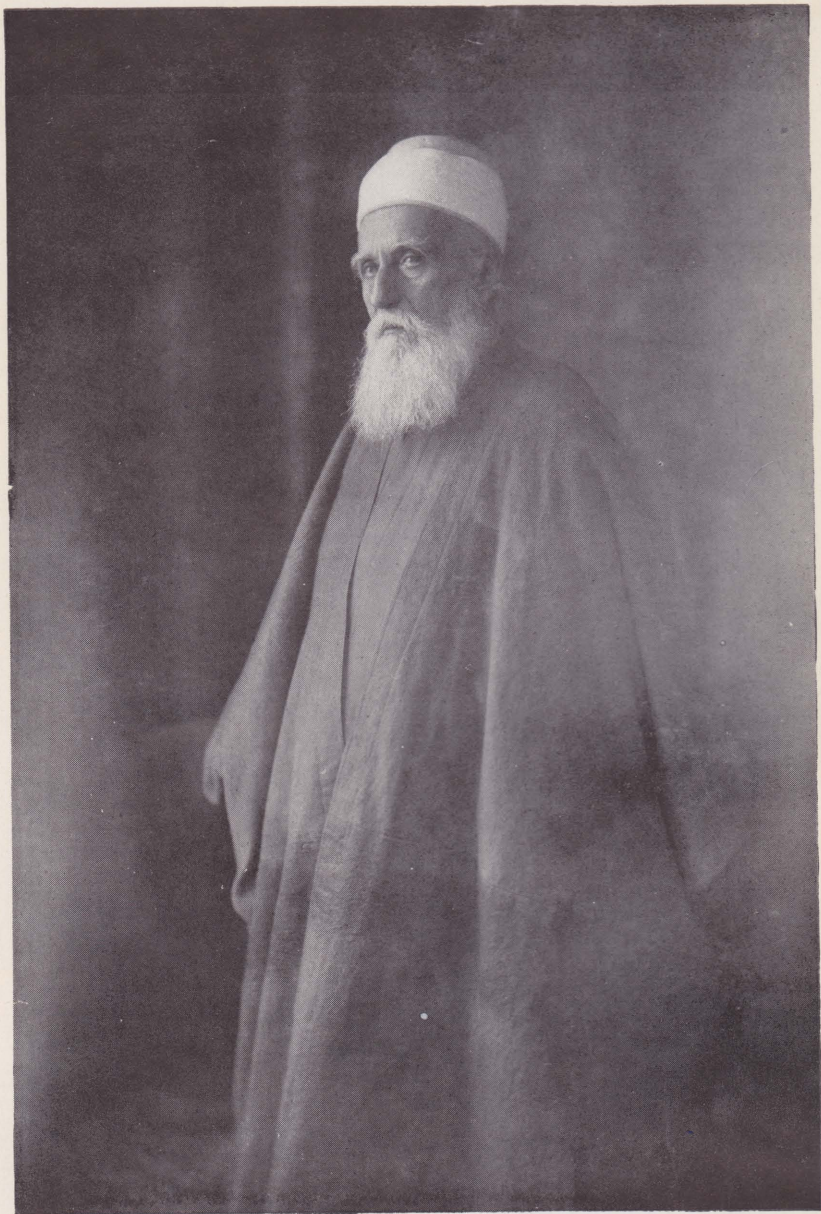


THE CENTENARY OF A WORLD FAITH

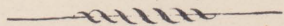


'Abdu'l-Bahá

THE CENTENARY OF A WORLD FAITH



THE HISTORY OF THE BAHÁ'Í
FAITH AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN
THE BRITISH ISLES



ISSUED BY
THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE BRITISH ISLES
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INTRODUCTION

ON the evening of May 22nd, 1844, at Shíráz, the well-famed city of Southern Persia, a young merchant by the name of Siyyid 'Alí Muhammad declared that He was the Bearer of a new message to mankind. He took the title of the Báb (the Gate), and it is by this name that He is known to history. Today a hundred years intervene between us and the day of that momentous declaration.

To the Báb was given only six short years of ministry, more than half of which He lived in captivity. Yet He raised a call which has resounded throughout the world. On July 9th, 1850, He was shot at Tabríz in Northern Persia. His followers were hunted down singly and in multitudes. At last it seemed as if the fire of persecution had burnt to ashes the noble edifice of the new Faith.

The Báb had constantly referred to a mighty Advent which was to follow His own, and of which His revelation was but a herald. On April 21st, 1863, Bahá'u'lláh, a nobleman of Persia, who had fervently championed the Faith of the Báb, and who had undergone imprisonment and exile, declared at Baghdád that He was that same great Educator whose coming the Báb had foretold, and for whose sake the Herald had suffered martyrdom—that indeed He was the One promised to all Faiths, the Deliverer of Latter Days, the Lord of Hosts, the Christ Returned. Bahá'u'lláh was then on the eve of a further exile, to Istanbul. Thence He was sent by the authorities of the Othoman Empire to Adirnih (Adrianople). Finally in August 1868, He and a number of His followers were banished to the penal barracks of 'Akká in Palestine. Bahá'u'lláh found a Judas in His own half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá, known as Subh-i-Azal, to whom we shall refer later.

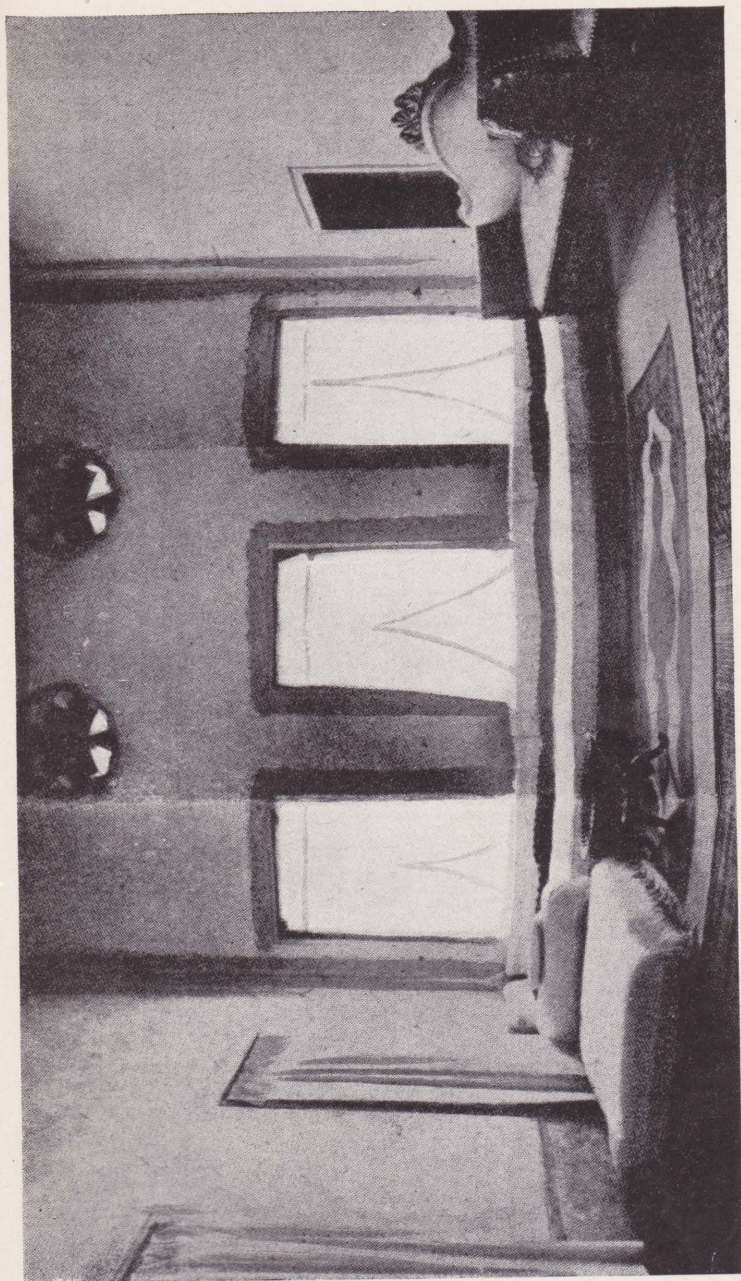
Bahá'u'lláh left His human temple on May 29th, 1892. Two years before he had been visited by Edward Granville Browne of Pembroke College, Cambridge, the future orientalist of international fame, then at the outset of his brilliant career. The pen-portrait of Bahá'u'lláh, bequeathed to us by Edward Browne in his introduction to the English translation of *A Traveller's Narrative*, a terse account of the early days and the origins of the Bahá'í Faith, is a unique document. And it must be quoted here in full:

'My conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I paused, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment,

along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going, and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall, sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called *táj* by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain.

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

'Such, so far as I can recall them, were the words which besides many others, I heard from Bahá. Let those who read them consider well whether such doctrines merit death and bonds, and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their diffusion.'



Bahá'u'lláh's room in the Mansion of Bahji. Here he received Edward Granville Browne

To face page 8

In the same work, Edward Browne writes this of his five days' sojourn amongst the followers of Bahá'u'lláh:

' . . . It was, in truth, a strange and moving experience, but one whereof I despair of conveying any save the feeblest impression. I might, indeed, strive to describe in greater detail the faces and forms which surrounded me, the conversations to which I was privileged to listen, the solemn melodious reading of the sacred books, the general sense of harmony and content which pervaded the place, and the fragrant shady gardens whither in the afternoon we sometimes repaired, but all this was as naught in comparison with the spiritual atmosphere with which I was encompassed . . . the spirit which pervades the Bábís is such that it can hardly fail to affect most powerfully all subjected to its influence. It may appal or attract. It cannot be ignored or disregarded. Let those who have not seen disbelieve me if they will; but should that spirit once reveal itself to them, they will experience an emotion which they are not likely to forget.'

Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, to succeed Him as the centre of His Covenant, and the sole Interpreter of His revealed text. 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained a prisoner of the Othoman Empire until 1908 when the Young Turks changed the régime and set free all the political and religious prisoners of the Sultán. In the meantime the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh had reached the Western World. In Europe and America there were groups of devoted and zealous followers spreading the message. 'Abdu'l-Bahá after His release went to Egypt, and in 1911 visited Europe. He was in London in September. Next in April 1912 He set out on a tour of the United States and went through that vast country from coast to coast. December of that year saw Him again in London. The following year He was on the Continent. Soon after His return to the Holy Land, the world plunged into war. In Europe and America, He had many a time warned the people of the impending disaster.

During the war years 'Abdu'l-Bahá strove hard to relieve distress, and for this a Knighthood of the British Empire was conferred upon Him by His Majesty's Government. He passed away on November 28th, 1921, mourned by people of all races, religions and classes.

This in very brief outline is the story of the Bahá'í Faith. This book will relate it in greater detail, and show its growth over the five continents. The story is one of great heroism, great suffering and great achievement. It reveals upwards of thirty thousand martyrs

who died joyously for the glory of their Faith. It also carries dark pages of sordid treachery—the betrayals of faithless souls who bid for personal power and evil leadership, and failed miserably. Every earnest student of the Faith cannot but marvel at the spiritual powers latent within it, which overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and used every blow either from within or without, to further consolidate its edifice. Throughout its hundred years nothing was able to retard it, to stifle it, to split it. The Bahá'í Faith, the natural outcome of the earlier Bábí Faith, has remained one and indivisible.

Here we must refer again to Azal, the Judas of Bahá'í history. It becomes necessary to do so, because a word or two should be said here about the works of Edward Browne on the Faith of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. It must be readily admitted that Browne's extensive writings on the subject did serve to bring the Faith to the notice of many. The measure of recognition which is due to him cannot in justice be overlooked or minimised. His pen-portrait of Bahá'u'lláh which we have already quoted is affixed to the entrance of the room at Bahjí, 'Akká, where Bahá'u'lláh received him. And today the visitor to that spot, held sacred by the Bahá'í world, can read those words before entering the room which not only was the scene of the interview, but also the place where Bahá'u'lláh passed into His Kingdom beyond. But Edward Browne has also put on record views that can be construed as favouring Azal. He has included in his works material which came into his hands from avowed traitors. Browne's plea was no doubt that as a historian he could not suppress relevant data, nevertheless Browne did not detect forgeries, nor the malicious intent of some of his informants. In the course of time, Browne's works have been quoted by the ill-wishers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, to discredit its claims. However, the same passage of time has fully and abundantly and unequivocally exposed the wretched purpose of the faithless and the self-seeking who tried to bring schism into the ranks of the Faith. Today Azal is nothing but a name coupled with misery and shame, sunk into oblivion. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, and that betrayal led the Son of Man to his Calvary. Judas was seemingly triumphant, but Judas gained eternal infamy, and Jesus was the Light of the World, the Word of God. History repeats itself in the case of Azal and Bahá'u'lláh.

At a later date 'Abdu'l-Bahá, too, saw His Judas in His half-brother. There, too, treason reared its ugly head, and treason was

impotent to break the mighty stronghold of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant. The Cause came out of the storm and the tumult with added vigour, greater cohesion, its unity unimpaired, its claims further vindicated.

The Cause of Bahá'u'lláh has found devoted champions and faithful adherents all the world over. More than eight hundred Bahá'í Communities recruited from every faith, creed, class and racial origin today span the globe. They are a representative cross-section of humanity. Although living under diverse conditions, they are all consciously aspiring and striving towards the same end—the establishment on this earth of that kingdom whose promise lies enshrined in the Scriptures of mankind, the Kingdom of God. Many of them are today deprived of their legitimate freedom. These cannot work together as organized bodies, because the hand of suppression is laid upon them. But the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has time and again amply demonstrated the fact that no power can permanently stem its rising tide. Greater oppression has invariably resulted in greater self-sacrifice on the part of its courageous adherents. Perhaps here and there a few timid souls have failed to withstand the sorrows of affliction, but they have been very few indeed.

To summarise the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, one can do no better than quote from the words of Shoghi Effendi, the first and the present Guardian of the Faith, appointed to that position by His grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

He says of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh: 'The mission of the Founder of their Faith, they conceive it to be to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute, but relative; that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive; that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, "abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith."

'The Bahá'í Faith recognises the unity of God and of His prophets, upholds the principle of unfettered search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand-in-hand with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an ordered and progressive society. It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education, abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an

auxiliary international language, and provides the necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace.'

The administrative order of the Bahá'í Faith is without any parallel in the religious annals of Mankind. The Founders of the Faith themselves have framed it and have given it their definite and explicit sanction. It will be described later in this book.

Here it must be said that the administrative order is not ecclesiastic. No Bahá'í institution can adopt articles of faith, enunciate a new creed or claim authority over the spiritual lives of the individuals. The hall-mark of every deliberation is the law of consultation—and that is frank, unfettered exchange of views and opinions without the slightest attempt at forcing the minds of others. Shoghi Effendi writes: 'The keystone of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority, but humble fellowship; not arbitrary power, but the spirit of loving consultation.'

Of such a Faith this book will give a fuller account.

CHAPTER I

THE BĀB, HERALD OF THE NEW AGE

THAT period of Bahá'í history known as the Heroic Age had its origin and beginnings one hundred years ago. It constitutes a religious epic of sublime faith and courage, of vision, beauty and power unsurpassed in history. The spiritual drama, slowly unfolding and continuing throughout seventy-seven years, gathers around the figures of three Great Ones, who were the channels for a new and vital message to mankind.

The light of this new evangel first dawned in a country which, at the time, was utterly decadent and obscure. Indeed, the spiritual condition of the whole world was then like a vast frozen lake, cold and congealed, and divided by dangerous fissures of class, social, economic, national, racial and religious animosities. World unity seemed but a Utopian dream. Brotherhood, in any modern sense of the word, was unrecognised. Social injustices and cruelties abounded. It was the nadir of modern civilisation, the stagnant midnight of a world.

And Persia was part of that frozen lake, with a feeble Government, corrupt administration, a darkened social life, and the once noble and austere religion of Islam sunk into superstition and gross materialism, and held in the bondage of an all-powerful and debased priesthood.

But in every age, amid the decline of every great Faith, are always to be found a few who, in spite of the surrounding darkness, keep the pure flame of the Spirit burning. It was so among the Jews in the days of Christ; and here among the followers of the Prophet Muhammad were some gifted souls who mourned the condition of their country and its spiritual decadence. But they were also filled with hope and expectancy, because they believed that a New Day was about to dawn, and that the time had come when the numerous prophecies made in the Qur'án regarding the appearance of a great spiritual deliverer—their promised Imám Mahdí—would soon find fulfilment.

Two wise and learned men, Shaykh Ahmad, and his pupil and successor, Siyyid Kázim, living in the sacred city of Karbilá, began to teach and prepare those who came to them for the thrilling advent of this Messenger of God and the many and explicit signs by which,

according to the Qur'án, He could be recognised. They taught also that the coming dispensation would be one of unsurpassed splendour in its spiritual power, and that the Manifestation would be two-fold in character.

After the death of the venerable Kázim, certain of his disciples dispersed all over Persia in an eager search for this Herald of the New Day.

On the afternoon of May 22nd, 1844, or in the Muslim calendar, 5th day of Jamádí'ul-Avval, 1260 A.H., one of their number, Mullá Husayn, weary with his long and arduous journeyings, arrived outside the walls of the ancient and famous city of Shíráz. Telling his two companions to go on into the city, he walked for awhile alone meditating on his problem. And then in that simple and natural way in which life's miracles are often wrought, he saw coming towards him a dignified and radiant youth, of about twenty-five years of age, wearing a green turban—the sign of a lineal descendant of Muhammad. The youth greeted him like a beloved friend, and warmly invited him to accompany Him to His home. And during the wonderful night that followed, Mullá Husayn was privileged to perceive the heavenly Light that shone through 'Alí Muhammad, and to realise that the long quest had at last ended.

Like all profound mystical experiences, his could scarcely be described. He said:

'I sat spell-bound by His utterance, forgetful of time. I was blinded by the dazzling splendour of this revelation . . . excitement, joy, awe and wonder stirred the depths of my soul . . . the universe seemed but as a handful of dust in my grasp.'

At last the Báb arose, and in a voice that thrilled His amazed guest declared:

'This night, this very hour, will in the days to come be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals. Do thou render thanks to God for having graciously assisted thee to attain thine heart's desire, and for having quaffed from the sealed wine of His utterance. Well is it with them that attain thereunto.'

And while He was speaking, away in far Tihrán, there was a child born to Mírzá Husayn 'Alí of Núr (Bahá'u'lláh), who afterwards came to be known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

The first white ray of a New Day pierced the sullen horizons of the world.

'Alí Muhammad, early left an orphan, had grown up under the care of a maternal uncle, a merchant of Shíráz, whose business He entered. With only an elementary education He displayed, while still a child, exceptional gifts, and an intuitive knowledge and understanding of spiritual matters. As a youth His nobility of character, beauty of person, serenity and grace of manner impressed all who knew Him.

The sacred title of the 'Báb', which 'Alí Muhammad at this time assumed, means a door or gate, signifying that the mission which had been entrusted to Him by God, was to prepare the way, to open the door of men's hearts for the entrance of a mighty Revelation, for the advent of 'He-Whom-God-will-make-manifest', but whose name and station were as yet veiled from the eyes of men.

Drawn by the magnetic personality and spiritual power of the Báb, a band of ardent disciples soon gathered around Him, each of them, however, coming to Him separately, and as a result of their own eager and independent search after Truth. Many of them were young, and brought to the Faith that spirit of courageous enterprise and endurance which helped to ignite the flame of divine fire that quickly spread throughout the land.

In contrast with the corruption, formalism and fanaticism of the Muslim clergy, the degradation of women, and the many public evils, the Báb's pure spiritual teachings made Him appear as a zealous reformer and innovator.

To His disciples, known as the 'Letters of the Living', before sending them forth as missionaries, and to their ultimate martyrdom, He gave His exhortations in these exalted words:

'You are witnesses of the Dawn of the promised Day of God . . . Purge your hearts of worldly desires and let angelic virtues be your adorning. The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity can ascend unto the throne of the Most High. . . . Beseech the Lord, your God, that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections . . . may tarnish the purity or embitter the sweetness of the grace that flows through you. I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. . . . Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts prepare the way for His coming.'

The subsequent events which occurred during the remaining six years of the Báb's life, have been narrated in part by many

writers and in many languages. It is a story which must always make an appeal to the imagination, sympathy and admiration of its readers. But in *The Dawn-Breakers*, written by one who was very close to the happenings recorded, we have now a detailed and authoritative history.

In a series of graphic pictures there unrolls before us the tragic beauty of the drama surrounding this young heroic figure. We can see Him standing up in the city of Mecca, before a vast concourse of pilgrims, in the supreme stronghold of the Muslim priesthood, proclaiming His message; exhorting the people to cleanse their hearts and minds of man-made dogmas, meaningless rituals, materialism and superstition; explaining the spiritual and prophetic meaning of passages in the Qur'án, rebuking evil customs, announcing the dawn of a new and nobler era, with a God-inspired eloquence, conviction and courage.

Returning from that city He faced persecution, ridicule and arrest at Shíráz; exile from home and the girl-wife whom He would never see again. In Isfahán—ancient capital of the Safaví Kings—the Báb came under the protection of the Mu'tamid, the Governor—who afterwards became a believer. Here, for a time, there was comparative peace and wonderful opportunities for the Cause. Many eminent people and divines came to visit the Báb, and were amazed by His profound knowledge and wisdom, the lucidity with which He was able to solve the most abstruse metaphysical problems, and His spirit of love and humility. Some fell at His feet enraptured, and among them was a distinguished chief priest and confidant of the Sháh.

But the flames of priestly hatred, jealousy and fear were now kindled against the youthful Reformer, in which the State, dominated by the Church, joined issue.

Sheltered from their fury by the kindly Governor in his garden palace for forty days, at his sudden death the Báb was again arrested and held a prisoner.

Summoned officially to the capital at Tihrán, the Bab's great desire was to be permitted to see the Sháh. How different might have been the results had the interview taken place! But fearing His influence, enemies prevented this.

As a prisoner then, the Báb travelled right through the country on horseback, with rough and alien guards, who were instructed to camp without the towns passed en route. Yet by day or night, those who believed Him to be indeed their long-expected Imám

Mahdí risked their lives in order just to hear His voice and receive His blessing. And the guards themselves, ere the journey's end, became His devoted friends.

In the remote castle of Máh-kú, on the north-west frontier of Persia, under a harsh warden, the Báb was hastily shut away. And here it was that He began to compose His principal work—the Bayán. In this book, as indeed in all His voluminous writings, prayers, commentaries, interpretations of the Qur'án, and spiritual teachings, the central theme, the very essence of His compositions were the praises and descriptions of that Reality, that beloved and mighty Lord soon to make His appearance, and of whom He was the forerunner and herald.

He, Himself, was but 'a letter out of that most mighty book, a dewdrop from that limitless ocean'. And 'so inflamed was He with His flame, that commemoration of Him was the bright candle of His dark nights in the fortress of Máh-kú, and remembrance of Him was the best of companions in the straits of the prison of Chihríq.' (*A Traveller's Narrative.*)

When, as so often happened, the heart of the castle's warden had been softened by the gentle prisoner, His followers were allowed to visit Him, and bring Him tidings of the wonderful progress of the Cause in the face of an ever rising tide of bitter persecution, torture and martyrdom.

In accordance with the Báb's instructions the 'Letters of the Living'—eighteen in number—had meanwhile been travelling throughout the country, winning adherents. Many volumes could be filled with the records of their deeds, and of those whom they aroused to a like devotion. A devotion which often demanded the sacrifice of wealth, career, home, and life itself. Among the 'Letters' was a woman of noble birth, a famous poetess, known as Qurratu'l'Ayn or Táhirih, who by her intellectual brilliance, radiant personality, eloquence and utter fearlessness exerted an immense influence over both men and women. In this land of women's ignorance and seclusion, her appearance and career presented so amazing a phenomenon that, as Professor Browne writes:

'Had the Bábí religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient, that it produced a heroine like Qurratu'l'Ayn'.

Facing her murderers shortly before her martyrdom in August 1852, she cried: 'You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women'.

The Báb had forbidden His followers to offer armed opposition. 'Force can accomplish nothing. In this day we must teach the people by faith and persuasion, self-sacrifice and non-resistance.'

But so ferocious now were the assaults made upon them and their families, that some of them, far removed from their Lord's guidance, banded together for desperate defence.

So occurred those extraordinary episodes almost without parallel in religious history.

At Zanján, led by the intrepid Hujjat, the Bábís manned the clay walls, while the women, like the Carthaginians of old, cut off their long black tresses to bind about the few crazy guns. Yet for ten months they held at bay thousands of well-armed government troops, until they one and all fell victims to a merciless fate.

At Nayríz, the persecuted took refuge in a ruined caravanserai, outside the city walls, and with calmness and prayerfulness resisted for many months, and with amazing success, the combined forces of Church and State.

In the year 1848, amid the woods and swamps that surrounded the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsí, in Mázindarán, some three hundred and thirteen souls made a gallant stand. Led by the scholarly Mullá Husayn, the Báb's first disciple, they laboured to construct ramparts and dig trenches. No light tasks for gently-nurtured youths and elderly divines. But over this fortified retreat in the wilderness waved for eleven months the black standard, 'earthly emblem of an unearthly sovereignty . . . summoning the multitude who gazed upon it to renounce the world and espouse the Cause of God'. A large army, composed of the Sháh's finest troops, including cavalry and artillery, was sent to besiege them. And when their pitiless cannonade reached its height, Husayn, that mighty warrior of the spirit, would sally forth with his little untrained band, and charge to the cry of 'Yá Sáhibu'z-Zamán'—'In the name of the Lord of the Age'. Panic-stricken, the attackers would flee before them. Then would Husayn appear on the ramparts, clad in white robes and green turban, and appeal to the soldiers. 'O people, we wish not to fight, we only desire to proclaim to you the fulfilment of our sacred traditions in the advent of the promised Qá'im.'

To the soldiers he appeared like some bright shade of their Imám of Karbilá, and they were moved to tears. Alarmed, the commanding officer would order the guns to silence his pleading. The defenders had been joined by Quddús, the beloved friend and confidant of the

Báb, who had accompanied Him to Mecca, and whose exquisite spirit was so akin to that of his Lord. No bombardment, however severe, could disturb his serenity. Smiling, he would stand amid the explosions, chanting verses with spontaneous joy. The calamitous days and nights were spent by the besieged in prayer and chanting and in studying the illuminating Tablets of the Báb.

But finally the dauntless Mullá Husayn was slain. There came the agonies of decimation and starvation; an honourable surrender upon solemn promises sworn on the Qur'án; infamous betrayal and massacre. While Quddús, torn to pieces in the market square of his native town, prayed, as Christ, forgiveness for his enemies.

Meanwhile, the Báb had been removed with the utmost secrecy to the grim fortress of Chihríq. But even to this remote spot in the wild northern hills, devoted friends at length traced Him; and upon the rough Kurds surrounding Him fell the subduing influence of His grace.

Brought from here to the farce of a tribunal held in Tabríz, at which the crown prince was present, the Báb boldly declared His station of Imám Mahdí:

‘I am the Promised One, whose name you have for a thousand years invoked . . . whose advent you have longed to witness, and the hour of whose Revelation you have prayed God to hasten.’

How could these dark and prejudiced minds meet such a challenge, save by the bastinado, and a secretly contrived sentence of death?

Yet so transcendent was the Báb's joy in the realisation of His union with His Lord that He cried:

‘Though the ocean of woe rageth on every side, and the bolts of fate follow in quick succession, and the darkneses of griefs and afflictions invade soul and body, yet is my heart brightened by the remembrance of Thy countenance, and my soul is as a rose garden from the perfume of Thy nature . . . and to the bonds of Thy love I cling.’

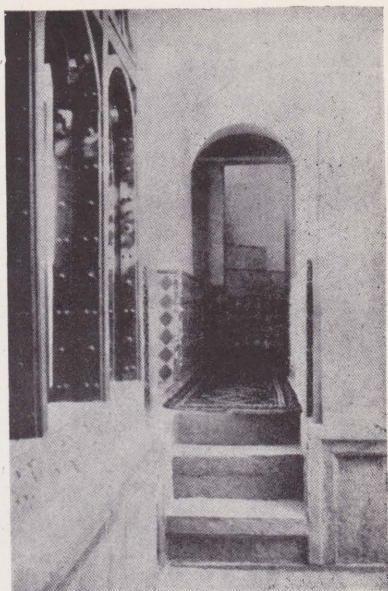
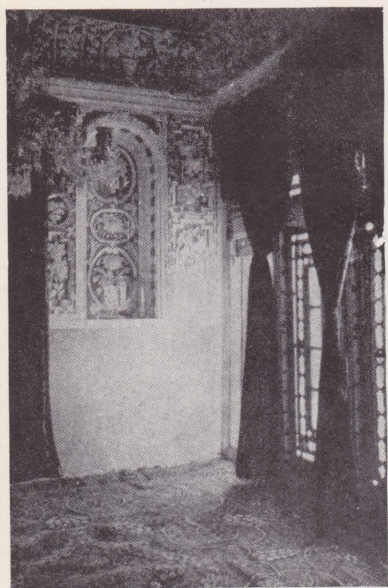
That the Báb understood that His mission inaugurated a universal era, a new historic cycle of world peace and unity is shown by His preparation of a new calendar, to supersede the many different ones in use, and freed from their objections and associations.

Aware of His approaching end, He confided certain documents and a few personal treasures—His seals and pencease—to a trusty messenger, with instructions to deliver them at all costs to Mírzá

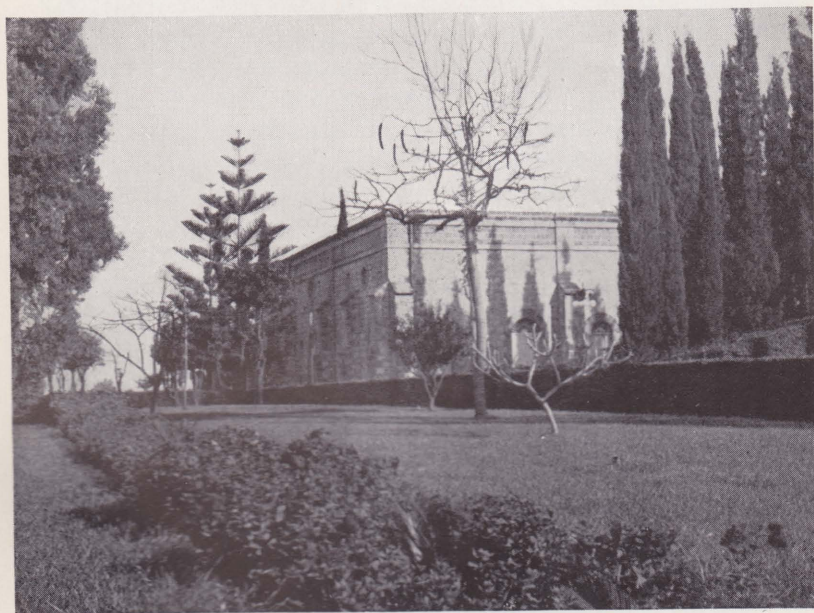
Husayn 'Alí of Núr—whom the Báb had designated Bahá'u'lláh—the Glory of God.

Then on the morning of July 9th, 1850, the Báb was taken, with a young disciple who had begged to be allowed to die with Him, to the barrack square of Tabríz. Here, before an excited concourse of ten thousand people, He offered up His precious life. But the first volley of the firing squad failed to harm Him, and the soldiers refusing to fire again, another regiment had to be summoned to undertake the dreadful deed. His body, riddled with bullets, save for the face, was with great risk recovered by His heart-broken followers, and finally, after long concealment conveyed to Palestine, where it now lies in a beautiful shrine on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

And the blood-red dawn was but the sure herald of the Promised Day.



In this room the Báb first spoke of His mission



The Shrine of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on Mount Carmel

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CHAPTER II

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH—THE FOUNDER

DURING the years that followed the martyrdom of the Báb, His adherents passed through a time of profound grief, bewilderment and confusion. Not only had they lost their beloved Lord, but one after another, the leaders of the Cause had also perished—Quddús, Mullá Husayn, Táhirih, Hujjat, and many others. But they had not been left utterly desolate, for in the person of Mírzá Husayn 'Alí, known as Bahá'u'lláh, there now arose the greatest champion of the Báb's cause and of the New Day.

Born on November 12th, 1817, in Tíhran, of a noble family, Bahá'u'lláh was reared in wealth and refinement. His father, Mírzá Buzurg of Núr, held a responsible post in the court of the Sháh, and at his death his brilliant and highly-respected eldest son was expected to succeed him in the position. But far otherwise was to be the destiny of Bahá'u'lláh.

Like the Báb, very early in life He had shown signs of greatness, profound wisdom and inspiration, astounding the learned divines who met Him, by His eloquence and knowledge. His love and compassion for the poor and oppressed, stainless purity of life, and magnetic power of attraction made Him an outstanding figure and natural focus of attention. However, having withdrawn from official circles of the court of the Sháh, Bahá'u'lláh espoused the new Movement, and became its most fearless and irrefutable exponent. And in this distressful hour it was to Him that the forlorn Bábís turned for comfort, guidance and renewed hope.

At an important conference arranged by Bahá'u'lláh at Badasht in 1848, He made it clear that the Báb's mission was no mere offshoot of Islam, but the inauguration of a new era and dispensation, the Báb holding the same spiritual station as Muhammad, Jesus and Moses.

In 1852, there occurred an incident which their enemies seized upon as an excuse for the wholesale extermination of the Bábís. A youth, deranged with grief by the Báb's death, made a foolish and unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Sháh. This became the pretext for deeds of darkness and martyrdoms beyond imagination. But Clergy and State alike forgot the lesson of history, that the

blood of the martyrs is ever the seed of the Church, and that physical violence could not prevent the manifestation of spiritual power.

Although it was clearly proved that Bahá'u'lláh and the other Bábís had nothing to do with this deed, He was arrested and thrown into the dungeons dark, and foul and overcrowded with thieves and assassins.

Yet it was amid these terrible conditions that there came to Bahá'u'lláh the Revelation of the destiny appointed Him by God. He was to be the bearer of a new Divine Message to mankind, the human channel for a supreme Manifestation of God's Love, Will and Purpose in the age now dawning. He describes how, in the night, He heard voices speaking marvellous words of comfort and assurance:

'Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety.'

And this gloomy prison was alight with such divine love and happiness that, as His followers were taken out, one by one, to torture and death, they would kiss the hands of Bahá'u'lláh, and obey with joy the dreadful summons.

When, after four months, Bahá'u'lláh had almost reached the point of death, He was released and sentenced to exile, His property confiscated, His wealth and possessions seized, His family stoned.

The long and difficult journey to Baghdád had to be undertaken in the depths of winter, and Bahá'u'lláh, with His family and those who accompanied Him, unable to make any adequate provision, suffered extreme hardships.

After a time for recovery, Bahá'u'lláh once more arose to unite and strengthen the Bábí community. In this cosmopolitan centre, His fame soon spread far and wide, and His power was again made evident. Yet, here also enmity and jealousy pursued Him, the opposers being those of His own household. A half-brother, Subh-i-Azal, sought by every subversive means, to undermine His influence and create divisions. So Bahá'u'lláh secretly withdrew from the world of men and went away into a wild and mountainous region, remaining alone there for two years. Such breathing-spaces seem necessary to those upon whose human nature has been laid the Divine mandate for the regeneration of mankind. We remember Buddha meditating in an Indian forest, Moses on Mount Sinai, Jesus in the wilderness.

The holy confirmation that descended upon Him, He describes in a moving passage, in a letter addressed to the Sháh.

'I was but a man like others, asleep upon my couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that has been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what has caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. . . . This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? . . . His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people'.

When, to the overwhelming relief and joy of His family, and loyal followers, Bahá'u'lláh returned to Baghdád, He began to prepare them to recognise the Manifestation of the Promised One foretold by the Báb, and to promulgate those spiritual laws which would form a basis for religious unity. He inspired them with a new vision and understanding regarding the Oneness of Mankind. This must no longer be a mere intellectual assent, but a spiritual realisation resulting in a practical application that would create an organic change in the whole structure of society. 'Ye are all the leaves of one tree, drops of one sea, flowers of one garden.' Prejudices, whether of class, sex, nation, race or religion should be laid aside, especially religious prejudices, surely the most deep-rooted of all. The great Founders of the world Faiths of the past, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, were all Messengers of God. The truths they revealed were in accordance with the capacity and the needs of the people at that particular stage in history. But religion could not be static; when it became so it declined. Revelation of Truth was progressive and continuous. How appropriate was Bahá'u'lláh's vision to the problems of today is seen in the following passage from His writings: 'The Time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realised. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves.

Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him.

'If this be done the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation. We fain would hope that the kings and rulers of the earth, the mirrors of the gracious and almighty name of God, may attain unto this station, and shield mankind from the onslaught of tyranny.

'The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script. When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home. These things are obligatory and absolutely essential. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.

'That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the people and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens'.

Bahá'u'lláh illuminated the inner meanings of prophecy in all the world scriptures regarding the appearance of a great Messenger of God expected at this time. He reminded the Zoroastrians of the promise they had concerning the advent of Sháh Bahrám, who after 3,000 years of conflict, would come to establish a reign of righteousness and peace. The Jews anticipated the coming of the Lord of Hosts in the 'great and terrible Day of the Lord' to gather their dispersion and end their afflictions. Jesus foretold the return of the Son of Man 'in the glory of the Father'. Muhammad announced a Day of Judgement and of Resurrection.

The home of Bahá'u'lláh was besieged by visitors. From far and near people of all nations and faiths, including many prominent men, came to hear His teachings. Some of them came out of curiosity, some with evil intent, some with passionate longing for spiritual truth. In this, 'Abdu'l Bahá, His eldest son, now grown from boyhood to youth, showed himself to be his Father's true servant

and helper, discriminating among the callers, devotedly guarding Him, assisting in the management of the household.

During Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdád He began to write those remarkable books and tablets and exquisite verses, communes, and prayers, which in a continuous stream flowed from His pen throughout all the vicissitudes of His life. Such gems of religious and mystical prose as *Hidden Words*, and *Seven Valleys* were composed as He walked in the cool of the evening, on the banks of the Tigris.

But alas! the ever-present enemies, having found all their machinations to dim the radiance of His personality and influence ineffectual, at last succeeded in procuring from the Sultán of Turkey His summons to Constantinople. Great was the consternation and grief of His followers! Indeed, so beloved was He by all sections of the population, high and low, rich and poor, that while necessary preparations were being made for the long caravan trek, a kindly Páshá placed his large garden-park at Bahá'u'lláh's service, in order to accommodate the crowds that, weeping and wailing, thronged round Him.

This garden of Ridván was destined to be the scene of a momentous and historic declaration, and the twelve days of the sojourn here—April 21st to May 2nd, 1863—are now celebrated as the most important festival in the Bahá'í calendar.

Amid all the pain of cruel separation, the turmoil of departure, Bahá'u'lláh remained perfectly serene and confident, and filled with a mysterious and transcendent joy. Then to a number of His immediate followers, He made the announcement that He, Himself, was the Promised One of all the ages, the Manifestation of God to men. Scarcely could they grasp such amazing and glorious tidings. But its effect was instantaneous, transmuting their fear to courage, despair to hope, grief to an exalted gladness. And how they needed such a consolation, as they watched the caravan of their revered and beloved Lord and Master disappearing into the lonely desert, beneath the dark menace of exile and the perilous unknown!

Arriving at Constantinople, Bahá'u'lláh, well aware of the intrigues surrounding Him, maintained a dignified silence.

So another banishment was decreed, this time to Adrianople, where through the falling snow, the company arrived in an almost destitute condition. Yet we find Bahá'u'lláh's calm resignation to be such that He wrote:

'I am not impatient of calamities in His way, nor of afflictions'

for His love and at His good pleasure . . . Through affliction hath His light shone, and His praise been bright unceasingly: this has been His method through past ages and bygone times.'

In this important city of Roumelia, Bahá'u'lláh made a public declaration of His mission and the authority of His revelation; and the Bábís henceforth were known as Bahá'ís, i.e. followers of the Light or Splendour. The Cause began to assume a universal significance.

Here also, and later in 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh wrote the series of famous letters, called the 'Epistles to the Kings'. These were addressed to the crowned heads of Europe, the Sultán of Turkey, the Sháh of Persia, the Pope, and the Government of the United States. In a language of majestic humility, the Exile and Prisoner dared to rebuke tyranny and oppression, and appeal to the rulers to establish just government and social equity in their realms, and a pure religion. The various warnings of retribution that He gave should this appeal remain unheeded have already been strikingly fulfilled.

To Queen Victoria, who returned a courteous answer, Bahá'u'lláh outlined His plan for the promotion of permanent peace, and the formation of a Universal League of Nations. Today, our leaders are being impelled by world events increasingly to adopt the measures He advocated.

But once more the evil devices of enemies, and among them, alas, the half-brother, Subh-i-Azal, resulted in still further and final banishment, to a Turkish penal colony at 'Akká, in Palestine, a place to which only the worst type of criminal was sentenced—to perish.

And as the prison gates of this ancient fortress closed upon Bahá'u'lláh and His little company (in August 1868), this must have been the tragic end, had not His mission been of Divine origin and mandate.

It is not possible to describe the sufferings endured here—the humiliations, lack of pure water, semi-starvation, dirt, disease and death by which the prisoners were assailed. Yet the Angel of His presence saved them from despair, and lit the dark days with hope and gladness. And amid this sea of woes Bahá'u'lláh triumphantly declared:

'Fear not. These doors will be opened. My tent shall be pitched on Mount Carmel, and the utmost joy shall be realised.'



The Prison Barracks of 'Akká



The Mansion of Bahji

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This very imprisonment fulfils in a remarkable way a number of passages both in the Old Testament regarding Mount Carmel, and in the sayings of Muhammad concerning the significance of the city of 'Akká.

One day, after some eleven years of confinement, Bahá'u'lláh passed out of the gates of 'Akká, having shown to men the power that can transcend all humiliations; and none daring to hinder Him, took up His residence in a beautiful country mansion, called Bahjí, some miles from the city. And here devoted pilgrims, despite the many difficulties, constantly found their way to Him from all parts of the Eastern world.

Only one European, the distinguished Orientalist, Professor E. G. Browne of Cambridge, was privileged to see Bahá'u'lláh, and the description he wrote of the interview has become justly famous.

During the closing years of Bahá'u'lláh's life, He continued to write on subjects dealing with every aspect of human thought and activity, and laid down those spiritual laws which, when applied, would serve to create a new world order and a nobler form of civilisation. These writings, universal in their range, and spiritually educative in purpose, constitute the Bahá'í Scriptures.

On May 28th, 1892, at the age of seventy-five, Bahá'u'lláh left His earthly tabernacle, and His body is laid in a beautiful Shrine on the plain of 'Akká, next to the mansion of Bahjí.

In His Will and Testament, Bahá'u'lláh appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who had shared in all His tribulations for forty years, as His Successor and the authorised Interpreter of His Word.

CHAPTER III

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ—THE TRUE EXEMPLAR

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ was born in Tihrán on May 23rd, 1844. Only a few hours earlier, the Báb had revealed His mission. He was named 'Abbás, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, meaning the 'Servant of Glory', was the name which He took upon Himself, after the ascension of His Father. Bahá'u'lláh used to call him 'Master'. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was only eight years old when the fury of persecution in August 1852 engulfed His Father, and gathered Him within the prison of Tihrán. Bahá'u'lláh's house was laid desolate, and the family had to take refuge in obscure but safer quarters. 'Abdu'l-Bahá retained vivid memories of those tempestuous days: '... one day life was so hard that Mother told me to go to my Aunt and ask her to find us a few qráns. . . . I went and my Aunt did her best for us, and tied a five-qrán piece in a handkerchief and gave it to me. On my return someone recognised me, and said "Here is a Bábí", at which the children attacked me. I found refuge in the entrance to a house . . . I was there until nightfall, and when I came out the children again chased me, shouting at me and pelting me with stones.'

One day He went to visit His Father in the dungeons: 'I saw a dark, steep place. We entered a diminutive, narrow doorway, and went down two steps, but there eyes could not see anything. In the middle of the stairway, all of a sudden we heard His blessed voice saying "Do not bring him in here", and so they took me back. We sat outside waiting for the time when they would bring out the prisoners. Suddenly they brought out the Blessed Perfection¹ and He was chained with several others. And what a chain! It was so heavy that they could move it along only with great difficulty. That view was very sad, very moving.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá shared His Father's exile and shared every suffering entailed by that cruel exile. When Bahá'u'lláh left Baghdád and sought the seclusion of the mountains, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then barely ten years old, arose with serenity and courage to shoulder the responsibilities devolving upon Him. Bahá'u'lláh had gone away to show the traitors within His gates that His aim, unlike theirs, was not gain and self-seeking leadership. At that tender age, 'Abdu'l-Bahá withstood the machinations of the foes with exemplary calmness and

¹ Bahá'u'lláh was called the 'Blessed Perfection' by his followers.

fortitude. Some two years later, Bahá'u'lláh returned to Baghdád, on the urgent pleading of the Bábís who, sorely tried and beset with surmounting afflictions, had sent emissaries to discover His retreat. Under the care of His beloved Father, 'Abdu'l-Bahá grew up in Baghdád. It is said that an adversary once stated that had Bahá'u'lláh no other proof or evidence to His extraordinary powers, this fact sufficed that He had reared a son like 'Abbás.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was sixteen years old, when at the request of a man of high culture He wrote a most lucid and illuminating commentary on a well-known tradition of the Prophet Muhammad; 'I was a hidden treasure and loved to be known, therefore I created beings to know'. The depths of wisdom and understanding laid bare in this commentary are a prodigy even if shown by a man of mature years. For a youth of sixteen it is indeed miraculous.

Then in April 1863 came further exile, this time to the seat of the Othoman Empire. 'Abdu'l-Bahá served His Father and others of the travellers on that long, arduous journey with utmost devotion. At night He was the last to lay down to rest, and at dawn He was of the first to rise and set the caravan on another day's toilsome march. And the whole day long He ministered to the comforts of Bahá'u'lláh and His faithful friends.

Next came the exile to Adirnih (Adrianople) and at last the consignment to the dreaded penal barracks of 'Akká in the Holy Land. 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered the prison in the company of His Father in August 1868, and remained a prisoner for forty odd years. Those forty years were filled with dire vicissitudes and perils. He suffered intensely. And when He was in London a journalist asked Him to relate some of His experiences of bondage and imprisonment. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's answer was, 'There is no prison save the prison of self'. No measure of tyranny and repression, no act of dark treachery could becloud the radiance of His life, faith and character. He bore all suffering with what He called 'radiant acquiescence', not dull, inert resignation, and came out all-triumphant.

In that dismal prison of 'Akká, He was a torch of constancy, a beacon of strength and spiritual power. Polluted water, shocking sanitation, revolting food soon told their tale upon the prisoners who were some eighty in number. Disease ravaged their tortured frames, but not their brilliant spirits. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tended and nursed them by day and night. Four of them died, and the guards refused to remove their bodies without payment. Bahá'u'lláh gave them the only piece of

carpet left to Him, on which He slept. Later, a younger son of Bahá'u'lláh lost his life through an accident which was due to the prison conditions.

Thus they passed two anguished years within the prison-barracks. Then came partial release, but not full freedom. Bahá'u'lláh and His family were moved to a house nearby, and He was kept for nine years more a prisoner within the walls of 'Akká. But a great change was taking place. The officials and the populace were losing their initial arrogance and hostility. They were subdued by the commanding presence and the majesty of Bahá'u'lláh, captivated by the master character of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. And 'Abdu'l-Bahá, ever ready to sacrifice His all in the path of His Father and His Father's friends, was constantly endeavouring to ease the ardours that beset the exiles. He shielded Bahá'u'lláh from the intrusions of those who came not in search of truth, but in pursuit of self-interest. The regulations governing the confinement of the exiles were still in full order—nothing had been repealed but those who were in charge of affairs at 'Akká tacitly declined to enforce them, and when Bahá'u'lláh walked out of the gates of 'Akká and sought His residence on the adjoining plains none dared to obstruct His way. But still He and His followers were the prisoners of the Othoman Empire.

In 1890, as mentioned in previous chapters, Edward Browne of Pembroke College, Cambridge, visited the exiles at 'Akká. Thus he wrote of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed me more. A tall, strongly-built man holding himself straight as an arrow, with white turban and raiment, long black locks reaching almost to the shoulder, broad, powerful forehead, indicating a strong intellect, combined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk's, and strongly marked but pleasing features—such was my first impression of 'Abbás Effendi, "The Master" (Áqá), as he *par excellence* is called by the Bábís. Subsequent conversation with him served only to heighten the respect with which his appearance had from the first inspired me. One more eloquent of speech, more ready for argument, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians and the Muhammadans, could, I should think, be scarcely found even amongst the eloquent, ready and subtle race to which he belongs. These qualities, combined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed beyond the circle of his father's followers. About the greatness of this man and

his power, no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt.’ (Introduction to *A Traveller’s Narrative*.)

Bahá’u’lláh in His Will and Testament appointed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as His successor—the Expounder and the Interpreter of His revealed Word. And once again treachery came to the fore. Muhammad ‘Alí, a younger son of Bahá’u’lláh, in total disregard of his Father’s Will, rose in opposition. He and his lieutenants resorted to every foul device to harm ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. They spread false reports and base rumours, but the power inherent within the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh overcame their miserable designs. Repudiated by the Bahá’í Community, they next set about to poison the minds of the Authorities. Early in the new century, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was erecting a modest building on Mount Carmel to harbour the earthly remains of the Báb, which had been kept hidden for long in the land of His martyrdom. The breakers of Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant alleged that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was building a fortress and plotting against the security of the State. A commission of inquiry was sent from Istanbul. Its members came with prejudiced minds. Once again ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was subjected to severe restrictions and His life was in danger. Here is His own testimony in His Will:

‘O dearly beloved friends! I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour’s life is lost to me. I am thus constrained to write these lines for the protection of the Cause of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Word and the safety of His Teachings. By the Ancient Beauty! This wronged one hath in no wise borne nor doth he bear a grudge against anyone; towards none doth he entertain any ill-feeling and uttereth no word save for the good of the World.’

And He prays for those who had schemed His death:

‘I call upon Thee, O Lord my God! With my tongue and with all my heart, not to requite them for their cruelty and their wrongdoings, their craft and their mischief, for they are foolish and ignoble and know not what they do. They discern not good from evil, neither do they distinguish right from wrong, nor justice from injustice. . . . O my Lord! Have mercy upon them, shield them from all afflictions in these troubled times and grant that all trials and hardships may be the lot of this Thy servant that hath fallen into this darksome pit. Single me out for every woe and make me a sacrifice for all Thy loved ones. . . . Lowly, suppliant and fallen upon my face, I beseech Thee with all the ardour of my invocation to pardon whosoever hath

hurt me, forgive him that hath conspired against me and offended me, and wash away the misdeeds of them that have wrought injustice upon me. Vouchsafe unto them thy goodly gifts, give them joy, relieve them from sorrow, grant them peace and prosperity, give them Thy bliss and pour upon them Thy bounty.'

Then in 1908 the Turkish revolution broke out and smashed the Sultán's despotism. The political and religious prisoners of the Othoman Empire were freed, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá gained His liberty.

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In the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh, the Cause had already gone beyond the confines of Persia and 'Irâq to India, Egypt and Russia. Only a year after His ascension, Dr. Henry Jessup of the Syrian Protestant College (now American University of Beirut) speaking at Chicago, in the course of his speech made a reference to Bahá'u'lláh. This is what he said: 'In the Palace of Bahjí or Delight, just outside the Fortress of 'Akká, on the Syrian coast, there died a few months since a famous Persian sage, the Bábí Saint, named Bahá'u'lláh—the "Glory of God"—the head of that vast reform party of Persian Muslims, who accept the New Testament as the Word of God and Christ as the Deliverer of men, who regard all nations as one, and all men as brothers. Three years ago he was visited by a Cambridge scholar and gave utterance to sentiments so noble, so Christlike, that we repeat them as our closing words.' And he went on to quote some of the words already recorded in our introductory chapter. Dr. Jessup had not all of his facts quite right, he had classified the Faith as a mere sect of Islâm, but among his audience there were some who set out to learn more about Bahá'u'lláh. In this way the Cause was taken to the American Continent. The first American Bahá'í was Thornton Chase. In 1897 the first pilgrims from the Western shores reached 'Akká. A year or two later the Cause found its first adherent in the British Isles: Mary Thornburgh-Cropper. France and Germany in turn provided followers to the Faith.

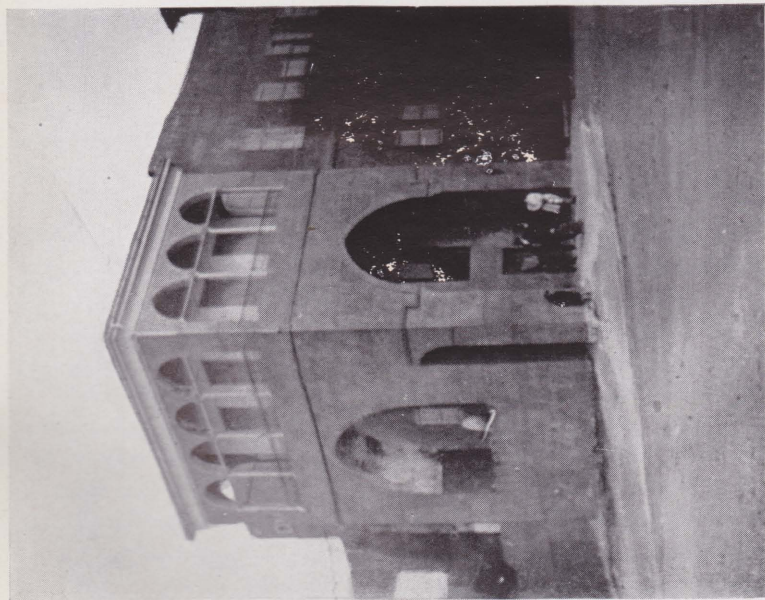
Thus by the time 'Abdu'l-Bahá was free to visit Europe and America, there were numbers of diligent, active believers in the West.

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'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled to Egypt in 1910, and stayed there for eleven months. In Alexandria and Cairo He was received with great esteem. The Muftí of Egypt and George Zaydán, the Founder of the



The House in 'Akká where Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdúl-Bahá
lived for many years



Group of early pilgrims in 'Akká, 1901

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great Arabic periodical *Al-Hilál*, were amongst the notables who sought His meetings. Then in August 1911 He visited Europe. After a stay of a few days at Thonon in Switzerland, He came to England. A small book with the title '*Abdu'l-Bahá In London*', published soon after, contains a number of the talks which He delivered on that visit to varied audiences. In October He was in Paris. *Talks by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Given in Paris*, compiled by Lady Blomfield with the help of her two daughters and a friend, is an extremely valuable record of that visit. The American edition of this book has the title *The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. By the end of the year, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was back in Egypt.

April 1912 saw Him bound for America. He sailed in the S.S. *Cedric*, and reached New York on the 11th of the month. This is how a friend described the first meeting of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the very afternoon of His arrival: 'No words could describe the ineffable peace of Him. The people stood around Him in rows and circles—several hundreds in the rooms, many were sitting on the floor in the dining-room. We made a dark background for His effulgence. Our tears only reflected Him; and there were many, many who were weeping just at the sight of Him . . . just at the sight of that divineness. For at last we saw divineness incarnate.' (Juliet Thompson, '*Abdu'l-Bahá's First Days in America*.)

Another visitor at that gathering was a Minister from Jersey City. At that time he was not an adherent of the Faith. Here are his impressions: 'The press of eager friends and curious ones was so great that it was difficult even to get inside the doors. I have only the memory of an impressive silence most unusual at such functions. . . . At last I managed to press forward where I could peep over a shoulder and so got my first glimpse of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. . . . The impressive thing and what I have never forgotten, was an indefinable aspect of majesty combined with an exquisite courtesy. . . . Such gentleness, such love emanated from Him as I had never seen.' (Howard Coleby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*, George Ronald, 1943).

'Abdu'l-Bahá was in His sixty-eighth year when He toured the United States from coast to coast. They had been years of great hardship, His physical strength had been subjected to much strain. Yet He did not falter for one moment. He accepted every demand that His American tour made upon Him, with fervent joy. And His days were indeed strenuous. There was a constant stream of inquiries and friends whom He met individually and in groups. He spoke in

churches, synagogues, universities and many other gatherings of diverse interests and backgrounds. He spared Himself nothing in the path of service. People brought Him offerings and expensive gifts. He declined them graciously. They felt happy in His presence. He did not impose on human souls. Rather, He made souls unfold and aspire to their highest capacities. High and low, coloured and white, learned and simple, He treated them all as the children of God. Peary, the great explorer, and Alexander Graham Bell were amongst the prominent, public figures who came to meet Him. He also visited the Bowery Mission in New York, spoke to the poor and gave them gifts. He used to do that in the olden days in 'Akká every Friday. And not only Fridays—at all times He would go out to those who were in need of help. To his last day, no one was ever turned from His door—no one who came with a genuine problem to resolve went away disappointed.

On May 1st He laid the foundation stone of the Temple at Wilmette. His talks in various parts of America are published in two volumes called *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*.

'Abdu'l-Bahá left America on December 5th. On board the S.S. *Celtic* He gave a farewell address: 'This is my last meeting with you, for now I am on the ship ready to sail away. These are my final words of exhortation. I have repeatedly summoned you to the cause of the unity of the world of humanity, announcing that all mankind are the servants of the same God, that God is the Creator of all; He is the provider and life-giver; all are equally beloved by Him and are His servants upon whom His mercy and compassion descend. Therefore you must manifest the greatest kindness and love towards the nations of the world, setting aside fanaticism, abandoning religious, national and racial prejudice. The earth is one nativity, one home, and all mankind are the children of one father. . . . Beware lest ye offend any heart, lest ye speak against anyone in his absence. Direct your whole effort towards the happiness of those who are despondent, bestow food upon the hungry, clothe the needy and glorify the humble. Be a helper to every helpless one and manifest kindness to your fellow creatures in order that you may attain the good pleasure of God.'

He arrived at Liverpool on December 13th, whence He travelled to London. On January 21st He left for Paris. At the end of March He visited Stuttgart, and next He went to Budapest and Vienna. Another visit to Stuttgart, and He was back in Paris by May 1st. Everywhere



'Abdu'l-Bahá at his farewell meeting in London—September 29th, 1911

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He spoke to varied audiences, and met hundreds of inquirers from different walks of life.

Finally on June 12th 'Abdu'l-Bahá set out on His homeward journey. He stayed a few months in Egypt. Sir Ronald Storrs, writing about 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a letter¹ says, 'when, a few years later, he was released and visited Egypt, I had the honour of looking after him and of presenting him to Lord Kitchener, who was deeply impressed by his personality, as who could fail to be?'

Then in December, He returned to Palestine. For more than three years He had been travelling to scatter the Message of His Father far and wide. In Europe and America He had spoken of the dangers that threatened humanity. Comparing Europe with a vast arsenal, He had said that it needed just one tiny spark to set it aflame. And that happened only a short while after His return to the Holy Land.

During the war years, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was cut off from His friends. Only occasionally letters and messages could be exchanged. He worked hard in those years to relieve suffering and distress. He foresaw the famine that came at the close of the war, and was ready with grain raised under His own supervision to feed the hungry and the destitute. In 1917 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life was once again in great danger. The story is given fully in Lady Blomfield's *The Chosen Highway*. Through the intermediary of the British Foreign Office that danger was averted. And when in 1920, in recognition of His humanitarian work, Knighthood of the British Empire was conferred upon Him, He accepted it as the gift of a 'Just King'. But he did not use the title. Always He was happy to be known by one appellation and one alone, 'Abdu'l-Bahá'—'The Servant of Glory'—the name that He had chosen himself, after the ascension of His Father.

On Monday, November 28th, 1921, in the early hours of the morning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away. He had been indisposed for only two days. But He knew of His approaching end. Three days earlier He had given a plain hint to His devoted gardener, and that was one of several intimations that He had made in the weeks prior to His passing.

'You wish me to take some food, and I am going,' were His last words to His family. In a few moments He was gone. His face was so calm, His expression so serene, they thought Him asleep.

His funeral on the following day provided a most impressive testimony to the place which He occupied in the hearts and the

¹Printed in '*The Chosen Highway*,' by Lady Blomfield.

respect of men. Nothing like it had ever been witnessed in the Holy Land. In that homage to the memory of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, all distinctions, all differences and hostilities were forgotten.

The High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert (now Viscount) Samuel; Sir Ronald Storrs, the Governor of Jerusalem; the chief officials of Government, the Consuls in Haifa of various countries, the heads of religious communities, the prominent men of Palestine: Muslims, Christians, Jews, Druses, Egyptians, Turks, Kurds; Bahá'ís from the East and the West; men, women and children of all ranks and classes—some ten thousand walked in that funeral procession which wended its way up Mount Carmel to the Shrine of the Báb, where His body was to be laid to rest.

'O God, my God! Our father has left us, our father has left us,' was loudly on the people's lips.

There in the gardens overlooking the Bay of Haifa, the coffin was placed upon a table covered with a plain white cloth, and speaker after speaker, Jew, Christian and Muslim, stepped forth to pay their tribute to Him whom they had learned to love most dearly.

A Muslim said, 'Shed no tears for the one that hath departed to the world of Eternity, but weep over the passing of virtue and wisdom, of knowledge and generosity. Lament for yourselves, for yours is the loss . . . weep one hour for the sake of him who, for well nigh eighty years, hath wept for you.'

And a Christian said, 'I weep for the world, in that my Lord hath died; others there are who, like unto me, weep the death of their Lord. . . . We say farewell to the material body of our 'Abbás, and his material body vanisheth from our gaze, but his reality, our spiritual 'Abbás, will never leave our minds, our thoughts, our hearts, our tongues. . . .'

The Muftí of Haifa said, 'O thou revered voyager! Thou has lived greatly and hast died greatly. . . . O, Thou whom we have lost! Thou leader of men, generous and benevolent! To whom shall the poor now look? Who shall care for the hungry, and the desolate, the widow and the orphan?'

Nine speakers, Muslim, Christian and Jew thus paid their homage.

Many were the messages of sympathy that reached Haifa:

His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Winston Churchill, telegraphing to His Excellency the High Commissioner for Palestine, desired him 'to convey to the Bahá'í

Community on behalf of His Majesty's Government, their sympathy and condolence on the death of Sir 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás, K.B.E.'

Viscount Allenby, the High Commissioner for Egypt, through the intermediary of the High Commissioner for Palestine:

'Please convey to the relatives of the late Sir 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás Effendi and to the Bahá'í Community my sincere sympathy in the loss of their revered leader.'

The Theosophical Society in London to a Bahá'í in Haifa:

'For the Holy Family Theosophical Society send affectionate thoughts.'

Such was the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Exemplar of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

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In His Will and Testament, which was written in three parts, 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, then a student at Balliol College, Oxford, to be the Guardian of the Cause. Furthermore, He laid down in it the guiding principles of the administrative order. We have quoted previously from that most weighty document, and here to end this chapter on the life of its matchless Author, is another eloquent passage from it:

'The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion, and with absolute detachment, scattered far and wide, calling the people of the world to Divine Guidance till at last they made the world another world, illuminated the surface of the earth, and even to their last hour, proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps.'

CHAPTER IV

PROGRESS OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN EAST AND WEST

THE Heroic or Apostolic age of the Bahá'í Faith began with the Declaration of the Báb, continued with the Advent of Bahá'u'lláh, and ended with the Passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The disciples of the Báb spread the message throughout Persia and into the neighbouring lands. Next the followers of Bahá'u'lláh spread the teachings still further to India, Egypt, Caucasia, Russian Turkistan and various parts of the Near and the Middle East. Not until the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's release from his Captivity, was knowledge of the Faith spread to any great extent in the West. Since 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Passing, it has been spread in South America, the last great area of the earth hitherto untouched by Bahá'í teachers.

'Abdu'l-Bahá guarded against disruption and sectarianism by appointing His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as the sole interpreter of the Scriptures, and the Guardian of the Cause. For a short period the 'Greatest Holy Leaf', Bahíyyih Khánum, sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, administered the affairs of the Cause. To her both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá had paid glowing tributes. Bahíyyih Khánum was tireless in her efforts to console and encourage the Bahá'ís all the world over, despite physical infirmities due to her exiles and imprisonment. The breakers of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, now a discredited few, attempted to obtain possession of the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. Cables from Bahá'í Communities in East and West repudiated their totally false and unjustifiable claims. That was the end of their pretensions.

The time had come for building up the Administrative Order specifically laid down by the Author of the Faith, and further implemented by its Expounder in His last Will and Testament. The election of the local Spiritual Assemblies takes place annually on April 21st, the first day of the festival of Ridván, which marks the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád, in the year 1863. The formation of these local assemblies had begun during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Today, some eight hundred local spiritual assemblies are in existence throughout the five continents. All Bahá'í elections take place by secret ballot and are free from every manner of



Bahíyyih Khánum ('The Greatest Holy Leaf'),
daughter of Bahá'u'lláh

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canvassing, persuasion and compulsion. Voting at a Bahá'í election is a true exercise of full spiritual freedom.

Then immediate steps were taken to establish the secondary Houses of Justice, now known as the National Spiritual Assemblies. These assemblies are elected annually by delegates, usually at a National Convention. Delegates are elected by the local communities in proportion to their numerical strength. Today the following National Spiritual Assemblies exist and function: The National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles; United States and Canada; Australia and New Zealand; India; Persia; 'Irág; Egypt.

The establishment of the Universal House of Justice has not yet been possible. This body, which is the supreme legislative organ of the Bahá'í world, will be elected by an electorate composed of the National Spiritual Assemblies (the secondary Houses of Justice). The Guardian will be its life-president.

Another institution of the Administrative Order which has been steadily developing is the Nineteen-Day Feast. It must be pointed out that the Bahá'í Calendar, as originally instituted by the Báb, consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, with four intercalary days, five in the case of leap years. March 21st, called the day of Naw-Rúz, is the New Year's Day. The first intercalary day is on February 26th. The Nineteen-Day Feast held every month by the local communities, consists of three parts: devotional, business and social. During the second part the local Spiritual Assembly and its committees present their reports and consult with the members of the community. Matters and plans are discussed and recommendations are made to the Assembly, which is bound to give them full consideration. The Nineteen-Day Feast stands at the very core of Bahá'í community life.

Since the early years of his work, the Guardian has addressed from time to time general letters bearing on the world problems and the teachings of the Faith, to the Bahá'ís of the East and West. These letters, known as the 'World Order Letters', include 'The Goal of a New World Order', 'The Unfoldment of World Civilisation', 'The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh', 'The Advent of Divine Justice', 'The Promised Day Is Come'. These, showing as they do, a truly inspired understanding and interpretation of the World Plan of Bahá'u'lláh, have proved a source of immense inspiration and guidance to the budding communities of Bahá'ís.

The nature and the significance of the present Bahá'í elected

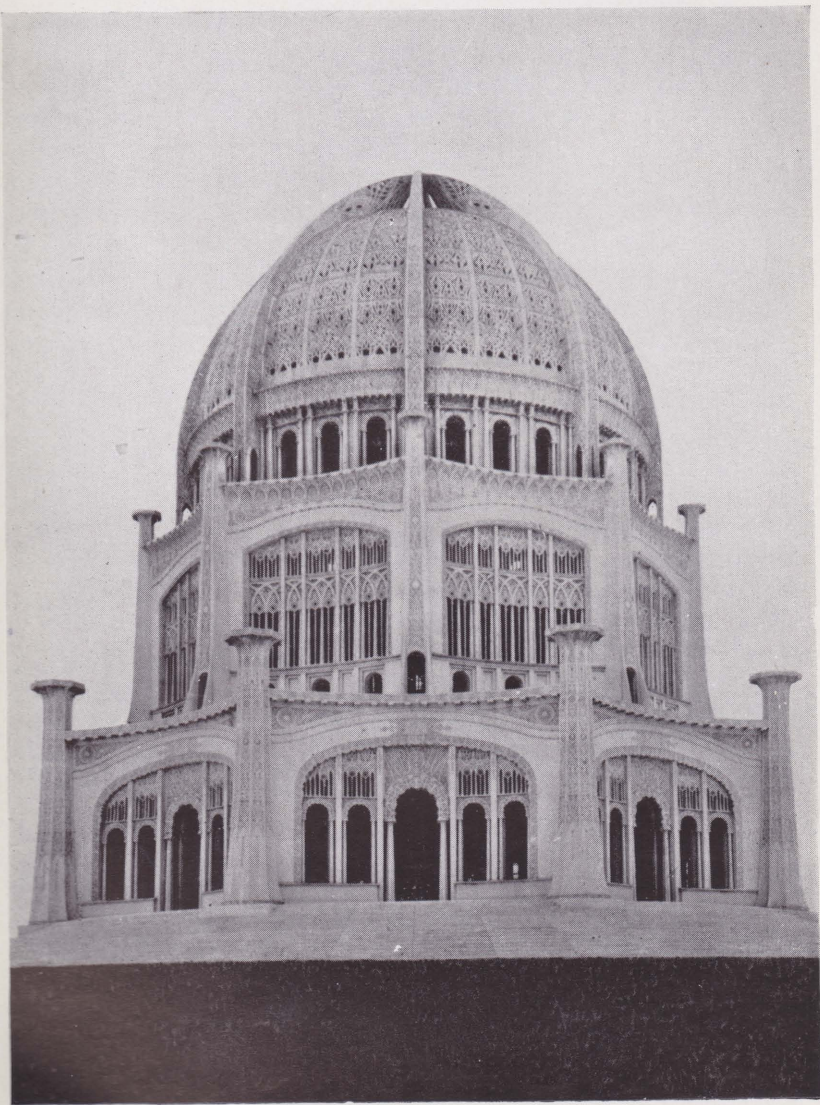
bodies are portrayed by the Guardian in these striking words: 'The various assemblies, local and national, constitute the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House is in future to be firmly established and raised. Not until these function vigorously and harmoniously can the hope for the termination of this period of transition be realised.' Speaking of the personnel comprising the Assemblies, he says: 'Since a Spiritual Assembly is established upon a new and higher ideal, the character, knowledge and purity of its members is essential to success'.

With the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Bahá'í Faith entered its Formative period, and it is still within that stage of building up. Fellowship between Bahá'ís the world over is stimulated and fostered by means of frequent correspondence, and visits as circumstances permit. Persians and Indians have come to Europe and America; Europeans and Americans have toured and taught in the East.

An institution which accompanies the growth of a Faith, is that of a Temple, a place of public worship. Accordingly temples will arise where all men may gather to worship a common Father. One such has recently been completed by the shores of Lake Michigan, in Wilmette, near Chicago. A Bahá'í Temple is called 'Mash'riqu'l-Adhkár', meaning 'The Dawning-Place of Praise'.

The Wilmette Temple is the first of its kind in the Western world. The inspiration for its erection came from the very first Bahá'í Temple to be built in the world, that of Ishqábád in Russian Turkistan. A noteworthy characteristic of such Bahá'í places of worship is that they do not stand alone, but are closely bound with a number of other institutions. They may in point of fact be the first buildings to be constructed, but they are only complete when there are grouped around them all the cultural and humanitarian institutions necessary for the proper functioning of an organised society, viz.: hospital, university, schools, orphanage, administrative buildings, etc. Thus they exemplify the definition by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that 'Religion is an attitude toward God reflected in life'.

Bahá'ulláh ordains these places of worship in His book of Laws ('Kitáb-i-Aqdas' or the Most Holy Book) in these words: 'O Concurrence of Creation! O People! Construct edifices in the most beautiful fashion possible, in every city, in every land, in the Name of the Lord of Religions. Adorn them with that which beseemeth them. Then commemorate the Lord, the Merciful, the Clement, with spirit and fragrance'. And so in answer to a request from the Chicago



The Temple at Wilmette

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Spiritual Assembly, on June 7th, 1903, 'Abdu'l-Bahá cabled: 'Now the day has arrived in which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual Temple, shall be erected in America', and gave the assurance: 'You have only to begin, everything will be all right.' Hence in spite of the fewness of believers and lack of resources, the courageous American Bahá'ís took up their task. Land was chosen and paid for in April 1908 as a nucleus. More was added later. The story of the design and the construction of this beautiful edifice on the shores of Lake Michigan makes wonderful reading, and now at the end of the first Bahá'í century, it stands complete, a beacon and inspiration to struggling humanity, guiding it towards spiritual unity. Built as it was partly by contributions from Bahá'ís the world over, it is indeed a symbol of human solidarity. The design of the Temple is the work of Louis Bourgeois, a French Canadian architect. Bourgeois did not live to see the full glory of his creation. The true import of the Temple is described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as follows:

'The Manifestation is the real divine Temple and Collective Centre of which the edifice is the symbol. The real Temple is the very Law of God, for to that all humanity must resort, and that is the centre of unity for all mankind. That is the Collective Centre. That is the cause of accord and unity of the hearts. That is the cause of the solidarity of the human race. That is the source of life eternal. Temples are symbols of that unifying force, in order that when people gather there, in a given edifice of God, they may recall the fact that the Law has been revealed for them and that the Law is to unite them.'

Now that it is complete, the Temple has become 'the greatest teacher', for not only is it a striking landmark, but during the years of its growth many thousands from all parts of the world have visited it, have been inspired by its beauty and have taken away literature and pamphlets about the Faith. Models of the Temple have frequently been shown at fairs and exhibitions with the consequent distribution of literature, so that the knowledge of the Faith is spread far and wide.

The inauguration of Bahá'í Summer Schools in different parts of the world is another important development. Their significance can be gathered from the description by Shoghi Effendi that they constitute the nucleus of Bahá'í Universities. These Summer Schools are springing up in various countries, and are proving their value

both as cultural agencies and the medium for fellowship on a communal basis. They are eagerly looked forward to by many interested inquirers as well as by Bahá'ís. The first to function was at Green Acre, Maine, which was blessed by a visit from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1912. Others followed in America at Geyserville, California, and Louhelen Ranch, Davison, Michigan, at all of which the range and treatment of subjects have been vastly extended. A Summer School was held for the first time in the British Isles at Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, in August 1936, and has remained, with one year's lapse, a permanent yearly feature ever since, but held in different parts of the country. Much has been achieved, and the intimate fellowship experienced every year is a source of inspiration second only to the instruction received. In Germany the believers built largely with their own hands a small building for their Summer School at Esslingen, near Stuttgart, which was often attended by Bahá'ís from other lands. During 1937 all Bahá'í institutions were suppressed in Germany, and thus the Summer School was closed down. The more recent and thriving Bahá'í Community of Australia and New Zealand have the use of a country residence at Yerrinbool, New South Wales, for their Summer School, which is yielding splendid results. The first Summer School of India was held in Simla in 1938. Owing to the great extent of the territory to be served, it is to be held each year in a different part of the country. In Persia, the believers meet for their Summer School in the outskirts of Tihrán, the capital, by means of which they hope to make up in some degree for the Bahá'í schools which were closed by the Government some years ago.

As priesthood does not exist in the Bahá'í Faith, the spread of the Message as well as administration and religious observances depend entirely on the degree of devotion of every individual believer. We are reminded of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's striking simile: 'Behold a candle, how it gives its light; it weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give its flame of light.' Such severance and spirit of sacrifice must characterise those who would rise to serve their Lord. The description given of Himself by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was that of 'Servitude, servitude at the Holy Threshold'. And those who would also serve, must sacrifice time, comfort and leisure unsparingly. One of the foremost to answer the call for service abroad was an American journalist, Martha Root, who, although without Press prestige or usual introductions, brought the Faith to the attention of highly-

placed officials and statesmen and royalty; and spoke to societies of all kinds, and at universities and colleges in South America, Europe and the East. In fact this intrepid worker went up and down Europe for five years, tirelessly fulfilling her mission in many lands. Bahá'í sessions at several international Esperanto Congresses were due to her indefatigable effort. Lydia Zamenhof, a daughter of the Founder of Esperanto, became a follower of the Faith, through Martha Root.

The late Queen Marie of Rumania, responded to the Message taken to her by Miss Root, openly upheld the Bahá'í teachings, and declared her faith in Bahá'u'lláh. Four times round the world was Martha's record. Difficulties of travel, climate, accommodation, were no obstacle to her. On May 20th, 1937, Martha sailed from San Francisco for a Far Eastern tour. She spent the month of June in Japan, and then proceeded to China. Next, India was covered from North to South. Lectures were given in all chief cities. The Press was interviewed and literature was distributed. In 1939 she visited Australia and New Zealand. It was on her homeward journey from New Zealand that this stalwart worker, worn out by her arduous labours, passed away in Honolulu amongst fellow-believers. There a befitting memorial marks her resting-place. This devoted teacher taught as much by her loving, radiant personality as by her lectures. During her travels in India, she published an account of the life of Táhirih, the brave and beautiful poetess of Persia, who, in following the Báb and raising the call of women's emancipation, died a martyr's death.

May Maxwell (née Bolles) and Keith Ransome-Kehler were two other American Bahá'ís who worked most devotedly for the Cause in lands far from their own. May Maxwell in the early nineteen hundreds taught the Faith in Paris. It was through her that Hippolyte Dreyfus, the first French Bahá'í, joined the Cause. In 1940 she turned to the teaching field in South America, and in Buenos Aires she passed on. For more than forty years she had served the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh most faithfully. The Guardian said that hers was the glory of martyrdom.

Keith Ransome-Kehler went to Persia in 1932. The Bahá'ís of the native land of Bahá'u'lláh received their fellow-believer come to them from the western world with great and fervent joy. She worked hard, and spared herself nothing. At last her physical frame could no longer support her unfailing spirit. She too fell on her battlefield.

There have been many more pioneers both in the East and the West—pioneers who, relying on the all-conquering power of the Word of God, have gone out with courage and confidence to take the message of their Faith to a sorrowing world. One more specific example—the Dunns, also believers from America. They established the Faith in Australia. Today pioneers from North America are doing the same work in Latin America. Already ten spiritual assemblies have sprung up in South and Central America, and others are in process of formation. And pioneers from Persia are going into those neighbouring territories such as Afghanistan and Bahrayn, that have as yet remained outside the range of Bahá'í teaching.

An important undertaking by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the erection on Mount Carmel of a building which was to serve as the Shrine of the Báb, and to which His remains were transferred from their hiding-place in Persia. In the interests of safety, the remains of the Báb had for some fifty years been moved from place to place as circumstances demanded. On His passing, the body of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was placed in another section of the same building. The third and the last section houses the most precious archives and relics of the Founders of the Faith. The whole building forms one of the two most revered and frequented places of pilgrimage in the Bahá'í world. Under the masterly planning of Shoghi Effendi, there are now beautiful memorials on Mount Carmel to Bahíyyih Khánum (The Greatest Holy Leaf) daughter of Bahá'u'lláh; to His wife, and His son, Mirzá Mihdí—the Purest Branch, whose remains were removed from the cemetery at 'Akká' and buried on the sacred mountain, and also to Munírih Khánum, wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The surrounding land in a strip from the foot to the summit of the mount has been acquired and part laid out in delightful terraces and gardens open to the public. These form one of the show-places of Haifa. The Bahá'ís believe that in the future, Mount Carmel with its sacred Shrines will be regarded as the spiritual centre of the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá prophesied that the twin cities of 'Akká and Haifa will be the world-metropolis and the ships of all nations will be plying the waters of the bay. Of recent years the road between Haifa and 'Akká, round the bay, has been completed, and the newly-built harbour shelters the largest ocean-going vessels, and the oil pipeline from the wells of 'Iráq empties itself into the great tankers which bear its contents to the West. And for Bahá'ís Haifa represents



Baha'is of Didingaw Kalozov, Kunjangoon, Burma. (A village in the heart of the jungle)

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their International Headquarters where the Guardian resides, and from which flows an endless stream of visitors and correspondence inwards and outwards to the ends of the earth.

The Bahá'í Communities, no matter where they are established, are working along the lines of the Administration as previously described. Committees, both local and national, are everywhere set up to carry out the various projects of their community. These committees function under the direction of the Spiritual Assemblies. In Persia were set up committees to collect and transcribe original sacred writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In the western world, English translations of the Scriptures were circulated among the believers first as typewritten sheets passed round among friends. Later printed volumes of prayers, and compilations of the sacred writings appeared. Of such compilations, the most comprehensive was the volume, *Bahá'í Scriptures*. A number of the pilgrims to the Holy Land published the accounts of their visits, and these publications were of various lengths. The *Hidden Words* of Bahá'u'lláh went into many editions. *Some Answered Questions*, compiled by Laura Dreyfus-Barney, contained informal talks given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at table. Apart from books, numerous pamphlets on the teachings of the Cause have been issued. Such titles as *The Oneness of Mankind*, *The World Economy of Bahá'u'lláh*, *World Religion*, *Homoculture*, etc. have appeared, and continue to appear.

The growing need for informative literature and for suitable books for the use of the believers led in time to the formation of special agencies for publishing, such as the 'Bahá'í Publishing Committee' of America, and the 'Bahá'í Publishing Trust' of the British Isles. Much literature was at one time printed at Weinheim, Germany, including all Bahá'í works translated into Esperanto. Many books were also brought out in these countries and others by non-Bahá'í publishing firms. Way back in 1911, the Bahá'ís of America began to issue a magazine under the title *The Star of the West*. In the course of years this publication changed its name to *Bahá'í Magazine*. Now it is issued as the *World Order*. For a number of years, the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand have published their magazine, *The Star of the South*. There have been several other Bahá'í magazines and monthlies published in Ishqábád (Russian Turkestan) India, Germany and Switzerland.

One of the most important of Bahá'í periodicals is the biennial *Bahá'í World*. This appeared first in 1926 as the *Bahá'í Year Book*

in a modest volume of 174 pages. After a rapid expansion during its eighteen years of existence, it has grown into a bulky 1,000-page tome. Although published in America under the auspices of its National Spiritual Assembly, the material is collected from all over the world, through the co-operation of an International Committee, and submitted to the Guardian, thus necessitating a voyaging backwards and forwards across half the globe.

Another great editorial undertaking by the Guardian, was the translation of Nabil's authentic history of the early days of the Faith. The hundreds of illustrations for this work were collected by Miss Effie Baker of Australia, who was at that time in charge of the Western Pilgrim House at Haifa. This inspiring book of tremendous historical interest came from the press in 1932. Since then the Guardian has translated into English four volumes from the works of Bahá'u'lláh. Two of them are under the titles, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, and *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, selections from His prolific writings, only a small proportion of which has, so far, been rendered into English, though more has been translated into this than any other language. The two others are translations of two complete works of Bahá'u'lláh, namely *The Book of Certitude* (Kitáb-i-Íqán) and *The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*.

The individual Bahá'ís have throughout the years produced various types of books on the Faith in a variety of languages. Perhaps the most widely read of them all is *Bahá'u'lláh and The New Era*, by Dr. J. E. Esslemont. This book which presents a comprehensive account of the history and the teachings of the Faith was first published in 1924, by George Allen & Unwin. It has already been translated into 37 languages.

Bahá'ís have taken part, among other conferences on Race amity and Religious Unity, in an Inter-religious Conference for Peace at the Hague 1928, and at the annual International Congresses of Esperanto from 1925 onwards. Individual Bahá'ís have been great workers for many humane projects such as Save the Children Fund, Relief after the Tokio earthquake of 1923, etc.

An International Bahá'í Bureau was opened at Geneva, where a book shop attracted many workers along international lines at this mid-European cosmopolitan centre.

At last came the time when established communities sought legal recognition. This was done in many states of America, and the

National Spiritual Assembly of America and Canada became incorporated as a public body with Articles of Association which have largely been the pattern for the Bahá'ís of the British Isles, India, 'Iráq, Egypt, etc. This proved a definite step towards the acknowledgement of the independent character of the Faith—no longer could it be looked upon by adherents of other religions as a sect, or an offshoot of Islam. Indeed, this step became essential in countries where the prevailing faith was Islám, because in these countries there were no civil courts of law for matters of personal status, but all came under religious courts. For many years, because marriages contracted other than within a recognised religious category were illegal, Bahá'ís who attempted to register a Bahá'í marriage with the religious courts were considered as breaking the law, were fined and frequently even the women were imprisoned for weeks or perhaps months. In Egypt, when the Bahá'í Faith gained independent status, the Government granted them land for a Bahá'í cemetery.

The activity of the Bahá'ís in different countries has inevitably varied with the degree of freedom with which they could hold meetings, circulate literature and approach the public. Hence, in Southern Russia where refugees from Persia had built the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and had become consolidated into a well-functioning organic community, running schools, hospitals, etc., they were at first unmolested under the Soviet régime, but by degrees a higher and higher rental was charged for their property which became impossible to pay, as many of the men had been exiled.

The active company of believers in Germany, who had entertained 'Abdu'l-Bahá and to whom many teachers had come to help spread the teachings, at last found themselves in 1937 unable to meet and associate together. Their literature and national archives were confiscated and they were cut off from their fellow-believers of other lands. The same is true of all the countries which have come under Nazi domination. And Persia? what has been the outcome of the Faith in the land of its birth?—the land honoured as being the birthplace of both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. The story here is one of long-standing opposition and persecution, in spite of which the Faith has constantly gained adherents, held its Feasts, observed its anniversaries and transacted its business according to the Administrative System. Bahá'ís have throughout attempted to foster education, and for years two schools were run by them in Tihrán, one for

boys and one for girls. They have also striven to encourage and educate women to take their rightful place in society.

The universal House of Justice cannot yet be elected; but when this wonderful institution, which is the Supreme Court, the highest legislature with the Guardian as permanent chairman, comes into being, it will doubtless demonstrate to an unbelieving world the truth that Bahá'u'lláh has revealed for the healing and harmony of the nations.



Memorials on Mount Carmel



The Temple at Ishqábád

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CHAPTER V

THE GROWTH OF THE CAUSE IN THE BRITISH ISLES

IT was in 1887 that the first contact was made between one of the British race and the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. Edward Granville Browne who had made a special study of the Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages, was in this year made a Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, and the independence thus secured enabled him to undertake the journey which had long been the goal of his ambition.

The description of the Bábí Faith in *les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* by the Comte de Gobineau had filled him with a desire to study it at first hand, and he forthwith set out to learn all that he could.

There were many difficulties in the way, for persecution had driven the Faith underground, and it was only as his genuine friendship was recognised that he was admitted with much secrecy to commune with the friends. During his travels he had many opportunities of meeting followers of the Báb, who had by that time for the most part accepted Bahá'u'lláh as the one of whom the Báb had testified as 'He whom God will manifest', and through them obtained copies of some of the sacred writings.

The full account of his travels is given in his book *A Year amongst the Persians*, also in papers read before the Royal Asiatic Society and the note published with his translation of *A Traveller's Narrative*, a history of the Bábí Faith. In this he gives an account of his subsequent visit to 'Akká, where he had an audience with Bahá'u'lláh, of Whose Personality he gives a vivid impression. About this time an account of the Bábí Faith and its rigorous persecution was published in Lord Curzon's book *Persia and the Persian Question*, and information on the persecution was also available in a book by Lady Shiel—wife of a diplomat in Tíhrán—in 1852.

In 1869 Bahá'u'lláh had addressed a Tablet to Queen Victoria, commending her for the abolition of slavery and recording the blessing of God for this act. He goes on to exhort governments to act as responsible to God and to work for the Most Great Peace. 'Be united, O Kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of

discord be stilled amongst you and your peoples find rest . . . Should anyone among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him—for this is nought but manifest justice.' This document was not given publicity at the time.

Sources of information had become available in the English language. There was, however, no general appreciation of the significance of the movement, though Dr. Jowett of Balliol had sufficient insight to write: 'This is the greatest light the world has seen since Christ, but it is too great and too close for this generation to appreciate its full import.'

In 1893, at a Parliament of Religions in Chicago, a paper was read by Dr. Jessup, of the Syrian Protestant College, in which he referred to the Bahá'í Faith. Some seeking souls amongst the audience taking interest in the matter, started to investigate it. Later Mrs. Phoebe Hearst and a friend set out from U.S.A. to visit Palestine in order to learn more fully. The friend was accompanied by her daughter from England, Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper, who thus became the first avowed Bahá'í in this country. On her return she recounted her experiences to her friend, Miss Ethel Rosenberg. Miss Rosenberg when a girl had been told by her mother to watch for a great Teacher sent from God, and she at once was deeply interested, and in 1901 made a pilgrimage to 'Akká where she was privileged to spend some time in the Master's household. The third believer was Mrs. Scaramucci.

In those days, when 'Abdu'l Bahá and His family lived under constant threat of persecution and death great caution had to be observed during these visits and even in speaking of them afterwards. The Bahá'ís were forbidden by the Turks to teach their Faith in Palestine; but that could not prevent the daily lesson of the Christ-like life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which was a constant and convincing testimony to His high calling. In 1907 Lady Blomfield and her daughters were in Paris, and she tells how there entered the salon of a friend, a girl with her face alight with enthusiasm and awe, saying: 'It is true, it is really true. He has come again'. The Blomfields caught the spirit of her ardour and willingly agreed to meet the bearer of the Glad Tidings, Miss Rosenberg—newly arrived from 'Akká.

Gradually a little group formed in England, some members of which were able to make pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

In 1908 came the news that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was freed by the Young

Turk Party, which had recently come into power. In 1911, through the interest of Mr Wellesley Tudor Pole, who had visited Him in Egypt, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was invited to attend the Universal Races Congress at the University of London. Unfortunately He was not able to be present, but the translation of a paper written by Him was read by Mr. Tudor Pole. It contained this remarkable passage: 'This Congress is one of the greatest of events. It will be forever to the glory of England that it was established at her capital. It is easy to accept a truth; but it is difficult to be steadfast in it; for the tests are many and heavy. It is well seen that the British are firm and are not lightly turned aside, being neither ready to begin a matter for a little while nor prone to abandon it for a little reason. Verily in every undertaking they show firmness. O ye people, cause this thing to be not a thing of words, but of deeds. Some Congresses are held only to increase differences. Let it not be so with you. Let your effort be to find harmony. Let Brotherhood be felt and seen among you and carry ye its quickening power throughout the world.'

Later, in September of that year, in answer to their earnest desire, the Bahá'ís were able to welcome 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He arrived on September 3rd and was welcomed to the flat belonging to Lady Blomfield at 97 Cadogan Gardens. The Sunday after His arrival He spoke for the first time to a European audience in the City Temple at the request of the Rev. R. J. Campbell—and wrote an inscription in Persian in their pulpit-Bible. The translation runs: 'This Book is the Holy Book of God, of celestial inspiration. It is the Bible of Salvation, the noble Gospel. It is the mystery of the Kingdom and its light. It is the Divine Bounty, the sign of the Guidance of God.—'A du'l-Bahá'Abbás.'

The following Sunday, at the invitation of Archdeacon Wilberforce, He spoke at the evening service at St. John's, Westminster, the Archdeacon introducing Him as 'one who had been forty years a prisoner for the cause of brotherhood and love'; and who at the end of that ordeal could say: 'There is no prison but the prison house of self'.

Many opportunities of hearing and seeing the Master were given when He spoke at various gatherings organised by the English friends, also at the Theosophical Centre, a society which He commended for their unprejudiced search for truth.

A week-end was spent at the Clifton Guest House, Bristol, where large numbers were enabled to hear Him; He also visited the Lord

Mayor at the Mansion House, where He expressed his appreciation of the justice available for all in this country. On the day before He left for Paris a large gathering met at the Passmore Edwards Settlement to bid Him farewell. Professor Michael Sadler presided. He was supported by Sir Richard Stapley and Mr. Claude Montefiore. The Professor's opening address concluded with these words: "Abdu'l-Bahá brings, and has brought, a message of Unity, of Sympathy, and of Peace. He bids us all be real and true in what we profess to believe; and to treasure above everything the spirit behind the form. With him, we bow before the Hidden Name, before that which is of every life the inner life. He bids us worship in fearless loyalty to our own faith, but with ever stronger yearning after Union, Brotherhood, and Love: so turning ourselves in spirit and with our whole heart, that we may enter more into the Mind of God, which is above class, above race, and beyond time.'

During the whole of the Master's visit, apart from His public engagements He gave numerous interviews and talks to a constant stream of inquirers and friends, who from early morning to late evening sought Him at 97 Cadogan Gardens. Details of His stay may be found in the book written by Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, which gives an interesting record of those memorable days.

On October 3rd He left for Paris and the friends in London contrived to meet among themselves and to spread the Message with which He had charged them. Among these were Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper, Lady Blomfield, Miss Rosenberg, Mr. Eric Hammond, Miss Gamble, Miss Herrick, Mr. Arthur Cuthbert, Mrs. Claudia Coles, Miss Yandell, Miss Platt, Miss Elsie Lea, Miss Marion Jack, Mrs. Scaramucci.

On December 13th 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá again visited England on His return from America. He landed at Liverpool and spent two nights at the Adelphi Hotel, and spoke at a meeting of the Theosophical Society, and also at Pembroke Chapel. Proceeding to London, He stayed again at 97 Cadogan Gardens, and was as before visited by large numbers of friends and inquirers.

During His stay He visited Manchester College, Oxford, and also Dr. T. K. Cheyne, higher critic and oriental scholar, who accepted the Faith and wrote a book on the Cause, *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*. On Christmas Day He was present at a dinner for 1,000 destitute people in a Salvation Army shelter, to whom He

spoke. On leaving he gave the officer-in-charge £20 to provide another dinner for the New Year. He was present at a performance of 'Eager Heart', a mystery play by Miss Alice Buckton.

Other meetings were held in the Essex Hall by the Women's Freedom League, when He spoke earnestly of the increasing scope of women's influence and responsibility, and in the Friends' Meeting House in St. Martin's Lane.

Edinburgh was visited, and Mrs. Alexander Whyte was privileged to be His hostess. He spoke to a drawing-room meeting for women, again stressing their high calling as the equal partners with men; and with some sadness, foreseeing the dire events in the near future which would cause this summons. Meetings of the Theosophical Society, organised by Dr. Graham Pole, and Esperantists were also addressed, and at a meeting of the Outlook Tower Society presided over by Sir Patrick Geddes, He explained the Principles of Bahá'u'lláh. A vote of thanks was moved by Dr. Barbour, and the Rev. A. B. Robb of Falkirk seconded, and the Rev. R. B. Drummond also spoke.

After He had left for the Continent the friends carried on as before; the European war scattered them and there was little corporate life among them. Great anxiety was felt for the safety of the Master, who was in Haifa and surrounded by enemies.

In the spring of 1918 a telegraphic message was received from an authoritative source: "A du'l-Bahá in serious danger. Take immediate action." Lord Lamington, whose regard for the Master was great, was at once appealed to, to use his influence. A letter was written to the Foreign Office explaining the importance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's position, and His work for peace and for the welfare of the inhabitants of Palestine. Through Lord Lamington's influence this was brought direct to Lord Balfour. That same evening a cable was sent to General Allenby: 'Extend every protection and consideration to 'A du'l-Bahá, his family and his friends.' When the British marched on Haifa, by these means a terrible tragedy was averted, for enemies of the Master had stirred up the Turks who intended to crucify Him and His family on Mount Carmel. Allenby entered Haifa several days before it was thought possible, and the Turks had no time in their precipitate retreat to carry out this shocking threat. Largely through the knowledge of Major Tudor Pole and his promptness of action, information as to the whereabouts and danger of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was available to the authorities, and the friends with

supreme relief and thankfulness received the words of General Allenby's cable: 'Have today taken Palestine. Notify the world 'Abdu'l-Bahá is safe.'

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We have already seen how through the efforts of Mary Thornburgh-Cropper and Ethel Rosenberg gradually a group of Bahá'ís was formed in London. Then came 'Abdu'l-Bahá's historic visits, a widening circle of contacts, and also increased membership. At the same time a small group was formed in Manchester. The first Bahá'í in that neighbourhood was Miss Sarah Ann Ridgeway, a native of Pendleton. Sarah Ridgeway was a silk-weaver who had lived for a considerable time in the United States, where she had heard of and accepted the Bahá'í Faith. In 1906 she was back in her native town, and in touch with the Bahá'ís of London. At the end of 1910, Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Hall of Manchester met Sarah Ridgeway. Mr. and Mrs. John Craven, near relatives of the Halls also joined the Faith. They were the pioneers of the Faith in that part of the British Isles. Yet another pioneer of the Cause in England was Daniel Jenkyn of St. Ives, Cornwall, who made a teaching trip to Holland—the first Bahá'í teaching in that country. Daniel Jenkyn died young.

There was also another English believer of those early days Thomas Breakwell, who too died in his youth. Breakwell heard about the Cause in Paris, and his work for it was all done there. But his story is so dramatic and so moving that it should not be omitted. In the summer of 1921, May Maxwell¹ (then May Bolles) was in Paris, explicitly told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá not to leave that city during the summer months. One day she had two visitors—Thomas Breakwell and a mutual friend who had brought him along. The next day Breakwell, called again, and this is what he said: 'Yesterday when I left you I went alone down the Champs Elysées, the air was warm and heavy, not a leaf was stirring, when suddenly a wind struck me and whirled around me, and in that wind a voice said, with an indescribable sweetness and penetration, 'Christ has come again! Christ has come again!' He asked May Maxwell if he had gone crazy. 'No,' she said, 'You are just becoming sane.' The same evening May Maxwell received a cable from 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 'You may leave Paris at any time.'

Breakwell held a leading position in a cotton mill in the South

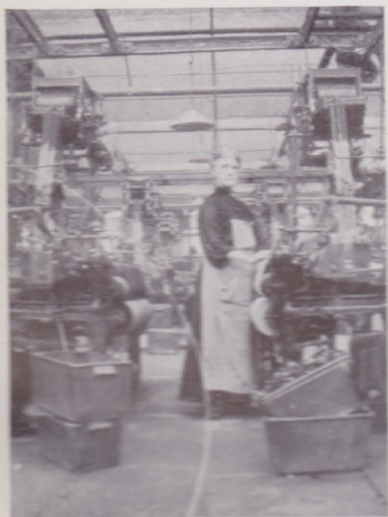
¹Mrs. Sutherland Maxwell, the mother of the Guardian's wife, who, a few years ago, died in Buenos Aires while engaged in pioneer teaching.



Mary Thornburgh-Cropper, d. 1938



Ethel Rosenberg, 1858-1930



Sarah Ann Ridgeway, d. 1913



Sara Louisa, Lady Blomfield
(Sitáneh Khanúm), 1859-1939

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of the United States. He resigned his post and gave the rest of his short life in the service of the Cause he had embraced.

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The war of 1914, with its resultant dispersals, brought about a temporary pause in the activities of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles. At that time they had no spiritual assemblies. There was a Bahá'í Consultative Council in London which was not an elected body, and it seems that whoever was available for help could be co-opted. That Council heroically continued its work through the war, although with interruptions. In the meantime through the efforts of Mrs. Florence George, the Cause was being taught in Bournemouth and its environs. That distinguished Bahá'í author, Dr. John Ebenezer Esslemont whose immortal work, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, published in 1924 by George Allen & Unwin, is now translated into thirty-seven languages, enlisted in the Cause in the early years of the war, and was associated with the group in Bournemouth. He died in Haifa on November 25th, 1925. Esslemont served the Faith not only in the capacity of an author, but as a teacher and administrator as well. At the time of his death in Haifa, he was assisting the *Guardian*. Sister Grace Challis was another pioneer believer in the Bournemouth area, who helped with great devotion.

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Major W. Tudor Pole visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká only a week after the Armistice of 1918. He wrote: 'The Master was waiting at the top (staircase) to greet me, with that sweet smile and cheery welcome for which he is famous. For seventy-four long years 'Abdu'l-Bahá has lived in the midst of tragedy and hardship, yet nothing has robbed or can rob him of his cheery optimism, spiritual insight and keen sense of humour.'

With the war over and communications re-established, the British Bahá'ís could resume their contact with the Master and the international centre of the Faith in the Holy Land. In 1920, Shoghi Effendi, the eldest grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the present Guardian of the Cause, came to Britain to continue his academic studies. He joined Balliol College, Oxford, and was in this country when 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away. It was not until the Will of the Master was read that the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi became known and was declared to the Bahá'í world. Lady Blomfield

accompanied Shoghi Effendi on his return to Haifa. The Will was in a sealed envelope addressed to Shoghi Effendi, and therefore its perusal had to be postponed until his arrival. Ethel Rosenberg was present at the gathering where the Will was read for the first time.

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In 1919, the London Bahá'ís once again undertook regular teaching meetings, and the home chosen for those gatherings was Lindsay Hall in Notting Hill Gate. They continued their weekly meetings in that hall, right through the twenties, until 1929, when the first London Bahá'í Centre was inaugurated at Walmar House, Upper Regent Street.

The establishment of the administrative order and the proper functioning of the duly elected spiritual assemblies, both local and national, was the urgent step required, in the early twenties. The first attempt was made in 1922. The London, Manchester and Bournemouth Communities elected nine representatives to the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly for England. It was apt that this first elected assembly should meet at the start at the home of Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper (the first British believer) in Westminster. Three local spiritual assemblies were also elected and organised. But it was not until the following year that the 'National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles' had its first meeting on October 13th, and it was composed of the following members: Lady Blomfield, Dr. Esslemont, Mrs. Florence George, Mr. E. T. Hall, Mr. J. Joseph, Miss Rosenberg, Mr. Palgrave Simpson and Mrs. Thornburgh-Cropper.

Henceforth, the administrative order took its natural course of development, and as years went by it was further consolidated and strengthened. Until 1927, the membership of the National Spiritual Assembly was apportioned to different local communities, but from that year onwards this practice which was not in full conformity with the requirements of the administrative order was dropped, and the National Spiritual Assembly was elected from amongst the entire national community.

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Local communities had always issued either at regular intervals, or whenever they thought necessary, news letters of different sizes. The first National News Letter came out in July, 1929, and the



John Ebenezer Esslemont, M.B., Ch.B., F.B.E.A., 1874-1925

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initiative in this matter belonged to the Manchester Community. This publication which was known as *The Newsletter from the Bahá'ís of the British Isles* went on until June, 1935, when it gave way to the Bahá'í Journal, which is still issued under this title, and is the official medium of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Since reference has been made to periodicals, it is as well to mention *The New World Order* at this juncture, although it is of a much later date. This publication was undertaken by the National Assembly in December 1938. In connection with it an exhibition was held in Notting Hill Gate, early in 1939, which lasted for a month, and attracted many visitors. In all 24 numbers were issued, the last being in June 1941. There was then a gap of more than two years, and publication was resumed in a new form. Today the *New World Order* is a quarterly.

The Manchester Spiritual Assembly issued in 1925 a full history of the establishment and the development of the Cause in their city, under the title *The Bahá'í Dawn: Manchester*. Bahá'í publications in the twenties included new editions of the *Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*, a pamphlet by Dr. Esslemont, with the title *Bahá'u'lláh and His Message* (revised and reissued in 1938), a new edition of *Talks* by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Given in Paris compiled by Lady Blomfield, *Unity Triumphant* by Elizabeth Herrick, and *The Coming of the Glory* by Florence Pinchon. Esslemont's great work, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, was mentioned previously.

The question of publications takes us to the formation of the Bahá'í Publishing Trust in 1937. One more major Bahá'í book (apart from reissues) before the days of the Publishing Trust, was *The Promise of all Ages* by Canon George Townshend, which was published in 1934 under the pseudonym 'Christophil' by Simpkin & Marshall. The Publishing Trust was launched because a Bahá'í publishing agency was becoming an urgent necessity. The Trust started with funds given by the National Assembly and a generous gift from the Guardian. The works issued by the Bahá'í Publishing Trust include *A Selection from Bahá'í Scriptures*, *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, *Security for a Failing World* by Stanwood Cobb, and *The Unfoldment of the World Civilisation* by Shoghi Effendi. The Publishing Trust has built up a large stock of books, and well satisfied a real demand.

Another notable book of the thirties was a second work of George Townshend—*The Heart of the Gospel*, which was brought out by Lindsay Drummond.

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A further development of the Cause in Britain is the institution of Summer Schools. These, the first of which was held in August 1937, at Cromford Court, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire, have maintained a steady progress and improvement, and have proved extremely useful both to the Bahá'ís and to their friends and earnest inquirers. Only one year, in 1940, due to national exigencies, a Summer School was not held.

In August 1939, the National Spiritual Assembly was incorporated under the Companies' Laws, as an unlimited company without shares and dividends. This step gave legal status to the supreme administrative body of the Cause in this country.

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Now we must turn our attention to the activities in the teaching field, and the formation of new groups and communities. To begin with, we must pay tribute to the help given by the Bahá'ís of other lands in this sphere, from the very earliest dates. It is impossible to give here an exhaustive list of all those who came to us from abroad, and give proper acknowledgement for their manifold services. In the early days Sidney Sprague and Charles Mason Remey from the United States gave valuable help. Stanwood Cobb was one of the first visitors after the last war. Lutfullah Hakim, a believer from Persia, lived in this country for a number of years, and did much to serve the Cause. Mrs. Mary Hanford Ford, another American believer, came year after year in the late twenties and travelled to many parts of the country to spread the message of Bahá'u'lláh. Harry and Annie Romer, also from the United States, did yeoman service over many years. Harry Romer lies in Hampstead cemetery. F. St. George Spendlove of Canada contributed greatly to the work of the London Community. Mountfort Mills of New York, Dr. Yun s Afrukhtih of Tihrán, Mme. Dreyfus-Barney of Paris, Mrs. Schopflocher of Montreal, they all gave much to the Cause in this country. Then there was the indomitable, glorious Martha Root, that intrepid soul whose sincerity, devotion and high-mindedness were indeed exemplary. She came more than once, and did much. One of her visits was in 1926 when the International Esperanto Congress was meeting in Edinburgh. Charles and Helen

Bishop, also from the United States, stayed more than a year, and did a great deal. Mark Tobey, another American believer, served the Cause in Britain both as a teacher and an administrator. It is beyond the scope of this book to mention full details of all the teaching work done by these and other friends.

In 1924, at the conference of Living Religions Within The Empire held in connection with the Empire Exhibition at Wembley, the Faith was represented, and Lady Blomfield gave a reception at Claridge's to all delegates. Again in the World Congress of Faiths held at University College, London, in 1936, there was a Bahá'í session at which Viscount Samuel presided. These were his remarks on that occasion—'If one was compelled to choose which of the many religious communities of the world was closest to the aim and purpose of this Congress, I think one would be obliged to say that it was the comparatively little known Bahá'í Community. Other faiths and creeds have to consider, at a Congress like this, in what way they can contribute to the idea of world fellowship. But the Bahá'í Faith exists almost for the sole purpose of contributing to the fellowship and the unity of mankind'.

The Bahá'í paper on this occasion was read by Canon Townshend on behalf of Shoghi Effendi.

An editor who has for some sixteen or seventeen years generously given his columns to the discussion of the Cause and the review of its publications is Mr. R. J. G. Millar of John O'Groat's Journal in Wick, Scotland.

The *Christian Commonwealth* (which has now ceased publication) gave very wide publicity to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visits to Britain, at times carrying several columns of Bahá'í material.

Many papers, periodicals, etc., have on different occasions published articles, reviews, and items of news related to the Cause. The *Morning Post* and the *Manchester Guardian* gave long obituary notices regarding 'Abdu'l-Bahá. An article by the correspondent of *The Times* in the Middle East, which appeared in the September 17th, 1919, number of that paper, was of particular merit.

Many societies and churches, specially the Theosophists, Esperantists, and the Unitarians have provided platforms for Bahá'í speakers, and given speakers to Bahá'í meetings. Here again it becomes impossible to enumerate all these occasions, and render due acknowledgements.

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The teaching work in Bradford owes its inception to the efforts of Alfred Sugar of Manchester. In 1929, Mr. Sugar was living in Bradford. He was able to interest a number of people in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. The first occasion when the Faith was presented at an organised meeting in Bradford, was in November of that year, when Alfred Sugar addressed a meeting of the members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. In 1931 Miss Marion Burgess (now Mrs. Arthur Norton) joined the Cause, and she was the first believer of Bradford. Later Arthur Norton and Mrs. Wilkinson came into the Faith, and they formed the nucleus of the group which grew into a community. The first Spiritual Assembly of Bradford was elected in 1939, and in January 1940, the Bahá'í Centre at 68 Great Horton Road was opened. In 1941, the Summer School was held in Bradford. Mrs. Mary Hanford Ford from U.S.A. and several other visitors from abroad and from other parts of the country gave valuable help in establishing the Cause in this promising town of Yorkshire.

The work in Torquay and its neighbourhood began with the pioneering activity of Mark Tobey, an American artist, and was greatly furthered by visits from Helen Bishop. Mark Tobey organised study classes in Dartington and gave lectures at Torquay, as a result of which Mrs. Lilian Steyens and Mrs. Constance Langdon-Davies joined the Faith in 1937. Mrs. Scaramucci, one of the first Bahá'ís of the British Isles was living in Devonshire at this time. Within two years Torquay came to have a Spiritual Assembly. On March 21st of the same year, 1939, the first Bahá'í Centre of Torquay was inaugurated at Castle Chambers. Since then it has moved to 14 Market Street.

We have previously referred to the opening of the first London Bahá'í Centre at Walmar House. That Centre, which was opened in 1929, was the first of its kind in the whole of the British Isles. In this Centenary year, the London Centre is at 1 Victoria Street. It is not only the local Centre but also houses the offices of the National Spiritual Assembly. The Manchester Centre was first established in 1937 at Commerce House, 39 High Street, Manchester 4. These four Centres serve as the focal as well as the radiating point of all Bahá'í activity in this country.

The younger Bahá'ís have had at various times their own specialised organisations and gatherings. Their functions have ranged from public meetings and study circles to social evenings

and picnics. They took part in the first international symposium of Bahá'í Youth in March 1936, as well as in subsequent years. They were also able to send delegates to the annual Bahá'í Students' Conferences in Paris, which used to be a regular feature of Bahá'í work in the French capital over a number of years.

From 1937 to 1939, a Bahá'í Theatre Group existed in London, which presented a number of public performances. Although this group worked under the direction of the local Spiritual Assembly its membership was by no means drawn exclusively from the Bahá'í Community. Indeed it had a number of non-Bahá'í members, and there was whole-hearted co-operation all round.

The teaching work has not only been confined to the cities with communities and centres. In many other towns and cities the Cause has been presented in various ways. They include Newcastle, Liverpool, Blackburn, Blackpool, York, Leeds, Doncaster, Sheffield, Harrogate, Birmingham, Nottingham, Ilkeston, Northampton, Cambridge, Orpington, Salisbury, Cheltenham, Bristol, Plymouth, Exeter, St. Ives. There are Bahá'ís in most of these places, who are furthering the knowledge of their Faith and building up groups and eventual communities.

This war, though so much more devastating than the last, has not interrupted the Bahá'í work in the British Isles to the same extent, because the Bahá'í Faith was more firmly established at the beginning of this war than at the beginning of the last, when there were no administrative institutions.

This account of the development of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the British Isles, has necessarily been only an outline, short and concise. Many details have had to be omitted. But enough has been said to show that the Cause has grown steadily, gradually enlarging its scope. Thousands have heard directly and indirectly of the creative message of Bahá'u'lláh, who in turn have passed it to still others. And in the meantime the Faith has been consolidating itself, laying a firm, unassailable foundation in the hearts of its adherents.

It is not only within the circle of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, in this or any other land, that one witnesses the powers of His Revelation. The world at large is becoming daily more conscious of those laws and principles which Bahá'u'lláh announced to humankind some eighty years ago.

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