like me again, you hear? Never.” He slammed the door and headed down the road.



36. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, 1940. From left to right: Siegfried Schlopflocher, Harlan Ober, Dorothy Baker, Roy Wilhelm, Amelia Collins, Allen McDaniel, Leroy Ioas, Louis Gregory, and Horace Holley.

In Kansas a tornado-threatening storm threw Dorothy's car back and forth across the road. The countryside was empty and no other car traveled the deserted highway. Sighting a farmhouse, Dorothy stopped and tried to open her door, but the wind blew against it too hard. On the downwind side she was able to push the car door open and slide to the ground. Sharp granules of blowing dust ripped into her eyes and hair and burned her skin as she crawled to the door of the house and banged on it with her fist. There was no answer. She tried the handle but the door was bolted. Still lying on her stomach, Dorothy banged again with all her strength on the bottom of the door, hoping the people inside simply hadn't heard her over the roar of wind and the battering sound of flowing debris as it slammed against the wooden walls. Then there were voices. Dorothy shouted back so they would know it was a human knocking there, not just the splintering wood of their wildly dancing porch swing, pounding against the shuttered windows.

"I'm outside. Out here!"

A high-pitched voice, muffled by the closed door, tried to scream over the wind. "Can't open it."

"I'm not dangerous, I just need shelter."

“Got to keep the door closed, the pressure change would blow the place up.”

Dorothy lay there for a long moment, trying to find the reason or energy that could dispute that logic. A rock the size of a bar of soap bounced across the porch, tossed by the wind as if by a rolling mass of water. It hit her ankle bone, cutting her bare skin exposed save for the ruined pair of stockings, a pair she'd been saving through the shortages especially for this speaking trip. Lying there being blown and battered seemed ridiculous. Though the other option was no more tempting, she made her way back across the yard and climbed into the front seat. Unsure whether to go or to stay, Dorothy again chose to keep moving, this time in the hope of escaping the tempest. Slowly she rolled down the road, furiously pulling the wheel one way, then the other, to keep the barely moving machine on the pavement and repeating out loud with every breath, “Yá Bahá-u'l-Abhá!”⁶⁷

Other episodes were just as exhilarating, though with less physical drama. As Dorothy left an interview with George Washington Carver, the renowned agricultural researcher, he called out to her, “Tell the world, Mrs. Baker, that Dr. Carver is very partial to the Bahá'í Faith, very partial.”

With most of the Pacific Fleet destroyed by Japanese bombers and America thoroughly entrenched in “the war effort,” peace was a most unpopular subject. In an article on the activities of the College Speakers Bureau Dorothy wrote,

At one college in North Carolina the president sympathetically prepared the speaker for a bleak reception. “My students,” he remarked, “all but stopped the last speaker who mentioned peace, and he a minister wearing the cloth,

mind you!” Looking carefully, at a later time, through “The Pattern for Future Society,” he said, “Oh, but I understand. You Bahá’ís do not dwell on pacifism; you offer a program. Every college should hear this.” In this manner school men seem almost invariably to accept the writings of Shoghi Effendi. The talented head of the Indian Normal College at Pembroke, where no speaking appointment had previously been made, said, after scanning “The Pattern,” that if necessary classes could be disbanded to hear this subject.⁶⁸

At a backwoods college in Kentucky Dorothy was greeted by a completely different environment and a student body that electrified her with its simple, straightforward warmth. Wherever she went Dorothy talked with her audiences about their interests, not proselytizing but discussing the basic truths of Bahá’í concepts. She wrote in *Bahá’í News*:

At Pine Buff, Ark., on the campus of the State Negro University, the members of the faculty came forward at the close of Chapel, and talked for almost an hour, losing entirely, it afterward appeared, their lunch period. The Bahá’í principles interested them not at all, but they were held by the thought that a spiritual commonwealth had been born, indivisible in its nature, and committed to a unified racial life in its essential pattern; that it could never be rent apart religiously and that its unique organism, under the Guardian, was already an actual, living, breathing civilization, slowly growing up. This was no hollow promise, but a tested Reality.⁶⁹

In the early 1940s many of the schools in the deep South were riddled with racial prejudice. Undaunted, Dorothy always discussed the importance of unity among the people of the world, regardless of race. The responses to her emphasis on racial harmony were generally mild. Many of her audiences were

made up of people for the most part who did not concern themselves with non-WASPs. They could listen with interest to the progressive teachings of Bahá'u'lláh without sacrificing the accepted pattern of their lives. It was in a black college that the wisdom of uncompromising unity was most thoughtfully discussed. To these students and professors the race issue was not something to be kept at a distance, but neither were they ready to accept white society as a whole. During the discussion following one of Dorothy's talks, a young dean spoke, a man of "unusual thoughtfulness and charm."

[He] seemed doubtful of the wisdom of the uncompromising unity required in the Bahá'í community life. When I assured him that Shoghi Effendi, and the Master before him, had held up that pattern as the clearest demonstration that we could lead the world to peace, he said, "but don't you think we might compromise a little because of the Ku Klux Klan?" One of our companions replied for me: "The speaker has said that this Faith is the Kingdom of God. If this is true, you cannot compromise it; neither can you divide it." Picking up the thread we explained that if the Kingdom, in America, should divide around the races, then we must permit division in India concerning the "untouchable" and compromise likewise the essential unity between Arab and Jew in the Holy Land. The dean became thoughtful and then slowly he said, "This is a 'world' Faith. This Faith is different. This Faith may be worth dying for."⁷⁰

In an article for *Bahá'í World*, "The Bahá'í Faith in the Colleges," Dorothy again wrote about reactions on campus:

One could never tell where the interest would flare most brightly. Here an aristocratic college in the heart of the "blueglass," there a four-year business college of practical turn of mind, and again one of the state

colleges, colored or white, would press the speakers to stay for a day or two, or send others. . . . The head of the College of the Latter Day Saints had heard ‘Abdu’l-Bahá speak in 1912 in Washington! “Where have the Bahá’ís been through these years?” he asked, “I have wondered when you would come to the colleges.”⁷¹

The numerous reports sent in to the National Bahá’í Office from colleges where Dorothy spoke give a firsthand idea of the response her presence stimulated:

Kentucky State College

In the thirteen years of my administrative experience as the chief executive of this college, no speaker has appeared upon our platform with a message more comprehensive in nature, more universal in scope and more gripping in its appeal. For some forty-five minutes Mrs. Baker gained and held the complete attention of our audience. While some of us had been introduced to the Bahá’í movement in other institutions, as far as I know Mrs. Baker is the first to bring the message to Kentucky State College.

Bowling Green Business University

We are accustomed to having extraordinary speakers, but I cannot recall that we have ever listened to a woman who so pleased everybody as did Mrs. Baker. The best part of her address was the high ideals she held, all undergirded by historical proofs and classical illustrations with now and then a bit of humor. Every school in America ought to hear Mrs. Baker. She spreads the gospel of Everlasting Truth, and she does it in an effective way.

Vanderbilt University; School of Religion

I am happy to testify to the ability of Mrs. Dorothy Baker as a speaker and teacher. . . . She had a charming personality and a very happy and effective way of presenting her message, and best of all she had something to say.

The praise of Dorothy's ability, of the way she handled herself, makes it sound as if the whole process of speaking had become quite easy for Dorothy, but in fact it was still most challenging. Helen Archambault, a Bahá'í who then lived in the Boston area, talked with Dorothy many times in Boston, at Green Acre, and at National Conventions.

Before speaking to large audiences Dorothy has said that her knees quaked as she approached the doors of the great colleges, but she used the Tablet of Ahmad several times and when she finally gave her address she felt spiritual power like a mighty wind sweep over her, and that the thousands were on their knees before the Beloved. This would show that she became selfless and spoke only after He had spoken.

En route between colleges, Dorothy would sometimes put a can of soup next to the radiator to warm, then stop by the side of the road to eat her fast, inexpensive lunch. When time allowed she would take advantage of a municipal golf course. Using the adjustable-head club Frank gave her, she would play a few holes until she felt, as she put it, "stretched out" and could go on, refreshed.

Back from an early college trip, Dorothy dreamed she saw hundreds of the students riding in square, bug-like open cars. The young people, all male (which seemed odd to her), called to Dorothy to join them at their destination.

She recognized some of their faces as students she'd spoken to at different colleges and universities, so she followed. The next impression was of being in a huge luminous banquet hall, a long room with tables stretched its length on both sides. The young men were already seated when she arrived, lining the tables from the entrance of the brilliantly lit room to the far end, which seemed to disappear into light. When she entered they were engaged in some joyous celebration, talking and laughing, but as she walked in they all stood to greet her. The joy of the room filled Dorothy's heart as she walked between the tables of radiant young men.

The next December Pearl Harbor was bombed and the United States entered the war. Soon after Dorothy saw her first army jeep and commented to the family that it was exactly like the car she'd seen in her dream. Then a heavy bolt of understanding jarred her; the young men riding through her dream were on their way to meet death in those bug-like army jeeps and the banquet where they would greet her was one they were going to soon, in the next world.

CHAPTER 16

Travel, talks—hundreds during the early 40s, even beyond those given at colleges—counseling the Bahá'ís and near-believers; these were the activities Dorothy gave herself to, but her friends and family members were never long forgotten, nor did they receive less than a full measure of her love, though her time was limited. Their responses to her and their memories of her speak lucidly of Dorothy and of a devotion to her beliefs which expanded her love of the people around her. Written accounts of these memories and her own letters during those same years, primarily the early 1940s, display clearly her personality, her attitudes, and aims.

Louise B. Matthias quoting Dorothy Baker

There is nothing I would love more than to give every minute of my life and all of my attention, all of my acts to teaching work . . . but then I would become a very unbalanced person and I would not be able to give a true picture of the Bahá'í Faith. I have always to see to it that I have three facets to my life—my Bahá'í work, my family, and recreation.

Mary Lou Ewing

On the cross-country train ride with Dorothy, from Ohio to New Mexico, she talked to me about how exciting it was to be alive. If she had her choice,

she said, she would have lived in the time of the Báb. She turned to me, her eyes alive with fire and excitement, and asked, “Mary Lou, wouldn’t you have loved to be alive during the time of the Báb?” I answered, “Good heavens, no! She looked so startled, but I was very serious, and explained that I simply would not have had the spiritual wherewithal to have purchased—or somehow gained—that kind of privilege. I told her that I might want to buy a Cadillac, but would probably be lucky to get a Ford. To live among the Dawn-Breakers would have been like not having the wherewithal to join that august company. Dorothy obviously would have been part of them.

One day she told me that I must face the fact that I must make the choice between being a mediocre Bahá’í and being a flame-like Bahá’í who truly serves. It was frightening . . . but I remember that she would put it very squarely on a person that the choice was essentially with that person as to what he would accomplish.

Margaret Ruhe

During the years that David and I lived in Atlanta, Georgia on two different occasions, Dorothy came to be with us, and we felt so honored that she took time out. One time she came under conditions that really made me quite sad.

I wrote and asked her if she could come and help us with a weekend teaching institute. She wrote back and said that all her weekends were taken; there were no free gaps at all in the near future, but she said, “You know, I have promised Frank and the children to go on a fishing trip with them to Norris Dam Lake in Tennessee. You know, that area is not far from Atlanta. I’ll just take a day and a half off and come down and be with you, and then scoot right back up there to my family.” This made me feel very bad, because

I felt that Frank and the children needed her so much, and I knew there were times when her family were very lonely. I knew that her family life had been somewhat disrupted, and that the two little children, Bill and Louise, missed their mother very much. Later on I heard stories about how Bill really at times was very, very lonely in his childhood because his mother had to be away so much.

Anyway, Dorothy came and spent the weekend with us. It was very interesting. We held a big public meeting one of the evenings she was there in one of the large hotels in downtown Atlanta. I had been asked to be her chairman. Dorothy arrived at the meeting wearing a beautiful long evening gown, and I was also wearing a long, formal dress for evening wear. The two of us stood there receiving the guests, and a gentleman who became one of our very good contacts and studied the Faith for many years, came in and sat down and looked around. After looking at Dorothy and me for a while he came up and said, "What do you two glamour girls know about religion anyway?"

Dorothy and I were simply delighted; we laughed and laughed, and I've never forgotten that remark. . . . She was so human, and she enjoyed all the human touches. She always studied the hats I wore, and always had some comment on them, and this tickled me to death.

She was also very human in her domestic pursuits. For some reason or other she had a special thing about canning fruits and vegetables. On her way home from Convention she used to stop at all those marvelous fruit stands in Illinois and Ohio, and arrive home absolutely loaded with fresh fruit and vegetables. Then everybody in sight had to help with the canning process, which she thoroughly enjoyed. She got right into the middle of it herself.

Mary Lou Ewing

Another thing I remember about those early days was the ride to Bluffton, Ohio . . . fifteen or twenty miles from town. Dorothy had called and asked if I would ride over with her, to pick up Louise from a swimming party she had arranged for her. . . . Going over Dorothy commented on how she had been protected by Bahá'u'lláh in her mothering. She said that she realized she was [away] from her children a great deal; that it would have been very easy to have an estrangement, to have had a sense of neglect of her parental duties, a sense of separation and deprivation. But she had been comforted over and over by being intuitively aware, even though absent from them, of difficult times which either Louise or Bill might be experiencing. She could be in the middle of a meeting, she could be in the middle of a trip, the middle of prayers or studying, or most anything and one of her children would come into her mind in such a way as to alert her that she should instantly turn to Bahá'u'lláh and ask for their protection. Later on, when she returned home, she would ask about what had happened, and over and over she would be able to tie the prayer, or the sense of urgency for prayer to a crisis that had occurred in their lives. It was something that was on her mind, and about which she was intensely grateful to Bahá'u'lláh—for being close in this parent-daughter relationship, or parent-son relationship.



37 The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Lima in the 1940s. Back row, left to right: Harry Jay, Dorothy Baker, Charlene Warner, Clyde De.nnison (?). Front row, left to right: Edmund Miessler, Hazel McCurdy, Frank Warner, Floyd Saphr, Frank Baker.

Louise Baker Matthias (as a teenager)

One time, when Mother was away from home on a teaching trip, I woke early, feeling especially happy and loving. I dressed and ran down to the “pullman,” where Dad had already finished his breakfast and was looking through the newspaper.



38. Mary Lou Ewing, 1945.

“Hi, Dad,” I greeted him happily and kissed the top of his head, where his hair had begun to get just a bit thin. As I slid onto the bench across the table from him, I reached for the pitcher of milk, bumped against the toaster knocking it to the floor with a great clatter, doubly loud because I tried to catch it on the way down—it shattered a cup and saucer, clanged against a heavy wooden chair, ricocheted off the end of the bench and finally subsided

under the table. In a desperate attempt to halt its progress I was under the table, too, on hands and knees.

Dad's nerves were vibrating, and he snarled, "For heaven's sake, Louise! Can't you be more careful?"

My nerves were in no better shape than my father's. I scrambled out from under the table, leaving the toaster in its temporary grave, and snarled back, "No, I can't! I was born clumsy!" and fled, weeping, to my room. I threw myself across my bed, sobbing with self-pity and, for the moment, hating my father. The phone rang and I waited, expecting to hear Dad's footsteps. There was no sound from downstairs, so I pulled myself together enough to go to the upstairs phone.

"Hi, Loweezy." I heard my mother's voice. "How are you, Sweetie?"

"Oh, Muzz, I'm terrible! I hate Dad!" Through my sobs I told her what had happened.

"Was that it! I knew something was wrong. I just dreamed about you. You were a little girl, high in the air, in a little wicker basket hung below a balloon. You were so happy and laughed so gaily. Then for some reason the basket tipped, and you fell out. I saw you falling. You cried out to me and you looked so shocked that I woke up and had to call to be sure you were all right."

She was quiet for just a moment. Dad picked up the downstairs phone and heard her next words. "My poor ewe lamb! And my poor, darling Frank-o!" Her voice was tender. The three-way conversation that followed was not

profound, but within seconds, thanks more to Mother's warm, loving appreciative spirit than to her actual words, Dad and I were once more feeling tender toward each other, and were laughing at the ease with which we had surrendered our nerves.

*Roan Orloff Stone*⁷²

It was 1943—the national Congress of the Esperanto Association of North America was to be held in Lima, Ohio. The Esperantists and the Bahá'ís invited me to spend a month prior to the Congress teaching a class in Esperanto. I was staying at the home of Frank and Dorothy Baker and their son and daughter, and the cook. And of course, Aunty Lu – Dorothy's mother, who was *the* Esperantist in the family.

Actually, I saw Dorothy seldom during that month. If she wasn't at meetings of the National Spiritual Assembly, then she was travel teaching for the Faith. When she was gone, the house, so charming (I loved it because it was made of fieldstone and it had pillars and a veranda), was as quiet as a church on Monday morning. The children were busy with their summer activities. Frank Baker and Aunty Lu and I rattled around in the house like three little peas on a big dinner plate. Everything was so subdued!

No sooner did Dorothy Baker come home, however, than there was an air of life, of brightness and joy and magnetism that went everywhere she went.

Conrad Baker's son Dwight

My first memories of my grandmother were of visiting her and my grandfather in the house in Lima. I remember sitting on the couch with her in

the long living room that could be divided from the dining room and kitchen by a sliding door. She would tell stories to Ann and me. I especially remember her telling (not reading) us about Jean Valjean and the silver candlesticks from *Les Misérables*. She kept us eager with anticipation by telling one chapter at a time with such drama that we could hardly wait for the next chapter—and with such compassion for Jean Valjean and his suffering. She also told us stories from the Bobbsey Twins, Peter Rabbit, and of an orphan family which I think was called the Box Car Kids. (They all loved each other and stayed together through thick and thin.) And of course she told us stories of the Báb and the early Bahá'í Youth Dawn-Breakers. . . .

On one of her trips to Mexico, Grandma bought me a little leather purse which I still have. It is shaped like a little shoe and has a zipper up the front. The leather is tooled with fancy designs and it says Mexico on the side. I also have some coins from foreign countries which she gave me and I keep in the purse.

Edna Andrews

I remember so well a morning (I'm not sure of the date – 1943 or 44). Dorothy was to go to Chicago for surgery. She told me the date and the time of day the surgery would be done. She asked me to pray for her while she was under the anesthetic. She felt we could be very close to each other at a time like this.

At the given time I went into my bedroom after disconnecting the phone and locking my doors against neighbors dropping in. I prayed for her, taking the healing prayers, and concentrating on the Tablet of Ahmad.

I think probably this was the only time in my life that I experienced the “ecstasy” of prayer. Two hours passed; I knew the surgery was probably completed. Then I realized that at some time during the prayer I had seemed to feel that Dorothy had said, “Oh Edna, Pray. Fill your life with prayer. Pray Pray Pray.”

A month passed and [Dorothy] came home and I went to see her. I asked her what she would have said to me if our minds had met during the time she was under the anesthetic, and she answered, “Oh Edna, I would have said to you, ‘Pray, Pray, fill your life with prayer.’”

John Robarts^{[73](#)}

She came to Rice Lake (summer school) in 1943. We were talking about prayer and she said, “I don’t always do it, but I like to arise in the early morning, before all the rest of my household, so I can have some quiet time to myself. I can go into the bathroom and lock the door. Two prayers I like to say are the Tablet of Ahmad and the Long Obligatory Prayer. Sometimes I have time for only one. I find that when I say the Long Obligatory Prayer my personal affairs go well—I seem to be inspired. And when I say the Tablet of Ahmad, all my Bahá’í work goes well.”

1943 was the last year of the Seven Year Plan. We had many unfulfilled goals. Besides giving a course, Dorothy had sessions with almost every member at the conference. I can’t tell you how many of the people there pioneered, but many did. Nobody could resist her. One woman wanted to pioneer, but she was unmarried, middle-aged and alone. After talking to Dorothy, she went to Halifax, and wrote back that she had found a job that

was just as good as the one she had left. A month later she wired home asking for prayers. She was being married the following day.

*Gene Pritchard*⁷⁴

I was a passenger in the car which Dorothy Baker drove to Rice Lake. Dorothy stayed overnight with Harriet Pettibone, and we left early the next morning. While she was driving in heavy traffic in Buffalo, some people tooted their horn at her. She most lovingly said, “Darlings, I will be right out of your way.”

Always her heart was filled with love. . . . While at Rice Lake Dorothy Baker spoke so dramatically, and beautifully. When she made the appeal for pioneers her eyes flashed and it seemed as though she was communing with the other world. In fact one person in the room said that they had a vision and had seen ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the room. Sometimes she told stories, and laughed heartily, and everyone in the room laughed with her. . . .

Dorothy Baker often spoke of her Grandmother Beecher, of her lovely daughter “Lou” for whom she prayed each morning[,] and she spoke of her pioneering in South America. She also spoke of her son and told of an incident where she had to do some work with the National Spiritual Assembly regarding draft status. She said she had a son whom the decision might affect, but regardless of any personal feelings she had to do what was right in the sight of God. She often spoke of her wonderful husband, and of his sacrifice in allowing her to travel and teach extensively.

Once Dorothy Baker asked Martha Root how she was able to accomplish so much in the face of so many difficulties. According to an unsigned typed

document found among the Baker papers, Martha answered, “Dorothy, when I am faced with a difficulty, I use the Tablet of Ahmad every day for nine days, asking God, in the name of that Holy Tablet, to remove the difficulty. If I am faced with an extremely difficult problem, I recite the Tablet of Ahmad three times a day for nine days. And when I am faced with a problem that is completely impossible, and there is and can be no solution, I use the Tablet of Ahmad nine times a day for nine days, and the problem is always solved.”

*Notes from some of Dorothy Baker's talks at Rice Lake, 1941, taken by
Gene Pritchard*

On Prayer:

Pray until you feel the inner contact about anything, then watch. God will open the door. We should obtain God's first choice. Have magnetic spiritual passion. Talk, listen to the inner silences. Hear the voice of God. Yearning opens the recesses of the heart. Have ardor and conviction. . . .

Remember the gift of intercession, as it is one of the creative forces of God. Those who have ascended have different attributes but there is no real separation. The realm of bounty is not fully understood. The force behind our progress is the degree of detachment, the consecrated life, and depth of conviction and devotion. The depth of our contract with God shows the conviction to God. Servitude is the essence of motion.

Pray aloud, so your body will be surrounded by prayer. It helps concentration. There is always divine companionship in every loneliness. A soul is never alone. We should always be God-conscious. “I am far from Thee, but Thou art near unto me.” God is nearer to you than your hands and

feet, nearer than breathing. Joy is the water of life, the cause of vivification. . .
. Joy appears first in the life that is inspired, then it affects the lives of others. .
. . Every home where there is prayer is the garden of God.

You can lose contact after your commitment through your own veils and clouds if you do not pray every day. If there are clouds around, use the Tablet of Ahmad, as it never fails. If there was a great wall Martha Root used the Tablet of Ahmad 9 times a day. “Seek, O servant of God, this light until you remain in limitless joy.” Seek the eternal conditions.

If healing is best, it will surely be granted. Remedies and prayers are not contradictory. The law of prayer is higher.

The prayers of a soul do not penetrate the veils of the Kingdom if we are unclean.

Use the Tablet of Ahmad several times to find deeds you can do to confirm souls. Do not lose your destiny. Ask God if he can use you. “Rise to that for which ye were created.” It is the Day of God. Let us perform some deed however small. Through deeds we can recreate lives.

When you pray, first know you are standing in the presence of the Almighty, then pray with utter detachment.

On self, others, and the material world:

Give your life to God. Make a contract and keep it no matter how hard or where it leads. Each one chosen of God has to fight the battle of self. No matter how difficult make the contract with God, the supreme sacrifice.

Realize the harmony of life here and hereafter. It is a great opportunity. In Gleanings it says that some have the capacity of a cup, and some a gallon. If we turn to God, through prayer he will turn it into a rushing river. If you are in a community where there are difficulties, try praying together. The heart of every righteous man will throb. If personality problems [were causing disunity], all difficulties will disappear. Every soul bows down to God's word. The vibrations are never ending. The word of God goes out, but never comes back. No one has any enemy but himself, his own ego. Goliath, our ego, is to be conquered by David.

It is good for each soul to take the Holy Writings and be left free to grow in it, but never to become an authority on it.

. . . The Sermon on the Mount still applies in speaking of individuals. Turning the other cheek still is the highest act of kindness and tenderness—radiant acquiescence. Social life must be a forceful suppression of aggression—strength behind love, justice. “Whatever ye eat or drink, or think, do it all to the Glory of God.” The soul of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was too great to recognize blame. He saw praise and blame as one, so great was his love for humanity. . . . The unification of mankind will be established only by a true, abiding love that burns away the differences of self-interest, and melts by its flame all hearts into one heart.

The perfect human sentiments and virtues:

1. Your thoughts and ambitions are set to acquire human perfection.
2. You live to do good and to bring happiness to others.

3. Your greatest longing is to comfort those who mourn, to strengthen the weak, and to be the cause of hope to the despairing soul. Day and night your thoughts are turned to the Kingdom, and your heart is full of the Love of God.

4. You know neither opposition, dislike, nor hatred, for every living creature is dear to you and the good of each is sought.

After questions, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sought guidance from above or smiled lovingly at the person, then spoke. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived and worked in that higher and real world. All His concepts, all His motives, all His actions derived their springs from that “World of Light,” although outwardly He lived in the world of confusion. He was a herald of the world of reality, a summoner to all men to leave the seeming and live on the plane of the Real.

All material things progress to a certain point, then begin to decline. We must obey the law of motion. But with the human soul, there is no decline. Its only movement is toward perfection. Growth and progress alone constitute the motion of the soul. The thought of our own weakness could only bring despair. We must look higher than all earthly thoughts, detach ourselves from every material idea, crave for the things of the spirit, fix our eyes on the everlasting, bountiful Mercy of the Almighty who will fill our souls with the gladness of joyful service to His command, “Love One Another.” . . .

God always lets us give up the thing we love most. We must sustain the yearnings of the earth.

On pioneering and teaching:

Each community is an island of assurance. The second Bahá'í Century is great. Never again will there be a time when souls can arise to be pioneers. The pioneers are taking the seed of heroic martyrs, and putting it together with bricks. There are different stages. We will be ignored, we will be persecuted, we will be tolerated. Whole groups will vote to come in. Then, there will be the Golden Age. The key is the way we execute our task. Every act will be remembered. The people of the ages will be those who give all. The intimates of the Guardian are those who packed up their houses and walked.

Everyone should be a teacher and educator. Hearts are waiting. Sometimes if you give the message it is not discovered until the next world.

Spend every breath of your lives in the most great Cause, so that you may in the end be freed from loss and failure and attain to the inexhaustible treasury.

If ye will follow earnestly the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, ye shall indeed become the Light of the World, the Soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe.

On speaking:

Have your chin in, chest out, shoulders back. Breathe properly so your voice will throw. Take 20 deep breaths each morning. Use the lips to make the 3 main sounds each day: e, ah, o. Concentrate on throwing the voice from the diaphragm. Think of your voice as coming out of a pipeline. Have warmth, depth, feeling, without being dramatic. Avoid monotone. Have enough pauses

for emphasis. Enunciate, use your lips. If you want to stress a word, hold it. . . . In speaking do not hold your breath. Fill up, say the sentence expending the entire breath. For a good public talk you should know your goal before you begin; know details. In a planned talk you should know your distance, and have a few keys. Put down the points to be covered, a single point for each, and the key words to remind you of the story. Have your notes on a card. Use as few notes as possible. Notes spoil public speaking.

Memorize as many words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Bahá’u’lláh as possible. Use as many quotations and stories as possible to reach the point. When you come to the final point sum up the goal. It is difficult to become unselfconscious enough to speak from the heart. Discipline yourself to a brief outline. . . .

Lua Getsinger took notebooks full of notes and philosophies while in Haifa. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá told her not to be troubled with them. He told her when she went to London she would speak to the audience, but she should first turn her heart to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and he would tell her what to [say]. Lua tried to be absolutely obedient. She rose before the audience but no words came. There was a terrible silence. She raised her eyes and prayed. Then she spoke as an angel. Every soul attained the inner meeting. Bahá’u’lláh knows what the hearts need. As soon as you can arrive at the state of an inspired speaker, do it. A heart might be confirmed by a look, a word, an act or a story. We do not know what the soul needs. The Beloved knows the capacity of others. In speaking, channelhood is the answer.

From a letter to Louise Caswell⁷⁵ written by Dorothy Baker, March 18th, 1942

. . . The negative forces of our time seem to knock at every door. In a letter to Roberta Christian, the Guardian recently said, “Life *in this world* holds many tragic and terrible hours for us all— *even for the beloved Manifestation of God Himself*. Even He is not spared the sufferings that fall to Man’s lot in this fleeting world.” Later he writes in the same letter: “At such a time it is not unreasonable to expect your body and your spirit to be exhausted and depressed.”

But Louise, you are so beautiful that Canal Zone cannot fail to see it. It would seem to me that you would have only to be what you are, a rare, delicate instrument of beauty in the hands of the Beloved, to attract the whole Panamanian world. *And it will come*, by the bounty of His Highness the Exalted One. I think our greatest suffering comes in loving the Cause so much that impediments to its spread amount to actual heartbreak . . . Darling, if you come north, save a little time for me in Lima this time; it has been so long, and one gets homesick to see an old friend. I am still a little “chore-doer” and you are a pioneer with everlasting lustre. I need you to help me to attain.

Tender love—Dorothy

A letter from Dorothy to Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, February 3rd, 1943

Our darling Rúhíyyih,

I suppose you never can quite know what your letter meant to me; especially your mention of my lamb, Winnie Lou. I am waiting for her to have a particular hour of great need, and then I am going to send it to her! She gave her first Bahá’í talk *in Spanish*, in Panama, and Louise Caswell writes

that it has left the real seeds of a Youth group as a number of young students and soldiers attended.

Rúhíyyih, the letter from Shoghi Effendi never has arrived, though your dear note came over two weeks ago. I wake in the night, wondering what it said, line by line and longing unutterably to have it. Perhaps that is why God gave me the comfort of yours, too, dearest one. Your letters to Phil and others have been food and inspiration to all American Youth, especially my Winnie Lou. I believe that aside from the Guardian himself, who is the Pen of God, you are the chosen channel for our eager young people, especially as you, above all, bring them close to him. They learn on the one hand to nestle in his great heart, and on the other to go out filled with determination and courage to serve. World Mission is on their lips constantly and in their hearts. Please never stop writing to America.

. . . My heart's love once again to the blessed Guardian. When next you have the privilege of entering the Tomb of the Blessed Beauty, dearest Rúhíyyih, will you pray that my life may be a ransom to the Guardian? I cannot come to do this, but I believe that He will answer your prayer. A thousand thanks—

Tenderest love—Dorothy

From Elisabeth Cheney's⁷⁶ letter to the Guardian, October 14th, 1944

Dorothy Baker is to undergo a major operation Monday morning, November 27th, at the Women's and Children's Hospital in Chicago, for the removal of an abdominal tumor resulting from a serious fall when she was teaching in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a year ago. During that western trip,

en route to San Francisco, a tiny steel splinter had been blown into one of her eyes. Doctors examined her, but could not find it, because it had penetrated the pupil of her eye and was of exactly the same color. For two weeks with this grave and painful disability, which began to affect her sight, Dorothy continued her tour of lectures, addressing the great race unity gatherings on the west coast, working with groups and individuals, often being able to keep the affected eye open only during her talks on the Cause of God, and that only by a sort of miracle. At last she arrived in Albuquerque, and because she could no longer see,⁷⁷ she fell full length down a steep flight of stairs; calmly picked herself up, and went on to talk to a gathering of people about Bahá'u'lláh. In the audience there was a physician, who was among those that came forward to talk with her more intimately after the lecture. And now, it suddenly became impossible for her to keep the affected eye open. It kept closing in spite of all her efforts to keep it open. The doctor questioned her about it, and told her that he had a friend in Albuquerque, a young medical man, who had access to one of two special lights in existence in this country, which were designed to show the location of particles embedded in the human eye, which could not be detected with ordinary light. He made an appointment for Dorothy to be examined by this man the next morning.

The special light showed the splinter embedded in the pupil of her eye, and the doctors could not believe that, enduring the agony of such an injury, she had been able for two weeks to go on teaching the Cause of God. They declared this a physical impossibility. The young doctor took her hand and said, "I can remove this splinter, but I want you to know that when I do so, there is a strong probability that you will be blind, and I do not want to make you blind. Do you accept this responsibility?"

Dorothy answered quietly, “I accept it. I am not afraid. I have faith that you will not blind me.”

The doctor operated and removed the splinter and when it was over, he said, “Now open your eyes and tell me if you can see.

Dorothy obeyed and replied, “Yes, I can see light.”

“Thank God!” the young man said, with tears rolling down his face. “I could not have borne it, if I had made one like you blind.”

*Harriet Pettibone*⁷⁸

She told me at the Park Plaza in Toronto where we were occupying adjoining rooms—that above all she wanted to be a ransom. This was at early morning prayers in her room—she looked lovely in a blue silk nightie and matching robe—and she said it so fervently. I believe she was.

She was a keen judge of people and told me not to waste my time with two people I introduced her to. She was right, as far as interesting them in the Faith was concerned.

When I think about her she is as alive as if she was here in person.

She put her arms around me—one morning after spending the night in our home—and said, very lovingly, that I was a slow grower, meaning spiritually. Again she was right.

Emmalu McCandless^{[79](#)}

Dorothy Baker had tea with me in my room at the Flatiron Hotel in Omaha, Nebraska in the fall of 1943. She was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly then and came to Omaha to visit the Bahá'ís.

I can remember her so clearly, how tall and slender she was, how animated her beautiful face, how loving her attitude, how eloquent her speech. She was beautiful and radiant and moved like a swift-flowing stream. She was so *alive*.

One of the things we talked about was the Báb's Address to the Letters of the Living, and how it depicted the pattern of life for all Bahá'ís. She prayed aloud for me personally and for the success of the consolidation efforts in Omaha. I was overwhelmed by the flow of her words and her animation in prayer. . . .

I have always felt “blessed” by that visit with her in the hotel. It is one of the memories I will carry with me through eternity.

Amy Brady Dwelly^{[80](#)}

Perhaps the experience I remember best, and which has stayed with me in all its intensity through the years was an afternoon in her hotel room at A—, where she had come to clear up a difficulty in which two Bahá'ís were involved.

Both parties had received suggestions from Dorothy as to a certain appointment; both thought that Dorothy had the authority to make the appointment, which she did not have nor had she meant to leave such an

impression. Both parties were furious with each other but neither one held any enmity toward Dorothy. She had just returned to her hotel when I arrived and found her grief-stricken. She paced the floor, wringing her hands.

Then with tears standing in her eyes she began saying, “Oh my, my, what have I done to my precious little—and to poor deluded—? I wanted justice for both but I have failed. I have harmed them both when I wanted so much to help them both “

Much of what she said has left me but her sincere grief, her deep sorrow, the baring of her breast to accept the darts of criticism and blame for something she could not be held responsible for—all these have left a lasting impression on me. She wanted to make amends and I tried to convince her that she was not to blame.

“I should have been wiser—I should have understood the situation better. . . .”

At last I left her to her prayers and Bahá'u'lláh. As I walked down the hall I felt as though I had been in the presence of a martyr.

Edith McLaren^{[81](#)}

In those struggling years Dorothy often came to me in a dream which always gave me new courage to carry on. Once she loaned me her glasses. When I put them on they were rose-colored! This was at a time when the problems seemed insurmountable in the community of many capable, strongminded people. I got the point of that dream as soon as I awakened and took a fresh heart.

A letter from Dorothy

—honey,

Back from Canada and have both your letter and card; the latter just arrived this morning.

Now dear, let's just look at this thing sensibly. Human personality is a curious thing. It graduates from kindergarten to university in one of the spiritual fine arts, and lags perhaps in the third grade in another. If all the Bahá'ís were in the university in all of the fine arts you and I would have practically no problems. But it isn't so, and knowing this, I don't see how you can afford right now to try to expose your bad health and delicate nervous system to the variables existing within our evolving groups. If a good doctor has suggested dropping the thing and becoming inactive, I think you are absolutely justified in doing just that. I wouldn't withdraw membership (unless at some time you already have), but rather I would quietly retire from the entire situation and drop it completely from your mind.

Do you think that your formal relationship to the Cause interests the Beloved at a time like this? I don't. I think you are a human soul, a tender, delicate human soul, who can't stand the kind of evolution we are now going through, toward a larger collective life. And I don't think He wants you harassed by it for a minute. Turn your heart to Him and be happy in Him; use His prayers, read His Word; go your way, and live your life. He understands. You can count on it; He *understands*.



39. Elisabeth Cheney in 1944 with friends gathered in Wilmette, Illinois (Elisabeth is seated in the second row, far right). Dorothy Baker is seated in the first row, third from left.

Keep the old chin up. Much love, and write when you feel like it, always of happy, positive things; plans, observations, hopes, daily work, etc. The secret is that every day a new world is born.

Love, Dorothy

Excerpts of letters from Dorothy Baker to Elisabeth Cheney during Elisabeth's time as a pioneer in Paraguay

Dec. 19, 1940

My Beloved Elisabeth,

Never in Lima's little history has the going away of anyone left such a hole in the middle of things. Everywhere Elisabeth is on every pair of lips. . . .

Feb. 22, '41

. . . Your last letter was put in my hands just as I was leaving Lima again. This is my first stop and I hasten to tell you what has been flooding my heart. It seemed to me just like Keith R. Kehler who became a Hand of the Guardian just at the very time she felt she had failed. . . .

. . . It was as if every breath of inspiration was crushed from her, and she experienced that "zero hour" you mention. . . . The station of true martyrdom is a glorious, lonely thing (seen on this plane), a trek through wilderness other feet have not beaten down. How can *anyone* but One accompany you, shining herald? Who else is big enough? . . .

June 17, 1941

. . . The NSA passed the return of the Paraguay Angel with deep regret, and a strange little silence seemed to pervade the room that made me weep inwardly without knowing why. . . . I love you so, my glorious Elisabeth. And it is with a tender, weeping affection that looks to God and implores only the highest destiny. . . .

And that pen of yours; oh my Elisabeth—you would have been tempted to pride if you could have heard Horace Holley, the human pen of North America, say in the midst of your letter, "God, that girl can write." I think it

was when you said, “In Paraguay, when the sun shines, there is thunder on the horizon.” Bowled ‘ern over!

. . . Heart’s love,

Dorothy

Edna Andrews

I remember well the day, soon after my son died from a drowning accident, she said, “Come, let’s go to a movie, today we will laugh and have fun.” And we did. And I was happy. She seemed to know intuitively one’s needs, and was quick to do something to relieve the pressure, to fill the need.

She was the epitome of gentleness, yet at the same time firm as a rock. Nothing ever deterred her from doing that which she felt was needed. . . . One did not have to tell her how one felt, she knew, and did just the right thing at the right moment to bring relief to an anguished heart, or a troubled mind. . . . She never criticized—she was never critical of another’s weakness. She always seemed to understand the motives of another person’s actions. . . .

For weeks after the drowning accident which took the life of my seventeen-year-old son, I had been tortured by the same dream . . . his dead body walking, trying to come to me. I would waken, devastated by grief. I dreaded the coming of each night.

One beautiful September morning Dorothy phoned me and asked me to have lunch with her. After lunch she suggested we sit out in her yard by the lily pool in the garden. It was quiet and cool there and very peaceful, little

gold fish swam lazily in the clear water among the lily pads; a gentle caressing breeze moved through the branches of the shade trees.

Without preamble, Dorothy said, “Edna, you are sad. What is bothering you?” Then I told her of the devastating dreams which came night after night. She looked at me, very intently for a long moment, then with infinite love in her eyes, she gently touched my hand. Then in the most natural, conversational tone of voice she prayed that these dreams would be removed, and that I would know a lasting peace.

To this day there has never been another distressing dream. And peace did come to my heart, an abiding, continuing, blessed peace.

Doris McKay

. . . I pray that through that pure spirit [Dorothy] God will endow me with her chief and outstanding quality: sincerity. A woman who was living at the Bakers at the time told me that when she first met Dorothy she would not believe she was *real*. Finally she went to work for her for three years and never once in that time did Dorothy fail in the least degree to exemplify the station which she had chosen to occupy. That is a startling achievement, when you think of it.

Margaret Ruhe

In a letter she sent me on July 13, 1940, on Race Unity matters, she wrote at the end, “Above all, do not be discouraged. The immortal Martha used to say that the great secret lay in two things: first, never to miss the very smallest opportunity, and second to be conscious of wearing the mantle of Bahá’u’lláh

Himself while working. The Master once said that the people are really like birds who are listening eagerly for the voice of the Master Bird, and that if you know this, you will have the right attitude of friendliness and charm. They will thank you through all eternity. May the spirit of the Blessed Perfection go with you. With Bahá'í love, Dorothy Baker.”

Mary Lou Ewing

There was an interesting sternness and penetration about Dorothy. I have only met one person in my entire life who knew Dorothy who was not entirely devoted to her. It was very evident that that person had a rather strong ego and was jealous. She would say, “Well of course Dorothy can accomplish what she does because of her wealth and freedom.”

In trying to show this person her real love, in spite of the criticism and resistance, Dorothy one day spontaneously gave her a truly precious gift—precious in the material sense. Later on that person was again openly critical of Dorothy, and suggested that Dorothy protected people she loved. It was possibly the only time I saw anger in Dorothy. She said, more or less, “This is spiritual blackmail. She should not have accepted my gift if she could not accept my sincere intention and love.” That was the end of that. There was no further discussion of the matter.

Paraphrased from an unsigned letter

Dorothy had a radio script with her in Providence, Rhode Island and I accompanied her for an interview with the station manager. He took one look at the Bahá'í title and then said, “Well, I’ll read this and let you know.” He had been informed that Dorothy was there for only two days.

In a pleasant, firm voice Dorothy said, “Oh, give that back to me,” at the same time giving the manager a meaningful glance. With the same knowing look and smile the manager handed the script back to Dorothy. He knew that she knew he had no intention of putting it on the air and much time was saved. I might have waited around for days, but Dorothy had practical wisdom.

Charlotte Stirrat^{[82](#)}

Being head and shoulders spiritually above others, she was a target for jealousy. She used to have many unpleasant things happen because of the jealousy of others. She’d come home—Frank would console her—joke with her and say: “It’s good to have something like this to suffer for. Imagine your chagrin and remorse when you arrive in the next world and you have nothing to say to Bahá’u’lláh when he says, ‘What have you suffered for My Cause?’ Now you have something to say.”

Dorothy Campbell Rougeou^{[83](#)}

In January of 1942 I was invited to a Bahá’í lecture in Jackson, Mississippi. I had never heard of the Faith and knew nothing whatever about it. The ladies who welcomed us at the door of the ballroom were most gracious and I kept looking at them after I was seated for they had some quality I couldn’t place. They seemed so relaxed and happy but there was great dignity. Soon a beautiful tall blonde was introduced as the speaker for the evening—Mrs. Dorothy Baker—and she said that she would like to begin the meeting with a prayer revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, the Founder of the Faith.

We were all seated and after the prayer had begun I found myself shaking all over and finally had to hold onto the seat of the chair to try to control the shaking. My first thought was that I had a deep chill, but as the prayer ended, the shaking subsided. I was so shaken that I don't remember much of what she said, but before she stopped talking, she said that the Bahá'ís believed that this was the Word of God for today, and as always with the creative Word of God, it had the power to change our lives. She challenged us to buy a Bahá'í prayer book, read it for fifteen minutes a day for two weeks and then we would be unable to live without it. Being a good Baptist, I had never read a prayer book in my life, but I found her challenge so extraordinary that I decided to buy a prayer book and read it and find out for myself if what she said was true. Needless to say, after two weeks of reading the prayers, I never stopped and found that I had been changed, my heart cleansed of negative emotions, and ready to study the Bahá'í Teachings. After a few months of intensive reading, study and prayer, I accepted the Faith. . . .

The first night, after the public meeting, I went home and began to read some of the prayers. One that I read—the Tablet of Ahmad—had this statement: “He who turneth away from this Beauty hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride toward God from all eternity to all eternity.” That rocked me and I knew I had to find out for myself if Bahá'u'lláh was the Messenger of God for today, and if He was, then I wanted to be His follower. I was blessed to be able to recognize Him and shall always be grateful to Dorothy Baker for awakening my sleeping soul on that January evening in 1942.

I recall one time when Dorothy, looking so pretty, made a public talk in the Crystal Room of the Argonne Hotel. She wore a long coral dress and looked just radiant. When it was over, Dorothy came walking down the center aisle almost in tears, and said to her Bahá'í friends, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't present Bahá'u'lláh well. I got in the way." Yet she, to me, was perfect. So pretty, so knowledgeable, so kind, so selfless.

*Artemus Lamb*⁸⁵

At another early Convention, I think in 1943, after I had given a very inadequate little talk about the work of the Regional Committee in the Rocky Mountain area, Dorothy came up to me to tell me very lovingly, but emphatically, that she was so happy to "feel my spirit of service." This expression struck me, and, I might add, her kind but sincere words encouraged me to greater service. Later I perceived that her constant endeavor seemed to be to encourage the Bahá'ís to greater service. . . .

Once in Denver, Colorado, I presented her to a very small group called the Religious Tolerance Society. It was really not a very inspiring occasion, but as Dorothy talked, this mysterious flowing eloquence began to surge and quickly everyone was enraptured. At the end, one gentleman—a rather analytical and cold intellectual, not in any way a spiritual or emotional type, spoke up, obviously highly moved. He said in essence that certain people have been given great "gifts" and to Dorothy had been given the "gift" of eloquence.

Hazel Little

[At] my first meeting with [Dorothy], Eleanor Kepfer and I joined her for lunch at an oriental tearoom. I remember saying to her, "This faith sounds

good. I can accept it, but I can't give up Jesus." Dorothy, gently smiling, said softly and kindly, "My dear Hazel, you don't have to. This simply adds on to your Christian faith."

Yet, even so, my attraction to beloved Dorothy was such that I made myself stay away from her for one year to make sure that it was the song she sang and not infatuation with the songstress that drew me. Indeed she was my spiritual mother.

*Belinda Elliot*⁸⁶

This particular evening [Dorothy] was speaker for a fireside at the home of Philip Sprague. . . . Afterward I couldn't leave her. She was staying at a hotel in Greenwich Village and I trailed along when we left the meeting. There was a small, old-fashioned drugstore across from the hotel, the kind of place that had little round marble-top tables where ice cream was served.

Dorothy suggested we go in for a soda. As I remember my times with her it seems she had such influence over me that I was almost entranced. Another person who had the same effect was Madame Ali-Kuli Khan, Marzieh Gail's mother. I could hardly be in their presence without weeping.

That evening in the Village is as clear to me now as though it happened only a couple of years past, rather than all those years ago, probably because of what she said to me as we sat at our small table. Without preamble Dorothy looked at me very seriously and said, "Sara Ellen (my name then), you must always remain steadfast in the Faith. No matter what happens in your life, remain steadfast. Because as the first believer in your family you carry a great responsibility."

She had my full attention. All I could do was stare at her beautiful face. So smooth, so lit from within. She was wearing dark blue and a small veil on her hat of that color came down over her eyes. Then she explained that the first believer at the time of the coming of any Manifestation of God, has the privilege of interceding for the direct members of their family for many generations. She said at the time of Moses it was four generations forward and four generations back. At the time of Christ, it was five generations forward and five generations back. At the time of Muhammad it was six generations forward and six generations back. But in this day, the day of the Glory of God, the first believer in each family has the privilege of interceding before Him for the direct members of their family for seven generations forward and seven generations back.

That is exactly the way she said it to me. I can still see Dorothy's finger as she traced in a forward and backward motion on the table top, the direction of the generations. This information had a stunning and overwhelming effect upon me. Tears streamed down. I just kept watching her face, spellbound. She fascinated me. It is easier now to understand it was an irresistible spiritual attraction before which I was speechless. There was nothing for me to say.

Others felt her spiritual force, too. I've watched her sway large audiences, bring them to their feet after a speech. Dorothy Baker's talent was so special. That night in Greenwich Village will be remembered for all time. The sudden knowledge of the responsibility laid upon me as a first believer, surely has had a steadying effect all my Bahá'í life. . . .

Our wonderful session together was brought to a close with these generous words. "You see in our family neither Louise nor I have this privilege,

because in our family Mother Beecher has this distinction. She was the first believer.”

Louise Baker Matthias

Do you remember how James Farley, who was postmaster general under Roosevelt, was known for his ability to recall everyone’s name? He trained himself to do this. Mother was impressed. I remember her talking about it. She made a very conscious, concentrated effort to associate the names and faces of her fellow Bahá’ís so that she could honor them in this way.

Marion Yazdi^{[87](#)}

In 1943-44, the centenary year, the Bahá’ís of Berkeley, California had a year-long teaching campaign, the highlight of which was Dorothy Baker’s one-day Berkeley visit, September 23, 1943. Dorothy gave talks continuously from the time she arrived until late at night. A letter I wrote to my parents a week later best describes that day and the following two days:

“The day Dorothy Baker was here in Berkeley was one of the most exciting days of my life. A number of us met her at the train. There was just time (the train being an hour and a half late) to drive her to her first engagement—speaking to University of California students at the Race Relations luncheon.

...

“While she was speaking there, I pressed her dress for her afternoon engagement, wrote publicity for the newspaper on her radio talk and took it to the office, went to the Berkeley Book Guild and encouraged them to put out more chairs, called on two people to go to the talk, and got ready myself.

“The afternoon talk was very good and well attended (New Trends in Race Relations). One woman called me afterwards and said it was one of the richest experiences of her life.

“After the club talk about ten of the people came down here (2910 Telegraph) with Dorothy Baker (I quickly made lemonade). Dorothy gave another talk out in the court and everyone was completely happy.

“Then we went to the Women’s City Club. Ali (Yazdi) was chairman, and Dorothy spoke after dinner very delightfully. Then after some had gone she again drew us around her and told stories until we really had to stop her to save her for the date (Symposium) the next night.

“The Symposium . . . was an outstanding success. The place was filled, probably eight hundred or more. I think we had over one hundred there from Berkeley.

“Mrs. Cooper gave a tea for a small group of special guests on Saturday. I was on the committee for it and invited some people who enjoyed it enormously. It was a very lovely affair at the Women’s City Club in San Francisco. That day Dorothy gave the best talk of all, I thought.”

San Francisco Chronicle, September 15, 1943

THE BAHÁ’Í SYMPOSIUM

“RACIAL EQUALITY ESSENTIAL TO WORLD ORDER”

The new world order that will emerge at the end of the war will not endure peacefully, if based on military force and political strength alone, but in addition must consider the religious rights and racial equality of mankind.

That was the composite opinion expressed by four speakers last night on a symposium conducted in the Palace Hotel under auspices of the Bahá'í movement in San Francisco. Speakers included Mrs. Dorothy Beecher Baker, a member of the national assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada; Attorney General Robert W. Kenny, the Rev. Dr. Rudolph L. Coffee, president of the Temple of Religion, and Robert B. Flippin, director of the Booker T. Washington Center here.

Of the Bahá'í Faith, founded 100 years ago in Persia by Bahá'u'lláh, Mrs. Baker said:

“It was scourged, impaled, imprisoned, beaten, shot, lied about and suppressed at every turn, an infant pattern against which governments and religions hurled their eastern fury. From these things it emerged unified and uncompromising, a World Faith dedicated to the ideal of a single humanity conscious of the Fatherhood of a single God.”

*Isobel Sabri*⁸⁸

I first met Dorothy Baker in the spring of 1945 when she came to San Francisco to be one of the Bahá'í speakers at a special public meeting sponsored by the Local Spiritual Assembly in conjunction with the international conference at which the United Nations was formed. A number of the Conference delegates had been invited by the Bahá'í Community to a special banquet and were later seated on the platform during the public

meeting. Marion Holley (later Hofman) was the Chairman of the meeting which was also addressed by a professor of Political Science from Stanford University. Dorothy spoke very impressively about the spiritual foundations of universal peace.

After the meeting Leroy and Sylvia Ioas invited a sizeable group of people for coffee and ice cream at a nearby restaurant. I was not yet a Bahá'í and had come up from Stanford with Farrukh Ioas, the elder Ioas daughter, who had introduced and strongly attracted me to the Faith some weeks earlier. I sat next to Dorothy, and among other subjects she spoke of having been very ill recently. This particularly attracted my attention as I also had been and still was quite ill. Dorothy impressed on me the importance of overcoming any such barriers. She said that one must just go ahead and do whatever needed doing, knowing that God would give you the necessary strength. She said that she had never allowed her ill health to stand in the way of her serving the Faith. This was a valuable lesson which I have taken to heart with good effect through many years.

Dorothy came to Stanford a few days later for a luncheon speaking engagement arranged by Farrukh Ioas at the Lagunita Residence for women students where we both lived. About fifteen students were seated at a specially arranged table in the dining hall, but by the end of Dorothy's talk which took place after lunch the table was also ringed by standing student-waiters—all thoroughly engrossed in the lively question period. Marion Holley had driven Dorothy down from San Francisco, and Farrukh and I had the blessing of spending the whole of that afternoon in conversation about the Faith with these two outstandingly knowledgeable women.

I also attended teaching meetings in San Mateo and San Francisco at which Dorothy spoke during that visit to California. It was not so much *what* Dorothy said as *how* she said it. She had a very spiritual presentation which conveyed to the listener the deep quality of her faith. She had absolute confidence in what the Faith would mean to the world—a certitude similar in nature to that which I later witnessed in the beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi.

Dorothy Baker quoted by Hazel Mori

“Truly it is not how much time you spend reading the Writings, it is how much you think about what you have read. I find it best to choose each morning some one phrase, some one quotation from the Writings, and then carry it with me all day, thinking about it at odd moments. That way I have it in my memory and in my heart. You try it, and pretty soon you will be full of the Words of Bahá’u’lláh, right up to your ears—so full that they have to come out your mouth!”

From Mrs. Louise R. Eddy

She was scheduled to speak in the city of Highland Park, Michigan at the YWCA on the Bahá’í Faith. I sat enthralled by her personage, by her words, by the glow on her face, by everything about her. After the meeting, I went up to the stage to ask her a question which was of tremendous importance, of course, to me and which she must have had to answer everywhere she went. I asked her if I should become a Bahá’í? I had spent months agonizing over this. My family had been Episcopalians for three hundred years and tho I had broken with them to become a Unity student, a Unitarian, I had still remained a Christian. She must have sensed my anxiety. She came down from the stage and coming up to me placed her hands on my shoulders, looked deeply into

my eyes, smiled and said very gently, “You will be a Bahá’í You have the Bahá’í eyes already.” That calm manner, that sweet voice and smile, that soul searching look took away all my stress, my feelings of doubt, my weariness and I had my answer. I became a Bahá’í in May of 1947.

Doris McKay

I have concluded that we have to take one role only . . . and that, the one where we do the most effective work. Dorothy Baker has done that. I knew the old “Dorothies” who had to leave. She is like a candle sacrificing herself to the Light. We had breakfast together in Toronto and again she laid bare her heart to me. She told me about riding home with Frank and Louise and loving them and knowing that again she must leave them, and unconsciously moaning so that they heard her and how their glad chatter was stilled until she gaily reassured them. But Frank knew! He just patted her shoulder.

CHAPTER 17

If the time and effort Dorothy exerted for the Faith between her forty-fifth and fifty-second birthdays could be cut like a pie, one half would be North American activity and the other travels abroad. Work on the homefront, in the United States and Canada, would have to be divided again into two equally substantial wedges: teaching and administration. Dorothy diligently carried her weight and more on committees and institutions of the Bahá'í Cause. But from the beginning her real joy was teaching, seeing doubt, frustrated anger, or phlegmatic calm dissolve as people were exposed to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. She spoke with great love and eloquence, but she took praise reluctantly. For her, adulation had become a necessary by-product of the goal: allowing people to hear the message of her Lord. Junie (Katherine) Faily Perot recalled seeing Dorothy Baker angry only once, at Louhelen. Dorothy felt the chairman made too much of her. She commented, "No one is that good. You praise me too much because I go around and speak a lot. Frank is a better Bahi'l than I am, because he does not go around talking."

Lenore Bernstein also noted Dorothy's very deep sense of humility. She once heard Dorothy remark, "It should be Frank, not I, who stands in the limelight, for if it were not for Frank's support and understanding, I could not travel or teach at all."

And speak she did, thanks to him, and thanks to her own efforts, for the glory of her Lord. One hundred years after the Báb declared His mission, one hundred years after He fulfilled the promise of the world's sacred books, Dorothy spoke at the House of Worship in Wilmette.

Usually Dorothy was careless about her own privacy, except for prayer. Just a few nights before her talk, Dorothy slipped into Emma Rice's hotel room, whispering through the dark to Emma, who was already in bed, "May I come in with you? I hope you don't mind, but my daughter can't find a room so I'm letting her share mine with Frank." Early the next morning Dorothy disappeared into the bathroom saying, "Wait for me and we'll go to breakfast together." Her ease at sharing Emma's quarters, her friendly suggestion of breakfast together made Emma, although she was already hungry, change her mind and sit down on the unmade bed for what she assumed would be the length of time required for a short shower.

A half hour later she was beginning to feel a hollow grinding in her stomach as she dimly realized, no sound of running water yet heard, that Dorothy must have gone into the bathroom for her prayers. Time in the clockless room dragged on as Emma waited. She wondered if a knock on the bathroom door would be appropriate or if she should simply leave a note and go on down to breakfast.

Just at the point of putting one plan or the other into action, the door swung open and Dorothy emerged, an aura of zeal and charged energy surrounding her. "Shall we?" Emma eagerly agreed they should.

At the table, Dorothy neither concentrated on her meal nor cherished a few comfortable moments with her friend. Emma noticed, "She ate nothing,

really, because she was too busy greeting people, answering questions and radiating joy and happiness round about. That was Dorothy, God bless her!”

The only times Dorothy kept strictly for herself were the hours spent in prayer, meditation, or study. And those periods were usually in the early morning, when other activities didn’t make demands.

But on the afternoon of May 22, 1944 having asked to be released for the rest of the day from her duties at the Convention, Dorothy avoided lunch with friends and retreated instead to her hotel room.

She felt the most important talk of her life was to be given that night at the Bahá’í House of Worship. The occasion was the centenary anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab. Before the program of readings took place at 9:40 P.M. under the great dome, a public meeting was to be held in Foundation Hall, where she and two others would present the Bahá’í Faith. Dorothy felt it was vital, for the success of her talk, to prepare herself spiritually. With The Dawn-Breakers on her lap she sat quietly in the room. Frank, her devoted protector, stood watch in the hall during lunch and the afternoon break so that admiring, zealous friends, eager and importunate, could not present themselves at her door. To the urgent pleas for exception in one case or another, Frank was stoic and firm. No one saw or spoke to Dorothy.

Mid-afternoon Frank drove her to the beauty salon, where Dorothy continued to read while having her hair washed and set, avoiding even the friendliest of frivolous chatter. She did not want anyone or anything to dim her heart, and tried instead to “strain every nerve to acquire inward and outward perfections.” She did not want to chance diminishing the power of the spirit she prayed would flow through her that night. Back at the hotel,

after a last check of the long white dinner gown bought for the occasion and the final decision on what jewelry to wear, Dorothy settled down for several hours of uninterrupted prayer, study, and supplication.

For Louise Baker, newly arrived home from her pioneer post, the evening was distinctly memorable. “Foundation Hall was overflowing; those who came too late to find seats stood to hear the words of the evening’s speakers. For the first time a public address system was set up to carry even outside Foundation Hall so all who gathered could hear.” Three individuals spoke: Horace Holley, the author of several books of poetry and prose, also at the time a member of the National Spiritual Assembly; Dr. Harry Allen Overstreet, a well-known writer of the day; and Dorothy. George Latimer, another member of the National Spiritual Assembly, served as chairman of the Convention and of the public meeting. He introduced Dorothy first. She rose from her chair. Like a tall white candle glowing at the front of the room, she moved toward the podium on that, the first night of the second century of the Bahá’í Faith. Radiant with the power and majesty of the historic moment, Dorothy spoke:

Religion is progressive, rushing forward like a giant river from God to the ages, watering the arid centuries to produce flowering civilizations and holy lives. God speaks, and the merciless opposers of His truth are swept into the limbo of the forgotten, while out of the lives of the martyr-revelators moves the age-old, twofold process of the fall of an old order of things, and the rise of a believing people, endowed with the power to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. . . . [89](#)

Dorothy manifested the very power of which she spoke: the power that enables believers in God and His progressive plan for humankind to carry

forward that potent, ever-advancing civilization. She spoke of the Founders of the world's great religions, of their gifts to civilization. Foundation Hall quivered with the shimmering vision Dorothy projected of God's kingdom, finally come.

She closed:

The religion of our fathers returns, opening a new chapter of revelation, and revealing a newly ordered world, to which the prophetic welcome of the Báb calls all who are gathered in this commemorative place: "Enter therein in peace, secure."

The account in *Bahá'í News* continues the description of the evening's events:

After the public meeting, we walked up the white path in the darkness, up the steps and through one of the nine great portals. The vast space beneath the Dome was packed with Bahá'ís. I wished the Guardian could have been here to see them, to see all these souls across the earth, who have grown out of the words that the Báb spoke in Shiraz a hundred years ago tonight.^{[90](#)}

Following the commemoration Dorothy went to Amelia Collins' hotel, her eyes very bright, and whispered, "Get out of bed, Millie! We're praying all night."^{[91](#)} The joy must have filled the hearts of these two future Hands of the Cause, bowed down in adoration on the one hundredth anniversary of the dawn of their Faith.

The talk Dorothy gave that evening was published in *World Order* magazine under the title "Religion Comes Again to Mankind," then as a

pamphlet called *Religion Returns*. This was the second pamphlet written by Dorothy to be released in the mid-forties, following *The Victory of the Spirit*.⁹² In July of 1944 Dorothy also spoke at a special Centenary Conference arranged by the National Spiritual Assembly for delegates from five Latin American countries who had been unable to attend the commemoration in May.

National work, teaching on other continents, the needs of communities in the United States—all of these concerns and the concomitant days and months of effort they demanded sometimes made Dorothy unsure which areas should receive her most concentrated attention. She even asked friends in Lima to please consider her situation when they elected the next Local Spiritual Assembly, as she was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Lima, and numerous committees. Because of their concern for her well-being she was not reelected to the Local Spiritual Assembly. Relieved but feeling guilty, she wrote to the Guardian for his opinion of her action. He wrote back that Dorothy should not have encouraged the friends not to vote for her; in Bahá'í elections individuals should feel free to vote for whomever they choose. The next Ridván Dorothy shared his guidance, but, still aware of her multiple responsibilities, the Bahá'ís again did not elect Dorothy to the Lima Assembly.

Even without local administrative responsibilities, the needed balance was missing in Dorothy's life and she knew it. Europe beckoned, as did South America, where Edmund and Muriel Miessler, Louise Baker, and Elisabeth Cheney pioneered, all from the area Dorothy once felt was barren territory: Lima, Ohio. The pioneers had clear-cut work before them, but Dorothy felt the pulling need of every front.

Still questioning where her fractioned energies should be concentrated, she put the matter to Shoghi Effendi in a letter written February 17, 1947. The National Teaching Committee had asked her to consider giving up one year of other teaching to concentrate totally on North America, as many groups and assemblies seemed to need assistance.



40. July 9, 1944: Bahá'í representatives from Latin America—both native believers and pioneers—with the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada.

His answer begged her not to “over-tax your strength, but rather save it for your essential work on the NSA and in such important fields as Europe.” In his wisdom Shoghi Effendi kept Dorothy from personally tackling the problems of groups and assemblies from New England to Arizona.

But in her “home” state of Ohio, the land she had dreaded from afar twenty years before, Dorothy could not resist taking an active part in the teaching. Her response to Bahá'u'lláh's call to love the people of the world would not let her discontinue the tending and nurturing of Bahá'í communities in the cities and hamlets and farmlands of that state. She did so with the patience of a gardener who knows that, as surely as midday follows dawn, with time and

attention planted seed will grow. She often paraphrased a passage from the Psalms, “In this day, no seed shall be lost.” Hinckley, Medina, Granger, or Findlay, the villages and townships of Ohio received the same scrupulous devotion as national talks and the international travel that she began in the 1940s.

Dorothy’s prominence in the North American Bahá’í community meant little to the souls she tried to reach. That she was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of one of the largest and most active Bahá’í communities in the world, that her name was reverently spoken by numerous Bahá’ís on that continent and others hardly mattered when she approached, as every Bahá’í has and will again, souls shrouded with their own doubts.

Some people she spoke with, befriended, and set her heart’s hopes on came into the Faith; a few others left. In Findlay, Ohio, a woman who had seemed devoted suddenly dropped her membership. She explained her decision by saying she felt the Bahá’ís adored Dorothy Baker too much.

Dorothy and other Lima Bahá’ís, with the help of Ruth Moffett from Chicago, opened Findlay to the Faith in 1947. In 1950 Dorothy had notices printed inviting the citizens of Findlay to attend talks at the local YMCA on Saturday nights. The notices, which were widely distributed in the little town, began,

Dear Friends:

The classes you have been looking for start next Saturday evening and you are invited to be there.

And ended with a list of the topics Dorothy planned to address in the six lectures:

The Art of Being Happy

The Bibles of Mankind

Features of the New Civilization

The Races of Man (Illustrated)

Why Belief in Immortality

The Forward Look

Hardly anyone came, but after the first class Dorothy touched local Bahá'ís Howard and Nellie Duff by anxiously asking, “Do you think I did all right? Do you think it will do any good?” Though few people attended the meetings, Nellie’s friends responded in what for Findlay seemed a wholehearted way: they told Mr. and Mrs. Duff they had seen the notices and knew the Duffs were Bahá'ís.

As Howard Duff recalled it, “Teachers from Lima held classes for some of us for two winters, and they were not mild winters either.” Those were cold months in more than one way. After the first few meetings the Bahá'ís were told they could no longer use the YMCA. One of the town leaders said it would be “like taking the C out of YMCA,” never imagining he might be

turning his back on the very return his Lord promised. Still the Bahá'ís met and said prayers together, gathering wherever they could. Howard remembered Dorothy praying “with that glow in her face like that on the face of a young girl in love for the first time. . . . That was an angel, that woman!”

A few steadfast Bahá'ís from Findlay would drive to Lima for special meetings. When they walked in the front door of the Bakers' house, Nellie Duff knew what it felt like to be a queen. “Dorothy would take us by the hands, sort of bow and say ‘Findlay!’ It seemed something special.” What respect she had for those staunch Bahá'ís who weathered the condemnation and the cold impassive faces of their neighbors, greeting their spiritual recreation with grumbling doubts or active opposition. In Dorothy's vision the Bahá'ís of rural Ohio were Dawn-Breakers and she gave them her best.

In the mid 1940s there were six Bahá'ís in Granger Township and four in nearby Hinckley Township. The Bahá'ís, like their neighbors, lived on farms spread across the fertile Ohio land, but there were enough of them in the two areas to form a Local Spiritual Assembly. Lillian Dake of Granger remembered the anxiety and strong feelings roused among some of the Bahá'ís when they found out they had to form separate Bahá'í communities and lose their assembly.

About this time our beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, asked that each be divided into townships, cities, or municipalities and to work towards forming groups and assemblies.

This worked a hardship on us to some extent as being new in the Faith threw us into confusion, so Dorothy Baker was sent to us and we were asked to have a joint meeting, which we did.

At this meeting held at the Reidel's in their little Farm Parlor, we all sat in a circle and Dorothy (as we all called her) stated that we were to carry on in obedience with our Guardian's wishes and to work for additional members to the Faith.

She then told us how to treat one the other and it was a very valuable session as she told us this by not mentioning any names. . . . That one should try to be obedient to the letter of the law, but that in the growth of our groups or any one that we must be patient, and to teach by love the fundamentals of the Faith, and that when this knowledge became clear to one, he would then be obedient, that one should not talk about any one or repeat gossip, for it hinders progress of the Faith, that we should only speak of the good one does and enlarge on that and he will become encouraged and try harder to do more.

That one should not be jealous of another, that there are many ways one can serve the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh and that one should encourage another to work in the Faith, that to restrict one of the Group, the spirit is killed and no progress will be made, that in fact it will kill the spirit of the group and it will be caused to disperse. . . .

That it is each person's duty to teach the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in whatever manner he can. Some teach by actions and others by pioneering, some only by hospitality, and others financially, but that no matter how, each must sacrifice to give some thing of themselves for that only brings happiness and health on one or to a group.

What a bounty this meeting was to us and later Dorothy Beecher Baker met at our homes many times and stayed at mine as well as at the Herbert Kamps and the Bert Beach's. . .

Dorothy will always be remembered with fondness and love by me and many a time I [still] see her as she washed her hands at the lavatory and would with each ablution repeat the obligatory prayer, in the morning.

Another remembrance [is of] when she told us to work and that making a mistake should not discourage us as she had made errors when she first came into the Cause . . .

When I think of the many, many times she journeyed forth [to] teach Bahá'u'lláh's Cause of the Oneness of Mankind and the oneness of Religion and that Bahá'u'lláh was the Christ returned as was promised, sacrificing self and family and her utter devotion to the Bahá'í Cause, I am ashamed to be called a follower of this Great Faith.

She was so happy and contented doing His bidding that her self was never thought of, but only the daily task of living as best she could for the Cause. No time of the year or weather or even sickness stopped her, she went forth cheerfully and gladly and joyously taught the beginners in the Faith.

She not only was a Standard Bearer, but also helped to lift the load of the weight on the weak and beginners in their path of following the Lord of Hosts in this Day, and helped to prepare them for the teaching of the Bahá'í Cause, to work together and alone as best they could.

I am overcome with emotion as I think of the Bounties bestowed upon us in this region, by the presence of strong souls at the beginning of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Faith [such] as Dorothy Baker and Louis Gregory.

The little towns were segregated, but the Bahá'í Faith reached across the racial divide. Mrs. Dake remembered Dorothy Baker speaking of Louis Gregory to the rural Bahá'ís of her area. Dorothy said that Louis Gregory was the only person she knew of who had been able to stay in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá for more than twenty minutes while a Tablet was revealed to him—the rest fainted.

The Bahá'ís of Hinckley and Granger decided it was time to teach their dark skinned neighbors. Mrs. Dake arranged for Dorothy and Louis Gregory to speak before the black congregation of the Second Baptist Church in Medina, Ohio. Mrs. Dake watched as Dorothy “spoke so lovingly of Louis Gregory that tears came to their minister’s eyes as she spoke of how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá placed him at the Embassy table in Washington D.C.”

In Lima the Faith kept moving forward in spite of the barrier of racism. The future Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Elsie Austin wrote:

I first met Dorothy Baker when I was a young inquirer, reluctantly interested in the Faith because of its newness and because I had reached the point of disbelief in the power of religion to change people or social circumstances. The bigotry and prejudice in the world seemed to me at that state to be served by religion rather than diminished.

Mrs. Baker and Mr. Frank Baker lived in Lima, an insular, reactionary, small town in Ohio, a citadel of conservatism and an area once identified with activities of the Klu Klux Klan. In the rigid climate of this city Frank and Dorothy Baker had opened their home for Bahá'í meetings to which all persons were welcome. Dorothy’s special radiance of spirit and eloquence in speech made her home a site for regional firesides to which

believers and inquirers from cities and towns within a radius of fifty miles from Lima would come. Here the Teachings were always earnestly and beautifully presented.

This was the period of the early thirties, when racism and bigotry were the accepted way of life, and people who did not suffer from these blights did not often have the courage of their convictions. Because of this atmosphere the courage and stand for human unity which the Bakers took in opening their home to teach a new Faith and to persons of many races and backgrounds was a traumatic thing for Lima. The comings and goings of so many different people attracted much attention, yet the Bakers were never apologetic or furtive in their efforts for the Faith. Their courage and their sincerity gave real results, for nearly every person who went to those firesides became a dependable and predictable Bahá'í.

The July 1944 issue of *Bahá'í News* shows Dorothy Baker in a photograph of nine individuals, all dressed meticulously, the two men wearing suits, the women in corsages, pearls, or hats. These were the speakers at a race unity banquet held in Lima. Two were African-American women, one of them Frances Cotman. More than fifty years later, her grandson, Dr. Ivan Louis Cotman, recalled:

Charles, my grandfather, was a carpenter and night watchman at the Frank Baker Bakery which I often visited during my teen years when I was sent from Detroit to visit my grandparents in the summers. As I understand it, it was my grandfather who began to be interested in the Bahá'í Faith.

Frances, my grandmother, was a domestic for Dr. and Mrs. Halfhill there, a local physician. I can't recall her doing anything besides being a domestic

until later when she started Cotman's "That's for Cats" cat hotel at 932 W. High Street in 1947.

Neither had finished high school but when they passed away I found books on Arabic. They had written Allah'-u'Akbar and other Arabic words in the margin of the books. Imagine—"Negroes" in the early fifties attempting to write and read Arabic—very insightful.

My grandmother was very active in diverse Bahá'í activities including travelling to Bahá'í meetings in different cities. Apparently my grandmother accompanied Dorothy Baker to a Bahá'í lecture at Kentucky State College, now Kentucky State University, located in Frankfort, Kentucky, the capital city. Kentucky State was then completely segregated.

It was still segregated when I entered college there in 1958. It is noteworthy that my grandmother accompanied Mrs. Baker to an integrated affair in a period when nothing was integrated, not even the bus station. I remember the bus station in Mount Sterling. My father said, "You sit over here. This is where I have to live. Bobby Kennedy can tell you where you can sit, but I've got to live here, so while you're here, you sit on the Negro side." These were efforts, Mrs. Baker's efforts and my grandmother's, at integration.

I have memories of visiting Lima in the summer and going to the Bahá'í Center, at the home of Frank and Dorothy Baker, about 1953 or 1954. It was a two story house where people met—brick. You went up the porch stairs, then there was a room on either side of the entry hall. As I recall there were a number of blacks and whites at these prayer meetings and this assemblage of people would pray together.

It wasn't like Buddhist chants, but there was a cadence, one I remember clearly, my grandmother's favorite which I often quote, "Is there any remover of difficulties save God?" That prayer is powerful. It's a legacy Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Cotman left to me and my generation.

I recall fondly my teen experiences in Lima, including sunrise breakfast services with the Bahá'ís at Schoonover Park. On Sunday mornings they'd go to the park and wait for the sun to rise. They'd have all this good food, a pot luck breakfast, picnic tables. My point is there was outdoor social interaction between blacks and whites in that very socially repressive town. Mrs. Baker and my grandmother were advanced in a very segregated, monolithic, repressive atmosphere which I think says something about the Bahá'í Faith, not to mention the valor of Dorothy Baker.

My grandfather told me about the Universal House of Justice before he died. In 1994, while serving as Deputy Superintendent of the Michigan Department of Education, I accompanied a delegation of staff from the United States House and Senate Committees to Haifa, Israel. On Mount Carmel, high above the Mediterranean, one can look out and see all of Haifa. One's attention is automatically drawn to the golden dome of the Shrine of the Báb and the surrounding gardens. I found it very emotional to realize again these "uneducated Negroes" as they were called, living in Lima, Ohio, of all places, would have an international perspective and the foresight to envision all that. I felt the Bahá'í Faith broadened my grandparents' perspective in a spiritual, literary and geographical sense.

My brother Charles and I were raised as Roman Catholics at my mother's insistence. My mother had converted to Roman Catholicism from the

African Methodist Episcopal Church, the AME church.

Some of the family ostracized my grandparents. My mother would say things like, “Mama Frances has gone crazy!” They just didn’t take time to understand what the Bahá’í Faith was about. But it made sense to us. As a Unitarian-Universalist, the notion of progressive revelation, of the harmony of science and religion, of racial harmony: these principles make sense to me.

Just a word about my father. To the day he died, I never heard him talk about religion. I never knew what my father’s religion was, but he always kept a picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on his dresser. My brother and I were dropped off at church on Sundays, but he never went. I never saw him in a church. But he would always pray, using one of those Bahá’í prayers. I still have that picture, and his prayer book.

Allie Diehl heard of Bahá’u’lláh in Lima in 1947. Her memory of Dorothy as a local community member stemmed solely from the years when outside responsibilities were such that, logically, Dorothy couldn’t have had that much energy to devote to Lima. But for her, placing the most important over the very important did not necessarily mean grand scale teaching over small scale. One night, what Allie described as “a typical fall Tuesday, early in November 1947,” she met Dorothy.

I did not really wish to go to the Bahá’í meeting, but, because we had exhausted all the possible excuses for not going, my husband and I bowed to the inevitable. Really, I did not want to go. I had heard that the speaker was a rather wealthy person and I must admit that contact with other “rich”

ladies had not been a pleasant experience. Frankly, I had a strong prejudice against most anyone “rich.”

It was a small fireside where all knew each other except I did not know Mrs. Baker. (Those present were Joe Stahl, Mildred Stahl, Lillian Wilson, Mrs. Baker and myself.) First impressions can be powerful and I was struck with the thought of how this sincere, beautiful lady could possibly be associated with “rich” people. The economic barrier was dissolved— instantly. The lesson, too, was powerful. After being introduced as a person who would tell about the Bahá’í Faith, Mrs. Baker said that she would try to tell the listeners about the Bahá’í Faith. The word “try” stays with me today because the illustration she gave was practical and meaningful.

Gesturing with her fingers to form the shape of a small box, she developed the idea that if she had a gift to give, it might be in a box that big. That box could be wrapped in beautiful paper with a beautiful bow. On the box could be a card of greeting. Yet, to have the gift within, a person would have to open the box himself. No one else could do this for the individual. Knowing the Bahá’í Faith is the same thing. A person cannot be given this wonderful gift of God without opening the box and taking the gift.

That fireside was long ago, but the impression of the compelling personality has remained. I had experienced something that evening most people rarely have. I had met someone who could demonstrate her teachings through her own life.

As a Bahá’í teacher, Dorothy had no equal. She gave me an education that would shame many. Using the works of the Guardian, she would use the

technique of analyzing the Writings by looking at parts of speech. We studied *Pattern of Bahá'í Life* by listing the verbs, then the nouns, the adjectives and the adverbs. Once the words were pointed out, each would be counted and discussed. This has helped me to memorize many of the prayers and given me a skill that is invaluable.

Deepening classes would be on time, scholarly, and well-organized. Outlining was the method used and encouraged. She was well-prepared and would readily show the references in the Writings. Impromptu questions on a personal level were answered immediately, followed by a letter two or three days later recapping her comments with a specific reference, usually from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The typewritten letter would sometimes run two pages.

Dorothy always had time to see people who wanted special help with personal problems. A call ahead for an appointment would assure time in either the library or Pullman at the Elm Street home/center. The interview was never rushed and there was time to talk through the entire concern. The advice given was solid and wise. I remember her constant admonition to obey the Administrative Order, regardless of the demands placed upon the individual.

The supportive personal love that flowed back and forth between the Ohio friends was not marked by a perception on Dorothy's part of herself as the source. She was responsive. Her role was not one of strict authority, but of a flexible partner in the giving and receiving of knowledge and inspiration.

The closest role model Dorothy had was Mother Beecher. She visited the cemetery in Lima where Mother Beecher lay buried rather as if she were

visiting a shrine. But Mother Beecher had not dealt with the Administrative Order to the extent Dorothy now did as the first female chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada. No precedent had been set in the Bahá'í community for how a woman should act when dealing with responsibilities usually left to men. A common response is to take on a dominant attitude and subjugate more delicate qualities. This stiffly defined approach, that women with responsible positions should act like the men who held those positions before them, did not find favor with Dorothy. She fluidly combined the active, or “male,” and receptive, or “female,” aspects of her character, which allowed other men and women on the National Spiritual Assembly the same freedom. Since oftentimes the clarifying remark in consultation may come from the humblest soul in any meeting, consistently taking on the role of the wise one can be an act of ego rather than of wisdom.

As Bahíyyih Nakhjavání writes, “it is not who we are but what we do in relation to each other that makes a jewel of our lives. No individual, therefore, can symbolize the active force alone, or assume the role of the receptive agent rigidly.”⁹³ An inflexible, carefully crafted self-image as leader or follower, the kind of rigidity often deemed necessary in the world, would have reduced rather than enhanced Dorothy’s effectiveness. Instead, letting the needs of the situation determine her action, allowing the force of truth to have its impact, whether through herself or through another, she did not slip behind a comfortable facade of authority figure or of servile attendant.

Others’ perceptions of Dorothy and her own attitudes toward herself as a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and as an administrator on Bahá'í institutions give an interesting vision of how various qualities must have combined to create the effectiveness of her administrative efforts.

Artemus Lamb

I have never been very adept at describing people, and when it came to trying to describe Dorothy, I am sure my own lack of capacity and experience prevented me from adequately perceiving many of her qualities. I do know that I and everyone I knew wanted to be with her at every possible moment to try to imbibe a little of her knowledge, inspiration, and love. . . .

At one of my first conventions in the USA . . . Dorothy was chairman of the Convention. In her opening remarks she stated that often it was thought that spirituality and efficiency did not go together—that it was either one or the other—however, she did not believe this was so, and she hoped this Convention would be both spiritual and efficient. Now as I write this, I realize that it was this balance in Dorothy that impressed me so greatly.

Hattie Chamberlin, a Bahá'í in Massachusetts

She was a dynamic and powerful teacher. I remember well, at a Convention in the Temple at Wilmette, Illinois when volunteers were asked to pioneer to Africa—Dorothy immediately went to one corner of the Foundation Hall and said, “We’ll begin right here and form the line!”

*Edna True*⁹⁴

My next association with Dorothy was on the NSA. I was elected in 1946. . . . In the early days my mother, Corinne True, was elected chairman of the Temple Unity Committee. Dorothy was the first and until now the only woman chairman of the NSA.⁹⁵ She tossed it off.

Her sense of humor was simply superb. It trickled through everything she did. I don't care how serious, she always found room for a little laugh. . . . So she took this in the same way. She said, "Oh, the men can't decide which one they want. You watch me, Eddie. It⁹⁶ will be one year—that's all it will last!"

The men on the NSA used to tease her a little bit, because she was rather extravagant sometimes in her vocabulary. We went over one day (to an NSA meeting) right from the Convention, where she had talked about Latin America. She'd spoken of "girdles of immorality around South America." She used this expression and they never let her forget it. And no one would laugh harder than she would at herself. It was wonderful to see. They just loved to tease her about the different expressions she would use!

Paul Haney,⁹⁷ from a tape made in Haifa, Israel, May 1976

I served with Dorothy from 1946 to 1953 on the United States National Spiritual Assembly. She was a person of such great qualities and capacities that it is very difficult to characterize them, but certainly she combined in a unique way the qualities of both an outstanding teacher and an outstanding administrator, and that is a combination that is not often found. She was indeed unique in that respect, and in both fields she had the ability to bring out the best capacities that were latent within the people with whom she was associated in the Faith. I recall that in the difficult and often slogging sessions of the National Assembly she had the unique capacity and ability to raise our sights to a true concept of the real purpose of the work we were engaged in, and what its ultimate objective should be.

As a platform speaker on the Faith, or indeed on any subject, she had no peer. Dorothy had an ability, in an abundant measure, to "go across the

footlights” in a very wonderful way, which for the most part only great actors and actresses possess, and she used it not to project her own personality, but to project the Teachings. Whenever she spoke of the Faith, what she said struck home to the hearts of the listeners. It was not just her eloquence which enabled her to evoke such response, but also her sincerity and her dedication to the Faith, and her deep knowledge of the Teachings.

All these things in combination produced an effect that people really marveled at, and in some cases envied.

Before I became a member of the National Assembly in Ridván 1946, I had heard Dorothy speak and I knew that she was a great teacher of the Faith, but I had no conception of the extent of her administrative capacity. I was soon to learn that. At the very first meeting which the four new members attended, while the Convention was still going on, the first order of business was the election of officers. To everyone’s surprise and astonishment Dorothy was elected chairman, the first and only woman who has ever been chairman of the National Assembly of the United States.^{[98](#)}

During the conventions that followed that year, until she went to Latin America at the time of the Convention in 1951, she served as the chairman of the annual Convention, and set a pattern of performance that I am sure subsequent chairmen, including myself, have striven to emulate but have never fully succeeded.

I recall that during the 1st or 2nd year of our service together on the National Assembly, she had written the Guardian asking for the bounty of pilgrimage. At that time the Guardian replied that a trip to the goal countries in Europe would be more meritorious. With characteristic obedience and

happiness, because the Guardian's wish was her command, she immediately arose and made the trip to Europe and all the goal countries in those critical early months of the 2nd Seven Year Plan. One can imagine how much her visits must have meant in those difficult years to the pioneers who were struggling to establish the Faith in those countries, and to the few believers who had at that point accepted the Faith . . .

Many of the friends still living will recall the extensive tours she made, particularly to visit colleges and universities, both colored and white, throughout the country, where she lectured on the Faith. She was for many years the chairman or secretary of the College Bureau of the National Assembly, and she had a very great interest in this type of teaching. She always had a great empathy with young people. She attracted them always, and was able to reach them with the Message she brought.

I had the privilege of sharing the platform with her at two very large public meetings which were held in the middle 1940's; one of them I believe in 1945 at the Hall of Nations in Washington, D.C., where she and Horace Holley were the speakers. I was the chairman and Ollie Walter Olitsky, a very devoted Bahá'í who was a baritone with the Metropolitan Opera, sang. We had an "all-Bahá'í act," as we termed it. This program was repeated a year or so later at Times Hall in New York City before a very large audience. On both occasions both Dorothy and Horace Holley rose to great heights. Each was a gifted speaker in his own way, and the occasion brought forth their best efforts.

One of Dorothy's gifts and graces that I admired very much was her beautiful command of the English language and the ability to make thoughts come alive by using colorful metaphors and figures of speech which were

always dignified, but expressive, and enabled her to reach her audience in a way that few people, and none in the Faith, could do. She was unmatched as a speaker. As I said before, it was not just this capacity that made her so effective as a speaker, but the combination of this with the degree of sincerity that Dorothy had, and her knowledge of the Teachings. The combination is unbeatable! . . .

I have spoken of her qualities as a teacher and an administrator, but this tribute would be incomplete without paying tribute to her as a friend. Dorothy was a person one enjoyed being with not only in serving the Faith, but in any connection. She had a wonderful sense of humor and could enjoy a good story or a good joke. During the intense sessions of the National Assembly we always relaxed around the luncheon and dinner table, and Dorothy was always one of the most appreciative listeners to the stories that Horace [Holley] and I and others would bring to the table, and she contributed a good many herself. From a man's point of view, I think Dorothy could be characterized as "a good sport," a person with a sense of humor, and a sense of fair play, and a thoroughly enjoyable person to be with under all sorts of circumstances.

Jokes Dorothy wrote in a small spiral notebook for breaks during NSA meetings.

"There were rewards for everybody but the audience."

Heywood Brown: "It opened at 8:30 sharp and closed at 10:30 dull."

Descriptions: "Fred Astaire. Can't act. Slightly bald. Can dance a little."
MGM Inter-Office studio memo after first screen test, '33. Framed over

Fred's fireplace.

Mother: "Darling, why making faces at your bulldog?" "Well, he started it."

Louise Baker

The first time Mother chaired a National Convention she found that she could not keep control of the consultation. It tended to become heated, get off the subject, and she couldn't remember the order in which people had raised their hands to speak. Finally, she called a ten-minute recess. Mother went immediately to the Cornerstone, as she always did when she had a problem. She was very tense and nervous, and prayed, "Oh, God! I can't handle this. What can I do? I feel as though I were in the middle of a terrible vortex that drags me down."

She forced herself to take a few deep breaths, relax, and clear her mind. Suddenly she seemed to hear a voice saying, "In the middle of a vortex there is absolute quiet."

Immediately she felt relaxed and confident. She went back to Foundation Hall and proceeded to handle one of the stormier Conventions we have had over the years. Now and then she would simply close her eyes when things threatened to get out of hand, and stand quietly for a moment or two, to regain that calm at the heart of the vortex.

From Dorothy to Edmund and Muriel Miessler

May 16, 1947

Dearest Muriel and Ed,

Since your darling, bubbly letter came, I have been consumed by the task of being chairman of Convention and of starting another year as chairman of the NSA, and these two things are enough to put a novice like me into an early grave!! Only the mercy and compassion of the Beloved pulled us through with joy and assurance and a few little jokes on Dorothy which nobody minded very much. . . .

The National Assembly is going on a double schedule this year and as chairman I will have to give full time to it, so that it will be impossible to remain on the Inter-America.⁹⁹ This takes me out of your direct field of service, but my heart will be just as much with you as ever; I wouldn't have to tell you that. Tell the dear Bodes about this when you see them and give them my heart's love and gratitude for their remarkable service during this first period of Brasil's uphill climb.

All my love, dear ones, and fervent prayers for your continued success. We get so busy in this world that it becomes impossible to be to each other what we should be, but I want you to know again, here and now, that you are so near and dear to me that words are really inadequate to describe it and I pray God to be worthy of your friendship.

Oceans of love, your
Dorothy

Bahá'í News, June 1948: "The Divine Plan Unfolds"

The chairman, Mrs. Dorothy Baker, opened the Convention at 9:30 by asking—“What is the magic of this time?”

In answering this she said that some of it was in the number 40. She referred to Moses and the 40 years in the wilderness, the 40 days Christ spent in prayer on the mountaintop and Muhammad’s 40 days of preparation. The Báb, she stated, received Letters of the Living for 40 days while the Blessed Beauty suffered for 40 years. In this Fortieth Convention, she continued, “May God assist us to make this the hour of a new birth, for it is the Time. In Europe, on my recent trip, so many asked me: ‘How long will this obscurity last? Will you hurry?’ Mrs. Baker closed by asking: “May we make the keynote of this Convention that we arise to carry the Cause of God out of our own obscurity into the Light of God, for the true aim of the Convention is the conversion of the world . . .

The Fortieth Convention was historic. Some highlights were:

The triumph of surpassing the goal set by the Guardian of having 175 Assemblies in the United States and Canada . . . A second goal, toward which all eyes had been turned with hope, was described by Mr. John Robarts, who was introduced by the new name of “Chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Canada.” With enthusiasm and assurance Mr. Robarts said: “We have accepted the challenge of our 5-year Plan sent by the Guardian, we are going at it NOW and we KNOW it can be done.” He spoke of the good judgment of the Guardian in marrying a Canadian and of the inspiring letter received from Rúhíyyih Khánúm, in whose childhood home the Convention was held. Canada, Mr. Robarts reminded those present, was the ninth pillar in the forthcoming International House of Justice. . . .

Bahá'í News, June 1948: "Canadian Bahá'í Convention, 1948"

... Dorothy baker, for the last time acting as chairman of our joint NSA opened the Convention and conducted the election of our Convention officers. She had come with four other members of the NSA of the United States (how strangely shorn that title appears) to hand over to the Canadian NSA the trust shared for so long.

Our Convention chairman, John Robarts, and secretary, Laura Davis, took their places. . . .

John Robarts

When the Canadian NSA was formed five members of the United States NSA came to help us. Dorothy was one of them. Dorothy was chairman and we had the election of Convention officers. I was then elected chairman and sent to occupy the chairman's seat. Dorothy had a silk scarf with her with a pattern on it. I found it in the chair and put it around my shoulders, with the feeling that it was a talisman of the chairmanship which I was carrying on. I kept it for several years and then gave it away. I have always regretted doing that.

Excerpts from letters to Dorothy Baker from Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih
Khánum

Haifa

July 14, 1947.

Dearest Dorothy,

This letter is not going to be very coherent because I am always in a hurry. I suspect you live in very much the same atmosphere and know what it means to always have a new task treading on the heels of the one you are still doing.

I am so glad that you and Louise are now going to be able to go to Europe and I think that your visit there will make a big difference. . . .

Aren't you ever going to grow old? I should think other Bahá'ís at home would feel like tearing their hair out when they see you turn up, year after year, with the same girlish figure and the same sweet face. . . . How I wish we could see each other! I long to stretch my mind in the presence of some mature believers, if you know what I mean. I miss the wonderful talks that I used to have with my mother. . . .

I did not mind a bit your writing to me in pencil, and any word from you is always very dear to me, but knowing how busy you are, I don't think I should expect you to answer me, any more than you should expect me to answer you.

A heartfelt of love to you.

Rúhíyyih

PS. In reading this over I find it very inadequate. It was dictated and I can't be really at home with a non-Bahá'í stenographer from here. On the other hand I just cannot do the Guardian's mail and my own long hand. I get too tired and have not the time. There is so much I should like to just ramble

along with you about . . . next time maybe. Now it is eleven and if I don't go to bed I can't work properly tomorrow. So often I wish I were at least two people!

October 20, 1948

Dearest Dorothy,

From afar I gather my own impressions of the Cause in America and tho I may be very wrong here are some of them.

It sometimes seems to me in the effort to establish the administration soundly the friends are going to the other extreme and flooding a relatively small community with oceans of procedure and red tape. Highly efficient races, like the Germans and the Americans, who like to organize, have a tendency to over-organize and get out details for every single contingency that may ever conceivably arise. This is easy to do, for to tell other people where to get off is a pleasure, to make rules is so much easier than to follow them! But don't you think it kills initiative and makes people afraid of doing the wrong thing, of breaking a rule? . . .

Forgive me for pouring out all this. But it is close to my heart and your letter called forth these thoughts and I feel to you I can always say what is in my heart, though I may be wrong. Too often one sees in assemblies the attitude, "we have the power, and you must obey." Of course this is true. But the wielding of power is an art. To lead gently is so much stronger than to drive harshly and creates unity and cooperation. . . .

Forgive this long scribble! Much love goes to you always, and I long for the day we will meet.

Rúhíyyih

Eunice Braun^{[100](#)}

Around 1948, in the spring or summer, when I was studying the Faith, Dorothy gave several firesides in the Chicago area.

When I could find out where she would be speaking I would come and listen to her. At one fireside there was a woman there who dressed very exotically. She taught some kind of religious philosophy on which she held classes. She had a certain charisma, but she also had a certain arrogance about her, as if she knew she was in command. She was not a Bahá'í, but had come to hear Dorothy.

When Dorothy spoke she was very powerful, but at the same time there was a tremendous humility about her. I wasn't a Bahá'í at the time. I had talked to the other woman, and was deeply impressed by the difference between them. . . .

One evening at Louhelen she invited me to come to her room to talk. A man named H— was there, who had had his voting rights removed. I had run into him at different places. He had caused great trouble in several places I had been—great dissension. (He was very annoying to me, because I could see that he was just a troublemaker in the Faith.) Apparently he was to meet with the National Assembly the following weekend. He stopped Dorothy and wanted to talk with her. I don't

remember just what was said, but she said something like, “Just what is the Faith worth to you?” She was a different person—like a lioness. She didn’t raise her voice or anything, but her eyes blazed, and it was very powerful. I thought at the time, “If I were that man, I’d drop dead!”

He left, and we walked on as if it had never happened at all. Some people say that Dorothy was all sweetness and light. No, that isn’t true. She was a lioness in the Cause of God. There’s no doubt about that. I think that she had an ability to absorb the spirit so that when she was with people it affected them very, very deeply. She had the ability to be such a channel that the love came through to people. Some times, I think, people attributed that purely to personality, but I don’t think it was that. She really was such a channel.

Motives purified by tests, skills honed by service, heart afire through prayer and study and love, Dorothy saw the world in desperate need. The 1940s was the time when she stepped into the international field.

CHAPTER 18

In 1940 Louise Baker turned eighteen and Bill seventeen. University or the family business were the obvious choices for Bill, but Louise wasn't so sure. At the last minute she decided to forgo her fall enrollment at Rollins College, majoring in history, and apply to Scudder Secretarial School in New York. Frank and Dorothy were more than a little surprised with her answer when they asked about the reason behind her change of plans. She said she had decided to move to South America, but thought she would need a skill to support herself there. Louise had a good background in Spanish already and she had decided to train as a bilingual secretary. Neither Frank nor Dorothy knew quite how to respond to this surge of independence from their daughter, who seemed suddenly transformed from a rambunctious teenager to a strong-willed young woman with her own ideas about how she wanted to live.

The two of them talked it over. Frank was against an international move from the start, but Dorothy was more open. The Inter-America Committee was in need of pioneers in South America. She was delighted that her daughter might be able to go. Another single young woman might not be hardy enough, but Dorothy knew Louise and her strengths. If she had the will to go, Dorothy was in favor of letting her try.

The next summer, with Louise home from secretarial school for vacation, Dorothy was doubly glad of their decision. She was doing a lot of writing,

and her daughter's new typing skills were very useful.

On January 1, 1943, Louise was on her way to Bogota, Colombia. Reports to the Inter-America Committee and home to her parents were positive. Dorothy began making plans to visit the young Bahá'í community where "Winnie Lou" lived. She decided to learn Spanish first and, in her typical style, set up a class so that anyone else in Lima who wanted to learn could join her.

Frank bought some Spanish language records, and Dorothy managed to stay one lesson ahead of the class she taught, which was made up mostly of Bahá'ís. She planned to leave Lima in December for a two-month teaching trip, beginning in Bogota. On December 10 Horace Holley, the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly, sent her a cable from Wilmette:

WE ALL FEEL ASSURED SPLENDID RESULTS YOUR IMPORTANT
UNDERTAKING MAY YOUR INFLUENCE GUIDE AND INSPIRE
PRECIOUS NUCLEUS FAITH IN COLOMBIA

Upon her arrival at the Colonial Hotel in Miami, Florida, the last stop before her flight to South America, Dorothy received a cable that must have given her heart wings:

FERVENT PRAYERS ACCOMPANYING YOU LOVING
APPRECIATION SHOGHI RABBANI

Louise found that "by the time Dorothy got to Bogota she had a good base of Spanish to build on, but could not carry on even a simple conversation. She spoke, naturally enough, at many meetings, and I translated for her."

This method worked, but Dorothy was determined to put her limited Spanish to use. She told Louise which stories she wanted to use in her talks and asked Louise to tell them to her in the simplest Spanish. Keeping the verbs in the present tense wherever possible, Louise told her the same story five, maybe six, or even seven times, trying to use the same words to make the job of learning them easier. Louise carefully translated every sentence at the next public talk, but right in the middle Dorothy launched into her Spanish story, to the enthusiastic response of her listeners.



41. The Inter-America Committee in the mid-1940s: Edna True, Virginia Orbison, Mrs. Barton, Dorothy Baker, and Amelia Collins.



42. *Bogota, Colombia, 1944: election of the first Local Spiritual Assembly. Dorothy Baker, a visitor, is sitting second from the right. Louise Baker is standing second from the left.*

After several weeks in Bogota, Dorothy and Louise traveled to Barranquilla, Colombia, especially to visit an early Colombian Bahá'í, Senor Carlos Nieto. In a letter to the Inter-America Committee, mailed just before leaving Colombia for Venezuela, Dorothy wrote:

Upon arrival (in Bogota) I found six believers confirmed by Mr. Gerard Sluter. The two classes being conducted, one by Mr. Sluter and one by Winifred Louise Baker, were courteously turned over to the visitor and opened to guests. A class in Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh was organized for believers and close students, and teas and conferences were arranged for others. You all doubtless know now the joyous news that two new believers have enrolled, and that the Guardian and the National Assembly approved an immediate election. I hope that the report has reached you safely. Several more are close.

The weeks in Colombia had improved Dorothy's Spanish to the extent that she arrived in Venezuela with a stock of Bahá'í stories and enough vocabulary to locate and talk to the native contacts who had learned of the Faith from earlier teachers and pioneers. She recorded with enthusiasm what must have been difficult maneuvers on her first foreign teaching trip.

The extreme cordiality of the people forbids the "foreign" feeling in Caracas. What a happy task it was to find, one by one, the friends of Gwenne Sholtis, former pioneer, and remind them of the great Cause which had been the object of her love and devotion while among them. They had not forgotten, and some of them were glad to come to the little meetings at the Gran Americana. Delightful contacts of Mr. and Mrs.

Emeric Sala were later added, and new friends found their way to the little gatherings. Through the courtesy of Sra Trina Courlaender, editor of the magazine *Pro-America*, and president of the National Club for the Union of American Women, a world of friendships opened up. The meetings grew to about forty in attendance.

At the close of a period of five weeks, eight historic souls accepted the joy and responsibility of the World Order under the Guardian, and in addition, one youth, and one adult who lacked permanent residency. Sra Courlaender herself became one of the group that organized on that memorable night. All were present when Dr. David Escalante was elected the first Secretary, and all assisted in laying the first plans for feasts and regular classes.^{[101](#)}

The Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and South America received numerous visits from Dorothy over the next few years. Viva Lismore, born to Swedish parents, moved to Cuba with her husband in 1936, unaware of the existence of the Bahá'í Faith.

She wrote that a friend, Josephine Kruka,

‘phoned me up and invited me to attend a lecture by Rosemary Sala, but at the time I could not gather up sufficient energy to attend anything, as my family and myself were in deep sorrow over the passing of our eldest son, Hugo, killed in action on June 6, 1944. However, I invited Miss Kruka and Rosemary Sala as well as Jean Silver for tea. They stayed for several hours but never mentioned the word “Bahá'í” I remember Rosemary told me that I had a highly spiritual nature. When they invited me to come and hear another travelling teacher, Dorothy Baker, speak, I felt I could not refuse.

When I arrived at the large hall where she gave her talk, the two resident pioneers were at the door welcoming the guests. They asked [me] to join the group sitting on the platform, but I preferred to sit with the audience. I felt rather upset by the fact that the translator was not conveying into Spanish what Dorothy Baker was saying in English. I sat there, listening to Dorothy Baker speak, a trim figure on the platform, wearing a small hat, and quite suddenly I saw a halo of light around her head. I asked my neighbor whether she could see it, and she replied, "No." Again, I asked her if she could see this halo of light around the speaker's head, which was gradually becoming brighter. Her negative answer surprised me. At this moment, Dorothy Baker said: "Anyone who wishes to hear more about Bahá'u'lláh can come to the Bahá'í Centre for the next ten days where I shall be seeing the friends mornings and evenings." I had never heard this word "Bahá'u'lláh" before, and it went straight to my heart and has never left since. From then on my life changed entirely. I felt that I had embarked on a journey without a compass, but also I felt confident that the journey would be guided, protected and illumined.

In 1945 Dorothy Baker was in Mexico on a delicate mission for the National Spiritual Assembly. Her goal was to disentangle the nascent Bahá'í community from the grip of a spiritualist who tried to control the friends.

On the way there Dorothy shared a train compartment with Gayle Woolson. Amelia Collins accompanied them to the station in Chicago. Gayle wrote,

While at the depot waiting for the train on which Dorothy and I had a reserved compartment, we sat at a small round table with metal legs in a restaurant of the station where we had coffee and talked. I basked in the light of their presence and inspiring conversation which revolved

principally around the guidelines given by the Guardian to consolidate and expand the work of the Faith in Latin America. The love for the Guardian and the desire to follow his guidance was uppermost in our hearts. . . .

When the departure of our train was announced, dear Millie, as we lovingly called her, recited by heart, with profound feeling and sincerity, the Tablet of Visitation by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The spirit of it accompanied us on our journey. . . .

When Dorothy and I were settled in our compartment, one of the first things she talked about was the magnificent and thrilling new book of the Guardian, *God Passes By*—a classic—which recently had been published. As yet, I had not read it. She conveyed that it is a gem-like, ingenious presentation of a summary of the first eventful one hundred years of the Bahá’í Faith-1844 to 1944. . . . Dorothy carried a copy of the book with her. How profoundly she treasured it.

Among the things that Dorothy related to me in the course of our journey was an episode in *God Passes By* about a critical period at the time of the early Bábís. Bahá’u’lláh told them in part to recite the prayer of the Báb, which we call the Remover of Difficulties, five hundred times. She then said, “Let us say that prayer five hundred times for special assistance with the work in Mexico.” I was delighted. Settled for prayer in our compartment, she tore up some paper into small pieces with which to keep count. We took turns saying the prayer a number of times each (ten or twenty). When we finished, it felt as though [we] were endowed with renewed vitality and fortified with a new spirit, inner peace and a feeling of assurance that success would be obtained.

The train stopped at San Antonio, Texas, for a considerable length of time —perhaps an hour or so. The passengers were able to leave the train. . . . Dorothy and I went out and, for exercise, we walked up and down a stretch of the tracks on the wood planks between the rails and talked. . . . She always had something interesting and instructive to say. One continually learned from her. . . .

Mexico City was reached about September 21st, 1945. Dorothy and I settled in a moderately priced hotel. Our room had a small parlor where friends could be received. . . .

Identifying the man who exerted such power over the Bahá'í community was simple enough, but removing his negative influence was another matter. Dorothy first held a special meeting at which she explained to the Bahá'ís the need to keep the Faith in its pure form rather than introduce a lot of unrelated practices and beliefs. To the man who was using his psychic practices to influence and gain control over the new Bahá'ís, Dorothy spoke with great strength. At one point Rosemary Sala, who with her husband Emeric pioneered for fourteen years in South Africa, then in Mexico, accompanied Dorothy to call upon the individual. Rosemary was repulsed by the man's countenance. Looking into his eyes she saw a dark, treacherous abyss and felt the presence of personified evil. Shocked and repelled, Rosemary asked, "Dorothy, how can you be near him?"

"Well, he's a human soul, and going through his own tragedy. We must either let him cut himself away, or receive him and change him."

After meeting with him, Dorothy settled on a method of offering the Bahá'ís an alternative to his totally dominant influence. Rosemary Sala

remembered,

We sat in the park in the middle of the Avenida de la Reforma, and she said the Long Healing Prayer, which Marzieh Gail had just translated, and we repeated it together. In the evening when we saw Dorothy, she said that she had had this inspiration. She was going to hunt for a new Center. She would tell the Bahá'ís about the new Center, and would invite all of them to come. Those who came to the new Center would be considered the members of the new community of Bahá'ís in Mexico City. . . . This was the way she healed the situation, without causing any disunity, or any disagreement, or any discussion between the believers, which was perfect. They made their own choice freely. No enmity was caused. This was a wonderful example of her wisdom and gentleness.

In fact Gayle Woolson recalled that at the community gathering a Bahá'í lady offered her home as the new meeting place. It was large and modern and served the community well. The leader of the spiritualism group and his family dropped out of the Faith, and an election was held to fill the vacancies on the Local Spiritual Assembly.

With the strain and tension gone from the community, inactive Bahá'ís even began to reappear. With Mexico City strengthened, Dorothy felt able to spend the last part of her trip teaching in Puebla and Vera Cruz.

In April 1945 Louise Baker had arrived in Caracas, Venezuela, to help form the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Venezuela. There she found Yolanda Stronach, one of the women whom Dorothy had taught more than a year earlier during her first South American visit. With her one pamphlet and

Spanish prayer book, Yolanda had held together and strengthened the first few Bahá'ís of Venezuela, almost all of them women.

In February 1946 Dorothy and Frank left Lima to visit Louise and travel through Jamaica and Cuba on their return. Arriving in Caracas, they found a small, thriving Bahá'í community. Dorothy gave numerous classes there.

One evening Dorothy, Louise, and several of the Venezuelan friends were at a meeting in Yolanda's home. The class, like others she gave, had been advertised in the newspaper. Late into the evening there was a knock at the door. Yolanda opened it and found two men standing outside.

“Is a Mrs. Baker in this house?”

Their presence didn't seem inspired by any spiritual quest. They were direct enough, but somehow suspect. In an effort to be courteous yet cautious, Yolanda said, “Did you read about Mrs. Baker's visit in the paper, or are you friends of some of the Bahá'ís?”

“Neither. Is she here?”

Hearing this exchange from the couch where she sat, Dorothy went to the door. “I'm Mrs. Baker. Do you wish to see me?” “Yes, we have a message.”

They came into the small parlor, their eyes on Dorothy, not even glancing at the rest of the people in the room. The taller one stood quietly, but before Yolanda could even close the door or ask them to sit down, the other one began to speak.

“A man came to us with a message for Mrs. Baker.”

Again Dorothy said, “I am Mrs. Baker.”

The two men looked at one another, presumably for a signal that each believed this was the woman they had come to find. Their expressions didn't change, but some sign must have passed between them because after a long pause the shorter man spoke again.

“In our practice we receive messages. This one is for you. A man in robes, dark hair, dark beard, wishes us to extend his greetings to Mrs. Baker. You are Mrs. Baker. Greetings from the Báb.”

The room remained quite still. Those who weren't sure they'd heard correctly didn't even whisper their questions. Dorothy, who had been staring dispassionately into the speaker's face, then at the tall man's unmoving features, asked “How did you receive this message?”

“He came to us in our practice and told us where to find you.” “What is your practice?”

“We are spiritualists. We meet to receive word from other worlds.”

“Would you like to know more about the man who spoke with you? About the Báb?”

“The Báb asked us to do his bidding, and we have. Nothing else is necessary.”

They turned and let themselves out, leaving Dorothy looking after them, and the rest of the room looking to Dorothy.

On that same visit to Caracas, a native Bahá'í woman came to Dorothy's hotel after attending several of her classes and asked to speak in private. Dorothy's Spanish was still limited, but Louise was there and able to translate. The three of them went outside into the garden and sat in a sunny corner, hidden from the lobby of the hotel by a semicircle of shrubs and trees. As soon as they were seated the Venezuelan woman began to cry. Through her tears came disconnected pleas for help and a jumbled narrative of her problems. Louise struggled to understand, translating into English whatever short phrases she could glean from the woman's desperate staccato that melted at times into moaning sobs. The problems seemed hopelessly severe, but the details were unintelligible.

"I don't know what to do, Muzz. She's so upset I can't understand what she's saying."

In surprise Dorothy turned to her daughter and said, "Why, Sweetie, it's perfectly clear. You go along while she and I talk."

Horried by what seemed to be the huge dimensions of the woman's problems and amazed that her mother could understand the garbled, almost senseless explanations, Louise left them to themselves. Two hours later they came in from the garden, the native woman looking refreshed and calm. With fond tenderness they kissed each other good-bye on both cheeks, and the woman left.

Louise Baker had her own problems to contend with, as Dorothy wrote in a letter dated October 13, 1945.

Winnie Lou is sick. Dangerously low blood count; possible parasites. Wants to stay but has to give up her job. Pray for her when we can, dearest. She feels failure in Caracas, but I think it is her health; and being just too tired and busy. There is a little heart-break in her letter. Someone has said that pioneering is ecstasy and tears, and I think it is true. Every country has its ransom. Maybe her health is just that. The mother of Ashraf said, “Go thou straight on, my son!”

Bahá'í News, May 1946, reported, “Mr. and Mrs. Frank Baker have recently returned home after visiting Assemblies in Caracas, Venezuela; Kingston, Jamaica; and Havana, Cuba. Louise Baker is remaining in Caracas until after the election.”

Shortly after Dorothy's return from South America, having sent reports on Ridván elections, the state of Inter-America Committee goals, and questions, she received correspondence from Shoghi Effendi that included the following postscript in his own hand:

Dear and valued co-worker:

I am truly grateful to you for your magnificent services, rendered in such an exemplary spirit, over so wide a field, despite so many obstacles, and with such distinction. Persevere in your high endeavors, and remember always that the Beloved is well pleased with the standard of your work, and that my loving and continued prayers will continue to be offered on your behalf at the holy Shrines,

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

(March 15, 1946)

Four and a half months later Rúhíyyih Khánun, on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, wrote to Dorothy,

He will pray for all those you mentioned in your letters – but particularly for your dear daughter Louise, who seems to be following most rapidly and closely in her devoted mother's footsteps!

In the same letter the Guardian wrote,

Dear and valued co-worker:

The expansion of your activities as a result of the inauguration of the new Plan will enable you to display, to a still greater extent, the magnificent qualities that have distinguished in recent years your unique services to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. I am proud of, and feel deeply grateful for, these services. Persevere in your glorious and historic task, and rest assured that I will continue to pray for you from the depths of my heart.

Your true & grateful brother,
Shoghi

In the spring of 1946, just after Dorothy's teaching trip to South America, the needs of that continent fresh in her heart and mind, Ed and Muriel Miessler visited the Bakers to talk about Regional Teaching Committee work. Ed's first wife, Elma, had died in 1939. Ed and Elma had dreamed of pioneering when the children were grown. Now Elma was gone. Ed still thought of pioneering, but there was a new family situation, and the children, Margot and Bob, were teenagers now and still in school. Muriel was a fairly new Bahá'í, having declared her belief about the time she and Ed married. Life was full enough of change and new responsibilities. The moment had never seemed quite right to add starting over in a new country.

Sitting together as the comfortable breeze of a cool Ohio afternoon blew through the living room, surrounded by the familiar, easy spirit of the house where both her guests had learned about the Bahá'í Faith, Dorothy said to Ed and Muriel, "Now just what is it that is keeping you from going pioneering? We need pioneers in Latin America."

The reasons seemed too numerous to even begin to explain, but the only one that came to mind was that the children were in school. Later, after more than thirty years at their post in Brazil, Ed still recalled how simply Dorothy put the problem into perspective. "Bob will be graduating from high school and going to college. Margot has only one more year of high school. She can be our daughter during that year. Why don't you say the Tablet of Ahmad every day for nineteen days? Then come back and let's talk it over."

Long before the nineteen days passed, the Miesslers were back, offering to go anywhere they were needed in South America. In September Dorothy said good-bye to Ed and Muriel, two more of what she called "the people of destiny"—pioneers. [102](#)

Sept. 25, '46

Goodbye, darlings of Bahá'u'lláh!

Anchors away! Vayan con Dios! May the Angels attend you.

Take along this bit of dust from the inner shrine of shrines.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself calls it potent, and our Guardian calls it potent. And this, dear Muriel, is a quotation to which you will turn in time of need, facing the Blessed Spot, and you will know that the holy Navváb is actually gifted to assist you when assemblies, committees, yes, and the dearest of friends, are powerless to help you. Never be afraid. We have human hearts that become deeply troubled; did not the heart of our adored Master cry out many times? But not with fear. "He who does not love God fears all things, but he who loves God, all things fear him." . . .

You are like the pearl to which the Master likened dear May Maxwell when He said, "One pearl is better than a thousand wildernesses of sand. When that pearl associates with and becomes the intimate of the pebbles, they also change into pearls."

Eternal love,
Dorothy

Dorothy and Frank watched over the Miessler children, though they lived with Muriel Miessler's sister until joining their parents in Brazil. On May 16,

1947 Dorothy wrote to Ed and Muriel that Bob and Margot, “both came to Convention, the cute things, and were right in the very heart of the Youth activities.”



43. Rice Lake Summer School, 1946• Lloyd Gardner, Annamarie Mattoon, Louise Baker, Bill Baker.

When Louise Baker was in the United States between pioneer posts, she served as recording secretary of the Inter-America Committee. But Dorothy had to leave service on that committee for a time, as she said to the Miesslers in a letter written on June 2.

NSA is almost doubling the number of its meetings this year and all National Assembly members are asked to relinquish membership on national committees. Edna True is the lone exception to this, because the European work is still so new. I have taken on the chairmanship of the NSA for a second year and that will keep me pretty busy for a while longer, of course, so I am thankful to be relieved. All the same, I am homesick for Latin American news. I attend IAC meetings once in a while when special conferences come up, and in making overall plans, but I have no fresh news of anyone, and miss it terribly. You will have to write me

nice long, newsy letters now, so I won't be an orphan. You are my darling dears, anyway, and will always be, though committees may come and go. . . .

I must close; this was meant only to be a note to tell you how we loved having Bob. He is the most thoughtful, considerate boy we have ever seen! We only wish it could have been Margo, too, but she got away before we had a chance at her.¹⁰³ The Miesslerers will soon all be together again and then watch old Brasil!

Louise Caswell—an American who pioneered in several Central American countries including Guatemala from 1953 to 1975, then Yucatan, Mexico—served on the first regional National Spiritual Assembly of Central America, Mexico, and the Antilles. While Louise Caswell was still in Panama, her first pioneering post, Dorothy wrote to her:

A thousand thanks for your beautiful gift, dear friend. It is a symbol of something precious to me. The pioneers are the “men of the unseen,” the people of destiny, of whom the future will sing. To have been favored by one of them is lovelier than I can express. It is a strange thing, dear Louise, that when I think of you tears come to my eyes. It is a warm, tender thing, and I am conscious that I did not create it.

The National Assembly is proud of all of you. Each is as a thousand.

Lovingly always,
Dorothy

In one year over thirty Bahá'ís left Lima for homefront or international goals. But in Dorothy's opinion a Bahá'í did not have to be a pioneer to attain one of the greatest blessings of pioneering. She felt the pioneers were more successful in teaching than those who stayed home because, in her words, "they are God-centered. Everything revolves around their pioneering work, and everything else is subordinate to it. Wherever you are, strive always to be God-centered." Dorothy wrote the Miesslers at their post in Brazil in January 1947, the same year Ed and Muriel helped form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Sao Paulo.

Frank and I are setting out for Mexico immediately after the January session of NSA, speaking in Cincinnati and Louisville on the way, and, of course, giving Louise a hand in Mexico. If you want to catch me soon, write in care of Louise, c/o US Consul in Vera Cruz. I expect to be there in mid-Feb. She is doing a wonderful job and doesn't need me at all. This is Frank's idea! And there is a possibility that Bernsteins will go along.

I can ill afford the time, but Frank says I never will have time and this is THE time to go!! Looks awfully like a vacation to me, dears.

Well, I must pack, as I get off day after tomorrow, not to return. Frank (and perhaps the Bernsteins) will meet me in Cincinnati later.

I can be reached by cable c/o Horace, up to Jan. 21.

I love you both so that it sometimes hurts, actually. I do want you both to know that you are of the nearest and dearest friends I have in this world and the next.

Your

Dorothy

In Mexico the trip turned from vacation to teaching. Louise was living in Vera Cruz but traveled by bus every week to Coatepec, outside of Jalapa, where she gave an English class for contacts one night, went teaching the next day, and then on the second night gave a fireside-deepening. The following morning she would leave Coatepec for Puebla, where she had a similar schedule, and then take the bus to Mexico City for another two days—one night at a deepening, the next assisting the Local Spiritual Assembly. On the seventh day she would travel back to Vera Cruz to try to activate the small Bahá'í group there.

On her first day in Vera Cruz Dorothy told Louise the schedule was too much for anyone and suggested dropping that city. Exhausted from constant bone-shaking bus rides, sleeping two nights a week on a plank bed with only a cotton blanket for a mattress and two other nights in a single bed shared with one of the native Bahá'í women, Louise took her mother's advice. Frank and Dorothy helped her move to a comfortable room in Puebla.

In Coatepec, after Dorothy gave a talk, Louise took her parents to a hotel in nearby Jalapa rather than to the small family home where she usually stayed. High above sea level, cloudy, cold and wet, Jalapa had a gruesome effect on Dorothy. She had often suffered from asthma in certain climates, but Louise, who wrote her account of that night, had never witnessed it before.

That night in Jalapa she couldn't lie down. She couldn't even relax in an armchair. Her breathing was painfully raucous. She spent the entire night sitting totally erect in a straight chair, not even able to lean back. That way she could breathe, although her breath rasped with every inhalation. I wanted to go on up to Puebla, where the air was drier, but she wouldn't hear of it. "I'll be just fine," she told me. "You go to sleep and don't worry about me. I've had this often enough before, and know what to do. I'll just say a few prayers." When I told her I'd stay up and keep her company, she sent me off to bed. It was abundantly clear that, close as we were, this was a time she needed to be alone. I woke up several times during the night, to see her still sitting in her chair, the personification of Victorian "good posture," her breath rattling into her lungs. I spoke to her the first time or two, but not after that, because she seemed to have retreated so far into herself, and looked so utterly peaceful in spite of the noisy breathing and rigid posture, that she had difficulty in coming to the surface to answer me.

While the Bakers helped their daughter move and visited some of the small towns where Louise had been teaching, the Bernsteins, who had traveled with Frank and Dorothy from the United States, flew to Mexico City to wait for their friends. The four of them had planned a side trip to Cuernavaca, Taxco, and Acapulco, but when the Bakers returned to Mexico City, Dorothy asked if the others would mind going on without her so she could stay and help the Bahá'ís there and in Louise's goal towns. The little group left, and Dorothy carried on with the work she wanted to do.

From Puebla she wrote to the Guardian about plans and goals in Mexico and South America, among them the goal of forming one new Local Spiritual Assembly. To her delight that Ridván, what she called "Louise's two new assemblies," Puebla and Coatepec, both formed.

Dorothy's plans for the following winter included a teaching trip to Europe. The second Seven Year Plan had begun in 1946, the "second collective enterprise undertaken in American Bahá'í history." It became known as "the European Campaign," as Europe was the "preeminent goal."¹⁰⁴ Louise was not sure where she should serve. On June 21, 1947, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm wrote to Dorothy, on behalf of the Guardian:

. . . The work your dear daughter is doing is very much appreciated. . . . In regard to her future plans: he feels that, although she can render valuable services in Latin America, the work in Europe at present is more urgent, particularly in Spain. He, therefore, urges you to, by all means, take her to Europe with you and try to arrange for her to remain in Spain, or, if that is not possible, in Portugal. . . . Please give his loving greetings to Mr. Baker and assure him of how greatly he admires the spirit of sacrifice he shows in enabling you to serve so constantly. . .

Dear and prized co-worker:

I deeply regret the delay in acknowledging the receipt of your letters and reports which I have read with interest, gratitude and admiration. You are truly rendering in both the teaching and administrative fields services which posterity will gratefully remember and extol. The friends praise and admire the spirit you manifest, the ability, the devotion and zeal with which you promote the manifold interests of the Faith. You should feel happy, grateful and confident. The work in Europe stands in great need of workers such as you, and I pray that you and your dear daughter may be guided and richly blessed in this new and highly meritorious activity in the European field. Persevere in your noble task and rest assured that the

Beloved is watching over you and is well pleased with the standard of your achievements.

Your true and grateful brother,
Shoghi

Louise decided this might be the perfect time for her mother to receive permission to go on pilgrimage. Since she would be traveling to Europe as well, Shoghi Effendi might allow them both to go. Together they wrote to the Guardian and, on January 4, 1948, received the following reply.

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Your letter to our beloved Guardian, dated Dec. 19th has been received, and he has instructed me to answer you both on his behalf.

He is delighted to see your plans for Europe and that you both, each in a special field and way, are going to be able to render such valuable and much needed services. You may be sure that his thoughts and special prayers will be with you as you labour for the Faith.

In the sad and dangerous condition this country is in at present, it seems that pilgrimages to Haifa will be once more postponed, owing to circumstances, for some time! However, he assures you both that he hopes the day will come when together you can visit this sacred land. You would be more than welcome, you know.

The increasingly confused situation in the world is causing a like confusion, it would seem, in the minds of men. All the believers can do is to cling steadfastly and calmly to the Faith and its teachings, and try to reach with the Message those seeking for it, and to give the comfort and hope we, as followers of Bahá'u'lláh, possess to all those they meet.

He greatly values and admires the services your family is rendering the Faith in this period of the world's greatest need.

With warm love
R. Rabbani

Dear and valued co-workers:

I greatly welcome the news of your contemplated trip to Europe and of the aid and support you will both extend to the pioneers in Europe. You will, thereby, be enriching the splendid record of your past services, and setting a noble example to your fellow-workers in the North American continent. My fervent and loving prayers will accompany and surround you wherever you labour. Be happy, persevere in your historic and glorious task and rest assured that the Beloved is well pleased with you and will bless your work.

Your true and grateful brother
Shoghi

A photo in *Bahá'í News* shows mother and daughter smiling into the camera, the two of them looking uncannily like sisters. The caption reads,

“Miss Louise Baker sailed January 13th as pioneer to Portugal, and Mrs. Dorothy Baker flew to Europe January 12th to lecture in ten goal countries.”^{[105](#)}



44. On their way to Europe: Louise and Dorothy Baker, January 1948.

Dorothy wrote to friends on Christmas Day, before leaving.

Dear Ones,

This is goodbye. Louise and I start immediately for Europe, and oh how we want your prayers! *Will* you have one daily for us? My help to Europe is especially thin, as it has to be the fast-moving itinerant kind. If you lined my pockets with a million dollars in American money it would not compare to the gift of *fervent, real* prayer every day now. It is a pea soup fog I am going into. I think we all have to have this sometimes. Your love will make your prayers count, and I particularly want them. . . .

Fly out of NY Jan. 12—Return Mar. 20-21.

Tenderest love,

Dorothy



45. Louise and Dorothy in Madrid, March 1948, “looking like sisters.”

While Louise began to settle in as a pioneer in Portugal, Dorothy visited all the European goal countries of the second Seven Year Plan, as well as others: Ireland, England, France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Everywhere she held press conferences, spoke to small and large groups, and met with pioneers and native Bahá'ís to encourage and inspire them.

In early March Dorothy arrived in Portugal to meet Louise, with a letter from Rúhíyyih Khánúm in hand. The letter asked that they call on a certain friend of Rúhíyyih Khánúm and of her mother, May Maxwell. The gentleman, Hubert Matthias, lived in Lisbon, but had befriended the Maxwells in Germany some fourteen years before. Greatly impressed with the older and younger Canadian ladies, with their spirit and their personalities, he began to study the Faith and eventually accepted it, writing directly to Haifa.

Louise was aware that Rúhíyyih Khánúm hoped they would contact her German friend, but in an unusual spurt of shyness, had resisted the impulse, waiting for the support of her mother's presence. Instead Louise visited with Virginia Orbison. Virginia was later named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh as the first pioneer to the Balearic Islands, east of Spain. Louise also made another friend, Valeria Nichols, who was then pioneering in Portugal. (Valeria later served on the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico for many years.)

As Hubert Matthias recalled, Dorothy was less shy than Louise was about contacting him.

In Lisbon, Portugal in early 1948 I lived in a room with a balcony that I rented from a German woman with two kids. I think it was on a Friday in March that I received a phone call from an American woman, Valeria Nichols, on behalf of Mrs. Dorothy Baker, to please come for dinner at the American Club the following Sunday. As always on weekends I drove out to my very primitive country place, but returned early on Sunday afternoon to Lisbon to appear at the American Club betimes.

When I entered the club on the fourth floor of an apartment building the manager took me to the table in the right corner where three ladies sat: Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Nichols and Louise Baker. The reception was very cordial, as they were Bahá'ís and I had joined the Faith in a letter to Haifa several weeks earlier. I don't think they knew that, and of course were very happy when I told them so. My mood was a strange one because before leaving my quarters I had strange premonitions and some inner voice had repeatedly told me: "Tonight you are going to meet your wife, tonight you are going to meet your wife." I told myself, calming my trembling hands, not to be hysterical and to calm down. When I first saw the three ladies and

noticed Miss Baker's tiny little hat with short little black feather-like bunches of thick hair sticking out on two sides, I decided that of this hat I would make a shaving brush.

There was [for me] no doubt that the young woman would be my wife and of course her mother, Mrs. Baker, my mother-in-law. Dorothy put me at ease with her graciousness and I felt at home with them, just as I had with the Maxwells years ago when I met Mrs. Maxwell and her daughter in Munich, Germany. They had brought me to Canada and the States in 1938, my first visit to America. Mary – Rúhíyyih had given Miss Baker my address as she was going to Portugal, encouraging her to look me up. This had led to the invitation for dinner, which we were now about to eat.

I guess we talked about the Maxwells, about Portugal and about the Bahá'í Faith, and afterwards they asked me to come to their apartment where there would be a meeting. The four or five people that came were Portuguese and I was asked to translate Mrs. Baker's talk to them. I had lived in Portugal for about five years already, so my Portuguese was good enough. I remember hesitating when Dorothy said something that I considered to be somewhat unwise to be said more or less publicly in a police state, as Portugal was at the time, but she nodded forcefully to make me translate exactly what she had said.

The next day in the morning we all went to see the Moorish castle on top of a hill on the east side of downtown Lisbon, and for the next days we drove to Cintra and other places of note. Mrs. Baker struck me as a very exceptional woman of high intelligence and great empathy. Her grey eyes were extremely expressive and a pronounced jaw in her beautiful face indicated a strong will and strong convictions. On the way down from

Cintra castle the elder ladies had gone ahead and given Louise and me a chance to talk with each other, and it was then probably that we realized that our premonitions of meeting each other had been sound and realistic. I remember stating to myself that the way Louise treated me I wanted to be treated for the rest of my life. . . .

In the evening Dorothy took me aside, where we were alone, kissed me on both cheeks and said, “Hubert, I’m all for it.”

As a result of May Maxwell’s and Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum’s friendship with Hubert years before in Germany, this young man—his family torn apart by war, his body scarred and one arm temporarily paralyzed by the effects of Russian bullets—had decided, alone in Portugal, to become a Bahá’í. Through obedience to Shoghi Effendi’s instructions, Louise Baker had moved to the Iberian Peninsula, her first post outside of Latin America, where she had spent some very lonely, difficult years. Following both the instructions of Shoghi Effendi to teach in Europe and the request of Rúhíyyih Khánum to look up the young German in Portugal, Dorothy brought the situation to its culmination.

When news reached Rúhíyyih Khánum that Louise and Hubert were married, she wrote to Hubert, June 20, 1948, from Haifa: “And will you believe me if I confess that my secret and ardent hope—the Guardian is my witness!—was that by just a miracle this very thing would happen and you and Winifred Louise would fall in love and marry?” In the beginning this end may have been out of sight for all involved. Or perhaps the sequence of events was forecast in one mind or another; at least Dorothy, Louise, and Hubert had premonitions. But whatever the combination of original

intentions, the results were very satisfactory. On October 20, 1948, Rúhíyyih Khánum wrote,

Dearest Dorothy—

I enjoy your letters so much and it was so sweet of you to give me a glimpse of the Portuguese romance! I was *so* happy about that marriage and to know Hubert has come to rest in the Bahá'í harbour. He is a fine soul and has much needed qualities in the Cause. . . .

In other countries Dorothy visited, the spirit of the assemblies and individuals was recharged with hope and enthusiasm. Isobel Sabri later served as a member of the Continental Board of Counselors for Africa and at the International Teaching Center in Haifa. She pioneered in Africa for more than thirty years. But when Isobel met Dorothy Baker in Scotland she was still a fairly new Bahá'í

The second time I met Dorothy Baker was in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the winter of 1948. I had become a believer two months after meeting her in California and in 1946 went as a pioneer to the British Isles during the Six Year Plan there. My parents were British, so I had dual nationality and was able to live and work in Britain with no difficulty. Dorothy had written to the Guardian asking permission to visit the Holy Land on pilgrimage. He had replied that it would be more meritorious to visit the pioneers and young communities in the countries of Europe. Scotland was one of her first stops.

After a series of meetings in Edinburgh which resulted a few days later in the declaration of the first Scottish believers there, a Mr. and Mrs. Wood

who had been greatly impressed by Dorothy's spirituality, the two of us travelled together by train from Edinburgh to Glasgow where she was to catch her plane. During the journey Dorothy recited prayer after prayer by memory. It was remarkable to me how many prayers she knew by heart.



46. Lisbon, Portugal: Hubert Matthias, Louise Baker Matthias, and Virginia Orbison, 1948.



47 Portugal, 1948: in Hubert's Citroën.

Dorothy always gave considerable thought and attention to her appearance. She spoke to me of the fact that even one's manner of dress should attract the listener to the Faith. She explained that she had chosen a different colour and outfit for each country she was to visit, according to the nature of the people of the country as she perceived them to be. For Scotland and England she had chosen a lovely soft grey ensemble, and for Spain red!

Certainly Dorothy made the most of her natural charm. There was a quality of impeccability about her. She also paid attention to the details of her manner and words. One sensed that she had really studied how to express herself, how to teach the Faith effectively. She didn't leave things to chance. She prepared herself meticulously for her teaching trips and her lectures. She carried in her suitcase considerable quantities of special mimeographed materials, answers to questions, which she had prepared, ready to give to those who showed interest. She once said to me, "What is the use of God sending a soul into your life to teach if you are not ready and prepared to help him?"

In speaking at gatherings of the Bahá'ís only, Dorothy always took pains to have small vignettes or bits of information about the Faith to tell them which they would probably not have heard before. This made her a particularly appealing speaker to the believers.

After Scotland, she went to Birmingham, England, for the British National Teaching Conference. The British Bahá'í Community was quite small and conservative at that time; but this lovely woman, Chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, won their hearts totally and her effect in inspiring the believers to arise for the success of their Plan was notable indeed. She spoke of the Guardian, and her theme was, "If you love the Guardian, there is nothing that you wouldn't do to please him."

The National Teaching Committee of Great Britain wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States,

Mrs. Baker's visit meant something very special to our national community. . . . appreciation is not confined to the Committee but is

warmly felt up and down the land. . . . Great as was the value of her teaching work, however, by far her most remarkable and permanent contribution grew out of the providential opportunity for her to participate in our Annual Teaching Conference. This Conference is one of the three rallying points of the national community during the year, and for the past three years has marked a significant turning-point in the affairs of the Cause. In a sense, Mrs. Baker's presence and contributions were a pivot for the whole proceedings of the Conference.

. . . A reception was attended by 85 people, including 50 non-Bahá'ís, while the attendance at the Teaching Conference was the highest on record, averaging about 75 believers. You will realize that this is more than a third of our national community, every Assembly and goal town being represented. Thus it is apparent that the beneficent influence of Mrs. Baker's work has gone out to all parts of Britain. . . . Her work will long be remembered, and we feel sure that she has done much to knit even closer the bonds of Bahá'í fellowship which unite our two national communities. . . . [106](#)

In Spain Dorothy spoke to small groups of four, or eight, or sixteen—five meetings in all—in Madrid. Virginia Orbison's diary read, "Dorothy not well but holding up." According to a history of the Faith in Spain that Virginia was writing, "Dorothy conquered all the hearts of those she met."

Doris Lohse, who was to become a pioneer of long standing in Switzerland, wrote from Brussels, where she pioneered in 1947,

Darling, with your teaching work, with your talks on prayer, your touching stories and with the "Seven Valleys" you have started the irrigation of a

nearly parched soil in the hearts of your listeners. They really did not know what they lacked so desperately. Your visit has been an invaluable contribution to the first awakening of a nation.

Lea Nys, the first person to become a Bahá'í in Belgium, learned about the Faith from two American pioneers, Jack and Eunice Shurcliff. She was active in helping to organize Dorothy's visit.

Dorothy Baker spent one week in Brussels in 1948. I didn't know much about her; just that she was a great lady, and had done much for the Faith. But when she came, we knew! She was very impressive.

We had been trying to find a way to contact the 50 or more associations in the city which had aims which accorded with one of the Bahá'í principles. When Dorothy Baker was to come, this seemed the right chance. I was put in charge of organizing the meeting; it was the first time I had done this sort of thing for a really large meeting.

I contacted a friend who was a very well known musician, and he made arrangements for a very fine trio to play before the meeting, which was held in the Hotel Atlanta in a large and very lovely meeting room which could seat about five hundred. Between four hundred and five hundred attended.

When Dorothy Baker entered the hall, she was like a queen. She was so attractive, and she always seemed to be master of any situation. The way she dressed was very different from the way the Belgian women dressed, and was most attractive. When I recall that lady's capacity, it was tremendous. She had a very fascinating power which was working . . .

strongly that evening. She had something very special. We were “all ears,” absorbing her words, the way she talked, her manner, the gestures she used—her whole attitude was something I cannot convey here. It could not be reproduced. . . .

When I had introduced her she stood up and greeted the people with “Allah-u-Abha,” and then she explained its meaning. She talked about world unity. . . . She stood very straight, and there was a microphone, but she did not use it.

Then she talked about life after death, and gave many details. It was for me something of a discovery of a different aspect of the teachings. I had never been very concerned with it. She really drew it to our attention that we have only one life to get ready for it, that we must be prepared, that we must pray and meditate every day, that we have only once the opportunity to know the Manifestation of God on this planet. . . .

Within five or six months of Dorothy Baker’s visit several local assemblies were formed in several different cities. She brought us a lot, and she left a lot. . . .

Dorothy’s own memories of the same period in Brussels were centered, as were all her recollections of that 1948 trip to Europe, on the Bahá’ís she met there, not on herself. She wrote,

Brussels was the scene of day and night activity, with the Hotel de Boeck, except for one large downtown meeting, the stage center for peace leaders and the many friends and contacts of the Bahá’ís. On the last evening the little parlors overflowed into the hall. A tender note was struck by a

Dominican priest, recently disrobed for the sake of his conscience. He sat in the farthest row back. A pioneer who had given him a book some months before, recognized him and spoke to him. “What do you think now?” she asked. He lowered his head for a moment and then replied with unaffected simplicity: “I have found the truth.” A hero had found Bahá’u’lláh. [107](#)

In Brussels Dorothy Baker and John Robarts, who had served with her on the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, were together again on the program for a public meeting. That morning Mr. Robarts woke up with laryngitis and a sore throat. He recalled that Dorothy told him, “Don’t worry about it, but get yourself to the meeting anyway. I am to be your chairman. I will not embarrass you but if, even at the last minute, you feel that your throat is clearing, you may have an experience that I once had. I had the same sort of throat, but got to the meeting anyway and suddenly, when my turn came to speak, my throat cleared and I addressed the meeting without any trouble. John, just relax. Don’t worry about the meeting. Pray, and I will pray with you.”

He arrived at the meeting in silence. When Dorothy got to the point of introducing the speaker, she looked over at him. He nodded that she should go ahead with it. Then, to his own amazement, he spoke without any trouble. Later, still astonished at what had happened, Mr. Robarts commented, “Well, it was Dorothy Baker who got me through that one.” A few years later Mr. Robarts and his wife, Audrey, were named Knights of Bahá’u’lláh because of their move to Bechuanaland. In 1957, Shoghi Effendi appointed John Robarts a Hand of the Cause of God.



48. Dorothy Baker in Lisbon, 1948.

Dorothy's trip made her even more sensitive to the sacrifices and confirmations of the Bahá'ís who leave their homes to settle in new countries with the hope of spreading the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Pioneering is ecstasy and tears; bad food, cold rooms, dark *pensions*, and periods of fruitless waiting; yearning souls, sudden illumination, an outreaching public and new conviction of the "power that is far beyond the ken of men and of angels." . . .

From Oslo to Lisbon the pioneers are singularly suited to their tasks, as if by Providence ordained to them. . . .

But Dorothy was not naive. In the same report on her trip abroad she proved her understanding of the distance still to be traveled in the work of the Faith.

Europe is frustrated and often skeptical, living in fear and believing in nothing. But Europe is groping too, and in search of a soul, and the part of her that finds it will go to almost any length to keep it. The new believers are the eyes of Europe; they alone can look ahead. To them the Cause is the difference between everything and nothing. [108](#)

In 1949, a year after the European tour, Dorothy set out for the International Teaching Congress in Guatemala. A cable from the Guardian was analyzed by a committee of the Congress and from his suggested activities—“EXTEND SCOPE TEACHING, CONSOLIDATE ASSEMBLIES”—a two-year plan was drawn up with specific goals. Dorothy was impressed by the diligence and hard work of the Bahá’ís of Central America and the Antilles. However, the outstanding attainment of this Congress in her mind, “was the greater understanding which the delegates acquired of the Guardian and a tremendous deepening in their love for him.”

Edward and Mary Bode were Americans who had established the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Beverly Hills, California, before pioneering on three continents including Europe, where they lived in Holland for nine years. While in Amsterdam they received a letter from Dorothy in which she again expressed her devotion to Shoghi Effendi:

What a perfectly marvelous letter from the Guardian! His discernment, love, and inexhaustible wisdom continue to be an unanswerable proof to the validity of the Cause. How could anyone fail to see it who had the privilege of witnessing it as it unfolds in life after life, in treatise after treatise, and in deed after deed of magnificent, international dimensions? I remember sometimes poignantly what dear Rúhíyyih Khánum wrote her Mother in May’s last days in New York. She said, “Somehow, Mother, I

am coming to believe that all my salvation is linked up in some inexplicable way with the Guardian and that without him I am like a bit of chaff” (I think she said) “on an endless ocean.” In these uncentered times, when all the dark forces of the world are converging in wars and greed and prejudice, thank God for our Guardian, for his peace and calm and wisdom and unyielding loyalty to our goals. I feel as if I were sitting with the three of you and sharing your joy at this moment.

Dorothy’s faith in Shoghi Effendi was explicit and unwavering. Just after the Guatemala Congress Dorothy corresponded with Cora Oliver, a pioneer elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Central America, Mexico, and the Antilles, and later named a Knight of Bahá’u’lláh for her early settlement in British Honduras. Dorothy wrote to Cora, “if a door opened and Latin America or Europe beckoned and the Guardian said walk through it . . . some way would open to take care of it surely.”

In 1950, drawn by the goals of the Guardian’s second Seven Year Plan, Dorothy represented the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and the Inter-America Committee at both the Annual Congress for Central America, held this time in El Salvador in April and the fourth Annual Congress for South America held in Lima, Peru in May.

While Frank and her mother traveled to Portugal to visit Louise and Hubert, Dorothy boarded a southbound train and, stopping here and there for North American teaching, headed toward San Salvador and the International Congress. She wrote a letter to her family aboard the “Frisco Lounge Car.”

1950

Easter eve

Hi Dears!

Well, we've just gone through Will Rogers country, and are entering Arkansas. I think thus far we have kept up the record of a fresh study class in every city, though Oklahoma City was tougher. Soon Jackson and mail; I must confess I'm anxious. Only Eureka and Little Rock to go first. Wish I could see you tonight.

April 11

Riding on a bus thru the Ozarks, and what a country! Eureka is a little Shangrila, hanging up on a hill like an eagle's nest. I stayed at this hotel, and I think the asst. manager, Charlie Smith, is going to sign up and be the historic ninth, even tho' he is a Catholic and has had all his children confirmed. His wife was the even more historic first, and there was bitterness. He alone was worth coming for and that precious group had 45 people out last night! It's such a village in its psychology, too.

Little Rock

Three letters, and how I gobbled them! I could see the water systems and furniture lining up, and imagined myself eating a bit of garden lettuce. Endive coming up?

And by this time Wetchi¹⁰⁹ is with you. Greetings to Wetchi; I would love to know her.

This afternoon I am to call on the Governor of Arkansas, and they say he is very fine. [Later she writes: "This fell through." D.F.G.] Last night we had a

grand meeting, with photographers and wire recorders adding to the pleasant bustle of the occasion. This is quite a bunch out here.

All my love,

D.

Take some pictures, please!

Jung Hotel
New Orleans

Well, well! Here I am 'way down in NO [New Orleans] ready to hop over. This is the last line in some time, perhaps.

Mother's note in Jackson was so sweet I am sending it to Edna True: she will be so thrilled by Louise's activities.

I am meeting with the Area TC^{[110](#)} here and with the Community and with the public, and a hundred errands in town to do, but Tues. (18th) the little old Pan Am will pull out for Mexico with Dottie just front of the wing, and a Katy True capsule inside. *Don't forget to pray for me!*

Study groups don't line up for us here as readily as northward but individuals like to be worked with on a social arrangement with reading off-side. The south is surely conservative. But they are fine stuff.

Elisabeth Cheney has been very ill, and is about to go home. Better, but not good. She may be IAC [Inter-America Committee] secty. next year, if well,

but she can't take Latin countries any more.

Milly Collins has taken a flying trip to Puerto Rico and Haiti to insure elections, and may pop over to the Salvador Congreso. Brave little heart! Europe just about did her up. Everywhere the Central Amer. area hangs in the balance, and we are all rolling our sleeves 'way up.

Big hugs to our two children; every day I think of you and am so thankful you are all together.

Dearest love—D

Here is the Crescent, on top of Eureka Springs. It used to be a hospital. Now you can be there and have good meals and good rooms not too expensively and go fishing in a dozen directions and have your fish cooked for breakfast—Some time, maybe, Franko! Climate like Portugal's hills.

Dorothy's presence at the two congresses in San Salvador, El Salvador, and Lima, Peru, was important because these were the last international gatherings to be held in South and Central America before the Annual Conventions the following year and the formation of National Spiritual Assemblies in those regions. As a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and of the Inter-America Committee, Dorothy's specific mission was to help bring about full consultation on the particular problems that the Latin American National Spiritual Assemblies would be facing when they came into existence the next year.

Julius Edwards, a delegate from Jamaica who was later named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh in Africa, made something of a sensation in San Salvador. He

was conscious that few people of African descent lived in that Central American city; on the street, people were intrigued with the color of his skin and would stop and smile at him as he passed.

Many seekers were invited to the opening session of the Congress. A Salvadorean ambassador to another country, newly aware of the Bahá'í stand on racial harmony and unity, arose after the keynote address and spoke enthusiastically, explaining his own experience with persecution in other countries because of his Latin origin. He ended his remarks with an emotional declaration that he intended to write a book on the subject and have it printed with white ink on black paper to emphasize his newly awakened desire for racial amity.

A retired Salvadorean police inspector stood up in the audience and vehemently began to address the ambassador, condemning his idea as ridiculous, and announcing to the rest of the assemblage that the obvious motive for his desire was financial reward. Julius Edwards, the only black in the audience, sat quietly listening. Then he heard Dorothy Baker's voice.

“Mr. Chairman, would you kindly give Mr. Edwards the floor?”

From the podium he addressed the ambassador. “Senor, I have had similar experiences of racial prejudice.” He stretched out his hands to the man and in a strong voice said, “I conquered!”

With a great smile the ambassador leaped up and embraced Julius. The spirit of the first session was changed from one of bickering conflict to unity, and the tone was set for the remainder of the five-day Congress.

Soon after, Dorothy received five dozen roses from the ambassador, who was obviously impressed with her diplomatic powers.

Alfred Osborne was an educator who became a Bahá'í in Panama and was later appointed as a member of the Continental Board of Counselors. Watching Dorothy in Latin America, he wrote:

I was particularly impressed because I felt that she had given up some of her comforts, some of her style of living, because it was evident that she came from a very good, solid background, in order to mingle with the people and teach the Faith. She did not register at the expensive hotels. She and Louise Caswell used to live in little third-rate hotels or pensions. I remember attending a number of deepening classes, sponsored by Louise Caswell and taught by Dorothy Baker. I thus had an opportunity to see how they were living and the sacrifices they were making. Louise always struck me as being a sort of aristocratic person; a lovely, very sweet Bahá'í, who could adjust so beautifully, and accommodate herself, and Dorothy Baker as the same. These *pensiones* did not have private baths. Facilities were shared by all who lived there. I never once noticed any feeling of repugnance or regret or disdain in those two pioneers as they went about their work of teaching the Cause.

Dorothy's vision of pension living was somewhat different. She wrote to Frank and her mother,

This little Pension serves three squares a day anyway, even if you don't have private baths, and I have a sala with my bedroom for the committee to come to, which saves me from running around. It is rudimentary, but clean and honest. And lots of fresh pineapple etc. I have felt fine right

along, all but one day in Lima, Peru, where I must have had a touch of the tourist tummy. Am wondering how you both got along.

Her lifestyle was simple, her attitude loving, and her magnetism was difficult to describe adequately.

Dorothy reported thoroughly to the Guardian on the many activities of the Inter-America Committee, which she had served on beginning in 1944. In *The Priceless Pearl*, Rúhíyyih Khánum wrote that the first Seven Year Plan, begun in 1937, had a “triple task.” The final aspect of the plan was “to create one centre in each Latin American Republic ‘for whose entry into the fellowship of Bahá’u’lláh’ Shoghi Effendi wrote ‘the Plan was primarily formulated.’”^{[111](#)}

The Inter-America Committee’s diligent efforts met with wholehearted encouragement from the Guardian.

Haifa,
Israel,
February 18, 1951

Mrs. Dorothy Baker, Chairman,

Inter-America Committee

Dear Bahá’í Sister:

I have been instructed by our beloved Guardian to acknowledge receipt of your letters dated as follows:

January 3rd and 30th, June 4th, 8th and 10th, August 1st, September 27th and October 28, 1950. He has also received the many enclosures and photographs forwarded in these letters.

He feels that the work accomplished by your Committee and its very active members during the past year has been highly effective and gone a long way towards insuring success during the elections for the two new National Spiritual Assemblies this coming April. . . .

The success likewise of the two Congresses was marked and most encouraging. . . .

He feels that the Inter-America Committee has played a singularly historic part in the development of the Cause, in the prosecution of the second Seven Year Plan, and in reflecting glory on the entire North American Bahá'í Community. It is wonderful to see how the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh has sustained the believers in carrying out this tremendous project, and how their efforts have been blessed, in spite of many difficulties to be overcome and many heartbreaks on the part of all concerned. He, himself, is immensely proud of what has been done, and congratulates your Committee on the splendid work it has achieved and the example it has set. . . .

He assures you one and all of his loving prayers and his deep appreciation of the services you have so selflessly rendered the Cause of God. . . .

With warm Bahá'í love,

R. Rabbani

P.S.—I am enclosing a little message from the beloved Guardian addressed to those who wrote him on the occasion of the Fourth Bahá'í Congress for South America. Will you please see that it is shared with the believers concerned.

[The Guardian added, by hand]

May the Almighty bless your strenuous, devoted and meritorious efforts, aid you to enrich continually the record of your manifold services, and win still greater victories for His Faith & its institutions.

Your true and grateful brother, Shoghi

Between 1943 and 1952 Dorothy visited fifteen Central and South American countries. Artemus Lamb, then a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America and later a Continental Counselor, wrote,

Her influence in Central America is most powerful, and at the same time mysterious, for in reality she spent only a few days here on several occasions; yet all loved her deeply and feel dependent upon her like children upon a mother.^{[112](#)}

In 1951 the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran requested a record of Dorothy's travels and experience as a Bahá'í. She responded as follows:

Member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States from 1937 forward. Four years chairman. 1945-1949. Present vice-chairman.

Successively chairman of the following national committees:

Assembly Development Committee

Louhelen School Committee

Child Education Committee

Radio Committee

Race Unity Committee

College Speakers Bureau

Inter-America Committee

National Programming Committee

Inter-Continental Committee

Teaching: National Assembly representative in the historic first National Convention of Canada and Central America. Eight teaching journeys to Latin America, one to Europe, two to Canada. Attendance at five Latin

American and one British Congress. Following countries and provinces visited:

Latin America

Mexico

Guatemala

Honduras

El Salvador

Costa Rica

Panama

Cuba

Jamaica

Puerto Rico

Venezuela

Columbia

Peru

Argentina

Paraguay

Brazil

Canada

Ontario

Quebec

New Brunswick

Europe

England

Eire
Scotland
Norway
Sweden
Denmark
Holland
Belgium
Luxembourg
France
Switzerland
Italy
Spain
Portugal

The Colleges: In one hundred and forty colleges and universities Bahá'í lectures given in Assemblies or Chapels, most of them leading to class room discussions, or to further lectures by other speakers, comprising the first organized effort to spread the Faith in the colleges under a sponsoring committee; terminated unfortunately by the war.

The Bounty of Bahá'u'lláh was first conferred through the faith and generosity of a paternal grandmother, “Mother Beecher,” with whom I visited His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the city of New York. It is a blessed thing to remember the child who sat entranced at the feet of her Lord and received his all-merciful love. In that hour all fear was replaced by a passion for all people. Beside this, only one thing remained; that Bahá'u'lláh is the All-Glorious redeemer and His power is equal to all things. This fixed principle became, and still is the fulcrum and pillar of an otherwise impotent life.

Faithfully, in the service of the Guardian,

Dorothy Baker

CHAPTER 19

While his mother and sister traveled the globe, Bill Baker, after a year at Yale University, was drafted into the army. For three-and a-half years during the Second World War he served as an army cook. After the war he returned to Lima, Ohio, to work at his father's bakery. The family was very hopeful that Bill Baker would marry a Bahá'í, but the national community was so small and spread out that Dorothy feared he would never have the opportunity to meet many Bahá'í girls. She began to make a point of inviting young ladies to Lima for the weekend so Bill could get to know them.

It was after a visit from a particularly sweet and pretty girl named Annamarie Mattoon that Dorothy went to the cornerstone room at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette and prayed that Bill would marry. She prayed for God's will, but later confessed that she had had her eye on Annamarie. On December 23, 1947, Bill married Annamarie at her sister's home in Wilmette. Members of the next generation of Bahá'ís were coming into their own. Annamarie's sister, Florence Mattoon, had married Otto Zmeskal seven years before Bill and Annamarie's wedding. Both Florence and Otto had been students in Dorothy's youth classes at Louhelen. After their wedding Dorothy wrote to them expressing her tender contemplation of Bahá'í marriage.

Dearest Flossie and Otto,

You can't know, and I'm afraid I can never tell you how happy it makes me to write to a Bahá'í bride and groom, and especially to have it be you. Our Louhelen days together have endeared you both to me. . . . There is no doubt that your home will become a place of attraction and brilliant illumination. . . . I pray that there may be a thousand thousand marriages like yours. It seems to me that it must be a prototype of the New Day, of all marriages of the future.

Dorothy was very close to Florence and Otto, who, after Bill's marriage to Florence's sister, were now family as well as friends. Dorothy spoke to them about her son. She told them that she loved Bill so very much and depended on him. "He is like a rock—you can count on Bill."

After his own wedding, Bill Baker went to baking school in Minneapolis, then back to work at Plezol, the family bakery. The four-and-a-half years he worked for his father were wonderful years for Frank and Dorothy. During her travels Frank had Bill and Annamarie nearby as well as having his son's able assistance at Plezol. Dorothy adored coming home to such a rich family life. Her mother, Luella, now lived with them on Elm Street, and only twelve miles away at the family farm were her dear son and his bride, Annamarie.

When Frank's namesake was born to Bill and Annamarie on March 5, 1949, Dorothy was overjoyed. She wrote to Cora Oliver:

Here in Lima I have become a grandmother! A darling little boy, Frank Mattoon Baker, has moved into all our hearts, and as you may well imagine, directs two households with no effort at all! He is so sweet and I

really do believe will have many of the fine qualities of his two namesakes, the grandfathers Baker and Mattoon. Bill and Annamarie are naturally bursting with pride and joy these days.



49. Bill Baker and Annamarie Mattoon's wedding in Wilmette, December 23, 1947

When Frank junior was very young he adored his grandmother. After Bill and Annamarie married in December of 1947, Bill continued to work for his father at the Plezol Bakery. Their growing family lived at Frank and Dorothy's farm near Lima, Ohio. Annamarie remembered "Dorothy became an enthusiastic grandmother urging and insisting on being allowed to babysit. . . . The children loved her dearly and Frank . . . tended to get sick if his beloved grandmother's travels kept her away more than two months. It is interesting to note that Dorothy Baker's children and grandchildren have all pioneered or are now pioneers."

On Dorothy's return home from a long trip, she would drive out to the farm and be greeted, as she got out of the car, by an ecstatic little boy. Dancing in a ring around her, Frank could not control his joy at Dorothy's homecomings. Florence and Otto's daughter Ellen visited the farm in the summers and remembers wonderful rides in the Bakers' big convertible.

Dorothy relished being a grandmother and was able to see the family often until 1952, when Bill and Annamarie moved to Illinois. Bill had broken off his studies at Yale before the war and could now finish his bachelor of science degree at the University of Illinois, where he also earned a master's degree in food technology and a doctorate in biochemistry in 1960. Annamarie recalled that Bill remained quite active during all of this. "Even then he was finishing his Ph.D. and, of course, very busy, he was an attentive father and husband and a very active Bahá'í being chairman of the Champaign, Illinois, Bahá'í community and often having two firesides a week."

One day during their stay in Illinois Bill and Annamarie took their laundry to a new dry cleaners. The man behind the counter saw the "Baker" label in their clothes and asked Bill if he was related to Dorothy Baker. Bill said, "She's my mother." The man was thrilled. He said, "We were good friends!" Four or five years before, he had attended a Bahá'í talk given by Dorothy while she was on a teaching trip and had spoken to her afterwards. That casual meeting had been enough to endear her to him for life.

Conrad Baker, Dorothy's stepson, graduated from the Yale University School of Medicine in 1934. He married Marjorie Wheeler in her hometown of Bridgeport, Connecticut, on July 23, 1935. Conrad interned at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit where his first child, Dwight Conrad Baker was born in December, 1937.

The family moved to Lima, Ohio the following year where their daughter Marjorie Ann was born in February, 1939. Conrad and his family lived in Lima for two years where he practiced as a pediatrician. So though she wasn't technically a grandmother yet, Dorothy had plenty of practice with Conrad's two little ones. Then Conrad decided to become a resident in anesthesiology at Cincinnati General Hospital.

When the war broke out Conrad enlisted in the army and served in England, France, Belgium, and Germany. After the war, Dwight Baker remembered times with his grandparents, Frank and Dorothy.

About 1947 my parents and Ann and I took a trip to Green Acre, and Grandma was there too. She was very busy attending NSA meetings at Rogers cottage which had little meaning for me at that time. In 1948 I went to Green Acre with just my father. I remember running and playing on the big porch on Sarah Farmer Hall—which kids are still doing to this day. . . .

During a visit to Lima in 1950, Grandma found out that I was interested in radio broadcasting and engineering. She went to the trouble of arranging for a visit to the transmitter tower of the Lima radio station, then drove me over. They let me stay for most of the afternoon talking to the engineer on duty and learning about the workings of the radio station. In addition Dorothy and Frank also purchased a gift subscription to my first electronic publication. That really got me started in what would become my career.

In the spring of 1946 Conrad Baker joined Windham Community Memorial Hospital in Willimantic, Connecticut. Conrad was the first Bahá'í to live in that area.

In the fall of 1948, following Conrad and Dwight's trip to Green Acre, a pneumonia epidemic broke out in New England. As the only anesthesiologist on staff, Conrad was on call at the hospital twenty-four hours a day and worked endlessly.

Among those who became ill were his two children, Dwight and Ann. Conrad successfully treated them both with penicillin, which was a fairly new approach to the treatment of the disease. When Conrad himself caught pneumonia, the rampage had been so wide spread that the hospital ran out of penicillin. Conrad Baker died on November 13, 1948, at the age of thirty-nine, a devastation for his young family. He was buried in Windham.

Now both of Frank's children whom Dorothy had met so long ago at the little boarding house had passed on to the next world. But Frank and Dorothy had two children, as well. Frank decided it was time for him to make an overseas trip, and visit Louise. As Dorothy wrote to Cora Oliver,

Frank and Mother still plan to go to Portugal, and I am still piling my pennies into the Temple at every turn and planning to go nowhere. . . .

I am submerged in plans for the Convention, and am trying to work in a little circuit or two on the subject of Temple building and its needs. April will be the worst, though, and after that life should become more simple. There are many grave problems immediately ahead of us, and the Convention is our natural springboard for taking care of them. . . . The material side looms up like a mountain before us; aside from the usual current needs, \$850,000 must be met in two years for the Temple. No wonder the Guardian likens it to the deeds of the martyrs; it's a little like that in another way.



50. Frank Baker in the 1940s.

Frank and Luella did go to Portugal together in 1950. Although Dorothy's financial resources were already marked for the completion of the House of Worship in Wilmette, she also made a trip there a year later, in the summer of 1951. At home, Annamarie was pregnant with her second child; overseas, Louise was pregnant, too. On the way to be with her daughter during the birth, Dorothy sat on ship deck reading *Childbirth Without Fear* and wrote home to Frank, "Am wondering about our Annamarie these days."

Settled into the German Hospital in Lisbon to wait for the baby with Louise, Dorothy received a cable about Bill and Annamarie's new arrival. Dorothy wrote back to Frank, "I am thrilled that hers is a girl, and 'spect she and Bill are too. Now she can use the cunning dresses, and she will feel as if she is playing 'dolls'! Anxious to know the name."

With her new granddaughters safely born, Crystal Louise to Bill and Annamarie^{[113](#)} in Lima and Dorothy Elisabeth to Hubert and Louise in Lisbon, Dorothy returned to the United States to heartbreaking news. During the time

she awaited the two births, her adored friend Louis Gregory had died. With other devoted admirers of the man whom Shoghi Effendi called “dearly-beloved, noble-minded, golden-hearted Louis Gregory,”¹¹⁴ Dorothy deeply mourned his passing. In a cable from Haifa the Guardian conferred the rank of Hand of the Cause of God on Louis G. Gregory.

Those assembled at the Louis Gregory memorial service in Wilmette heard of his outstanding service to the Bahá’í Faith. Dorothy officiated at the gathering and recounted some of the many ways Louis gave his life: fourteen years as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly between 1922 and his retirement in 1946 and annual participation in college teaching projects and race amity work. To the Bahá’ís assembled that November day, his appointment as a Hand of the Cause of God must have seemed the natural outcome of a life of sacrificial service.

Like Louis Gregory, other Westerners had received this honor posthumously, but none had yet received it while living.

Dorothy did not see herself as outstanding. She genuinely seemed to find others more capable and worthy of leadership. In April of 1951 she wrote to Cora Oliver,

Last year we were chairmen of sister communities; at the moment we are vice chairmen of Nat'l Assembly (tho' I go out of office next week if my real choice steps in,) and more and more of our tasks follow the same paths as we trudge along, anyway, though yours is of course infinitely more historic. Fun to think about it so!

Dorothy saw herself as neither the source of the strength and power others attributed to her, nor above the trials of being human. Just home from a National Spiritual Assembly meeting, Dorothy asked Harry Jay, a good family friend in Lima, if she could talk to him after his noon radio broadcast. She looked dejected when he greeted her. When they were alone she told him there was disagreement at the national Bahá'í headquarters. False rumors had been spread about her. Harry was stunned by her next words and repeated them to his wife that night: "I feel like getting out of the teaching work—let it all go, and go back to being a housewife."

In addition to the personal hurt Dorothy felt from the cruel and untrue gossip of some individuals, her pain and anxiety were increased as she was called upon to perform a service she felt unsure that she could render. In one of the countries Dorothy visited, a woman had a strong dislike for a young pioneer. The woman was determined to have the young man declared a covenant breaker. However, the National Spiritual Assembly of the area did take away the young man's voting rights.

Dorothy was asked to inform the pioneer. She was very distressed, as she believed the man was innocent of any wrong doing. Obviously the decision had to be obeyed, but Dorothy knew it would result in his leaving the country as he was there on the pioneering budget.

A Bahá'í who knew Dorothy well watched her grapple with the problem.

All night long Dorothy Baker paced her room, praying for guidance, knowing that the man was innocent. The only answer she felt was that she must obey the institution, no matter what the circumstances. Therefore when she went to tell him, she also told him that although he now lost the

financial assistance he had previously had, he was not required to leave the country. . . . he could still teach. He determined to stay, if it were at all possible.

. . . She continued to write the young man, encouraging him. He got a job selling, and stayed in a different city each night. During the day he worked at his job, and each evening held a meeting in a different city in the course of each week. At the end of the year there were seven new communities ready to form seven new Local Spiritual Assemblies, in each of the seven towns he had visited in the course of his work. . . . His voting rights were immediately restored. . . . Dorothy Baker said later that because she obeyed she could see that he was strengthened and assisted by her action, and he too obeyed fully.

Notes taken from one of her talks show her concern for obedience to the institutions and the thoughts on which her actions were no doubt rooted.

The Institutions form the embryonic basis for God's new world order and future world divine civilization and are the main channel through which guidance and blessings flow to the believers. They have great spiritual power—the Power of the Covenant—which comes from God. Unity depends upon firmly adhering, loyally upholding, and lovingly obeying these divinely-ordained institutions.

Dorothy Baker obeyed the institution though the situation was difficult. Earlier she had found the heart to carry on in the face of harsh criticism, but this period was one of the most painful of her Bahá'í life.

Soon after these two incidents Edna True called Dorothy from the Bahá'í National Center. A cable had been received from Shoghi Effendi. The scope of the Guardian's cable was tremendous, covering the superstructure of the Báb's Sepulcher, the International Bahá'í Council, various historic sites in the Holy Land, and the four upcoming international conferences. Edna did not read all of it but quoted his last point,

HOUR NOW RIPE TAKE LONG INEVITABLY DEFERRED STEP, CONFORMITY PROVISIONS 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S TESTAMENT, CONJUNCTION WITH SIX ABOVE-MENTIONED STEPS THROUGH APPOINTMENT FIRST CONTINGENT HANDS CAUSE GOD. . . .

Edna read the names of the three Hands in the Holy Land, the three in Persia, then those for the American continent: "Horace Holley, Dorothy Baker. . . ." Dorothy interrupted.

"Wait, Eddie. You're kidding!"

Edna repeated the news again and again, as Dorothy continued to insist it was a practical joke. Dorothy was sure that it had to be a hoax. As Edna True recalled, she had to insist again.

"I'm not kidding."

"Yes, you are. You're kidding. You must be!"

"Please be serious, Dorothy. I'm not kidding."

"You've got to be. There's no reason why he would appoint me. Eddie, I think he means *you*."

“No, he doesn’t. There’s no chance of a mistake here.”

Years later Edna was still amazed at Dorothy’s persistence.

I kept talking, and it took quite a bit of talking. And I said, “Now you just go back and think about this, until you realize it’s true.” But she just fought it off. She just *knew* it was not true. I said, “Well, you just wait and see; see how things develop. There isn’t anything more I can tell you except that it’s sitting right here in front of me, dear, and your name is on it.” It was so peculiar, trying to persuade somebody that she was on this very important list. . . . I was all ready to explode with excitement, but she put me down to a solid argument of persuading her. It was characteristic of Dorothy. . . . She even cut off from me still saying, “You’ll find it’s a mistake. It can’t be true.”

In Portugal the summer before, Dorothy had given a course called “What Is a Good Administrator?” In it she listed qualities a good administrator must have. Among them were:

Detachment: from people, love or dislike, from praise or censure, from your work.

Frankness: combined with courage and courtesy.

Integrity: in personal affairs consulted on by the Assembly, and loyalty to Assembly decisions.

Humility: Take the Cause seriously, but don't take yourself seriously.

It seems Dorothy had mastered the last quality. As Edna said, "All her modesty, all her humility came to the top and she just couldn't conceive that this could be true."

To her daughter and son-in-law, Louise and Hubert Matthias, Dorothy wrote in late December 1951 or very early January 1952,

Darlings,

Wanted you to see this first from me, and not from outside sources and read the two long messages of our Guardian. There are twelve Hands! I am amazed, thrilled, baffled, and uplifted, and only realize vaguely what it all means. Above all, I am humbled to a small spot.

It is the International phase opening up, and it is overwhelming.

All my love,
Dorothy

Shortly after the appointments Leroy Ioas visited the Bahá'ís in Canada, where Rosemary Sala was living.

He came to our NSA meeting and we all gazed at him. Here was a first living Hand of the Cause! A being from another world! And he looked at us and said, with tears in his voice, "Oh, don't look at me like that! You

know, we used to think that the Hands of the Cause were these glorious beings, before whom we would have to bow down, and now we find that they're just—they're just like I am!" and he broke down and wept.

Then he said, "When Dorothy heard, she lost her voice. And when Dorothy loses her voice, the birds stop singing. The world is silent."

Dorothy described the shock she felt in letters to friends, family, and Bahá'í institutions around the world. But as the days passed there were signs of her growing assurance and understanding, and finally of the eagerness she felt to begin a "completely new epoch":

Alice¹¹⁵ beloved:

How *like* you that was!

And how my heart flew back to the day when you came up to a meeting of the Race Unity Committee in Wilmette, trudged on foot through snow drifts to the depot, sat for hours wet and ill, went home and took to your bed literally for months. And during all this time foolish Dorothy, on four national committees and with many problems at home, did not write a single line to one who, almost a martyr, must have often wondered at such seeming ingratitude. Yet my Alice was one of the first to send a loving appreciation of the Guardian's upsurge of divine bounty to one of his servants who with eleven others stands completely stunned and listening. And your promise to pray for us is the most precious part of your dear message, for we three here are still rooted to the spot, waiting for some Act of God to pull us up and propel us forward again in His Path. Alice, to you I can say that I lost my voice for almost three days and am physically weak

still! It has been like an electric shock. Your prayers *are* needed, and I for one shall count on them. Will you pray for nineteen days, please dear? May I ask for this? And when you come to my name, ask that the All-Merciful Lord will lift me to the heaven of true understanding, and pour upon me, however unworthy, the capacity to gladden the heart of our adored Guardian and serve him with ringing victories in every way that his dear heart desires.

Over and over come these sustaining words: “Put your whole trust and confidence in God Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs. Succor cometh from Him alone. He succoreth whom He will, with the hosts of the heavens and the earth.”^{[116](#)}

With a heart full of love and gratitude to you and to all.

Dorothy

Precious Muriel and Ed^{[117](#)}:

The enclosed little envelope is for Bob and his lovely bride. Please feel free to take it out and read the note and have a little prayer holding the Holy Dust before they have it. I had always wanted to give you such an envelope of your own, so add your blessing to this one and pass it along to your children. When it is our Margo’s turn, perhaps I shall have been to visit the blessed spots “situate by the sea” and will have something for her. Inshallah! These two children of yours seem so like my own, somehow. At least I don’t see how I could feel closer!

Your dear letters are going to be kept always, in my file of treasures. They were so fragrant and wonderful that I could not help passing them around to Aunt Lou¹¹⁸ and Frank to read. So great is the new motion in the Cause, through these things, that almost sixty letters have come, from all over the world, praising God for the safe advent of so great an international phase of our Faith, and offering the blessing of prayers for the newly appointed ones. There is such an intermingling of spirit in these days, and such a growing love.

Gladys and Ben Weeden¹¹⁹ are back from Haifa, and are journeying around a bit before settling down in America again. They had lunch with NSA last week, and told us so much of the life at Haifa, and the great trial and suffering of our beloved there. Fresh attacks have broken out, and the “mess of pottage” for which the younger generation of the Holy Family has traded its birthright, is a blow indescribably harrowing to him. The form it has taken has been marriage to children of the violators, and in every case, resulted in careless indifference or outright rebellion. *Please pray for the Guardian daily.*

There were tender things and happy things too, but perhaps I was in a serious mood (for me) and the poignant side kept cropping out. I will try to remember everything, to share with the believers in April when we are alone without outsiders. One thing that struck me was that our Guardian travails when something tremendous is to be born, almost as a mother having a child. He will be absent from meals for days sometimes and remain in his own apartment. Tension is often great then, and the household is on tiptoe. Then comes a burst of something tremendous and world shaking, and joy rings through the halls again; hearts look up and thank God, and everyone plunges more eagerly than ever into the tasks set,

tasks demanding an absolute perfection, a complete obedience, an unquestioning devotion, upon which in every case hangs the success of any service. How he looks to us here in the west, not only to awaken the sleeping giant of the Occident, but to prepare ourselves for world conquest. Our home successes *must come first*, and upon them the greater task rests. Those who arise are known to God intimately, in His Day, before the majesty of which all the worlds quake. I will bring much more when I come. The believers must work as never before.

I hope that the NSA can save the first half hour of every day for these things, right in the Convention proper; I am going to write to dear Manuel¹²⁰ very soon now, and am only waiting for the NSA letter from up here to reach him first. Then we will plan, according to what your NSA can arrange. I will not discuss any of these things in the schools where non-Bahá'ís may be, and when no NSA members can be present. I can take parts of *Drama of Salvation* in the school though, if Bahá'ís and *very* close students only come. It should be a close and wonderful time . . . and the eighteen chosen souls of Latin America committed to the leadership of these continents should be present as much as possible, I would say. We'll see, after a little more writing and consulting. It is a breath-taking time to be alive and conscious, and the whole further evolution of glorious Latin America in the great destiny set for them may depend largely upon the understanding of a very few. Then we are ready for the multitudes. In a letter to our Guardian this very week it came to me so strongly to say, when mentioning problems still existing, that the two National Assemblies raised up in the Latin continents were complete assurance of victory. He is impressed, I know he is, with these remarkable beginnings in administration.

Our two little families are thriving. Annamarie and Bill have two exquisite babies, and Louise and Hubert have a little pioneerling there that seems to hold extraordinary promise.

If Bob and Myriam cannot cash these two ordinary little checks, just send them back, and I will put them both into one American Express. We thought such small ones would have no trouble. A big hug to both of them for all of us, and please let us know all of the news on the family front. Perhaps I can stop off for a peek at them myself; who knows? I do nothing any longer, of course, without direction.

All my love, and heartfelt thanks,
Dorothy

PS. I am afraid that the wire recorder would be impossible this time, due to teaching materials. Let's watch for the very first one going by boat, and send it along then. Too bad dear Margot Worley did not know. There will be others.

Response to a letter from Valeria Nichols

Feb. 1, 1952

The appointments were staggering, like an electric shock around the world. And each fleck of dust named has been galvanized into new streams of thought and action by a power outside himself.

May the Beloved assist us to give our all on the altar of Shoghi Effendi, and add to his joy and strength daily. We can never be worthy, but He is the All-Merciful.

615 W. Elm Street
Lima, Ohio
USA
Feb. 4, '52

Luxembourg Bahá'í Assembly

Luxembourg — Ville, G.D.

Luxembourg

Beloved Friends:

Your fragrant letter brought back so plainly the beautiful city of Luxembourg and my heart leaped across the sea to embrace you all in your wonderful work for the blessed kingdom. I often think with intense gratitude of the visit to Europe and my precious association with you all. How glorious it has been to watch your progress, and what sturdy believers Europe can boast today, to say nothing of her promise for the future!

I beg you all to pray that in these soul-shaking days we who have been appointed to the new responsibilities incumbent upon the Hands, may be enabled to so serve our revered Guardian as to bring increasing joy to his

overburdened heart. This is our common prayer and whole desire. Knowing your love and depth of understanding, I can with the greatest assurance ask you to share in it.

The appearance of these institutions is still another sign to us all that the Faith can now sustain, outwardly and inwardly, the impact of world recognition and world administration. God be praised that you and I have been privileged to see this! Please give to the dear friends of the Luxembourg Community, most loving greetings. May we meet together many times, and each time with a greater victory to offer.

Warm Bahá'í love,
Dorothy Baker



51. 1951: Dorothy Baker, Hand of the Cause of God.

CHAPTER 20

Bahá'í News

June 1951

The delegates and friends gathered for the first historic Conventions of Latin America, celebrated in Panama City and Lima, Peru, had the joy and bounty of receiving, through the good offices of Mrs. Amelia Collins, a priceless gift from our Guardian to the first National Spiritual Assemblies of those great territories, of a lock of the blessed hair of His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh.

This precious relic, designated for the first National archives of the newly elected Assemblies, was presented by the visiting members of the United States National Spiritual Assembly, Miss Edna True and Paul Haney in Lima, Peru, and Mrs. Dorothy Baker and Horace Holley in Panama City. The effect was “electric,” to quote the friends, and all hearts melted into an extraordinary unity as they turned to Haifa and the Guardian in thanksgiving for their many newly conferred blessings.

Before traveling to South America the following year, in 1952, Dorothy made a valiant effort to pave the way for comprehensive deepening on the message and meaning of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation. She had helped with a one-hundred-and-thirty-four-page study guide she wanted to use there. It was

titled *The Drama of Salvation: Days of Judgement and Redemption*.

Published by the Bahá'í Publishing Committee in Wilmette, the book presents the coming of each of God's messengers through the ages as "the most important single event in the era of which He is a part. For through Him the Word of God is 'made flesh and walks among men.'" The reader is brought into immediate contact with the power of the summons of Bahá'u'lláh, "He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is come. The Kingdom is God's."¹²¹

Dorothy went to great lengths to make translations of *The Drama of Salvation* available in South America in time for the pre-Convention school. On April 5, 1952, she wrote to pioneers in South America,

I do have a very great favor to ask of you, Evie and Ed, by way of making my little look-in at Buenos Aires really productive. It has to do with Drama of Salvation. I got Sarah Pereira to translate it, and Ev Larson to set it up on stencils and run it off, and as it turned out that my Part III was never received by them, that meant that Elizabeth Cheney had to be tied up to setting it up, doing the translating herself, and running it off here. . . . I have sent a load to Costa Rica and a load to B.A., with several samples of corrected copies, that is corrected by pen and ink, having corrected all that I possibly have time for here, and am asking you two down there, and Louise Caswell and Art Lamb up there, to hire it out, so to speak, and have ready when I come. I will pay fifty cents a course for the pen and ink corrections, and each course will take an hour and a half or two hours to do, so of course, it is not adequate payment. It is just a stipend of love, with a plea that it will be direct and real service to the Faith as well as a little pocket money. . . . You know who could use just a little pocket money, and who will sit right down and get it done immediately. . . . And no-one is to be bashful about taking it; they will find ways to use it, for the

Cause if not for themselves, and many need it personally these days. I only wish I could offer more in each place, but it cost me \$25 to send it all down by air, a necessity now.

Oh, dear ones, I wake up in the nights praying for you valiant ones these days; something in me pulls on the heart strings as never before. God reward your steadfastness.

In a letter written May 27, 1951, Dorothy congratulated Ed Miessler on his “election to the first Nat'l Assembly of South America. . . . victory after victory awaits that new Pillar of the U. House of Justice.” Then, at last, she was there again. Dorothy first attended the Central American Annual Convention in Panama, then went on to the South American Annual Convention held April 29–May 2 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Muriel Miessler, one of Lima, Ohio's pioneers to the Latin field, was present in Buenos Aires.

Muriel and Dorothy were very close. It was in Dorothy's house that she and her husband decided to pray about pioneering. The incident described by Muriel below was kept confidential for twenty-five years.

There was a particularly stormy session of the Convention in progress—I need not say what was the problem, but it was one that was testing the very faith of some of those present. As I was not a delegate, I was not present, but was sitting in a nearby room doing some typing for the NSA. This room had been prepared to hold the sacred relics, Bahá'u'lláh's hair was lying there in a frame, together with some small things of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and some sacred writings, and the room was decorated with flowers and pictures. It was at the moment a little shrine.



52. Convention of South America, Buenos Aires, 1952. Dorothy Baker is standing in the center wearing a dark suit with white collar and buttons.

Suddenly Dorothy came in from the Convention room. I could see that she was agitated, though she talked calmly enough. She walked around, touching this and that. Suddenly, at some word I uttered to the effect that it was sad that some would have to leave the Convention early and would not be able to hear a particular message which she was to bring, she began pacing up and down and praying aloud. I felt that I was just no longer present in her consciousness, as she prayed with tears streaming down her face, her shoulders shaking, calling out again and again to Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. She knelt down and clasped the blessed hair of Bahá'u'lláh to her breast, and cried for help. She was in agony even as Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane. And her agony was entirely for the beloved Cause—her whole suffering was for the unity of the believers and their progress. Her words—though not loud—rang in that room and echoed and re-echoed, and I felt such a Presence that I cannot describe it. Finally, she stood, calmed, smiling, serene—and went into the Convention room. And there was a new peace there immediately.

At the close of the incident, Dorothy looked at me with a world of emotion in her eyes, and said, “This is between you and me, isn't it, Muriel?” And I

gave her my word—except that I could share it with Edmund. Now—perhaps, I am released from that promise—I’m sure if it would do any good, Dorothy would release me.

Margot Miessler took notes one afternoon when Dorothy did speak in Buenos Aires. Dorothy placed great emphasis on *The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh* and the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The Guardian pleads with us to speak of the greatness of the Cause, its world scope. He begs us to give it prestige. Do not speak of it as if it were your own little, personal philosophy; it is the salvation of God for this day, and without it the planet becomes nonexistent. Mrs. Baker explained that teaching falls into three categories of which the first is the fire of attraction, and every single believer is responsible for this. But it is only the first step.

The experience of the heart is important, but it is not enough. Now the Guardian has said that a basic study of *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era* is necessary, and that for the third stage—preparation for membership—we have the *Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh* and *The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*.

Now, I think we do not yet realize the importance of The Dispensation. If you could all go home and tell the believers in your community this: that just as *The Aqdas* was the Book of Laws and gave us the laws, the succession and the institutions of the Faith, and *The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* was the charter of the world order, so *The Dispensation* has its place, for it stands as the testament of the Guardian. In it he plainly defines the place of the Guardianship in relation to the world order.

It is interesting, in the absence of an actual will at the time of the Guardian's death five years later, that Dorothy Baker called *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh* his testament.

At the request of the National Spiritual Assembly, she remained in South America after the 1952 Convention to teach.

She wrote home to Frank and the family:

May 4 [1952]

Dearest Folks:

I have not finished the school courses, but will just begin a letter home and see how far I get.

There are many problems, and this National Assembly is so pressed; I wish I could wave a wand for them; they are so valiant. After the school, we are going to take rooms together in town and finish up. Then it looks as if I will go to Brasil *via* Paraguay. Asunción needs it. There seem to be many more problems here than in Central America. . . .

It is beastly cold here, and there is no heat. We have a cottage system with a central eating place. At noon it is warm in the sun, and the rest of the time we freeze. But the hearts are warm and the spirits high.

Tomorrow we visit Quilmes, the cemetery where May Maxwell is buried, to pay tribute to her and to hold a Memorial service for Sutherland Maxwell. . . .

May 6

School over and we have all flocked in to town for NSA meetings. We are staying at a little hotel where there is heat, which never gets turned on because it is not cold enough yet. But I keep my coat on night and day and get along all right.

Before coming in I cabled for prayers and the prayers of the friends because only the power of prayer can accomplish what has to happen here. When I get to Brasil I will write more. Already I feel the help, and *do so appreciate it. . . .*

May 10

Sorry this is so disjointed, alas! Will mail this today, but want to say that two meetings a day are now arranged up to Tuesday, May 20, when I take off for Asunción. Tell Elisabeth to get busy on help for Asuncion, *her* baby, at that time! I am not exaggerating when I say that this stay in Buenos Aires is more important than anything else on the whole trip, and miracles are happening. They *have* to happen, and *now*.

If June 7 is too late for strawberries, maybe someone could give me a hand on a crock of good jam, and I'll let the freezing go.

All my love—Keep with me—Dottie

Gayle Woolson, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of South America, recalled that she and Dorothy were offered a lovely apartment in Buenos Aires which belonged to Mr. Carlos Foos, “who generously gave us full use of his home and went somewhere else to stay while we were there. What a great joy it was to be together!” Gayle continued,

The next day we were visited by a wonderful Bahá'í couple of Jewish background who resided in Buenos Aires, Jose and Zulema Mielnik, who were rather new in the Faith. They had met and heard Dorothy at the recent Convention and Bahá'í school and were so deeply impressed that they requested to have an appointment to visit her. When this couple entered the door they were already in a state of exhilaration over the expectation of seeing Dorothy Baker. She received them with much joy and graciousness, and enveloped them with her radiant love. After we were seated, Dorothy spoke beautifully to them about various aspects of the Faith including references in the Bahá'í Faith about Jesus Christ.

Dorothy quoted the writings of Bahá'u'lláh concerning Jesus Christ by heart. According to Gayle, she recited from memory the following passage from *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*.

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His

all-pervasive and resplendent Spirit. We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things.^{[122](#)}

Gayle continued,

After a few moments Dorothy went out of the room briefly to get something. In that interval the couple looked at me with glistening eyes and ecstatic countenances and said, “We feel as though we have been at the Altar of God.” I, too, was in that same state of feeling transported to the Presence of God. This was a powerful characteristic of Dorothy Baker.

Dorothy’s travels in Latin America in 1952 took her to Argentina; Paraguay; Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil; Puerto Rico; Jamaica; Costa Rica; Camagüey, Cienfuegos and Havana, Cuba; then again to Miami, Florida.

While pioneering in Brazil, Muriel and Edmund Miessler always loved Dorothy Baker’s visits. She was their spiritual mother. But those were busy times during her travels, always packed with Bahá’í activity. Dorothy longed to see more of the Miesslers, too. The needs of the Faith were great, though, and now she was a Hand of the Cause, with even more responsibilities. But Muriel remembered one day when time stopped, just for them.

It happened one Sunday when Edmund and I were resting after having had a terrific week. We were so tired that we decided that we would not answer either the telephone or the door bell. So, we turned over—and before we were asleep, the door bell rang. We looked at each other. And stayed in bed. It rang again, and again we looked at each other with a question in our eyes. But we didn’t answer it. It rang again, impatiently, and Edmund said,

“All right. I’ll answer it.” Guess who it was! Our beloved Dorothy! She had been in Asuncion and was supposed to come to us on the following Sunday, but there was a pending air strike, and she took the last plane available out to São Paulo. It was the most beautiful surprise imaginable, and we had a FEAST for a whole week, with nothing else really planned. I’ll never forget how humbly proud I was one time when Dorothy listened to a remark that I made and said: “I can use that, Muriel”—I had almost too much love and adoration for her. She really was one of the Chosen Ones.

On Dorothy’s stopover in Miami before returning home from South America, she spoke with the Bahá’ís, including Lucile Buffin, who had visited Lima, Ohio, almost twenty years before. Lucile noted two comments Dorothy made in Miami:

“You know, in the Bible it says, ‘Take heed what ye set your heart upon, for it shall surely be yours’”. . . at this same meeting I remember hearing her say, “There is only one thing in this life that I dread and that is growing old. I hope when I go I shall go with my boots on.”

During the South American trip Dorothy had to rise at 2 A.M. one morning to catch her plane from Buenos Aires to Paraguay. Gayle Woolson had been with her until that point. Sure that Dorothy was badly in need of further rest, Gayle suggested she might sleep on the plane, but Dorothy answered, “No, I never can sleep on a plane. The greatest sacrifices I make for the Bahá’í Faith are to leave my husband and to travel by plane.”

But she made these sacrifices and she was confirmed. God had granted her the physical strength to carry on. She traveled the world, served her Lord, her

family, and her home community. If one desire was left unfulfilled it was the desire she had expressed to Rúhíyyih Khánum in a letter dated February 2, 1943:

My heart's love once again to the blessed Guardian. When next you have the privilege of entering the Tomb of the Blessed Beauty, dearest Rúhíyyih, will you pray that my life may be a ransom to the Guardian? I cannot do this, but I believe that He will answer your prayer. A thousand thanks.

Tenderest love

Dorothy

In 1953, exactly ten years after writing that letter, Dorothy made her pilgrimage to that most sacred spot. Her prayers there surely reflected the same devoted hope: to be allowed to offer her life as a ransom to free Shoghi Effendi from distress or harm. In February 1953, on her way to the Kampala Intercontinental Conference, she was welcomed to the Guardian's presence, where story has it that in greeting her he said, "Welcome, welcome, a thousand times welcome, my martyr pilgrim."

Dorothy anticipated "that at the Guardian's table" she might see "new vistas and sense indescribable joy ahead." In her pilgrim's notes, copied by Elsie Austin, who was present during much of Dorothy's pilgrimage, she recorded the following words of Shoghi Effendi, spoken to the Bahá'ís gathered at dinner:

The planet is the footstool (of God). The Holy Land is in the heart of the planet. It is the meeting place of three continents—and is the nest of the Prophets.

He went on to describe the sacred place where the Báb's remains lie, much as he had described it in his message of March 29, 1951, to the Bahá'ís of America: "Within this Most Holy Land rises the Mountain of God of immemorial sanctity, the Vineyard of the Lord, the Retreat of Elijah, Whose return the Báb Himself symbolizes." There, on Mount Carmel, are the gardens, "the extensive properties permanently dedicated to, and constituting the sacred precincts of, the Báb's holy Sepulcher. . . . Within this shell is enshrined that Pearl of Great Price, the holy of holies, those chambers which constitute the tomb itself." It is this tomb, which holds the Báb's remains, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá "acclaimed as the spot round which the Concourse on high circle in adoration."^{[123](#)}

Having spoken of the Holy Land and the Mountain of God, Shoghi Effendi went on to tell the pilgrims about the connection of this world with the world beyond, and about the meaning of the "Supreme Concourse":

There is a very close connection between the souls beyond and souls here. This connection depends upon certain difficult conditions—concentration, purity of heart, purity of motive. It will be possible to communicate, but do not attempt to experiment now.

One can even smell the presence of these souls. The Master said, "I can smell the spirit and the fragrance of the writer from this letter, when I opened it."

The Supreme Concourse are beings of whom we have no conception, but it includes souls of people who have been very devoted and other beings as well of whom we are not aware. The higher the position, the greater the influence. They rush to the assistance of the sincere servants who arise now

We need to develop greater concentration and purity in prayer. Prayer and action attract the assistance.



53. In Haifa on her long-awaited pilgrimage, with Lutfu'lláh Hakim, January 1953.

God assures each one that every act is a magnet for the Supreme Concourse.

The Master said . . . “As to the question that the holy and spiritual souls influence, help and guide the creatures after they have cast off their elemental mold, this is an established truth of the Bahá’ís.”

Only these references from Shoghi Effendi concerning the Holy Land and the next world are available from Dorothy’s pilgrimage. Within the year she was to make her home near one and in the other.

Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum knew of the many times Dorothy had asked to be allowed to come to the Holy Shrines. Her first request for pilgrimage was made to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1920. Then, in 1935, the Guardian accepted her offer to contribute her travel money to the National Fund for the construction of the House of Worship. In 1937 the financial tests caused by the persecution of the Bahá'ís of Lima again made it impossible to afford pilgrimage. Then the restrictions imposed because of dangers in the Middle East limited travel at the time of her 1939 and 1948 requests for pilgrimage. On each occasion she had been unable to fulfill her fondest hope. Writing of Dorothy's pilgrimage, Rúhíyyih Khánum recalled,

So you see that when she did eventually come here it was the fulfillment of a lifelong dream of hers, and I remember going up to her bedroom the night before she was to leave and telling her how distressed I was that after waiting so many years to come on the pilgrimage, she only had seven nights (due to airplane connections). She gave me an answer which I have very often quoted to the friends. She said that she felt that when people came here they were like a dry sponge and that when they had the experience of the pilgrimage—the Shrines, the Guardian—in an instant they were filled like a sponge being plunged into water and that very little more could be added, so I should not feel sad that she had only had seven nights. Her beautiful eyes were shining when she said this and I was deeply touched.

Marguerite Sears went on pilgrimage later that same month, February, 1953. In her notes from the Guardian's conversations, Mrs. Sears has recorded,

The hosts of the supreme Concourse are suspended between earth and Heaven waiting to assist, but we must be like a magnet to attract this spirit. This spirit has accumulated because it has not been drawn upon. . . . It requires purity of heart and extreme concentration to communicate with the next world. The Bahá'í who turns to God—he not only can achieve miraculous things, but can exercise a great influence on others.

In Dorothy's informal talks with the friends in Haifa, she spoke of prayer, too. "The power of prayer is dammed up at the channel, never at the source. Spirituality is a measurable force, like electricity or light. . . . Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance, but taking hold of God's willingness." And she quoted the Bahá'í writings: "I swear by the Bounty of the Blessed Perfection that nothing will produce results save intense sincerity." This attitude of intense sincerity, according to her son, Bill Baker, was perhaps the greatest secret of Dorothy's success.

As a Hand of the Cause, Dorothy Baker attended all four Intercontinental Teaching Conferences, during what Shoghi Effendi described as the "GREAT JUBILEE COMMEMORATING CENTENARY OF THE TERMINATION OF THE BÁBÍ DISPENSATION BIRTH BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S REVELATION SIYAH CHAL TEHRAN. . . ."¹²⁴

Rúhíyyih Khánum explains the Ten Year Crusade by saying that there was to be a three-year pause that would lead into the third Seven Year Plan. Instead there was no wait.

A victorious army, having swept all barriers before it, is often so exhilarated by its exploits it needs no respite. It is ready to march on, fired by

its victories. This was the mood of the Bahá'í world as 1953 approached and it was about to enter the Holy Year.

The highlights of the Holy Year were four great Intercontinental Conferences. . . [125](#)

As the Guardian wrote,

Let there be no mistake. The avowed, the primary aim of this Spiritual Crusade is none other than the conquest of the citadels of men's hearts. The theatre of its operations is the entire planet. Its duration a whole decade. Its commencement synchronizes with the Centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission. Its culmination will coincide with the Centenary of the Declaration of that same mission. [126](#)

Kampala, Uganda, in the heart of Africa, welcomed Bahá'ís from four continents and nineteen countries at the First Intercontinental Teaching Conference in February, 1953. Leroy Ioas, a Hand of the Cause who had given up his executive business position in the United States to serve Shoghi Effendi in Haifa, represented the Guardian in Kampala. Mr. Ioas gave his message to the Bahá'ís who gathered under the large army marquee, a substantial tent set up on the grounds of the Kampala Hazíratu'l-Quds. Of the 232 assembled Bahá'ís, nine men and one woman were Hands of the Cause of God. Many of the Hands had never met one another before. Among them were 'Alí-Akbar Furútan and Dorothy Baker, who greeted each other for the first time.

The day Dorothy gave her first talk in Kampala, she and many of the Bahá'ís visited African villages first. Their transportation got them back

rather late, so Dorothy had no time to dress or prepare herself for the public talk. Mr. Furútan recalled the evening:

My first impression was of her spirituality—her face, her eyes; how she looked at the people. I was especially impressed by the way she talked—a very special way. First she loved them. You could see from her eyes, her manner, she loved people. She talked about their beliefs, their history and religion, their sacred scriptures. Then gradually she began to talk about the Faith. . . . Another thing I saw in Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker, she did in almost all the meetings. She herself would say a prayer at the beginning and at the end, in such a way and with such spirituality and feeling that even Bahá'ís like myself would be uplifted. I felt I was ascending to heaven; her voice and manner were quite distinguished.



54. Hands of the Cause of God attending the First Intercontinental Teaching Conference, Kampala, February 1953. In the background is the Kampala Haziratu'l-Quds. Left to right: Musa Banani, Valíyu'lláh Varqá, Shu'á'u'lláh 'Alá'í, Mason Remey, Horace Holley, Tarazu'lláh Samandari, Dhikru'lláh Khadem, Leroy Ioas, Dorothy Baker, and 'Alí-Akbar Furútan.



55. Dorothy Baker in Kampala: making a point.

Mr. Afshar, a pioneer to Africa who was present on the occasion, commented years later,

She was in my idea not from this world. In my life I have seen few people like her, and I haven't seen any more since that time. At the time she was speaking English. I could understand a few words only, but I could follow her tone and her emotion, and without being able to help it I was crying. She was talking and I was crying all the time. Her words were really God's Word, and I couldn't imagine that a human being could do such work, could thrill the world.

As moving as Dorothy's talk was, it had some repercussions that hurt her deeply. A member of the press who was present at her talk reported in the newspaper that the Bahá'ís were in favor of "revolution." Dorothy had repeatedly referred to the Revelation of God, but the journalist had misunderstood. Horace Holley wrote a piece for the paper that explained the Faith's true position. Though the incident provided wide publicity for the Faith's views, Dorothy was very upset that her words were used, misused really, to shed a false light on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

The effect on most of the native Bahá'ís who heard her speak was thrilling. Dorothy had been introduced as a relative of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin and fought against slavery. Mr. Furútan saw that the people were very excited by her connection to such an outstanding figure in the history of racial harmony. He listened as Dorothy explained that, as a Bahá'í, she appreciated the book and admired the greatness of the soul of Harriet Beecher Stowe even more. Mr. Furútan, himself a distinguished scholar, author, and speaker, remarked that her talk and her presence "literally raised a tumult and attracted many among the audience to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh."¹²⁷

Also present at the Kampala Conference was a young man whose family members had been in the household of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He himself had grown up in Haifa in the time of the Guardian. His name was 'Alí Nakhjavání. Almost three decades after the Kampala conference, Mr. Nakhjavání stood in the lobby of the pilgrim house in Haifa, where he has served the Bahá'í world as a member of the Universal House of Justice since 1963. He recalled his impressions of Dorothy Baker:

Dorothy was strong in the Covenant. Someone must have taught her very well about the Covenant. She was in love with every word of Shoghi Effendi. In front of an audience it was clear her motive was pure. She knew what she must do and her object was to help them see what they must do. She bewitched her audience, not so much with her words and stories, but with her beauty and dignity, with the way she delivered her talk, the use of her hands, and the manner in which she moved them for emphasis. She combined love with eloquence and wisdom.

In August of 1952, a young woman engaged to a Muslim left England to meet her fiancé in Mombasa. Her name was Irene Bennett. Before leaving England she had read *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, was deeply affected by it, and handed the book on to her sister. On the ship she met someone connected with the Aga Khan schools and was offered a job as a teacher. When she arrived in Mombasa members of the British colony were so shocked to find that her fiancé was foreign, they sent her away to Nairobi to teach in the Aga Khan girls' school there.

Disgusted with the racial attitudes of the English colony and discouraged not to be able to live in Mombasa where she could at least see her fiancé, Ali, Irene decided to go home to England when the term ended. Then her sister wrote. She had read the book, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, and had become a Bahá'í.

Irene went to her first Bahá'í meeting in January of 1953, where she met many Bahá'ís who were arriving for the conference. On Tuesday the 24th of January, she became a Bahá'í. On Wednesday she was invited to hear Dorothy Baker speak at the United Kenya Club. But the opening ceremonies of the school where she taught were planned for the same evening. At the last moment she decided to skip the ceremonies and go to the Kenya Club.

Many Bahá'ís were there, en route home to various African countries from the Kampala Conference. Listening to Dorothy, Irene began to weep. She said later, "never before had I been unable to control my tears, and I felt very much ashamed." As long as Dorothy spoke, Irene continued to cry. Mrs. Khadem came over after the talk and explained to her that this was her spiritual rebirth. In fact, the impact of her declaration was felt by many who

had attended the conference. Aziz Yazdí told her, “Yesterday you were our friend. Today you are our sister.”

Irene went home, she said, walking on air. She remembered thinking, “How can I teach school tomorrow? I can’t do it.” But when she arrived the headmistress told her a holiday had been declared at the opening ceremonies the night before, so Irene was free to lunch with Dorothy and Mabel Sneider.

After lunch, Dorothy asked Irene to tell her about her life. Irene told about Ali.

Dorothy said, “You must put your trust in Bahá’u’lláh. Before, Ali was one step ahead of you, and now you must bring him one step ahead to catch up with you. . . . You may find, after all, that you won’t marry Ali . . . Would you like me to go and see Ali in Mombasa? I am flying to Dar-es-Salaam, and I might be able to change my ticket for a stopover in Mombasa en route.”

In retrospect, it is unbelievable that Dorothy offered this, but in fact they walked directly to the office of the East African Airline and changed Dorothy’s ticket. Dorothy talked to Irene about serving the Faith. She told her she would introduce Ali to the Bahá’í Faith. Dorothy said, “I married a man who was not a Bahá’í, but he became one later.”

On Saturday Dorothy left for Dar-es-Salaam, stopping over in Mombasa to find and meet Ali. On her arrival, she happened into a shop owned by Ali’s best friend. When Dorothy met Ali, she liked him and found him very spiritual. He was intrigued by this sudden visit and asked if he could become a Bahá’í and still remain a Muslim. But when Ali came to Africa, and attended Bahá’í meetings, he showed no interest whatsoever, which baffled

Irene. They did not marry. Irene stayed on in Kenya as a pioneer, then pioneered to Portugal in 1959. With her sister she moved to the Orkney Islands—and so lived all her Bahá'í life as a teacher and a pioneer.

The spring following Africa, Dorothy attended the All-America Intercontinental Teaching Conference in Chicago, Illinois. There, at the Medinah Temple, she spoke of the Guardian and of his reference to 'Alí Nakhjavání during her pilgrimage:

He told of 'Alí Nakhjavání. He spoke of the fact that this intrepid youth had gone into the jungles of Africa, as you have no doubt been hearing, and, assisted by Philip Hainsworth¹²⁸ of Britain, they lived with the Teso people; they ate the food of the Teso people; they slept on straw mats or leaves, or whatever it is that you sleep on among the Teso people. The rain falls on your head and salamanders drop in your tea, if there is tea. And they stayed! And they did not say, "Conditions do not warrant it because these people eat herbs and things that would just kill us." They stayed! Is there an 'Alí Nakhjavání, then, in America? At the present, no. I mean, up to the present. Is there a Philip Hainsworth? Up to the present, no.

Now, the dark skinned people, he [Shoghi Effendi] said, would have an upsurge that is both spiritual and social. The spiritual upsurge will rapidly bring them great gifts because this is an act of God and it was so intended. And all the world's prejudiced forces will not hold it back, one hair's breadth. The Bahá'ís will glorify it and understand it. The social repercussions of race suppressions around the world will increase at the same time, and frightened, the world's forces will see that the dark skinned peoples are really rising to the top—a cream that has latent gifts only to be brought out by Divine bounties. Where do the Bahá'ís stand in this? Again

and again he pointed out that the Bahá'ís must be in the vanguard of finding them and giving them the base. For the social repercussions will at times become dreadful, if we do not, and we shall be judged by God.

I thought that I was rather a fanatic on the race question, at least a strong liberal, but I sat judged by my Guardian, and I knew it. My sights were lifted immeasurably and I saw the vistas of these social repercussions, coming because of our spiritual negligence through the years, and I saw the Indian tribes dotted about this continent unredeemed, waiting—waiting for an ‘Alí Nakhjavání. Are the African friends going to have to come and awaken us for the dark skinned races in our midst? God forbid, that in even this coming year we fail in this. . . .

God grant that we may raise up our heroes who will dedicate their lives to the Indians, to the great dark skinned races, to the Eskimos, to the Negro peoples so brilliant, so promising in our national life. Which one will be our ‘Alí Nakhjavání?

Jim Stone was not present at that memorable talk, but he drove his old truck sixty miles to hear Dorothy speak one night in Virginia. For him, that night was a step, unheralded and unplanned, toward a life of service.

The last time I saw Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker was in the home of Joel Marangella in Falls Church, VA, I believe in the summer of 1953.

Joel had asked Dorothy to come over to Falls Church from Alexandria where she was staying, at the time, to speak on the Faith to some of his friends. There were possibly 40 or 50 in the room as it was a fairly large house with a large living room.

After the evening formalities were over and we were all milling around, chewing cookies, drinking punch and chattering like magpies . . . Dorothy really blossomed out and showed her true qualities.

It started getting late, 10:00 P.M. , 10:30 P.M. and still no sign of anyone deciding to leave. In my mind loomed the possibility that the evening would be a repetition of those earlier meetings in which we went home at 2:00 A.M. or later. As I had to be at work in the morning, and had to drive over 60 miles of winding mountain road, it looked like it would be morning before I got there. Finally about 11:00 P.M. , I asked Joel if he was going to take her back to Alexandria, thinking if he was, I'd leave and go home.

He answered, "Oh! My car isn't good enough to take her home. . . . I'll phone for a cab in a while and pay for it."

Dorothy was then standing only a short distance away, talking to some people. I turned to her and apologized for interrupting and said, "Joel will not be able to take you back to Alexandria. Would you like to ride in my old 1934 Ford Pickup so that I can?"

Her reply was short and to the point, "Come on Jim. Let's go."

She thanked everybody for a lovely evening and we left. As we left, we could feel the remarks of the crowd more than hear them.. . . "The renowned, beloved Dorothy Baker riding nine miles home in the middle of the night in an old rattletrap of a PICKUP. How could one think of such a thing?" . . .

However, as far as the two old friends were concerned that ride that night was the highlight of the whole evening. No ride in a gold plated Fleetwood Cadillac could have been more spiritually rewarding.

Those two friends reminisced for half an hour and were completely oblivious to the bumps in the road or any other inconveniences involved.

That year, she had addressed the National Convention as to the need for the development of teaching work among the American Indians. Living in Martinsburg and being out of touch with Chicago goings on, this fact was unknown to me and she never referred to it.

However, the Guiding Hand of God was working and that fall saw me preparing to move to Gallup, New Mexico and fulfill her wishes. I never knew that I had done so until I arrived in Gallup and it was brought to my attention. . . .

I have been here now some 29 years and have no intention of moving.

Knowing that Dorothy had just been at the Kampala Conference, where Leroy Ioas had represented the Guardian, his daughter, Farrukh Ioas, asked Dorothy how he was. After hearing the glowing report on his performance at the Kampala Conference, Farrukh asked if, now that he was a Hand of the Cause of God, her father still used strong language, or if he had changed in that respect.

Dorothy answered:

I believe we have to revamp our definition of saints. Your father was the Guardian's representative . . . and it was his job to see that the Guardian's gift—a photograph of the portrait of the Báb—was shown at that conference. Leroy met with those in charge and asked what was the appointed time on the agenda. They told him not to worry, that it would be taken care of. The next day nothing was mentioned so Leroy asked them again to make a decision as to when it would be shown. They assured him that it would be taken care of—but it wasn't. Leroy called them together then and told them that the Guardian's gift would be presented that day at 2 or 3 P.M. and that if it wasn't he would tell the Guardian they didn't give a damn.

As Nancy Dobbins, who recounted the above story years later, said, the most important aspect of it is the ability Dorothy had to turn the issue around and say that the definition of a saint must be changed—not the saint himself.

During that same spring of 1953 at the National Convention in Wilmette, a young Bahá'í woman was combing her hair in the ladies' room during a break. She turned around and saw Dorothy Baker standing next to her. Reelected to the National Assembly, now serving as a Hand of the Cause, but most important, alive with her joy in serving Bahá'u'lláh, Dorothy was admired by most and adored by many, among them the young Bahá'í who turned to find this radiant figure so close by. Dorothy embraced the girl and surprised her by commenting on her fine “Bahá'í reputation.”

The dark-haired girl answered that her real wish was to be more like Dorothy, to be able to do the things Dorothy did for the Faith “so effortlessly—so beautifully.” Then she asked, “Is there something I can do to help me achieve this, to be more like you?”

Dorothy smiled and said yes, there was, then told her listener, “What helped me develop was a certain detachment from the world and all that pertains to it. At this stage in my life I fill my mind and thoughts only with spiritual things. When things of the world come into my mind I instantly think of the Greatest Name or some divine attribute.” Years later, when Soo Fouts¹²⁹ became a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States herself, she still remembered and practiced Dorothy’s advice.

Dorothy’s thoughts, so disciplined to spiritual realities, were totally reflected in her outward behavior and demeanor. At that 1953 National Convention Belinda Elliot found her to have “a radiance unlike any I had seen before, or since. She appeared to be almost transparent to me and in the auditorium during services she kept gazing upward. My eyes were always fastened on her face. . . .”

Al Reinholz wasn’t a Bahá’í, but some friends from Milwaukee thought he should see the House of Worship and think about declaring. On a Sunday they drove to Wilmette to look around and hear the Bahá’í talk that was scheduled. It happened to be given by Dorothy. One thing stood out for Mr. Reinholz: the prayer Dorothy said before the talk—the “Remover of Difficulties.” He said, “I’ve never heard anyone since say it the way she did. This was almost my only contact with her. It was a tremendous thing. She knew just when to pause—I don’t know if it was a natural thing with her or whether she practiced it, but it was very effective.”

In a sense, she did practice it, as Mrs. Khadem witnessed. It was the year after her husband, Dhikru’lláh Khadem, was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God that she visited the Bakers. While he traveled to South America in

service to the Faith, as he would later travel throughout the world, Javidukht Khadem recalled that she went on a teaching trip of her own.

Dorothy Baker said that I must stay with her, so I went to her home in Lima, Ohio. She said that she had made an itinerary for me to go to all the firesides in the area as the speaker. I was very shy. I said I knew very few of the Bahá'ís in the area. She said it did not matter; I had to do it.

Every day someone picked me up and took me to the fireside. Each day I became happier. Every night I came home late—sometimes at 1 A.M. When I got home I found Dorothy Baker and her wonderful husband sitting in the breakfast room (the pullman) and talking. She told me that it was the only time she had to be with her husband, because all day she was so busy.

At the end of 10 or 11 days she had to go to the National Assembly meeting, and I wanted to go to visit my brother. She said, “Let us go together in the car.” On the way she told me, “I have so many things that I must do, and I do not have time. Will you please read these letters I have received, and take notes on how to answer them?” I made notes on the back of each letter, as she told me what to write.

In the middle of this she said, “I have to do something that I forgot. I promised to pray for Elsie Austin,^{[130](#)} because she wants to go to Africa, and the door is closed. Will you help me?” and I said, “Sure.” I did not know what she wanted. She said, “I want to say the ‘Remover of Difficulties’ 95 times.”

She said it very slowly, and with each word her tears poured down. She didn't even notice me. I looked at her. I had never experienced anything

like this. The tears covered her face, and dropped onto her clothes. I did not even count the number of prayers she said, but when she finished she pulled the car over to the side of the road, and she passed out.

I opened the car door and called, “Dorothy—Dorothy. Please!” After about 10 minutes she opened her eyes, and was so happy! She said, “I am sorry, honey, that I bothered you so much.” I asked her, “Is this the way you always pray?” She answered, “Is there any other way?” “Do you always say your prayers like that? Do you say your Obligatory Prayer every day like that?” I asked. She said, “Did you ever read that you must wait to pray until you are feeling spiritual? Every morning I say many prayers, so that I will be spiritual enough to say my Obligatory Prayer.”

That was my trip with Dorothy Baker.

Dorothy felt the spouses of the Hands of the Cause must be encouraged, as they carried a great burden and received little recognition. She worried about them and how they felt, whether their potential was being brought out or lost in the shadows behind their vibrantly shining mates. Mrs. Khadem became an example of one who has been ardent and active, among other things, as a fine speaker and a member of the Auxiliary Board in the United States.



56. Hands of the Cause of God attending the Third Intercontinental Teaching Conference, Stockholm, July 1953.

Dorothy's own beloved Frank was an example of the sacrifices made by the wives and husbands of the Hands. He financed her travels, then bore the loneliness of her absence. She was his dearly loved companion and was keenly missed during her months away from home every year. Even when she was home she wasn't able to spend the time with him they both would have liked. Hand of the Cause Paul Haney recognized the suffering Frank went through. In Haifa, speaking of Frank Baker in May 1976, he said,

I don't believe the extent to which he sacrificed to make it possible for Dorothy to do all the things she did is generally realized. He loved her very much, and he loved being with her. He sacrificed much of the time of their married life to make it possible for her to be away, and render those outstanding services to the Faith. I've always felt that in many ways he was an unsung hero of the Faith.



57. Hands of the Cause of God at the All-America Intercontinental Teaching Conference, May 1953. Left to Right: Dorothy Baker, Shu'á'u'lláh 'Alá'í, 'Alí-Akbar Furútan, Tarazu'lláh Samandari, Musa Banání, Valiyu'lláh Varqá. Twelve Hands of the Cause of God attended the Conference.



58. In the House of Worship, Wilmette, 1953, with Matthew Bullock.

During the Intercontinental Conference in Chicago, Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True, ninety-one years old, invited all the Hands who were present, as well as their spouses and several other Bahá'ís, to dinner at her home. In her long life Mrs. True had gone on pilgrimage to Haifa nine times, had received more than fifty tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and had been instrumental in the building of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, near Chicago. Frank and Dorothy Baker were among her guests that evening in 1953. After dinner, as people were casually talking to one another, Mr. Furútan asked Frank about his wife, her services, and their life together. Frank, who was usually a quiet man, not one to express his feelings too publicly, looked into Mr. Furútan's warm, dark eyes and said, "First of all, she's not just my wife. She's my queen. I would never consider myself her equal. As far as her services go, my main recollections are of packing and unpacking. I send her off on a teaching trip and when she returns I help her unpack. Those moments when we're home together are the sweetest moments of my life."

It wasn't long after talking with Mr. Furútan that Frank again saw Dorothy off on further foreign travels. The Third Intercontinental Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, had the bounty of welcoming fourteen Hands of the Cause of God. Wednesday morning, July 22, 1953, they were introduced to the almost four hundred Bahá'ís in attendance. When Dorothy's name was called she said to the assembled Bahá'ís, "I begin to understand why Europe has been considered the pulse of the world. If we regenerate its pulse, the world may be conquered."^{[131](#)}

On Friday morning Ugo Giachery,^{[132](#)} the Hand of the Cause of God representing the Guardian at the conference, read the paragraph of Shoghi Effendi's cable setting forth Europe's part in the great "Global Crusade," the sweeping Ten Year Plan that stretched from 1953 forward to 1963, and would —though no one knew it at the time— also usher in the Universal House of Justice. Dr. Giachery listed the territories in which there should be pioneers by the end of "the Jubilee Year," the first year of the Plan, commemorating the hundred-year anniversary of the birth of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh in the Síyáh-Chál prison. The Jubilee Year began in October 1952 and was to end at the New Delhi Intercontinental Conference in October 1953. With the New Delhi Conference hardly more than two months away, the hope of settling pioneers in the thirty virgin territories scattered from Albania to the Hebrides seemed remote.^{[133](#)}

Earlier in the Stockholm conference, in a touchingly humorous talk about one goal—"little Spitzbergen"—Dorothy had motivated many pioneers to volunteer for what must have seemed obscure, out-of-the-way places. However, on this last day of the conference, some goals remained unfilled.

None of the four National Spiritual Assemblies that had been assigned goals had yet succeeded in fulfilling all of them. On Sunday afternoon Dorothy reported that, of the European goals assigned to the National Assembly of the United States, one virgin territory was left to be filled: Andorra. The Bahá'í World records, "As she spoke, a believer immediately offered to pioneer to that country."¹³⁴

In turn various individuals spoke about the unfilled goals of the three other National Assemblies. One by one, the same thing happened until, at the end of that session, pioneers had volunteered for all the territories remaining to be opened to the Faith in Europe. The hope Dorothy stated at the start of the conference, that Europe's pulse be regenerated, had been achieved. The Guardian's pioneer goals were won.

In her room at the Hotel Malmen in Stockholm, the night before the final resounding call for pioneers on the conference floor, Dorothy wrote a letter to Gladys and Ben Weeden, revealing her secret hopes, unknown to her fellow believers who listened and arose.

July 25, '53

Dearest Gladys and Ben,

In the atmosphere of this wonderful conference it comes strongly to me to send you greetings and also a hint of what is in my heart about pioneering.

The West Indies area is just "ready to pop" and in most of it you can live like a lord on a very few dollars! When we can wriggle out of a few last affairs in Lima it might be that Frank and I can be permitted settlement

somewhere there. We retired folk *can* wriggle, after all. Our Guardian says “No exceptions!”

Now my heart simply jumps up and down at the thought that *you two* might be interested. We might even go to the same island or at least be neighbors. This is all secret consultation, of course, and purely personal, as every single one must use his own judgment and come to his own decision. I just thought that if you *were* thinking of something of the sort it would be so wonderful to be together or at least semi-together. And our Western Hemisphere Teaching Committee could pay expenses to the island, I just know, if you can manage to even partially get on after arrival. The Leewards and Windwards are very inexpensive.

How I wish we could get the settlement angle finished within the Holy Year, as our beloved in Haifa begs us to go at least throughout the Western Hemisphere where we are so free. In his message to Europe, in speaking of the 131 new virgin goals of the Crusade he says, “*no* act worthier, no honor greater.”

If it should come to your hearts, dears, you can obtain blanks immediately from Ms. Katherine McLaughlin, 73 College Rd., Princeton, New Jersey.

Now I will forget that I have written, and be sure that only what is best for you will come to your hearts.

Dearest love,

Dorothy

Even a year would be marvelous and unexpected things come along to help go on.

Island Paradises of the World would be nice to read. I forget the publisher.

If you act, act fast, for your names should be past the committee and before the NSA by the time of its meeting Aug. 28. Pray about it and you will know whether it is for you.

Frank met Dorothy on August 1st, just home from a teaching trip to Finland after the conference. Before he carried her off to a favorite fishing haven, a cable went off to the Guardian: "OFFER SETTLE ISLAND CARIBBEAN AFTER INDIA. AWAIT DECISION REVERED GUARDIAN. DEVOTED LOVE FRANK DOROTHY BAKER." On August 7th they received their answer: "HEARTILY APPROVE LOVING PRAYERS ACCOMPANYING YOU SHOGHI." A week later Dorothy wrote to her daughter and family.



59. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1953.

This is the photograph the Guardian placed in his room at Bahjí; five members resigned to go pioneering. Front row, left to right: Mamie L. Seto, Elsie Austin, Edna True, Dorothy Baker, and Matthew Bullock. Back row, left to right: H. Borrah Kavelin, W. Kenneth Christian, Paul Haney, and Horace Holley.

August 14, 1953

Dearest Louise, Hubert, and Dodey,

Just in case you did not get my note written to Birre from fishing camp, this is a little Bon Voyage and goodbye. We are still thrilled and happy about the sale and feel so relieved that it^{[135](#)} does not have to be rented.

Well, all the world is on the move, pioneering, and I do want you to have our wonderful news while you are on European soil, that Dad and I are setting sail in January for the Windward Islands, British West Indies, to settle as resident pioneers. I thought you would like to know, to tell dear Charlotte and Hilda and Xavier and all the other dear ones, and ask their prayers for us.

There always seems to be some test of sincerity at the point of going. Bill Sears had longed to reach the point of winning a contract for \$1,000 a week on the radio, and just as he was about to sail for Africa he received it! He sailed.

Your homecoming is ours. We shall have time together *before* January, however, and Dad must come home annually on business, so ours is not as

“rugged.” We are just going to treasure every moment we do have and be grateful.



60. Budd Lake, September 1953, four generations (from left to right): Dorothy Baker, her mother Luella (Aunty Lou), granddaughter Dorothy (Dodey), and daughter Louise.

Aunty Lou is to go back with us next year, when we have a more definite set-up in Grenada, in fact she is counting on it. This year we feel it might be taking a chance for her to try it. So the house will go on as usual here *this* year, as a Center and as a home for Aunty Lou, who will be a hostess, business manager, and inspiration, at one and the same time. Thus you can come home just the same, and moreover, both Junior families are to use the farm apartment to their hearts' content. In fact we have a surprise for you in the shape of a really good little guest house out back now, so that *both* Junior families can come at once and enjoy each other and the farm.

We want to wait until we have lived in the islands a while before we make any move toward a change here. We'll know better next summer the wisest thing to do. . . .

Well, we'll tell you more about the island of Grenada in the Windwards when we see you. It brings me still closer to the Latins and puts us under NSA of South America. I think Dad is going to love it; he is genial by nature and a better mixer, and in the first stages at least I am certain he will accomplish more, just by his presence and general personality. But we do not wish to make "in-a-hurry-Bahá'ís"; first we make friends, and go slowly. Dad would like to add a word to you all.

Love,
Mommie

Hi folks –

It seems too good to be true that we will soon all be together. Very much pleased about the house. Hope Hubert got his money out of the export business too. Muz says the best way to get to Budd Lake is by bus—get directions from Addie. [136](#)

love from Dad

In 1953 five members of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States resigned to go pioneering. The first three were Matthew Bullock, Dorothy Baker, and Elsie Austin, the woman Dorothy had prayed for a few months before as she and Mrs. Khadem drove to Chicago.

That NSA included two Hands of the Cause of God as well as one future Hand of the Cause, three future Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, one future member of the Universal House of Justice, and one future Continental Counselor. Altogether, five members resigned to become pioneers: the three Knights of

Bahá'u'lláh – Elsie Austin, who planned to go to Morocco; Matthew Bullock, to the Dutch West Indies; and Kenneth Christian, to Southern Rhodesia—and two others: Mamie Seto, who intended to go to Hong Kong, and Dorothy Baker, who planned to go to Grenada in the Windward Islands. The Guardian kept a photograph of that 1953 National Spiritual Assembly in his own room at Bahjí.

CHAPTER 21

Before their much anticipated pioneering move to the Caribbean, Dorothy prepared for her trip to the fourth and final Intercontinental Conference, in India. She wrote to Lenore Bernstein, one of the Lima friends, who now continued her Bahá'í activity in Florida, "How I wish you could go along. Lennie, this is going to be the most wonderful trip of all." On the first lap of her journey to the Far East, Dorothy wrote home. Her daughter and family had recently moved back to the U.S. from Portugal. As Dorothy had said before, her greatest sacrifice was leaving her family.

September 29, 1953

Dearest Folks,

It seems impossible that I am on a train again, lurching along to NY and off to India, on the other side of the world. I keep holding on to the little details of back home, like wondering whether there is an iron at the farm; Louisie may have to carry hers back and forth, the iron, I mean. Or whether Mother and Mrs. Scohy¹³⁷ know there is cabbage and lettuce in the downstairs ice box to be used up. And whether possibly Hubert and Louise moved on out tonight so Dodey wouldn't have to weep because of leaving the meeting again! Etc. Etc. Can't seem to really leave Lima, or sleep. And then, too, I'm kind of worried about dear Mrs. Scohy who is so

frail. We have never had company before, except overnight guests, and dinner guests, and you fellows will have to just say “You do this and we’ll do that” and make her live up to it. I find that if you can get her to lie down each day it’s all right. Forbid desserts and just bring up fruit or ice cream; that helps. We don’t need cooked desserts. She has a bad heart, and could slip out very easily; that’s a fact.

Well, that sounds like Gloomy Gus, doesn’t it? But it’s not that; it’s just Lima hanging on to my coat tails. I presume you have thought of all those things and more, by the time this will have arrived. And my mind will turn eastward.

And I’ll write Dad a special letter for himself, next, when he gets back from fishing. First I’ll see BOAC.^{[138](#)}

For our dear young people a last hug and embrace for a while. It seems so natural to have them around now that they are here, and it seems so just right, too, about Detroit. They have new worlds to conquer and they will do it with that wonderful ease that always seemed to me so characteristic of them in Birre. There will be tests and times of strain of course, life is like that; but they will be OK always. They both stand high in a large percentage of life’s “aptitude tests,” and also they are *happy*. So I am thankful and happy riding along, thinking about everything.

Best to everyone and deepest love to all my dear family. Fondly,

Mommie

Excuse jiggle; I hope you can read this.

PS. Arrived safely and checked in at Lincoln. Can still see my dear ones all waving at the depot in Lima. God bless them, everyone.

The next morning, Dorothy wrote on the outside of the envelope, “Little anxieties all gone this A.M. I guess I’ve left Lima now! Love to you all.”

A few days later the Bahá’ís in and around London gathered to meet her. Among them was Ian Semple, who would later serve as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, then, beginning in 1961, as a member of the International Bahá’í Council and, in 1963 as one of the First members of the Universal House of Justice. He recalled:

It was on the afternoon of Saturday, 3rd October 1953, when the friends had gathered in the London Bahá’í Centre at 103 Earls Court Road, to meet Dorothy Baker who was on her way to New Delhi. It was a smallish room with the door at the back. I was sitting in, I think, the second row waiting as the friends gathered before Dorothy should arrive. Suddenly I had the most extraordinary sensation, as if pure joy were pouring over me and I were “floating” in an ocean of love. I looked round to see what on earth could be the cause of this feeling, and there was Dorothy Baker standing in the door-way, having just arrived. I am not given to having such experiences, and I can only say that I had not the slightest doubt that Dorothy’s presence was the source of it.

After a brief stay in England Dorothy traveled on, again recording her feelings and impressions in a letter home.



61. New Delhi, October 1953: Bahá'ís who attended all four Intercontinental Teaching Conferences. Dorothy Baker is sixth from the left.

Dearest Folks,

No place on “Jet” but never mind; they put me on an Australian liner and got me off. I’ll miss the Nehru affair but will be in plenty of time for the Conference. I don’t know what went wrong at BOAC office in Chicago. There were a number of complications. But all’s well that ends well, and I took off from London this A.M.

We had a lovely meeting yesterday in London and after that Marion and David Hofman¹³⁹ whisked me out to the 15th Century village of Wheatley for the night, a stone’s throw from old Oxford. It was perfect; I wouldn’t have missed that old bit of England for anything. And they have two beautiful children, 6 and 4, who say little Bahá’í prayers in the sweetest upper-class British you ever heard, and can’t wait each day for the “family worship period” which David and Marion have inaugurated. After little one-line-or-so prayers by grown-ups and children alike, a short paragraph is read and they tell one story only and that’s that. It’s wonderful and I can’t wait to tell Bill and Pen. Dodey is probably a little young yet. Frank could do it. And Pen and Bill are so anxious for those things. Also, the perfect English of these children springs from the fact that their publisher Daddy staves off just everything else from them, and feels that background

becomes at last the individual. I did learn and realize a lot from them, and those children are so simple and natural too, that I was impressed. They have an acre or so of land, and the children pick up all the fruit in season and receive a penny from each basket sent to market. The family is a kind of “cooperative.”

Well, India next, and only cards from there, maybe, to Lima and Lauderdale.

Love to old and young,

Mommie

The complications Dorothy mentioned in trying to leave England included almost not receiving permission to continue her travels. When she and the Hofmans dropped her big bag at the air terminal that evening, airline personnel told them the plane she was scheduled to take the next morning was making a stop in an Arab country where Dorothy could not be admitted because her passport had been stamped in Israel. But by the time they reached the Hofmans' home in Wheatley, a BOAC official was on the telephone assuring Dorothy she would be allowed to fly. Then, as Marion Hofman later wrote to Frank Baker, Dorothy could relax.

We put the children to bed, and then had scrambled eggs by the fire, and such a lovely visit. After supper we begged Dorothy to pray for us, for as perhaps you know, business affairs had prevented us from active service for almost two years. She readily agreed, got herself ready, and said, “Now don't interrupt me, for I'm going to say as many prayers as I like.” And she did, dearest friend and heavenly spirit, intercede for us with prayer

after prayer. And so to bed at midnight or later, but not until I had sat on her bed in a short few moments during which I sought and she gave advice on something known only to the two of us. Our hearts met and were opened to each other, and her wisdom altered my life.

The next morning David Hofman took her to the airport as he recalled:

. . . we rose very early in the morning and I drove her to London airport to catch the plane to New Delhi. There had been quite a business getting her on it, but all was set. However, half an hour from home, with nice time, we ran out of gas halfway up a hill . . . before 6 A.M. There was a gas station there, but we could rouse no one. I admired Dorothy so much; no fuss or reproaches; she just stood upright, and I was sure was calling upon Bahá'u'lláh to help her fulfil the Guardian's command. I remembered a hotel with gas station at the bottom of the hill, and so turned the car round and coasted right into the yard. The night porter was making some tea and gladly gave us the gas, and off we went, but with no time to spare. We made it, just, and as Dorothy turned from the official to say goodbye I gave her a big hug and a kiss, said "God bless you" and off she went.

Dorothy's grandson Frank called her Lou. Luella Beecher, Dorothy's mother, was always known as Aunty Lou, so Lou seemed a good name for Dorothy. At the stop in Rome en route from England to India, Dorothy mailed a picture postcard of an airplane to her youngest granddaughter. On the back she wrote,

Dear Dodey,

This picture is a 'plane and Lou is taking a ride on this plane today. When you get big, you can fly on a plane too! I send you a kiss from Lou.

At the airport in Delhi about a hundred Bahá'ís greeted her, and she arrived in time to meet with Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India. Hand of the Cause of God Mr. Furútan recalled the meeting.

When she went to meet Nehru in New Delhi (all the Hands were there) and he gave the very beautiful speech of welcome, she turned to me and with her eyes invited me to answer Nehru, which I did. It was her initiative to invite me; her silent invitation.

She loved everybody. She showed me many kindnesses. At all the conferences the Hands gave public talks, or talks to the Bahá'ís. When I was the speaker she always encouraged me afterwards, praising my speaking. Once she said, "Come sit next to me, my brilliant speaker."



62. Speakers at the New Delhi Town Hall, October 1953. Left to right: Mildred Mottahedeh, Abu'l-Qasim Faizí, Dorothy Baker, H. Collis Featherstone, and John Robarts.

During the New Delhi Intercontinental Conference Hazel Mori was very aware of Dorothy's presence. During one of the sessions at which Dorothy spoke, Mrs. Mori watched her from the audience.

I sat off to the right as we faced the speakers' stand in that makeshift auditorium with its folding chairs, whirring fans, dampened India prints draped to cool the large circus-sized tent that held us. She was ever in my range of vision where she sat almost motionless, her gaze directed to her left, slightly past the speakers, with no flicker of emotion to show she was listening. I wondered at the time if she was trying to avoid showing any evidence of pain, since her fingers were folded under, as though clenched, so much of the time, or, because her face was so serene, if she were just communing with the Abhá Kingdom. But the moment she rose to address us she showed complete awareness of all that had been said during the preceding consultation, and her poise, her encompassing love, her vivid speech, radiated vitality to us.

A. Bashir Elahi, who worked at the Iranian Embassy in New Delhi, wrote,

During the Conference she was the shining figure because of her lectures. . . . The conference was scheduled from October 7 to October 13, 1953 and I remember she was talking nearly every day, explaining the goals of the Conference and the directives of the Guardian. Her speeches were so mesmerizing that everybody would try so hard not to miss them. Moreover, she had the responsibility to contact the Indian authorities and acquaint them with the principles of the Cause and aims of the Conference.

In the meantime, some public gatherings were also arranged at various places for non-Bahá'ís and she lectured eloquently and convincingly. Her

speeches in public meetings were received so warmly, that they were reported by most of the newspapers in town. . . .

As this was the last of the Intercontinental Conferences, Bahá'ís attended from all over the world. Emma Rice was among them. She later wrote:

The next time I was with Dorothy was in New Delhi, India at the fourth and last of the four Intercontinental Teaching Conferences, October, 1953. She was exhausted from the heat and humidity and would often ride on the back of a donkey cart to the conference tent on the hay stacked in the back of the cart looking just like a young nature nature girl with flowers 'round her neck and in her hair. She was totally unconscious of her station—Hand of the Cause of God—Chairman of the NSA of the USA—newly declared pioneer to Grenada. After the Conference was over she asked me to accompany her to a girls school nearby where she was to give a talk. She was just getting over pneumonia and could not speak a word. I wondered what was going to happen—I just could not persuade her to rest some more. But nothing doing, on she went through the long dusty desert drive. She greeted the girls with cheers and smiles, stood up on the platform and gave a magnificent talk in a firm, positive manner, descended the stage, joined the teenagers, autographed something for each one . . . that was Dorothy—nothing could stop her.

Perhaps it was the same school where Shirin Boman's eleven year-old daughter Ruhiyyih was a student. If so, the girls were unaware of anything in Dorothy's manner that would suggest exhaustion. Ruhiyyih Boman Sanchez said,

I remember that she gave a beautiful speech at the little school. It was inspiring; we were spellbound. I still remember her face. The way she spoke reminded me of Rúhíyyih Khánum. After the inspiring speech she took a handful of what looked like coins and to our amazement, she just threw them to us. We rushed to get the coins, and found they were chocolates covered with silver foil.”[140](#)

Frank waited at home, patient in anticipation of the day, quite soon, when his wife would return and together they would travel to the West Indies and away from her time-consuming responsibilities of recent years. Then he received a telegram:

NEW DELHI

GUARDIAN CABLED URGING HORACE, MASON AND ME REMAIN INDIA
ADDITIONAL MONTH. APPROXIMATE ARRIVAL HOME LATE NOVEMBER.
ADDRESS BOX 19 DELHI LOVE

DOROTHY

By the end of November, more than a dozen Indian towns received Dorothy, who was often accompanied by one or more Indian Bahá'ís. Mrs. Shirin Boman, a close friend, traveled with Dorothy for eighteen days. Mrs. Boman was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India the following year and became a member of the Continental Board of Counselors for South Central Asia. Her daughter Perin, the future Dr. Perin Olyai, is a member of the Continental Board of Counselors for Asia, and, at Dorothy's request, named her own daughter Dorothy.

Mr. Isfandiar Bakhtiari sometimes accompanied Dorothy. He served for years on the National Spiritual Assembly of India and later the National Spiritual Assembly of Pakistan, as well as an Auxiliary Board Member for that region. He had also helped Martha Root¹⁴¹ on some of her travels in the area. Other companions in Dorothy's Indian travels were Mrs. Monira Sohaili, who later pioneered in New Caledonia for seven years and in Australia for thirteen; Bahiya Sohaili, a pioneer to Laos, Bangkok, and Zimbabwe; and Sheriyar Nooreyazdan, who later taught at the New Era School in Panchgani. In each town Dorothy spoke one or two, even five or six times, in the few days she was there.

Monira Sohaili wanted to join Dorothy on her travels, but feared she would not be able to. Her wedding had taken place during the New Delhi Conference, and she assumed it would be best to stay with her new husband. When Monira explained this, Dorothy said, "Don't worry, whatever happens is the Will of God. You will accompany me if you are meant to." This made Monira think again about going. She talked it over with her family, who had no objections, and a few days later, when Dorothy passed through Bombay, Monira joined her. Dorothy said, "Now your husband has joined the club my husband belongs to, whose wives go on teaching trips and are gone most of the time." Monira, Dorothy, and two other youth, Bahiya Sohaili and Sheriyar Nooreyazdan, set out from Bombay with Dorothy. Monira later recorded some of the events of the trip.

The first stop, I think, was Surat, where the Vakil family lived. . . . Their father, a very devoted and dedicated Bahá'í, had passed away. His wife and two daughters took us to the guest-house. As Dorothy was about to enter the room she stopped and from her face it seemed she was aware of something, and then she turned to us and said, "Dear Martha Root has been

in this room.” We were very surprised. The Vakil sisters told us that dear Martha Root had spent some days in that very room facing the water and written portions of her book *Táhirih the Pure*. Dorothy was very quiet and had such a thoughtful look, as though she could see dear Martha there in that room.



63. Dorothy Baker with friends in Kanpur, December 5, 1953.



64. Dorothy Baker addressing Sanskrit College, University of Banaras,
December 10, 1953.

We then went to a place called Baroda. Most of the time we travelled by train. On one of these train rides a man approached us and started asking many questions. Dorothy did not answer him and we were surprised why she did not wish to talk with him about the Faith. She then asked him to look up at her and tell her if he sincerely was seeking or only wanted to argue about God. With this the man looked down, and walked away, and left us in peace. We wondered how she knew he was not a seeker and only wanted an argument. She said she could see in his eyes he was not sincere.

Now our trip to Baroda was really a memorable one. We arrived there tired from the trip, and wondering what to do as the few Bahá'ís there were not seen and were not at the Bahá'í Center. Dorothy turned to us and said, "Here we will have a public meeting." We three were very surprised as to how we would inform the public and get it all together in one day. We decided the only way was to print handbills announcing the meeting at the Bahá'í Center and hand them out in the street to people, so each of us took different sections and started distributing a few thousand of these handbills. People just took it and some asked us to give them, but of course as with all public meetings we did not expect more than a couple of people would come.

When it was time for the public meeting we were late, as we were still handing out the invitations, and when we came to the Center what a surprise awaited us. There were so many people that the stairs were also filled and we were not able to go to the room to hear dear Dorothy, who was already speaking to them. After one-and-a-half hours of speaking she

told them that those who wanted to leave could, and should not feel bad as she would turn her back so they could leave. Well, not one left and the meeting continued till late at night. They were just enraptured and the whole center was packed. Some of the Bahá'ís who heard also came and we were able to meet them, and as a result they became deepened and active.

Well, I can even now see her dear face, so happy, and she told us, “I am going to write to the beloved Guardian and tell him what you three youths did today in this place.”

Many times she expressed the wish to be with Frank Baker and told us that she was counting the days when she could join her husband to go pioneering, but as the Guardian had asked her to continue a little longer her teaching trip she was staying longer. She taught us by her example. . . . Her obedience to the Guardian was “exact and complete.” Though her heart longed to join Frank, she stayed on. . . . Her great devotion to the Guardian was evident; so many times a day she said his name. . . . During dinner time [at a hotel] we were served with the most delicious custard pudding. Dorothy expressed how delicious it was, but would not take a second helping. We could see she was thoughtful. Then she exclaimed, “I wish the Beloved Guardian were here to enjoy it.” This was typical of the way dear Dorothy felt . . . anything she saw that was beautiful, she would exclaim in the same way and then would say, “May my life be a sacrifice for the Beloved Guardian.”

Many times she would repeat to us and tell us how to teach these people of the Hindu background. Here I would like to explain that until that time, teaching in India was very slow and the Bahá'ís were mainly Persians

from Iran and not Hindus (native Indians). She would tell us that the best way to teach them was to attain the station of a lover to his beloved, only then would we get results. She told us that the Hindus had a great heritage as they were taught religion and were spiritually inclined through the religious beliefs of prayer and meditation and it would not be difficult to bring many of the Hindu people into the Faith. How many times she would say, “I wish I could give my life for these people of India so that they can come into the Faith.”

Finally we said our goodbyes with many tears. Dorothy called the three of us to her and held our hands and prayed for us to go pioneering and told us that if she did not meet us here, if we would pioneer and teach the Faith, we would meet with her in the Abhá Kingdom.

Another request came from Haifa asking Dorothy to travel in India for one more month. While she was away, Frank had been preparing to leave for their pioneer post in Grenada, West Indies. To establish credit in their new post, Frank asked for and received, on October 10, 1953, a letter of recommendation from the vice-president of the Metropolitan Bank of Lima, Ohio. It stated, “The Baker family enjoys an excellent reputation in this community and their dealings with us have always been most satisfactory. Any courtesies extended them will be appreciated.” Frank wrote letters to his old friend from Lima, Ed Miessler, at Ed’s pioneer post in South America, expressing his hopes and feelings:

November 9, 1953

. . . Dorothy, Aunty Lou and I are going to go down to Grenada about January 15th as pioneers. . . . If we stay in Grenada most of the time we

may eventually sell our home here and just use the apartment at the farm when we come back each year. We will probably spend eight or nine months of the year in Grenada and probably will buy a home there. Keeping up three places runs pretty steep and if the group here can find a suitable place to meet I will probably sell our home here in Lima.

Since I sold the business Bill has gone back to college. . . . He is taking a course in food engineering and was first in his class last year, only one B. All other grades were As. . . .

Dorothy is in India and will be home about Dec. 14th or 15th. She is speaking at the schools and colleges there and at a lot of public meetings beside. This will probably be our last long separation—hope so at any rate as I miss her more this time than on any of her other trips. . . .

Nov. 20

My dear Ed and Muriel,

Received your nice letter this morning. Have not been sleeping more than eight or nine hours a night since I made you that loan—now I can get back to normal. . . .



65. Dorothy Baker at Lady Irwin College for Girls, New Delhi, 1953.

I got quite a shock yesterday. We had made our plans to leave Miami for Grenada Jan. 15th. Got a letter from Dorothy yesterday saying that the Guardian had asked her to stay in India another month so she will not get home till about Jan. 14th. Guess we will get away early in February now unless the Guardian asks her to do something else between now and then. I have not sent her any extra cash and since she expected to come home about Nov. 2nd when she left I'm wondering what she is using for money. She has really been doing quite a job over there, good audiences and good results, stays about two days in each place. She spoke before several Rotary Clubs and other organizations as well as regular Bahá'í and public meetings. Thank goodness this is one trip where she will get in a little sightseeing whether she wants it or not. She has visited Taj Mahal and some of the ancient caves. They just cannot imagine a person not wanting to see the sights so arrange little visits for her on their own.

Hubert has made a connection with General Motors in the Insurance end. . . . He would like eventually to get into the export end but his immediate interest is to get into the company and stay in this country till he gets his citizenship.

Sunday he started in the school that G.M. conducts in Flint. . . . Until he finishes the school about Dec. 19th Louise and Dorothy (Dodie) will stay with us here. . . .

I wouldn't be surprised if we get a home in Grenada some of these days, most likely not this year however but I feel we will get a lot further along there if we look like permanent fixtures than we would if people got the idea we were only there as temporary residents.

Everyone is well here—we are all around the Pullman table reading and writing letters but I guess in about a minute we will just be reading.

Love and best wishes to the whole family from

The Frank Bakers

Aunt Lou and Louise send their love.

F.A.B.

Dorothy spoke at three colleges in Agra. Years after her trip to India, Eunice Braun traveled there to teach. Mrs. Braun said in an interview:

An interesting thing happened in Jaipur, at the University of Rajasthan. An Indian man, I think the head of the English Department, had been invited. He translated my talk that night into Hindi. He told me about himself. He had been a young student at the University of Agra when Dorothy had come. He had a program from that meeting. He carried it with him, strangely enough. It had a picture of Dorothy Baker in it. He had not

become a Bahá'í , but he had been so deeply touched, he had never been able to forget her, and he still carried that program, nearly twenty years later. He had made a pact with himself that he would never forget what she had said, and sealed that pact by pricking his finger and marking the program with his blood. He said it was a second chance for him. The fact that I had known Dorothy seemed to mean a great deal to him.

Among the towns Dorothy visited in November was Gwalior, where her schedule, as usual, was packed. The *Bahá'í News Letter* of India records the activities of her two days there.

Mrs. Dorothy Baker arrived in Gwalior on the 20th November 1953. She was received at the station by a batch of students who garlanded her with flower garlands.

The same day at 1:30 P.M. she delivered a lecture in the Victoria College on "Real Internationalism." From there she went to Kamalraja Girls College and addressed the faculty and the students at 3 P.M. on the Bahá'í Faith. At 6 P.M. Mrs. Dorothy Baker delivered a public lecture in the Hall of the Chamber of Commerce which is in the heart of the city. Rani Rajwade, a very prominent lady, was in the Chair. She has read extensively of our Faith, so she opened the meeting with a very impressive speech on the Bahá'í Faith including short history and a reading from the Guardian's message to the first All India Woman's Conference in India. The audience consisted of the cream of the city and dear Mrs. Dorothy Baker carried them to the Seven Valleys of Bahá'u'lláh during her talk. All heard her spiritual discourse with wrapt attention and all seemed to be deeply impressed.

Next morning Mrs. Dorothy Baker met the representatives of the Press at a Conference and spoke to them on the history of the Faith. At 11 A.M.

Dorothy Baker met on invitation Rani Rajwade and her daughter-in-law at their residence. Rani Rajwade has promised to study more about the Faith.

At 12 noon an interview with Her Highness the Maharani Scindia was arranged in her Palace. During the interview Mrs. Dorothy Baker had free discussion with her on the Bahá'í Faith for about an hour. Photos and films were taken and three books were presented to her by Mrs. Shirin Boman on behalf of the Spiritual Assembly of Gwalior.

At 3:30 P.M. Mrs. Dorothy Baker gave a talk on the Faith at the Agriculture College. Questions were answered and all were greatly impressed.

At 4:30 P.M. some distinguished ladies were invited to tea at the Bahá'í Centre to meet Mrs. Dorothy Baker. After the party she spoke to the local Bahá'ís in her own inspiring way about our beloved Faith. "No words can express the heavenly atmosphere in which we found ourselves." The friends joyfully discussed the occasion and shared their feelings of joy in the Nineteen-Day Feast. At 6 P.M. she dined with the Rotarians and addressed them for more than 20 minutes. That day Rotarians had come from different parts of India [so] dear Dorothy Baker could give the message to all. At 11 P.M. she left Gwalior.

Half a dozen cities later, on December 5th, Dorothy was in Kanpur. The Local Spiritual Assembly of that city wrote to the Guardian on January 14, shortly after her visit,

. . . We particularly remember her brief memorable 2-day visit to Kanpur during which she spoke at no less than 20 places without any rest or even the time to gather her breath. She left her spiritual imprints in Kanpur not only on the Bahá'ís but also on the pressmen and the people of Kanpur at large. The send-off meeting in the train's compartment was a never-to-be-forgotten meeting of prayers and tears, after which she gave her parting message to the people of Kanpur which was published, along with her group photograph in no less than a dozen English and Hindi newspapers of Kanpur. . . .

In a letter written to David and Marion Hofman in early December, Dorothy described her travel plans. She closed the letter saying, "For the trip to London there will be no complication. If God wills, I'll be on Jet plane Jan. 7. Much love, Dorothy." At the same time she wrote home:

Dearest Family,

When you write, please tuck in a copy of the pamphlet "Religion Returns."

What do you think of me in a sari?? These were given to me. The entire thing is one piece, you know, wrapped around by a special method which I'll show you. And there I am in the navy dress which is my regular college attire. Some say to wear a sari for colleges and "be one of them." I might try it around Benares, the 100% Hindu center of all Asia, and incidentally the world center of Theosophy. It is the ancient "Sacred City."



66. “What do you think of me in a Sari?”

The enclosed is my proposed new routing, which takes the east side as previously planned and leaves time open afterward for Hindu centers like Banaras and the Indore region in central India where the *second* holiest city is. I assure you we are now attempting the impossible. Don’t be surprised if you hear that I have bathed in the Ganges, sacred river of all Hindus, and come forth singing verses from the Vedas.

Later

Another wonderful batch of mail here at Delhi, and how I did eat it up! The meeting with Longs must have been so wonderful, and never mind if pioneers could not further arise; Ohio still needs lots of help! How lovely for Lima to have been blessed with such a meeting. And I’ll bet Frank’s breakfast was par excellent! [*sic*]

For Frank—there are no gold coins left in India. They are forbidden in banks, and I have asked the best antique collectors and they say you just have to stumble on one but they have really been snapped up. They will let me know if any do turn up, but they shake their heads doubtfully.

Now the Guardian's cable regarding remaining another month brings me to Jan. 6 when I fly as follows:

Jan. 6 Jet to London, arriving Jan. 7. Jan. 8 leave London 8:00 P.M., arriving New York (Idlewild) at 8:15 A.M. Jan. 9.

They have it worked out at BOAC here in Delhi for me to write them from anywhere I happen to be, and cancel the second half of that trip (London to NY), and instead, fly London to Trinidad, via Jamaica. I would be in Jamaica the 9th instead of New York, that's all, and transfer after visiting a day or two with the friends there, to Trinidad where I would remain and meet your plane on the 15th. I could meet that fine young chap there in Jamaica, who might be a great help to us in teaching later. You would save at least the price of my ticket from Miami as well as a trip home from New York. I can get clear to Trinidad for about the London—NY trip, and it does seem sensible. Just turn back my round trip to Edna and get it back, if you decide to do this. Write me when you decide. As for you, Mother darling, you are as safe as rain with Frank on that big liner, and I'll be at the airport at the other end. Take one of my capsules at the Miami Airport.

Thanks, Louise dear, for sending the trunk. I'm so grateful. It will be no time before I see you in the Spring, dearest, if the family decides to go and meet me. Stick in a couple of my summer dresses if trunk has room and if I go direct.

Personally, I am against changing our timing. You *might* pick me up in NY though, and drive on south. Let me know.

Love,
Dorothy
Mommie

In Benares, having delivered ten talks in the previous five days in Benares and Patna, and preparing to continue her schedule with a visit to the village of Rampur the next day, Dorothy wrote to her daughter and son-in-law:

Dec. 12, 1953

Dearest Louisie and Hubschi,

News on your front sounds so good, both as to housing and dear friendships, and as to Hubschi's work which is in the first stages of very fine things. I can just see old Hubschi getting his teeth into that study job! Just born for it.

Funny thing; I have not heard a word about Bill's studies this year, and last year I felt so close to it all, going up to NSA meetings as I did and stopping off to see them. Tell Pen my India address and see if she will send me a good old-fashioned bulletin of the Bill Baker Bunch. I feel kind of homesick about them because of so suddenly being cut off after being so close to it all.

And when I think of my two young families I have a little sinking feeling anyhow, missing the holidays and big reunion, but I did have it all at Budd Lake and did see you all together, and that's a lot. I wish there were a way

for you to keep an arm around Dwight and Ann¹⁴² spiritually; maybe you will find you can as time goes on. They need Bahá'í association very much, and Marge too. You seem to me, Louisie, to be the one who can especially help them along; just pray about it and see.



67. Dorothy Baker with the Maharani of Scindia at the Palace, Gwalior, November 1953. Shirin Boman is on the Maharani's left.

Now we have to begin planning a summer reunion, when the family can get together somewhere again, and take account of stock. With the super-duper little guest house, that should be easy. You two younger families can manage nicely and we'll have dinner for all at night. Tell dear Mrs. Scohy I've been thinking already about next summer when she, I hope, will be back with us, and of what extra help I am going to have to do all clearing up, dish-washing, and errand-running, so that she can be just the preparer of the dinner. A school girl can come in and clear up and we can spend

every minute with each other and Mrs. Scohy. Either that, or the three of us (you, Pen, and I) are going to take over the after-dinner business and lift her bodily out of the kitchen! Tell her now so she can get her water wings out, because we might toss her way down into the august Ottawa River if she objects! And you say a dear goodbye to Mrs. Scohy for me right now, Louisie, as it seems I've really left home.

When I get to the island I'll write you all more often, and you and Pen can mail back and forth our family epistles. We really are not far away, you know, and from Trinidad it's a non-stop, 13-hour flight to NY (if you choose the right day).

Hug my little namesake too. Dad says she is a wonderful bundle of energy. Well, any child that lifts up her head at the age of *two hours*, and quietly takes a look around, gets a fair start on *that*, for sure. She has remarkable potentialities stored up within her, that baby, and life will be a great adventure. Teach her to live for others, to serve others, to love others, for her nature is strong; what she does she will do 100%. Not to possess, but to give is the key; she will live throughout history if this is her foundation and the Cause of God her passion.

Send my love also to my boy Frankie, and his little sister, "Crissel" and hug that dear Hubschi. All my love to you both

Mommie

Dec. 20
Train to Nagpur
and Indore

Dearest Family,

This is the last letter home that you will be able to answer while I am in India, for transportation out on Jan. 6 is assured, and from there to London, one night there, and there to Jamaica, one night there, or even two, and there to Trinidad to await you. Yes, I may stay two nights in Jamaica, or even look in at the Weedens or the St. Lucia folks or Edie Rice-Wray en route to Trinidad, according to where the local plane stops. I will get to Trinidad by the 13th or 14th, though, and have everything in hand, including reservations at a Grenada hotel, through the Air Co., and at Trinidad.

Now I need to know the following, so as to sit in right with you from Trinidad on.

1. Day and hour of departure from Trinidad to Grenada so I can get a seat when I get to Trinidad, or even get it ordered from this office, to be sure of it.
2. Please send me three "paper mate" ball point pen fillers. I want to give two away in Delhi and use one myself. Rush this. Name store in Lima where they can be further procured, and price.
3. Please tuck in my Harper Hair Ointment. It will stop my hair from falling out before I become a hard-boiled egg.

I cannot give addresses except the following:

1. Box 19, New Delhi, India, up to Jan. 6.
2. c/o David Hofman, Wheatley, Oxon, England, up to Jan. 8.
3. c/o Miss Marie Brown, 190 Orange St., Kingston, Jamaica, Jan. 9 and 10.
4. c/o British Overseas Airways, Trinidad after that. I am flying strictly with this company and they will save my mail. England is close to you and Jan. 1 you can mail c/o Hofman easily, even Jan. 2-3. That Kingston secty. is also safe.

But send fillers here to Delhi by return mail, please, as it is a promised gift to one who has done many favors for me here. Bring along some fillers to Grenada, too, as I did not pack mine, thinking to come right back.

A bit of news to say that the Hindu capital of Banaras [Benares] seems to be still alive and breathing. One of the friends in Calcutta, owner of quite a big store there, said he dreamed that some lovely children from Banaras were building a beautiful, clean structure and I was directing them. He climbed to the top and looked out and there he saw also a Hazira. God grant it.

Then, arrived in Patna I found to my consternation not one living Bahá'í. But I had an invitation to speak to Rotary Club (a member heard me back in Gwalior). It was confirmed by a great spirit and the next day I had breakfast tea with one, luncheon at the home of another, and evening tea

with still another. And believe it or not, five “New Eras” are en route for a self-propelled study circle. Friends in Calcutta promise to run up and look into the nursery from time to time if these new offspring are found still breathing. Patna is the ancient capital of King Asoka.

Please thank dear Gert and Floyd; also my Mil and Dolly,¹⁴³ for their lovely birthday cards. I will not write them, but they will know how I loved receiving them, I know.

My work in India is almost finished. There is one more hard pull; the second sacred city, Ujjain, near Indore, and if four days in Banaras could effect a start, let’s pray for Ujjain now, as Central India has absolutely nothing. Indore had an Assembly, now blown away, and this too should be restored. Miracles have to happen again, and ask a few of the friends to pull along for this victory.

Oh, and thank Elisabeth¹⁴⁴ for her wonderful letter. I read it many times.

All my love to you as you sit around the dear pullman table—It’s my birthday now, and I give thanks to God for permission to live in such a time in God’s moving drama.

Love, D.

Her birthday past and the Christmas holidays beginning back in the United States, Dorothy moved on to Indore. Her schedule for the final week of December and the response to her presence during that last week of 1953 was intense. The following account of those incredibly busy days is from the *Bahá’í News Letter* of India:

MRS. DOROTHY BAKER AT INDORE

Mrs. Dorothy Baker reached Indore at 5 P.M. on December 23, 1953. Immediately on her arrival she gave a discourse at 6:30 P.M. at the Gita Samiti in Bara Rawla, juni Indore on “Journey of the Soul.” The speech was so inspiring that a pressing request for another talk was made by the members of the Samiti but the same had to be declined for want of time.

On December 24, at 6:30 P.M. she addressed members of the Rotary Club at the Lantern Hotel on “Victorious Living.

On December 25, at 9:30 A.M. Mrs. Dorothy Baker addressed a press conference at the Lantern Hotel. Invitations were sent to 35 [who] attended and received the Divine Message of Bahá’u’lláh from her.

At 7 P.M. the same day Mrs. Dorothy Baker addressed a public meeting at the Vikram Lodge in Madhavnagar, Ujjain under the auspices of the Theosophical Society of the place. The subject of her talk was “Victorious Living.” The people became so pressing to know more that it was announced then and there that Mrs. Dorothy Baker would visit Ujjain again and would meet all interested persons in the Grand Hotel, Ujjain on the 29th-30th December.

On December 26 Mrs. Dorothy Baker addressed the students and staff of the Gujrat College, Indore in their hall at 1:45 P.M. Principal Yajnik, who had already heard about the Cause when he was in Lahore, was in the Chair, and spoke very favorably about the Faith.

The subject of dear Dorothy's talk at this College was "The New Civilization." After the lecture, the Principal took the guests to his room for refreshments and also showed them the entire College.

On the same day at 4 P.M. Mrs. Dorothy Baker and Bahá'í friends were invited by the Organizers of the "Balodya Samaj" of Indore to meet the children at their Children's Welfare Centre located in the garden of Narhar Kothari Balodan on Mahatma Gandhi Road, Indore. She addressed the children and distributed sweets among them.

At 6:30 P.M. Mrs. Dorothy Baker spoke on the "Trends of Social Work in America" at the Maharashtra Sahitya Sabha Bahvan, Indore under the auspices of the Indian Conference of Social Work. Her talk evoked so much interest that some members of this society expressed their desire to attend Bahá'í Study Circle which would meet at the Bahá'í Centre every Sunday morning at 9:30 A.M.

On December 27 at 9:30 A.M. Mrs. Dorothy Baker spoke on "A Modern Avatar" at the Theosophical Lodge, Indore.

At 12 noon the same day she visited on invitation the Manick-Bagh Palace of the Maharaja of Indore and took lunch with Princess Usha Raja and other members of the Royal Family of Holkar. Dear Dorothy Baker presented some Bahá'í books to the Princess who has received good education and is the heiress-apparent to the throne of Indore.

At 5 P.M. a public meeting was held at the Gandhi Hall, Indore, under the Chairmanship of Prof. D. M. Borgaonkar. Mrs. Dorothy Baker spoke on a Programme for Peace.

On December 28 at 11:45 A.M. Mrs. Dorothy Baker addressed the students and staff of the Holker College Indore. Principal Ghose was in the Chair and the subject of her talk was “Pride and Prejudice.” The audience numbering about 400 persons were very much impressed.

At 6 P.M. she spoke at the YMCA on “The Eternal Christ.” Prof. G. W. Kaveeshwar presided. The lecture was much appreciated by all those present and a small group was interested to know more of the Bahá’í Faith.

On December 29, Mrs. Dorothy Baker went to Ujjain and spoke to a group of about 25 persons at the Grand Hotel. On December 30 Mrs. Dorothy Baker spoke at the Maharajwada School at Mahakaleshwar, Ujjain City. Her talk was translated into Hindi by Mrs. Shirin Boman.

Mrs. Dorothy Baker accompanied by believers left in a car for Makshi and Shajapur which are places about 25 and 45 miles from Ujjain on the Agra Bombay Road. At Makshi she spoke about the Faith to a group of about 200 persons at the Dak Bungalow. A Christian Doctor named Dr. Saresh presided. It was a wonderful meeting for many were heard to say that they find great truth in the Faith. We then left for Shajapur. On our way Mrs. Dorothy Baker addressed a small group which was collected by Mr. Gauri Shankar Sahrma to pay respects to dear Dorothy.

The biggest meeting which Mrs. Dorothy Baker had was in the Vikram Talkies at Shajapur when about 2000 persons listened with wrapt attention to her inspiring talk. Mr. Kamlakent Dubey, the District Magistrate and Collector of Shajapur presided and spoke highly of the Cause. Mrs. Shirin Boman translated Mrs. Dorothy Baker’s talk in Hindi. Lady volunteers who stood as guard of honour gave salute to Mrs. Dorothy Baker as she

passed through them. This meeting is indescribable for it was her great spirit which seemed to speak to the hearts of all those present. She returned to Ujjain late in the evening of December 30.

On the morning of December 31 Mrs. Dorothy Baker was invited to tea by Dr. and Mrs. Kapoor who are ready to declare themselves as Bahá'ís. She left for Delhi at 11 A.M.

It was not possible to give details of the great teaching victory achieved by Mrs. Dorothy Baker. But friends are hopeful to establish a few good Assemblies by April 1954 as a direct result of her visit to these parts. She has moved all the friends to action. She has taught them the secret of successful teaching. She visited every Bahá'í home and gave a spiritual touch to it.

In Agra Mrs. Boman thought she and Dorothy could rest and bathe at the Bahá'í Center, but when they arrived everything had been stolen from the building. Mrs. Boman found that there was no fan and it was very hot:

Dorothy said she would like a sponge bath. But there was nothing there to hold water. Then she came in with two soup plates and a small towel. She tried to take a sponge bath with this. I was wondering how a lady from the States could be satisfied with that. This is how I learned one should not be attached. I was worried about her comfort—she was not in the least interested. I learned two things from her. One is detachment and the other is obedience.

Eighteen days continuously we were together from New Delhi, Agra, Gwalior, Indore, Ujjain. . . . I arranged meetings for her. [At one, when]

the hall was packed, no one imagined so many would come. The priests of Zoroastrians were there, too.

Several days later Dorothy and Mrs. Boman were still together in Indore. In 1983 Mrs. Boman recalled the impact of Dorothy's visit there.

We now have a Bahá'í Institute in Indoa, Central India, the first Bahá'í Institute in India. When she came we had nothing. It was purchased by the NSA when Dr. Muhajir encouraged us to buy a place for deepening.

Suddenly the government wanted land for factories and wanted to take our land. Notice was sent to us. My daughter, Táhirih, was asked by the NSA to see if she could save this property. She went to the highest authority. When the man heard the word Bahá'í he said, "You speak of the Bahá'í Faith; when I was a student a lady spoke of it and the whole speech was impressed upon my heart." My daughter asked who that lady was and he said, "Her name was Dorothy Baker. I will see that you keep the land."

Dorothy's passionate hope still burned. She had written home on her birthday, December 21, 1953, "let's pray for Ujjain now, as Central India has absolutely nothing. Indore had an Assembly, now blown away, and this too should be restored. Miracles have to happen again, and ask a few of the friends to pull along for this victory" This hope took a first step towards coming true, in the words of Mrs. Boman,

We were still in Ujjain when she expressed her wish to go to some village and as we had some Bahá'ís in one of the villages of the Ujjain area, we took a taxi and went to the village of Harsodan. My husband had visited several times, but I had never been. In this village she went with her high

heels and walked in the dust because the car could not carry us right to the village. We had to leave it on the roadside. When we went in the village she embraced the women folk who were all in dirty village dresses, and she spoke to them about Bahá'u'lláh. She poured all her love on them and won their hearts. Later on they brought some tea for us which was really difficult for us to drink as it was very smoky, but seeing how quickly dear Dorothy sipped the tea, we also had to swallow it up. This village is of course one village where we have at present got an LSA and again when mass conversion was started many friends in this village volunteered to teach the Faith and they are like torch-bearers. Almost the whole village is now Bahá'í

During her travels in the area of Indore, Ujjain, and Shajapur, Dorothy was becoming much weaker. Mr. M. B. Irání was present in those cities and noted her condition:

During the whole trip she was feeling sick and running temperature but at the time of speaking and teaching the Faith she would become all right. . . .

She was eating very little food only once a day. She liked tea and coffee and a little toast and butter. She was feeling weakness and when all alone would break down, even running a temperature. She had no strength to say her prayers sitting which she would say lying down in bed. But while talking on the Cause and Teaching she would become a lioness. Her great spirit was felt when she was talking on the Cause—at the time of teaching there was no fatigue or fever.

But in Indore, even while speaking, the physical strain became too much for her. In a public hall she suddenly had to sit down on a chair near the

podium and ask that the microphone be brought to her so that she could finish her lecture.

At the Intercontinental Conference, before the cable came from Haifa asking the Hands of the Cause to travel teach, Dorothy had been talking with Hazel Mori.¹⁴⁵ Hazel recalled,

I asked her her plans, for I knew she had resigned from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States in order to pioneer abroad. Would it be Latin America, or Europe, I asked, knowing of her tremendous service in both continents, and the pull she must be feeling toward . . . each . . . or the islands of the Pacific?

“The Pacific?” she said, “Or this part of the world! I would give my life to rouse India. . . . Yes, it is already planned. We have chosen a spot close to both Central America and the Caribbean, and to South America as well. . . . My husband and mother are already proceeding to the Windward Isles, and I shall wing my way there and touch down to meet them, so we can cable the Guardian we are all three of us Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.” Her eyes traveled past me for a moment. Then with a sigh she said, “But it will be only ‘touch down,’ because I must go quickly to Chicago for medical treatment, and I’m afraid this time it will have to be surgery.”

I was startled into silence by the sad resignation in her voice. She pushed her plate with most of her food uneaten away from her, chuckled at me and ended, “I cannot bear the thought of inactivity! I want to be teaching full speed every day till the day I report to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in person!”

A. Bashir Elahi noticed that when Dorothy arrived at the airport, her first day in India, “I saw a smiling, healthy, charming lady, intoxicated with the love of God, chatting and laughing with all the friends. . . .” But when she finished her travels and returned to New Delhi, he said, “I noticed that she had become frail and physically weak; yet her ardor and zeal had increased.

Toward the end of her trip, in Delhi, Dorothy ran into other difficulties. At the Constitution House where she and Shirin Boman were staying, Dorothy’s suitcase was stolen. Mrs. Boman was very upset for her and wanted to approach someone to complain about the theft until Dorothy said, “Well, Shirin dear, somebody needed it more than I did, so let it go.” That was on one of the first days of 1954.

In Indore Dorothy said to the Bahá’ís, “This is the heart of India. Let the heart of India beat with the love of Bahá’u’lláh.” Mrs. Boman found her words prophetic when, almost ten years later, “the whole of the mass conversion did start from the Indore area.” She later recalled,

In two things where I did not obey Dorothy I am still suffering. She said, “Shirin, take the first chance and go and meet the Guardian.” From 1954 to 1957 I was planning to go. When suddenly the shocking news of our beloved Guardian’s death came I wished I had obeyed Dorothy. The second: You know she went with us and showed us the way to teach in the villages. Unfortunately we did not understand.

In 1976 Hand of the Cause of God Dr. Rahmatu’lláh Muhájir¹⁴⁶ spoke about Dorothy Baker in India:

The Guardian told Dorothy Baker to go to India and discover why we could not teach the masses there. She went to several villages and then said, “This is the heart of India. Mass teaching will start in these villages.” Mrs. Boman (later) wrote the Guardian He wrote her to go to the villages and teach the people. Go to the easy places—not the hard ones. At a conference Mrs. Boman said, “I have the key. Now I know what to do.” She went from one village to another, and as she went, whole villages became Bahá’í. . . . It began in the very villages where Dorothy Baker had taught.

Dorothy spoke at forty-four colleges and in thirty-seven localities in India. She presented a long and detailed report on her trip to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of India. By that time Mrs. Boman was serving on the Assembly. When she replaced a previous member in a by-election during Dorothy’s visit, Dorothy pressed an anointed handkerchief into her hand and said, “My prayers have been answered. Now I send you to this NSA to act as its mother.”

At one point in her travels through India, Dorothy visited with Hushmand Fatheazam and his family. Only ten years later Mr. Fatheazam would be serving at the Bahá’í World Center as a member of the Universal House of Justice; when Dorothy met him he was pioneering in an Indian village. A step in the transition from one kind of service to another may perhaps be attributed to Dorothy Baker’s influence:

She was with us for one week. Toward the end of the stay she said the possibility to serve the Cause was greater in the capital than in a village and rather insisted that we go to New Delhi although it was not a pioneering goal. A few months later when I had finished the scholarship—

I was on a two-year scholarship—I left. There was an opportunity to go to Panchgani to serve in the New Era school, but instead we did what she said because she came on the instruction of the beloved Guardian and knew what was best.

In Gwalior Dorothy admired the surroundings of the palace as she stood at its gate after her visit with Queen Vijayaraja Scindia and said, “One day the banner of the Greatest Name will be raised at this palace gate.” In the Five Year Plan given to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, the Universal House of Justice asked that a National Bahá’í Conference be held in Gwalior. Over nine hundred believers passed through the gates of the chosen site: the palace Dorothy had visited twenty-three years before. Dr. Perin Olyai, during her speech, reminded the friends that Dorothy Baker foresaw their presence there. But Dorothy could not foresee her own future.

CHAPTER 22

Dorothy Baker reached Karachi, Pakistan, on the evening of January 8. Ed and Muriel Miessler had probably just received Frank Baker's letter of December 24. "The time for my trip is getting closer right along and I'm going to be mighty glad to see my girl friend again—It will have been over 15 weeks since Dorothy left," the longest they had ever been separated.

On January 9 Dorothy met the local believers in the Bahá'í Hall Garden. At 10:30 A.M. the meeting began. Dorothy described her experiences in Haifa, the hopes of the Guardian for the success of the Ten Year World Crusade, and she briefly recounted her experiences of the previous year. She spoke of pioneering and of her mother who was in her eighties but would be meeting Dorothy, with Frank, in the Antilles. She called for pioneers, asking that nine persons volunteer. She shared the experiences and sacrifices of American pioneers, and then her strong voice rang out to the gathering, "Go out, ye conquerors of hearts, determined never to return, if need be. In particular I call upon the Bahá'ís of Zoroastrian background to pioneer. The Guardian has willed it. Nearly one year has passed since the Ten Year Plan came into force and pioneers have not gone to many of the goals. What face shall we show to the beloved Guardian?"

Nineteen people stepped forward from among the Bahá'ís listening. Since Rustam Jamshidi's parents were pioneers to Pakistan, he grew up in Karachi. As a youth he took the photograph of Dorothy Baker standing in the gardens of Bahá'í Hall, speaking to the gathering. Years later in Northern Ireland, he

and Beman Khosravi, also a pioneer from Iran to Pakistan, recalled the day and the evening with Dorothy Baker. When the volunteers stepped forward, she turned to them and said, “Oh, dear! I have nothing to give you! I give you my life. I give you my love. You will all be blessed.”

At 4 P.M. Dorothy attended a party given in her honor in those same gardens. The guests included the city magistrate, civil judges, *ulama*, and the editors of English and Urdu newspapers. Dorothy spoke for half an hour. When she finished, a tax officer in attendance said, “If for nothing else than for the conviction with which she speaks, I am convinced of the truth of the Bahá’í Faith.”

At dusk the gathering in that Pakistani garden dispersed. Many of them came together again at the airport in a large room filled with flowers, news reporters, and friends. There was one problem. Dorothy did not have the British papers required to board her flight. At the airport, as her departure time neared, she and a few others retired to an adjoining room. There she strode up and down, repeating the Remover of Difficulties.

The flight was announced. As she returned to the departure lounge, the other passengers were preparing to board. Then the Bahá’í entrusted with the task of arranging Dorothy’s documents came running in, waving the papers over his head. Minutes later the friends watched as the jet “Comet” took off.

In Africa at the Intercontinental Conference in Kampala, Isobel Sabri had talked with Dorothy about several things, among them teaching and Dorothy’s favorite airplane, the Comet:

One of my most memorable experiences with Dorothy was in Africa where she accompanied my husband, Hassan, and me “on safari” by road from Kampala, Uganda, to Nairobi, Kenya, after the first Intercontinental Conference in 1953. She then continued her journey to Tanganyika by plane, and we met her again there as Dar es Salaam was our pioneer home at that period.

During the tiring, dusty two-day journey to Nairobi by car she shared with us her pilgrims’ notes and her impressions of the beloved Guardian. She told us that she had expected the Guardian to give her clear directions for her future services as a Hand of the Cause, but he had not done so and this had greatly perplexed her.

One evening I was visiting her in her hotel room in Nairobi. I told her that I was not happy about our teaching work in Africa, as we weren’t getting the results we wanted. She gave me the pamphlet *The Spiritual Potencies of that Consecrated Spot*. Her advice to me was to study the life of Bahíyyih Khánúm if I wanted to learn how to serve the Cause.

Dorothy had a great love of the new Comet jet aeroplane on which she had travelled to Africa and which had just been put into service by the British. In this connection she spoke of the wonders of modern science and related this plane to Shoghi Effendi’s statement regarding the perfect regularity and speed of future travel. She always seemed to see the significances in world affairs which related to statements contained in the Bahá’í writings. In Entebbe, Uganda, we had bidden farewell to a sizeable group of the Hands of the Cause who were travelling out of Africa by Comet. We had spoken of being worried that so many Hands were on the same plane.

Dorothy had turned to us joyfully and said reassuringly, “You needn’t worry—it’s a wonderful plane.”

On the tenth of January, almost a year after the Kampala Conference, Dorothy was on board a Comet again. The flight left Karachi, stopped in Beirut, then Rome, where Dorothy mailed her final reports to the Guardian. She reboarded with the other passengers traveling to London; at 9:31 A.M. the plane lifted off the runway.

A fisherman from the Italian island of Elba, Giovanni di Marco, was on his boat, just south of the island when he heard the whine of a plane. “It was above the clouds. I could not see it. Then I heard three explosions, very quickly, one after the other.

“For a moment all was quiet. Then several miles away I saw a silver thing flash out of the clouds. Smoke came from it. It hit the sea. There was a great cloud of water. By the time I got there all was still again.”^{[147](#)}

On the beach a few days later a reporter found a handbag belonging to another of the Comet’s twenty-eight passengers. Inside was a pamphlet on the Bahá’í Faith. Even in her last moments Dorothy was teaching.

Dreams float in another reality. In that realm Dorothy lived. Around the world Bahá’ís dreamed of her that night and nights before and after. To one she said, “I never went down. I stepped straight into the arms of my Lord.”

In Jamaica a teenage boy named Hopeton Fitz-Henley heard about the Bahá’í Faith from his father, Randolph. The family and the community were

thrilled when the news came that Dorothy Baker would be visiting Jamaica on her way to Grenada.

The spirit of loving expectation was such, was so moving that my own spirit, young and curious, was ignited. . . . I was not then a believer. The waiting community was shaken with the tragic news. Really, I don't remember dreams much but that night she said to me, "Don't worry Hopeton. I was not in that plane. Thanks to Bahá'u'lláh, I took another plane and went away." Her words were warm, loving and reassuring.

When I told my father about the dream he said that once he had expressed to Dorothy Baker that none of his children had become Bahá'í. She had told him not to worry, that one of them would some day.

Rosemary Sala dreamed that she saw Dorothy dressed in silvery white, standing on resplendent shining shores. "The rolling waves separating her shore from mine changed into ripples of Arabic writing and I seemed to receive an impression of Dorothy saying, 'the waves of the ocean may divide but the Word of God unites.'"



68. Dorothy Baker in Karachi, January 9, 1954, in the gardens of Bahá'í Hall. Her last public appearance, the day before her death.

Gloria Faizi—a writer, wife of Hand of the Cause Abu'l-Qasim Faizi, and an active teacher—was pioneering in an Arabian country with her family at the time of Dorothy's death, a country where teaching was not possible. Shortly after the accident Mrs. Faizi called on a friend whose daughter died on the same flight. Mrs. Faizi told her friend that she had also lost someone precious to her on that flight, and mentioned the name of Dorothy Baker. To Mrs. Faizi's surprise the grieving mother looked up through her tears and asked "What does Bahá'u'lláh have to say about life after death?" Mrs. Faizi was shocked as she had never mentioned to her friend that she was a Bahá'í, nor was she aware that her friend knew of the Bahá'í Faith. She then reached into her purse and gave her a pamphlet called "Life After Death." She also told the lady, "I dreamt of the next world. There I saw Dorothy Baker with your daughter and Dorothy was guiding her." These words were a source of great comfort to her friend. She began to investigate the Faith and later became a Bahá'í.

In January 1954, at the time when she heard of Dorothy's death, Florence Mayberry was in Montreal at the Maxwells' home.

I went upstairs to pray in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's room, not specifically about her, although I had this on my mind. I never knew Dorothy, although I once sat in an audience and heard her speak. I never met her. I had a strange feeling in that room (which could be total imagination) that Dorothy Baker was telling me that when there is a spirit existent, and there is an open channel, almost like a sieve that water can pour through; this water of the spirit doesn't care where it goes because it's in movement, in flow, and will flow wherever the opening is. I had a strange feeling that she was saying that she was going to help me. I thought to myself, "You crazy woman, you. You never knew her. She doesn't know you. She never heard of you. This

is ridiculous.” But I couldn’t forget it, nor have I ever forgotten it. It was comforting, as though I’d be helped by some quality that she had.

Many years later, when I had been appointed an Auxiliary Board member and had served in that capacity for many years, I was at a convention in Wilmette. A woman from Lima whom I had seen and knew by sight, but not by name, came to me and said, “Oh, Florence Mayberry, I have to speak to you. I have a message for you from Dorothy Baker.” I told her, “I wish that were true, but it can’t be, because I never knew her and she didn’t know me.”

The woman said, “Indeed she did,” and I said, “How could she? Because I never met her. I was merely once in an audience when she spoke.” She said, “I don’t care. It’s you. It’s your name. Dorothy Baker said to me, ‘There’s a girl in California we have to keep an eye on. We have to watch her because she’s going to accomplish something in the teaching field. That girl’s name is Florence Mayberry.’”

I insisted that it could not be I. “Are you sure it wasn’t some other name?”

“Yes,” she said, “I know you, it’s you. It was your name.” Immediately, I thought back to that day in Montreal.

Florence Mayberry was later appointed to the first Continental Board of Counselors for North America and later served as a member of the International Teaching Center in Haifa for ten years. A writer, she has been active in many areas of Bahá’í life, notably as a lucid and moving speaker.

On January 11, 1954, Marion Hofman wrote to Frank Baker, describing the delight Dorothy's October visit had given her family and the events of the last days:

Then came a cable about a week ago which we did not quite understand, but took to mean she would be in England only five hours and would fly out the same day. It said she was arriving January 10, "bring coat or blanket, need five hours rest." I was bitterly disappointed, as the NSA had asked me to speak at Teaching Conference in Liverpool on January 10th, and I really felt unable to change this. So after talking over her cable, we decided to invite a lovely Bahá'í, our local secretary, Miss Jean Campbell . . . to accompany David and the children by car to meet Dorothy's plane at 10 A.M. They were all filled with eager anticipation. . . .

For my part, I went off to Teaching Conference on Saturday morning (the 9th). I had it in mind to suggest Dorothy might telephone the Conference if she felt equal to it, but in the rush of departure I forgot. When I found that the Conference Room had a telephone in it, I felt impelled to get up early and call David at 7:30 on the 10th, before they left home, and I gave him times to call, suggesting 3 P.M. as perhaps the most propitious on the Conference agenda. (You will perhaps recall that Dorothy came to a Teaching Conference in Birmingham a few years ago, and was its heart and soul.)

That morning, as Conference was convening just after ten o'clock, I felt moved after the prayer to ask to announce Dorothy's expected arrival in England (at 10:00 A.M. that very hour), and the possibility she might call. I spoke of the blessing her very presence on English soil would bring to the Conference. The friends were all very excited and happy. Now I know,

after seeing the newspapers, that our dearest one must have flown away, perhaps even as we spoke her name amongst the friends, for the hour of the crash is said to have been 10:15 A.M.

At that time David Hofman and his small party were waiting at the airport. In a report of January 10 and the days following, he wrote,

Jean Campbell, May, Mark and myself, went to the London Airport to meet Dorothy, Marion being at the Teaching Conference; we expected five hours with her and hoped she would come home for the night.

On arrival at the airport we were told the Comet was due at 12.10 (we had come for 10.40).

At 12.55 we were told it had been changed to 12.40, but no signal had yet been received as to its approach.

At 1.20 an officer (lady) came to the spectator's enclosure where we were waiting and asked if I would go to see the flight manager, and she would escort Jean and the children to the lounge. I thought he was apologizing for the long delay and was going to give us a "ringside" seat.

The Manager (Mr. Irwin), much perturbed, showed me a map and said the plane was down in the Tuscan Sea. Wreckage had been sighted and they could offer very little hope for anyone. He asked for Mr. Baker's address and I said I could provide it when I got home. We exchanged telephone numbers and he promised to telephone me at the Bull Hotel in 45 minutes. He confirmed that Dorothy was aboard. . . .

At the Teaching Conference, Marion Hofman awaited the call she thought would come from Dorothy. She described this time in a letter to Frank Baker.

As 3 P.M. came and went, and no call, I wondered what had happened. We were hearing reports of the four Conferences, and were in the midst of New Delhi, when the phone rang.

Instead of asking for John Ferraby, the NSA Secretary, as I had suggested, the call was for the NSA Chairman, Hasan Balyuzi. We knew it was David, for he spoke his name. And then nothing except, from Hasan in a very low voice, four times repeated: “Oh dear . . . oh dear . . .” Then Hasan called me and I went to the phone. David said: “I have just sent this cable to the Guardian.” And he read it. [“BOAC ADVISE COMET CARRYING DOROTHY BAKER MISSING TUSCAN SEA ONLY VERY FAINT HOPE WILL ADVISE. . . .”] I could think of no words, but asked him to read the cable again slowly, while I repeated it aloud to the friends. There were sixty of us present. As I left the phone and walked half the length of the room, I heard no sound but my own footfalls. In this silence of shock and grief, the Conference Chairman, Richard Backwell, said the “Remover of Difficulties” nine times.

Dear Frank, it was indeed the propitious moment-Bahá'u'lláh's very chosen moment—for all the depth of our collective love and sorrow to bring to the friends that dimension of dedication which the NSA had earnestly hoped would be the result of this Conference. It was just before the final talk, the summation of the Conference, which I had been asked to give. I spoke of Dorothy, dear Frank,—that whatever her fate, it had come to her in the path of our Guardian's service; that if she had indeed been taken, it was God's mystery, for she was and is in her prime. . . . You will

guess what spirit of unity and devotion was attained in the closing hour of the Conference, with this mysterious heartrending event throbbing in every consciousness.

I did not reach home, by train and coach, until 2 A.M. and all the while she lived in my heart, and has been there all day. This morning we received a beautiful letter from her. I attach a copy, for we cannot bear to part with her own handwritten words.

My very dears,

I have just telegraphed about arriving Sunday morning January 10th by Comet, and requesting five hours rest before having to meet anyone.

Also, if you receive this in time, I wonder if you would mind sending along to the airport an enormous old wool coat (David's maybe, but not dainty Marion's!) or a blanket in which to bundle? I came prepared only for summer and my family planned to meet me on my return to NY at the end of OCTOBER with something fairly warm. Isn't this a scream? I keep getting cables to stay on, and the enormous wisdoms of it are only now coming home to me, I assure you, but meanwhile I freeze. So save me as best you can. I'll be wearing the purple wool suit, and that is all you will be seeing me in at any time; I know the friends won't mind. On arrival in the West Indies I shall gradually thaw out, feet first, I hope.

Save time for "just us," too. I go right back out on the eleventh but cannot tell you the time at the moment. I would make no appointments for the eleventh for me unless we do it on the spur of the moment.

You can't imagine how much I am looking forward to our cozy visit. That is if no more cables come! I will share with you some ecstasy and tears, some love and laughter, and a real from-the-heart prayer—

Dearest love,

Dorothy

The morning after the Comet went down, Mr. Furútan sat at breakfast at the home of the Hand of the Cause Clara Dunn—Mother Dunn, as she was called. After the New Delhi Conference, the attending Hands had been asked to visit various areas; he was traveling in Australia. Reading the paper, as he often did to absorb a feeling for the concerns of the people in the countries he visited, Mr. Furútan came upon a small article about a tragic accident involving a BOAC Comet after its safe flight from Karachi to Rome. His eyes scanned the list and stopped. D. Baker. He knew she had been asked to travel through India and Pakistan, as he had been asked to travel to Australia.

“Could it be Dorothy Baker this article mentions?”

Then one Hand of the Cause reassured the other. “Why would that ‘D. Baker’ be our Dorothy? There must be hundreds, thousands of ‘D. Bakers’ in the world.”

Comforted by Mother Dunn, Mr. Furútan caught his flight to Jakarta, Indonesia, and forgot the sharp pang of fear that had touched him. As the plane neared Jakarta the air hostess called his name. There was an urgent cablegram from Haifa.

In Jakarta dear Mr. Furútan went alone and mortified to his hotel room, where his weeping could not release the desolate sadness of the loss. “Why such a young beauty, such a teacher? It was a very great shock to me,” he told pilgrims at Bahjí twenty-seven years later, tears coming again to his kind, dark eyes. “For several months after I couldn’t come to myself.”

In Haifa that night, the Guardian did not come to dinner. Unannounced, his car arrived at Bahjí. As he opened the car door for Shoghi Effendi, Salah Jarrah, the custodian of Bahjí, was surprised to see his evident grief. Alone, the Guardian walked the gardens he had begun to plant just a year and two months before. Salah saw him then enter the Mansion and followed to see if he could be of any service. Shoghi Effendi was in his room. He said to Salah, “I have come tonight specially to pray for Dorothy Baker.” His cable from Haifa to the United States read,

HEARTS GRIEVED LAMENTABLE, UNTIMELY PASSING DOROTHY BAKER,
DISTINGUISHED HAND CAUSE, ELOQUENT EXPONENT ITS TEACHINGS,
INDEFATIGABLE SUPPORTER ITS INSTITUTIONS, VALIANT DEFENDER ITS
PRECEPTS. LONG RECORD OUTSTANDING SERVICE ENRICHED ANNALS
CONCLUDING YEARS HEROIC OPENING EPOCH FORMATIVE AGE BAHAI
DISPENSATION. FERVENTLY PRAYING PROGRESS SOUL ABHA KINGDOM.
ASSURE RELATIVES PROFOUND LOVING SYMPATHY. NOBLE SPIRIT REAPING
BOUNTIFUL REWARD. ADVISE HOLD MEMORIAL GATHERING TEMPLE
BEFITTING HER RANK IMPERISHABLE SERVICES. . . .

SHOGHI

Haifa, Israel
January 13, 1954

“I beg you to pray that God will accept my life as ransom for our beloved in Haifa,” Dorothy had written to Agnes Alexander in 1952, “and assist me, in whatever service he chooses to confer, to fill that cup to overflowing, with joy that will uplift his over-burdened heart. Deepest loving appreciation, Dorothy Baker.” She wrote to others in a similar vein, among them Amatu’l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum: “When next you have the privilege of entering the Tomb of the Blessed Beauty, dearest Rúhíyyih, will you pray that my life may be a ransom to the Guardian?”

Though Dorothy had longed to sacrifice her life for him, she felt, a year before her death, that the Guardian was the ransom for the believers, not the other way around:

He is at times a servant and again a King; and he is at once the point of all joy and again the nerve center of suffering. . . . He is alas, a ransom; we are his beneficiaries. He suffers the grief of the Prophets and yet is the “true brother.” And as he casts himself into the sea of sacrifice, he is willing to cast us, one and all, into that shining sea also.

Willing though he may have seemed, losing Dorothy Baker into that “shining sea” caused him great pain. To Hermann Grossmann, another Hand of the Cause of God, he wrote on February 8,

The sudden passing of dear Dorothy Baker is indeed a great loss to the Faith, and leaves a sad gap in the ranks of the Hands of the Cause. She was exemplary in so many ways, and her services can ill be spared at this important period in Bahá’í history.

No doubt there is a wisdom in such calamities; and through her death others may feel moved to become more consecrated to the service of the Faith. Surely such a soul's influence will continue to be felt in this world.

When Louie Matthews spent a day with the Guardian in Haifa in February 1954, they talked about Dorothy's death and about Louie's book, *Not Every Sea Hath Pearls*. Shoghi Effendi's gaze wandered out toward the sea. He grew quiet, then said, "Now the Mediterranean has the blessing of the pearl that was Dorothy."

EPILOGUE

Frank A. Baker
615 West Elm Street
Lima, Ohio
March 26-54

My dear Muriel and Ed—

I didn't get back to Lima till March 17th and find stacks of wires and letters to be answered. Many thanks for your nice letter. We were on our way to meet Dorothy in Grenada when we got word at Fort Lauderdale, Florida about the accident. Bill and Louise met Mother and me in New York and we went on to Rome. Dorothy's body was not recovered and we held funeral services at sea on Jan. 18th. Mother and I went on to Haifa—returning to Rome where we waited for a month to see if they could bring up any part of the plane containing passengers but I do not believe now that there were any large pieces left.

The explosion took place twenty minutes out of Rome and everyone was killed instantly. There was no suffering and for this at least I am thankful.

While Dorothy's life was not long I do not know of anyone who has accomplished as much in a full lifetime as Dorothy in her short span of

years. We had thirty-two wonderful years together.

We are going to erect a memorial for Dorothy on the temple grounds in Rome.

Thank you so much for your sympathy and prayers. Love from all of us

Frank

The Hand of the Cause of God Ugo Giachery

I received a cable from Shoghi Effendi to go at once to the scene of the disaster and went, alone. My wife . . . later escorted the Baker family there. . . .

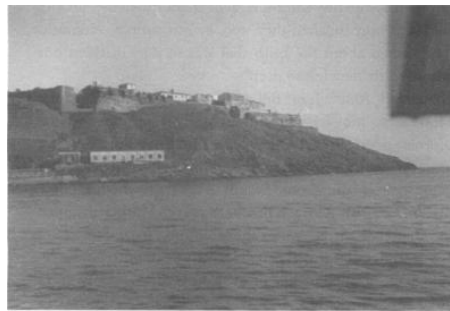
The fishermen were picking up the pieces of the airplane. They picked up a pamphlet and gave it to a newspaperman—a tall fellow, I don't remember his name. It was *An Early Pilgrimage* by May Bolles. He saw “Bahá'í” and threw it back into the water. When he realized what he had done he hired a boat to go out and look for it. He found two or three traveler's checks, but nothing else. . . .

Louise Baker Matthias

When the family went to Porto Ferraio, on the island of Elba, it was thought that Mother's was one of the bodies recovered from the sea. It was quickly determined that this was not true. In Italy Ugo and Angelina Giachery and indeed all of that dear community took us to their hearts and sustained us with their love.

We travelled north on the train toward the port of Piombino. From there we took the ferry across to Elba, landing at Porto Azzurro. On the quay a large crowd had gathered. Ugo told us that the local people knew when we were to arrive and had come to show their sympathy. I saw that the women, all dressed in black, and some of the men as well, were weeping. No one said a word, and they parted quietly to let us through. Across the island in Porto Ferraio we encountered the same quiet, supportive sympathy.

The next day before the memorial was to be held I became distraught when I realized that we had no flowers. I searched the town and asked officials and the hotel personnel where flowers might be purchased, but none were to be found on the island. But the next day, just before the memorial service, Dad was handed a large bouquet of red carnations.



69. Elba, 1954, on route to the spot where funeral services were held at sea for Dorothy.

Two ships were provided by the Italian navy, one much larger than the other. The larger ship's deck was crowded with mourners, clerics, reporters, sailors and officers. Only we were on the smaller ship, with a handful of reporters and the ship's own crew and officers. I suppose the

officials didn't quite know what to do with a family whose faith they thought might be non-Christian, or at least different and unfamiliar.

When we arrived at the site where the debris of the Comet had disappeared into the sea the two ships lined up facing each other, a rather narrow expanse of water between them. On the larger ship across from us there was considerable ceremony. I believe a mass was said and a huge wreath was carried to the ship's rail and ceremoniously slid over the side to drop into the sea.

On our ship we said prayers: those for the departed, the Tablets of Visitation, and the Tablet of Ahmad. As we finished each of us dropped a few carnations into the sea. The captain and other officers and sailors stood nearby and again we felt their sympathy. Later several of them spoke to Ugo and told him how touched they were by our simple ceremony. They asked about the Faith that was so new to them but whose spirit they felt so deeply.

As Dad, Aunt Lou, Bill and I sat in a small sala in the Hotel Massimo, feeling as though this were somehow the ultimate deprivation, I suddenly recalled a day almost twenty years earlier. Dad and I sat at the pullman table when Mother came in after taking some friends to the train who had come to Lima to visit Mother Beecher's grave. Mother dropped into her chair at the end of the table and after talking for a few minutes about the visit, suddenly said, with considerable heat, "I hope people don't make a shrine of my grave after I'm buried!" Dad chuckled and asked, "And how can you make sure they won't?" Mother considered a moment and then answered, "If I could really have my choice, I would be buried at sea."

Later Mother added, “And if I could choose the sea, then it would be the Mediterranean, whose waves will lap eternally on the shores of ‘Akká.”

In the course of the next forty days, I often found Dad with his Bahá’í prayer book in his hands, open to the prayers for the departed. “It’s the last service I can render her,” he told me. It wasn’t, he felt, that she needed his prayers. It was he who needed the ‘mingling of their spirits’ that Bahá’u’lláh promised when He enjoined a forty-day period of prayer for the progress of a beloved soul who leaves this world.

Haifa, Israel
December 9, 1954

Mr. Frank A. Baker.

Dear Bahá’í Brother:

The beloved Guardian has received your letter of November 19th, and has instructed me to answer you on his behalf.

The news that dear Mrs. Beecher^{[148](#)} and you have arrived in Grenada rejoiced his heart. He hopes you may soon find a suitable house, so that you can get settled there.

The Guardian feels confident, if you will put forth an effort, and then persevere in your task, you will succeed in attracting a few receptive souls whom you can teach, and finally win to the Faith. Everyone who arises for

this service in a spirit of true dedication finds himself assisted in ways that seem truly miraculous.

You can be sure that your beloved Dorothy from the realms on high will watch over you and guide you in your teaching efforts. She is no doubt very proud of your having gone to that foreign land to spread the Faith of which she was such an able exponent, and to which she was so devoted.

Please convey his kind greetings to Mrs. Beecher. He assures her and you of his prayers for the abundant success of your labours for the Cause.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

R. Rabbani

May the Almighty bless keep and sustain you and Mrs. Beecher, cheer your hearts, guide every step you take, and enable you to win great victories, and rejoice the soul of your dear and departed wife in the Abhá Kingdom,

Your true brother,

Shoghi

Elisabeth Cheney was utterly disconsolate when she heard the news of Dorothy's death. She had loved Dorothy deeply since learning about the Bahá'í Faith from her in Lima, Ohio. The third night after the crash Elisabeth was asleep when she heard her friend's voice direct her to get out of bed. Without turning on the light Elisabeth did as she was told. In the dark she

walked to the dresser and pulled open the drawer Dorothy's voice indicated. Under some clothing was a letter written by Dorothy on the eve of Elisabeth's departure to pioneer in Paraguay sixteen and a half years before. Elisabeth opened it and read.

June 13, 1937

Beloved Elisabeth:

This is one of those tremendously busy mornings, but a letter came which was of great importance to me. I read it with tears in my eyes, and said to myself again and again,

"There are a few; there are! You have thought that there never would be those who could give all, everything, but there are!" And this amazing fact sent me to the typewriter for a stolen moment.



70. Monument erected in memory of those who lost their lives in the crash of January 10, 1954.

Elisabeth, all that you have been through, all that you have learned, all that has passed in swiftly changing pictures before you on the screen of your life, all this has led up to the place where you now stand. You have been born in the Day of God, heralded for centuries. Others, hearing of it, oppose it or stand idle while knowing its advent. You are conscious, and you have bowed down before its splendor, saluting its mighty King, and risen up to call in His Name to the sleeping nations. . . . That you may have the greatest joy in every passing moment. . . . I want to make sure. I have only two rules to give you. One is this: Look not to the creatures. Let your heart be supremely attached to our Beloved; then you can serve all of His children with detachment and joy, and never fail any of them, no matter what they do. When people make mistakes, you are only witnessing moments that are hook-ups between states of consciousness. It does not matter. The second rule is this: Make a joyous thing of the little services,

because you can never tell which is little and which is big in God's sight. Bahá'u'lláh said: A single deed done in My Name is equal to the deeds of a hundred thousand years; nay, I ask pardon of God for this limitation, for such a deed is without limited reward. So when you speak His Holy Name, rejoice, be quiet in your heart, and know that this is a Very Great Occasion, an occasion of pure joy. He verily is the Lord of Hosts, and will assist you at all times.

And now, dear Elisabeth, let me put my arms around you, because there will not always be time in this world. If I never see you, touch you, speak alone to you again in this world, soldier, know now the comfort you have brought me, and know that the march is all that matters; the march is all that matters! And when the march is over, through all the Worlds of God, the miracle of it all will be continuously unfolded before us, and there will be no separation. . . .

With tenderest love . . .

Dorothy



71. Luella Beecher and Frank Baker on the porch of their house in Grenada, West Indies, 1956

Louise Baker Matthias

I have wondered if, when he pioneered in Grenada, Dad ever had an experience similar to mine. For more than two years after Mother's passing, whenever I taught the Faith and particularly when I gave a prepared, public talk, I would no sooner begin than I would have an incredibly strong sense of Mother's presence and it seemed that she spoke through me.

That first night it happened I had scarcely finished two or three sentences when I suddenly felt as though Mother were standing behind my left shoulder. The sensation was so strong I turned and looked behind me, but saw nothing. I turned back to the room full of people and continued to speak, but did not in any way follow the subject I had prepared.

I had always prepared a speech with great care, with notes so I wouldn't forget any major points. After that experience, however, I tried to follow 'Abdu'l-Bahá's advice to Lua Getsinger. I immersed myself in His words, and when I began to speak I turned my heart to Him.

This happened repeatedly over the next two years or a bit more . . . At those times I felt infinitely close to Mother. Needless to say I sought out every teaching opportunity I could find. Before each meeting I spent an hour or two reading the words of Bahá'u'lláh and/or 'Abdu'l-Bahá. I thought about what I might want to say on whatever subject I had been asked to speak and reviewed stories I might want to recount to illustrate points. Still, I knew I would probably not be using any of the material. It was a period of particular sensitivity and perception. I began to understand

what people meant when they said that the “mantle” of a great soul who leaves this world can fall on the shoulders of someone still here.



72. Some of Dorothy Baker’s legacy, circa 1955: (back row, left to right) her daughter-in-law, Annamarie Mattoon Baker, and daughter, Louise Baker Matthias; (front row, left to right) her son-in-law, Hubert Matthias, grandchildren, Frank Baker, Dorothy Matthias, and Crystal Baker, and son, Bill Baker.

The episode ended gradually and naturally. I never felt any sense of loss as it waned. I was simply deeply grateful for the experience. She had always been my spiritual as well as my physical mother, but even during her lifetime I only rarely felt as close a connection with her as I did during those two years following her death.

I think Mother’s granddaughter, my niece Crystal Louise Baker Shoaie, expressed it best when she recounted a recent dream she had. Cris dreamt she was in Mother’s bedroom in Lima, Ohio. In actuality the closet there is very shallow, but in her dream it was a commodious walk-in affair. She walked into the large room where a few people were trying on clothes that

had belonged to Mother. She, too, tried on several outfits and found that some fit her well, while others she could not use. She kept and wore those that fit her and left the rest.

Each of us, both Mother's physical and her spiritual children, of whom there are thousands throughout the world, share that spiritual kinship with Dorothy Baker. We have all "tried on her garments" and wear those that seem to fit us. As we touch her spirit and try to emulate her we all become her spiritual heirs.

The bounty of Bahá'u'lláh was first conferred through the faith and generosity of a paternal grandmother, "Mother Beecher," with whom I visited His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the city of New York. It is a blessed thing to remember the child who sat entranced at the feet of her Lord and received His all-merciful love. In that hour all fear was replaced by a passion for all people. Beside this, only one thing remained; that Bahá'u'lláh is the All-Glorious redeemer and His power is equal to all things. This fixed principle became, and still is the fulcrum and pillar of an otherwise impotent life.

Faithfully, in the service of the Guardian,

Dorothy Baker

1952



73. *Hand of the Cause of God*, Dorothy Baker, 1953.

APPENDIX I:

SELECTED WORKS BY

DOROTHY BAKER

Hear, O Israel

by Dorothy K Baker^{[149](#)}

The theme song of the Jews, the singleness of God, has lived through four thousand years. Where can history match this?

The term Israel, Ferdinand Isserman asserts, means Champion of God. In Ur of Chaldea, the Semitic people first championed this Cause, led by Abraham, son of Terah, maker of idols. Abraham is reputed to have been born in a cave and kept in hiding through his early years, because of the wicked designs of the idolatrous king, Nimrod, who was warned by the stars of the

coming of a Great One, whose power would encompass heaven and earth. To Abraham, as to the Prophets long before him, it was given to know the indivisible nature of God. A story that is something of an allegory comes down to us concerning his childhood. Coming forth from his cave one day and seeing the sun, he said: "This is surely the Lord of the universe. Him will I worship." But the sun set and night came, and seeing the moon with her silver radiance, he said: "This then is the Lord of the world, and all the stars are His servants; to him will I kneel." The following morning, when moon and stars had disappeared, and the sun had risen anew, Abraham said: "Now I know that neither the one nor the other is the Lord of the world, but He who controls both as His servants is the creator and ruler of the whole world."

One day Terah found his gods burned, and going to Abraham, he asked: "Who has burned these?" Abraham, replied: "The large one quarreled with the little ones and burned them in his anger." "Fool," cried Terah, "how canst thou say that he who can not see nor hear nor walk should have done this?" Then Abraham made answer: "How canst thou forsake the living God to serve gods that neither see nor hear?"^{[150](#)}

Nevertheless, Abraham was given charge of his father's idols to sell them. One day, tells the Talmud, a customer came, and Abraham asked: "How old art thou?" "Lo! So many years," replied the man. "What!" exclaimed Abraham, "is it possible that a man of so many years should desire to worship a thing only a day old?"^{[151](#)}

Then Abraham again destroyed the idols and was arraigned before Nimrod, who said: "Knowest thou not that I am God and ruler of the world?" Abraham said: "If thou art god and ruler of the world, why dost thou not cause the sun to rise in the west and set in the east? ... Thou art the son of Cush, and a

mortal like him. Thou couldst not save thy father from death, nor wilt thou thyself escape it.”[152](#)

After this, Abraham was cast into a fiery furnace and suffered many things, that he might become “a stream of blessings to purify and regenerate the pagan world.”

At the hour of Abraham’s appearance, the Semitic people were reborn. Around the early camp fires the first academics of learning came into being, schools whose central teaching was the singleness and majesty of God. As late as the day of Alexander of Macedon, these academies remained the most effective centers of truth in the world. Alexander himself, coming incognito to conquer Jerusalem, was himself conquered by the wisdom of the Rabbis. The Revelation of Abraham was so potent that its effect lasted many centuries, and so universal that a later writer testifies: “It is particularly Abraham—the friend of God, upon whom are founded alike the Synagogue, the Church and the Mosque. Abraham was not a Jew nor a Christian, but a believer in one God.—When God said: ‘Let there be light,’ He had Abraham in view.”

Centuries after the passing of Abraham, Moses the Interlocutor arose to champion the Cause of God. He found his people fallen into bondage and unfaith. Because they knew nothing of self-government, Moses laid down mundane laws as well as spiritual, and Israel became a theocracy, a nation rightly proud of a government founded on divine justice. So to the heritage of faith was added an extraordinary ideal of obedience, righteousness, and respect for law. The story of Rabbi Yossi Ben Kisma relates: “I once met a man in my travels—he offered me a thousand golden denari and precious stones and pearls if I would agree to go and dwell in his native place. But I replied, saying: ‘If thou wert to give me all of the gold and silver, all the

precious stones and pearls in the world, I would not reside anywhere else than in a place where the law is studied.”¹⁵³ This amazing respect for law gave rise to high ethical morality, and when the foot of the people slipped, inspired men arose again and again to renew the moral suasion of Abraham and Moses. Rabbi Isserman, in his graphic little volume, “Rebels and Saints,” recalls them to us, every one of them a champion. A Nathan who could rebuke a king’s injustice; Amos, the shepherd of the desert who cried out that the famine was “not a famine of bread or thirst for water, but of hearing the words of our Lord”; Hosea, who warned: “My God will cast them away because they did not hearken unto Him, and they shall be wanderers among the nations”; Isaiah, who prophesied peace and an Íránian Redeemer to end suffering; Daniel, whose visions spanned twenty-three hundred years to the “time of the end.” These were champions indeed. Long after the Jews ceased to be a political nation, the amazing loyalty to God, the Single, the One, remained. At one time the law of the Jews and the idea of the God of Israel was displeasing to the Romans, and the famous Rabbi Akiva was forthwith put to death. On his lips were the words that had become the theme song of Israel: Sh’ma Yis-ro-ayl A-do-noy E-lo-hay-nu A-do-noy E-chod. (Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is One.) From the Talmud, “—and as they tore him with currycombs, and as he was with long drawn breath sounding forth the word One, his soul departed from him. Then came forth a voice from heaven which said: ‘Blessed art thou, Rabbi Akiva, for thy soul and the word One, left thy body together.’”¹⁵⁴

Now to every discerning one, it must be evident that the importance of Divine Unity was very great among the Jews, since their Odyssey is marked by an ever recurring aria of such strength and beauty. Bahá’u’lláh has revealed the true meaning of Divine Unity. Its explanation has two parts. First, God is single and unattainable in His Essence. “Regard thou the one true God as One Who is apart from, and immeasurably exalted above, all

created things.”¹⁵⁵ Second, that the true matter hidden in the song of the Jews is the continued manifestation of this singleness, as revealed through the great Prophets. “It is clear and evident that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God.” The early Jews evidently recognized that Revelation was progressive and recurrent, for we find in Jewish lore: “Adam’s book, which contained celestial mysteries and holy wisdom, came down as an heirloom into the hands of Abraham, and he, by means of it, was able to see the glory of his Lord.” In brief, Abraham received Divine Knowledge identical to that of the Prophets before him. Why, then, can we not go farther and say that one God revealed the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur’án? Bahá’u’lláh proclaims that loyalty to one must include loyalty to all, for God and His law are indivisible. Bahá’u’lláh has brought to a close the Adamic cycle, a period of evolution covering five hundred thousand years. He writes: “I have been preceded in this matter by Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, and before him by the Spirit (Christ) and before him by the Interlocutor, Moses.—This is the Father of whom Isaiah gave you tidings, and from whom the Spirit received his covenant.” Isaiah wrote: “The government shall be upon his shoulder, and he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end.”

Spiritual unity can come only out of Revelation. It was Revelation that created the ancient unity, Judaism; created Christianity, a later unity; created Islám. Each has had a potency beyond the ken of men and of angels, has purified life, made progress, and taught truth. Each, in its primitive period of growth, has exercised the greatest influence and held its world together. In its later days, each has fallen into disunity and been all but lost to its adherents. The desire of Bahá’u’lláh is that these courts of majesty become one court, and that God be worshipped as One Lord. Today He is as torn by idle fancies

as in the days of Nimrod. His Cause is again in need of champions. The ancient Cause of God has reached the most dramatic point in its history, for evolution, side by side with Revelation, has brought man to the age of maturity. A Revelation containing the seed of the Most Great Peace has appeared, and once more a divine government will be born, a government with powers to subdue the warring forces of the planet and organize its resources. Bahá'u'lláh calls the world from clan to superstate, from sect to spiritual solidarity.

This is a challenge to Israel, the champion of God. Can the clan spirit today prevent a great people from stepping into the court of a world religion? Never will they be willing to stand clinging to the shadowy past, failing in the greatest adventure of history. The voice cries in the sacred vale: “Here am I! Here am I!” Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God, the Lord is One!

The Victory of the Spirit

By Dorothy Baker^{[156](#)}

Revelation, the Path to God, has been progressive. Early man could understand a little truth; later he could assimilate great truth. Fundamentally the truth was one. With each appearance of truth, a rebirth of powers has attended it; man has been imbued with divine ideals, and an ever-advancing civilization has taken new steps forward. The miracle of new social power is

accompanied by the appearance of a Master Teacher. The lettered Jews sprang from the spiritual genius of Moses; the glory of ancient Persia reflects the fire of Zoroaster; unfolding Europe lifts her spires to the glorious Nazarene; the architecture, astronomy, and poetic genius of the Muḥammadan world in the middle centuries bespeak the gift of Muḥammad. “He hath ordained,” writes Bahá’u’lláh, “that in every age and dispensation, a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the Kingdoms of earth and heaven.”

To the individual, this is always an invitation to sit at the feet of the Master Teacher and renew his own powers. Laying aside the fears imposed today by tradition, the seeker on the Path fearlessly looks for the stainless mirror of his age. The Jew who knows of the majesty of Moses, the Christian who longs to touch the garment hem of Jesus; these are the souls schooled in adoration. The illumined Writings of Bahá’u’lláh will bring to these, and to the untutored millions, the light of renewed faith, and the means of traveling with sovereign power the immeasurable distances of the Path to God.

The Words of Bahá’u’lláh, coming as a part of the unending outpouring of the Word of God through the ages, act as the water of life upon the thirsty soul, refreshing, cheering, and bringing forth the powers of the seeker. Every life needs the emphasis of the love of God, but some cast about for a lifetime, failing to find this Holy Grail of spiritual health and joy. Just as bodies are sometimes lacking in the food elements that produce health, the soul sometimes stands in need of a divine physician who can prescribe the missing elements for spiritual success. The few thoughts given here are chosen from the unlimited mine of wisdom and explanation offered in the Bahá’í Writings. Space permits mention of only a few.

Power Through Prayer

Faculties long allowed to rust must be called into activity. Man becomes like a stone unless he continually supplicates to God. Prayer is the great quickener. There is no human being who is not in need of prayer. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “O thou spiritual friend! Thou hast asked the wisdom of prayer. Know thou that prayer is indispensable and obligatory, and man under no pretext whatsoever is excused from performing the prayer unless he be mentally unsound, or an insurmountable obstacle prevent him.” The sincere seeker, however, often asks, “Why pray, since God knows our needs?” In response, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mention many of the benefits of prayer.

1. Connection with God

“The wisdom of prayer is this: That it causeth a connection between the servant and the True One, because in that state man will all heart and soul turneth his face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking His association and desiring His love and compassion.”

2. Divine Companionship

“Verily He responds unto those who invoke Him, is near unto those who pray unto Him. And He is thy Companion in every loneliness, and befriends every exile.”

3. Joy

“Know thou that supplication and prayer is the Water of Life. It is the cause of the vivification of existence and brings glad tidings and joy to the soul.”

“Know that in every home where God is praised and prayed to, and His Kingdom proclaimed, that home is a garden of God and a paradise of His happiness.”

4. Healing

“There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the use of remedies, of medicines; the second consists in praying to God and in turning to Him. Both means should be used and practiced.... Moreover, they are not contradictory, and thou shouldst accept the physical remedies as coming from the mercy and favor of God....”

“O thou pure and spiritual one! Turn thou toward God with thy heart beating with His love, devoted to His praise, gazing towards His Kingdom and seeking help from His Holy Spirit in a state of ecstasy, rapture, love, yearning, joy and fragrance. God will assist thee, through a spirit from His Presence, to heal sickness and disease.”

“Continue in healing hearts and bodies and seek healing for sick persons by turning unto the Supreme Kingdom and by setting the heart upon obtaining healing through the power of the Greatest Name and by the spirit of the love of God.”

5. Protection

“Besides all this, prayer and fasting is the cause of awakening and mindfulness, and conducive to protection and preservation from tests.”

6. Removal of Difficulties

“Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!”

“Say: God sufficeth all things above all things, and nothing in the heavens or in the earth but God sufficeth. Verily, He is in Himself the Knower, the Sustainer, the Omnipotent.”[157](#)

7. Increased Capacity

“By these attractions one’s ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is widened the water increaseth and when the thirst grows, the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of stating one’s wants.”

8. Effect upon the World

“Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb.”

9. Intercession

“Those who have ascended have different attributes from those who are still on earth, yet there is no real separation. In prayer there is a mingling of station, a mingling of condition. Pray for them as they pray for you.”

“Asked whether it was possible through faith and love to bring the New Revelation to the knowledge of those who have departed from this life without having heard of it, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied, “Yes, surely! Since sincere prayer always had its effect, and it has a great influence in the other world. We are never cut off from those who are there. The real and genuine influence is not in this world but in that other.”

“He who lives according to what was ordained for him—the Celestial Concourse, and the people of the Supreme Paradise, and those who are dwelling in the Dome of Greatness will pray for him, by a Command from God, the Dearest and the Praiseworthy.”

“O Lord! In this Most Great Dispensation Thou dost accept the intercession of children in behalf of their parents. This is one of the special, infinite bestowals of this Dispensation. Therefore, O Thou kind Lord, accept the request of this Thy servant at the threshold of Thy singleness and submerge his father in the ocean of Thy graces...”

The science of going about prayer is so little understood that we find ourselves, in the words of Tennyson:

“A child crying in the night,
A child crying for the light,

And with no language but a cry.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggested that there were four wonderful qualities that could help us to pray. The first is a detached spirit. It is a little like closing a window to the noises of the street, that the strains of the violin within the room may not be lost. The second is unconditional surrender of our own wills to the Will of God. This is very subtle and very difficult, for the self is inclined to argue with God and to rationalize its own desires, putting them always first. How few have the singular purity of the child who wanted a horse more than anything else in the world, and decided to pray for it. After a time her father said, “God did not answer your prayer, did He?” “But of course He did,” she said simply, “He said no!” Concentrated attention is the third quality, and the fourth, true spiritual passion, that ardor and devotion which distinguishes the apostle from the multitude. Surely God will raise to His very Presence the least peasant who whole-heartedly casts himself at His feet, in preference to the kings of the earth who are complacent. In the highest prayer, man prays only for the love of God.

The actual words help concentration. It is good to repeat the words so that the tongue and heart act together and the mind is better able to concentrate. Then the whole man is surrounded by the spirit of prayer. The communes of Bahá’u’lláh are like invigorating breezes; there is great power in using them aloud, for the exalted pen of a Manifestation of God is a source of power in the world. Prayer may be likened to a song; both words and music make the song.

If prayer is to become a guiding force, a protection, a joy, and the source of divine companionship, it must become a habit. How often a human being waits for the vicissitudes of life to drive him Godward when in reality

harmony, health, and full victory lie in continual praise and supplication. One needs to be in a perennial state of prayer. “The greatest happiness for a lover is to converse with his beloved...”

Victorious Living

A man’s goal is God. He is born to tread the Path to God. In the words of Bahá’u’lláh, “The purpose of God in creating man hath been and will ever be to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence.”

Success depends upon surrender to God at every turn. “O thou who hast surrendered thy will to God,” wrote Bahá’u’lláh, “By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose.” This is the secret of happiness. “The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.”

Those on the Path are conscious of this joy. They have a sense of victory that no circumstance, however ruthless, is able to destroy. When the earliest Bahá’í pilgrims found their way to the prison city of ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would often call on such radiant souls as the aged Ḥaydar-‘Alí, who, because of his great suffering and saintly character, was called the angel of ‘Akká.

When the American visitors seemed discontented with their lot, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say that Ḥaydar-‘Alí had also suffered; that he had been dragged across a desert with his head in a sack! But Ḥaydar-‘Alí made always the same reply, “I have known only the joy of serving my Lord.”

Lady Blomfield, foremost early Bahá’í of England, records the tender moments when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made His journey through the West, and interviewed under her own roof, so many of the thoughtful of that land. When, people said, “We are glad, oh so glad that you are free,” He said:

“To me prison was freedom.

“Troubles are a rest to me.

“Death is life.

“To be despised is honor.

“Therefore I was full of happiness all through that prison time.

“When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed freedom! For self is the greatest prison.

“When this release takes place, one can never be imprisoned. Unless one accepts dire vicissitudes, not with dull resignation, but with radiant acquiescence, one cannot attain this freedom.”

Martha L. Root, greatest of the Bahá’í teachers in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s era, knew the secret. On her last historic journey through the West, she was asked the secret of her success and happiness. This plain little woman who had stood before queens and emperors with such undeniable power, replied thoughtfully, “It is important to find out God’s first choice about everything. Then the bounties flow, the hearts are made happy, and the spirit of attraction is at work.”

Such a soul has nothing to fear. There is no circumstance that cannot be used for progress on the Path to God. “Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones,” testified Bahá’u’lláh. “The sea of joy yearneth to attain your presence, for every good thing hath been created for you, and will, according to the needs of the times, be revealed unto you.”

Radiant acquiescence to the Will of God means obedience to His Commands and contentment in all that befalls, but it never means inertia, laziness, and slothful living. Activity in God’s Will is the law of victory. God can no more guide an inactive soul than a man can guide a car while it stands by the side of the road. “Pray and act,” Martha would say. Action attracts the answer to the prayer. That is the reason for the importance of deeds in victorious living. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote, “By faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds.” These deeds are the wealth of the friends of God.

Those who have arisen to teach these truths have all experienced the confirming power of assistance which Bahá’u’lláh promised to His sincere servants. “A company of Our chosen angels shall go forth with them, as bidden by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise.... If he be kindled with the fire of His love,... the words he uttereth shall set on fire them that hear him. Verily thy Lord is the Omniscient, the All-Informed. Happy is the man that hath heard Our voice and answered Our call. He, in truth, is of them that shall be brought nigh unto Us.”

Even daily work done in the spirit of service is an important part of victorious living, for it is accounted by Bahá’u’lláh as worship. He writes, “We have made this, your occupation, identical with the worship of God, the True One.” Living apart for pious worship is therefore discouraged. As Jesus

gave His life to men in the market places, so must our spirituality find practical expression among the people.

No life is victorious that cannot live with its fellows. “Blessed is he who mingleth with all men in a spirit of utmost kindliness and love.” A Bahá’í drops away all forms of arrogance. His door is open to black and white, rich and poor, fellow countrymen and foreign born. “Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony.... So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth.” The practice of social unity by a mere handful of the champions of God must slowly give rise to the harmony of the race.

Immortality

The Path to God is a stream of upward consciousness; it does not end with this small world. Our existence here may be likened to an acorn which, if quickened with life, becomes an oak. Or it may be likened to a child in the matrix of the mother as it develops its faculties of sight, hearing, and the like, for use in this world. So does the soul treat this world as a place of beginning in which it develops its spiritual faculties for use in all the worlds of God. Many are the assurances of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá concerning this journey for the soul who faithfully sets out on the path to God.

First we must know that there is *continuance*. The true believer will “eternally live and endure. His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long as God Himself will last.... It is evident that the loftiest mansions in the Realm of Immortality have been ordained as the

habitation of them that have truly believed in God and in His Signs. Death can never invade that holy seat.”

The other world is a world of *knowledge and memory*. “Undoubtedly the holy souls who find a pure eye and are favored with insight will in the kingdom of lights be acquainted with all mysteries, and will seek the bounty of witnessing the reality of every great soul. Even they will manifestly behold the Beauty of God in that world.” The mysteries of which man is heedless in this earthly world, those will he discover in the heavenly world, and there will he be informed of the secret of truth; how much more will he recognize or discover persons with whom he hath been associated.”

Not a static heaven, but a busy, active condition, bright with *growth and progress*, is visualized for us by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Those who have passed on through death have a sphere of their own. It is not removed from ours. Their work, the work of the Kingdom is like ours but it is sanctified from time and place. “It is as if a kind gardener transfers a fresh and tender shrub from a narrow place to a vast region. This transference is not the cause of the withering, the waning or the destruction of that shrub, nay rather it makes it grow and thrive, acquire freshness and delicacy and attain verdure and fruition.”

Bahá’u’lláh speaks of the *power* bestowed upon the faithful in the world of continuance. “The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the Ideal King and Divine Educator, the pure leaven that leaveneth the world of being, and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are

made manifest. Consider how meal needeth leaven to be leavened with. Those souls that are the symbols of detachment are the leaven of the world. Meditate on this, and be of the thankful.”

And again, *joy* is the keynote! “O Son of the Supreme! I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve? I made the light to shed on thee its splendor. Why dost thou veil thyself therefrom?”

“Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life. As to those who have tasted of the fruit of man’s earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God alone, the Lord of all the worlds.”

“O my servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes.”

The greatest gift of all, bestowed in the worlds of light, must be the gift of *companionship* with the holy souls of every age. The heart is immediately stirred by such a possibility. The grandeur of Moses comes close to us; we sit again at the feet of Jesus the Christ! In short, we come to the conclusion that the true believer of this illumined time is the associate and intimate of the apostles of former times. “Likewise will they find all the friends of God, both those of the former and recent times, present in the heavenly assemblage.” “Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul

liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise. The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship. With them that soul will freely converse, and will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God, the Lord of all worlds. If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station.”

An American friend who had enjoyed the privilege of more than one visit to ‘Akká during the days of the exile of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, related an incident that took place at His table. With her sat persons of varied races, some of them traditional enemies who had now grown so to love one another that life and fortune would not have been too much to give if called upon to do so. As the reality of their love gradually became plain to her, there was born a ray of the knowledge of the intimacy of the near ones in the world beyond. When the meal drew to a close, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke of the immortal worlds. As nearly as she could remember, the Words he spoke were these: “We have sat together many times before, and we shall sit together many times again in the Kingdom. We shall laugh together very much in those times, and we shall tell of the things that befell us in the Path of God. In every world of God a new Lord’s Supper is set for the faithful!”

The secret of so great a fulfillment is intimacy with God through His Messenger. Revelation, the open door to God, is forever linked with the Revelator. With one gracious gesture God bestows upon the world a divine physician, a lawgiver, a perfect pattern, and a point of union with its God. Happy is the heart that experiences fusion with the Manifestation of God’s

Perfection. Paul would be made alive in Christ Jesus. Stephen, radiant even as the excited mob hurled him from the cliff, cries, “Behold, I see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God the Father.” ‘Alí, youthful disciple of this day, proclaims as he offers his life, “If I recant, wither shall I go? In Him, I have found my paradise.” The Word of God is the Water of Life, one Word throughout cycles and ages. The soul, refreshed by new waters, finds itself yet on the old Path, the ancient, eternal Path. To tread that Path with dignity and joy, through this world and hereafter, is every man’s birthright. Therefore, once in about a thousand years, God, in His great compassion, clears the Path of superstition and division, that the way may be made plain once more for the sincere seeker. And so Bahá’u’lláh has come.

Today the stage is set for the greatest spiritual drama of history, for the rebirth of the powers of the human race will be for the first time worldwide and in proportion to infinitely higher development. The coming of Bahá’u’lláh marks the close of a great cycle, the beginning of one infinitely greater. Man has come of age; a world unity will appear, enjoyed by a new race. Bahá’u’lláh is the Father promised by Isaiah, the Michael spoken of by Daniel, the Spirit of Truth prophesied by Jesus, the Mihdí foretold by Muḥammad, the Friend promised by Gautama, the Sháh of Bahrám of Zoroaster. His coming is the bow of promise in the sky. “The universe is wrapped in an ecstasy of joy and gladness.” “Peerless is this Day, for it is as the eye to past ages and centuries, and as a light unto the darkness of the times.”

Religion Returns

by Dorothy K Baker¹⁵⁸

And when Thou didst purpose to make Thyself known unto men, Thou didst successively reveal the Manifestations of Thy Cause, and ordained each to be a sign of Thy Revelation among Thy people.

—Bahá'u'lláh

Religion is Progressive

Religion is progressive, rushing forward like a giant river from God to the ages, watering the arid centuries to produce flowering civilizations and holy lives. God speaks, and the merciless opposers of His truth are swept into the limbo of the forgotten, while out of the lives of the martyr-revelators moves the age-old, twofold process of the fall of an old order of things, and the rise of a believing people, endowed with the power to carry forward an ever advancing civilization.

The Manifestations of God

There has never been a prophet of a religion who has not been doubted. Through under-emphasis they have become dim historic figures who can be judged only by the results apparent in the world after them. In the light of the Bahá'í Faith, the shadowy forms of the world's great Master Teachers stand

out again in brilliant relief against the mediocrity of their times. Their wisdom is deathless. They stand alone against the world, arch-types, on a mount of vision, foreshadowing the perfections of an unfolding race. Bahá'u'lláh aptly calls them Manifestations of God. As heat manifests fire, as a ray manifest the sun, these pure and stainless souls manifest the Will of God whose plan for spiritual evolution is written, chapter by chapter, in their lives and utterances. They are despised, mocked, imprisoned, crucified, but out of the crucible of their suffering religion is born again; they are proofs of the power of God.

The Power of the Prophets of Israel

Abraham was a Manifestation of God. The son of a pagan priest in Ur, He was exiled because He taught the Oneness of God. He came over into the region of the holy land, a man alone against the world. By the power of religion, His exile became glorious. His descendants produced the prophets of Israel, and most of Europe and Asia came under the influence of the God of Israel.

At a later period Moses appeared, a man who was a stammerer, known among men as a murderer, who through fear had for a long time remained in concealment, shepherding the flocks of Jethro. Yet Moses, standing one day on Mt. Horeb, heard the voice of God, directing Him to free the Jewish nation. What could a stammerer reply? Would He be convincing, even to His own people? How could He command a Pharaoh?

“Oh my Lord, I am not eloquent,” He lamented, “but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.” And the Lord said, “Who hath made man’s mouth? I

will be with thy mouth and teach thee what to say.”

After this Moses went into the market places of the Egyptians, teaching the children of Israel. He revealed the plan of God for the Jewish people and the people listened with increasing eagerness. Only when Pharaoh’s lash descended more brutally they became afraid and turned away from Moses, for how could they believe in a single man, alone against the world, against Pharaoh’s chariots, against starvation and cruelty and poverty? How could they know that Moses, whose staff was His only companion, would lead the Jews, six hundred thousand strong, into the wilderness and the promised land?

By the power of religion Moses fed, housed, and taught the people, purified their lives, gave them back their faith, brought them under His civilizing law, and bestowed upon them knowledge and love of God. Moreover, He set in motion a great civilization for those times. The children of Israel became the envy of the pagans. The civilization of the Pharaohs went down to utter loss. Literacy, government, and moral values continued for many centuries to make Jerusalem, the city of the Jews, the cultural center of the ancient world. To such a development did they attain that the sages of Greece came to regard the illustrious men of Israel as models of perfection. An example is Socrates, who visited Syria and took from the children of Israel the teaching of the Unity of God and of the immortality of the soul. A man found his highest tribute in the words, “He is like the Jews.” The power of religion had raised the lowest tribes of the earth to greatness.

Revelation Progresses to Christ

Revelation is progressive, sweeping onward with the natural evolution of the race. Jesus Christ appeared, the living Word of God, flashing like a giant meteor through the musty period of decline that marked His generation.

Born of Mary, nurtured in the Jewish church, assisted neither by His own people, nor by the military powers of Rome, nor by the intellectual supremacy of the Greeks, Jesus of Nazareth brought into being, in a mere three-year span of ministry, a Faith destined to cross seas and continents and enter at last every known country on the planet. Today hospitals, cathedrals, universities, and governments testify to the power of religion through Jesus Christ.

Alone against the world, healing, blessing on the one hand, hurling fierce accusation into the very teeth of a hypocritical and dormant society on the other, Jesus became the primal point of a vast civilization. So great was His power, born of God, that Bahá'u'lláh in recent times wrote of it: "The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit ... He it is who purified the world."

His was a strange sovereignty. The stars were His lamps; He had no place to lay His head. Yet His was the sovereignty that could scourge the money changers! His was the power to say, "Pick up thy bed and walk!" His was the power to utter the divine words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go and sin no more!" All power in heaven and earth was given to Him, the humble carpenter. God does not prove His power by exalting the already exalted. From the upper chambers of communion with this Immortal Beauty, a handful of lowly fishermen conquered the world.

The Great Prophet of Arabia

Islam leaves no less a proof that religion is progressive. The Arabic civilization in the sixth century was sunken into degeneracy. Drunkenness and moral profligacy abounded. Mecca, center of worship for the pagans, boasted no less than three hundred and fifty idols, including effigies of Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Muḥammad denounced the idols, preached against the practices of the people, and declared the singleness of God.

Muḥammad never fought against the Christians; on the contrary, He treated them kindly and gave them perfect freedom. A community of Christian people who lived at Najran were under His care and protection. Muḥammad said, "If anyone infringes their right, I myself will be his enemy, and in the presence of God I will bring a charge against him."

How appalling were the misfortunes that befell Muḥammad! Alone against the world He preached the truth, and all the powers of Arabia leagued themselves against Him. That He dared to bless a girl child was pretext enough for stoning Muḥammad. When He prayed much in the desert alone, the people flung refuse at His holy person. A thousand injuries He sustained in meekness, a man against the world.

The scene changes. We find the Arabians emerging to scientific and moral heights under the refining laws of Muḥammad. Gambling and drunkenness disappeared. The protection of women was established. The arts flourished, the mathematics, astronomy, and literature of Cordova and Salamanca became world-famous. Moral life was purified. Political unity from Arabia to Spain drew tribal life upward to national sovereignty. In short, from the

lowest human condition, the people of Islám formed for a time the most powerful center of civilization. Such is the power of religion.

Religion Moves in Seasons

But all religion moves in seasons. Cycles of civilization move slowly upward, rising and falling with the faith of man. With the coming of each religion a springtime appears, accompanied by storms of opposition. The stormy spring passes into summer; religion bears its fruit, and sinks at last into the cold winter, a petty tyranny of forms with little vestige of the master passion.

The nineteenth century bore the stamp of a spiritual winter. Gone was the fervor of the apostles; gone the summer heat of earlier faiths. Decay, intrigue, and division had swept away the very foundations of Islám; division and lassitude had eaten into the fibre of Christendom; Judaism, a thing hunted, presented neither a strong nor united front.

Into such a world came Bahá'u'lláh^{[159](#)} preceded by the youthful forerunner and prophet, the Báb.^{[160](#)}

The age in which they appeared was to unfold a story so tragic, yet so full of promise as to challenge every God-fearing soul. Dynasties were to fall, religious systems collapse, and moral standards sag to the breaking point. The earth, careless of inventions inviting a neighborhood of closely-knit human interests, was to witness wars of gigantic proportions, more terrible than any known to history. Out of such abysmal depths, mankind, chastened and

despairing, would need, more than at any time previously, the wisdom of a Moses, the preciousness of Christ, and in the progressive experience of such recurring bestowals, a Physician for the specific ills of a new and travailing age. Someone has said, “In such times great religions perish and are born.”

The Dawn of a New Day

It was one hundred years ago, on May 23, 1844, unheralded by the world’s leaders, that the Bahá’í Faith was born. The Báb received on that day His first disciple, and announced to him the dawn of a new religious cycle. The scene of the announcement was a humble dwelling in Shíráz, Persia.

The Báb Himself was a radiant young Persian of some two and twenty years. He was a merchant by profession, practicing a trade, as had the Carpenter of Nazareth, two millenniums before Him. On that eventful day He went, a little before sundown, to the gate of the city. His tranquil beauty must have arrested even the heedless, as He stood scanning the faces of the passing multitudes. Among those in the vicinity of the gate that day was a Shaykhi student, a young man of great inner perception, whose own heart promptings had irresistibly drawn him to Shíráz, in search of a great Master. Husayn, like the Magi of old, knew that a time pregnant with divine power was again at hand. With what sudden inrush of joy he must have gazed for the first time

upon the countenance of the Báb. Still uninformed, however, of the reason for his ecstasy, he accompanied His Lordly host to the modest dwelling chosen to become the scene of the proclamation. An Ethiopian servant opened the door, and the gentle voice of the Báb addressed His youthful visitor saying, “Enter therein, in peace, secure.” On that night the Báb announced to Ḥusayn His own mission and likewise the coming of a mighty prophet, “Him whom God would make manifest,” whose coming would introduce the foretold age of unity and peace.

Except for the fragmentary reports of Ḥusayn, the first disciple, little is known of the hours that flew in quick succession from sundown to dawn in the upper room of that house. The apostle is one of the mysteries of every religion. He attains the miracle of faith a little before his world, unable to see the end from the beginning, yet melting, flame-like into the heart of the Revelator. The commentaries that fell from the lips and pen of the Báb filled His listener with extreme inner excitement. “All the delights,” records Ḥusayn, “all the ineffable glories, which the Almighty has recounted in His Book, as the priceless possessions of the people of Paradise—these I seemed to be experiencing that night.”

The Ministry of the Báb

The holy and transforming power of the Báb is the first proof of our time that religion has come again to mankind. Through the pen of a chronicler we walk with Him on the lonely road to Shíráz, whence He has come to meet the armed guards who have been sent to seize Him; we hear the pleading of the captain of the guard that He escape to a place of safety lest He be delivered to

His death; we listen to His soft-spoken reply, “May the Lord, your God, requite you for your magnanimity and noble intention. No one knows the mystery of My Cause; no one can fathom its secret ... Until My last hour is at hand none dare assail Me; none can frustrate the plan of the Almighty.”

We follow His path of exile as far as the city of Tabríz; a thousand excited citizens come out to meet Him. They kiss the stirrups that His feet have touched, and offer their children to be healed. His mercy is like the mercy of Christ; it is given freely, without hope of reward.

We further watch through the eyes of chroniclers the long months spent in the prison fortress of Máh-Kú, situated in the northern mountains. The rough tribesmen crowding at the gate are Kurds, wildest natives of Persia, and bitter traditional enemies of the people of the Báb. They listen to His chanted prayers; they learn to take their oaths in the name of the Holy One within the walls of the prison; they yearn to attain His presence; their lives struggle upward.

A glimpse of His martyrdom is likewise witness to the power of God. He is sentenced to death. A Christian colonel whispers a plea for forgiveness. “Enable me to free myself from the obligation to shed your blood,” he entreats his noble Prisoner. “Follow your instructions,” the Báb replies, “and if your intention be sincere, the Almighty is surely able to relieve you from your perplexity.” The Báb is suspended on ropes, to be shot. Seven hundred and fifty men led by Sám Khán, the Christian colonel, fire a volley of shots. The cords are severed by the shots but the Báb remains untouched. The soldiers of Sám Khán flee in terror and he thankfully retires from his ignoble task. Strangers are brought to commit the odious deed and the spirit of the Báb takes its flight. It is high noon. A dust storm from that hour to the going

down of the sun awes the ten thousand witnesses of the scene. One is reminded of the passing of Christ. The strange paradox of suffering and sovereignty are again evident, marking a springtide in the affairs of men. The effects of the martyrdom of the Báb are far reaching. The Báb is dead but religion marches on.

Bahá'u'lláh, The Glory of God

More than twenty thousand preceded the Báb to a martyr's grave; a bare handful survived Him. Among the few was Bahá'u'lláh, son of a Persian Vazír of high station and reputation.

As a young man, Bahá'u'lláh showed remarkable capacities, coupled with innate wisdom. In refusing the highest positions of State, He won the admiration of a generation steeped in bribery and petty ambitions, and the wisest men of the realm came to regard His destiny as above and distinct from others. "All that we can hope to achieve," explained one dignitary of the nation to his own son, "is but a fleeting and precarious allegiance which will vanish as our days are ended.... Not so, however, with Bahá'u'lláh. Unlike the great ones of the earth, whatever be their race or rank, He is the object of a love and devotion such as time cannot dim nor enemy destroy. His sovereignty the shadows of death can never obscure nor the tongue of the slanderer undermine. Such is the sway of His influence that no one among His lovers dare, in the stillness of night, evoke the memory of the faintest desire that could, even remotely, be construed as contrary to His wish. Such lovers will greatly increase in number. The love they bear Him will never grow less,

and will be transmitted from generation to generation until the world shall have been suffused with its glory.”

Bahá'u'lláh spread far and wide the teachings of the Báb and for a time wisely withheld His own identity as the One foretold. In 1852, following the martyrdom of the great forerunner and prophet, Bahá'u'lláh Himself was seized and imprisoned as a Bábí in the underground dungeon of Tíhrán.

En route to this loathsome pit, He was stoned and derided by a populace incited by His enemies to acts of violence. An aged woman begged to be permitted to cast her stone. “Suffer the woman,” said the holy Prisoner. “Deny her not what she regards as a meritorious act in the sight of God.” With such calm resignation Bahá'u'lláh took up His toll of sacrifice for a Cause in which the Báb was the dawn and He was the noonday sun. With a few companions He was placed in the dungeon in stocks. His words of endearment continued day by day to cheer their hearts, and no day passed without singing. “God is sufficient unto me,” ran their glad refrain, “He verily is the all-sufficing. In Him let the trusting trust.”

In later years Bahá'u'lláh, with His family and over seventy followers, was exiled to ‘Akká, Palestine, a fortress city situated at the foot of historic Mt. Carmel. Here, in barrack rooms, the little band of first believers lived in such joy as to make them a source of wonder to all. In these days Bahá'u'lláh wrote to some friends, “Fear not. These doors shall be opened. My tent shall be pitched on Mt. Carmel, and the utmost joy shall be realized.”

This indeed was the case; His last years were passed at Bahjí on the plains outside of the city. Here He wrote and taught, and often in the summer, the cypress trees of Carmel offered shade to the world’s greatest Prisoner. This

was a fitting fulfillment of the writings of Judaism, Christendom, and Islám, which had so often extolled Mt. Carmel. Here the Christian world was wont to look for the return of the Spirit, Christ, and the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God.

Here Bahá'u'lláh wrote many of the Tablets to the kings, begun earlier in the exile, enjoining upon them the peace of the world and advising them of the ways to attain it. Here, in a land where women were often little more than chattel, He taught the equality of men and women. Here, in a world removed from science, He proclaimed the harmony of science and true religion. Here, in a despotic monarchy He espoused the cause of representative government, world language, a world tribunal, and federation of the nations. Here, in the midst of fanaticism and bigotry He proclaimed, "Consort with the people of all religions with joy and fragrance."

Bahá'u'lláh counted all of the revealed religions as one and the same. "I have been preceded in this matter," He wrote, "by Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, and before Him by the Spirit, Christ, and before Him by the Interlocutor, Moses." Recognizing the differences of emphasis from time to time in God's revealed religion, He said, "In every Dispensation the light of divine guidance has been focussed upon one central theme.... In this wondrous revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God and the distinguishing feature of His Law is the consciousness of the oneness of mankind."

The Final Proof

The final proof of a religion is its survival and its triumph over opposition. Were the walls of ‘Akká to obscure forever the hallowed light of Bahá’u’lláh? Could such a community outlive its founders? The rise of such a Cause out of the obscurity of an eastern prison gives promise indeed of a power beyond the ken of men. In a single century the newborn Faith encircled the earth; invaded sixty countries and seventeen dependencies; numbered within its ranks no less than thirty races and tore down the barriers between them; published and broadcast its writings in more than forty tongues; and established a worldwide spiritual commonwealth, indivisible by its very nature and universal in its goal. Through the unpaid missionary efforts of its adherents it has swept from dungeon to royalty, from Shíráz to far-flung outposts, and from the first humble disciples to the scholars and statesmen of the earth.

The Succession

The walls of the prison city closed around Bahá’u’lláh in 1868. At the time of the rise of the Young Turks in 1908, they opened to His Son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the appointed Center of His Covenant, who subsequently journeyed to England, France, Germany, and the United States. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entered the prison city in His youth and left it an old man. The days of this noble successor among the western friends were marked by striking victories, for churches, synagogues, and peace societies everywhere opened their doors to Him. He who had never faced a public audience, nor attended a western school, nor moved in western circles, became “all things to all people,” a universe of kindness, a loving father to high and low alike, to churchmen and layman, lord and commoner. Though broken in health and aged by suffering, His teaching, characterized by brilliant simplicity and kingly humility, was as

bountiful as the rain, and offered to the west the mirror of His illustrious Father, whom it would never know. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave to the west a profound message of social unity, and there appeared in His lifetime a world community dedicated to the principle of racial, national, and religious oneness.

In His Will and Testament ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appointed His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as interpreter and first Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith. Today the Faith of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh has moved out of its apostolic period into a formative era, in which its world administration is slowly taking shape. Haifa, now a flourishing seaport across the bay from ‘Akká, is the chosen residence of Shoghi Effendi, whose World Order Letters have already made an indelible impression upon the stream of international life. Mt. Carmel, whose cypress trees once sheltered the holy Prisoner, now boasts the shrines of His family. On its terraces a Temple is destined to be reared, and the future Bahá’í International House of Justice will overlook the Mediterranean, a House dedicated to the service of that world community which must remain for all time inclined “neither to east nor west, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither rich nor poor, neither white nor colored; its watchword the unification of the human race; its standard the ‘Most Great Peace.’”

“For our of Zion shall go forth the law,” sang the prophets. The holy land of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus is again glorious with religious aspiration. The religion of our fathers returns, opening a new chapter of revelation, and revealing a newly ordered world, to which the prophetic welcome of the Báb calls every soul; “Enter therein, in peace, secure.”

APPENDIX II:

**SELECTED RADIO
TALKS GIVEN BY
DOROTHY BAKER**

Bible Prophecies of Today

Again and again we are asked: “Does the Bible confirm the Bahá’í teachings?” This morning I would like, in part at least, to answer that question. I suggest that the radio listeners take a paper and pencil, and write down some of the references used, so that they may check them over at their leisure. And while you are finding your pencils, let me answer question number 1 asked by so many of our fellow Christians: What is the Bahá’í attitude toward the Bible? When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of Bahá’u’lláh, visited London, he was taken by his devoted friend, Archbishop Wilberforce,

to visit the Old City Temple, where he wrote in the Bible the following words: “This book is the Holy book of God, of celestial inspiration; the Holy book of salvation, the noble Gospel. It is the mystery of the Kingdom and its light; it is the Divine bounty and the sign of the guidance of God.”¹⁶¹ These words clearly indicate the belief in the Holy scriptures shared by every Bahá’í the world over, whether of Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu, or Parsee birth and background. Thousands of human beings on the other side of the world, who have for centuries repudiated the Christian scriptures, have found complete reverence for these scriptures through Bahá’u’lláh, and have been awakened to the Divine station of the Christ himself, through the Bahá’í message.

The second question is this: Does the Bible promise us a Day of fulfillment, an age of permanent peace such as the Bahá’ís believe will appear at this time? Such a Day is predicted in various forms. Sometimes it is called “the time of the end.” Again it is “the last days,” “the latter day,” “the Day of His Preparation,” or simply, “in that day.” Let us write down a few references to that Day.

Psalms 72:7-8. In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 2:2-4. And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow unto it.... And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning

hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Hosea 2:18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth and will make them lie down safely.

Haggai 2:6-9. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all the nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

The third question is this: Are there actual signs given in the Bible by which we know that this is the dawn of that same Day?

Isaiah 11:11-12. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people.... And he will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcast of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

This sign is fulfilled in the mass movement of the Jews toward Palestine today. Hosea refers to it again: Ch. 3:4 and 5, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without an ephod or teraphin: afterwards shall the children

of Israel return and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days.

In chapter 2, verses three and four, Nahum reveals a clear flash of vision in the words, “the chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation ... the chariots rage in the streets: they rush to and fro in the broad ways; the appearance of them is like torches: they run like the lightning.”

Daniel in his last chapter 12, the first four verses, gives perhaps the clearest signs of all: “and at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time the people shall be delivered every one that shall be found written in the book.... But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Daniel has here given us four signs; first, a princely leader, second, a time of great trouble, third, a running to and fro, and four, an increase of knowledge. The first is fulfilled in Bahá’u’lláh, prince of Núr, the second in the present national and economic struggles, the third in modern travel and transport, and the last in the great strides of science and education.

Jesus lists certain signs also. Some of them are war, famine, earthquake, tribulation, persecution, false prophets, indifference, the spread of the Gospel to all nations, the coming of the Prophet from the east, and riotous living as in the days of Noah. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, the disciples asked: “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?” Jesus replied: “For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in diverse places.” The condition of Europe today testifies to the hostility of nations; famines have been plentiful, for in

China alone, in 1930, two million people literally starved; and earthquakes abound; the Lisbon earthquake at the end of the century just preceding the life of Bahá'u'lláh cost 6,000 lives. "Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you," continues Jesus. This cannot apply any longer to the Christians, since they are in full power today[;] but may it not be fulfilled in the slaughter of the 20,000 who gave their lives in the last century for the cause of God, as renewed by Bahá'u'lláh. To continue, "Many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray." Just before the days of Bahá'u'lláh, a long line of leaders arose in Jerusalem itself, trying to seize political power in the name of Christ. Redpath, in his history of the world, states: "Christ after Christ arose, leading revolt." This sign is amply fulfilled. And further, "the love of many shall wax cold." The sweep of atheism and indifference today is startling in its wide spread, fulfilling this sign to a most sorry degree. "And this gospel shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations." This sign was fulfilled when the Christian missions carried Christianity at last to the very outposts of civilization at the close of the last century.

Reading on, "For as the lightning cometh forth from the East and is seen even unto the West, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man." Bahá'u'lláh appeared in the east, and His teaching is only now, after seventy years thoroughly permeating the west. Many other signs Jesus gives, though we do not have time to use them. He closed with the warning "For as in the days of Noah they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ... and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man.... Watch therefore; for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh."

“Immediately after the tribulation of these days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” The former light of religion has indeed been darkened by materialism and ignorance and the powers of religious institutions like great luminaries are shaken and are falling everywhere.

“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be for as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be ... therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh.”

So we list the signs given by Jesus in somewhat the following order: wars, famines, earthquakes, persecutions, false prophets, preaching of the gospel to all nations, shining of the new light from east to west, darkening of the spiritual sun and moon, falling of the stars, and the heedlessness as in the days of Noah.

Sum these up and add to them the tribulations, the running to and fro, the increased knowledge, spoken of by Daniel, and the chariots in the streets; here is the startling discovery that all unaware we are living in THAT DAY!

This amazing discovery leads to the natural question: Is it possible that Bahá'u'lláh is the One promised? Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia, part of which in ancient days was known as Elam. Jeremiah, Ch. 49, verses 38 and 39, tells us that in the latter day God would set his throne again in Elam. Daniel also prophesies Elam as the place of fulfillment, and Hosea proclaims

that in the day that Valley of Achor will be a door of hope to the people; the valley in which Bahá'u'lláh was exiled. Sharon and Mt. Carmel are also places of His exile, and of these Isaiah in the 35th chapter says, “The wilderness ... shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it; the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.”

I want to leave you with the final and most joyous promise of all the holy scriptures; the last of John's Revelation: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.... And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne saith: ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” Can there be any clearer prophecy of the passing of injustice and mass poverty?

Yet even this age of peace and plenty, ushered in by the Glory of God, does not mark a final end of revelation on this planet. “Know of a certainty,” writes Bahá'u'lláh, “that in every dispensation, the light of Divine Revelation has been vouchsafed to men in direct proportion of their spiritual capacity.... The rise and setting of the Sun of Truth will indefinitely continue.”

So a new Testament opens, and all previous ones become the old. The covenant of God with man is renewed, and a new cycle of human power begins. The prophets of old have sung of this day, and ours is the high adventure of possession. Bahá'u'lláh has said: “Verily thou wilt see the earth even as a most glorious paradise.”

The Uses of Prayer

Down the corridor of time humanity has always been known to pray in one way or another—always to something higher than themselves. Pascal the philosopher has said: “Thou wouldst not seek me, hadst thou not already found me.” A great Rabbi, visiting a famous cathedral, looked with admiration upon the beauty of the place, but as he walked slowly along the aisle toward the chancel, his eye fell upon the crucifix, before which a lone figure prayed. “What idolatry!” he thought. When he had come close, he found that the kneeling figure was a boy, a crippled lad—whose face, tear-stained, had become transfigured in its pain. The great Rabbi thought then: “How small I am, and how great is this child who feels so deeply the healing Presence of my God.” Suddenly he knelt beside the little lad, lost in the union of a common reverence; knowing that they worshipped One Source.

Prayer is the birthright of every man, woman and child of the new day. The masses, who are immersed in the business of keeping body and soul together, must be liberated. Watching men fire a ship for twelve hours a day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, greatest of Bahá’í teachers, said sadly: “These men do not have time to be spiritual.” Prayer is a great necessity in the life of the world. Thomas

Edison said during his last illness: “I do not set myself up as an authority on religion, but I do say this; that if the spiritual life of man does not catch up to his material development the result will be a terrific crash!” Bahá’u’lláh, founder of the Bahá’í Faith, said that in the next century prayer would be united and effective, the very heart of community life. It would change not only the individual but a whole civilization. The trends of the twenty-first century will be spiritual as definitely as the trends today are material. Steinmetz tells us that beside the power of prayer when it is known, the power of electricity will seem dwarfed.

Now how can you make prayer real amidst the clamor of your world’s demands? First, prayer should become a habit. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Be in a perennial state of prayer.” It is like saying: Be in harmony with the Will of God all the time! Now the question is; do you think it is really worth the struggle? No-one in this radio audience this morning should feel justified in entering upon such a difficult task unless and until he is assured that it could be one of the most powerful factors for good in his life. Yet I am sure that a few minutes a day can mean to you, joy, guidance, power, peace, companionship! A child of my acquaintance was struck by a truck and taken to a hospital with a concussion and a fractured hip. She tossed feverishly a night and a half a day, until at two o’clock she lay back in her pillows and was still. Her mother thought she slept, but suddenly the child turned starry eyes to her and said: “Mother, why am I so happy?” It was some time before the mother knew that friends, hearing of her distress, had sent the blessing of some of the simple Bahá’í prayers at that very time. Prayer begets joy!

Miss Olive Jones tells of a child who had learned the science of prayer. Her mother said: “Why do you pray for guidance? Do you not have conscience?” The little girl thought a moment and then replied: “Conscience tells us the

difference between right and wrong, but guidance tells which of the six right things to do.” Prayer begets guidance.

Jesus walked with His disciples toward a high hill and listened quietly as they disputed and complained among themselves. When they came to the hill, he looked to the top of it, and then again at them. “If ye had faith,” he said, “Ye could remove this mountain.” Prayer begets power!

And peace! What is more difficult than this to attain today? Wherever we look people are in trouble. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “Prayer and supplication are the wings of spirit.” We could not walk above the world any other way. Prayer begets peace.

There is an Arabic supplication that goes straight to my heart: “Rabba Arani! I want to see my God.” Prayer gives us sharpened perceptions and intuitive powers; a sense of Divine Companionship. We walk with God; talk with God; seek His Will; trust His Will; commune with His Spirit. Prayer begets companionship.

A few minutes a day can accomplish all this! But the great thing to realize is that it is not fitting to wait for the occasional sorrow to drive one to his knees. It is true that insanity, illness, and distress often disappear before quick and imperative prayer, but your life may still be out of the orbit of the continuous flow of God’s protection and love. You need to become God-conscious; anything else is insecurity. Prayer is like food and drink, we cannot be anything but emaciated if we take it only spasmodically. A Bahá’í teacher recently told of her experience in a college town where a number of young men attended lectures. After she had gone home she received a letter from one of them saying, “My room-mate and I are trying to live up to the things

you talked about; that is, all except prayer. We want you to know, though, that if we get into trouble, we'll pray." The Bahá'í¹⁶² penned a single line from the bottom of her heart: "Dear friend, you are in trouble; start praying." Mrs. Lua Getsinger, one of America's earliest Bahá'ís, had a little experience during her visit at the home of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa, Palestine. She had been in a great hurry that morning, and was scurrying to breakfast without having had her usual morning prayer. 'Abdu'l-Bahá met her in the hall and looked at her with a penetrating glance. Then he said: "Lua, you must never eat material food in the morning until you have had spiritual food." So we must come to love God enough to wish to associate with him a great deal.

Of course there will be times when it is the counsel and guidance of God in some specific problem rather than only a communion that we seek. Three steps may be followed to achieve the desired results. First, be quiet; meditate on the problem from all angles, and turn to God with a sense of listening. If possible, use one of the beautiful prayers of Bahá'u'lláh for guidance. The second step is to take hold of a definite conclusion with the full help of reason, facts, and, above all, the sense of being assisted by God. Sometimes this step comes in a clear flash; sometimes not. I have often risen from a prayer for guidance without a sense of having achieved the answer, only to find that every door opened for the right fulfillment. The third step is to proceed courageously, knowing that it is answered. Banish all fear or anxiety and walk confidently; act as if the desired results have already been accomplished. If you fail to do this, your prayer is perhaps like a beautiful child still-born, and therefore of no avail to this world.

If, in spite of technique, your prayers do not seem effective, try to acquire the four attainments of which 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks, for in these are found the spiritual qualities that are the true basis of prayer. He said: "The worshipper

must pray with a detached spirit, concentrated attention, in unconditional surrender of the will to God, and spiritual passion.”

If we listen to a soft violin and a hurdy gurdy begins to play in the street below, we need to close the window. Sometimes one has to close the window of the soul to the clamor of the world in order to hear the soft strains of the desire of God. This is the detached spirit.

Concentrated attention is closely akin to this. When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in New York, he called to him Mr. M., a successful businessman, saying: “If you will come to me at dawn tomorrow I will teach you to pray.” Now Mr. M. held prayer to be little more than a worthy sentiment. Yet he was delighted with such an opportunity, and even greeted it with exultant enthusiasm. He arose at four and crossed the city, arriving at six. He found ‘Abdu’l-Bahá already at prayer, kneeling at the side of his bed. Mr. M. followed suit, taking care to place himself directly across. Seeing that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was quite lost in his own reverie, Mr. M. began to pray silently for his friends, his family and finally for the crowned heads of Europe. No word was uttered by the quiet man before him. He went over all the prayers he knew, then, and repeated them twice, three times—still no sound broke the expectant hush. Mr. M. rubbed one knee and thought about his back. He began again, hearing as he did so, the birds singing outside the window. An hour passed, and finally two. Mr. M. was quite numb now. His eye, roving along the wall, caught sight of a large crack; then traveled on until it rested once more upon the still figure across the bed. The ecstasy he saw arrested him, and suddenly he wanted to pray like that. Even his immediate surroundings were forgotten. Closing his eyes again, he set the world firmly aside, and, amazingly, he became cleansed by humility and lifted by a sense of peace. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had at last taught him to pray! In a trice the teacher had arisen and was

standing near him. “When you pray,” he was saying, “you must not think of the birds outside of the window, nor of the cracks in the wall!” He became entirely serious, then, and added: “When you pray, know first that you are standing in the Presence of the Almighty.”

The surrender of the will depends upon perfect trust in the rightness of the Father to *know*. Mr. Fosdick describes some prayer as being guilty of making a God a Cosmic Bell-Boy! How few have the simple faith of the child who prayed for a horse without apparently success until one day a friend said: “Mary, God did not answer your prayer, did He?” Mary said quickly: “Yes, He did! He said ‘No.’”

But if surrender is difficult, spiritual passion is perhaps even more so. Spiritual passion is devotion to God; pure, selfless dedication. Sometimes we first touch it through suffering. Personal hurt may be at the near end of the journey; spiritual passion at the far end. Verily I believe that God will choose to lift into His very presence the least peasant who hurls himself upon the breast of God in fiery supplication in preference to the kings and learned men of the whole earth, if to the latter the smug complacency of a dulled age is sufficient. In the book of Revelations it is said, “So because thou art lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth!” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said: “In the highest prayer, you pray only for the love of God.”

The Spiritual Life of Man

One day a businessman said to me, “Secretly I wonder about myself. I arise in the morning, eat, keep shop, sleep and then do it all over again. I begin to feel like that person who said, ‘Man matters only to himself; he is fighting a lone fight against a vast indifference.’”

What a strange creature man is! He stands at the very apex of creation and forgets his own preciousness in the sight of God. Sometimes we go into dark closets of our own building and stuff up the keyhole and the cracks. Then we say, “The sun is not shining for me.” We build the closets of our own odd variety of materials—envy, fear, selfishness, sadness and sometimes just a sense of frustration and futility. And there we stay, mainly because we have not thought out our position there and so we are not doing anything about it. Often we hear the sighs of others in nearby closets and we wish we could liberate them, but not having freed ourselves, we find it pretty hard to tell them what to do.

Now the first thing that is probably needed is a larger perspective. I had the good fortune to have a remarkable grandmother. How well I remember hearing her say, “If anything troubles you very much now, look at it terms of five years from this time, or twenty-five, or fifty, and if it still looms pretty large, measure it in terms of eternity. Now that is my theme this morning—measure your life and everything in it in terms of eternity. Then look back, if you will, and wonder what became of your darkest closet.

The great thing is to find for ourselves the purpose of being, and to hold to that thru everything. Bahá'u'lláh said, “O God, I testify that thou hast created me to know Thee and to adore Thee.” There is God at the far end and here are we at the near end, on this lonely little island, the earth, needing to discover in that brief flash, an enormous purpose like that! And it is brief! He also said, “Count all the days of thy life as less than a fleeting instant.”

To know and adore God! Think of the things we deplore every day that all the while may be really speeding us on our way! Take the matter of trouble, for example. Bahá'u'lláh, in His tablet to the Sháh of Persia, wrote, “I am not impatient of calamity in His way nor of affliction for His love. God hath made afflictions as a morning shower to His green pasture, and as a wick for His lamp, whereby earth and Heaven are illumined.”

A morning shower! Often trouble opens the heart to God. And after that it becomes purified, little by little, so that the self or Satan of the heart dies out and makes room for the Divine Beloved. I came just this morning upon these words, “Purify thy heart for My descent. The Friend and stranger cannot dwell here together.” Trouble is often just the testing ground of the soul. There is a real freedom in it. As a Kreisler after difficult years of drudgery is free in the work of music, as an athlete after long discipline of the body has supremacy in the world of sports, so does your soul win a sovereignty thru a life that challenges it to be at grips with the world. Tests often come again and again to teach a single lesson, until at last there is a victory and a former weakness is replaced by strength. Every time this happens, it marks a milestone on the path to God.

The picture of our whole destiny comes more clear when we realize that as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said, “This is only a matrix world.” Measuring life in

terms of the eternal is easy for one who knows this. As unborn babes, thru the long months preceding their birth, form organs and features for their life here, so do we build our spiritual statures toward that new starting point that is called death. "I have made death glad tidings for thee," wrote Bahá'u'lláh. Is it anything more than dread of the unknown that makes us fear the angel of death? To the Museum of National History of New York came 'Abdu'l-Bahá one day, accompanied by a number of the early Bahá'ís of that city. Near one of the entrances of the great building, he seated himself and waited. A moment or two passed and there came to the door the caretaker, a kindly old Jew who wore a skull-cap and looked with beaming countenance upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá. To one of the friends he whispered, "Who is he? He looks like one of the old prophets." The friend answered, "Go and speak to him." Very shyly, the kindly old man went to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá, saying, "Won't you come into the museum and see my fossils and stuffed birds?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá smiled and replied, "I did not come to see dead things, but to tell you about a place where everything is alive." A shadow passed the face of the caretaker. "I know," he said, "you are speaking of death. I am afraid to die. All this I know; I am used to it." 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, "I have come to tell you that when you die you just go to a room upstairs. This is still here; you are just above it." The old man watched his face keenly as he spoke and gradually a most surprising thing happened. He began to take hold of the thing that he heard, and his eyes began to shine happily. "I understand," he said, "I understand." The friends left him there looking after them with a great light in his countenance. One of them came back a few days later to find him, but he had gone to the room upstairs. We have to sense the joys and adventures of that room upstairs, every one of us, before it can seem a reality. 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes, "The mysteries of which man is heedless in the earthly world, these will he discover in the heavenly world, and there will he be informed of the secrets of truth; how much more will he recognize or discover persons with

whom he had associated. Undoubtedly the holy souls who find a pure eye and are favored with insight will in the kingdom of lights be acquainted with all mysteries, and will seek the bounty of witnessing the reality of every great soul. They will even manifestly behold the beauty of God in that world. Likewise will they find all the friends of God, both those of the former and recent times, in the heavenly assemblage. The difference and distinction between men will naturally become realized. But this distinction is not in respect to place, for the Kingdom of God is sanctified from time and place: it is another world and another universe. A love that one may have entertained for anyone will not be forgotten in the worlds of the kingdom, nor wilt thou forget there the life that thou hadst in the material world.”

One day seated with a number of friends who had come thousands of miles to see him, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá intimated that he too would soon be going into that room upstairs. He said, “We have sat together many times before and we shall sit together many times again. We shall recount the things that befell us in the path of God, the Most High.” Then he smiled and added, “And we shall laugh together *very much!*” Again a little party of pilgrims who had come to him in Haifa during those last days of his imprisonment, caught a fresh glimpse of the joy of our eternal panorama when he said, “In every world of God a new Lord’s supper is ordained.” New Knowledge!—New realization! New bounty! How could we dread that?

In the book *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* we find this remarkable statement: “Know then of a truth that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will assuredly return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict or tongue describe. The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God and stood unwaveringly firm in His path, shall after his ascension, be possessed of

such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit thru him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the ideal King and divine educator, the pure leaven that leaveneth the world of being and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. These souls that are the symbols of detachment are the leaven of the world. Meditate on this and be of the thankful.”

Now by this we see that we are in training to become effective, not just in this world but thru every world. This opens the door of the highest adventure to us. Gone is the old idea of the harp and the golden-paved street, and in its place is the idea of normal continuation of whatever we have begun of the discovery of all mysteries, of magnified powers of service extending to unnumbered worlds and of unimaginably glorious companionship. A sense of great joy pervades the whole. A young mother came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mourning the loss of a beautiful little daughter. He said very gently, “Be happy, be happy. If you know the joy of a little child or of any soul who goes out in light, you would not have the will-power to remain here for twenty-four hours.”

But what has become of the old ideas? They are still true. As an unborn child could not conceive of rivers and clouds and mountains which are completely beyond its experience, so we cannot think in terms of forms never experienced. In teaching us, God has always had to use symbols, pictures with which we are familiar; and we discover that that which we have customarily called heaven or hell is really a state of being and exists here as well as beyond. For example, the Eskimo believes in a hell. To him it is a wandering ice-flow [sic], cold, desolate, forever cut off from loving companionship. This to the Eskimo is the greatest degree of deprivation he knows. The Arab believes in hell, too. To him it is boiling oil. This in his hot

country is the greatest degree of deprivation that he knows. Christian scriptures depict a hell of fire and brimstone. The fastidious ancient Greek believed in hell. To him it was a place of refuse outside the city bountiful. And they all speak truly. I have sometimes thought that it would be a very good idea each morning to say: "Good morning, Mrs. Baker. Are you living in heaven? Or have you fallen into desolate loneliness, cut off from God; or into the burning fire of hate, or into the refuse heap of some carnal desire." We who know and love the Prophets of God have a short cut to heaven thru the harp of God's word and by traveling the streets of His command. It is a strange thing how often we try to escape law, and yet we need a great friendliness with law. Moses said, "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord, your God." Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Bahá'u'lláh said, "My commandments are the lamps of my loving kindness unto thee." A young man said to Harry Emerson Fosdick, "I have never been so happy in my life as now that I am rid of God." Mr. Fosdick replies, "You may be rid of God, but you are not rid of a moral universe; you are not rid of a universe that is run by law." The young man succeeded only in putting himself out of balance with that law and out of harmony with life. Bahá'u'lláh writes, "To be in heaven is to live and move in the atmosphere of God's holy will." This is the only harmony. The streets of his command run straight to his door. We collect our wealth as we go. Bahá'u'lláh further writes, "The good deeds of the friends are written in the guarded tablet of God and constitute their true wealth. Come not into My court with empty hands." Sacrifice in the service of God and man is so great a wealth that the pure souls finally see in it only joy. Steven, spat upon, lied about, and stoned, cried, "Lo, I see the heavens opened." A missionary among lepers, who contracted the dread disease, said, "This but is radiant with His presence, and here I live in heaven." 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote for one who grieved for him, "Though I stay in prison it is just like paradise; afflictions and trials

in the path of God give me joy; troubles rest me, death is life, to be despised is honor.... Seek, O servant of God, this life until you remain in limitless joy.”

So there is God at the far end, and He is here at the near end, and we come to see that all life, both here and hereafter, is the expression of one thing and cannot be divided. Throughout His kingdoms, one increasing purpose runs: know God, and love Him.

The Habit of Prayer

Is prayer a habit with you—not a formal habit or repeating empty words but a deep, energizing force in your daily life? Of course you may not be able to answer this off hand, because it is possible that you actually pray many times without knowing it. I know a fine young man who said to a Bahá’í teacher, “I never pray.” The Bahá’í looked intently into his clear young eyes. “If you will tell me what you do, I will tell you how you pray.” Indeed, Bahá’u’lláh teaches that work done in the spirit of service is worship, and that every thought, word and deed devoted to the glory of God and the good of one’s fellows is prayer in the truest sense.

In the little volume “Doa—The Call to Prayer” we find listed nine attitudes that indicate our common urges to prayer. Perhaps you have been conscious of all of them; perhaps of a few.

One is SUPPLICATION. This is humble, earnest entreaty, with a sense of dependence on what is greater than ourselves. We remember the words of Paul, “God is an ever-present source of help in time of trouble.” “The heart of man is like a mirror which is covered with dust, and to cleanse it one must continually pray to God that it may become clean.” The act of supplication is the polish which cleanses the mirror and enables the soul to know and adore God.

And there is COMPUNCTION. This is an uneasiness of mind arising from wrong-doing. It is the sting of conscious, or a sense of remorsefulness. Did you ever have the feeling of unworthiness that we find in one of the Psalms: “Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me plenteousness of tears to drink.” If you did, you were being compelled to prayer by compunction.

The third is ASPIRATION. This is the longing sometimes unexpressed for what is above one’s present attainment, for what is pure, noble and spiritual. Alger says, “It is not aspiration but ambition that is the mother of misery in man.” Ambition may be purely personal but aspiration is a selfless longing.

INTERCESSION is a form of prayer too. It is entreaty on behalf of others. How often do you pray for the souls, the minds, even the bodies of those you love? unfortunately, so materialistic has the world become in recent centuries that the very possibility of spiritual healing has to a large extent been lost sight of. Some are endowed with exceptional talent for healing, and such talent should be recognized, trained and educated, like other gifts. The physical and spiritual laws are both important to know and use, for the physicians of the new age. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote a tablet in which he said: “The physician who has drunk from the Wine of My Love, his visit is healing, and his breath is mercy and hope.... He who is filled with the LOVE of God,

and forgets all things, the Holy Spirit will be heard from his lips and the spirit of life will fill his heart... Words will issue from his lips in strands of pearls and all sickness and disease will be healed.”

The community at large can help also. Everyone is affected by his social atmosphere, by faith or materialism, by virtue or vice, by cheerfulness or depression. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said that to be in the presence of some was to be consumed by hot desert winds; to be in the presence of others was to be refreshed by the cool breezes of the oasis. So even though you are not actively in prayer, you can be a willing channel for the Holy Spirit first by banishing fear, suspicion, jealousy, criticalness, and then by practicing appreciation. In this way you can actually help to heal.

And in using this prayer, remember those dear ones who have gone into the Worlds of Light. Bahá’u’lláh has suggested many beautiful prayers for them. Their worlds are progressive and unending, and are in no wise separated from yours. If prayer is effective here, then it is effective in every world of God.

And in your prayer for intercession, don’t forget the ills of the world. Never in the history has there been such a need of the realization of a New World Order on just and God-like thinking. When you pray for this, you pray for millions of bodies that are in danger of war and pestilence; for millions of souls robbed of loving homes and kindred, shot thru and thru with worse than lead; the spirit of hate.

And now another form of prayer: GRATITUDE. Many of you, I know, have felt the urge to thank the great Divine Being for favors and bounties received. Do you remember the words of David, “O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good and His mercy endureth forever.” Bahá’u’lláh likewise says, “Praise be

to thee, O Desire of the world! Praise be to Thee, O Beloved of the hearts of the yearning.”

Some attain prayer in the art of simple MEDITATION. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has declared that it is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking to your spirit and your spirit answers; the light breaks forth and reality is revealed. A business magnate once said that to a brief daily period of meditation on his affairs, he owed the bulk of his success. For 15 minutes at the beginning of each day he maintained an unbroken stillness during which he thought thru the day’s program. Now consider the effect of a whole world taught this art of concentration and using it habitually for spiritual betterment. How quickly the world could put into practice the magnificent teachings of peace and love brought by the Holy Prophets and emphasized today in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. Why not make this one of your daily habits?

Try it, putting the harmony that such a habit could bring, into our daily lives. One who has formed such a habit said to me recently, “When I forget to pray and meditate, my day is like darkness compared to sunlight.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes, “Thru the faculty of meditation, man attains to eternal life. Thru it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit—in that condition he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secret of things in themselves.” We live in a swirl of feverish activity. There is no one listening who does not need to learn the art of occasional listening stillness. “Be still and know that I am God.”

And now OBLIGATION is mentioned. Do you remember how the people of olden times laid lambs on the alter and gave praise to God? First we had the burnt offerings of many kinds of animal and human flesh; then fruits and grains were offered with prayers. Later sweet smelling incense was used, and

now the more advanced souls have learned to sacrifice themselves for the love of God. How often have you prayed this way.

The urge of ADORATION is a joyful spontaneous uplift of praise; it is an affirmation; it affirms the glory and majesty and all-power of God. The heart that learns to pray this selfless way purely for the love of God becomes lost in the spirit and is led to the last type or urge to prayer.

COMMUNION. This is the spirit's conversation with God and thru it perfect guidance may be obtained. Bahá'u'lláh says: "My love is in thee. Seek and thou will find me near. I have placed within thee a spirit from Me that thou mayest be My lover." *Now* prayer becomes the practice of the presence of God, and a very direct and earnest prayer it must be indeed. Thru such communion, every soul, rich or poor, black or white, native or foreign-born, becomes a glowing spirit of light, radiating joy and love and understanding wherever he goes.

Now, every one requires this guidance for a completely harmonious life. Not only should prayer become a firm habit, as constant as our eating and drinking, but such faith should motivate it that guidance is at all times assured. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, suggested five steps to be used by one who had a problem to be solved by prayer.

First step: Pray and meditate about the problem. Use the prayers of the great Prophets if you can, as they have the greatest power. Learn to remain in the silence of contemplation during which the Will of God becomes you complete desire.

Second step: Arrive at a declaration and hold to this. This decision is usually born in a flash during the contemplation, or it grows upon one with a sense of peace as he proceeds along his way.

Third step: When the decision becomes clear, have determination to carry it out.

Fourth step: Have faith and confidence that the power for spiritual accomplishment will flow thru you, the right way will appear, the door will open, the right thought will be given to you. Then take immediately the—

Fifth step, which is to arise and act as the prayer had already been answered. Act with tireless, ceaseless energy. AS you act, you yourself will become as a magnet which will attract more power to your being until you become an unobstructed channel for the divine Power to flow through you. Every prayer that is born without faith is like a stillborn child. Learn to fill your prayer with the lifeblood and spirit of faith. May I leave you with one last word; a word of warning. In all prayer make the Will of God your aim. Never seek to impose your will upon Him, but rather, pray to know His for you. Make this a daily habit.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!
What heavenly burdens form our bosoms take
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower.
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We knell; how weak! We rise; how full of power!

Why wherefore should we do ourselves this wrong
Or others, that we are not always strong
That we are overborn with care
That we should ever weak or heartless be
Anxious, or troubled—when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee!

¹ The book was first published five and a half years later, in 1984.

² Leon Edel, *The Alexandra Lectures 1955-56* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 96.

³ Ibid., p. 84.

⁴ John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1958), p. 112.

⁵ Allan L. Ward, *239 Days: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey in America* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), pp. 186, 43, 44.

⁶ Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1983), p. 96.

⁷ Dorothy Baker, “The Evolution of a Bahá'í, Incidents from the Life of Ellen V. Beecher: Chapter 3.—New Lamps for Old,” in *The Bahá'í Magazine*, Vol. 24, no. 9 (Dec. 1933), p. 284.

⁸ Dorothy Baker, “The Evolution of a Bahá’í, Incidents from the Life of Ellen V. Beecher: Chapter 5 (Conclusion—The Vision of Reality),” in *The Bahá’í Magazine*, Vol. 24, no. 12 (Mar. 1934), pp. 375-76.

⁹ Shoghi Effendi, quoted in “Memorial Meeting for Dorothy Beecher Baker,” in *Bahá’í News*, no. 277 (Mar. 1954), p. 2.

¹⁰ Mary Maxwell, an outstanding Bahá’í teacher and first in many things. She was among the earliest American pilgrims to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in ‘Akká, she founded the first Bahá’í community in Europe, and she was the first Bahá’í to settle in Montreal. At the time of her passing in Buenos Aires, Shoghi Effendi wrote that hers was a martyr’s death. Her daughter, Mary Maxwell, now known as Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum, married Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith.

¹¹ A pseudonym.

¹² Refers to the Arabic phrase *Alláh-u-Abhá*, meaning “God is most Glorious.” Its use among Bahá’ís can be compared to the Christian adoption of the Hebrew term “Hallelujah,” meaning “praise (ye) the Lord.” Many Bahá’ís use prayer beads to count a particular number of repetitions of the Greatest Name.

¹³ It wasn’t until 1938 that Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, asked the Bahá’ís of the West to begin observing Bahá’u’lláh’s law forbidding the consumption of alcohol.

¹⁴ Edris Rice-Wray later became a physician and moved to Puerto Rico and Mexico to follow her career in gynecology and obstetrics and to teach the Bahá’í Faith.

¹⁵ A pseudonym.

¹⁶ Dorothy and Frank's son, William King Baker, was born two and a half months later, November 26, 1923.

¹⁷ Mother Beecher.

¹⁸ A resort hotel

¹⁹ Conrad's French bulldog.

²⁰ Louis G. Gregory, "The Seventeenth Annual Convention and Bahá'í Congress," in *Bahá'í News Letter*, no. 6 (July–Aug. 1925), p. 3.

²¹ Hattie, one of Dorothy's favorite maids.

²² Pronounced "līma."

²³ This was probably a reference to Nabíl-i-'Azam [Muhammad-i-Zarandí], *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1932).

²⁴ See *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, new ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), pp. 209-13.

²⁵ Rex and Mary Collison later moved to Africa to establish the Bahá'í Faith there. Because they moved to an area where no Bahá'ís had lived before, they were named "Knights of Bahá'u'lláh." They were still living in Geneva, New York, when Mother Beecher wrote this letter.

²⁶ See Wallace Stegner, "The Radio Priest and His Flock," in *The Aspirin Age: 1919-1941*, Isabel Leighton, ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), p. 233.

²⁷ See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “The First Hundred Days of the New Deal,” in *Aspirin Age*, p. 280.

²⁸ Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Big Change: America Transforms Itself 1900-1950* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1969), pp. 130-31.

²⁹ See Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Avon, 1970), p. 252.

³⁰ See Allen, *Big Change*, p. 131.

³¹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, quoted in Schlesinger, “The First Hundred Days of the New Deal,” in *Aspirin Age*, p. 276.

³² Nabíl-i-A‘zam [Muḥammad-i-Zarandí] *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá’í Revelation*, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1932), p. 315-16.

³³ Though this passage was widely circulated at the time, it has not been authenticated.

³⁴ A future member of the National Spiritual Assembly, later named a Knight of Bahá’u’lláh

³⁵ See Appendix I (pp. 499-534) for two of Dorothy Baker’s articles on the subject of progressive revelation, first published as the pamphlets “The Victory of the Spirit” and “Religion Returns.”

³⁶ April 1936, Geneva Times, Geneva, New York.

³⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Women, Extracts from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Shoghi Effendi, and the *Universal House of Justice* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1997), p.

28.

³⁸ For more information about Louis Gregory, see Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World. Louis G. Gregory and the Advancement of Racial Unity in America*, foreword by Glenford E. Mitchell (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982).

³⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 87.

⁴⁰ The Báb, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 28

⁴¹ Joseph Baker (1698-1763) was a common ancestor of Dorothy Beecher Baker and of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Dorothy descended from his son Joseph, who was her great, great, great grandfather. Harriet Beecher Stowe descended from his son Nathaniel, who was her great grandfather. Harriet Beecher Stowe died in 1896; Dorothy Beecher Baker was born two years later. They were also related through Harriet Beecher Stowe's mother, Roxana Foote Beecher, who was a blood relative of Dorothy's great grandmother, Harriet Barnes Beecher.

The following may be of interest to those who are curious about the bond between Dorothy Beecher Baker and Harriet Beecher Stowe's family. Dorothy's grandfather, Joseph A. Beecher, writes of Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe's father:

Dr. Lyman Beecher was a frequent guest of [my grandfather] John Beecher, and in the old farmhouse where [I] was born and brought up, that great divine was generally to be found after preaching in the congregational church at Wolcott [Connecticut].

⁴² Her novel, *The Windbreak*, was published in 1938.

⁴³ Dorothy's mother, Luella Beecher.

⁴⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, in Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Prayers and Meditations*, compiled at the request of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada

(New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1929), p. 54.

⁴⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and Marzieh Gail (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997), no. 35.7.

⁴⁶ Elsie Austin, *Above All Barriers: The Story of Louis G. Gregory* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 17.

⁴⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, nos. 36.4-5.

⁴⁸ For more information on this subject see Gary L. Matthews, *He Cometh With White Clouds: A Bahá'í view of Christ's Return* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1996).

⁴⁹ Mary Maxwell, given the name and title Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánúm, is the daughter of May and William Sutherland Maxwell. Her many years of dedicated service to the Bahá'í Faith include acting as the Guardian's secretary, traveling on international teaching and speaking trips, representing the Guardian and the Bahá'í World Center at numerous occasions worldwide, serving as a member of the International Bahá'í Council from 1952 to 1961, shouldering countless other responsibilities, and writing several books, including two on Shoghi Effendi. At the time of her father's death, Shoghi Effendi cabled, in part, "The mantle of Hand of Cause now falls upon the shoulders of his distinguished daughter, Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih. . . ." (*The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume XII, 1950-1954*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956], p. 657).

⁵⁰ See Appendix II for the text of these talks.

⁵¹ See Appendix I.

⁵² Ruth Moffett was a close friend of Mother Beecher. In 1927 she and Mother Beecher prayed that Dorothy would actively serve the Cause.

⁵³ Dorothy Baker, *The Path to God* (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1937), p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, trans. Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan, new ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), pp. 39-40.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Mary Lou Ewing, "Memories of Dorothy Baker," p. 5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Edris Rice-Wray, "Memories of Dorothy Beecher Baker," p. 2, in Puebla, Mexico, February 27, 1976 (unpublished).

⁶⁰ Buffalo newspaper, April 19, 1936

⁶¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Seven Valleys*, p. 22.

⁶² A pseudonym.

⁶³ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, 1st ps ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), p. 39.

⁶⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, in *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, new ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 4.

⁶⁵ Dorothy Baker, "The Bahá'í Faith in the Colleges," in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record*, Volume IX 1940-1944, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1945), p. 774.

⁶⁶ Mary Lou and Tom Ewing pioneered to Albuquerque. They were the first Bahá'ís in the state of New Mexico. There Mary Lou became active in work with some thirty-five Indian tribes, involving both the Bahá'í Faith and the Indian cultures.

⁶⁷ Variation of the Greatest Name meaning "O Thou the Glory of Glories!"

⁶⁸ Dorothy Baker, quoted in "Around the World with Bahá'í Youth," in *Bahá'í World*, Vol. IX, p. 530.

⁶⁹ Dorothy Baker, "Among the Colleges," in *Bahá'í News*, no. 161 (Mar. 1943), p. 6

⁷⁰ Dorothy Baker, quoted in "Around the World with Bahá'í Youth," in *Bahá'í World*, Vol. IX, p. 531.

⁷¹ Dorothy Baker, "The Bahá'í Faith in the Colleges," in *Bahá'í World*, Vol. IX, p. 775.

⁷² Roan Orloff Stone and her husband, Jim, pioneered to Gallup, New Mexico, and worked with the Navajos.

⁷³ For more from hand of the Cause of God, John Robarts, see Chapter 17.

[74](#) Gene Pritchard, a devoted and active Bahá'í woman, all four of whose children also became Bahá'ís

[75](#) Louise Caswell, see Chapter 18

[76](#) Elisabeth Cheney, a writer and journalist, learned of the Faith in Lima, Ohio, and went on to open Paraguay to the Bahá'í Faith in 1940. She continued to travel and live in Central and South America until illness and finally death overcame her (see *The Bahá'í World*, vol. XIII, pp. 914-15). Elisabeth loved Dorothy Baker very much.

[77](#) Her depth perception was affected.

[78](#) Harriet Pettibone, a Bahá'í from North Dakota who was active in Buffalo, New York after her marriage in 1929.

[79](#) In 1924 Emmalu McCandless, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Weyer, and all her sisters became Bahá'ís. She later moved to Nebraska as a homefront pioneer.

[80](#) Amy Brady Dwelly is well known in children's education and psychology, and also as a writer for children.

[81](#) Edith McClaren pioneered to Latin America and served as a member of the Auxiliary Board. Her posts included Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

[82](#) Charlotte Stirrat, a Bahá'í who, during her long and devoted years of service to the Faith, pioneered in both Europe and Africa, beginning in 1947. In Africa she lived in Mozambique and Swaziland and is now serving in Namibia.

[83](#) Dorothy Campbell Rougeou moved to South America in 1950 to assist in the growth of the Faith there. Her record of service includes membership on several South American National

Spiritual Assemblies, most often as Secretary. She finally returned to the United States in 1973 to marry her sweetheart from 1930.

⁸⁴ Hazel Little, a teacher who learned about the Faith from Dorothy Baker, she moved to Tucson and served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Pima County.

⁸⁵ Artemus Lamb, an American pioneer and a member of the Continental Board of Counselors who served for years in Central America. Before he died he accomplished his life long dream of completing a history of the Bahá'í Faith in Latin America

⁸⁶ Belinda Elliot moved to several homefront pioneer posts in order to assist different communities.

⁸⁷ Marion Yazdi was the first Bahá'í student at the University of California at Berkeley, and at Stanford University in 1923. For her story of these times, see Marion C. Yazdi, *Youth in the Vanguard*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982.

⁸⁸ Isobel Locke in 1945. See also Chapter 18

⁸⁹ Dorothy Baker, *Religion Returns* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1945).

⁹⁰ Marzieh Gail, "Impressions of the Centenary," in *Bahá'í News*, no. 170 (Sept. 1944), p. 15.

⁹¹ Notes from Nancy Phillips.

⁹² See Appendix I, pp. 499-534.

⁹³ Bahíyyih Nakhjavání, *Response* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), pp. 33-34.

⁹⁴ Edna True, daughter of the Hand of the Cause of God Corinne True, served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and on the Continental Board of Counselors for North America and played a highly influential role in teaching the Faith in Europe.

⁹⁵ Judge Dorothy Nelson was elected to that position in 1988.

⁹⁶ Dorothy's chairmanship.

⁹⁷ See also Chapter 20.

⁹⁸ See fn 96.

⁹⁹ Dorothy Baker served on the Inter-American Committee from 1944-1951, except for 1947-48.

¹⁰⁰ An author, editor, and publisher who served at the U.S. Bahá'í Publishing Trust for twenty years, Eunice Braun later became a member of the Auxiliary Board, serving in the southern United States.

¹⁰¹ "Excerpts from an Inter-America Report Received Prior to the Convention," in *Bahá'í News*, no. 169 (July 1944), pp. 7-8.

¹⁰² Edmund and Muriel Miessler set sail for Brazil on September 25, 1946. They both served valiantly for their entire lives. In 1952 Ed was named a member of the Auxiliary Board by the Hands of the Cause. His territory was all of South America and the Falkland Islands. For more information see Muriel Miessler, *Pioneering in Brazil: Our Glorious Spiritual Adventure* (Brazil: Editora Bahá'í, 1986).

¹⁰³ Margot and Bob joined Ed and Muriel in Brazil in 1947. Margot went on to become a traveling teacher and pioneer in several countries including Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Honduras

and the Pacific. Bob, like Muriel and Ed, eventually served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Brazil and traveled to teach the Bahá'í Faith in many parts of the world.

[104](#) Priceless Pearl, pp. 402, 403.

[105](#) *Bahá'í News*, February 1948, p. 7.

[106](#) Quoted in “Around the Bahá'í World,” in *Bahá'í News*, no. 209 (July 1948), p. 4.

[107](#) Dorothy K. Baker, “A View of Pioneering,” in *Bahá'í News*, no. 207 (May 1948), pp. 9-10.

[108](#) Ibid, p. 9.

[109](#) Hubert's sister.

[110](#) Teaching Committee

[111](#) Rúḥíyyih Rabbaní, *The Priceless Pearl* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969), p. 9.

[112](#) Quoted in Mariam Haney, “Dorothy Beecher Baker,” in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume XII, 1950-1954*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956), p. 673.

[113](#) Bill and Annamarie Baker, with their nine-year-old son, Robert, and their daughter Crystal, pioneered in Peru in 1968. In 1974 they moved to Cochabamba, Bolivia. Annamarie made the adjustment to their new home in South America a comfortable and happy one for her family and became a teacher and vital member of their new community. Annamarie died at her post on May 13, 1995, but she is still much loved. Bill Baker served on the National

Spiritual Assemblies of Peru and Bolivia and was later appointed to the Auxiliary Board. He founded the Dorothy Baker Institute outside Cochabamba, Bolivia. The institute is devoted to development in the Alto Plano, the poor, high altitude communities found on the eastern incline of the Andes Mountains. His emphasis is appropriate technologies and grassroots education.

Crystal Baker Shoaie, for many years a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia, and Robert Baker, M.D., are both actively connected with Nur University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Frank Baker, Annamarie and Bill's eldest son, having pioneered in South America in 1976 and 1977, is now with the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois.

[114](#) Quoted in Harlan F. Ober, "Louis G. Gregory," in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record: Volume XII, 1950-1954*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956), p. 666.

[115](#) Alice Cox, a Bahá'í friend who wrote for *World Order* magazine and reviewed articles for that and other publications for many years.

[116](#) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and Marzieh Gail (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1997) no. 45.1.

[117](#) Muriel and Ed Miessler.

[118](#) Luella, Dorothy's mother; Dorothy's children called her Aunt Lou.

[119](#) The Weedens' wedding in 1948 was the first Bahá'í wedding to occur in the newly formed State of Israel. Mrs. Weeden assisted in the work of the Guardian while in Haifa, and Mr. Weeden, among other tasks, was able to assist in building the superstructure of the Shrine

of the Bab. In 1953 the Weedens were the first Bahá'í pioneers to settle in Antigua, in the Caribbean, and were named Knights of Bahá'u'lláh.

[¹²⁰](#) Manuel Vera, Secretary of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South America.

[¹²¹](#) Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, 1st ps ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), p. 210.

[¹²²](#) Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, 3d ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), ¶269.

[¹²³](#) Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1965), pp. 95, 96.

[¹²⁴](#) Shoghi Effendi, “Momentous Announcement of the Jubilee Centenary,” in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume XII, 1950-1954*, comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956), p. 115.

[¹²⁵](#) Rúhíyyih Rabbaní, *The Priceless Pearl* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969), p. 416.

[¹²⁶](#) Shoghi Effendi, quoted in Rabbaní, *Priceless Pearl*, p. 412.

[¹²⁷](#) From 1957 on, the Hand of the Cause of God Mr. Furútan's presence in Haifa has had a magnetic effect on the hearts of the thousands of Bahá'í pilgrims whom he has welcomed so tenderly. Ali-Akbar Furútan was born in Iran and accompanied his parents to Ishqábád, Russia in April 1914, when he was nine. He took his degree at Moscow University in child psychology and education. He was the Secretary of the first National Spiritual Assembly of

the Bahá'ís of Iran and served in that capacity for twenty-four years. He was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God in 1951.

[128](#) Philip Hainsworth enrolled in the Faith in 1938. He has served as chairman of the National Bahá'í Youth Committee of the British Isles, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom, and as a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Central and East Africa.

[129](#) Soo Fouts, former member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, is serving as a pioneer in South Korea.

[130](#) Elsie Austin pioneered to Morocco from 1953 to 1957 and was named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh. She then pioneered to Nigeria in the 60s and later to the Bahamas. Elsie Austin now resides in the Washington D.C. area.

[131](#) Quoted in “Report of the European Intercontinental Teaching Conference,” in *Bahá'í World, Vol. XII*, p. 171.

[132](#) Ugo Giachery was born and educated in Palermo, Sicily and received a doctorate in chemistry from the Royal University of Palermo. He was appointed by Shoghi Effendi as his personal representative for all the work in Italy associated with the erection of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb on Mt. Carmel. Later he served in the same capacity for the construction of the Bahá'í International Archives building on Mt. Carmel. In 1951 he was appointed as a Hand of the Cause.

[133](#) Pioneers who arose during the first year of the Ten Year Crusade or who arose in later years to go to territories previously unopened to the Bahá'í Faith were known as Knights of Bahá'u'lláh. Their names were inscribed on a Roll of Honor by the Guardian.

[134](#) Bahá'í World, Vol. VIII, p. 177.

[135](#) Louise and Hubert's house in Birre, near Lisbon, Portugal.

[136](#) A reference to Adelaide Beecher, wife of David Beecher, Dorothy's brother. David and Addie married and settled into the Beecher family lodge on Budd Lake, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

[137](#) One of the elderly women Dorothy arranged to have stay in her home, primarily to cook dinners when she was away.

[138](#) British Overseas Airways Corporation.

[139](#) Founders of George Ronald Publishers, Marion and David Hofman later moved to Haifa, Israel, where, from 1963, Mr. Hofman served as a member of the Universal House of Justice. Since his retirement in 1988 he has traveled and spoken all over the world. Mrs. Hofman, who was a member of the first Auxiliary Board for Europe, continued her work as publisher, writer, and editor. She died in 1995 and is sorely missed by all who had the privilege of working with her.

[140](#) From an interview by Gayle Woolson.

[141](#) Journalist, indefatigable world-traveler and lecturer, teacher of the Bahá'í Faith to royalty, the Hand of the Cause of God Martha Root spent fifteen months in India during her last extended teaching trip before her death in 1939. It is interesting to note that she finished her book *Táhirih the Pure, Irán's Greatest Woman* (Karachi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Pakistan, 1938) in Karachi, Dorothy's last teaching stop. For more information on Martha Root, see also M.R. Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983).

[142](#) Children of Conrad Baker, Dorothy's stepson who died in 1948.

[¹⁴³](#) Gertrude and Floyd Spahr were some of the first Bahá'ís in Lima, Ohio. It was Floyd and Frank Warner who originally spoke with Frank Baker about the study classes on unity, which led to the first firesides Dorothy gave. Milly and Dolly Clark were sisters and early Bahá'ís in Lima.

[¹⁴⁴](#) Elisabeth Cheney.

[¹⁴⁵](#) Hazel Mori served as a pioneer and devoted teacher in the Philippines from 1973 to 1995.

[¹⁴⁶](#) For more information on this devoted world traveler and Hand of the Cause of God, see *Dr. Muhájir: Hand of the Cause of God, Knight of Bahá'u'lláh* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1992).

[¹⁴⁷](#) *The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, no. 30, 736, London, January 11, 1954.

[¹⁴⁸](#) Dorothy's mother, Luella.

[¹⁴⁹](#) Originally published in *The Bahá'í World: A Biennial International Record, Volume VIII, 1936-1938*. Comp. National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1939), pp. 754-756.

[¹⁵⁰](#) Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 1

[¹⁵¹](#) Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 1

[¹⁵²](#) Shalshleth Hakkabalah—Talmud. Translated by M. H. Harry.

[¹⁵³](#) Avoth—Translated by M. H. Harry.

[¹⁵⁴](#) Berachotch—Translated by M. H. Harry.

[¹⁵⁵](#) Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, 1st ps ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), p. 166.

[¹⁵⁶](#) Published by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada in 1943.

[¹⁵⁷](#) Prayers revealed by the Báb, often used in times of difficulty. See *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, new ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991).

[¹⁵⁸](#) This essay was published as a pamphlet by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada in 1945. It was then reprinted in 1947 and 1953.

[¹⁵⁹](#) The Glory of God.

[¹⁶⁰](#) Door or Gate.

[¹⁶¹](#) The quotations in these radio talks that come from the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are not always exact.

[¹⁶²](#) Dorothy herself.