

ABDUL BAHÁ'S GRANDSON

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RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN
Grandson of Abdul Baha
with Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler

ABDUL BAHÁ'S GRANDSON

Story of a Twentieth Century Excommunication

by

MIRZA AHMAD SOHRAB



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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Heart Phantasies
The New Humanity
Abdul Baha in Egypt
Renaissance
The Song of the Caravan
Living Pictures (Co-author, Julie Chanler)
I Heard Him Say
Silver Sun (Co-author, Julie Chanler)
The Bible of Mankind
Broken Silence

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AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

The subject of this book is an untimely one. It might have been taken up in the Middle Ages by some intrepid hero. Voltaire would have considered it deserving of his pen, had he thought that the religion of his day was worth saving; but in the Twentieth Century, when the rights and dignity of the individual are respected in the society of free nations, this subject can be passed over as not requiring serious attention. Such is the opinion of my friends, while my own sense of humor, fearful of becoming unrecognizable in the cumbersome armor of the knight errant, has wistfully echoed their sentiments.

Nevertheless, there are moments when friends and even sense of humor must make way for passionate indignation. This is such a moment, stark and terrible. It comes as a result of the excommunication by Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahai Cause, of the descendants of Baha-O-Llah, Prophet of the Modern Age.

In dealing with this subject, I have picked out for discussion one person from among the many involved, and have told the story of Ruhi Effendi Afnan, great grandson of Baha-O-Llah, and grandson of Abdul Baha. Starting with a few incidents connected with his childhood, in the warm setting of Abdul Baha's household in Haifa, I have followed his career to maturity and shown him as the confidential secretary and chosen representative of his cousin, the Guardian. I have sketched his character, studied the trend of his mind and reviewed the services rendered by him to the Bahai Administration during his two visits to the United States. Finally, I have analyzed the reasons given out for his excommunication by the solitary judge in star-chamber proceedings; while throughout the story I have wondered, as I wonder yet, about the future and what it will bring to this man under the guidance of his own soul.

The subject of this book is an untimely one; but, the affectionate re-

gard which has animated the author is timely at all seasons and under all conditions.

The selections from poems by Rabindranath Tagore, appearing before the chapters, are printed with the kind permission of the poet's publisher, The Macmillan Company, 60 Fifth Avenue—the selections being from *Gitanjali*, *Fruit-Gathering*, *Collected Poems and Plays* and *Creative Unity*. This favor is deeply appreciated by the author. A single selection from *Rabindranath Tagore: The Man And His Poetry*, by Basanta Kumar Roy, printed through the courtesy of Dodd, Mead & Company, 432 Fifth Ave. is likewise acknowledged with thanks.

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab

PROTEST
against the Excommunication of
Members of Baha-O-Llah's Family
signed by
Leaders of Religion and Educators

Leopold von Ranke on Martin Luther

Even at the last station, a councillor of his sovereign sent him word that he had better not come, for that he might share the fate of Huss. "Huss," replied Luther, "was burnt, but not the truth with him: I will go, though as many devils took aim at me as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses." Thus he reached Worms, on the 18th of April, 1521, one Tuesday about noon.

—In Leopold von Ranke's *History of the Reformation in Germany*, translated by Sarah Austin, Vol. I, Book II, Chapter IV, p. 533, (Published by Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845, London)

PROTEST

**against the Excommunication of
Members of Baha-O-Llah's Family**

signed by

Leaders of Religion and Educators

May 1942

In these days when the principles of humanity are threatened on all sides, there is urgent need for men and women of good faith and purpose to band together for the upholding of the common rights of man, within their own communities and religions and within the communities and religions of others.

It is with this thought in mind that the undersigned consider conditions within a minority group, namely the Bahai Cause, and make passionate protest against the recent excommunication by Shoghi Effendi Rabhani, Guardian of the Cause, of certain members of Baha-O-Llah's family.

Excommunication, as we take it, is an order for severance of ties between the excommunicated and their fellow-members in Faith. It is an un-Christ-like act which, although practiced in medieval ages by religious authorities, is now totally condemned by enlightened persons of every rank and profession.

Therefore we go on record, at this hour when the Four Freedoms enunciated by the President of the United States are ringing around the earth, endorsing whole-heartedly and without qualifications whatsoever a sentence from Mr. Roosevelt's historic speech before Congress, delivered in January 1941:—

“The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.”

On the basis of this principle we insist that, in the New World Order which all of us picture and strive for, the irreligious practice of excommunication be set aside forever and replaced by the practice of Love and Tolerance as set forth throughout the ages by Christ and the great company of prophets, seers and spiritual teachers.

We urge men and women of all Faiths to consistently oppose, and to refuse to recognize, any and all exclusion acts within their religion, and under all circumstances to keep open the doors of their temples and hearts to their fellow-believers and to their fellows of every race, creed and color.

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Signed by:

Mr. David P. Berenberg, Author: *A Worker's World*; Educator, Lecturer

Kedarnath DasGupta, Author: *Essence of Religions* and Founder of World Fellowship of Faiths

Dr. Georgia Dunn, Professor of Psychology, Hunter College, New York

Mr. William Floyd, Editor: *Arbitrator*; Author, Educator

Archbishop William H. Francis of the Old Catholic Church

Miss Frances Grant, President of Pan-American Women Association, New York

Mr. Jacob Greenwald, Counsellor-at-Law, New York

Dr. John Haynes Holmes, Minister of Community Church, New York

Mr. Gordon S. P. Kleeberg, Counsellor-at-Law, New York

Commander R. E. Lambert, U. S. N. R.; Editor: *Sourcebook*

Rev. Leon Rosser Land, Minister of Bronx Free Fellowship, New York

Dr. John Howland Lathrop, Minister of Church of the Saviour, Brooklyn, New York

Mr. William Pickens, Director of Branches, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Washington, D. C.

Dr. Haridas T. Muzumdar, Author: *The United Nations of the World*; Lecturer, Sociologist

Mr. John J. O'Neill, Science Editor, *New York Herald-Tribune*

Rev. A. J. Muste, Secretary, The Fellowship of Reconciliation, New York

The Rev. Dr. Charles Francis Potter, Author: *The Story of Religion*; Founder and Leader of The First Humanist Society of New York

Miss Lisa Sergio, Radio Commentator

Dr. Krishnalal Shridharani, Author: *My India, My America*; Lecturer

Dr. Anup Singh, Editor: *India To-Day*; Author: *Nehru, the Rising Star of India*

Dr. George Maychin Stockdale, Minister of Church of Christ in America, Methodist Branch, Clinton, N. Y.

Dr. Eliot White, Clergyman, Writer, Lecturer

PROTEST

Comment and Some Notable Letters

In the Old World, we were not our brother's keeper; but were of the cautious type, looking for our own interests and letting others shift for themselves. In the New World that is to be, we shall recognize the fact that all of us are part of the human organism and will boldly apply ourselves to the task of keeping that organism in good shape. The averted eyes, the careful picking of one's way on the other side of the road will no longer be the acceptable attitude; but the straight look and the helping hand will be the characteristic of a new citizenry, *everywhere in the world*.

Of such an order are the distinguished educators who have condemned the action of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Guardian of the Bahai Cause, taken against several members of Baha-O-Llah's family. Excommunication, to their minds, has no place in modern society; intolerance, exclusion and cruelty has no place in any society, and so they have condemned this deed and gone on record in a *Protest* that will make a landmark in religious history. The Protestant Minister, the Catholic Bishop, the Jewish Rabbi, the Hindu, the Sikh have arisen together to protect the Bahai—their brother before God and man. So have the boundary lines grown thin under the penetrating warmth of the Religion of Love.

Dr. George Maychin Stockdale, Minister of Church of Christ in America, Methodist Branch, Clinton, New York, in a letter dated March 25, 1942 writes to us that their Young Men's Class studied Bahaism the previous week and is to consider Shoghi Effendi's excommunications the following Sunday. Dr. Stockdale states that he is ready to do anything "to help banish this ancient barbarism of excommunication from off this earth" and has actually communicated directly with the Guardian on this subject. He encloses a copy of his letter, which we herewith reproduce:—

CHURCH OF CHRIST IN AMERICA

Methodist Branch

George Maychin Stockdale, Minister

Clinton, New York,
March 25, 1942.

Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Guardian of the Bahai Cause,
Persian Colony,
Haifa, Palestine.

Dear Guardian of the Bahai Cause,

Your Christlike Grandfather, Abdul Baha, when asked on one occasion, "What is a Bahai?" replied,

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"TO BE A BAHAI SIMPLY MEANS TO LOVE ALL THE WORLD: TO LOVE HUMANITY AND TRY TO SERVE IT; TO WORK FOR UNIVERSAL PEACE AND UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD."

(J. E. Esslemont, "Bahá'U'lláh and the New Era," page 70.)

I'd like to make the above my own definition of what it is to be a Christian. On this definition the Hindu Gandhi and the Buddhist Das Gupta are both Christians and Bahais, as well as true Hindus and Buddhists respectively. Some of my Bahai friends do me more honor than I deserve by telling me that I am a Bahai, although I am just trying to be a Christian.

If we agree on the above, and I hope we do, it is the more amazing to get word of what are called, and seem to be, your excommunications of Ruhi Effendi Afnan, your cousin; his wife; your sister and *others*.

What troubles me, my dear Sir, is the method employed. If we love all humans, and the Love of God cannot dwell in us unless we do, how can we use any other than Love and Persuasion as our means of seeking change of mind and heart in those we deem wrong? Can excommunication be a method of Love?

Now far be it from us to prematurely make up our minds in this controversy. We would hear your side, Sir. Yet we assure you that even if you should submit proof positive of the commission of the more heinous crimes by any or all of the excommunicated, (which I am sure you wouldn't,) still would we say that the WAY of LOVE demands we retain community with the vilest of sinners. **THEY NEED LOVE EVEN MORE THAN NINETY and NINE SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMED SOULS, in whom GOD (LOVE) DWELLS.** That seems clear to me from both the teachings of Christ and of Bahá'U'lláh, interpreted too by Paul and Abdul Baha respectively.

It troubles me too that it is reported that you are not too sure amid this world madness just what loyalty we owe to God and what to the state. We are blessed beyond many here in America, as in Britain, in that the Draft Law here specifically makes room for us pacifists, who could not disobey God at the command of man, no matter what the consequences. We know you have the cares of a world gone mad in suicidal slaughter on your mind and heart. Yet it would be heartening to have from you a word, clear as crystal, that Bahaism officially "although making no attempt to bind the consciences of its individual members, will **NOT OFFICIALLY ENDORSE, SUPPORT OR PARTICIPATE IN WAR.**" I have slipped into the exact words of our Methodist Branch of the Christian Church, with which I agree one hundred per cent.

Yours, strong in the Faith that LOVE (GOD) alone can win,

(Signed) George Maychin Stockdale

PROTEST

The author of this book was very much impressed by Dr. Stockdale's stand. Of course, one expects all liberal-minded men, in the ministry and outside of it, to look with stern disapproval on the sacrilegious performance of this excommunication; yet, when one of them, of his own volition, comes forward to reassert the principles of a Faith of which he is not part, it is an act of generosity which one could not anticipate nor even hope for.

A copy of Dr. Stockdale's letter to the Guardian was forwarded to Dr. John Haynes Holmes and an answer, a section of which is quoted below, was received from him:—

I have your letter of the 26th with enclosures. You will be interested to know that Mr. Stockdale, of Clinton, N. Y., is one of my oldest and dearest friends in the ministry. This letter of his to Shoghi Effendi Rabbani is supremely characteristic of his mind and heart. I know of no nobler or braver spirit in the Christian ministry here in America today, and it comforts me to discover that he is in touch with you and Mrs. Chanler.

In rather shocking contrast to my friend, Mr. Stockdale, I find myself moved to a feeling of regret and shame that I have known nothing about this excommunication business. I make it a practice to read your NEW HISTORY magazine, of course, but the March issue has not yet had my attention. Now that I have the case before me, I am grieved to the bottom of my soul by what you fittingly describe as a piece of medievalism. It seems to me well-nigh incredible that the head of the Bahai faith would have taken such a step as this. Mr. Stockdale describes the significance of the event with precision and exalted vision, and I can think of nothing to be added thereto. I say Amen to every word with all my heart and soul.

In another letter, written three days later, Dr. Holmes refers to his visit to Haifa. He says in part:—

Ever since you wrote me, my mind has been going back to the day in Haifa when I made a call on Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, to pay my profound respects through him to the Bahai faith. It was at the time when I was making my pilgrimage to the sepulchres of Abdul Baha and the other prophets and saints. I remember my astonishment when I was taken into the reception room, placed in the corner farthest removed from the door, instructed that I must rise when Shoghi Effendi entered, and must under no circumstances approach his person. I was hardly used to that sort of thing, and it gave me a kind of a chill which spoiled the interview. I had previously met Abdul Baha on the occasion of his visit to this country, had sat close to him, taken his hand, and conversed with him in most informal and friendly fashion. And here in Haifa I had to keep my distance, as though I

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were in the presence of some king or pope. I didn't like it, and the memory of it as a kind of offense has lingered with me ever since. I assume that you have met with Shoghi Effendi, and I wonder if you were put through any such performance as this.

Archbishop William H. Francis, of the Old Catholic Church, writes on April 16th.

I most cheerfully subscribe my name to the protest against the excommunication of the members of Abdul Baha's family and others by Shoghi Effendi. It seems incredible that such steps should have been taken. What is this world coming to? Bombs on civilizations and excommunications on religious folks. I wonder if they will be taking a leaf from the diary of Torquemada—he of the inquisition—next?

A letter, dated April 19th, comes from Mr. David P. Berenberg, poet, writer and educator.

As you know, coercion and regimentation of any sort are detestable to me. I am happy, therefore, to add my name to the list of those who, like Dr. Holmes, are protesting against the excommunication of some of the members of Baha-O-Llah's family. I wish you all success in your effort to nullify this act.

Letter from Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Rabbi of the Free Synagogue, New York; President of the Jewish Institute of Religion and the American Jewish Congress, dated April 22, 1942.

I have been thinking much about the matter which has been brought to my attention by the Heads of The New History Society. I am shocked as The New History Society is shocked to think, of the issuance of a proclamation of excommunication against members of the family of the founder of the movement, and that for what you say are totally negligible reasons.

Excommunication is self-condemnation. One excommunicates only those of whom one is fearful, with whom one knows one cannot argue through a cause. It is about time that excommunication as a method of suppression and exclusion cease to be used.

As for excommunicating the members of the family of the founder of the movement, that is an act which is irreligion at its worst. I wish I could bring my thought to the attention of the guardian of the Bahai cause.

I am, with cordial greeting, my dear Sohrab,

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) Stephen S. Wise

The Rev. Dr. William Norman Guthrie, author of many books, lover of the arts and advanced thinker in the Church became Rector of historic

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St. Mark's-In-The-Bouwerie in 1911. Here, among the many proofs of his liberalism was the fact that he opened wide his door to the Bahais, to the point that this edifice actually became the second home of the Cause.

Mr. Mountfort Mills and Mr. Horace Holley, distinguished exponents of the Bahai Administration, became Vestrymen; office facilities were provided in the parish house for the activities of the movement; countless meetings were arranged, and a long list of Bahai speakers, including Ruhi Efendi Afnan, gave their messages under the hospitable roof of St. Mark's.

In a Tablet from Abdul Baha to Miss Juliet Thompson, published in *Star of the West*, June 24, 1919, we find these words:—

"Convey my greetings to Dr. Guthrie and Mr. Ledoux. From the bounties of God I ask that these two souls may be the cause of the promulgation of divine teachings, may proclaim the oneness of the world of humanity, may spread the cause of universal peace . . ."

It is certain that all who cherish the ideals of Baha-O-Llah owe a debt of eternal gratitude to Dr. Guthrie.

The following letter from Stamford, Conn., dated May 18, 1942, shows that Dr. Guthrie's love of liberty in religion is as keen and vibrant today as it was during his colorful years of service in New York:—

A word of thanks and congratulation are overdue. It took me exactly one month to peruse carefully the book and four pamphlets you sent me. The suit you have won is on behalf of spiritual liberty. May it stay won. But I fear you cannot save those who are mad with an official self-deification, or those who are greedy for tyranny, to exercise or endure. It would seem as tho' the spirit of Hitler had taken possession of the Guardian of the Cause, to cover in this fashion what he should have protected, with mortal ridicule by "Ex-communication!"

I know you want me to express myself. Mrs. Chanler and you can find my considered views in the paragraph quoted (pp. 221-2 "Broken Silence") spoken by Dr. Butler, my former teacher; and more explicitly in the paragraphs (pp. 163-165 "Broken Silence") written in 1925 by Dr. Alfred W. Martin, the very year I shared a trip to Beth-Shean near the Jordan with the most delightful Ruhi . . .

**(Signed) William Norman Guthrie,
Retired Rector of St. Mark's-In-The Bouwerie,
New York, N. Y.**

Manly P. Hall, lecturer, author and teacher writes from Los Angeles, California on July 16, 1942:—

This tardy reply to your letter of May 11 does not reflect my interest in the problems which confront you. In spite of my delay in

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answering, I feel very sincerely the unhappy condition which is set forth in your book, "Broken Silence," which I have just finished reading, and for copy of which I thank you.

As you may imagine, the matter of excommunication is revolting to the sensibilities of any deep and sincere student. Our comfort is that while men may exercise these divine prerogatives according to the fallacies of their own judgements, the Gods of high decision are untouched and unmoved by the smallness in human nature. It were better for man to be excommunicated an hundred times by the priestly hierarchies of the earth than to be condemned once by the voice of his own spirit.

My kindest thoughts await you and your co-workers.

Very sincerely,

(Signed) Manly P. Hall

Chapter I
RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN

*For every throb of their pain has pulsed in the secret
depth of thy night, and every insult has been gathered
into thy great silence.*

—Rabindranath Tagore

Fruit-Gathering, Stanza LXXXVI

Chapter I

RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN

A Nosegay of Cablegrams

A calamity of vast proportions has befallen the Bahai world; so far-reaching in its implications and tragic in its significance, that the student of the Cause is left speechless and breathless. In some instances his faith is actually threatened. Indeed, the magnitude of this event dwarfs all other considerations at this critical hour of Bahai history.

The news of the calamity is contained in a series of cablegrams coming from Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahai Cause, and addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of the United States and Canada. It is published on the front pages of the December 1941 and January 1942 issues of *Bahai News*.

These cablegrams announce to the American believers the excommunication of the major part of Abdul Baha's family; namely: Ruhi Effendi Afnan; his wife, Zahra Khanum Shahid; his sister, Soraya Khanum Afnan and his brother, Foad Effendi Afnan—all grandchildren of Abdul Baha. The reasons given are as follows: Ruhi Afnan incurred the Guardians dis-Afnan; his wife, Zahra Khanum Shahid; his sister, Saraya Khanum Afnan his second visit to America in 1935 was made without the consent of the Guardian. Soraya Khanum, sister of Ruhi Effendi, married so-called *Covenant-breaker* Feyzi Effendi Afnan, son of Aga Sayyed Ali Afnan and of Furighyyeh Khanum, a daughter of Baha-O-Llah. Foad Effendi Afnan, brother of Ruhi Effendi, made a trip to England without informing the Guardian.

Touba Khanum, second daughter of Abdul Baha and mother of Ruhi, Soraya and Foad, is apparently included in the excommunication; for in the first cablegram, we find these words:—*Ruhi's family concurred. Inform all believers (that) all manner of communication (with) excommunicated family (is) forbidden.* Likewise, Rouha Khanum, third daughter of Abdul Baha and mother of Zahra, is likewise implicated; for, if she has stood by the side of her daughter and continues to do so, the ban falls on her also.

These drastic steps, taken against the families of two of Abdul Baha's daughters, did not conclude this dark entry in the current annals of the Cause; for the nosegay of cablegrams contains a further pronouncement,

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applying to the excommunication of Shoghi Effendi's own sister, Mehr-Angiz Khanum. This latter message, which was sent on January 1st, constitutes a strange greeting for a New Year's morn. Was the date a circumstance, pure and simple, or was it perhaps the Guardian's conception of a blessing to his flock at the birth of another year? We have heard of a Roman Holiday. This was a Bahai Holiday indeed!

The cablegram states that Mehr-Angiz Khanum has *followed the example of Ruhi's sister*. Now, we know that Ruhi Effendi's sister, Soraya, married without the Guardian's consent; therefore, it seems likely that Mehr-Angiz has done the same thing. Possibly, she also married one of her cousins.

Inter-Family Alliances

Such inter-family marriages are rather startling to the Occidental mind, but in the Islamic world they are customary; and it is not on this ground that the Guardian has made objection. Moreover, in the instance of Abdul Baha's family, the explanation is easy to find. These children grew up without the intimacy which is usual in the West, among cousins living in the same locality. The girls led a retired life, and when they did see boys of their own age, these boys were necessarily cousins—there was no one else. Furthermore, Shoghi Effendi did not approve of foreigners, as husbands to the members of his family; he also did not approve of prospective husbands who were not Bahais or who had lately become Bahais. These restrictions set his cousins completely apart from other young people, so it is not surprising that they fell in love among themselves.

Another marriage in the family, which took place some time ago, was that of Ruh-Angiz, the older of the Guardian's two sisters. This young girl married Nayyar Effendi Afnan, grandson of Baha-O-Llah, and brother of Feyzi Effendi Afnan whose marriage to Ruhi Effendi's sister, Soraya Khanum, has just brought this latter into disgrace. Although this marriage of his sister was very displeasing to Shoghi Effendi, the couple remained in the Near East, no official act of expulsion having been taken in their regard, as far as I know. *Their existence must be precarious; but, Ruh-Angiz has received lenient treatment in comparison with her cousin Soraya, for it will be noted that both of them married sons of Baha-O-Llah's daughter, Furighyyeh Khanum, whom Shoghi Effendi posthumously brands as an enemy.*

RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN

In order to untangle this maze of relationship and gain a clearer picture of Abdul Baha's direct descendants, it would be well to study the following chart. It is based on my own knowledge and is corroborated by an article entitled *Members of the Holy Family* which appeared in *Baha'i News*, June 1927. I also have consulted a chart of the geneology of Baha-O-Llah, drawn up by Shoghi Effendi, which was published in *The Bahai World*, Vol. V, 1932-1934, p. 205; likewise *Daily Lessons*, by Helen S. Goodall and E. G. Cooper, published in 1908, which booklet contains a description of Abdul Baha's family under the chapter heading: *The Households* (pages 10-14).

Family Chart

Abdul Baha's four Daughters and their Children

1. Ziayyeh Khanum, wife of Mirza Hadi Afnan.

Children from this marriage:

- (1) Shoghi Effendi Rabbani
- (2) Ruh-Angiz Khanum
- (3) Mehr-Angiz Khanum
- (4) Hussain Effendi Rabbani
- (5) Riaz Effendi Rabbani

2. Touba Khanum, wife of the late Mirza Mohsen Afnan.

Children from this marriage:

- (1) Ruhi Effendi Afnan
- (2) Soraya Khanum
- (3) Sobeil Effendi Afnan
- (4) Foad Effendi Afnan

3. Rouha Khanum, wife of Mirza Jalal Effendi Shahid, son of the *King of the Martyrs* of Esphahan.

Children from this marriage:

- (1) Maryam Khanum Shahid
- (2) Dr. Munib Effendi Shahid
- (3) Zahra Khanum Shahid
- (4) Hassan Effendi Shahid

4. Monavvar Khanum, wife of Ahmad Effendi Yazdi.
No issue.

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Collateral

Furighyyeh Khanum, daughter of Baha-O-Llah and wife of **Aga Sayyed Ali Afnan**.

Children from this marriage:

- (1) The late **Hussain Effendi Afnan**
- (2) **Nayyar Effendi Afnan**
- (3) **Feyzi Effendi Afnan**
- (4) **Hassan Effendi Afnan**

Those who have lately been swept out of the Cause at the order of the Guardian are:—

Direct Excommunications

1. **Ruhi Effendi Afnan**: Grandson of Abdul Baha.
2. **Zahra Khanum**: Grand-daughter of Abdul Baha and wife of **Ruhi Effendi Afnan**.
3. **Soraya Khanum**: Grand-daughter of Abdul Baha and wife of **Feyzi Effendi Afnan**.
4. **Foad Effendi Afnan**: Grandson of Abdul Baha.
5. **Mehr-Angiz**: Grand-daughter of Abdul Baha and sister of **Shoghi Effendi**.
6. **Feyzi Effendi Afnan**: Grandson of Baha-O-Llah.

Indirect Excommunications

7. **Touba Khanum**: Second daughter of Abdul Baha.
8. **Rouha Khanum**: Third daughter of Abdul Baha.
9. **Mirza Jalal Shahid**: Son of the King of the Martyrs and husband of **Rouha Khanum**.

Posthumous Excommunications

10. **Furighyyeh Khanum**: Daughter of Baha-O-Llah.
11. **Aga Sayyed Ali Afnan**: Husband of **Furighyyeh Khanum**.

This Year of Disgrace

The law of excommunication puts an absolute ban on those who are expelled from the Faith. The families of these persons and their fellow-believers must leave the ostracized individuals alone. They must neither communicate nor associate with them. They must break all ties of friendship and of humanity even; for, if they deviate one hair's breath from this law, they themselves fall into the same ditch.

Thus as time goes on, the number of the excommunicated increases;

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for a few are generally to be found, here and there, who are willing to risk ease and safety in order to follow their generous impulses. Such evidently was the case in the instance of Toubah Khanum; it probably is the case in the instance of Rouha Khanum. However, in the instance of Ziayyeh Khanum, the Guardian cables that his *parents strongly condemn Mehr-Angiz's action*. Thus, Shoghi Effendi's father and mother have been forced to publicly denounce and repudiate their own daughter. Hereafter, they must be as strangers to her. They can never approach her in her hours of trouble or illness. They will never hold their grandchildren in their arms.

Such is the Bahai Cause in this year of disgrace—1942.

A Fact Beyond Realization

I intend to take up the matter, treating it in connection with historical data and in the light of reason; and, in order to simplify the subject as far as possible, I will center my thoughts around the personality of Ruhi Effendi Afnan. His excommunication and the reasons given for it tell the story of all the rest.

Ruhi Effendi Afnan has twice visited the United States; he has lectured before numerous Bahai gatherings and outside groups; his articles on the Bahai Cause are published in Bahai publications and the records of his loyal services to the Guardian and the Bahai organization are spread on the pages of *Baha'i News*. Knowing full well that he has not deserved the treatment accorded him at the hands of his cousin, Shoghi Effendi, I am taking it upon myself to vindicate him, as far as I am able.

Having experienced excommunication together with the ostracism of all those who are associated with me, I naturally sympathize with other excommunicated persons. However, this is not the reason that impels me to raise a voice of protest at this juncture.

During eight years, I was fed, clothed and educated by Abdul Baha. Throughout that time, the Master's daughters were most gracious to me and I carry in my memory lively tokens of their kindness. I associated most intimately with their children, and vividly remember the ardent respect of these young ones for their grandfather, and their devotion to him. I hold each and all of them in high regard.

I never objected to my own excommunication, nor did I take it at all seriously; but the excommunication of the very family of Abdul Baha has shaken my being to its foundations. I am amazed and indignant. I am outraged and horror-stricken. The fact that Shoghi Effendi has dared to expel from his own household these souls, in whose bodies run the blood

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and life of Abdul Baha, is beyond realization. The reasons given for their excommunication are childish to the extreme, having nothing to do with their faith and love for the Bahai Cause.

In the writing of this book, I have not had the opportunity of consulting with any of the members of Abdul Baha's family. It is certain that none of them would consult with me. Thus, I have asked permission of no one, and am alone responsible for every word appearing here. My own conscience is my sole guide.

Another reason for my taking up the pen in this regard is that a number of Bahais have written to me on this subject. To put it very mildly, they are disillusioned, shocked and confused. They cannot square the actions of the Guardian with his role in life. They are wondering what precipice is around the corner; toward what swamp of despair the Bahai Cause is being driven. They are anxiously asking if there may possibly be a modern rational explanation for these medieval and irrational procedures.

We will therefore face the issue and, as a first step, will examine the Bulls of Excommunication as presented in the up-to-date guise of the cablegram.

Text of Cablegrams

(Cablegram received November 10, 1941)

Ruhi's sister married covenant-breaker Feyzi, whose mother joined and supported arch-enemy Muhammad Ali and whose father 'Abdu'l-Baha denounced openly and repeatedly as His deadly enemy. Ruhi's family concurred. Inform all believers (that) all manner (of) communication (with) excommunicated family (is) forbidden.

(Signed) Shoghi Rabbani.

(Cablegram received November 10, 1941)

(The) flagrant disloyalty (of) Ruhi's family compels me (to) disclose information so long (and) patiently withheld (from) American believers concerning his failure (to) obtain my approval (of) his second visit (to) America. His subsequent conduct regarding his marriage which I refrained from revealing (to) anyone except your Assembly, as well as Foad's departure (to) England without my knowledge, should now be made known (to) believers. Confident (of) unshakable steadfastness (of) exemplary American Baha'i Community.

(Signed) Shoghi Rabbani

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Answer sent on November 17th by the National Spiritual Assembly:—

Informing friends (of your) message (about) Ruhi's family.
Assure complete obedience protection unity (of) sacred Faith.

(Cablegram received on November 21, 1941)

My confidence (in) immovable steadfastness (and) unstinted loyalty (of) American believers (is) reinforced.

(Signed) Shoghi Rabbani.

—*Baha'i News*, December, 1941, No 149, pp. 1-2

The Spiritual Quarantine

In the following article published in *Baha'i News* under the above heading, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of the United States and Canada responds to the call in all energy and enthusiasm.

Warnings have come to the American Bahai's from the Master and the Guardian in turn, at odd intervals over a long period of years, to avoid association with Covenant-breakers. Our latest instruction about this very grave matter comes by cablegram, a copy of which appears in this issue and names Ruhi Afnan and his family as now to be included in the list of bad eminence—persons, for the protection of the Cause, to be avoided.

That a scion of the Holy Family and a close relative of the Guardian should fall into such error and loss cannot be surprising to those aware of some happenings in past cycles. Those records, however fragmentary, afford ample proof that the real bond between the Holy Manifestations, their appointed successors and those whom they guide and teach, is spiritual rather than one after the flesh.

It is recorded that God had no respect for Cain, one of the sons of Adam. A son of Noah likewise became apostate. The brethren of Joseph, the Beloved of God, sold that Holy One into exile and slavery. Aaron, the brother of Moses, misled by his wife, joined her in murmuring against his Lord whom he had long so faithfully served. Both were grievously punished and Aaron was forgiven and restored only after his repentent plea for mercy.

Perhaps few persons recall that Jesus Christ had four brothers after the flesh. Their brief mention in the Gospels implies that they were quite unaware of the station of their illustrious kinsman; while strangers attracted by the power of His Word, attained high rank in the spread of Christianity. Subh-i-Azal, half-brother of Baha'u'llah, became the Evil Tree and center of death in opposing the Tree of Life. Mirza Musa, another brother, was loyal.

Christ prophesied:

"Many shall come from the North and the South, the East and the West and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God with Abraham,

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Isaac and Jacob, while the children of the Kingdom shall be in darkness."

This prophecy was directly fulfilled in the lives of Mohammed Ali and Badi'Ullah, the two sons of Baha'u'llah who became the fallen branches, influenced by pride and greed and opposing 'Abdu'l Baha. High in birth, they were abased to the lowest depths.

And now our Guardian utters the word which means the spiritual quarantine of the excommunicated family of Rubi Afnan. The Guardian has been extremely patient and long-suffering. In making this special requirement he but fulfills his sacred duty of Guardian to all the friends. He counts upon our discernment and loyalty. We on our part know that our faith in the Cause of God, divinely aided and confirmed, is far too precious a pearl for us to imperil by our disobedience to such commands. Not only is the Guardian's right to direct us revealed by the highest authority, but for fully a score of years, with supreme wisdom, ardent devotion, proficient services and high courage, he has guided the ship of the Cause through troublous seas to the havens of victory after victory. Unitedly, heartily, devotedly, reverentially, we hear and heed his behest.

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—*Baha'i News*, December, 1941, No. 149, pp. 23

A Rare Morsel

One would think that these highly seasoned dishes would have been enough to offer up to the Bahai community at a single sitting; but, no! Before the gruesome meal is even half digested, Shoghi Effendi comes forward with a morsel fit for the most jaded of palates, and lays before his followers the fair body and soul of his younger sister, his one-time favorite.

(Cablegram received on January 1, 1942)

Faithless sister Mehrangiz (has) followed (the) example (of) Rubi's sister. All ties (have been) severed. No consideration (of) family relationships can ever be allowed (to) interfere (with the) dictates (of) justice or (to) supersede supreme fidelity (to) Center (of) Baha'u'llah's Covenant. Inform believers.

(Signed) Shoghi Rabbani

(Cablegram received on January 3rd)

Parents strongly condemn Mehrangiz's action.

(Signed) Shoghi Rabbani

After presenting the above cablegrams in his columns, the Editor of *Baha'i News* continues:

In publishing these two messages from the Guardian, the National

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Assembly reminds the friends of the statement on "The Spiritual Quarantine" prepared for the December, 1941 issue of *Bahá'í News* in connection with the Guardian's two previous cablegrams reporting Covenant-breakers within the family . . .

The final cablegram to share with the friends came January 8th:—

Comforted (and) fortified (by) fervent messages testifying (to) solidity (of) bonds (of) spiritual kinship uniting me (with) true upholders (of the) Covenant. (I) prize their loyalty, glory (in) their achievements, hail their resolve, invoke still greater blessings (upon) their superb exertions.

(Signed) Shoghi Rabbani

—*Bahá'í News*, January, 1942, No. 150, p. 1

These amazing cablegrams sent by Shoghi Effendi across the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, and the article by the National Spiritual Assembly on *The Spiritual Quarantine* breathe the essence of fanaticism, bigotry, and mental and spiritual aberration. They are not only out of place with the World of Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha, but are contrary to the forward trend of this 20th century, as far as civilized countries are concerned. Indeed, they are contrary to the forward trend that was felt in all past centuries for, even in the darkest periods, there have existed wise and humane personalities which influenced their times in various effective ways. In the course of my writing, I shall again refer to the contents of these documents and try to analyze the spirit and the motives that are back of them; but, now let us return to Ruhi Effendi Afnan.

Early Training

Ruhi Afnan was a child of thirteen years when I first met him in Port Said, Egypt, in 1913. Since then, I have followed his career with interest. I have watched him as grandson to Abdul Baha, an earnest, obedient child, possessed of rapt adoration for his grandfather. I have watched him as an eager youth on Mount Carmel, as a brilliant student at the University of Beirut, as a teacher and lecturer in the United States and as the hard-working and faithful representative of Shoghi Effendi.

When I was in the service of Abdul Baha, I kept a diary in which I wrote down his talks, both formal and informal, his actions and the impression made on the people who came in contact with him. This record of past events is a treasury of historical data, and I can now return to it in reference to Ruhi Afnan.

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During the months of July and August 1913, Abdul Baha, having completed his journey through the United States, Canada and Europe, lived for a while in Port Said and Ramleh, Egypt. I was then acting as secretary to him and now, after the lapse of twenty-nine years, I find the following entries in my diary. To me, they are of interest and value, because they give a spontaneous picture of Ruhi Effendi as he appeared at that time to a fellow-believer and a fellow-Persian.

Port Said, Egypt, July 22, 1913

About six o'clock we left our apartment in search of news. The headquarters of all news is Ahmad Yazdi's store. We found there to our surprise and delight Haji Sayad Javad and Ruhi Effendi, just arrived from Haifa at the bidding of the Master. The former is an old Bahá of the time of Baha-O-Llah with an interesting history as background; the latter is the grandson of Abdul Baha. He is about 13 years old, the son of Mirza Mohsen Afnan. He is a quiet, lovely boy. I liked him at first sight. He outhreats the spirit of devotion and beauty, and no doubt some day will be a power in the Cause.

Port Said, Egypt, July 23, 1913

This morning Haji Sayad Javad and Ruhi Effendi came to call on us and we welcomed them with Bahai cordiality.

Port Said, Egypt, July 24, 1913

This morning the believers of Port Said, including myself, went to the station to bid farewell to Haji Sayad Javad, Ruhi Effendi and Mrs. Getsinger, who are leaving for Ramleh to be honored with the blessing of the Master's presence.

Ramleh, Egypt, August 2, 1913

Ruhi Effendi and his mother left today for Haifa. He is about 13 years old. He has captivated my heart and I have surrendered. What a sweet soul he is! I love him, oh, ever so much! He is so polite, so gentle, so humble, so beautiful, so pure, so noble! What a wonderful person he will become when he has grown to manhood! Watch him! Some day he will become a great power in the Cause.

From Ramleh, the Master journeyed to Haifa and I find the following note in the last week of December.

Haifa, Palestine, December 26, 1913

At noon we enjoyed a nice lunch at which were present Mirza Jalal, Shoghi Effendi and Ruhi Effendi.

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From 1914 to 1918, I observed Ruhi Effendi as he grew in physical and mental stature. His devotion to Abdul Baha was proverbial and the Master, in turn, bestowed upon him the graces of his wisdom and spirit. During eight or nine months of the year, he attended the University of Beirut in company with other Persian students, while the summer months were spent with his family on Mount Carmel. It was in the course of the holiday seasons that I was in a position to note the increase of his understanding; for, he literally basked in the presence of the Master, losing no opportunity to gain further grip on the teachings and principles of the Cause.

Later, at the suggestion of Abdul Baha, I myself entered the University of Beirut, taking a number of extra-curricular courses on *International Law*, *Education* and *History*. Here, I met Ruhi Effendi almost daily on the Campus and in the Library, at play and at work, and noticed his industry and good humor, displayed in the various departments of college life. Here, I saw him on Sunday mornings in a dormitory room where the Persian students gathered to pray, to chant and to take part in talks and discussions, which were delivered with all the fervor and enthusiasm of youth looking upon the world through the marvelous eyes of Abdul Baha. Those were happy days, usefully spent; while Ruhi Effendi played his little part in making them more profitable and more cheerful for all of us.

The record of services rendered the Cause by Ruhi Afnan, after the departure from this life of Abdul Baha, proves that I had not been wrong in my early estimation of his character and ability. Therefore, I will review this record and spread it before the eyes of the Bahai world. Perchance those eyes may see the truth, and the souls back of them may act according to that justice which is so repeatedly eulogized by Baha-O-Llah in his sacred writings.

Actually, no other grandson of Abdul Baha has displayed equal talents, equal energy or equal power of teaching and explanation as has Ruhi Effendi. In fact, he is the only descendant of the Master who was sent to this country to represent the Cause. And, how well he fulfilled his mission! From coast to coast, the Bahais remember and cherish his name. It was a memorable experience for them to meet and know a member of Abdul Baha's family; while, at the same time, to meet and know an illumined teacher, a noble character and an unusually charming personality was, in itself, a privilege. Besides, what a champion of the Guardian he was! How he used his influence to uphold the National Spiritual Assembly and the system that it embodies! This influence was quite penetrating, as I know

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to my cost, for several of the intimate and valued members of The New History Society left us at his bidding.

The End of the Road?

Now, in full maturity at the age of forty-two, this promising career has been cut short. The accumulated knowledge that was his, the experience that he had gained, as well as the natural advantages that came to him through his holy lineage, have been cast overboard and wasted. His name is anathema; communication with him forbidden, and oblivion offered as his sole refuge. Ruhi Effendi, his wife and baby, grandson, grand-daughter and great grandchild of Abdul Baha, have been stigmatized and despoiled of their heritage by another grandson of Abdul Baha. What a mockery! What an excruciating travesty of religion! Does Shoghi Effendi really think that the Cause is his plaything, to be kicked about at random and rolled into the muddy stream of the gutter? Is the Will, of which he talks so much, simply a mandate of personal property? And are we children too, that we should stand spell-bound before the antics of a fretful child?

As to the members of the National Spiritual Assembly: Is this procedure in accordance with their idea of the Cause which came to unify and to bless? Has this body no conscience, no respect for the descendants of the Master, that it so willingly and with such alacrity, joins in the chase and presses in on the kill?

Now, regarding the few that are left in the family and the Bahais at large: Do they think that this is the end—the closing chapter of an impious book? Why should it be so? The Guardian has had a taste of very pungent blood. After it, the common kind will seem flat. The circle can yet be drawn in. Shoghi Effendi is on the watch, waiting for the slightest slip; and a slip will come, sooner or later. Maybe, the next victim will be one of his brothers; maybe, his father or mother; maybe, his American wife, the former Mary Maxwell of Montreal, Canada, and New York City. No one, absolutely no one is safe. Then (to let loose our fancy for a moment), when the circle has narrowed to a point, the Guardian, in search of yet another thrill or perhaps as an act of contrition, may take it into his head to excommunicate himself. Well! Perhaps this would solve the whole Bahai problem.

Returning to Ruhi Effendi: I, personally, believe that this cruel blow will not terminate his career of service to the Cause; and I venture to predict that he will not allow himself and his family to be engulfed by the opaque waves of obliteration. His great grandfather, Baha-O-Llah, surmounted

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the formidable barricades raised before him by the Imperial Houses of Iran and Turkey. His grandfather, Abdul Baha, overstrode the pitfalls laid in his path by power and circumstance, and raised the banner of the Cause in the proud capitals of Europe and America. Ruhi Effendi is of their race; his son is of their race. They belong to the Cause, and the Cause belongs to them. They need the Cause, and the Cause needs them; and no voice, however thunderous, and no document, however embossed, stamped and sealed can take it away from them.

It is an axiomatic fact that inborn, inherent spiritual talents can never be completely stifled or nullified by an outside will. A blind man may insist that it is midnight at noon, but the seeing eye beholds the sun standing in the azure sky. I believe that Ruhi Effendi, in spite of his natural modesty, realizes that certain valuable, inborn, inherent spiritual talents have been planted in his nature by the hand of the Almighty, and I have faith that the conscience that is in him will not permit these assets, together with the training that he received at the hands of the Master, to become a total loss to the Cause.

In the course of the years, Ruhi Effendi has consistently demonstrated his capacity, and the record of his services stands clear in the publications put out by the National Spiritual Assembly. I, therefore, intend to refresh the memory of the Bahai world by reprinting a portion of these records in the chapters that are to follow.

Chapter II
MOUNT CARMEL

The myriads of human beings that inhabit the globe of ours enter my heart and find unspeakable joy in each other's company. There lovers enter and look at each other, and children stand and laugh in merriment . . . My heart is full to the brim with transcendent joy, and I find the world without a single human soul in it. It is all empty.

Oh, I know. How can it be otherwise when all have entered my heart?

—Rabindranath Tagore
The Man and his Poetry by
Basanta Koomar Roy, p. 153

Chapter II

MOUNT CARMEL

Away from the Ever-Rumoring World

Nearly twenty-five years ago, a little Persian girl, living at the foot of Mt. Carmel, transposed into English words her impressions of that mountain ridge which had dominated her outlook since birth. Now, it is with deep regard for that little girl and for the woman that she has become that I reproduce, verbatim, an article on *The Physical and Spiritual Beauty of Mt. Carmel*, written on June 30, 1917 by Mehr-Angiz Khanum who has lately come into prominence through the cablegrams sent to this country by her brother Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahai Cause:—

On the eastern coast of Mediterranean Sea rises high the chain of Mt. Carmel swelling up to a noble height and jutting into the restless waters that lays at its foot. The scenery it offers is of a most ideal and picturesque beauty, specially now at spring time. Taking part in the awakening of nature from its wintry rest, its surface is incrustated with herbs of a sombre velveteen green. Large prickly bushes, clad in tiny yellowish flowers, spread high their thorny hands as tho' to protect their blossoms from the fatal touch of an injurious hand. Everywhere in the valleys, dells and ravines, wild flowers have flushed into life; violets, half hidden timidly among their leaves, fill the air with their sweet fragrance; blue-bells, hanging loosely along their twining, fragile stems, exhibit their golden breasts; daisies, poppies and lilies, growing in all their richness and exquisiteness of color, turn up their smiling faces bedewed with the gems of morning toward the clear azure sky.

Pine groves are numerous on its summit, and they grow in their full grace and charm. These beautiful woods, full of life and restlessness, are haunted by beavies of twittering birds, who, while chirping merrily, build their nests among the foliage of the trees. Singing birds, perched on lofty branches, mingle their thrilling melodies to the constant rustle of the pines. The view of this magical mountain is of a most captivating beauty: like a sea-nymph, arrayed in all its majestic pomp and magnificence, it looks down benignly from its height at the country and further off at the sea beneath. The houses, built in the fashion of an amphitheatre, get crowded at the sea-shore while they reduce in number as they gradually ascend its lower hills.

The physical charm is enhanced by its spiritual beauty. It is the mountain so frequently mentioned in the old Testament and known as the "Mountain of God." It was the abode and shelter of the Prophet Elijah who, being threatened by the wicked King Ahab and his atrocious wife Jezebel, sought refuge in one of its caverns; and that

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cavern, having been identified, has grown the object of respect of many a person who goes to visit it as a shrine.

But recently, Mt. Carmel has grown of vivid interest to the Baháís; for on one of its vine-clad slopes rests the Blessed Remains of His Holiness the Bab, laid beneath the stone floor of a house erected for that special purpose. A small garden surrounds the building, and the air is embalmed with the sweet fragrance of the blooming flowers. In the rear of the tomb, there is a cluster of ever-green cypresses, overlooking the panorama of the whole country. Under the shade of these trees, Bahá'u'lláh sat to view the beautiful sceneries. And, up there, away from the ever-rumoring world, an atmosphere of heavenly peace and of sublime concord pervades over all things, filling the heart with blissful feelings of love, unity and joy.

A Unique Family

During World War I, I lived in Haifa and Acca where for five years I was engaged in the service of Abdul Baha. While the war was being fought on land and sea, the Master and his family as well as his Persian followers led a quiet, retired life and engaged themselves in caring for the suffering community nestled at the foot of Mt. Carmel. Abdul Baha was our rock of safety. He was a spiritual horizon toward which the people turned their eyes, and from which they received comfort and joy in the midst of misery and pain. Although we were surrounded with perils of all sorts, we were never mentally disturbed, for the Master enveloped us with the mantle of his protection and saw to it that, as far as was possible, no actual danger encroached on the fringes of our existence. Through his personal direction, he dispelled the darkness of those embattled years, bringing consolation and cheer to old and young, friend and stranger. He was the one whom every person consulted when in trouble; and the needs of all, whether material or spiritual, were supplied without hesitation or loss of time.

Cut off from the rest of the world and relying mainly on our inner resources, I became better acquainted than I had been before with the members of Abdul Baha's household: his sister, Bahyyieh Khanum; his wife, Moneereh Khanum; his four daughters, his sons-in-law and his many grandchildren. Consequently, I came to realize through personal contact that this was a distinguished and glorious family, dedicated to the welfare of the Cause which their Beloved was interpreting, to an unbelieving world, through his life and teachings. Truly, these women, men and children had no other idea but to serve the Master, no earthly desire but to please him and no concern but to live, to the utmost of their capacity, in accord with

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his lofty principles. To a very large extent, they succeeded in their aim, setting up an example worthy of emulation.

Now, I can honestly confess that it has never been in my nature to envy anybody's station, whether inherited through ties of blood relationship or attained through talent and industry. As a humble servant of my Master, I had my own place; and with it I was completely satisfied. Neither then, nor now do I aspire to reach a higher position for, in my estimation, there never has been nor will there ever be one higher than that of full and unconditional servitude. Nevertheless, I looked upon each member of the household as greatly gifted by birth; we associated on terms of a transcendent friendship, and now, after the years, I retain an abiding respect and an unshakable love for this unique family.

A Potential Teacher

In this privileged and fascinating group that circled around Abdul Baha, receiving his daily consideration and care, was Ruhi Effendi Afnan, the oldest son of the Master's second daughter; and for this boy I set aside in my heart an especially warm spot. From the day on which I had first seen him in Port Said, I was drawn to him on account of his modesty and princely dignity; and later, on Mt. Carmel, it became one of my pleasures to engage him in conversation and watch the workings of his mind. He was a dreamer of dreams and, inasmuch as I myself was a prodigious dreamer, we dreamed together the dreams of Baha-O-Llah and those of our Master. Our conversations, lengthy, and numerous, often centered on Abdul Baha and his spiritual victories in Europe and America; and here, as one who had been an eye-witness to these exploits, I was able to recount the story of the Master's successive appearances in churches, synagogues and universities, and in meetings of all sorts, and to describe the impression that had been produced on the people. Also, we studied together the Writings of Baha-O-Llah and mapped out youthful plans to spread these teachings throughout the length and breadth of the land.

When the Tablets of the Divine Plan were revealed by Abdul Baha, Ruhi Effendi Afnan was one of the few who grasped their significance and understood their world-wide implications; and it was with these thoughts in mind that he arranged the program of his courses in the American University of Beirut. All who, in later years, came to meet him in England and America and heard his masterly lectures, gave testimony to the fact that he had attained the position of an authoritative, fluent and convincing teacher.

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Holiday Seasons

During the summer months, Ruhi Effendi spent his holidays on Mt. Carmel, together with some thirty Persian Bahai students from the American University of Beirut; and there, this enthusiastic company had the opportunity of listening to the daily discourses of Abdul Baha. The Master instructed his youthful pupils in the fundamentals of the Cause; explained those principles and ideals that ultimately would usher in the dawn of international understanding and peace, and exhorted all who heard him to acquire the educational advantages of the modern world so that, at the proper time, they might become the wise expounders and spreaders of the teachings of Baha-O-Llah.

A distinguished Persian, Professor Noured-Din Zeine, the son of Janabe Zeinel-Mogarrabin who had joined Baha-O-Llah in his exile at Acca, has held for many years, a position on the faculty of the American University of Beirut. During World War I, Professor Zeine lived in Haifa and, as one of the secretaries of Abdul Baha, was an integral member of the Bahai Colony. A statement prepared by him for the Spiritual Assembly at Beirut gives a graphic account of those holiday seasons on Mt. Carmel. He writes:—

Between 1900 and 1910 we do not find more than six Bahai students in the Syrian Protestant College, studying in the schools of Arts and Sciences and Medicine. . . . The following nine years may well be called the golden period of the Bahai students in the Syrian Protestant College. Their number increased very rapidly, until in 1913-1914 it reached thirty. Persian, Palestinian, Turkish and Egyptian Bahais they were, all of them living in utmost friendship and love with each other. Add to that the presence of Shoghi Effendi and Ruhi Effendi among the students during that period and then try to imagine how great was their happiness. Then came the terrible catastrophe of 1914. . . . During those four years . . . in spite of the fact that the number of Bahai students decreased one-third, in spite of the economic difficulties that they had to face, away from home and cut off from all communication with their loved ones, they lived together in the same brotherly love and unity, the same happiness on their faces and in their hearts.

Before closing the account of this second period a word must be said about their summer vacations. In the early part of it, when the Master was travelling in Europe and America, the Bahai students spent their summers in Lebanon, but after His return, they were asked to come to Haifa. With what joy did they dismount the donkeys that had brought them from Beirut, for in those days the modern conveniences of travelling were not known. . . . Those days spent with the Master were indeed glorious days. To hear him every morning and afternoon and to walk with him on Mt. Carmel, to pray with Him

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in the Holy Shrines, such was the privilege of the Bahai students of that time, a privilege that very few then had and no one will ever again have.

Those three months of summer vacation were a period of spiritual education received from the lips of the Great Educator Himself. That is why all their material difficulties were forgotten, especially in the days of the War, all their worries and anxieties melted away; they were in the presence of the Master, what else mattered?

—*The Bahai World*, Vol. III, 1928-1930, p. 57

Sunday Meetings

In Haifa, it was the custom on Sunday afternoons to gather on Mt. Carmel before the Shrine of the Bab which commands a ravishing view of the Bay of Acca, extending on the left toward the Mediterranean Sea and on the right, in a curving silvery sweep, to the very foundations of the Prison City of Acca. When the believers had assembled, the Master would lead the way into the Shrine, and there he would lift his melodious voice in chant and prayer. After this reverent visitation, we would emerge on the terrace and for a while stroll in the lovely garden; then, we would come together again in a large room situated in the same building, to one side of the Shrine. When everyone had taken his seat on chairs ranged in a square around the four walls, the Master would enter and all would arise. *Bismillah!* he would say, *Befarmaeed! Beneshineed! Khoshamedeed!* Unforgettable words—his greeting pronounced times without number. Then he would cross the room, seat himself at the upper right corner, and we would sit down.

A pause. One or two minutes, or a little more, then Abdul Baha would begin to speak. The themes of these talks varied greatly. If there were present some pilgrims, coming from the far-flung corners of the earth, he would adapt his remarks to their special condition or needs, and refer to incidents which had taken place in their villages or cities. Often, he would mention the half-forgotten names of early pioneers in the Cause from their own native lands. Sometimes, he would take as his subject the good news contained in letters which had been received from Persia or India, from Russia or America; but more than often, during those summer months, he would speak about the tragedy of war with the destruction entailed on life and property. Occasionally, he would ask a question of one of the believers and then, on the tenuous fiber of a simple answer, would, through the magic of words and the power of the spirit, build a structure of explanation, laying the foundation of a new understanding in every mind and setting up a light to shine through the colonnades of every spirit.

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He spoke on God, on the mission of the Prophets, on immortality, on search after truth, on severance and detachment, on knowledge and wisdom, on tolerance and appreciation, on intellectual hospitality and spiritual understanding, on the sciences and arts, on economics and social services, and told stories about the martyrs and heroes of the Baháí Cause—and the subject, whatsoever it might be, was always connected with the teachings that Baha-O-Llah had come to establish in the hearts of men. In this manner were the meetings conducted both in Acca and Haifa, no person, however distinguished or learned, ever opening his mouth unless a question was put to him by the Master. His was the inexhaustible fountain of wisdom, and we filled our pitchers to their capacity with the water of life that continuously flowed from his lips.

A Ticklish Problem

As the war dragged along with no end in sight, an idea came to my mind, which according to the established rule of proceedings was completely revolutionary, but which to me, who had lived in the United States, seemed quite natural. The idea was this: that the Baháí students should themselves address the Sunday afternoon meetings in the presence of Abdul Baha; and more: that the children of the family and the children of the Baháís should also take part. So, I set about to put this simple plan into action, and presently discovered that I had addressed myself to a most ticklish problem.

At first I consulted with the Baháí students. "What," they exclaimed, "have you completely lost your mind? We always thought that you entertained outlandish notions, but never suspected anything like this. Imagine getting up and delivering speeches before Abdul Baha! It is unheard of! Wouldn't it be like carrying coals to Newcastle? Besides, what have we to say, and how would we ever dare utter a word in the presence of the Master? We all would collapse and fall to the floor right then and there."

I quite understood their attitude but could not agree with it, so my ardor did not cool down. Therefore, I sought out the parents of the children in the community and presented the plan. They were dumbfounded: Their little boys and girls who stood spellbound, with folded hands before Abdul Baha, how could they raise their voices in his presence? Besides, they continued, the children had nothing to say. In order to meet this argument, I suggested that they, the parents, might prepare the speeches; but found that their confidence in themselves was also nil. Anyhow why waste time, they said, when they had Abdul Baha in their midst to teach and guide them into the right path.

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Finding myself in an impasse, I decided to take my case directly to the Family; so, I presented myself successively before Bahyyieh Khanum, Moncerreh Khanum and the daughters of Abdul Baha. Here, to the delight of my heart, I met with some encouragement. The daughter of Baha-O-Llah, Bahyyieh Khanum, responded to the idea with an alacrity that surprised me. To her, it seemed well worthwhile that the young generation should come forward and show what it could do. Furthermore, it would be amusing to see the children standing on their feet and speaking out, even if their ideas were few and far between. As I left her, she gave me one of her heavenly, human smiles, I even could say that it was a little chuckle of sly pleasure at the prospect of what might develop in the near future, and she said:—You have met with some opposition from the believers, but it seems to me that you are not discouraged. I will pray to Baha-O-Llah. I know He will assist you—. Later, Moncerreh Khanum, the wife of the Master and her daughters treated me with equal kindness. They all understood my motive and felt that the idea might bear fruit.

The next step was to lay the plan before Abdul Baha, and the right moment arrived sooner than I had expected. One day, I found him alone in the garden of his house and, taking my courage in both hands, I brought up the subject and unfolded the plan. When the speech that had long been prepared in my mind reached its end, silence came and descended upon us. The Master, who had been walking all the time with myself following, continued on his way through the garden paths. Five minutes passed. It appeared like a century. At last, when we were close to the house he stopped, turned and looked straight at me with those inscrutable eyes that pierced the heart. I knew from past experiences that something definite was in his mind, but could not guess as to whether he approved or disapproved the plan. Then, he spoke:—*Leave the matter in my hands*, and he mounted the steps of the porch and disappeared through the door.

That night, a large meeting was held. Believers and students crowded the room, together with many of the children who seldom attended the evening gatherings. I took my seat near the entrance, feeling instinctively that something unusual was about to happen.

Abdul Baha began to speak, and the theme of his talk was something to this effect:—During many years he has raised his voice; he has delivered hundreds of speeches in Egypt, Europe and America; he has spoken at home, in Acca and Haifa, to his followers and to pilgrims coming from near and far—all this, season after season. Now, the hour has arrived for the children of Baha-O-Llah to become vocal, while Abdul Baha sits

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and listens to their words. They must unseal their lips and, relying on the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, contribute their understanding of the Teachings. The youth of Baha must train itself in the art of eloquence and public discussion. The boys and girls must not be afraid, for they have been chosen by God to deliver the glorious Message of the New Day to all the inhabitants of the world. Time is short and the hours are ticking away. Here, in this divine university, the believers, the students and the children must emulate his example. Let them learn to speak before Abdul Baha passes away from this mortal life. As soldiers in the army of Baha-O-Llah, let them sharpen their instruments, which are their tongues, and advance toward the arena of explanation. If they do not speak now, when will they do so? If the nightingale does not sing in the rose-garden, how will it be fitted to bring harmony to the desert places? Yes, the hour has come for him to keep silent and for others to take up the work. He is satisfied to sit at the side. He is waiting; he is patiently waiting.

The above is the gist of the talk given on this occasion by Abdul Baha; but he spoke much longer and I am not presenting his actual words, but rather the spirit that animated them. Then, the address having come to an end, he arose and left the room, while one could have heard the dropping of a pin. As he passed by the door, he looked at me and smiled.

Immediately following this memorable evening, plans were set afoot for the conducting by the young generation of a new type of Sunday afternoon meeting.

The Students Take Hold

The Persian Bahai students from the American University in Beirut prepared their own speeches and presently delivered them. Among these were Mirza Abdul Hossain Istakhree, Azzizollah Khan Bahadur, Mirza Badi Bushrui, Mirza Ali Mohammad Khan Shirazi, Ali Aga Rashti, Mohommad Ali Afnan, Mirza Kamal Khan, Dr. Arastou Aflatoun, Shoghi Effendi and Ruhi Effendi all of whom, in due time, presented a number of well-constructed talks on the Cause and its relation to the problems of our modern civilization.

Feeling that these efforts had a value all their own, it seemed to me that records of them should be kept, even though the speeches were delivered orally. Therefore, I requested the students to set down their talks in a series of copy books. As I now write, the old manuscripts lately bound into volumes are spread before my eyes; and, as I read them one by one, I am struck by the cogency and reasoning power that had been displayed by these

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young minds. Among the papers, I find one talk given by Shoghi Effendi and two by Ruhi Effendi, in their own Persian handwriting. The talks by Ruhi Effendi are on the following subjects:—*Religion is the Cause of the Progress of Humanity*, given on August 19, 1917 and *The Necessary Means for the Development of Persia*, given on September 16, 1917.

The fact that these students had to deliver their talks before an audience of from fifty to a hundred persons, and that this number included Abdul Baha, constituted an extraordinary experience. At first, they manifested a great deal of hesitancy but, as the weeks passed into months, they took hold of themselves, acquired assurance and played their roles with dignity and serenity. This diffidence on their part was referred to in a speech by Azzizollah Khan Bahadur, who said:—

Although we as a company of students are powerless to open our lips in the holy presence of the Master—how much less to deliver speeches—for that is considered the height of audacity—this very audacity now takes the aspect of obedience to his command. Therefore, the tongue of my conscience haltingly and with trepidation makes the following remarks . .

It goes without saying that these budding orators received their reward. At the close of each Sunday meeting and often again during the week, the Master would shower his blessings upon them, at the same time inciting them to spread the wings of their imagination over yet wider horizons.

The Children Come Forward

Once the dam of silence had been lifted, the flood of enthusiasm ran high and all the boys and girls began to clamor for the privilege of speaking in the presence of Abdul Baha. Of course they had to be helped; therefore, the task of preparing speeches, both long and short, fell on my shoulders. The subjects I chose were varied, the language obviously was Persian and the phrases simple and direct. It took a great deal of time to prepare the talks, to teach them to the children, to coach them in delivery and then to arrange the programs and supervise the conduct of the meetings. Altogether, I wrote one hundred and three speeches, a good percentage of these being for the girls, who took subjects such as: the freedom enjoyed by Western women, their struggle for suffrage, their educational and vocational advantages and their enlightened services to their fellow-men.

Most of the girls' lectures were again delivered at the weekly meetings which took place regularly on either Tuesdays or Thursdays (I do not remember which) in the home of Abdul Baha, under the auspices of the

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adies of the household. Maryam Khanum, Mehr-Angiz Khanum, Zahra Khanum and Munib Effendi were a few among the many grandchildren of the Master for whom I drew up little speeches, and who delivered them with grace and with joyful hearts.

After awhile, I began to run short of subjects and felt that the time had come for the girls to express their own ideas. I knew that they could do this, for had they not been educated by Abdul Baha and had they not been allowed to bask in his presence during the period of their lives? So, I suggested this new plan to a few of the older girls and found the result to be miraculous. Some of them took leadership in this field, demonstrating their ability in a way that surprised themselves as well as others. Notable amongst these girls was Khorsheed Onsi Khanum, daughter of Aga Sayad Yahya, who has left in my archives a record of more than forty speeches, copied in Persian in her own handwriting, all giving evidence of a spiritual outlook and a well-informed and balanced mind. Another talented young personality was Mehr-Angiz Khanum, sister of Shoghi Effendi, who displayed a facility for writing in English. I have copies of two short essays from her pen; one on *Contentment: the Foundation of Happiness* and another on *The Physical and Spiritual Beauty of Mount Carmel*, which latter essay heads this chapter.

The Master Steps In

Now, as a development of these intellectual and spiritual efforts which kept the younger generation busy and happy on Mt. Carmel during World War I, the Master one day specified a wish that the children should deal more directly with the history of the Bahai Cause; and this desire on his part brought forth a climax to our activities in a form that I have never seen tried elsewhere.

After due thought and discussion with a number of Persian students, which included Ruhi Effendi Afnan, we all came to the conclusion that there should be prepared a series of short speeches, unfolding progressively the life of the Bab. The Master applauded the idea, and as the task was put in my hands, I began to work without loss of time.

Starting with a brief sketch of the history of Sheikh Ahmad Ahsai and Haji Sayad Kazem Rashti, the two heralds who had predicted the imminent appearance of the Promised One, I advanced step by step along the historic route trod by the Bab during his ministry, continuing to the final scene of his martyrdom in Tabriz and ending with the transfer of his remains from Persia to Mt. Carmel. These essays were submitted to

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Abdul Baha, who studied them attentively as I brought them to him one by one, making corrections and suggesting facts with which I was unacquainted to be incorporated here and there. By the time that the series was finished, I had prepared twenty-five speeches, each one giving a complete phase of the life of the Bab, and all together covering the story from beginning to end. They were twenty-five vignettes, twenty-five miniatures; and the whole was a drama.

When the writing was completed, I selected twenty-five boys and girls and after I had presented each with the part that fitted him or her best, the task of memorizing and then of rehearsal began in earnest. I had to direct the company until all could recite their lines naturally and without halt or hesitation. Happy and invigorating days were these, spent in this all-absorbing labor of love! Sometimes, when the rehearsal was in full swing, the Master would drop in on us and listen to the budding orators. He often corrected them as they went along and, on one memorable occasion, he got up and gave a full lesson in elocution, instructing them, as any director would, regarding a raise in the voice or a dramatic pause; pointing out where emphasis might be laid and where the words were to come softly as the wind that murmurs through the branches of the trees.

The Drama

At long last, the expected day arrived! It was Sunday afternoon and Mt. Carmel was bathed in golden sunlight. One by one, two by two, the believers ascended the mountain to attend a unique meeting regarding which rumors had been floating about for weeks. The parents were expectant but apprehensive; the young people were tense with excitement, praying and hoping that they might not forget their lines. The large central chamber, situated next to the Shrine of the Bab, had been decorated with flowers, and presently it became filled with the pioneers of the Cause and the younger men. Through an open door, the women could be seen crowded in an adjoining room. The *speakers* were ranged in the sight of all. Abdul Baha's presence completed the picture.

The meeting opened with the chanting of prayers; then, the Master turned his eyes to me, as a signal to go ahead with the program, and the drama began.

The first speaker stood, and with perfect poise told the story of Sheikh Ahmad Ahsai, the great scholar who, in the early years of the nineteenth century, had been fully aware of the fact that the Hour of Destiny was very close. He sat down. Immediately following, the boy sitting in the next place

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arose and picking up the thread of history, went on with the life of Haji Kazem Rashti, the illumined teacher who had said of the coming Prophet:—*My knowledge is a drop, compared to the immensity of his knowledge; my attainments as a speck of dust, in the face of the wonders of his grace and power.* He sat down. Another boy took up the account with the birth of the Bab, continuing to the hour of his Declaration on May 23, 1844. From this point, the colorful and tragic life of the Bab was recounted—his pilgrimage to Mecca, his return to Shiraz, his wanderings through Persia attended by an ever-increasing host, his incarceration in the castles of Maku and Chehriz and his martyrdom in the public square of Tabriz. Then, the spread of his message, the massacre of his followers and the perilous journey to Palestine with the shattered remnants of his sacred body. All this in quick succession, like flashes on a screen, was unfolded before a breathless audience. It was a miracle of effect. From first to last, the children made no mistake, nor did they pause or fumble for a word. They spoke with fire and fervor, with conviction and love, even as little disciples of the Great Prophet, which indeed they were.

When the final note of the dramatic symphony had been struck, silence descended upon the room; while the eyes of parents and friends, of old and young in that crowded assemblage, rained with tears. Truly, it was an unforgettable day; and to me, who had labored so hard for its fulfillment, it was a *most* unforgettable day.

As I examine the manuscripts of those twenty-five speeches, bound as they now are in a single volume, and think of the young people who had played their parts so beautifully, I am carried back over the intervening span of twenty-five years and live again those hours the like of which could never be reproduced in my life or, doubtless, in the lives of any.

In December 1918 I started on my journey to America, and on the way stopped for a few weeks in Cairo, Egypt. There, I met the celebrated Arab scholar, Sheikh Mohyeddin, who had been a pupil of the even more celebrated Mirza Abul Fazl. During one of our many interviews, I showed him the manuscripts of the speeches and he was so delighted with them that he made a copy of each and every one. Sometime later, when I was living in the United States, I received a printed book mailed by him; and, on examining it, found to my infinite pleasure that it was entitled *The Book of Nineteen Speeches*. All the talks were contained in this volume, but Sheikh Mohyeddin had named it as he had because the story of the Bab as told by the children consisted of nineteen chapters. The rest of the material dealt with the history of Sheikh Ahmad Absai and Haji Sayad

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Kazem Rashti. Needless to say, this volume is among my most cherished possessions.

It is likewise interesting to note that this book is listed in a catalogue of Baha'i Publications in Oriental Languages under the title: *The 19 Talks, Cairo* (see *The Baha'i World*, Vol. VIII. 1938-1940, p. 737).

An Incontestable Fact

During those summer seasons of youthful activity on Mt. Carmel, the presence of Ruhi Effendi Afnan was felt by all. Personally, I delighted in his fresh and expansive outlook, admired the sober restraint which was his as well, and was moved by the spirit of dedication in him, which was apparent in spite of his cheerful, modest ways and manner. Looking back over those years and scanning them up to the present, I find as an incontestable fact that, in the entire family of Abdul Baha, he is the only one who has literally followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, leaving the retirement of Haifa and sailing the seas to carry the message of the Cause to distant ports. In this realization, we might transport ourselves in thought to Sunday, August 19, of the year 1917.

On Mt. Carmel, the young people are holding their meeting in the presence of the Master. It is an exciting moment as far as the seventeen year old speaker of the afternoon is concerned, for he is about to deliver his maiden speech. His grandfather is observing him closely as he arises in boyish shyness and stands erect with flushed cheeks and shining eyes.

Shall we listen to the words which Ruhi Effendi spoke on that day? His talk is here before us, and the subject-matter is definitely interesting. However if we do so, I suggest that we accord him one grace: that of questioning if the fate which has befallen him in 1942 would have seemed possible to Abdul Baha, as he watched him then—would he *acceptable*, as he watches him now:—

Religion is Conducive to the Progress of Humanity

The Ancient Beauty (Baha-O-Llah) in The First Ishrak says:

“Religion is a manifest light and a strong fortress for the protection and tranquility of the people of the world; for fear of God commands people to do that which is just and forbids them that which is evil. If the lamp of Religion remains concealed, agitation and anarchy would prevail, and the orb of Justice and Equity and the sun of Peace and Tranquility would be withheld from giving light. Every man of discernment testifies to that which is (here) mentioned.”

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Religion is conducive to the progress and prosperity of the human-kind. It is the cause of union and harmony among different tribes. Religion transforms enmity and hatred into love and friendship, and changes humiliation and poverty to glory and exaltation. If we look upon the pages of history, we realize that religion has unified and consolidated the scattered parts of every nation and brought in its train advancement and civilization. For example, the Jews consisted of various tribes while they lived in Egypt as captives subjected to the tyranny of the Pharaohs, but when His Holiness Moses appeared, he unified this lowly and humiliated people through true religion and the knowledge of the Oneness of God. Thus, he established among them a cord of union and harmony, and they became so strengthened that within a short while they were freed from the yoke of the Pharaohs and became the conquerors of the Holy Land. Presently, they established a kingdom, erected a throne and obtained a great sovereignty. They defeated their enemies and, while living under the shade of the Mosaic law, attained to the apogee of splendor, enjoying freedom and liberty. However, when they deviated from the path of Moses, their emancipation was changed into captivity and their glory transformed into humiliation. This was the result of religion among the Jewish nation.

Now, let us for a moment investigate the history of the Arabs. These consisted of scattered and divided tribes, submerged in the sea of ignorance and illiteracy, and pursuing the path of selfishness and inadvertence. They were so degraded that they buried their daughters alive; for the birth of a girl in a family was considered by them as a disgrace. Their time was occupied with internecine conflicts, warfare, despoliation and rapine. Nevertheless, when the brilliant sun of the *Prophet Mohammad* arose upon the *Horizon of Hejaz*, their hearts were illumined; they became unified and agreed, and they covered the face of the earth with the traces of their sciences and arts. Their ignorance and illiteracy had been changed into assurance and knowledge through acceptance of the One True God. By means of his message, Mohammad the Prophet made of these oppressed, divided and scattered tribes the conquerors of East and West and the wielders of great power; the ancient Persian Empire even, and the great Roman Empire coming under the shade of the Arabian banner. In *this manner did these lowly people become the guides of the nations* through knowledge and religion. But later, the Mohammadan nations deviated from the path of truth. Then their congregations became divided and their groups were scattered; their countries were conquered; their states were despoiled; their sovereignty was attacked and the foundations of their kingdoms were shaken.

The best means for the prevention of the recurrences of these differences in the world of humanity has been revealed by the pen of the Ancient Beauty (Bahá-O-Llah). He says: "If the people of the Koran had lived according to the Holy Law after the ascent of His Holiness the Seal of the Prophets (may the soul of all else be a sacrifice to Him) and had held to the firm foundation of religion,

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چون آنکه بدانشیده نباشد و محبت اوست در بیشتر علوم نموده در ملک صحابه حضرت رسول در آمد و رسید ایمان شد
از عباد برای علم بود و چون شهادت بود عدالت خدا را رسالت حضرت محمد بود داخل زمره صحابه گشت
و برای راه رفتن میسر شد سلمان را نیز شخصی بود که راکب جوانی از ان بزرگواران رسول آورد و علی الهفتم رسید
به خطه نایند که هر یک جدا شده بود و پسند ظاهر بر کبریا ولی چون بدانت تمام گفت نظر سر کردند
و محبوب انقلاب گشت عباد با هم بود بسیار دقت کردند خبر معلوم دو واضح کرد بعد که بدانت دامادیم
فوتنت که کمک از برده ما دار تا مد نظر را کوالات همراه بسیار شده که یک شخصی جاهل ای که ابد
از علوم و فنون بهره نداشت و به نسبت از هر قید فارغ نبود بدانت منور شده ، اعلم علی طرف صحبت
میشد در مثل دهاتی برآمد علیه مبارک و بسیار شده که شخصی که از ارذل تنوسر و غنی نظر از بدانت
زین شد مظهر اداب و اخلاق روحا نه گشت سر بدانت سب تراف و سعادت کاملست و انگاه دانسته ف
وج نشد و اگر قوی بدانت نشست شوند و جفتشان در کشنده و بدانت

سیر ماهیه سر اموات و روز بگوئیم داده اسوده لایمیت ، بلکه این است که محل اشراق و طلوع افکار
این امر عظمت باین خود نمود شود و این است که حال دیران است و محل شهادت رجعت مرتکب شود عاش
جهانیه گردد و اگر چنانچه بیدار شد بر عمل کنیم انوقت لا ینفعنا من غیر الله و اینها را این معاد گستر
سبت دوم

دریوم بعد از ظهر گنجینه ۱۹ غلظت ۱۹۱۲ در حضور بعضی پادشاهان و اعیان
روم

Fac-simile of the last portion of Ruhi Effendi Afnan's manuscript (in his own Persian handwriting and signed) of speech delivered by him on August 19, 1917, at a meeting on Mt. Carmel in the presence of Abdul Baha and the Bahai community.

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they would not have been scattered and their prosperous cities would not have been destroyed; nay, towns and villages would have been adorned with security and contentment."

In brief, this is the influence of religion upon a nation in a general way.

Let us now study the lives of individuals—how religion affects a person. When the wheat-thresher of Esphahan became a believer in His Holiness the Bab, he turned into one of the most exalted of souls. When the heart of a certain date merchant was illumined with the sun of religion and the knowledge of God, he became one of the companions of the Prophet Mohammad. Abazer was a shepherd, but when he acknowledged the Oneness of God and the apostleship of His Holiness Mohammad, he entered the ranks of the most favored disciples and became the shepherd and guide of the souls of men. The Persian Salman was a barber, but as soon as he confessed the cause of the messengership of the Prophet of Islam, he ascended to the highest station of honor.

Consider Mary Magdalene. Who was she, and to what heights did she rise? Peter was a fisherman, but no sooner did he grasp the cord of religion than he became the great Peter, the beloved of the hearts. He was a fisher of fish, but he became the fisher of men.

Therefore, it is clear and evident that religion has within itself such a power as to transform the stone into a brilliant diamond and the drop into a scintillating pearl. How often does it happen that when an ignorant, illiterate person, deprived of the sciences and arts but with heart freed from all attachment and possession, becomes illumined with the light of religion, he is inspired to converse with the most learned of theologians and to discuss with them the most abstruse religious problems, coming out victorious in the arena of argument! How often does it happen that when a most lowly and selfish person becomes adorned with the virtues of religion, he is characterized with the spiritual attributes and qualities!

Therefore, it has been proven that religion is conducive to the exaltation and felicity of the world and the establishment of union and accord among the nations. When a people takes hold of the hem of the garment of religion, their hearts become illumined and enlightened.

Consequently we, the Bahais, must exert ourselves by day and by night, not resting for one moment until Persia becomes the dawning-place of the rays and the horizon of the sun of this great Cause; to the end that Persia, which is now in a deplorable condition being the arena of ignorance and tyranny, may be the center of merciful susceptibilities. If we live and act in this behooving manner, then we will be entitled to attribute ourselves to Baha and to his blessed religion.

Chapter III
THE PILGRIMS

*I have had my invitation to this world's festival, and
thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and
my ears have heard.*

—Rabindranath Tagore
Gitanjali, Stanza XVI

Chapter III

THE PILGRIMS

A Spiritual Discovery

The early American Bahais who visited Abdul Baha in his home in Acca, Palestine, from 1898 to 1911, were imbued with a most devout spirit. They were not *tourists* but *pilgrims*. They turned their hearts toward the Holy Land with longing and affection. They were hungry for the bread of God's knowledge and thirsty for the water of eternal life. They had been stirred by the strange story of a being, out of the ordinary in every sense of the word, who lived and taught as had the man of Nazareth 2,000 years ago. This was enough to arouse their interest and so, men and women left their offices, vocations and families, and crossed the ocean in order to see this man with their own eyes, to listen to his message with their own ears and to learn the secret of his spiritual attainments.

Once, when a Persian Bahai teacher inquired of a certain group why it had come, he received the following answer:—*For help in spiritual knowledge, so that we may be able to impart this to others. (Flowers Culled from the Rose Garden of Acca, p. 4).*

The numerous accounts of their visits made by the pilgrims are interpenetrated with a glow of enthusiasm and the joy of a great spiritual discovery. These persons describe Abdul Baha, surrounded by his family and disciples, living a simple, patriarchal life. They read in his teachings the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, and feel that they have entered a fourth-dimensional world. The records are the testimony of the first Americans who looked into the face of Abdul Baha and reported his talks and informal conversations. The same scenes are described by each, and pretty much of the same ground is gone over; yet the experiences and impressions are varied according to the individuality of the writer. All, however, are unanimous in their recognition of the Master's boundless love, his extraordinary knowledge, his kindness and hospitality, his humanity and his passion for God; and they reveal his desire to share all that he possessed, whether material or spiritual, with his fellow-beings.

As we read these straightforward and unaffected recitals, we can actually see Abdul Baha at the lunch or supper table, we can hear him as he entertains his guests in his own inimitable way; and we laugh at the pointed stories that he relates and fall under the spell of his zestful and scintillating personality.

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On rare occasions, these love-intoxicated pilgrims allow a paragraph or so to a description of some member of the Master's family; but this is simply in passing, for all are primarily concerned with Abdul Baha and his wisdom. Their accounts are centered on him, what he said and what he did, and very little else interests them.

The First American Pilgrims

Dr. E. C. Getsinger and his wife Lua were the first American Bahai pilgrims to have the inestimable privilege of standing in the presence of Abdul Baha. This was in 1898. During later years, these two souls rendered conspicuous services in America, Europe and Asia, and no history of the Bahai Cause, from the American angle, would be complete without a record of their remarkable teaching campaigns. It was in June 1909 that Dr. Getsinger wrote the story of his and his wife's acceptance of the Bahai message in a manuscript consisting of one hundred pages. This account naturally covers his first visit to Abdul Baha who, at that time, was still in captivity in the city of Acca. I will quote an extract from that document:—

We arrived in Haifa on the night of December 8, 1898. The stars were so bright in the heavens, such as I never saw in America. They seemed so close to earth and so large that we stood and marveled at the scene. . . . We were anxious to land, and our hearts were panting with joy because we were to behold the face of our beloved Abdul Baha. . . . We arrived in Acca after taking that beautiful drive along the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. We were taken direct to the house of Abdul Baha and shown into a small room. Lua and myself were to pay the visit to the Holy City and did not expect to be so suddenly taken into his presence. But great was our surprise when we entered the room and found Abdul Baha sitting upon the divan before us. Lua was preceding me just a few steps and, as she entered the room, without being told we both recognized who was before us, and at once we fell to our knees and were weeping, we did not know why except that it was for joy. Then Abdul Baha approached us and bade us to rise and be seated. He spoke to us some words of welcome through Dr. Kheirullah, our interpreter. Then we were invited to drink tea with him and during one hour or so we were in conversation with him. We remained in Acca in the Holy Household for several days and then returned to Haifa. We thus went back and forth just as we received permission to do so. We remained in Haifa and Acca until March 23, 1899, having arrived on December 8, 1898.

Personal Records

The accounts by pilgrims were for the most part in manuscript or mimeograph form; however, a percentage of the writers were in a position to have their work printed, and this was done independently, without supervision of any kind. Some of these booklets are still in print and are probably

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available at the Bahai Assembly, 119 West 57th Street, New York, N. Y.
The following is a partial list:—

- (1) *An Early Pilgrimage* by Mrs. May Maxwell, in 1898. 23 pages.
- (2) *A Message From Acca* by E. C. Getsinger, in 1899. 16 pages.
- (3) *My Visit to Abbas Effendi in 1899* by Margaret P. Peeke. 23 pages.
- (4) *A Message From Acca* by Anton F. Haddad, in 1900. 16 pages.
- (5) *Utterances of our Blessed Master, Abdul Baha, revealed to Three Pilgrims: Thomas Breakwell, Herbert Hopper and Isabella D. Brittingham* in 1901. 14 pages (in mimeograph).
- (6) *Table Talks with Abdul Baha* by Mr. and Mrs. Geo. T. Winterburn, in 1904. 32 pages.
- (7) *A Brief Account of My Visit to Acca* by Mary L. Lucas, in 1905. 42 pages.
- (8) *Unity Through Love* by Howard MacNutt, in 1905. 32 pages.
- (9) *Notes Taken at Acca* by Mrs. Corinne True, 1907. 32 pages.
- (10) *Table Talks at Acca* by Arthur S. Agnew, in 1907. 32 pages.
- (11) *In Galilee* by Thornton Chase, in 1907. 84 pages.
- (12) *Ten Days in the Light of Acca* by Julia M. Grundy, in 1907. 111 pages.
- (13) *Flowers Culled from the Rose Garden of Acca* by Mrs. Ida A. Finch, Miss Fanny B. Knoblock and Miss Alma S. Knoblock, in 1908. 40 pages.
- (14) *Daily Lessons Received at Acca* by Helen S. Goodall and Ella Goodall Cooper, in 1908. 101 pages.
- (15) *A Heavenly Feast* by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Haney, in 1909. 36 pages.
- (16) *Acca Lights* by Mr. and Mrs. Jos. Hannen, in 1909. 15 pages.
- (17) *A Heavenly Vista* by Mr. Louis G. Gregory, in 1911. 32 pages.
- (18) *The Light of the World* by Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Randall and other pilgrims, in 1919. 149 pages.
- (19) *My Pilgrimage to the Land of Desire* by Marie A. Watson, in 1921. 23 pages.

As I read these booklets one by one, I am transported in imagination back to the Holy Land and live the experiences of these spiritual comrades of mine, which were so like my own. Few of the authors had trained minds or native talent; they wrote simply as they thought and felt, yet they have given to the Bahai world most valuable records which cannot, at any time, be duplicated or added to. It goes without saying that many a pen-picture of Abdul Baha was made during these visits to Palestine; so, I have chosen one from among them to reproduce herein. It is an extract from *In Galilee* by Thornton Chase, who was an executive in a Chicago Insurance Company and a deeply-read student of the Bible. Mr. Chase is the author of many books and one of the most distinguished of the early Bahai pioneers. He writes:—

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Abdul-Bahá

I have been asked to describe Abdul-Bahá, but hesitate to do so. It is not his personality that he wishes the friends to consider. Yet so many long to know even a little of the appearance of this one whom they love, not having seen, that I will try to tell of him as he appeared to me. I saw a strikingly handsome man, tall and kingly. He wore a white fez with the small turban-kerchief wound around. This, the symbol of wisdom and learning among Mohammedans, was the only *outward insignia of his station*. A long, dark coat or cloak was worn over a dove colored undercoat. He is not thin or anaemic, but has the appearance of strong health. Although of medium height he is commanding in appearance and I can never think of him as less than six feet tall. His bright, fair face, light brown in complexion, was framed in silvery white beard and moustache. Usually his hair, or much of it, was tucked up under the fez. His nose was large, straight and strong. The mouth was rather full and very gentle. Deep under the broad forehead and shaded by white, thick eyebrows, shone the wondrous eyes, large, prominent, brilliant, penetrating and kind. Around the dark pupil and brown iris is that wonderful blue circle which sometimes makes the eyes look a perfect blue. Any description of them is only an attempt, no more. In repose the face expressed a dignity, intelligence and nobility which none would dare to disrespect. Conscious power and authority were there enthroned. He assumed nothing; his powers were natural, his sincerity thorough, his affection pure. His smile charmed and attracted friends to him.

He had the stride and freedom of a king—or shepherd. My impression of him was that of a lion, a kingly, masterful Man of the most sweet and generous disposition. I had formed an idea of Jesus as very meek, humble, lowly, gentle, quiet, soft and sweet; and I looked for such another one. I have revised my idea of Jesus and now, as I read his Words, I see in that one of the past a Man of Authority, whose words were clear and forceful, penetrating the hearts as with a two-edged sword. I found in Abdul-Bahá a man, strong, powerful, without a thought as to any act, as free and unstilted as a father with his family or a boy with playmates. Yet each movement, his walk, his greeting, his sitting down and rising up were eloquent of power, full of dignity, freedom and ability.

In his presence all are small and they are conscious of this. They show a deference to him that could not be excelled before the most absolute monarch, hesitating to approach him unbidden, humbly bowing when he passes, and halting afar off when coming into his presence. This was *not of his doing or will*, but purely from their recognition of the Spiritual Power proceeding from him and through their intense love and respect for him. He seemed utterly unconscious of their deference. He extends love to every one; he draws near to them; he invites them; he loves to serve them, even in little things. He demands no awe, no reverence, no separation, but is an elder Brother of affection and sweetness. He is gentle but not weak; sweet and powerful; humble and mighty; no bar or restraint is there, but winsome love and

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attraction. His work accomplished daily is very great, and yet much time is given to social and official affairs. He is abrupt in manner, the abruptness of power, but most courteous and charming. There is no aloofness in him; he invites all to be prisoners of love and fellow-servers of humanity with him. He spoke in brief, pithy expressions, intoned in medium pitch with a clear vibrant voice. No words were wasted. He said:

"The Bounty of God is flowing. The Power of the Kingdom of God will overcome all. It will not be long before the great result will appear." "The Blessed Beauty has put in our hands the lamp of teachings. By this Light the world will be illumined." "America will be enlightened very much, and from there light will be sent to other places." "I hope that the East and the West will become one, also the North and the South, and that all differences shall be removed." "The Power of the Word of God will accomplish this."

—*In Galilee*, by Thornton Chase—an account of his visit to Abdul Baha in Acca, Palestine, April 1907, pp. 28-31.

The Interpreters

The interpreters and translators of Abdul Baha consisted of a comparatively small number of people. As more and more pilgrims visited Palestine and on their return spread the message amongst their acquaintances and friends, a stream of letters from those newly interested began to flow toward Acca. These were translated into Persian and presented to the Master, who devoted much time in dictating answers which then had to be translated into English. Thus, thousands of Tablets were written to the constantly increasing number of correspondents in the United States and Europe. I have in my library several large volumes which contain copies made by myself of a considerable percentage of these Tablets.

In those early years in Acca, even a slight knowledge of the English language was considered as quite an achievement; therefore, the talks of Abdul Baha were interpreted by young men and women whose capacity was not quite up to the mark. The Master used the channels that were available and counted on the sincerity of his followers to supplement their limited experience.

Ibrahim Kheirullah, who had guided the first group of pilgrims to the Holy Land, was highly qualified as a teacher and interpreter. Abdul Baha's daughters, Ruha Khanum and Monavvar Khanum, who by this time had learned some English, served when occasion demanded. After them, with the passing of years and as the Cause gained momentum, new interpreters and secretaries appeared on the scene. Thus, from 1908 to the

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and of his life in 1921, Abdul Baha made use of many interpreters in order to convey his words to visitors and his teachings to the Western world.

Now, the pilgrims who visited Acca were not interested in the secretaries; they mention their names but seldom, and then as a necessary evil. Often, they mistrusted the translations that were given and questioned as to whether a certain person or other had an ulterior motive in his choice of words. However, I can testify that these individuals did their work honestly and well; and that there was *never one instance* when they should have been accused of even an unconscious desire to misinterpret the words of Abdul Baha. If sometimes a mistake crept in, this was owing to lack of efficient knowledge of English, or even to lack of complete understanding of the Master's rich and profound expressions of speech; but through it all, each one served cheerfully and in utter devotion, playing his own modest but useful part in the promotion of the Cause.

Below are listed, in fairly correct sequence, a few of the better known interpreters and translators:—

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Ibrahim Kheirullah | 12. Mirza Noured-Din Zaine |
| 2. Ruha Khanum | 13. Mirza Moneer Zaine |
| 3. Monavvar Khanum | 14. Mirza Younoss Khan |
| 4. Anton Haddad | 15. Tamaddon-Ul-Molk |
| 5. Ali Kuli Khan | 16. Badi Effendi Bushrui |
| 6. Dr. Ameen-U-llah Fareed | 17. Azzizollah Khan Bahadur |
| 7. Mirza S. M. Rafie | 18 & 19. M. and Mme. |
| 8. Hussain Effendi Ruhi | Hyppolite Dreyfus Barney |
| 9. Mirza Bozork | 20. Dr. Lotfollah Hakim |
| 10. Mirza Ahmad Sohrab | 21. Shoghi Effendi Rabbani |
| 11. Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi | 22. Ruhi Effendi Afnan |

It is interesting to note that in this list of twenty-two persons who acted as interpreters and translators at one time or another, there are 17 Persians, two Syrians, one Egyptian, one American and one Frenchman. Incidentally, on many occasions when no interpreter was in sight, the Master would press into service anyone present who could translate, however poorly, for the benefit of the visiting pilgrims or tourists.

Those, having even a cursory knowledge of the subject, realize that all translation is a most delicate art and will concede that, as applied to the Bahai Cause, the task is definitely intricate. In order to do a creditable job, one must comprehend fully the nuances and shades of meaning in both Persian and Arabic as well as English; and few of us could make such a claim. Nevertheless, this group of translators and interpreters were the channels—and the only channels—through which the Western world gained instantaneous or direct access to the spiritual source of the New Revelation,

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and it is not too much to say that the American and European Bahais owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Glimpses of Ruhi Effendi

The members of Abdul Baha's family seldom figure in the accounts left to us by the pilgrims; but, once in a long while, the curtain is lifted and we get a glimpse of some of them. On page 39 of the booklet by Thornton Chase, we read:—

The children, Shoghi and Ruhi and others were playing about the fountain, and altogether it was quite a party.

Again, in a book entitled *A Heavenly Vista*, written by Louis G. Gregory following his visit to Abdul Baha in 1911, we come across a mention of the same children, four years later. On page 19, we read:—

Before entering (the presence of the Master) we met Shoghi and Ruhi, two beautiful boys, the grandsons of Abdul Baha. These children of the Holy Household show great affection for pilgrims.

In a brochure, *The Light of the World*, Mr. Harry Randall of Boston, Mass., describes his own experiences in 1919 and often refers to Shoghi Effendi who by this time had become an interpreter.

Miss Genevieve Coy, an educator and psychologist, at one time engaged as a teacher at the Tarbiat School in Teheran, Persia, visited Palestine with three friends in the year 1920. Her account of this journey is unique and valuable because, as far as I know, it is the last but one recorded pilgrimage to Haifa made during the lifetime of the Master. It is published under the title *A Week in Abdul Baha's Home*, appearing in *The Star of the West*, September 8th, September 27th, October 16th and November 4th, 1921. In these articles we find repeated mention of Ruhi Effendi, so we might skim through them, beginning at the railroad platform in Haifa as the train bearing Miss Coy and her group draws into the station:—

We were so happy to be so near our journey's end,—we were so full of expectation, that it seemed as if the train would never reach the station. But at last we did pull up in front of it! Cora went out to look for a porter, and I was ready to pass baggage out of the window to her. But almost immediately a hand was reached in to shake mine, and we were welcomed by a young man, whom we later learned was Ruhi Effendi, one of the Master's grandsons . . . We shook hands with several young men, Bahais from the Master's household, and then we four American pilgrims were in the auto, with the driver, Ruhi Effendi, and some of our baggage . . .

During our ride from the station, Ruhi Effendi told us that the Master was staying on the Mountain for a few days, to rest from the

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many demands made on his time when he is in his house in the town . . .

As we were leaving the house, Ruhi Effendi, who had just come down from the Mountain, brought word that the Master would either come down, or send for us the next day. . . .

At lunch Ruhi Effendi brought word that we were to go up to the Tomb at about four in the afternoon, to see the Master!

Miss Coy then describes the meeting with Abdul Baha in words that are instinct with feeling and realization:—

Suddenly all of the believers rose and faced the East. Then, from around the corner of the Tomb came the Master with two of the young men walking a little behind him. He came slowly toward us,—and said, "Welcome, welcome!" in English; and then, "Sit down, sit down!" Sylvia sat next to him; then Mabel Paine, myself, Cora, and Mrs. Hoagg. The other friends were beyond her, in two rows. When the Master had walked toward us, it seemed to me that I had seen him come just that way at some previous time. He seemed to be so beautifully familiar to me! I suppose it must have seemed so because of the pictures I have seen of him, and the stories I have heard other pilgrims tell. It was a moment that one would prolong if one could, that one would never forget!

The Master began to speak in Persian, and Ruhi Effendi translated into English. He asked several questions; he talked of principles of living. Sometimes he would be silent for several minutes,—with his eyes looking far, far away. It is very difficult to remember much of what he said. Indeed, it was almost difficult to listen!

Her visit to the Shrine of the Bab is recounted by Miss Coy:—

Each knelt at the inner threshold, until all had arisen, and stood in a circle about the room. Then the Master spoke to Ruhi Effendi, who began to chant a long prayer, one of the Prayers of Visitation. His chanting was the sweetest, the most melodious of any I have ever heard.

Sometimes in the course of conversation while his words were being interpreted, Abdul Baha would interject a phrase in English, to the delight of his listeners. Miss Coy tells of such an incident:—

Then the Master told the story of Mirza Abul Fazl, and the English ladies who insisted on seeing him. Finally, when they had knocked very persistently and continuously, Mirza Abul Fazl became tired of hearing it, so he went to the door and said, "Abul Fazl is not here." Up to this point in the story, the Master had been speaking in Persian or Arabic, and Ruhi Effendi had been interpreting, but when the Master came to this part, he spoke in English, very distinctly, and repeated it, "Abul Fazl not here!" and then he smiled the most adorable smile!

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Continuing with her narrative, Miss Coy conducts her readers into the garden at an early hour:—

It must have been after seven when we went out into the garden. We walked about a bit, and then Ruhi Effendi and Mirza Lotfollah came out to wish us good-morning. On the previous evening we had told Ruhi Effendi that we were going up to the Tomb early in the morning. But when he saw us there, he said, "You *really* came! I didn't think you would! Americans never get up early!" At which we laughed much! Ruhi Effendi's English is very good,—but sometimes a phrase or some slang expression is used which he does not understand. He looks courteously questioning, half surprised, and waits for some one to explain!

And now, breakfast with the Master in the house of Abbas Goli, caretaker of the Shrine of the Bab:—

But we had been there only a few minutes, when Ruhi Effendi came toward us, calling that the Master wished to see us! And we went on eager feet, following Ruhi Effendi to Abbas Goli's house . . . Abbas Goli brought to the Master a little tray with a teapot full of what looked like tea. The Master poured out some and drank it, explaining that it was kind of herb drink. Then Abbas Goli brought us tea in the lovely little Persian glasses. Afterward he came in with a tray full of things to eat and placed it on a chair in front of us. . . . As we ate he was silent, looking out of window upon the sea at Acca. His beautiful profile was outlined against the windows; his gaze seemed to dwell on distant Acca,—and I could not but think of those long years of imprisonment that he had spent in barred Acca.

After eight unforgettable days with Abdul Baha and the members of his family, Miss Coy and her three friends leave Haifa on Sept. 8, 1920:—

Next morning before daybreak, we ate our last meal in the Pilgrim House and said farewell to our happy housemates there. Said Effendi, Mirza Lotfollah, Ruhi Effendi, and faithful Esfandiar and his horses, took us to the train which left at 6 A. M. We had a half-hour's talk with the young men before the train pulled out. . . .

We come across the name of Ruhi Effendi two years later in an item in the *Star of the West*, March 21, 1922. A Tablet to the American Bahais, left by Abdul Baha amongst his papers, is translated by Ruhi Afnan, Mrs. E. Hoagg and Ali Mohammad Bakir.

In the May 17th, 1922 issue of the *Star of the West* is published an article from the pen of Mr. Louis G. Gregory under the title of *The Bahai Congress for the Teaching and the Fourteenth Annual Congress*. The writer speaks of Mr. Mountfort Mills who has just returned from Haifa and quotes a report of his as follows:—

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Ruhi Effendi, brought up with Shoghi Effendi says of him: "Shoghi is wonderful. He retired at 3 A. M. and arose at 6. Once he worked forty-eight hours without food or drink. His effort is to overcome differences between races and nations."

The Two Cousins

Thus, through tiny items incorporated in the pilgrims' report, we have been able, on a thin chain of sequence, to follow these two cousins from childhood when they were playing around the fountain, up to the time when the older of the two had assumed the guardianship of the Bahai Cause and the younger had settled willingly and enthusiastically into his niche of unobtrusive service.

We now take a jump over two decades and, picking up *Bahai News* of December 1941, read with a thrill of dismay the following lines in an article signed by the National Spiritual Assembly:—.

Our latest instruction about this very grave matter comes by cablegram, a copy of which appears in this issue and names Rubi Effendi and his family as now to be included in the list of bad eminence—persons, for the protection of the Cause, to be avoided.

The two babies, born of the same noble stock; the two children, encompassed by divine love and solicitude; the two beautiful boys, acting as hosts to the pilgrims; the two young men, taking their places among the interpreters of the Master—the two branches, sprung from the sacred Trees of the Bab and Baha-O-Allah, can no longer be coupled as servants, each in his own way, of the mighty Bahai Cause. Something has intervened and set them apart; and we see the one, on the pinnacle of absolute power within his own domain, branding the mark of infidelity on the forehead of his life-long companion and turning him out to wander forever—friendless, comfortless and without sustenance. Even so Saul, appointed first King of Israel by the Prophet Samuel, yearned for the destruction of David and drove him forth into the wilderness!

Chapter IV
THE SECRETARY

*He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this
dungeon. I am ever busy building this wall all around;
and as this wall goes up into the sky day by day I lose
sight of my true being in its dark shadow.*

—Rabindranath Tagore
Gitanjali, Stanza XXIX

Chapter IV

THE SECRETARY

The Confidential Secretary

In this world of ours, men and women have often risen to great heights of communal service by acting as secretaries to leaders in various enterprises. Through their intimate association with their chiefs or employers, they have been enabled to learn the secrets of the technique used; to master the systems and practices of their professions, and to become in turn efficient and useful members of society. Thus, throughout the ages, apprenticeship has been considered the practical way to knowledge and advancement in the arts and sciences, in business, politics and religion. The rich and varied experiences gained by close contact with the executive or master were, in the long run, more valuable than formal education; and there are not a few examples of men who have made astounding progress as a result of past service in a comparatively humble role.

Ruhi Effendi Afnan acted as confidential secretary to the Guardian of the Bahai Cause for fourteen years; and the records of the Bahai organization show that during that time, from 1922 to 1936, he was constantly in demand in a variety of capacities. In 1924, he appeared in London as Shoghi Effendi's personal representative and delivered a brilliant address on the Bahai Religion before *The Conference of Some Living Religions Within the British Empire*. In 1927, he visited the United States as traveling agent and spiritual salesman of the Guardian, championing with fervor and zeal the system of Bahai administration before *recognized* and *declared* Bahais. He was an outstanding and honored guest at the 20th Annual Bahai Convention in Chicago, where he *participated vitally in all proceedings*; was the guest speaker at Green Acre Bahai Summer School in Maine, and traveled from coast to coast, delivering Bahai speeches before churches, colleges and outside gatherings. In 1928, we find him in Geneva, Switzerland, where, as the accredited representative of the Bahai Cause, he participates in the Conference of International Peace Through the Churches. Here, we see him taking the floor, offering some constructive suggestions which, as one report says, were very much to the point, and carrying his argument. In 1935, *with the Guardian's approval* (See *Baha'i News*, page 3, October 1935), he pays his second visit to the United States; takes part in

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the National Bahai meeting in Chicago and, before his departure, addresses a number of local Bahai communities.

At some future date, I will contrast the above-mentioned item in *Bahai News* with a recent cablegram of Shoghi Effendi dated November 10, 1941, which states that Ruhi Effendi *failed to obtain* the Guardian's *approval of his second visit to America*. I will also examine in detail the work accomplished by Ruhi Effendi in this country; but, for the present, I am merely tabulating the facts.

Thus, for fourteen years, Ruhi Effendi, as confidential secretary of the Guardian, was the main channel of communication between him and the Western world. He took charge of the correspondence sent from Haifa to this country, a few of which letters have found their way into the pages of *Bahá'í News*. As a rule, Shoghi Effendi reserved to himself the prerogative of writing general letters and cablegrams to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of the United States and Canada, but his confidence in Ruhi Effendi was so great that, occasionally, he would allow him to write letters to this body over his own signature. Such a significant letter, signed by Ruhi Afnan and addressed *To the Members of the National Spiritual Assembly and Read at the Annual Convention, Chicago, May, 1931*, is published on the front page of *Bahá'í News* of September, 1931.

Procedure of Correspondence

The letters written by Ruhi Afnan to individual Bahais generally start with *Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter . . .* after which the various points brought up by the correspondent are answered. Once in a while, a postscript is added by the Guardian in his own handwriting, which is signed *Shoghi*. (See *Bahá'í News*, February, 1931, pp. 9-10)

From the records that I have examined, it appears that Ruhi Effendi was the chief secretary, but now and then we come across other signatures affixed to letters written on behalf of the Guardian. Soheil Afnan, Ruhi's brother is one of them (See *Bahá'í News*, March, 1928, p. 1; also *Bahá'í News*, February, 1931, pp. 8-9); Hussein Rabbani, Shoghi Effendi's brother, is another (See *Bahá'í News*, September, 1931, p. 5); Azzizollah S. Bahador is a third (See *Bahá'í News*, February, 1932, p. 3).

Quite consistently, when a letter is written and signed by Ruhi Effendi and published in *Bahá'í News*, the caption reads: *Letter from Shoghi Effendi* (See *Bahá'í News*, September, 1931, p. 1; *Bahá'í News*, January, 1932, p. 1; *Bahá'í News*, March, 1932, p. 7). One wonders why the Editor of

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Baha'i News adopted such a caption; for it evidently causes some confusion in the mind of the reader, who reaches close to the end of the letter before he comes to realize that it was not written by Shoghi Effendi after all. The object probably was that the National Spiritual Assembly wished to convey to the Bahais, in a rather subtle and indirect way, the fact that the contents of the letters written by Ruhi Effendi carried the same authority as those written by the Guardian himself.

This strange procedure caused some controversy among the Bahais, and the question was debated pro and con until the National Spiritual Assembly was moved to alter the caption on this section of *Baha'i News* so that, after a certain date it read:—*Letters from Haifa* (See *Baha'i News*, July, 1932, p. 4; *Baha'i News*, October, 1932, p. 4; *Baha'i News*, February, 1933, p. 2).

Another subject that caused a good deal of agitation among the Bahais was the question as to whether the Guardian actually read all the letters written on his behalf by Ruhi Effendi. Some orthodox individuals were distinctly worried lest the secretary might slip in his own ideas and let them pass into currency under the authority of Shoghi Effendi; while others, who were more liberal-minded, finding the matter in the communications rather hard to swallow, chose to blame the secretary and allow full exemption to the Guardian. Finally, it seems that one zealous Bahai took the matter into her own firm hands and submitted the problem directly to Haifa. It was then that the Guardian's clear and unequivocal answer definitely disposed of the question. He wrote:—

I wish to add and say that whatever letters are sent in my behalf from Haifa are all read and approved by me before mailing. There is no exception whatever to this rule.

(Signed) Shoghi
—*Baha'i News*, May, 1931, p. 5

Another point of discussion applied to the signature of the secretary: should it appear at all? This matter likewise was settled by eliminating the name altogether and simply stating that the secretary of the Guardian writes so and so. (See *Baha'i News*, May, 1936, p. 6, where we read: *On March 4, the Guardian, through his secretary, wrote the Treasurer . . .*) This new ruling eliminated all reference to the personality of the secretary, leaving Shoghi Effendi's name to stand alone.

The main purpose of the letters written by Ruhi Effendi, which are published in *Baha'i News* over his signature, is to convey to the recipients the messages of the Guardian, his replies to numerous questions and his

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orders and suggestions in regard to the various activities and policies of the Bahai Administration. As Shoghi Effendi writes in a postscript to Mr. Albert Windust:—

I have asked Ruhi to convey my messages and suggestions in my behalf. . . . and I am sure that they will be duly considered.

—*Bahá'í News*, February, 1931, p. 9

This then was the dominant and controlling note of all the letters written by Ruhi Afán in his role as confidential secretary; he was the conveyor of the messages and suggestions of the Guardian to the American people, and, it can be said that during those fourteen years of service, he kept himself completely in the background and never entered the picture at all. Later, when he did appear in person before the Bahai Assemblies, he maintained the same attitude and if, in some instances, he was greatly appreciated, this was without volition on his part, and was simply an unavoidable circumstance.

Direct and Indirect Methods of Correspondence

Let us for a moment go back to the days of Abdul Baha and contrast this method of procedure with that of the Master. When the Master received letters in the English language, whether from Bahais or any others, these were placed into the hands of one of his secretaries, who translated them into Persian. Then holding the translations in his hand, Abdul Baha would dictate the answers, and later, when these had been written out, he would very carefully read them over, correcting them or adding a word here and there. These corrected pages were then copied in Persian in excellent calligraphic style and brought back as finished letters to the Master. Finally, Abdul Baha would again read each one, and sign it; after which they were translated into English on the spot or else mailed to America for translation. Almost every week, during several years, I regularly received packages of from fifty to one hundred such letters to be translated and forwarded to their respective destinations. Naturally, the originals always accompanied the translations.

In this way, did Abdul Baha answer directly all communications addressed to him, never delegating to his secretaries the power of dealing with them on his behalf. A secretary was at liberty to carry on his own correspondence with the believers or to keep a diary but, in such case, he alone was responsible for what was written. Abdul Baha did not interfere with these personal matters nor did he ever ask to read the secretary's letters or his diary.

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In all probability, one would never find a letter from any of the Master's secretaries which would open with:—Abdul Baha wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter. . . . A secretary might include among his personal comments to a friend:—Today Abdul Baha, in the course of conversation, mentioned your name and spoke thus and so about you. I often did this myself, but neither I nor anybody else had power to answer letters addressed to Abdul Baha. In reverse, it was Abdul Baha who himself occasionally answered letters addressed to his secretary. (See an example of this in *Abdul Baha in Egypt*, p. 2)

It is apparent therefore that the system of correspondence employed by the Guardian is altogether different from that of the Master; and in this he is quite within his rights. Thus, Shoghi Effendi, although well versed in English, delegated to Ruhi Effendi the privilege of conveying his messages and suggestions to his followers and invested these letters with an authority, if not quite equal to his own, at least approximately so, as can be seen by his endorsement addressed to America:—*whatever letters are sent in my behalf from Haifa are all read and approved by me before mailing. There is no exception whatever to this rule.*

The letters in question contain a great many instructions, directions, messages, orders and regulations for the administration of the Bahai Cause by the National Spiritual Assembly. Invariably, they have bolstered up the authority of this organization, strengthened its hand and endowed it with a totalitarian outlook which has become increasingly evident in all its activities and pronouncements. After the business has been disposed of, there are usually to be found a few paragraphs or lines written in a general sense, and we can gather that the secretary has rounded out the letter according to his own judgment.

Subject Matter

I will here mention a few of the various subjects dealt with in the communications of Ruhi Effendi as they follow each other in succession according to date:—

We have instructions regarding the collecting of the originals and translations of Abdul Baha's Tablets and are told that this is one of the most important tasks of this generation. (*Baha's News*, November, 1929). We find minute and detailed instructions about a forthcoming issue of *The Baha'i World*: the Publishing Committee is told not to add, discard nor displace any of the photographs selected by the Guardian; all photographs are to be strictly copyrighted, so that no one may have the right to repro-

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duce them without specific authorization. Inasmuch as Vol. I had a green cover and Vol II a blue cover, Vol. III is to have a red cover; a sample of the particular shade of red is enclosed and the request made that the cloth selected be exactly of this color (*Bahá'i News*, February, 1931). A Bahai has the right to teach the Cause unofficially, but he must keep in close touch with his Local Spiritual Assembly which reserves to itself the right to control all teaching activities on the part of such individual Bahais. Local Spiritual Assemblies must be organized where the number of adult believers reach nine, and this is to be considered as an obligation rather than a purely voluntary act. The methods of determining the boundaries and the jurisdiction of a Local Assembly are left to the wisdom of the National Spiritual Assembly. The meetings held in the auditorium of the Temple in Chicago must be purely devotional; thus, lectures and addresses should be strictly prohibited. Choir singing by men, women and children is permitted; rigidity in the Bahai Services is to be avoided; pictures and images are banned. The National Spiritual Assembly must get in touch with the Egyptian authorities and press for the official recognition of the Bahai Cause in that land. No further restrictions should be added to the qualifications required for voting at Bahai elections, for Shoghi Effendi has already laid down the essential conditions in his letters. (*Bahá'i News*, September, 1931)

Although in a general letter Shoghi Effendi had frankly addressed himself to the problem of international politics, he later is seriously concerned at learning that this plain speaking on his part is difficult to tie up with his definite instructions on the subject, namely: that the Bahais must under no circumstances take part in political discussions. Therefore, Ruhi Effendi is called upon to square the circle and reconcile the irreconcilable by stating that the friends should spread the *message* contained in that letter, but must do it *in a very judicious way lest the people think that we have entered the arena of politics with rather drastic programs of reforms.* (*Bahá'i News*, February, 1932)

Most careful attention is to be given to the completion and external decoration of the Bahá'i Temple. For *The Bahá'i World*, Vol. IV, Ruhi Effendi reports that the Guardian has created a new section to be devoted to Bahai poems and another to Bahai music. The Bahais are advised that in every Assembly, the cooperation of at least one local paper should be gained as a help toward a teaching campaign. A much loved book, *The Divine Art of Living*, is to be removed from circulation because these reported sayings of Abdul Baha do not carry his signature and, therefore,

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have not *the necessary binding power*. In this connection Ruhi Effendi conveys the message of the Guardian in the following words:—

All the other talks such as are included in Ahmad's diary or the other diaries of the pilgrims, do not fall under this category and could be considered only as interesting material to be taken for what they are worth.

—*Baha'i News*, February, 1932

A brief explanation is given concerning *Huquq* or religious taxation; nevertheless, at this time, the Bahais must reserve their financial resources for the completion of the Temple. There is no accurate statistics on the number of Bahais throughout the world and especially in Persia. (*Baha'i News*, March, 1932)

An explanation of the meaning of No. 9, which is the numerical value of the word *Bahá*, is given as follows: *B equals 2, h equals 5, a equals 1 and there is an accent at the end of the word which also equals 1; the "a" after the "B" is not written in Persian, so it does not count*. We find an excellent biographical sketch of Abul Qasim Khorassani, custodian of the international archives and caretaker of the gardens surrounding the Shrine of the Bab on Mt. Carmel. The Guardian was so pleased with this biography written by Ruhi Effendi that he orders the National Spiritual Assembly to publish it in *The Baha'i World*. (*Baha'i News*, April, 1932)

Youth should be encouraged in public speaking; all should study the literature of the movement. There should be a plan to raise funds for building the Temple, but such a plan should exclude any method whereby the help of non-Bahais would be included. (*Baha'i News*, July, 1932)

Advice is given not to hoard gold, yet make investments very secure. We are told that Shoghi Effendi had never said that the members of the National Spiritual Assembly should be renewed partially every year, or that it would be better that teachers be not elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, thus leaving administrative functions to those who cannot serve as teachers. Bahais are urged to arrange their vacations in such a way as to spend at least a few days at the Bahai Summer Schools. Mention is made as to why Shoghi Effendi engaged himself in the translation of the book *The Dawn-Breakers* and of the effect that has been made on those who received copies of the same; the Bahais are advised to hold classes for the study of this book. There is reference to the promotion of the Cause amongst the ranchers in the Western section of the United States and a plan for the Teaching Committee. In an indirect way, Shoghi Effendi condemns the method of fund raising used at Bahai Conventions. Writing on this latter subject, he comments:—

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Such gatherings for collections of funds are permissible if it is done with a true spirit of sacrifice, not when the audience is especially aroused to a frenzy and mob psychology is used to induce them to pay. . . . Shoghi Effendi is sure that the funds gathered at the last Convention was not due to the play of mob psychology but to the prayerful attitude of the friends and their desire to make further sacrifice.

—*Bahai News*, October, 1932

The liberty of an individual to express his own opinions should not be restricted so long as he makes it clear that these views are his own. (*Baha'i News*, November, 1932)

Detailed procedure in regard to the election of the members of Bahai Local and National Assemblies; observance of the Nineteen Day Feasts and value of religious Hymns. (*Baha'i News*, February, 1933)

Bahais are warned not to refer in their public utterances to any political figures, nor side with them. They are likewise told that:—

Before you extend any sort of help to, or affiliate yourself with the World Fellowship of Faiths, Shoghi Effendi feels that the National Spiritual Assembly should find out whether its purpose is in any way political, especially now that its leadership is transferred from Rabbi Wise to Mr. DasGupta.

—*Baha'i News*, April, 1933

Stress is made on providing for the financial needs of the Cause and completing the construction of the Temple; there are provisions for the admittance of new members as *declared* Bahais and for the expulsion of others. Shoghi Effendi advises that the Assemblies should not act hurriedly in either case, otherwise they can do much harm to the body of the Cause; he is likewise pleased over the report of the construction of the dome of the Temple (*Baha'i News*, May, 1933).

In this manner, Ruhi Effendi attended to all the details connected with the running of an organization—legitimate details, innocuous details, rulings, restrictions—most of them tending to obscure the purpose of the Founders. With the minds of all those in authority fixed on administration, it was inevitable that the spirit of the Cause, so apparent in earlier days, should be submerged and stifled. Ruhi Effendi fulfilled his role to the letter. He was controlled by the Guardian in much the same way as Charlie McCarthy is manipulated by his own *deus ex machina*; and, thanks to his apparent willingness and unquestionable loyalty, the chains of a purely material organization settled heavily around the body of the Bahai Cause, where they still remain.

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A Promotional Enterprise

I will now mention instances and show documents which reveal Ruhi Effendi as trusted and authoritative agent in a promotional enterprise planned to establish Haifa as the seat of temporal power in the Bahai Church:—

For many, many years the American Bahais, besides contributing large sums towards the construction of the Temple and the maintenance of the Administration, have responded to the suggestion coming from Haifa that they buy lands on Mt. Carmel adjacent to the Shrine of the Bab. As a consequence of these individual investments, properties have, in due time and under due pressure, been turned over to the National Spiritual Assembly and, in order to facilitate the proceedings, the Guardian advised that they be transferred legally in the name of Ruhi Effendi, who thus received power of attorney to represent the owners and *to appear before the Land Registries, Courts and Government Offices, sign applications, deeds and other documents, admit receipt of purchase price and also to appoint other or others in his place and revoke at pleasure such substitutes.*

I do not know whether the recent excommunication of Ruhi Effendi by the Guardian affects the latter's legal standing as representative of the American owners of land on Mt. Carmel. That in itself is an interesting aspect of the general problem which a lawyer might like to study; however, the point that I wish to make at this juncture is the fact that Shoghi Effendi confided in his secretary so completely that he placed on his shoulders great and permanent responsibilities. We might now examine an article in *Baha'i News* of April, 1933, which deals with this plan of land transference. It includes an explanatory letter of Ruhi Effendi:—

How to Transfer Mt. Carmel Land to the Palestine Branch

Since the preliminary notice on this matter was published a few months ago, a number of individual believers have taken steps to transfer their land on Mt. Carmel to the Palestine Branch of the National Spiritual Assembly. By these generous donations, thousands of dollars worth of this precious property is now held in perpetuity for Baha'i use.

Specific instructions how to effect the transfer of legal titles are now supplied in the following letter and Power of Attorney.

"Shoghi Effendi wishes me to send you these few lines to enclose a copy of the power of attorney that our lawyer here has framed in case any one of the friends desires to transfer the property he holds around the Shrine to the name of the National Assembly.

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"As I told you in my previous letter, by law such lands can only be transferred during one's lifetime. Otherwise it will go to the heirs according to prescribed shares. The will of the deceased is inoperative in such cases. Shoghi Effendi does not want to bring any form of pressure upon the friends. They are naturally free to keep the property in their name and have it go to their heirs.

"In case they express the desire to make such a transfer and have the property revert to the Cause then they have to sign this power of attorney before a Notary Public and then have it countersigned by the British Consul in that locality.

"The power of attorney is in my name and not in the name of the Guardian because he represents the N. S. A. and will sign for them. He cannot represent both parties to the transfer.

"For the transfer there are some expenses, among them 3 per cent of the value of the land, which is government taxes. They do not, however, amount to very much.

"Please note that besides putting their name and signature they have also to state the number of the deed which is mentioned on the Certificate of Registration which they hold.

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

Yours ever sincerely,
RUHI AFNAN

Haifa, Palestine.
October 2, 1932."

Power of Attorney

I/we the undersigned..... do hereby give power of attorney to Mr. Ruhi Afnan of Haifa, authorizing him in my/our place and name to sell, transfer and register in the name of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada—Palestine Branch the property registered in my/our name under deed No.....situate in Haifa and also to administer the said property, to effect partition, parcellation, correction of area and boundaries, sue in Courts and generally do such things and steps in connection with the said property as my said agent shall think fit, and for that purpose to appear before the Land Registries, Courts and Government Offices, sign applications, deeds and other documents, admit receipt of purchase price, and also to appoint other or others in his place and revoke at pleasure such substitutes.

In Witness Whereof I/We Have Set Hereunto My/Our Hands.

The Palestine Branch

In his resolve to organize the Bahai Cause, Shoghi Effendi has incorporated the Baha'i Assembly of Palestine as a *Branch* of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada. The

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text of application to the Palestine Government points out that this Association is composed of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Ruhi Afnan and such other persons as may be appointed from time to time by the Guardian. The letter to the Commissioner of Haifa making application for the incorporation of the Bahai Society is signed jointly by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani as President, and Ruhi Afnan as Secretary; the address of the incorporated Bahai Society being given as:—

**Persian Colony
c/o Ruhi Afnan, Haifa**

These remarkable Papers are published in *The Baha'i World*, 1930-1932, Vol. IV, pp. 165-166 and here are the texts:—

Documents Related to the Incorporation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada as a Recognized Religious Society in Palestine

(1) TEXT OF APPLICATION TO THE PALESTINE GOVERNMENT

Haifa the 8th of April, 1930

**To the District Commissioner,
Haifa**

Sir,

In conformity with the notice dated the 26th of August, 1919, regarding registration of Societies I beg to request that "The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada—Palestine Branch" be registered as a Society under the Ottoman Law of the 3rd of August, 1925.

The address of the Society is: Persian Colony, c/o Ruhi Afnan, Haifa.

The objects of the Society are stated in the attached Articles.

The Management of the Society is vested in Shoghi Effendi Rabbani; Ruhi Afnan is acting as Secretary of the Society.

Two copies of the Society's Regulations are attached.

Yours faithfully,

**Shoghi Rabbani (President)
Ruhi Afnan (Secretary)**

**Seal of
National Spiritual
Assembly of the
Baha'is of the
United States and
Canada—Palestine Branch.**

(2) ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF "THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHAI'S OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA—PALESTINE BRANCH."

1. The Name.

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The name of the Association shall be:

"The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada—Palestine Branch" (hereinafter called the Association).

2. Membership.

The Association is composed of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani or whoever may lawfully succeed him as the Guardian of Baha'i Faith, Rubi Afnan and such other persons as may be appointed from time to time by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani or his lawful successors with consent of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada organized and existing under the Declaration of Trust adopted on the 4th of April, 1927, New York City, New York, U. S. A.

3. Purposes.

The Association is formed in order to hold and to administer various movable and immovable properties belonging to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada in Palestine, and generally to act on behalf of and to represent the said Assembly.

4. Management.

Shoghi Effendi Rabbani or whoever may lawfully succeed him as the Guardian of Baha'i Faith or any other person appointed by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani or his lawful successors with approval of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada shall be entitled to act on behalf of the Association, to sign any deeds or documents, to represent the Association in any dealings or transactions, to enter into any agreements, to receive moneys and to give effectual receipts or discharges, to appear before the Courts and Government Offices, to acquire properties, lands, houses, and other immovables in the name of the Association and to dispose of any such properties, lands, houses and immovables by way of sale, mortgage, gift, partition or otherwise and generally to do validly any acts which may be lawfully done by the Association.

5. The affairs of the Association shall be conducted in conformity with such directions and instructions as may be given by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.

6. Dissolution.

In the event of dissolution of the Association all and any properties movable or immovable and all and any assets of the Association shall be disposed of in such a manner as may be decided by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.

7. Alteration of Articles.

The present Articles can be altered by decision of Shoghi

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Effendi Rabbani or whoever may lawfully succeed him as the Guardian of Baha'i Faith with approval of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.

Certified true copy of regulations submitted to the District Commissioner's offices for registration.

**(Sigd) E. MacLaren,
for District Commissioner.**

Haifa 15.5.30

**Seal of
National Spiritual
Assembly of the
Baha'is of the
United States and
Canada—Palestine Branch.**

According to the above Papers, Ruhi Effendi is a charter member of the Incorporated Bahai Society in Palestine, as well as Secretary with power of attorney, while the National Spiritual Assembly, an American organization, is the controlling factor of a Palestinian association. This latter fact is made clear in *Article Six* for, here we find that in the event of the break-up of the organization, all its properties, movable and immovable, shall be *disposed of in such manner, as may be decided by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada.*

Oases in the Desert of Rules

Reverting to the letters written by Ruhi Effendi in his role as secretary: we have realized that as transmitter of the messages and orders from Shoghi Effendi to the American Bahais, he fulfilled his task in a most exemplary manner. The dominant note, which he was expected to strike unremittingly, i.e.: the unconditional authority of the National Spiritual Assembly, comes out full and strong in every communication, making a recurrent theme which never fades nor wavers. Indeed, it can be said that the instrument was at all moments tuned to the required pitch.

At the same time, although Ruhi Effendi Afnan acted as spokesman for the Administration, he also, by chance or mischance, advocated the Bahai Cause itself. Here and there, we find in his letters certain liberal and inspiring sentiments, and can see him again as the witness to eternal truths which he started out to be. Thus, Ruhi Effendi speaks as an emancipated soul to other emancipated souls in a language which remains part of his being; and these paragraphs, rising like verdant oases in the dreary desert of rules and requirements, evoke a picture of more wholesome days. I like to think that he consciously, or even a little mischievously, put something over on his

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masters; but, whether or not such a supposition is justified, he did contribute something genuine and vibrant that warms the heart and comforts the soul.

With this thought in mind, it is something of an experience to reread the letters of Ruhi Effendi; to wade through the dry legalisms, and the arid wastes of materialism, and to come with a sudden delightful shock upon the Bahai ideals expressed in the Master's own modern, universal spirit and with his contagious energy. Therefore, may I invite the reader to wander awhile in the domain of Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha? It is to be found in the letters which came from Haifa, as written by the Guardian's secretary, Ruhi Effendi Afnan.

This failure of material civilization should bring man near to spiritual matters. Working for material comfort and prosperity is becoming so useless and hopeless that we may well turn our attention more to God and the future life.

—Baha'i News, April, 1932

As you mention in your letter the Cause needs some more people who are able to shoulder its responsibilities and extend real help in promoting its many interests, both spiritual and material. These people whom we are so eagerly awaiting to appear will not, however, come of their own accord. They have to be brought in. It is for us to become active and really spread the Message.

—Baha'i News, July, 1932

From every corner of the earth letters come . . . asking for teachers . . . The only way we can satisfy that need is to have every Baha'i follow the command of Baha'u'llah and become himself a teacher. And that task is not so very impossible; it only needs a thorough knowledge of the teachings and a burning desire to spread the Message.

—Baha'i News, July, 1932

As to teaching work in colleges and universities, this is very important, for students as a whole are open-minded and little influenced by tradition. They would easily enter the Cause if the subject is properly presented and their intellect and sentiments properly satisfied. . . . The movement surely needs educated and devoted souls who will through their deeds as well as pen promulgate the teachings throughout the world.

—Baha'i News, July, 1932

A group that does not progress and show signs of life will soon die out and be forgotten. We have to keep virile and remain active if we desire our Cause to prosper and become an active force in shaping the destiny of the world.

—Baha'i News, July, 1932

The present condition of the world—its economic instability,

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social dissensions, political dissatisfactions and international distrust—should awaken the youth from their slumber and make them inquire what the future is going to bring. It is surely they who will suffer most if some calamity sweeps over the world. They should therefore open their eyes to the existing conditions, study the evil forces that are at work and then with a concerted effort arise and bring about the necessary reforms—reforms that shall contain within their scope the spiritual as well as social and political phases of human life.

—*Baha'i News*, November, 1932

Moreover, it is the duty of the Baha'is to help one another in time of difficulty—in times such as these when our economic life is disrupted and as a result innumerable people are left without work and proper means of livelihood.

—*Baha'i News*, November, 1932

You mention the need of the Cause for capable and enlightened souls who would arise and help the promotion of our beloved Faith and the carrying through of its divine plans. . . . It may be because we have failed to do our best, in living the life, and promoting the spread of the Message to the best of our ability. We have first to create the material with which we have to work and then hope to succeed. In the *Beyan* the Bab says that every religion of the past was fit to become universal. The only reason why they fail to attain that mark was the incompetence of their followers. He then proceeds to give a definite promise that this would not be the fate of the revelation of "Him whom God would make manifest," that it will become universal and include all the people of the world. This shows that we will ultimately succeed. But could we not through our shortcomings, failures to sacrifice and reluctance to concentrate our efforts in spreading the Cause, retard the realization of that ideal? And what would that mean? It shall mean that we will be held responsible before God, that the race will remain longer in its state of waywardness, that wars would not be so soon averted, that human suffering will last longer.

—*Baha'i News*, April, 1932

The youth should be encouraged to train themselves in public speaking while they are still pursuing their studies in schools or colleges. It is surely very necessary that the friends should keep in touch with the modern social movements.

—*Baha'i News*, July, 1932

When such a crisis sweeps over the world no person should hope to remain intact. We belong to an organic unit and when one part of the organism suffers all the rest of the body will feel its consequences. This is in fact the reason why Baha'u'llah calls our attention to the unity of mankind. But as Baha'is we should not let such hardships weaken our hope in the future.

—*Baha'i News*, July, 1932

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The best Assembly is the one that capitalizes the talents of all the members of the group and keeps them busy in some form of active participation in serving the Cause and spreading the Message.

—*Bahá'i News*, November, 1932

The friends have a great duty, first toward the Cause and then towards society at large. Bahá'u'lláh has come to the world with a divine Message and devoted all His life and withstood all forms of persecution in the hope of establishing it firmly. We are now the trustees of that Mission. It is for us to bring that task begun by Bahá'u'lláh to a final consummation. Should we fail we have been untrue to our Lord and also remained deaf to the cry of humanity seeking salvation.

—*Bahá'i News*, February, 1933

Chapter V
THE SPEAKER

*Your speech is simple, my Master, but not theirs who
talk of you.*

*I understand the voice of your stars and the silence
of your trees.*

—Rabindranath Tagore
Fruit-Gathering, Stanza XV

Chapter V

THE SPEAKER

An Unparalleled Orator

The Bahai Cause is a revelation, in that it has disclosed the *Plan* of the Supreme Being for the establishment and continuance of a *Moral Society* on the earth; and the accomplishment of the plan is dependent upon speech. Now, mankind as a whole is endowed with this faculty, but only a very few have developed the sense into a talent, while it is but here and there throughout the centuries that the exercise of this natural capacity has become an act of genius.

In the case of Abdul Baha, words were the golden harvest that followed the blossoming of spirit, for the fragrant hours of his consciousness dropped half their petals into his speech. His was the voice of the heart which came from the heart and went to the heart. Simple yet profound, broad yet pointed, it was at once the easiest of languages and the most difficult; easy, because attuned ears understood it without effort; difficult, because certain ears could not catch its vibrations. Abdul Baha's discourse was like the rich carpet of his own Persian native land; it rolled to the feet of the observer and extended before him, revealing a wealth of subject matter, infinite coloring, delicacy, craftsmanship and inspiration. He was an unparalleled orator, the first in the Bahai Cause, and the secret of his eloquence was in his vehement simplicity. His thoughts breathed the breath of life and his words burned with the brilliancy of suns and stars.

Abdul Baha spoke extemporaneously and spontaneously. He never used a manuscript, nor did he keep at hand any note whatsoever in order to refresh his memory or guide his theme toward its logical climax. He discoursed out of the abundance of his knowledge and spiritual experience; and, when he referred to the writings of Baha-O-Llah, he did not read from them, but talked about them. He set his pattern of speech before the Bahais and wished them to emulate it; accompanying it the while with the resources of their own minds and spirits, and always adapting it to the changing circumstances of time and place.

Nevertheless, in certain Bahai groups in the United States there existed, and for that matter still exists, a persistent inclination to exclude all public speaking. Many thought it appropriate to confine themselves to the reading of the Tablets. This limited conception of turning Bahai meet-

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ings into reading circles—the reading done mostly by simple folk who understand little of the subject, amused Abdul Baha greatly. He wondered why these people were averse to delivering the message out of their hearts; and he often wrote on this topic, stating plainly that the most important service was to deliver addresses and speeches, as fluent and eloquent as was possible. Thus, he encouraged the Bahais to speak, advising them *to read but sparingly*. They must unloose the tongue, promulgate the fragrances and diffuse the words of God. They must present to the public the proofs and evidences of this Cause *with the language of fire*—so that the souls may be exhilarated and the minds become the arena of tumult and the seat of exclamation. Then divine inspiration would descend, the bounties of the Holy Spirit would be conferred, the breezes from the Paradise of Abha would waft and the glad-tidings of Baha-O-Llah would spread across the world.

The basis of a Bahai address must be the oneness of the world of humanity, so that religious fanaticism, sectarian bias, racial prejudice and political rivalry may be removed from the hearts of men. In referring to his Western tour and his addresses before sundry audiences, he would often state that the Bahais should imitate his own conduct and manner. When a teacher delivers an address, his words must first of all have a supreme and powerful effect upon himself; then the hearer will likewise be affected. His utterances must be like unto flames of fire, burning away the veils of separation and disunity.

Meeting the World on its Own Ground

From 1898, when the first vanguard of American pilgrims visited Acca, Palestine, up to 1910, Abdul Baha's talks before visitors were mainly in the form of conversation. He dealt with the problems of religion, philosophy, science and art, according to the questions that were put to him; and, of course, he touched upon all these subjects in the countless Tablets that were ever on their way to his followers. Yet, he did not speak in public meetings nor make what may be termed addresses. The conditions of his life rendered such activity impossible, for it must be recalled that from childhood to old age he had been held a captive. Then, in the year 1908, the Ottoman government was overturned and the political prisons of the Empire were thrown open by the Young Turks. Then was seen the miracle of miracles; one which, as far as I know, cannot be matched in human history. Another person, in like circumstances, would have retained upon his mind and body the marks of confinement. The spirit might yet be intrepid,

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but the elasticity would be gone. In an instance of this kind, one would denote signs of abstraction, probably of vagueness; one could not expect to find a man at the apex of his powers, and certainly not a man of the world, deft in his dealings, assured in his every move, a modernist far beyond the *moderns of his day and generation*. Yet such was the Master at the age of sixty-seven as he passed out of life-long retirement and emerged into public view. In his case, there were no inhibitions of whatsoever kind; no sense that his career was drawing to a close; no idea that his mission could be fulfilled at a distance. Abdul Baha, without the slightest hesitation, stepped forth to meet the world on its own ground.

After a stay in Egypt, he crossed the continent and arrived in London on Monday, September 3, 1911. The great majority of articles that appeared in the press were both restrained and dignified in tone. Everywhere, wonder was expressed that forty years of imprisonment should have left behind so few physical traces. In describing him, W. Tudor Pole in an article published in *Star of the West*, September 27, 1911, writes:—

Abdul Baha receives all who come to him, whether great or small. . . . Countless press correspondents have been received and they usually retire from the interview greatly impressed by his noble dignity and spiritual simplicity. Many of the London dailies refer to him as the great Persian Prophet. . . . Abdul Baha has been visited by many well-known leaders of thought now in this country.

He rises about 5 A. M. and works for some hours at his correspondence. Interviews commence soon after 9 A. M. and last until midday. After lunch he takes a short rest and then usually drives out into the parks or to visit various people who are deeply interested in his work. Gatherings of friends take place nearly every evening and he has given some wonderful discourses at such times. . . . On Sunday evening, September 10th, Abdul Baha accepted an invitation from Rev. R. J. Campbell to visit the City Temple. The visit was kept secret, but the congregation was as usual very large, probably well over 2,000. Abdul Baha spoke from the pulpit for about 9 minutes and the tense thrill vibrating throughout the whole building was most strongly marked. He spoke in Persian in full, vibrant tones and the whole congregation was held spellbound. For the first time probably, in the history of the Bahai Movement, its venerable leader addressed a great public gathering, and those of us who were privileged to attend can never forget the wonderful impression produced. It seemed to us as if a new page in history was being turned over and as if a new religious and spiritual epoch was being outwardly launched upon an expectant world before our very eyes. . . .

His presence among us is a profound blessing and its unifying spiritual effect will grow unceasingly. . . . Abdul Baha, Servant of God! No other title would be so appropriate or so dignified. The

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work now being so triumphantly brought to fruition by this great Master of Men will endure throughout all future ages and the great spiritual ideals that lie behind it will become actual realities. . . . Surely we require no greater inspiration than this!

In the same issue of *Star of the West*, September 27, 1911, there is the reprint of an article entitled *Towards Spiritual Unity* which appeared in *The Christian Commonwealth* of September 13th above the signature "A. D." This long article is valuable in many respects, mainly because it records one of the first interviews between Abdul Baha and an English correspondent. "A. D." opens as follows:—

For years past, word has been coming to the West that a new prophet has arisen in the East, and that a great religious movement, starting in Persia, was spreading far and wide. Reports were vague and conflicting, but gradually the main facts emerged. . . . On Monday evening of last week "The Master," as his followers naturally call him, arrived in London, and on Tuesday I had the privilege of meeting him.

"What is he like?" Let me quote the words of one who visited him at Akka a few years ago:—

"He is of middle stature, strongly built. He wears flowing light-colored robes. On his head is a light buff fez with a white cloth wound about it. His long grey hair rests on his shoulders. His forehead is broad, full, and high, his nose slightly aquiline, his moustaches and beard, the latter full, though not heavy, nearly (now quite) white. His eyes are grey and blue, large and both soft and penetrating. His bearing is simple, but there is grace, dignity and even majesty about his movements. . . . We see the benignity and the kindness of his countenance. . . ."

During his long imprisonment he thought not of himself, but of others; he enjoyed continual communion with God, he ministered to the needs of his fellow-prisoners, and it was because he lived this unselfish life that he survived while many others perished. "A captive for the Cause of God," his interpreter explained, "his prison was to him as a palace. His body was suffering, but his soul was free."

The invariable tendency on the part of the followers of a great religious leader is to attribute to him supernatural powers. Abdul Baha emphatically disclaims possessing any such, and even deprecates the description of himself as a prophet. He told me he had never spoken a single word implying that he had right to such an appellation. "I am simply a servant of God," he said, "and I do not wish to be called anything more than that." He assured me that he has no desire to found another sect. "The foundation truth of Baha'u'llah is the foundation truth of all religions. . . . Therefore, the Bahais have for the followers of other religions the greatest love and yearning, because they know that mankind is one. Baha'u'llah seeks to promote and establish friendship and union. He addresses himself not to a sect, but to the whole world. . . ."

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It is not surprising that people in increasing numbers are attracted to the Bahai faith by its catholicity, the loftiness of its ethic, the simplicity of its teaching, its complete freedom from narrow and exclusive dogma. It has no organization, no hierarchy, no ritual, no fixed places and times of meetings; in short, it is spirit and life. It does not seek to proselytize; you can be a Bahai without ceasing to be a Christian, a Jew, or Mohammadan. There are adherents of the Bahai faith in every country in the world. . . .

It has been my good fortune to meet Abdul Baha several times during the past week. In one conversation I sought his impressions of England . . . already he has been much impressed by the freedom we enjoy. "I admire the liberty you have in England and the use you make of it," he said. "Every person in this country can go his own way and say what he thinks without any one making him afraid. In fact, he is king of himself."

"Do you consider we have too much liberty?"

"Oh, no; you all seem to be perfectly comfortable and perfectly safe. Freedom of thought and speech enlarges the circle of one's understanding and leads to progress and unity. . . ."

The First Speech

The meeting at the City Temple is a landmark in history, for it was there that the flood of Abdul Baha's utterance was unloosed upon the world. Let us then continue reading the article of "A. D". By means of his description, we shall transport ourselves over the years and take our places in the vast congregation at that evening service. While all are joining in the hymn which precedes the sermon, a venerable figure in Persian robes slowly ascends the stairs of the pulpit; then, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, Pastor of the City Temple, introduces his distinguished guest, saying:—

This evening we have in the pulpit of the City Temple the leader of one of the most remarkable religious movements of this or any age. . . . The Bahai movement, as it is called, in Hither Asia rose on that soil just as spontaneously as Christianity rose in the middle territories adjoining, and that faith—which, by the way, is very closely akin to, I think I might say identical with, the spiritual purpose of Christianity—that movement stands for the spiritual unity of mankind; it stands for universal peace among the nations. These are good things and the man who teaches them . . . must be a good man as well as great. Abdul Baha is on a visit to this country—a private visit—but he wished to see the City Temple; and I think I am right in saying, for the first time in his life he has consented to lift his voice in public. He does not address public meetings, he does not preach sermons; he is just a religious teacher. He spent forty years in prison for his faith, and from his prison directed the efforts of his followers. There is not much in the way of organization, but simple trust in the Spirit

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of God. We, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is to us and always will be the Light of the World, view with sympathy and respect every movement of the Spirit of God in the experience of mankind, and therefore we give greeting to Abdul Baha—I do not know whether I could say in the name of the whole Christian community—that may be too much—but I think in the name of all who share the spirit of our Master, and are trying to live their lives in that spirit. Abdul Baha, I think, intends to say a word or two in response to this greeting that I address to him in your name.

"A. D.," the English correspondent, continues his article as follows:—

Abdul Baha then advanced to the front of the pulpit and addressed the congregation. He spoke for eight minutes in Persian with considerable animation, his voice rising and falling as in a rhythmic chant. Towards the close he placed the palms of his hands together as in prayer. The translation was read afterwards by Mr. W. Tudor Pole, as follows:—

. . . This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men, and a drawing together of all races and all classes. . . . The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men shall live as brothers. . . . There is one God; mankind is one; and the foundations of religion are one.

Mr. Charles Mason Remey, who had been called to join Abdul Baha in Europe, gives an account of the meeting in a letter published in *Star of the West*, October 16, 1911. He also describes the Master's method of teaching. We will quote a portion of this letter:—

He spoke for several minutes with an increasing forcefulness. . . . Then a stillness and a quietness fell over the assemblage and as Abdul Baha raised his hands in prayer and benediction, we were all conscious of the Omnipresent Spirit of God, for every soul seemed to vibrate in unison with the soul of Abdul Baha, who is God's servant here upon earth today. . . .

(Abdul Baha's) methods of teaching are positive in the extreme without the slightest suggestion of negation. In meeting people of all manner of thought from orthodoxy to atheism, his one object is to strike a positive sympathetic chord with the individual.

Through accentuating and dwelling upon the ground of common thought, spiritual chords of Unity are extended from him to many souls, and through ignoring the differences, those destructive, negative forces, finding nothing to set them in vibration, are as non-existent.

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From this we can learn a valuable lesson in teaching. It is not only unnecessary but also very harmful for one to attempt to dislodge religious beliefs from the mind of a truth-seeker by any other method than that employed by Abdul Baha.

Thousands of Speeches

That first eight minute speech was the mother that gave birth to thousands of other speeches—bright, happy children which tramped forth from the mind and heart of Abdul Baha to bless mankind with their messages of goodwill and fellowship. A percentage of these speeches have, since 1912, been brought together and published in book form, but many more, in the possession of Bahais throughout the world, are not yet in print. The following is a very incomplete list of the published works that contain the texts of the speeches:—

1. *Abdul Baha in London. Addresses and Notes of Conversations, 1912.*
2. *Talks of Abdul Baha Given in Paris, 1912.*
3. *The Wisdom of Abdul Baha, 1911-1912.*
4. *Abdul Baha in New York, 1912.*
5. *Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy, 1918.*
6. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Vol. I, 1922, Vol. II, 1925.*

There are besides other works which carry, either in part or in whole, the words of Abdul Baha and extracts from his conversations and talks, as recorded in the diaries kept by his secretaries or other individuals. A list of these may assist the student of Bahai literature:—

1. *Compilation, Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha, 1918.*
2. *Bahai Scriptures, 1923.*
3. *The Divine Art of Living, Abdul Baha, 1926.*
4. *The Oneness of Mankind, Baha-U-Llah, Abdul Baha, 1927.*
5. *Foundations of World Unity, Abdul Baha, 1927.*
6. *Abdul Baha in Egypt, 1929.*
7. *The Baha'i Peace Program, From the Writings of Abdul Baha, 1930.*

Besides the above books, I have in my library a precious Manuscript which contains textual translations from the original Persian copies of his talks delivered in Europe and America. The translations, made by a well-known East Indian Bahai, were approved by Abdul Baha himself.

Thus, it is evident that the great speeches delivered by Abdul Baha during his sojourn throughout Europe and America, from 1911 to 1913,

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have resulted in the creation of a library of information on the Bahai Cause which is a treasure-house of knowledge and inspiration. From the day when he set foot on the soil of the Western continent, *The Star of the West*, *World Order* and other Bahai publications in Asia, Europe and America have dedicated their pages year in and year out to the reproduction of his public talks. He arrived in England, September 10, 1911. After a sojourn in that country, he visited France and then returned to Egypt, from whence on March 25, 1912, he sailed for America. Reaching New York on April 11th, he journeyed throughout the United States and Canada until December 5th. On his homeward trip, he visited England, Scotland, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Egypt, and arrived in Haifa, Palestine, on December 10, 1913. During all this time, Abdul Baha was occupied in teaching the Cause and expanding the boundaries of the movement, and as we can see, he provided the Bahai world with a supply of timeless literature that is applicable to all conditions and circumstances and appears to be almost inexhaustible. All this within a period of two years.

Picking up the February, April and May copies of *World Order*, of this year, 1942, we, to our delight, come across three, until now unpublished speeches of Abdul Baha delivered in Baltimore and New York in the year 1912. Their titles are not only suggestive of the vitality of the message but also of the hopes and aspirations of the speaker. *All are servants of God* rings assuringly in our ears; *Be Ever Ready* lifts us out of our sluggishness; *The Happiness of Mankind Will be Realized* puts us on our mettle and sets us to work with hope and confidence.

Although Abdul Baha's physical presence has for long been removed from our midst, his marvelous speeches, like an omnipresent army, have been assisting us by day and by night; gaining for us victories without number. They have been used in a variety of ways, and are absolutely essential to Bahai work.

(1) There exist today many excellent compilations of extracts and quotations (published and unpublished) selected by individuals out of the never-ending mass of Abdul Baha's talks.

(2) The talks have supplied fitting texts for speeches delivered during all these years by Bahai teachers and non-Bahai scholars.

(3) Few Bahai meetings are considered complete without reading some suitable parts from the talks for the edification and enlightenment of the audience.

(4) Numberless general articles have been published by Bahai writ-

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ers and others in which the authors try to prove their points and clinch their arguments by quoting from Abdul Baha's talks.

(5) These talks have provoked creative discussions and have suggested collateral and useful ideas to many authors, speakers and writers.

(6) The Editors of the Bahai Publications have for years made suitable and interesting selections out of these speeches and published them monthly under various titles. The bound volumes of the *Star of the West*, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1929 contain many such selections which, at a glance, give us the variety of subjects dealt with by Abdul Baha. Here are some of the titles:—*The Progress in Religion—the question of Evolution. The Morn of Unity. Two Kinds of Education. Education must include the Spiritual ideas of World Peace and Brotherhood. Reality is One. Ideal Brotherhood. The Story of Baha-U-Llah's Life. What is Faith? If Persia and America Co-operate. The Brilliant Star—Christ. The Divine Perfections of Jesus Christ. The Spiritual Foundation of Education. Religion the basis for an enduring Civilization. The divine Phase of Economics. How to Make Life Successful. The two Natures of Man. God's Perfect Laws. The Existence of God. Equality of Man and Woman. Immortality. What is Death? The Accident of Color. The Elemental Atom and its Composition. Is Disarmament Possible? Communication with the other World.*

The above titles were not chosen by the Master, for he never entitled his speeches; but were selected later as descriptive of the topics dealt with in the various talks. The titles are interesting in themselves for they indicate the broad field of subject matter covered by Abdul Baha before his Western audiences.

This listing of records applying to the Master's European and American journeys would not be complete without a mention of newspaper accounts. I have in my library over twenty large clipping books containing news and feature articles, mostly illustrated, which appeared in the press of England, Scotland, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, the United States, Canada and Egypt. These articles and interviews show the impression made on the spot by Abdul Baha and will be exceedingly valuable in the hands of future historians.

The Inhabitants of the World are Ready to Hearken

On his return from his Western tour, Abdul Baha, in a Tablet written in Haifa, continues to accentuate the virtues of teaching. In part, he says:—

In short, although Abdul-Baha considers himself as a drop, yet

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this drop is connected with the Most Great Sea. Although he looks upon himself as an atom, yet this atom is related to the world-illuminating sun. As it is said: "The Originator of all these voices is the King himself;" or in other words: "It is through His assistance."

Unquestionably this physical body and human energy would have been unable to stand this constant wear and tear, and were it not for the support of the angel of Providence even the bones of this servant would have mouldered away. But the aid and help of His Highness the Desired One was the Guardian and Protector of the weak and humble Abdul-Bahá. Through the many annoyances and inconveniences of the journey, physical exhaustion was produced in the nerves and the various indispositions caused poor health, but the Spirit was so energized that this great weakness and excessive feebleness disappeared in a short period of time, and ere long Abdul-Bahá will be occupied again with reading and writing. . . .

Consider, that the Apostles of Christ were few in number, but because they were filled to overflowing with His Graces, and the essence of His Advice and Commandments were circulating, like unto the spirit, through their veins and arteries, to such an extent that one could find nothing else throughout their beings save His Love, and they girded up the loins of endeavor to convey the Message. Now it has become manifest what a tremendous effect and result their services produced! We must also act accordingly and follow in their footsteps.

O ye divine believers! Today any soul who is a teacher of the Cause is confirmed. The Teachers are in the front rank, are favored at the Threshold of the Almighty and helped from the Kingdom of ABHÁ! The believers of God must exercise the utmost love, respect and consideration towards the teachers;—so that in whatever place they may enter, joy and happiness be obtained. But regarding the qualifications of the teachers, they are revealed in the Divine Tablets. They must adorn themselves with those attributes. I declare by God, beside whom there is no God, that if today a weak mosquito is characterized with the qualifications of the teachers and summons the people to the Divine Kingdom, it will become a soaring falcon of heaven and the ephemeral moth will be changed into an eagle of the apex of the Merciful; the drop will be transformed into a surging ocean and the atom will emit the brilliancy of the sun. From every part the cry of, "*Where are the teachers?*" is being raised, and from the Kingdom of ABHÁ, the voice of, "*Where are the attracted ones. Where are the severed ones? Where are the sanctified ones?*" reaches to the ear of intelligence. The inhabitants of the world have attained to a most astonishing capacity and are ready to hearken to this Call.

O ye friends of God! Show ye an effort, put ye forth an extraordinary exertion—so that this Candle may become the witness of

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every congregation, and this lay or strain be the Cause of happiness to every human soul. . . .

from "*Trumpet Call to the East and West*". Tablet by Abdul-Baha Abbas, translated on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Palestine, Sept. 22, 1914—in *Star of the West* Vol. V, November 23, 1914, No. 14.

September in England

On page 79 of *Abdul Baha in London*, we find a chapter in which is described the Master's stay at the Clifton Guest House in Bristol during the week-end of September 23rd to 25th, 1911. This is as lovely an account of the Master as one could read anywhere. One sees him talking with his British friends, attending a general reception in his honor, driving along the countryside and walking on the downs; finally, we have a picture of him gathering together the servants of the Clifton Guest House and thanking them for their care of him as he speaks on the dignity of labor and gives to each a tangible remembrance of his visit. Let us hold in our consciousness this scene in a suburban English town, with Abdul Baha as the central figure, the while noting the date: *September, 1911*.

Thirteen years have rolled into the lap of eternity, and, taking a mental trip back to England, we find ourselves once more in the month of September. It is 1924.

We do not see the Master; that gracious presence is no longer on the earth, but his place is not vacant. A youthful figure is standing before a British audience, instead of that so familiar, patriarchal one; an untried voice is raised, substituting those rich, powerful tones, yet the message is the same. Let us then focus our attention on Ruhi Effendi, a young man of twenty-four years, as he steps to the front and takes up his grandfather's work. This is his maiden trip to the West and he comes as personal representative of the Guardian of the Bahai Cause.

The occasion is *The Conference of Some Living Religions Within the British Empire* which held sessions in London from September 22nd to October 3rd, 1924. The official report by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Great Britain, signed by its joint secretaries, E. J. Rosenberg and G. P. Simpson, is published in *The Bahai World*, 1926-1928, Vol. II, p. 225. It reads as follows:—

The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 afforded opportunity for holding a number of conferences on many subjects of imperial interest. Amongst these was one on "*Some Living Religions Within the British Empire*," organized by the School of Oriental Studies and the Sociological Society, the purpose of which was to

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render more widely known the Faiths now prevailing in the Eastern and Western Dominions of the British Commonwealth. With this object in view it was decided by the Executive Committee of the Conference that the papers to be presented should be contributed by adherents of each religion, who, while touching lightly on creed and dogma, should treat chiefly of the everyday results of the teachings as evidenced in the personal and social life of its followers.

It was originally intended that the Conference should be held in one of the halls at the Wembley Exhibition, but owing to difficulties which arose with regard to accommodation, it was held at the Imperial Institute, South Kensington, from September 22nd to October 3rd, 1924.

Amongst the twelve or more living religions dealt with, the Bahá'í religion naturally found its place, both because of its own inherent importance and because of its widespread range throughout the Empire, covering as it does not only Eastern but also Western countries.

The Bahá'í paper to be presented to the Conference was written, at the express wish of the Guardian of the Cause (Shoghi Effendi), under the supervision of a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, by Mr. Horace Holley—the other members of the committee being Mr. Mountfort Mills and Mrs. Parsons. It was subsequently revised by some member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Great Britain, and was read at the meeting on September 25, 1924, by Mr. Mountfort Mills, the chair being taken by Dr. Walter Walsh, the leader of the Free Religious Movement.

The Assembly came to the conclusion that it would be desirable to bring out more fully the practical results obtained through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and a short supplementary paper was therefore written by Ruhi Afnan with the direct advice of Shoghi Effendi, and was read by the author at the above mentioned meeting.

These two papers are now published in a separate edition for the benefit of Bahá'ís especially, but they will find their place also in the memorial volume of *Transactions of the Conference*, issued by the Committee and published by Messrs. Duckworth & Co., Ltd.

Of the Bahá'í talks above-mentioned, it is the second that we are concerned with, and this I would like to reproduce in full, did space allow. However, I am forced to content myself with quoting the opening remarks made by Ruhi Effendi before the Congress, after which I will skip over to the conclusion of his speech.

Speech of Ruhi Effendi Afnan

The speaker who preceded me gave you a sketch of the history of the Bahá'í Movement as well as a statement of some of its fundamental principles and teachings. It now rests with me to explain

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briefly the significance of those principles and teachings and to describe the profound changes they have wrought in the lives of their followers.

At a time when the spirit of materialism was spreading all over Europe, when internal revolutions, diplomatic intrigues, political strife and economic rivalries were darkening the horizon of an agitated and suffering world, Baha'u'llah, from the prison city of Akka, addressed a number of Epistles to the monarchs and rulers of the world to whom He declared His teachings and principles.

To the Baha'is these teachings stand out as the only remedy for the divers ills of the present age and the only solution of its manifold problems.

Baha'u'llah saw the world like the surface of a glacier hopelessly divided by innumerable fissures and dark and deep crevasses. The development of modern science had opened the eyes of men to the bigotry and prejudice that existed in religion and had so alienated them from it that even its pure and fundamental truths seemed, to their minds, to be darkened. The gulf existing between man and God was widening and agnosticism was the fashion of the day.

The spirit of nationalism, embittered by fierce economic and political rivalries, had so widened the chasms separating the nations, that nothing less than a great world war could be foreseen.

Within the individual nations also, new lines of cleavage accentuated the divisions and differences of man, and class hatred and economic unrest were spreading fast over the European continent.

Baha'u'llah conceived the glorious vision of the Oneness of Mankind and set before Himself the task of healing, by aid of His fundamental principles, every sore that afflicted the body of humanity. He knew well that unless all the crevasses were bridged over and all the differences removed, unity and universal peace would not prove enduring, nor even attainable.

To bring back man to God and at the same time to enable him to appreciate the advantages which science provides, He declared that true religion and science cannot possibly be antagonistic. For both, in their essence, are truths, and between truths there can be no conflict. Moreover, to reconcile the religions, he laid it down, as a guiding principle, that the purpose of Religion is to provide a social bond, to create a new force in man's life, to infuse in him the love of his neighbor. If, therefore, a religion, which He likened to a medicine, should aggravate the disease, it is far better to be without it.

In adjusting international difficulties He did not advocate political methods. He knew that war is only the result of a state of mind, a spirit of blind and narrow nationalism inherent in man's heart. He, therefore, dealt His first blow by declaring that "Glory is not his who loves his country, but glory is his who loves his kind." All men are the sheep of one fold and God the divine and loving Shepherd. Why, therefore, slay each other?

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As one of the sources of misunderstanding is multiplicity of languages, He called upon the members of the International House of Justice, either to create a new auxiliary language or to choose one of those already existing and to have it taught in all the schools of the world, so that ideas might be more easily diffused and the risk of grave misunderstanding lessened. He then laid down the broad lines that should direct the formation of the International House of Justice, a supreme and all-inclusive body whose members shall be fully accredited representatives of all the peoples of the world. They shall assemble, and after mature deliberation, arbitrate on all questions, social, political and economic, which may lead to war.

In order to eliminate the root cause of all forms of class hatred He proclaimed, "Do ye know why We have created you from one clay? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder in your heart how ye were created. It behooveth you, since We have created you all from the same substance, to be even as one soul, in such wise that ye may walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land; that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. This is My counsel unto you, O ye concourse of Light! Heed ye this counsel, that ye may obtain the Fruit of Holiness from the Tree of Wondrous Glory."

Thus by taking away all the causes of differences Baha'u'llah sought to establish the Oneness of Mankind and to abolish definitely international and class war. . . .

* * * *

In conclusion, it will be generally agreed that it would be far from God's infinite mercy to give His helpless creatures the freedom to tread on dangerous ground, and whilst knowing the solution of their problems to stand aside heedless of their sufferings and deaf to their constant prayers. It is in accordance with His divine attributes to give them guidance when need arises, to send them a Messenger with the necessary laws and commandments to put them on the right path of safety. And now that the social unrest is becoming a real menace to civilization itself, when world problems in their acuteness and multiplicity are baffling the minds of men, we, a small yet determined band, fired by the unquenchable enthusiasm of the promise of a New Day, firmly believe that the sea of divine compassion has surged, that the Lord has sent His Messenger with the necessary solution of those intricate problems. The Baha'is on their part have tried their utmost, have sacrificed their well-being, their property, their all, to diffuse this spirit far and wide. Is the world willing to answer their call, or at least to deem it worthy of attention?

—The Baha'i Magazine, *Star of the West*, April, 1925, Vol. XVI; also reproduced in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. II, 1926-1928, pp. 239-242.

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Bahai News of December 1924 gives an account of the conference. In it we find a glowing tribute to Ruhi Afnan who spoke in faith and wisdom, his youth and enthusiasm winning all hearts to a close attention to the Baha'i teachings. Following is the report in its entirety:—

Since the return of Shoghi Effendi to Haifa, the most important news of the Cause outside this country has been the great interest with which the two papers on the Baha'i Cause were received by the audience attending the Conference of Some Living Religions within the British Empire, held at the Imperial Institute, London, from September 22nd to October 3rd. Quoting from a general letter from the Spiritual Assembly of London, dated November 12th:

"The paper which presented the Baha'i Message was the product of consultation and cooperation and was read by Mr. Mountfort Mills, the delegate from the Canadian Baha'is, in clear and reverent tones reaching every part of the large hall, and was listened to with wrapt attention. Through the guidance of Abdu'l Baha the text was clearly inspired by his spirit, which was felt by all the believers.

"Ruhi Afnan then spoke in faith and wisdom, his youth and enthusiasm winning all hearts to a close attention to the Baha'i teachings he gave with sincerity and conviction. The power of the spiritual Presence was like a baptism. We felt the outpouring which Abdu'l Baha foretold would awaken the world with the Divine Message, and this must have been reflected in all hearts who were praying with us for the illumination of the world on that day of great opportunity."

—*Baha'i News, December, 1924.*

The Clock that Marked the Hour

We have observed the interesting fact that England was the setting of the initial public appearances of both the Master and his young grandson. Abdul Baha, emerging from life-long confinement in the East, faced his first audience in London. Ruhi Effendi, leaving the protective restrictions of his native Haifa, made his debut as a public speaker in the same city. That talk of Abdul Baha, compact with celestial meaning, was the first note in a symphony of speeches delivered throughout Europe and America. It opened a new era in the Bahai Cause; while the talk of Ruhi Effendi was likewise the starting point of fruitful journeyings in the interest of the movement. Naturally talented, well educated, endowed with a most sympathetic personality and, above all, possessed of a high sense of responsibility, this young man, then and there, embarked on a career which promised to be of incalculable value to the Cause. We can only guess how far he might have gone and what impetus the movement might have derived through him; we can only regret that he was never given wings to develop his mission

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to its fullest capacity, and can only mourn the cutting off from the Cause of this, its most living branch. For, in November, 1941, after nineteen years of service to the Baháí Movement and the Baháí Administration, Ruhi Effendi, together with his family, was excommunicated by order of his cousin, the Guardian; at the age of forty-two, this gifted exponent of the Teachings of Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha was cast out from the Cause and placed in *spiritual quarantine*.

And now, one wonders: Shall it be that this bright light is snuffed out permanently? Is this sacrificial spirit wounded beyond recovery? Can this son of mighty lineage concur in his own disinheritance? Only time will answer these questions; but, in the meanwhile, we are conscious of the fact that Ruhi Effendi arose to follow in the footsteps of the Great Speaker, and remember that there are precedents for those who determine to hold to their missions, in the face of official disapproval:

Baha-O-Llah had made certain contracts with God; and Church and State combined in order to stifle his sense of obligation.

Abdul Baha had accepted responsibilities at the hands of his Father; and governments and their agencies combined in order to stifle his sense of obligation.

Did temporal power succeed? The years settled that question; history recorded the answer, and the world bears testimony to the result.

And now comes the young branch grown from the Mighty Tree! He alone in the Master's large family responded to Abdul Baha's call for speakers; and the winds of adversity are blowing heavily upon him. Will they stifle *his* sense of obligation? The same clock that marked the hour when the responses of his great Forebears were sounded will strike out the answer of Ruhi Effendi Afnan.

Chapter VI
THE WRITER

*They come with their laws and their codes to bind
me fast; but I evade them ever, for I am only waiting
for love to give myself up at last into his hands.*

—Rabindranath Tagore
Gitanjali, Stanza XVII

Chapter VI

THE WRITER

Style

Abdul Baha was a master of words through the mediums of Persian, Arabic and Turkish. He spoke in these three languages with utter fluency; he wrote in them with simplicity and art. There is no obscurity in his method, never a shadow of the superior attitude, no pedantry, no oratorical flourishes. He went straight to the point, rejecting everything superfluous. His style is free, and balanced as wings bearing on them grave reflections; his sentiments are as sunbeams, condensed and burning.

The Master's eloquence, his rhythmic style, his warm poetic outpouring, his prophetic explanations were as much part of him as was his physiognomy, his stature, the throbbing of his pulse, the action of his will; thus, the writings that he has left behind are fraught with himself—they are Abdul Baha in person.

An author's manner is the reflection of his mentality. If he wishes to write with lucidity, he must first of all let light take possession of his mind; if he aims at writing in a grand style, he must live in a grand consciousness. The mind of Abdul Baha was a center of radiance; his consciousness was wide-spread and heroic. Therefore, his writings are like unto the clear, swift current of a river that flows fresh and unconstrained, beautifying the countryside and bringing life to the farmlands of the neighborhood.

It is said that some authors write nonsense in a clear style, and others sense in an obscure one. Some can reason without being able to persuade; others can persuade without being able to reason. Some dive so deep that they disappear from our view; while others soar so high that they lose their own bearings. Again, there is the type that employs sarcasm and irony in order to cover the dry bones of dead idealism. Meanwhile, the poet, the inspired teacher writes simply of things that he knows, logically of things that he understands, warmly of things that he feels and convincingly of things that he believes. The difficult is easy for him; the beautiful is familiar to him and the miraculous is part of daily life.

Collections of Tablets

Abdul Baha is author of few books but he wrote thousands upon thousands of Tablets. These were addressed to Bahais and non-Bahais: men,

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women and children of all nationalities and races, in every country of the world. I can imagine that there never will be a time when *all* the Tablets of Abdul Baha will be collected and published in a series of volumes. The task is well-nigh impossible, for they are scattered throughout the cities and hamlets of the earth and add up to an incredible number.

From the earliest days of the Cause, the Babís and later the Baháís in Persia, Iraq, Palestine, Turkey, Egypt, India and other parts of the East made individual collections of the Tablets of the Bab, Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha. These collections were, and still are to be found in practically every Bahai family; the size depending entirely upon the opportunities and the industry of the owners. Copies of the Tablets had to be gathered from near and far, written in longhand and later bound in volumes. The teachers on their travels often carried along rich and varied collections of Tablets. Immediately upon their arrival in whatsoever city or village, the eager and spiritually hungry residents borrowed these precious documents and applied themselves to the copying of them. If the teacher's sojourn in a particular place was short, the Baháís would forego food and sleep in order to reproduce as many Tablets as was humanly possible. Occasionally, they offered all kinds of inducements to the teacher so that he would prolong his stay in their midst.

After the introduction of the Bahai Cause in the United States, the same procedure was established here, and for a like reason; there being practically no printed booklets or books of the Writings available. Thus, the early believers gave much time to the copying and distribution of the Tablets. With typewriter and mimeograph machine at hand, these American Baháís had at their disposal a far more simplified method for the dissemination of the teachings than did their Oriental brothers; and they made full use of it.

Mr. Charles Everett Sprague, a pioneer Bahai was indefatigable in making copies of the Tablets of Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha and in sending them out broadcast. *Star of the West*, March 2, 1913 contains two interesting obituary notices on the life and work of Mr. Sprague, signed respectively by Major Honoré Joseph Jaxon and Edna McKinney, which bear testimony to his far-reaching work. To quote one of them:—

Those who have been in the Cause for a number of years will remember how the copies of Tablets from both Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha, which Mr. Charles E. Sprague sent broadcast over this country during the early days of the Cause in America were appreciated. From the moment of his entering the Cause, his main thought was "service," and the spread of the Glad-tidings to all. It was largely

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through his efforts that the first edition of the small book of prayers revealed by Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha was published.

I have in my library five volumes of these early Tablets which Mr. Sprague mimeographed and distributed amongst the seekers; also ten mimeographed collections of rare Tablets put out by Mr. J. H. Hougen, an active member of the Bahai Assembly of Seattle, Washington, who rendered a similar service to the Cause.

One of the most enthusiastic collectors and distributors of the Tablets of Abdul Baha was Miss Juliet Thompson. In those days, I lived in Washington, D. C., as secretary to the Persian Legation, and inasmuch as I received from the Master weekly packages of his Tablets, I made the habit of regularly sending the translations to Miss Thompson in New York who, on her part, made numerous copies and disseminated them amongst the believers. Her Friday night meetings were generally thronged with seekers who listened with rapt attention to these constantly arriving communications from Abdul Baha.

Practically every Bahai gave some of his or her time to the copying of the Tablets and to the sharing of their contents with others, and almost all of them had their individual collections. These were constantly being compared in order to find out which was most complete, and then the owners would fill in the gaps and bring their own collections up to the last minute. Amongst those who rendered conspicuous service in this field of spiritual education were Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hannen, Mrs. Harlan Ober, Mrs. Edward Kinney, Miss Harriet Magee, Mr. Charles Mason Remey, Miss Gertrude Buikema, Mr. Albert Windust, Mrs. May Maxwell, Mr. Arthur Pilsbury Dodge, Mr. Hooper Harris, Mr. Carl Scheffler, Mrs. Mary Lesch, Mr. Howard McNutt, Mrs. Isabella Brittingham, Mrs. Louise R. Waite, Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm, Mrs. Corinne True, Dr. Zia M. Bagdadi, Mrs. Helen S. Goodall, Mrs. Ella G. Cooper, Mr. Thornton Chase, Miss Mary Rabb, Mrs. Ella Rice-Wray, Miss Henrietta Wagner, Miss Berthelin Lexow, now Mrs. Frederick Allen, and Miss Ella M. Roberts. The last named was editor of the *Magazine of the Children of the Kingdom*, and she achieved excellent results in the new field of child education from the Bahai point of view. I could go on with this list, adding many more names, did space allow; for I have only touched on this subject and the work that was accomplished through the dissemination of Tablets.

Collections Published

Finally, many of these partial, individual efforts were crystallized into

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a whole; for, in a general circular letter dated March 21, 1908 and sent out by the Bahai Spiritual Assembly of Chicago, the believers were requested to submit to the Assembly copies of their Tablets from Abdul Baha for preservation and eventual publication.

Thus, with the consent of the recipients and the permission of the Master, the first volume of the *Tablets of Abdul Baha* was published in 1909; the second, in 1915 and the third, in 1930. These three volumes, containing altogether 730 pages, present a glorious selection from the thousands upon thousands of Tablets written by Abdul Baha to his followers in this country. They are treasure-stores of spiritual knowledge and an invaluable section of Bahai literature.

While the American Bahais were engaged in copying, disseminating and, finally, in publishing the Tablets of Abdul Baha, the Spiritual Assembly of Cairo, Egypt, was addressing itself to the same task. A volume of Tablets, in Arabic and Persian, containing 488 pages appeared in 1910 and a second in the same languages, consisting of 336 pages, came out two years later. These books brought to light some very early and little known Tablets of Abdul Baha written to the Mohammadan, Jewish and Zoroastrian Bahais; and they reveal to us an angle of the Master's encyclopedic mind which was packed with knowledge of the religions and philosophies of the East.

My Own Collection

From early childhood, I have been inclined toward copy-keeping (a very useful form of activity, especially when a writer is concerned) and this inclination developed into a passion in regard to the talks and letters of Abdul Baha. Therefore, in the early years of my service to the Cause, when the Master began to send to me for translation his Tablets addressed to the American Bahais, I invariably made copies of these documents in handwriting, and thus started my own collection which in time became very large indeed. It is now bound in two volumes; the first consisting of 1477 pages and the second of 1522 pages—in all 2999 pages.

Apart from these most precious volumes, I have several books that contain Abdul Baha's Tablets as dictated to me, and also as dictated to my fellow-secretaries while I was in his service; for after the Tablets had been written in Persian by others, the Master would allow me to keep the copies as spiritual gifts and reminders of the days when I was in his presence. These last collections are the gems of my Bahai library, for all the tablets carry the Master's corrections made by his own hand.

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As I stated in the beginning of this chapter, Abdul Baha wrote few books, as such. However, two books of which he is the author exist and are available in English. The first is *A Traveller's Narrative*—a history of the appearance of the Bab. It was written about 1886, when the Master was 42 years old. Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, London, England translated it from the Persian in 1891. The second work is *The Mysterious Forces of Civilization*, written in 1887 and translated by Johanna Dawud. The first edition was published in 1910.

Having sketched herein a picture of Abdul Baha as a tireless writer, a master of language and a prophetic exponent of Truth, it will be appropriate to present a few extracts from the collections of his Tablets. At the same time, I suggest that the reader bear in mind the fact that the translations are far from perfect and do not give a completely satisfactory rendition of the Master's inimitable style.

The Follies of the Old World

Look thou with seeing eyes at the world about thee and at the inhabitants thereof. Upon the stage of this immense theatre, most spectacular plays are being enacted. On one side thereof thou wilt see the victorious and the vanquished legions of profit and loss. On the other side thou wilt observe the waves of the sea of folly rising and falling. Cries are being raised on every side and the agonies of revolution, revolt and unrest reach unto the ears of progressive men. There is a tremendous strike and clash between capital and labor, and the war between the aristocrats and democrats is carried on relentlessly with bow and arrow, sword and javelin. The phalanxes of a great army are drawn in battle array, each division taking its position. Armed troops and artillery are to be found in every part of the field. The flash of the swords of enmity blind the eyes from even the most remote distance, the lightning effect of breast-plate and lance, and the sparkle of the bucklers of hatred light up the night and bewilder the sight. In short: strife, battle, slaughter and war are prepared in organized perfection.

On the other hand thou wilt hear that from every house strains of music are raised, and confusing melodies of harp, lyre, cymbal and flute are heard, and mad revellers are dancing to the tunes, while they are inebriated with the wine of vanishing pleasures. In one place thou wilt behold the wanton and soiled decorations, and in another the flimsy shows of the gilded class of creatures. On the one hand is to be seen the embellishment and luxury made possible through illicit wealth, and on the other hand, the ravishing of this mortal world of its beautiful appearance.

From different parts are to be heard sighs of anguish, lamentations of poverty, cries of agony and misery,—and the calls for succor.

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have reached to the gate of heaven. One hears the weeping of the hopeless, the appeals of the oppressed, the trembling murmurs of the helpless and the harrowing wails of the ship-wrecked in the sea of persecution. The heat of the conflagration of separation spreads on all sides, the fire of longing is raging with great intensity and the tongues of the flames of calamity leap forth in every direction. Here one sees the oppression of kings and the thoughtlessness of cabinet ministers; there one sees conflict on the battle field of thoughts and ideals by ambitious generals, statesmen and administrators of the nations and countries. They consult, scheme, plot and exchange views; they organize falacious and superfluous companies and make false the established values; and thus do they lay and destroy the foundation of their political careers.

In short: when thou observest these things with the eye of reality, thou wilt see that the outcome, result and fruit of all these theatrical performances are mirages, and their sweetness is bitter poison. A few days the earth shall roll on its axis, and these fleeting visions will be completely forgotten.

When thou shuttest thine eyes to this dark world and lookest upward and heavenward, thou wilt see light upon light stretching from eternity to eternity. The reality of the mysteries will be revealed. Happy is the pure soul who does not attach himself to the transient conditions and comforts, but rather seeks to attach himself to the purity, nobility and splendor of the world which endures.

—Abdul-Bahá Abbas

Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 16, p. 273 Dec. 31, 1913

The New Year

O ye children of the Kingdom!

It is New Year; that is to say, the rounding of the cycle of the year. A year is the expression of a cycle (of the sun); but now is the *beginning of a cycle of Reality, a New Cycle, a New Age, a New Century, a New Time and a New Year*. Therefore, it is very blessed.

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

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

Then this material realm will be Paradise, the earth Heaven, and the world of satan become the world of angels.

—Abdul Baha Abbas

Star of the West, Vol. IV, No. 16, p. 266, Dec. 31, 1913

Resurrection Day

This period of time is the Promised Age, the assembling of the human race to the "Resurrection Day", and now is the great "Day of Judgment." Soon the whole world, as in spring-time, will change its garb. The turning and falling of the autumn leaves is past; the bleakness of the winter-time is over. The new year hath appeared and the spiritual spring-time is at hand. The black earth is becoming a verdant garden, the deserts and the mountains are teeming with red flowers; from the borders of the wilderness the tall grasses are standing like advance guards before the cypress and jessamine trees; while the birds are singing among the rose branches like angels in the highest heavens, announcing the glad tidings of the approach of that spiritual spring, and the sweet music of their voices is causing the real essence of all things to move and quiver.

O my spiritual friend! Dost thou know from what airs emanate the notes sung by those birds? They are from the melodies of peace and reconciliation, of love and unity, of justice and security, of concord and harmony. In a short time this heavenly singing will intoxicate all humanity; the foundations of enmity shall be destroyed; unity and affection shall be witnessed in every assembly, and the lovers of the love of God at these great festivals shall behold their splendor.

Therefore, contemplate what a spirit of life God hath given that the body of the whole earth may attain life everlasting! The Paradise of El-Abha will soon spread a pavilion from the Pole-star of the world, under whose shelter the beloved shall rejoice and the pure hearts shall repose in peace.

—Abdul-Baha Abbas

Star of the West, Vol. VII, March 21, 1916, No. I, p. 169.

New Writers Come into the Field

With the departure from this life of Abdul Baha, an era in Bahai teaching came to an end. The great River of Explanation, which had been

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set in motion by him, continued on its way and flowed into the Sea of Truth, on the margins of which mankind is refreshed and invigorated. Its waters added to the volume of the sea, but the river itself was no more. Thus, the *Tablets of Abdul Baha* dropped out of the field of current literature and became Holy Writ.

Meanwhile life continues; it must be so. When the Master has withdrawn, the followers must take hold; and so a few of the Bahais engaged themselves in writing with very creditable results. Among these was Ruhi Effendi Afnan.

Ruhi Effendi is not a poet. If he owns a pair of poetic wings, he keeps them well tucked under his shoulder-blades. He does not soar in the rarified atmosphere of imagination, but keeps his feet firmly planted on the ground of logic and experience. His mysticism does not resolve into the mists of metaphysics and speculation, but inclines toward a practical solution of our mundane problems. He follows the deductive rather than the inductive method of reasoning, although it must be admitted that he does not dismiss the latter as unsound and that he wields it with good effect on certain occasions. Schooled through the scientific system of the West as taught in the American University at Beirut, he has the humanistic outlook; yet his humanism is not lacking in spirituality. He is neither a dry intellectualist nor an emotional religionist. His explanations of the Bahai Cause are sane, logical and convincing. He calmly and dispassionately reasons with his reader, taking nothing for granted and trying to persuade him without offending his intelligence. He does not possess the fire and warmth of Abdul Baha, but I think that he has his humility and patience. His scholarship is simple, profound and searching, without the pomp and circumstance of ambition or presumption. In a word, he is no theological swashbuckler, but a thorough modern in training, attitude and approach.

Writings of Ruhi Effendi

During the years 1924, 1925 and 1926, three classic articles by Ruhi Effendi, which dealt with various aspects of the Bahai Movement, appeared in Bahai publications. Much later, in 1934 the Baha'i Publishing Committee, with the approval of the Reviewing Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, brought out his remarkable monograph on *Mysticism and the Baha'i Revelation—a Contrast*. Incidentally, the authorities were so much interested in this monograph and in circularizing it as widely as possible that they printed two advance announcements concerning it in *Baha'i News* of May and No-

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vement, 1934 and, finally after publication, inserted an advertisement of the booklet in the January 1935 issue of the same publication. This advertisement reads:—

Publishing

Mysticism and the Baha'i Revelation: A Contrast

by Ruhi Afnan, a scholarly discussion of the "path to God" as expounded by Christian and Muslim mystics, with an exposition of the spiritual teaching of Baha'u'llah. The contrast is between doctrines which would make man independent of the Manifestation and the Baha'i doctrine of the Manifestation as source of Reality.

Paper covers\$0.50

This work, covering eighty pages, contains a brief and highly satisfactory introduction and then is divided into the following sections:—

- Mysticism and the Baha'i Revelation**
- I. The Trinity**
 - The World of the Divine Essence**
- II. The Prophets**
- III. The World of Creation**
- IV. The Dualistic Aspect of Being**
 - The Mystic Interpretation of the doctrine of Incarnation**
- V. The Circling Course of the Divine-Life Process**
 - The Mystic Path**
 - Purgation**
 - Illumination of Self**
 - Divine Presence**
 - Union—the Goal of the Mystic Quest**
- VI. The Seven Valleys of Baha'u'llah**
- Conclusion**

In the introduction to his essay on the above listed highly controversial and metaphysical topics, the author makes a very modest acknowledgement as follows:—

I have undertaken this task to clarify in my own mind the points of difference between Baha'u'llah and this other interesting conception of the spiritual life. My approach is therefore that of a student who seeks knowledge rather than a teacher desiring to impart his learning.

Passing to the last pages of this illuminating booklet, we find the quietistic philosophy of mysticism contrasted with the practical idealism

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of Baha-O-Llah. Here, the author's tendency toward humanism is clearly revealed; he exalts social responsibilities and recommends a healthy, practical spirituality. His treatment of the subject is very satisfying and is distinctly worth quoting:—

Mysticism and the Baha'i Revelation—a Contrast

... Mysticism similarly fails to present a solution for the baffling social and international problems that seem to threaten our very existence. How are the international problems to be solved? How are the excesses of poverty and wealth to be eliminated? How are wars to be replaced by arbitration? Should a super-state be advocated? Man cannot be divorced from his environment. In such an environment that breeds war, hatred, distrust, jealousy and destitution, our spirit can never find an atmosphere in which it can progress. A fortunate person with all his material needs well secured can give up the trammels of the world and in an environment all his own, seek an inward peace; but the mass of the people are not so favorably situated. World conditions are vital problems to them, they can find no other sanctuary than their slums, they are forced to go to war and slaughter their brethren; they are taught to hate their fellow-men that happen to reside across the frontier. How can they in such an environment obtain peace and help the development of their soul?

Mysticism, especially in its extreme forms, tends to be blind to these facts. Its attitude is to give up hope in earthly life and seek instead spiritual poise. If outward life is hopelessly muddled, seek the inward. It applies a spiritual palliative rather than faces the real occasion. It is the philosophy of man who has lost hope in ever bettering his earthly life rather than the attitude of a soul alive to the evils of the day and fully prepared to face them and conquer them.

This latter is in fact the attitude of Baha'u'llah. He knows the world problems, is conscious of their magnitude and fully provides for their solution. At least he sets forth the guiding principles that if applied in their entirety will make the world a better place to live in and a more suitable atmosphere in which to develop our spiritual life. The more the mystic discards the quietistic tendencies of his philosophy and becomes attuned with the reforming and socializing spirit of the Prophets, the more he will become a real force, active in the betterment of the group to which he belongs . . .

The Baha'i conception of the goal of our spiritual life, therefore, is to bring into actuality those divine powers inherent in our souls, it is to attain an unlimited perfection, it is to secure an ever growing of our personality. To become the likeness of God by acquiring His attributes, Abdu'l-Baha says "is the supreme goal of the world of humanity." God has treasured in our souls pearls of ineffable beauty, it is our task to produce them . . .

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This goal is not imaginary, it is no mere psychological experience. It is not the privilege of the few. The door of this heaven is open to all. It is the salvation that all humanity can seek and attain. Through it a spiritualization of the whole race can be achieved without in the least impairing the social and intellectual progress of man. In fact, the social, moral, intellectual and spiritual factors are so vitally connected that we cannot help one without enhancing the operation of the others. These factors are the environment in which our personality is to develop. They form the air it breathes, and the food it consumes. Let us have this form of spirituality permeate our life and we shall see how our civilization, even its material aspect, will leap forward and achieve miracles . . .

What He (Baha'u'llah) demands is not a renunciation of the world, but a healthy life as active member of society—a task to begin at the very start, and not after attaining the stage of Unity. For it is only by being active and healthy members of society that we can achieve spirituality. He asks us to enjoy the beauties of the world but not to be attached to them; to seek them but not to let them retard our moral and spiritual development. Salvation is not the life of renunciation but of healthy participation in our social duties. While living in this world we are meant to be human.

—*Mysticism and the Bahai Revelation— A Contrast* by
Ruhi Afnan, pp. 76-80

This essay, so much heralded by the Administration, is at present unobtainable at the Bahai Assembly in New York, and it goes without saying that the other Assemblies throughout the country have also been stripped of it, although it is still advertised as follows:—

Mysticism and the Baha'i Revelation, by Ruhi Afnan. An essay which analyzes in the light of the teachings of Baha-u'llah the mystical tradition of the soul's union with God: demonstrating that the Prophet or Manifestation is the intermediary between God and man. 80 pp.

In section of Baha'i Bibliography

The Baha'i World, 1938-1940, Vol. VIII, p. 717

Fortunately however, the New York Public Library at 42nd Street and 5th Ave. is in possession of a copy, and it is to be found under the serial No. *OAC, p. v. 182. There, the discriminating student might spend a profitable afternoon or evening examining the contents of the booklet and taking notes; after which he may wonder about the Guardian's reasons for excommunicating from the Cause a writer of such brilliance and acumen, because obviously this discriminating student would not have taken seriously the flimsy charges made against the writer in the cables which came from Haifa.

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Three Articles by Ruhi Effendi

Between the years 1924 and 1926, Ruhi Effendi, as I have already stated, wrote three articles on the Baháí Cause; and his scientific outlook and spiritual sanity are well demonstrated in these works. Now these articles cannot be withdrawn from publication for they are incorporated in *Star of the West*, where anyone who possesses the old numbers can read them at will. The first article entitled: *The Relation of the Bahá'í Cause to Modern Progressive Movements*, published June, 1924, must have been highly thought of by the *Guardian* and the National Spiritual Assembly, for it is reproduced in the *Bahá'í Year Book*, Vol. I, 1925-1926, pp. 139-141. The second under the title: *Religion and Our Modern Social Problems* appears in February, 1925 while the third, propounding the question:—*What is New in the Bahá'í Teachings?* is published April, 1926.

I wish that it were possible to reproduce herein these articles in their entirety. They are well worth the printers' ink and the space, if space there were. Possibly, some fair-minded and generous person will some day come forward and collect all the available writings of Ruhi Effendi to be published in one volume. This would be a distinct service to the Cause. The work of this author is valuable intrinsically, and valuable historically, as expressing the thoughts of the first and, thus far, the only descendant of the Master who has accepted the mission of teaching. In this light alone, the writings of Ruhi Effendi are inextricably part and parcel of the Cause.

I consider that the case of Ruhi Effendi arises before every Baháí to be decided in the arena of his own conscience. He has been condemned without a hearing; he has been cast out of the Baháí community, here and in all parts of the world; he has been designated for the contumely of coming generations. Is this acceptable to the followers of Abdul Baha? Is this acceptable to free Americans, or to Persian Baháís who are acquainted only too well with the horrors of martyrdom? I do not think so!

I have faith in the innate goodness of human nature and in the increasing enlightenment of minds and hearts everywhere; and I know of a certainty that no humane mortal, and not even an immortal whose being is kneaded with the quality of divine patience, can wish to hush up the case of the Baháí authorities versus Ruhi Effendi. I go on record as saying that it will be adjudicated before the Court of Baha-O-Llah and the tribunal of mankind.

I will now close this chapter with an extract from each of the three articles by Ruhi Effendi, published in the *Star of the West*:—

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The Relation of the Baha'i Cause to Modern Progressive Movements

. . . The Divine Power is behind all progressive movements. Baha'u'llah's teachings would have remained a utopia, never to be realized, if His spirit, that is God's hand, had not stirred some souls to establish new movements and work, although in apparent independence, yet for similar aims. These souls are the enlightened teachers who have been showing the world that material prosperity should not be the aim of life; that through appropriate taxation and education the rich can help the betterment of the social and economic conditions of the poor; that war should cease; that nationalism should give way to a higher and nobler policy of internationalism; that a League of Nations should be established to settle international disputes; that an international language should be created to become a universal medium of communication and eliminate misunderstandings.

In a word, these progressive movements which have sprung up during the nineteenth century have been instruments used by God to make the world more receptive to His Cause. They have been like the plowing and harrowing by which the farmer prepares the ground for his crop. And we can measure the extent of this preparation if we take the pains to find out *how much nearer now are the popular views to the Teachings of the Cause than they were at the beginning of the last century.* Since Baha'u'llah first proclaimed His Principles, the world has, through the work of these progressive teachers and the various societies they have founded, advanced so much towards the Baha'i teachings that we would not be in the least astonished, if from now on people would join the Cause in whole groups rather than as isolated individuals. As some one aptly said, "if the Baha'is do not make the world Baha'i, it will through its natural development, become so." . . .

In publishing the above illuminating article, the Editor of *Star of the West* makes the following generous and appreciative comment:—

The world is full of wonderfully progressive movements. In every direction the mind of man, responding to the stimuli of necessity and of desire for bettered conditions, is creating new solutions to old evils. One by one the outer enemies of man are being conquered and subdued. One by one the guardians of his inner citadel of self are being better disciplined and marshaled. Myriads of clubs, associations, new sects, are taking birth and growing to vigor in the fruitful soil of modern tolerance, spirit of research, and ardent world desire for an ideal civilization.

What part does the Baha'i Movement play in this rivalry of beneficent institutions? Is it but one of the many claimants for attention? Or can it be seen as an all-inclusive movement which contains

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not only the complete and ideal pattern for the coming world civilization, but also a dynamic power capable of putting into effect the remedies which it projects? And if the Baha'i Cause is so universal, so all-embracing, and so perfect in winning, as it never fails to do, the sympathy of all open-minded men and women to whom its great teachings are presented, why does it not at this time gain adherents by the thousands?

These are questions which are bound to arise in the mind and heart of every person looking newly into the Baha'i Movement, and seeking to adjust themselves and their past beliefs or cherished causes to its all-embracing appeal. Nowhere to our knowledge have these two important questions been better answered than in the article in this number by Ruhi Afnan, grandson of Abdul'l-Baha,—*"The Relation of the Baha'i Cause to Modern Progressive Movements."*

—*The Baha'i Magazine—Star of the West,*
Vol. 15, June, 1924, No. 3, pp. 39-40

Religion and Our Modern Social Problems

During the last century religion gradually lost ground before the progressing material civilization and weakened its hold upon the life and action of man. Through the many centuries of ignorance and priestly domination, its fundamental principles and underlying spirit were neglected and only the external rituals and practices emphasized. As science progressed, and as man's critical power developed, religion, due to this misrepresentation at the hands of its superficial adherents, failed to stand the attacks and vindicate its old, yet deserving position. The era of irreligion and agnosticism was thereby ushered in, and the cause of religion as a whole was weakened.

At present, however, we can detect certain signs of religious revival and the beginning of a definite reaction toward religion. Science has come to the conclusion that the material body of man cannot function without the help and assistance of some invisible power, which we may call spirit or soul. It has learned that from such infinitesimally small premises provided by science we cannot deduce a conclusion. So infinitely great, as what God is. Man's intellect and experience are too limited to deal with such a problem and attain such a truth. It suffices us to know that His Spirit permeates all things, that he is the Cause of Life and the Creator of man. The heads of the different religions on the other hand are opening their eyes to the truth of science and beginning to interpret religion in its true and spiritual significance. Thus religion and science are gradually unravelling each other's truth and uniting in the pursuit of their common aim . . .

The past century of agnosticism, though it has created a general apathy towards religion, was fraught with important consequences.

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Before that time most of the people were fettered with superstitions. Religion to them, was in many cases, a series of outward practices to be observed at different times and places. If they were to become Baha'is they would bring most, if not all, of those cherished, but outgrown ideas with them. The Cause would become a conglomeration of religious beliefs, rather than religion purified. It would become a dumping place of all sorts of ideas. This spirit of agnosticism has demolished those antiquated institutions and left the hearts free to be influenced only by the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the spirit of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

What is New in the Baha'i Teachings?

... At the advent of every prophet the world undergoes a great social, intellectual, religious revival. At the time of Christ, for example, the old religions of the Romans and Greeks had lost their hold on the minds of their adherents. They could not shape the conduct of man or keep him within the bounds of moral law. Abandoning religion, therefore, the people turned to philosophy, hoping that thereby the rules of ethics would be more strictly adhered to. They thought that through learning alone the moral life of the individual could be improved. But this hope was also frustrated. The people remained in search of a remedy until Christianity came to the rescue and saved the soul of the seekers. Meanwhile by this continuous and faithful search the people had come independently very near to the truth which was later propounded by Christianity. The teachings were so to say, "in the air", every one unconsciously absorbed them, so that when they came in touch with those teachings they did not have much to change, or many new principles to adopt.

Such is the case today. The intellectual people of the eighteenth century, weary of the narrowness and dogmas of the church, confused it with true Christianity. They tried to seek salvation in other fields, they were absorbed in research and philosophy, hoping again that through knowledge they might attain to the solution of their problems, to the establishment of peace, to the security of moral integrity. How successful humanity will be this time we cannot say and the theme, interesting though it be, is beyond the subject of our discussion. The point is that through this constant and sincere search the world has come to truths very near to those proclaimed by Baha'u'llah

We may well compare the advent of the different prophets of God to different stations on a long royal road. What a traveler needs is a new spirit, an encouragement to follow the road, a word of guidance to save him from dangers and difficulties. Likewise, so society, on its way to progress has come across these prophets of God these stations of divine power who have urged man to the attainment of his purpose, endowed him with a new spirit, restored his power

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by their word of encouragement and assurance. The student of the Baha'i Movement, therefore, should not consider it as a mere source of original ideas but rather as one of those dynamic powers which are successively sent by God to push society onward. He should look at the spirit which it creates in its followers and the solution which it advocates for world problems.

Chapter VII
RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN'S
VISIT TO THE UNITED
STATES

*You took my hand and drew me to your side, made
me sit on the high seat before all men, till I became
timid, unable to stir and walk my own way; doubting
and debating at every step lest I should tread upon
any thorn of their disfavour.*

I am freed at last!

*The blow has come, the drum of insult sounded, my
seat is laid low in the dust.*

My paths are open before me.

*—Rabindranath Tagore
Fruit-Gathering, Stanza X*

Chapter VII

RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

A Distinguished Guest

The visit of Ruhi Effendi Afnan to this country in 1927-8 was a signal event in the Bahai world for it gave the American believers their first opportunity of seeing a member of Abdul Baha's family. It is true that some persons had made the journey to Haifa and there had met or come to know the ladies of the household and the Master's grandchildren, but these fortunate ones were comparatively few. Consequently, the Assemblies throughout the country were on the *qui vive* to welcome this young man who not only was a descendant of Baha-O-Llah, but who came as representative of the Guardian of the Cause.

The preliminary plans for the reception of the distinguished guest are incorporated in an article entitled *Ruhi Afnan Will Visit America*, which appeared in *Baha'i News*, June 1927. It reads as follows:—

The good news has been received that Ruhi Afnan, grandson of Abdu'l Baha and cousin of Shoghi Effendi, will arrive at New York on or about June 17. We are informed that his purpose in coming is to attend the sessions of the Green Acre Institute of World Unity to be held at Green Acre from August 1 to September 3, and it is announced that he will also be at Green Acre during July.

A Committee has been appointed by the National Assembly and the Spiritual Assembly of New York to meet him on his arrival and to arrange with him the details of his visit. Until the committee has consulted with Ruhi Afnan, no definite arrangements can be announced.

However, the Committee has taken the privilege of arranging a Baha'i reception for our distinguished guest at St. Marks Hall, St. Marks Church, East 10th Street at Second Avenue, New York City on Saturday, June 18. This will consist of a feast in the hall so frequently placed at the disposal of the friends by the rector, William Norman Guthrie. A special notice of this event has been mailed to nearby Assemblies, extending a cordial welcome to all Baha'is to attend. The Committee will appreciate acceptances in advance, in order that the feast may be suitably arranged. Dinner will be served at 7 P. M.

The believers will also have an opportunity to meet Ruhi Afnan on Saturday, June 25, at the Annual Souvenir of Abdu'l-Baha to be held during the afternoon and evening at Evergreen Cabin, on the estate of Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm at West Englewood, N. J.

None of the friends will overlook the inestimable privilege of

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receiving this visit from a member of the Holy Family. Since the historic journey of the Master in 1912 many great souls have come to this country reflecting the Bahá'í spirit, but until now none has been of the sacred lineage.

The two receptions above scheduled took place in localities which during many years have been settings for Bahai reunions. St. Mark's-In-The-Bouwerie, through the generous hospitality of its rector the Rev. Dr. William Guthrie has, both before and since this occasion, been identified with Bahai work; and Evergreen Cabin, at West Englewood, N. J., on the estate of Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, likewise holds historic import. The latter, a lovely country place within easy access of New York City, was the scene of a memorable picnic conducted under the supervision of the Master; and that event made such a deep impression upon the Bahais that they have repeated it every spring. How well I remember that first picnic and the preparations made for it!

Plans for the Picnic

It was in 1912, during the month of June, that Abdul Baha decided to give a feast in the country to which all the Bahais would be invited; and, on hearing of the plan, Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm suggested that his country place be used as picnic grounds. The offer was accepted and the date set; then the Master began to make his arrangements.

One morning, I found him walking back and forth in his room at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Edward J. Kinney, 780 West End Ave. where he was stopping. As was his habit on occasions, he gave me a fairly sharp slap on the cheek and then began to speak. Naturally, I cannot quote him exactly, but his words were something along this line and the subject was cooking:—

Abdul Baha was a cook. In the past, he had prepared delicious dishes for Baha-O-Llah, as well as for the believers when they were ill or in trouble. Now, he was to be host, at a feast; all the Bahais had been invited and he was in need of a cook. Would I take charge? He had heard that I was quite an artist along this line, and was ready to put me to the test. Therefore, he continued, I was to prepare for his friends a Persian luncheon, seasoned not only with the mysterious condiments of the East but perfumed with an added touch of Bahai love. I had to produce such dishes as: *Polow*, *Chelow*, *Adas-Polow*, *Bagali-Polow*, *Zafaran-Polow*, *Morgeh-Mosamma*, *Fessenjan*, *Khoresh-Badinjan*, *Tass-Kabab*, *Abgousht*, *Koukou* and *Sharbat*. The believers of God probably were angels, but they had good appetites too. Consequently, I must exert myself and spread for them a royal table

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that would fulfill their requirements and, at the same time, do him credit as host. What did I think of the idea?

"My Lord," I answered, "your commands are my law; but I will need your assistance."

Abdul Baha laughed. "Assistance! Very well. I will be your assistant, and together we shall prepare a feast that the believers will long remember. We will lay the foundations of an everlasting Feast; and we are beginning right now." Then, he placed in my hands a few bills of fairly large denominations and sent me on my way.

Mrs. Kinney's Kitchen

Mr. and Mrs. Kinney could tell the rest of the story. How they placed their spacious kitchen at my disposal; borrowed charcoal stoves of various sizes, and procured a staff of willing workers. At the proper time, the culinary angels set themselves to shelling peas, to cutting tomatoes, to peeling egg plant, potatoes and even onions; and how they did weep as they applied themselves to the latter! Presently, aromatic condiments of the East were being combined with meat and vegetables and, when the mixtures arrived at the boiling point, the scent of Oriental spices spread abroad into the streets. Our nervous excitement kept pace with the preparations as they neared the point of perfection and, through it all, our great Assistant looked in on us now and then, made suggestions here and there and kept us in a condition of hysterical delight.

Having worked practically all night, the morning of June 29th dawned on the exhausted cooks who had provided sustenance for close to three hundred guests. Then, the ticklish task of transporting the food from New York to West Englewood, New Jersey, in a state to be served hot and appetizing, absorbed our attention. We tackled the problem in this manner: first we waited in Mrs. Kinney's kitchen until the arrival of a telephone call from West Englewood which appraised us of the fact that the guests were practically assembled; then we took from the fire the steaming cauldrons and capacious containers, wrapped them in newspapers and quilts, and piled them into automobiles which were ranged in file, waiting to be dashed at break-neck speed to the picnic grounds.

The Picnic

Luncheon was served by dozens of Bahai waitresses on a smooth cloth of pine needles. The guests sat on the ground, while the incomparable

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Host, his face beaming with satisfaction, walked among them. The day was perfect; the mood of everyone at top notch and, wonder of wonders, the food was piping hot.

Let us then take part in the pastoral scene and, all of us who are reading this account, become for a few minutes guests of Abdul Baha. We know that his hospitality knows no bounds and that he would welcome us in spirit regardless of space and time.

The Master, attired in a long cream-colored robe, his white turban on his head, is moving to and fro. He is affability personified, and his words are addressed now to this group, now to that. He is saying:—

True Bahai meetings are the mirrors of the kingdom wherein images of the Supreme Concourse are reflected. In them the lights of the most great guidance are visible. They voice the summons of the heavenly kingdom and echo the call of the angelic hosts to every listening ear. The efficacy of such meetings as these is permanent throughout the ages. This assembly has a name and a significance which will last forever. Hundreds and thousands of meetings shall be held to commemorate this occasion and the very words I speak to you today shall be repeated in them for ages to come. Therefore be ye rejoiced for ye are sheltered beneath the providence of God. Be happy and joyous because the bestowals of God are intended for you and the life of the Holy Spirit is breathing upon you. . .

How many blessed souls have longed for this radiant century, their utmost hopes and desires centered upon the happiness and joy of one such day as this. Many the nights they passed sleepless and lamenting until the very morn, in longing anticipation of this age, yearning to realize even an hour of this time. God has favored you in this century and has specialized you for the realization of its blessings. Therefore you must praise and thank God with heart and soul in appreciation of this great opportunity and the attainment of this infinite bestowal; that such doors have been opened before your faces, such abundance is pouring down from the cloud of mercy and that these refreshing breezes from the paradise of Abha are resuscitating you. You must become of one heart, one spirit and one susceptibility. May you become as the waves of one sea, stars of the same heaven, fruits adorning the same tree, roses of one garden; in order that through you the oneness of humanity may establish its temple in the world of mankind, for you are the ones who are called to uplift the cause of unity among the nations of the earth.

—*The Promulgation of Universal Peace* Vol. I,
pp. 209-10

Many pictures were taken that afternoon, notably a snapshot of a group with Abdul Baha, an enlargement of which appears in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. VI, 1934-1936, p. 628. It is not very distinct, yet one can

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recognize many faces. The Master stands near the extreme left; behind him, close to the margin of the picture, is Seyyed Assadullah Gomi. Then, looking from left to right, one sees two ladies close to Abdul Baha; the second looks to me like Mrs. Kinney. Afterwards comes Mirza Mahmoud Zargani and then myself, a humble and happy cook.

That feast under Mr. Wilhelm's pine trees left an impression upon the minds of all those present and, as the years roll around to its anniversary, I, at present an outsider and an untouchable, can very easily live again those joyous hours and find myself cooking for, and serving my friends of long ago.

Star of the West gives an account of the picnic, continuing the description on into the evening:—

Abdul Baha gave a Unity Feast in West Englewood, N. J. on Saturday, June 29 to the Bahais of New York and vicinity. About three hundred were present. In addition to the seven Persians in his party there were guests from Philadelphia, Buffalo, Green Acre, Me., Washington, D. C., Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Portland, Ore.

There in the fragrant pine grove, on a bright June day, Abdul Baha himself the host, smiling joyously and radiating the spirit of good-will, welcomed the happy friends. It was indeed a picture, and one of the utmost spiritual significance. Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and white and black races represented. Abdul Baha's very presence seemed to fill every soul with love. The bountiful meal was a Persian Feast, the delicious dishes being prepared by members of his Oriental party . . . After the dinner, Abdul Baha passed around . . . and himself blessed each guest, placing rose perfume upon their foreheads.

In the evening a meeting was held on the lawn of the Wilhelm home, Abdul Baha speaking from the veranda to some one hundred and fifty Englewood guests, who were seated in camp chairs. After this meeting questions were answered while he walked up and down the country road in front of the house. He remained with the Wilhelm family until Sunday morning when he left to fill an engagement in another part of New Jersey.

—*Star of the West*, August 1, 1912, No. 8, Vol. III, pp. 16-18

The Master's Grandson Attends Bahai Picnic

The Feast given by Abdul Baha in 1912 has been celebrated by the Bahai community every year at the same season and in the same place; and it was on one of these occasions that the young grandson of the Master was entertained nine days after his arrival in this city. In an article printed in *Baha'i News*, the late Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler writes of the significance

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of the feast and then goes on to describe the picnic at which Ruhi Effendi was present:—

Each year on this anniversary, Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm and his mother lovingly welcome as guests of Abdu'l-Bahá the Baha'is and their friends from all over the world.

Several hundred gathered on June twenty-fifth 1927 to commemorate the founding of the Feast and the visit of Abdu'l-Bahá fifteen years ago . . .

The feature of outstanding importance at the Souvenir meeting was the presence of Ruhi Effendi Afnan, who but a few days before had arrived from Haifa, Palestine. The most striking characteristics of this pleasing young man are sanity and modesty. Gifted with exceptional clarity of thought and native penetration, he brings to the work of the Cause a true spiritual ardor, that usually does not accompany the attitude of the student.

To the average man an ideal is something wistful, elusive, withdrawn, impractical. To the social benefactor and man of vision the ideal is not the antithesis of the practical: the ideal and the practical go hand in hand; the antithesis of the ideal is the brutal. The only distinction between the ideal and the practical is a difference of tense: the practical is present; the ideal is the future. And if today's ideal does not become the practice of tomorrow, then it was not an ideal at all, but a phantasy, a chimera, a vagary.

It is with the definite assurance that today's teachings will become tomorrow's action that Ruhi Effendi Afnan continually speaks of the Cause of Baha'u'llah. To his enlightened eyes "the glory of the coming of the Lord" is already existent, and the government of Baha'u'llah already established, through that leap of the mind that sees the present order of brutality and chaos replaced by the "healing of the nations."

In his brief speech he developed a very interesting theme on the reconciliation of science and religion. . .

At the evening session, Mr. Hooper Harris of New York, one of the most impressive and informed speakers in the Cause, gave a brief survey of some of the fundamental Baha'i teachings, followed by Ruhi Effendi Afnan, who, with his marked lucidity and restraint, set forth our most important principles.

—*The Baha'i Magazine, Star of the West*, August 1927
Republished in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. II, 1926-1928,
pp. 263-264

Now in this year 1942 we may, if we are able, realize the fact that if this one-time honored guest were to set foot on the property of Mr. Roy C. Wilhelm at the next Souvenir Anniversary, he would immediately be asked to withdraw, otherwise the entire group would melt away, shivering

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and sighing, like so many terror-stricken sheep at the sight of a ravening wolf.

Green Acre

The third place visited by Ruhi Effendi, of which we have record, is likewise an historic spot in American Bahai history. The late Miss Sarah Farmer founded a colony at Green Acre, Maine, as a center for expounding the teachings of the great religions of the world; and on her death the property came into the hands of the Bahai community. A book could be written about this gallant enterprise and the memorable incidents that were enacted at the Green Acre Summer School. I was there under the Persian Pines, when the great scholar, Mirza Abul Fazl gave courses of lectures on Bahai teachings, and later accompanied Abdul Baha when he spent a few days with Miss Farmer. For two summers, I interpreted the talks of Janabe Fazel Mazandrani given before Green Acre audiences and finally did some lecturing myself on those same grounds. It was to be expected that Ruhi Effendi's first summer in America should have been spent at the Bahai Summer School and, according to *Baha'i News* of August, 1927, his visit was a rare occasion:—

As mentioned in the last News Letter, Ruhi Afnan is spending July and August at Green Acre, after which he will visit as many local communities as possible before returning to Haifa in October.

The privilege of meeting this profound student of the teachings and devoted worker will not be overlooked by the friends in planning their stay at Green Acre this season.

An item in a later issue reads:—

At this time it is sufficient to inform the friends that the Institute of World Unity carried out its remarkable series of courses as announced . . . in addition to the series of Sunday morning talks delivered to some of the largest audiences in the history of Green Acre by Ruhi Afnan.

—*Baha'i News*, November, 1927

Again, in an article by Mr. Louis G. Gregory entitled: *Amity at Green Acre*, we learn of Ruhi Effendi's treatment of the race problem:—

Ruhi Effendi Afnan, scion of the noblest family of earth, mingled in joyfulness with the people of all races and in his formal address drew a striking picture of the entire lack of racial consciousness among people in the Orient who were awakened and taught human solidarity by the Holy Ones of God.

—*Baha'i Magazine, Star of the West*, August, 1927, Vol. 18, No. 5, p. 160

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Trans-Continental Tour

The next step, and a long one at that, was a journey athwart the country. It is a course that I know well, having followed it through to California with Abdul Baha in 1912, and personally lectured as far as the state of Washington in 1920; after which I went over the same itinerary with Janabe Fazel Mazandrani in 1921, and again in 1922-23. Other Bahai teachers likewise, have crossed and recrossed the continent, expounding the principles of Baha-O-Llah; and each one has made a dent in the American consciousness and a place for him or herself in countless groups.

I can therefore well imagine the effect produced by Ruhi Effendi as he followed the well-trodden highway to the Pacific coast. As flesh and blood of the Master and personal representative of the Guardian, this gifted speaker must have made a profound impression on audiences well-keyed up to meet him. His crowded program is outlined in *Baha'i News* of November, 1927.

Ruhi Afnan Visiting American Assemblies

The teaching work will be greatly reinforced during the next few weeks by Ruhi Afnan, who at the request of the Teaching Committee, has arranged to extend his visit in this country. The following schedule has been planned, subject to minor changes:

Geneva, New York, October 24 and 25; Buffalo, October 26 and 27; Cleveland, October 28 and 29; Detroit, October 30; Chicago, October 31 to November 3.

Ruhi Afnan will then proceed to California, where speaking appointments have been already assured in prominent educational institutions. Returning to Chicago after a stay of perhaps two weeks in California, he will then visit Baha'i Centers in the Middle West and proceed to New York via Washington, D. C., Baltimore and Philadelphia.

During his stay at Green Acre, Ruhi Afnan prepared and delivered a series of addresses developing the social significance of the Cause. These talks attracted many who are seeking a religion capable of improving the world and not merely offering a new mysticism. It is hoped that each local Assembly in the above cities will arrange as many meetings as possible for Ruhi Afnan during his all too brief stay, particularly at colleges and before liberal groups whose adherence would prove a valuable asset to the Faith.

Rufi Effendi's journey throughout the United States was a period of hard and exacting work. This fact is attested to in an article entitled *Ruhi Afnan's American Visit*, from which we get an idea of the many en-

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gements that were filled by the young speaker; and although this account applies to California, it unquestionably is an example of the manner in which his time was spent in other states. The article reads:—

Since October last, Ruhi Afnan has been engaged without interruption in most effective services to the Cause in North America, journeying from New York to the cities of the Pacific Coast in a teaching trip which recalls the mighty work accomplished by the beloved Janabe Fazel. A little time will be required in order to gather together the details and present a complete record of Ruhi Afnan's public addresses and innumerable meetings with groups of friends. Local Secretaries and others in touch with his program are cordially urged to send detailed accounts to the Teaching Committee of the National Assembly, through Mrs. Maxwell, so that this important event may be shared with Baha'i communities throughout the world.

Meanwhile, letters from Berkeley and Visalia, Calif., convey the spirit of enthusiastic appreciations and gratitude, and indicate accurately, if briefly, the results secured through this generous and self-sacrificing cooperation given the American friends by a member of the Master's family.

Among the audiences addressed by Ruhi Afnan in Berkeley and vicinity were: the student body of the College of the Pacific, Stockton; Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley; Brotherhood of Races, Y. M. C. A. Berkeley; Student's Lyceum and Berkeley Civic Unit; Epworth League; Colored M. E. Church; Y. W. C. A., San Francisco; High School, Visalia; Taylor Memorial Church; Hillel Foundation; Y. M. C. A.; Y. W. C. A.; Fellowship; Pacific Unitarian School; Mills College, Oakland; Montezuma School, Los Gatos; Unitarian Church, Palo Alto; First Congregational Church, Berkeley; Theosophical Society, San Francisco; Faculty Club, Berkeley; in addition to many meetings with the Baha'i communities of Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco.

This extensive program was carried out between November 11 and December 13.

An interesting program forwarded from Chicago announced a Baha'i Public Conference in New Masonic Temple on Friday, February 13: Mr. Carl Scheffler, Chairman; Invocation by Mr. Albert R. Vail; Address "Binding Power of Truth" by Dr. Fred Merrifield of University of Chicago; and Address on "Unity of Mankind—The Social Idea of Religion" by Ruhi Afnan.

—*Baha'i News*, March, 1928

That Ruhi Effendi not only followed in the Master's footsteps across the continent, but that he also used the Master's method of teaching is a fact which is brought out in the following interesting comment:—

In the words of Abdul Baha: "The unique accomplishment of Baha'u'llah in this day is the reconciliation of Science and Religion." Shoghi Effendi has indicated a desire that the Baha'is as teachers make

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an appeal to all classes, moreover he says that in order to do this we will have to make many changes in presentation and use of our subject matter. He has impressed upon us the importance of a working knowledge of science and sociology, for example, as an aid to advancing the Baha'i viewpoint to students and leaders in the world of progressive thought.

As a brilliant exemplar of the adaptation of this phase of the Cause to an important class of people not adequately reached before, Ruhi Effendi in his trip across the continent interested thoughtful people everywhere by a colorful tie-up of the Baha'i teachings with the discoveries of advanced thinkers in the modern world.

Baha'i News, October, 1928

Finally, when the time came for the National Teaching Committee to evaluate the effects of Ruhi Effendi's tour in the United States, it embodied the following tribute in its official Report:—

The depth and power of Baha'i teachings in this country has been a steady growth since the Master impregnated this land with his Holy Essence and quickened this continent through the Breaths of the Holy Spirit. The teaching has passed through many phases and last year culminated in its first national expression through the visit of a member of the Holy Family when Ruhi Effendi visited some thirty-five centers and through the mutual cooperation of the National Teaching Committee and Local Assemblies made many public addresses and penetrated more widely the cultured and educational groups than had heretofore been possible.

—Report of National Teaching Committee,
Baha'i News, October 1929, p.6

This series of quoted passages, dealing with Ruhi Effendi's services as a teacher in this country, would not be complete without an extract from a letter written to the National Spiritual Assembly by the Guardian himself. Here we learn of Shoghi Effendi's appreciation of the work that had been accomplished by his cousin:—

The warm hospitality accorded by the National Spiritual Assembly and the American believers to my dear cousin and collaborator, Ruhi Effendi, has deeply touched me, particularly as I realize from the appreciative reports I have recently received that by his radiant and earnest spirit of service he has deserved well of his dear fellow-workers in that continent, and contributed substantially to their better appreciation of the Teachings of the Cause. Much as I desire him to work by my side here in the Holy Land, I very gladly concur with your wish to further extend his sojourn with you, trusting that he will prove of great assistance to you all in the discharge of your noble task.

—*Baha'i News*, January, 1928, p. 8; also
Baha'i Administration, p. 135

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Bahai Convention

Convention time is an important period in the yearly program of the Bahai Administration, and the 20th Annual Convention conducted in the auditorium of the Temple at Wilmette, Ill., from April 26th to April 30th, held special significance in that it was signalized by the presence of Ruhi Effendi, who shortly afterwards returned to Palestine. *The Star of the West* of June, 1928 states:—

Of unique importance also was the attendance of Ruhi Effendi Afnan (grandson of Abdul Baha) of Haifa, Palestine, who participated vitally in all the proceedings.

Each of these lines carries much significance. Obviously, it was a unique experience and a rare privilege to take part in a convention which was made different from any other by the exhilarating presence of the Master's grandson. So much for the first line; now for the last: He *participated vitally in all the proceedings*. Here we catch the inference that Ruhi Effendi not only took part in the big public meetings, but that he also attended the private sessions of the National Spiritual Assembly. Of course, he would have done so; but the word *vitally* suggests that his attitude was completely satisfactory to the authorities. Undoubtedly, the Bahai officials had intended to make use of their distinguished guest's prestige in order to back up their practices; and, apparently, the guest in his turn had fallen in with their plans. The following cable from the Guardian shows that Ruhi Effendi was definitely in line:—

Overjoyed delegates spontaneous, most generous response. Praying for sustained effort by entire body (of) believers . . . Congratulate Ruhi.

**(Signed) Shoghi, Haifa, Palestine, May 2, 1928
—Baha'i News, June 1928**

Baha'i News of June, 1928 makes the following description of some of the proceedings:—

The Spiritual blessings consisted in the chanting of the Holy Words, the reading of beautiful Tablets and letters, the addresses of pilgrims recently returned from the White Spot, and the remarks of Ruhi Effendi Afnan.

The actual impression made by Ruhi Effendi at the Convention is shown in an article which appeared shortly afterwards in *Baha'i News*. Here we find evidence that his talents were thoroughly appreciated and observe that stress is laid on the fact that he placed himself under the

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shadow of the Guardian. How little did Ruhi Effendi know that, with the passing years, the shadow would deepen and thicken; and that one day, it would descend upon him and crush the heart out of him!

Following is the article in question:—

The report of the Teaching Committee related the increasing capacity of souls and the ease of reaching those who are now eager for the message. It especially featured the great and unusual services rendered during the past year by Ruhi Effendi Afnan . . . Ruhi Afnan addressed the Convention several times and was always listened to with profound attention. In one of his talks he gave a detailed account of his teaching work in America which covered a wide area. He pointed out the great possibilities of this work and the special need of reaching the youth with the glorious message. He stressed the need of holding before them high moral standards not only as ideals but exemplified in the conduct of the teachers, also the need of presenting the teachings in a modern and rational way. His frank and manly expressions brought the light of wisdom to the consultations of the friends and his placing of himself under the shadow of our blessed Guardian evoked much love—

“Rich in saving common sense,
In his simplicity, sublime.”

These words of the Victorian poet might well have been written about this youthful, devoted and eloquent servant of God . . . The culmination of the Convention teaching effort was the one great public meeting held in Chicago . . . At this great meeting, which filled to overflowing one of the most spacious auditoriums in the new Masonic Temple, the committee was favored in having the services of Dr. John Herman Randall and Ruhi Effendi Afnan who from the respective standpoints of West and East gave the message and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with eloquence and power.

—*Bahai News*, June, 1928

A Champion of Administration

I have sketched Ruhi Effendi's first trip to the United States from the material available to me; however, more detailed records are unquestionably to be found in the archives of the National Spiritual Assembly. Some day, these records may be studied in their order and certain conclusions arrived at; yet, for the present, a few obvious facts which I have set down in these pages are sufficiently clear:—

Ruhi Effendi is the first, and thus far the only descendant of Abdul Baha who has arisen to promote the Cause. He is the first, and thus far the only member of that distinguished family who has been seen in this country.

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Consequently, his place in the annals of the movement is unique and of historic importance.

Ruhi Effendi was a faithful and zealous champion of the Guardian and of his instrument, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of the United States and Canada. In spite of his liberal tendencies and of his scientific approach to the problems of the day, he yet threw in his weight, with apparent and probably with actual sincerity, on the side of the fast-growing orthodox and reactionary elements in the movement; and it is certain that he rendered yeoman's service to the Bahai authorities. We cannot wonder at this: organizations have a powerful effect upon their memberships, while the influence of religious organizations is compelling to the extreme. Besides, it must be remembered that Ruhi Effendi held a key-position in the administrative structure and that his sense of responsibility toward the Guardian must have been great. Doubtless, there were a *good many times* when he had to close his eyes to what was going on; yet, he held firm to his duty as he saw it. Through everything, he was the loyal servant of Shoghi Effendi.

Now, for reasons as diaphanous as gossamer, Ruhi Effendi has been expelled by the Guardian from the organization which he had served so devotedly; while this institution, lifting up its metallic hands, has made resounding applause. Here again we cannot be surprised, for organizations are machines, devoid of soul; and he who makes a god of the machine will be crushed by the very god that he has worshipped. A fictional character by the name of Frenkenstein centered all his hopes upon a machine-man who in the end destroyed him; while many a person, known and unknown to history, has been slave to temporal power to his disillusionment and loss.

Although Ruhi Effendi is at the height of maturity, I may compare him to Cardinal Wolsey who, if history quotes correctly, said:—"Had I but served God as dilligently as I have served the King, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs;" for, what do a few years, or the exact color of the hair amount to when the parallel is sound!

Biblical Allusions

In upholding the Guardian's action against Ruhi Effendi, the National Spiritual Assembly was unable to find any modern or reasonable arguments; therefore, it dived to the very depths of the sea of legend and, in an article published in *Baha'i News* of December 1941, emerged with the story of the first family quarrel, namely that of Cain and Abel. For no reason what-

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soever, Ruhi Effendi is supposed to be Cain; although, who was the victim and where lies the corpse are questions that remain obscure.

Secondly, he is likened to a son of Noah, called Ham, who saw his father in a state of drunkenness and shared the news with the family circle, although he let it go no further. Personally, I think that Ham was rather discreet; but that is beside the point, the problem being: how does the story apply to Ruhi Effendi and his cousin the Guardian?

Thirdly, he is paralleled with the brethren of Joseph who in order to get rid of their little kinsman threw him into a well; and again we cannot see the point, for it would seem that Ruhi Effendi more resembles Joseph who was so drastically disposed of.

It is suggested that we compare Ruhi Effendi with Aaron, the brother of Moses, who was misled by his wife; and here we catch an allusion to Zahra Khanum, Abdul Baha's grand-daughter. Naturally, we have no means of knowing anything about the conversations which passed between Ruhi Effendi and his wife; but just the same, we do not think it likely that *this young girl, brought up in the most restricted manner, had the power to dominate such an experienced and resolute husband.*

As a final case in point we are offered the four brothers of Jesus; and now our scrutiny of the charges grows distinctly awkward, because, if we are to study the parallel on its merits, we must place Ruhi Effendi in the composite role of the four brothers, and Shoghi Effendi in that of the Christ. We are willing to strain our mental muscles and make an attempt to view the picture as it is presented by the National Spiritual Assembly; yet, try as we will to be complaisant, we find that so little is known about *these four brothers that we are left balancing in mid-air.* All that we have to go on is that, according to the Gospels, they are not numbered among the devoted followers of Jesus during his lifetime; and here we suddenly realize that we have gained a foothold, nay rather, we are on solid ground and from this point of vantage can deny the charge squarely and unequivocally. Ruhi Effendi was a staunch and loyal supporter of the Guardian during nineteen years of service, as can be proven by the records of the official Bahai publications.

So much for Biblical allusions put to bewilder an all too docile flock!

I Am Thy Companion

The above analyzed literary effort, printed in extenuation of an act of injustice perpetrated upon the Master's most brilliant grandchild, will take its place in the annals of the Cause as a *bizarre and totally unfounded*

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bill of accusation; while, other documents, written in an altogether different spirit, may be referred to as applying to the subject of Ruhi Effendi in a more direct manner. Let us then listen to Abdul Baha as he addresses a follower in his hour of trouble:—

Be thou not unhappy; the tempest of sorrow shall pass; regret will not last; disappointment will vanish; the fire of the love of God will become enkindled, and the thorns and briars of sadness and despondency will be consumed! Be thou happy; rest thou assured upon the favors of Baha', so that uncertainty and hesitation may become non-existent and the invisible outpourings descend upon the arena of being! . . .

If the friends and relatives are keeping themselves at a distance from thee, be thou not sad, for God is near to thee. Associate thou, as much as thou canst, with the relatives and strangers; display thou loving kindness; show thou forth the utmost patience and resignation. The more they oppose thee, shower thou upon them the greater justice and equity; the more they show hatred and opposition toward thee, challenge thou them with great truthfulness, friendship and reconciliation.

Praise be to God, thou art near the Kingdom of ABHA! Rest thou assured. With all my soul and spirit, I am thy companion at all moments. Know thou this of a certainty!

—Tablets of Abdul-Baha, Vol. III, pp. 557-558

Chapter VIII
GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER
AND FRIEND

*The child finds its mother when it leaves her womb.
When I am parted from you, thrown out from your
household, I am free to see your face.*

*—Rabindranath Tagore
Fruit-Gathering, Stanza X*

Chapter VIII

GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER AND FRIEND

The Young Advisor

Ruhi Effendi Afnan was guest of honor at the 20th Annual Bahai Convention held in Wilmette, Ill., from April 26th to April 30th, 1928; and there he delivered an address before the delegates which is a masterly resumé of his teaching campaign in the United States. Many were the impressions which had been made on his mind by the Bahai Assemblies and the outside world. He describes his reactions to both; points out where there is room for improvement in methods of teaching, and gives an encouraging report on the receptivity of the public mind.

To a great extent, the world has outgrown the sectarian concepts of the past, he explains, and is now ready for a scientific religion. Such a religion has been set up by Baha-O-Llah and the time is ripe for the propagation of his teachings. Now the question is: Can the Bahais take hold of this great opportunity?

He speaks of the American student and of his open mind, but specifies that youth should be approached by youth. He emphasizes the need of mingling with all peoples, with all groups: Go to them, he advises. You will sit forever if you wait for them to come to you. He mentions the fact that, upon his arrival in this country, he had been urged to speak on the principles of the Cause without mentioning its name or the names of its great Founders. Although unfamiliar with American ways, he had put aside this suggestion and had come out frankly as a Bahai; later he was glad that he had made no compromise. He felt that the straight-forward attitude was desirable in every way and was the least that should be expected of a follower of Baha-O-Llah.

He accentuates the necessity for a teacher to live up to the standards formulated by Abdul Baha. If he cannot do this, he had better give up teaching the Cause. A pure life is even more important than prayer; and modern youth is wide awake; it does not endure hypocrisy.

Then he expresses his desire to see the Bahais achieve three things: break the shell which in some places they have created around themselves; pursue a form of adult education which would show the position of the Cause in society, and administer to the needs of youthful but seeking souls, through their teachers.

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In this talk, Ruhi Effendi maps out a chart for the future and he tells his listeners how to address themselves to it. We find no vague remarks, no generalizations; but keen analyses and practical plans. We see him as the young advisor, directing his colleagues of far more mature years; and we feel again, as many felt at the time, that if his visit could have been prolonged indefinitely, the benefit to the Cause would have been extreme.

The convention speech of Ruhi Effendi is a forthright and courageous document, a guide for teaching and an evangel of initiative and resourcefulness; and feeling that his advice applies to all of us, I have chosen a few generous extracts for reproduction in these pages.

Convention Speech of Ruhi Effendi

A little study of the progress of religion in this country, especially in the light of the books and periodicals that are coming out, will show every unprejudiced mind that on the one hand there is a dying out of the spirit of sectarianism and, on the other, a gradual creeping in of the desire for true religion. Man is becoming too broad along every line to be kept narrow in his religious views, but he has at the same time learned that without the value religion gives to life and the outlook it creates in the individual, science cannot proceed very far without at the same time opening up new channels for destruction. Science is gradually learning to value the importance of religion and drawing nearer to it.

At such a juncture the Baha'i Movement exists on the field, with the full equipment in principles and in spiritual dynamics, to provide the world with the necessary religious views. Is it going to avail itself of this wonderful chance, or is it going to let it slip away? It all depends upon us, the Baha'is, for ever since 1844 we have been trained for this purpose!

What I wish now is to say how we can do it, how we can arise to the occasion and spread this great Cause of ours. During these last few months, as you already know, I have been travelling around in this country and the experiences I have had in the field of teaching have led me to certain conclusions. I do not maintain that these views are beyond reproach, for after a few more experiences, I may modify them to a great extent. But maybe, if expressed frankly and clearly, these experiences will prove of some use to that body which will undertake the task of arranging for the teaching work during the coming year.

First, let us consider the condition of the Cause at present. Except in a few centers, such as New York, Portland and various other small centers, the Cause is not spreading rapidly. The friends do attend their meetings, they hold their feasts most regularly, but, as far as I can make out, they are not satisfied as to the progress they are making in attracting new individuals . . .

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. . . Many times I have been brought by Baha'is in contact with certain individuals who have heard me most diligently, perhaps even asked me a question or two, but who before leaving said "this is all interesting, but we are satisfied with what we have." It is useless to talk to people who are satisfied, unless we can first create in them a dissatisfaction and then a desire for some reformed ideas. Consequently, the proper persons to approach are not necessarily those who conform to certain religious views. Sometimes a person who is agnostic and has left religion in the pursuit of some other reformative movement is far easier to reach. There are millions of people in this country, who are craving for some religious views that would satisfy their reason as well as their spiritual longing, and it is these that we want no matter in what walk of life they may be. These are naturally broad-minded and ready to accept whatever satisfies their reason. Among teachers, educated people, club people and those who interest themselves in humanitarian services, there are throngs who would accept the Cause if approached in a broad way. Students of some philosophic or mystic cults are not generally so receptive . . .

Then our mode of approach should be exactly like that of the Master. I believe there are few who appreciate the great change the Master made in the method of teaching when he came to this country. Previous to that, in the East at least, the only way they proved the importance of the Cause was by referring to prophecies concerning the Cause that had been mentioned in the Holy Scriptures or the Qu'ran. The Master, when He undertook His trip to the West, saw the futility of such a method; he saw that if the people are not ready to comply with the authority of the Bible, surely they will not listen to what its prophecies prove! So he set aside that method and began to emphasize the social teachings of the Cause. Take the Paris or London talks, or the discourses he delivered in America and find for yourself how he emphasized primarily the social aspect of the Movement. My point is merely to follow His example, if we desire to succeed.

But though the Master laid for us the best form of teaching the Cause, He wants us to modify it to suit the occasion. Moreover, what He gives are certain generalizations: it is for us to prove them. 'Abdu'l Baha speaks of a graduated Income Tax as the only form of taxation; it is for us to prove its use. He mentions the Unity of Science and Religion; it is for us to find out how the movement is to be brought about. He advocates stronger family ties, it is for us to find out how the measures he advocates concerning marriage and divorce fit in with the family problems we have at present. In short, we have to study the historical background to find out the significance of what 'Abdu'l Baha advocates. It is only by doing that, that a newcomer can find out the true importance of the Cause and be attracted to it. Moreover, supposing the world were suddenly to awaken to the truth that only the Baha'is have the true solution for the world problems, and

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were to give us the reign of administration to adjust society according to our ideals, would we be able to undertake the task?

We have to prepare ourselves for this task in two ways. First by mixing more with the world outside. One unfortunate thing I have found in many centers that I have visited is that Baha'is, enchanted by the wonderful treasures they possess, do nothing more than sit down, count them and admire them. Baha'u'llah did not desire to attract us away from society, he definitely says, mingle with all the peoples of the world and share with them the fruits of your endeavors. A true Baha'i, therefore, is the one who lives as a member of society, alive with its activities. He should be a leader of society and a source of inspiration to it, always busy to apply in its life the precepts of the Cause. Mix with your fellow Baha'is, so as to keep in touch with the source of inspiration and then go out into the world using that spirit which you have obtained in quickening the world and solving its impending problems . . .

But to be able to do real service to humanity and appreciate the significance of the Movement, we should also try and educate ourselves. As far as my experiences go, the more books I read the more I appreciate the Cause . . .

One important conclusion that I have come to, while travelling throughout this country speaking about the Cause, is the method of presenting it. I was told on my arrival in this country, that the safest way to attract individuals is by avoiding the name of the Cause and its founders. I was even told that the name of the Cause is a handicap to it. Unfamiliar with the condition of the country, I almost believed it. The only reason why I did not subscribe to that idea was because a little knowledge of Christianity had taught me that the same thing was told about the early Christians. They called them Christians and jeered at them. But they did not change their name to satisfy the idiotic public, so I thought we should not give way to their prejudicial sentiments and commit a most humiliating act to the Cause and its founders.

Time and experience, however, have proven to me that such is not the case. I have not as yet found anyone who heard me mention the Cause and was prejudiced by its name. In fact, when on certain occasions the subject given to me was such that it did not necessitate a direct reference to the Cause, I have had people come to me later and ask why I did not mention the Movement and speak of it more exhaustively. The better the group, the more freedom I have had in mentioning the Cause. In a hall, on the grounds of Cornell University, I spoke on the work of the prophets and on Baha'u'llah as the manifestation of God to this day and no prejudice was manifested. Similarly did I speak to groups in Stanford University, University of British Columbia, Pacific School of Religion, in Vassar College and Mills College and to almost the whole student body of Howard University and many other groups.

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What I believe is the reason for the prejudice is the sentimental or sectarian way some people present it. When all the talk is about certain personal experiences in Haifa, or in the Cause in general, only few individuals who are already familiar with the Movement find it inspiring, others are not interested. Why should a college student or teacher care to know about the wonderful life of the people in Haifa? What he is interested in is the way they propose to help the betterment of the world.

Secondly, we sometimes are apt to speak of the wonderful teachings of the Cause, as if they are rival teachings with those of Christianity and far superior to them. Such an attitude would undoubtedly arouse a great amount of justified ill-feeling towards the Cause. In fact, it shows a lack of understanding on the part of the speaker. Baha'u'llah has not come to the world to create a religion to rival with Christianity, with a different set of teachings, all the time be on the alert to deprive others of their religion and bring them into His own fold. Baha'u'llah has come to reform different religions, to make Christianity true and pure Christianity, Islam true and pure Islam, and so on. In other words, our belief is that all these religions are the renewals of the ancient and the same religion. They are the different fruits that the same ancient tree produced at different seasons. All the religions, in their true form, are religions renewed, and not new religions to rival with the existing ones.

Thus, whenever any prejudice is found against the Cause, you can trace it back to some misconceived statement made to that individual, and not an inherent handicap due to the name of the Cause. In fact, the names of Baha'u'llah and the Master bring with them a spiritual power that operates as the dynamic force behind the teachings . . .

At the beginning of my work around the Bay Region, a great friend of the Cause, who had obtained for me some wonderful openings, told me "I would like to give you two advices. First, get to people of your own age, for those of my age are too hard-boiled; then, do not try to get the people to you, go to them." "There is always," he said, "a class of people, who go habitually to lectures as a form of entertainment. They will listen to you, but they will never take what you say seriously." . . .

On the subject of the young people, also, my friend was right. Out of the many groups I spoke to, college students were the most receptive. They are considered at present, by their elders, as irresponsible and irreligious individuals, but the truth is that they are too broad to conform to any sectarian form of religion to which their parents subscribe. Moreover, being free from dogmas and trained to use their reason, they are unwilling to accept anything on mere faith. They want a religion that would conform to their reason and, at the same time, satisfy their spiritual longings. Moreover, religion has always been the source of ideals for man. The early Christians became Christians because they found in it the hopes and ideals they

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craved for. The only reason why the Churches at present do not attract man is because they do not provide the intelligent individual with those ideals society needs at present. Religion is meant to be always in the vanguard; when it begins to drag behind, society will set it aside, rather than be encumbered by it. The only reason why the young students do not go to Church is because there is nothing the Churches can give them. The Churches do not stand any more as the source of ideals and inspirations, and that is the reason why the students do not frequent them. If we Baha'is come to the front and, in their own language and without exuberant emotionalism, show them that we have the breadth of outlook they crave to see in religion, if we show that our belief is that science and religion have to go hand in hand, and that they are both based on reason and faith; if we then present them the social ideals the Baha'i movement advocates, then they will run to its support and manifest the energy that is so characteristic of the young people as a whole.

But only young people can appeal to young people. With older people, they will have a lack of confidence and mutual understanding and, therefore, will not come out with questions so freely. With one of their own age, the case is however different. Moreover, only a young person can appreciate the problems of another young person. I was, one day, mentioning to a grown-up friend of mine some questions put to me by a Baha'i youth. I soon found that this friend of mine, instead of sympathizing with the problems that the youth had, began to scorn them. To me, however, the case was different; having had those problems to solve myself, I could show greater sympathy and leniency in the matter. Just as a young person cannot appreciate the difficulties of his elders, so grown-up people cannot appreciate the problems of the youth . . .

What I desire to see achieved along that line is that ten young and competent individuals, who are ready to sacrifice two years of their life, should prepare themselves for the work. These should be put under a rigorous course of study for one whole summer. During this time they should, under a competent teacher of the Cause and also a competent Professor of Social Science, obtain a general view of the Cause in a scientific way and also go deep and specialize along one of the phases of the teachings. Then prepare an essay, showing their competence in presenting the Cause. Once this is achieved, they should be sent from one College to another, to establish centers and study classes. They should not stay, however, for more than two weeks in any center, they should keep on moving and let others come in their place.

During this period, the Teaching Committee should also see that they are keeping up their study. For, unless they read outside books constantly, they are apt to become stale and incapable of standing up to the mark in winning their point while discussing the Cause with the students. . .

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Now we Baha'is should be on our guard lest the Baha'i teachings lose their purity. The Baha'i Movement is not a conglomeration of all sorts of religious ideas plus the beliefs of some mystic cults. It is religion purified, it is the ancient religion freed of the debris of human imaginings. If we desire to be true Baha'is we have to experience one of the greatest revolutions in our very soul. We have first to set aside old conceptions, we have to cleanse our slate from ancient outgrown, human imaginings, from those beliefs that have degraded the other religions into their present condition and then usher in the Baha'i ideals and beliefs and give them the complete and uncontested reign in the kingdom of our soul. We have first to "ring out the old" and then "ring in the new." . . .

Aside from this report, I would like to avail myself of this great opportunity where I am facing the representatives of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, to express my heartiest thanks for all the kindness that has been showered upon me. Without the constant help and inspiration that was given me by the teaching committee, through its secretary, I would have never undertaken such a trip all alone or obtained any one of the wonderful openings that were arranged for me. My experiences along that line have proven to me definitely that, being under the shadow of Shoghi Effendi, and keeping in touch with the National Assembly, through its proper committees, put us in unity with the source of spiritual power which is absolutely indispensable for success. We individuals are infinitesimal in our influence, it is that source of energy which makes us what we are in achieving success, in serving the Cause.

Then, I would like to thank all those individuals that took me into their homes and sheltered me as a son and brother. As I have often remarked, the world would be a different one from what it is at present, if every individual were to find as many homes in foreign lands as I have found in this. Thank you for all you have done for me. I will try to repay you if you come to Haifa.

—*Baha'i News*, June and July, 1928 issues

Return to Haifa

A farewell dinner to Ruhi Effendi was given by the Bahai community in the Hall of St. Mark's-In-The-Bouwerie, where he had been welcomed on his arrival in this city. Being included in the large assemblage of guests, I had the opportunity of looking into the face of this Bahai brother of mine whom I had not seen since youthful days in Haifa, and of hearing him speak with the charm and assurance of which I had heard much in recent months. A day or so later, I spent the lunch hour with him in an uptown restaurant where we discussed methods for propagating the teachings. All my talks are derived from the Master's, he said to me; I simply sowed a

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few of those very seeds, here and there. I have done my duty to the best of my ability. Baha-O-Llah will take care of the rest.

On his way to Palestine, Ruhi Effendi stopped in Geneva, where he addressed *The Conference of International Peace Through the Churches*; then he resumed his work in Haifa as secretary to the Guardian.

Short Shrift for The New History Society

It was in the following spring that The New History Society came into being, becoming a subject of controversy from the very start. The point at issue was that I would not place this new movement under the control of the National Spiritual Assembly or accept the unconditional authority of this body. Willing as I was to work in full cooperation with the Administration, I yet could not prostitute my conscience and my spirit to a religious dictatorship; consequently, after the passage of an agitated year and four months, The New History Society and its founders were expelled from the Bahai administration.

Throughout this proceeding, voluminous correspondence passed between New York and Haifa, most of it being attended to by Ruhi Effendi; and here we see the young secretary as a staunch advocate of the Administration and the passionate protector of its prerogatives. The fact that The New History Society received short shrift at his hands has never affected my high regard for him personally, for I realize that agents of organizations are cogs in the wheels, or, if very highly placed they are wheels in themselves and the machines are dependent upon their remaining in place. It can be said that throughout his active career, Ruhi Effendi fulfilled to the letter his obligations to the Administration; while at the same time, and I concede that his adjustive processes must have been rather complicated, he continued to uphold the Cause itself in all its universality and grandeur.

During the early Thirties, *Baha'i News* occasionally refers to Ruhi Effendi. The April issue of 1930 carries some teaching suggestions made by him; and the May issue of the same year includes an account by Dr. Walter B. Guy of his stay in Haifa, in which he repeats a prayer offered by himself at the Shrine on Mount Carmel in the sympathetic presence of the young secretary. In April 1931, Ruhi Effendi is referred to as being member of a committee in Palestine, together with his brother Soheil Effendi Afnan and Miss Effie Baker, engaged in collecting data for publication in Vol. IV of *The Bahai World*. The following July he is again mentioned, this time by Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler who, after a long time,

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yet recalls his speech given before *the Congress of Some Living Religions Within the British Empire*. Mrs. Kehler writes:—

Ruhî Afnan said in his paper before the Congress of Living Religions that when we see the teachings and principles of this Revelation at last stepping down out of the cold empyrean of idealism and becoming part of the everyday working order of the world, we cannot but agree with Abdu'l-Bahá that the "pulse of this mighty message of Baha'u'llah is beating like an artery through the five continents of the world."

—*Bahá'i Magazine*, July 1931

A Unique University

The American University of Beirut is an institution of incalculable value in the Near East. It has moulded the characters of countless young Oriental men and women, and stands as a beacon of tolerance and broad thinking upon the educational horizon of the world. Abdul Baha offered his most eloquent tribute to Dr. Bayard Dodge, President of the University, when he sent his own grandsons to be educated under his auspices; and he further recommended that the Persian Baháís enter their sons as students on this campus. An article by Dr. Dodge entitled *Education as a Source of Good Will*, which is published in *The Baháí World*, 1930-1932, gives the reader an idea of the spiritual attitude that has made the American University of Beirut unique among *Alma Maters*.

It is with a sense of deep appreciation that I reproduce herewith a few passages from this article. Dr. Dodge writes:—

The word "university" implies something broader than the use of education to nurture a specific influence or propaganda. It suggests an effort to set forth the ideas of the world as a whole, so that a student may seek the truth through broad horizons and be free to choose for himself. It is this conception that underlies the work of the American University of Beirut. An effort is made to prevent all forms of propaganda, except for a consistent pressure to promote good will and friendship.

During the past year there have been representatives of fourteen nationalities and twelve major religious sects on the teaching and administrative force of the University. . .

During the year 1930-1931 there have been 812 students in the University proper, 33 in the Institute of Music, and 697 in the elementary and secondary classes of the Preparatory School. These students represented twenty-two important religious sects and thirty-

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nine countries. They have come from places as far apart as India and the Argentine; Russia and Zanzibar. . .

As the University at the foot of Lebanon has given an interpretation of the gospel of Jesus and the teachings of the prophets which is similar to that proclaimed by the great Bahá'í leaders at the foot of Carmel, there has naturally been a bond of sympathy between the colony at Haifa and the American University of Beirut.

During the past year there have been three Bahá'ís on the staff of the University and twenty-six enrolled as students. The following is a list of the Bahá'ís who have graduated and become a great credit to their Alma Mater. . .

Dr. Dodge presents a list of twenty-six names which includes those of Shoghi Rabbani, Ruhi Afnan and his brother Soheil Afnan.

After mentioning the qualifications which mark the Bahai students at the Beirut University, some of which are refinement and courtesy, clean living, honesty and intuitive internationalism, President Dodge concludes thus:—

Centuries ago shepherds, who were watching their flocks in the fields of Bethlehem, heard heavenly voices singing of "Goodwill to all mankind." Today this same song is being chorused from Carmel and Beirut. May the whole world catch the spirit of the music, that harmony may take the place of discord and enmity be turned to peace.

—*The Bahá'í World*, 1930-1932, Vol. IV, pp. 368-371

The Attentive Host

I have striven to present a composite picture of Ruhi Effendi, drawn from published records, together with some printed items of more or less worth, which show him as guide, philosopher and friend to the Bahai Community. Now, I will close this chapter with a few lines having no historical importance whatsoever, but which give us one more glimpse of him in the modest role which he filled so long and so successfully—that of the attentive young host on the slope of Mount Carmel.

After landing, some of us chose to walk through the narrow crooked streets with Ruhi Afnan, grandson of Abdul Baha, and cousin of Shoghi Effendi, who was at the dock to greet us.

—In an article entitled: *Glimpses of the New World Order* by Mabel and Sylvia Paine, *Bahá'í Magazine*, March, 1933

Chapter IX
BAHAI STATESMANSHIP
TRANSCENDENTALISM
AND APOLOGETICS

And men, who contemptuously treat their own brothers and sisters as eternal babies, never to be trusted in the most trivial details of their personal life,—coercing them at every step by the cruel threat of persecution into following a blind lane to nowhere, driving a number of them into hypocrisy and into moral inertia,—will fail over and over again to rise to the height of their true and severe responsibility.

**—Rabindranath Tagore
Creative Unity, pp. 139-140**

Chapter IX

BAHAI STATESMANSHIP TRANSCENDENTALISM AND APOLOGETICS

A Decisive Event

Eight years after Ruhi Effendi's fruitful journeyings in this country, a second visit took place which was counted as of extreme importance, judging from the Annual Report of the National Spiritual Assembly, printed after his return to Haifa. Here, under the caption *Decisive Events of the Year 1935-1936*, we find, among other items, the following:

6. The second visit made to America by Ruhi Effendi Afnan.
Baha'i News, May, 1936

This visit although short was a repetition of the first, in that the time of the distinguished guest was kept very full indeed. *Baha'i News* announces in the following article:—

Ruhi Effendi Afnan Makes Second Visit to America

The National Spiritual Assembly is privileged to announce that Ruhi Effendi Afnan, great-grandson of Baha'u'llah, has come to America and with the Guardian's approval can remain until November in order to take part in the National Meeting at the Temple on October 26 and 27, and visit local Baha'i communities to assist in teaching on his way to and from Chicago.

The following itinerary has been arranged:—

September 8 to 22, Upper New York State.

September 25 to October 4, New England.

October 6 to 13, New York City Metropolitan area.

October 14 to 20, Washington, D. C. area.

October 21 to November 6. From Washington to Chicago, stopping at Pittsburgh en route.

November 7 until his departure from America. From Chicago to New York, stopping at Detroit and Cleveland.

Due to important work which requires his presence at Haifa in November, Ruhi Effendi Afnan regrets his inability to extend his visit to include a journey to Assemblies in the West.

From reports already received, the friends are making every effort to take advantage of this unique opportunity to have the Message presented publicly by so distinguished a believer, and the center already visited are enthusiastic and grateful for the results achieved.

Baha'i News, October 1936

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A Second Home

During this second visit, Ruhi Effendi was on familiar ground. The majority of those he came in contact with had met him before, and to most of these persons, the joy of renewing so rare an acquaintanceship was intense. Besides, some actual friendships had been formed on the first trip, and not a few men and women had come to look upon him as a guide when difficult problems came up. Therefore in many ways, the United States was to Ruhi Effendi a second home.

A characteristic of his, which was discomfiting to some but which, nevertheless, won for him universal respect, was his charitableness toward those who were absent. Gossip died in his presence, or else slunk fainting away to be revived when the coast was clear; and the example of his forbearance and kindness produced a definite impression, one as useful perhaps as were his explanations and teachings. A most lovely injunction of the Master is this: *The Bahais must possess the sin-covering eye*. It seems to me that Ruhi Effendi exemplified this teaching.

Bahai Statesmanship

A notable step forward on the second trip was the fact that this time Ruhi Effendi gave a talk on one of the great national networks. He spoke on W. A. B. C., of the Columbia Broadcasting System, on October 11, 1935 and presented the Cause in a manner that was highly satisfactory to his Bahai listeners. His voice is well suited to broadcasting and his delivery was remarkable, considering the fact that he was a novice along this line.

I am including this entire radio speech in my sketch of Ruhi Effendi, for in it he addresses himself to the subject of universal civilization from the Bahai point of view. It is an attitude that must be adopted by the world statesmen of the future. The title of his address is:

The Contribution of the East to World Civilization

It is venturesome to maintain that the mind of an Easterner is essentially different from that of a Westerner; that there are inherent qualities and capacities that distinguish them one from the other; but the fact still remains that whereas Western development has been in the direction of material civilization, the contribution of the East has been more along the spiritual line.

The expert knowledge, technique and specialization that has been produced in the West, especially in these latter days, is a reality that

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will for ever stand to its credit and characterize its civilization. The discoveries of the laws of nature, the progress of science in all its different branches, the development of industry and its mass production, the perfection that is achieved in business methods, all are arresting to an Eastern visitor in a Western land, arouse his admiration and awaken his hope that some day the same forces may permeate Asia and Africa.

There is no reason why such potentialities residing in nature and in man should not be developed and manipulated to serve the peoples of the East. All they have to do is to enter the centers of learning in Europe and America and partake of the knowledge accumulated there. To develop man has to follow in the footsteps of those who have advanced farther on the road to progress, and for a period of time, acquire knowledge from them. Only by emulating the West, in its physical and economic development, can the East start to evolve, and gradually reach a point when it can turn back and begin to contribute its share to world civilization. The material development of Japan is a decisive proof confirming the efficacy of this process.

But just as the East has to acquire from the West industrialization, technique and the specialized branches of learning, so the West must turn to the East for the spiritual element that will lift its civilization, balance it, make it perfect and raise it to the rank of a culture.

It is idle to theorize on the reason why the great cultural movements of the world, the great revealed religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have all sprung from the East and form the sources of the different cultural movements history records. I hesitate to suggest that the Eastern frame of mind makes it more susceptible to revelation, that the people of the Orient are a better channel through which God can express His Divine Will, that they are the chosen medium for regenerating mankind. But the facts are too glaring to be denied that all the cultures existing in the world today have sprung from revealed religions invariably born in the East.

Consider how the Christian spirit and teachings form the cultural background of Western civilization. The mode of thought, the basic moral principles that distinguish the European and American nations from the other peoples of the world, trace their source back to Jesus Christ; and this is a fact admitted by most students of Western culture. Jesus Christ introduced into the world a universal consciousness and outlook on life that permeated Roman thought and gradually remoulded its culture, as well as its legal system and institutions. It was the Christian spirit that balanced the Roman civilization and provided its true cultural element. There is much ground for doubt whether the influence of Rome upon the world and later civilizations would have been so great if the cultural and spiritual elements brought in by Christianity had been withheld; if Pagan

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Rome had not been conquered and refashioned by the spirit of Jesus Christ. Westerners, however, often fail to remember that Jesus was a Jew, born and bred in Palestine which is an integral part of Asia. *Because Islam supplanted Christianity in the Near East and drove it into Europe, we are often apt to identify Jesus so closely with Europe as to forget that He was an Oriental.*

Even more outstanding and irrefutable is the influence of Muhammad and the Qur'an upon the culture that developed in the Near East and gradually spread its influence into Western lands. Not only did that religion start a new civilization of its own, and in the tenth and eleventh centuries, give rise to centers of learning such as Khorasan in Northern Persia, Baghdad and Spain, but also the Persian, Arab and Moorish culture, that had obtained their spirit and basic teachings from Islam, exerted a cultural influence upon countries that were purely Christian in Faith. *The more we follow, with an unprejudiced mind, the study of Islam and the Renaissance, the more we find the influence the religion of Muhammad exerted upon European culture. Many of the earliest leaders of Renaissance pursued their studies in Muhammadan countries and were infused with the spirit of Islam. Among them was St. Thomas Aquinas, who spent his early days in Spain learning philosophy from Moorish scholars. Spinoza was greatly influenced in his thought by the Jewish philosophers who flourished in the atmosphere of a Muhammadan culture. Many of the unbiased students of history today maintain that if the French had not actually won the battle of Tours, Europe would have not gone through the period called the Dark Ages. This shows the importance of the cultural influence of Islam when its spirit was still young and virile.*

The progress of modern science is a glowing example of what human intellect can achieve when freed from the fetters of outgrown dogmas and superstitions. *The more man disentangled himself from medieval conceptions, the more he advanced and discovered the methods whereby he could use physical forces for his social and individual development.*

But as our civilization is more along material and industrial lines, as its drift has been increasingly away from true religion and spirituality, that cultural element has shown itself to be disturbingly lacking. The attention of the world has been directed towards the development of industry and commerce, towards the growth of technique and specialized study that is conducive to human well-being upon this earth. Much less importance has been attached to cultural values and the unfoldment of the spiritual faculties of man. *Can a civilization be considered a true culture when the spiritual destiny of man is ignored, when values are distorted and perverted? Can a truly cultured humanity perpetrate international crimes and cause the death of millions as we are doing?*

Science has laid at our disposal great forces that may be used

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for the betterment of humanity, but they are actually employed to destroy life and impoverish peoples. The curse of mankind in this day is that material civilization has progressed by leaps and bounds while spiritual culture has been dragging behind. We have obtained a detailed and accurate knowledge of many of the forces that operate in our physical universe but have not reached a true and proper understanding as to the goal of our moral and spiritual development, as to the purpose for which we were created and the direction in which we ought to develop. These are aspects of a true cultural life that is still unborn.

Again can the East come to the front and contribute, as on previous occasions, its cultural element to world civilization. It is only by acknowledging and accepting this worthy contribution the East can make in this day, that Europe and America will be able to perfect their material civilization and give it a cultural and finishing touch.

Being too near to the origin of the Baha'i Faith, which arose during the middle of the last century in Persia, we are apt to underestimate its value. In time we may obtain a better perspective and a more accurate method to appraise its importance. But even now it can be taken into consideration and its value recognized. It undoubtedly possesses a rich cultural value for all the civilized world.

Consider, for example, the goal of the oneness of mankind which it establishes as an ideal for all the peoples of the world. Baba'u'llah, the founder of this new Faith that has arisen in the Orient, proclaims: "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. . . This strife 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. . ."

With such a cultural ideal before us, with such a universal spirit to stimulate our inner emotions, narrow nationalism and its devastating influences can be overcome. Then the forces of nature harnessed by man, which now are employed for purposes of destruction and self-aggrandizement, can be used to strengthen the bonds that unite the human family. These forces could then be made to operate for furthering the conception of world unity and the brotherhood of man.

If this cultural movement (again sprung from the East), should be employed as the ideal of Western material civilization, as the spiritual force that is to animate it and direct its course, then, instead of dissipating our life along unworthy pursuits we will build up a nobler home in this world and make ready for the worlds to come. This is a practical idealism which will absorb youth and guide its footsteps.

We are born in this world with a spirit that is a store-house

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of infinite potentialities; with the capacity to develop these potentialities and reflect the rich and glorious attributes of God. Should we bear this cultural principle in mind, should we recognize the fact that we have more than a physical being, should we become conscious of the fact that the purpose of all creation is the spiritual development of man, then we will take life more seriously and joyously and concentrate our attention upon things vital and uplifting.

If the East and the West should each contribute its share along these lines destined by God; should they bear in mind that they are indebted and in need one of the other, then they would build up the future civilization in such a manner that both the material and cultural elements would be incorporated—elements indispensable for the richness and beauty of the whole. Then we will behold the true Kingdom of God, foretold by all the prophets, which constitutes the ideal world state the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh tries to establish upon earth.

—*World Order*, December, 1935

Bahai Transcendentalism

During this same year and the following one, much of Ruhi Effendi's writings were included in Bahai publications. A certain article, appearing in *World Order*, November, 1935 deserves the study of those who are interested in metaphysics, theology and religion. Here, the abstruse topics of the Divine Essence, of the Logos, of incarnation, re-birth and resurrection are handled with learning and acumen, his knowledge of these transcendental subjects being directly derived from the New Testament, the Koran and the writings of Bahá-O-Llah and Abdul Baha. This Paper, under the lengthy title: *A World Faith—Studies in the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh—The Oneness of the Prophets*, gives the author standing as a Bahai transcendentalist.

A beautiful section of the article, dealing with the potentialities of man and the continuing influence of the Prophets, reads thus: —

Man is born in this world endowed with latent and infinite potentialities with the object of developing them to the full. In this process of training he needs the counsel and guidance of a loving teacher who is above the prevailing social conceptions, who is not carried away by the trend of social influences, who is able to create his own environment as well as the environment for the whole world, and at the same time is himself guided by an inner and unerring Divine Light.

God who has created us loves us, and because He loves us desires our progress. Hence He has sent us His Prophets and given them the necessary power to raise us above our environment, overcome the forces of evil and set before us the true path of salvation and

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spiritual upliftment. But the Prophets do not act as spiritual educators only in this world, in all the worlds to come through which the human spirit passes on its road to progress, Prophets appear and help the development of man.

A new religion, therefore, comes into being whenever the previous one becomes too old to exert any appreciable and healthy influence upon society, whenever, in the words of Jesus, it becomes like a salt that has lost its savor. In one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha says: "This bounty and great opportunity shall end and this brilliant morn shall fade away into dark night. When you find the world in this condition know and be sure that the day of certainty has neared, that the light of the merciful God shall soon shine upon the horizon and the Lord shall appear upon the dark clouds."

In referring to the principle of the finality of revelation and of absolutism in religion, Ruhi Effendi has this to say:—

How foolish, therefore, is the principle maintained by the generality of the followers of the different religions that with the advent of their Prophet revelation has ceased; that their religion is the "absolute religion," the final word uttered by God to man. According to Baha'u'llah it is blasphemy "to believe that all revelation is ended, that the portals of divine mercy are closed, that from the day-spring of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that the ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the tabernacle of ancient glory the Messengers of God have ceased to be manifest."

Speaking of religion as *spiritual atmosphere*, embracing all life, he strikes a very high note:—

If we take religion to mean that spiritual atmosphere which embraces moral and social laws as well as beliefs and motivating emotions that God creates for the spiritual development of man, then all that the Prophets do, is to renew that atmosphere and make it more healthy and invigorating. The Prophets do not come into the world to establish rival institutions and to rob one another of their adherents. They are all servants of the same Cause, revealers of the same ancient religion of God, which, at the hands of man, is constantly corrupted and obscured. This is why Jesus said: "I have not come to destroy but to fulfill." He did not come to abolish the religion of Moses but to infuse it with a new life and spirit, to make it more effective in changing and uplifting the human heart.

To him all the Prophets have one and the same mission, namely, to help in the spiritual development of man:—

We have thus seen that all the Prophets are the manifestation of the Word of God, that they all come to the world for the same purpose, namely to help the spiritual development of man. Their

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mission is to renew the ancient religion of God, and so they all accept the Prophets who appeared before them and foretell the advent of the future ones. Hence, we should admit that they constitute members of the same race of spiritual and moral educators, destined by the hand of Providence to help the upliftment of man in this and in the myriad worlds to come.

Bahai Apologetics

A second article by Ruhi Effendi, written during this period, is published in the April 1936 issue of *World Order*. The author addresses himself to the subject: *Institutionalism and Religion*, a choice undoubtedly provoked by the existence of The New History Society and by its silent stand against the administrative theology of the National Spiritual Assembly. Here, writing at his own inclination or else at the bidding of those higher up, Ruhi Effendi tries his very best to discover the rational justification for the institutions of the Faith. He describes two manners of approach to religion: the *mystical* and the *revelational*—the first, emphasizing the inner feelings of man; the second, the necessity for institutionalizing the Faith in order to insure its life and continuity. The latter belief was held, as every one knows, by Christianity and Islam; and it is now the cornerstone of the Bahai Administration. Yet, was it the belief of the Founders of these religions? If I remember correctly, the great Prophets to whom I refer opened the vials of their condemnation upon the religious institutions of their day; while they built their movements on the untrammelled hearts of brave men who made themselves free to follow them. That institutionalizing did take place after their departure from this life is quite another story, and a very sad one, as far as my own views are concerned.

I now return to the explanations of Ruhi Effendi, who addresses himself to his subject as follows:—

Modern thought is inclined to consider any form of organization as detrimental to the spirit of true religion, and it bases its reasoning upon the belief that whereas religion requires a freedom of the spirit, laws and institutions force it into a groove and subject it to a definite and preconceived mould. How could the spirit soar and attain its full stature if restrained by the dictates of an organization?

The next paragraph contains a dart that is levelled straight at me. Instinctively, I want to duck my head; and then I change my mind and plead guilty.

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To denounce the administrative aspect of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, or in a general form, maintain that religion cannot and should not be organized, betrays a lack of understanding of the philosophy of the spiritual life. Only mystic movements can logically maintain that organization weighs down upon the spirit, that it retards its progress. The followers of the revealed religions, be they Christians, Moslems or Baha'is, on the other hand, cannot with any justification maintain such a theory.

Having carried his argument up to this point, the writer must have thought it incumbent upon him to make some note of the disastrous effects produced upon all the religions by ecclesiastical organizations, for he says:—

It is true that at times organization becomes a handicap to a spiritual movement, but that is only when its function is over-emphasized, when the organization becomes an end in itself rather than a mere means provided by God for the spiritual development of man.

In reading the following statement, I can only smile at the two words *after ages*:—

The administration of the Faith of Baha'u'llah is still in its infancy, it has to grow and mature, to fulfill its mission in the world; but after ages of activity and useful service it will become subject to corruption.

In spite of the fact that the *pros* on institutionalized religion are not my pet subject, but rather the *cons*, I yet consider this apologia of Ruh Effendi as a very clever piece of writing. It should have been appreciated by those for whom it was drawn up, and I do not doubt but that it was judging from the prominence that was given it; however, according to the documents that are in my possession, this article is his swan song for, following this date, I do not find any more of Ruhi Effendi's writings in Baha publications.

The Order of Bahai Apologists

The religion of Bahai Institutionalism is headed by Horace Holley known very simply as Mr.; although with time, an appropriate title such as Monsignor or the Right Reverend is likely to be added to him. Below stands an order of hierophants and prelates, acting as advocates and protectors of rights, rites and privileges. Some of them are men of erudition and learning; and these are occasionally called upon to explore the domain of philosophy, sociology, science, economics, church and state in order

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to find plausible arguments and sophistic explanations for the introduction of institutionalism in the Bahai Cause—all this to prove to the rank and file of the faithful, the logical necessity, the *raison d'être* and the divine origin of the said institution.

In Professor Glen A. Shook, the Bahai Administration has found a valuable exponent and interpreter of its institutional ideology. The May, June, July and August issues of *World Order*, 1936 carry four scholarly articles from his pen, entitled respectively: *Man as an Organic Unit*; *Society as an Organic Unit*; *The Divine Plan—A Creation* and *Elements of the Divine Plan*. A second series of articles by the same author appears in the March, April, May and June issues of this publication, under the general title: *A Study of Church Organizations*; while again, in 1938, we have in the January, February, March and April issues of *World Order* a third series of articles by Professor Shook, entitled: *Philosophy and Revelation*.

Mr. Mountford Mills has devoted his legal talents and experience to the establishment of the Bahai organization. As a former president of the National Spiritual Assembly, as most trusted agent of the Guardian and as a widely loved and respected personality, he has made notable contributions to the administrative system which he ranks, at the least, on a par with the Teachings. Three articles of his entitled *The World Crisis* which, in 1928, are published in the February, March and April issues of *World Order*, give his views on the subject.

Another consistent advocate of organization within the Cause is Mr. Kenneth Christian. His essays: *Education in a World Order*, published in *Baha'i Magazine*, March, 1934 and *Peace Realists*, appearing in *World Order*, October, 1937 rationalize the need of a Bahai administration.

In this campaign of apologetics, mapped out by the authorities, many American women have played prominent parts. The late Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler, a fine writer and speaker, as well as a dynamic and utterly devoted servant of the Cause and of the Administration, has cooperated whole-heartedly with the National Spiritual Assembly; her writings having consistently been featured in Bahai publications. The *Baha'i Magazine* of August, September and October 1933 carries a series of her articles under the title: *A World at Peace—Baha'i Administration as Presented to a Group of Free Thinkers*. In one of these, Mrs. Kehler praises the system of voting as conducted by the Bahai Administration. Her description is as follows:—

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The manner of voting is unique. There are no parties, no candidates, no nominations. Canvassing and electioneering are strictly forbidden. . . The elections have now been accomplished without contest, majorities or minorities. . . In advance of the election not only have no names been mentioned, no preferences asserted . . . but since no one is nominated previously there can be no platform.

I have said it before, when the subject of Bahai voting has come up, but I still can find no parallel to this conduct of affairs outside of the totalitarian systems as practiced in Europe. These elections are as different from the Democratic ideal as is *Mein Kampf* from the Constitution of the United States.

The World Order of Baha'u'llah is the title of another series of articles published in *World Order* of February, March, April, May and June of 1937. In them, the author, Mary Collison pays her own tribute to the Bahai system of elections.

Hussein Effendi Rabbani, brother and secretary to the Guardian, has, since 1932, been a consistent contributor to Bahai publications in America; and, his writings have helped greatly in moulding the thoughts of the community along reactionary and institutional lines. His articles in the *Baha'i Magazine* are: *The Social Emphasis in the Baha'i Revelation*, November 1932; *The Baha'i View of Authority and Organization*, January and February 1933; *The Baha'i Faith and the Forms of Government*, May, 1933; *Church and State in the Baha'i Social Order*, July and August 1933.—Appearing in *World Order* are:—*The Church and the World*, February, 1938 and *Religion and Society*, April 1940.

Another Cause

It was in the middle Twenties, only a few years after the Master's departure from this life, that the Bahai community first became aware of the fact that an administrative system was about to be fastened on to the Cause. The majority did not take the idea very seriously; yet, when lectures on the subject were announced, many attended because it was understood that this was Mr. Holley's hobby. A little later, when the existence of The New History Society had become an issue, the thoughts of all Bahais were directed toward the newly created administrative order; and presently the Bahai Cause, to all intents and purposes, drifted into the discard.

This substitution of *another* cause for the Cause itself necessitate some explanation, and it was to meet this requirement that the Baha

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apologists were set to work. That they did a good job of it is unquestionable. The believers have been induced to take a detour, on the understanding that it will eventually turn back to the great highway; and they are forging ahead at top speed on a road that leads into the dim and distant past.

In their own times, the *stately apologists* of Christendom accomplished their mission most satisfactorily. The tomes of their Jesuitical writings may be heaped with the dust of centuries, yet their influence still goes on. It was in appreciation of the complicated structure of the Catholic Church, and with the ambition of gaining an even greater measure of temporal power, that the Bahai authorities converted the Ark of the Lord into a Theological Fortress, in the dungeons of which the living teachings of Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha are conserved as archives.

The Crucial Choice

There is a time in the life of nation and of man when a crucial choice has to be made between slavery and freedom. The American fathers made that choice on the soil of this continent; the Democracies and would-be-democracies of the entire world are making that choice right now. On the other hand, there are masses of people whose mental and spiritual equipment does not warrant even a consideration of liberty; to them, the goose-step is rhythm and the voice of officialdom law, while the locked door makes home:—

A tame bird was in a cage and a free bird was in the forest.

In due time they met as a decree of fate.

The free bird cried: "O my love, let us fly to the wood."

The caged bird whispered: "Come hither, let us both live in the cage."

Said the free bird: "Among bars, where there is no room to spread one's wings?"

"Alas," cried the caged bird, "I should not know where to sit, perched in the sky."

—Rabindranath Tagore

Chapter X
THE CASE AGAINST
RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN

The cowardice of the weak; the arrogance of the strong, the greed of fat prosperity, the rancour of the wronged, pride of race, and insult to man—

Has burst God's peace, raging in storm.

*Fruit-Gathering, Stanza LXXXIV
—Rabindranath Tagore*

Chapter X

THE CASE AGAINST RUHI EFFENDI AFNAN

My Purpose

The narrative of Ruhi Effendi, as I have presented it, was written with the purpose of preserving the memory of this man in the literature which is growing around the Cause. This was necessary, because those who have incurred the displeasure of the Bahai organization are expunged from the record wherever possible, so that with time even their shadows are practically obliterated. It is true that on occasions, the names of these persons do come up in a mass listing, under a direful heading; but their achievements and good works are totally forgotten and, of course, their stories are never told.

Now, I have not attempted to tell Ruhi Effendi's story from his point of view. Such an effort would have been presumptive for, although I knew him well in his youth and have since observed his development with interest, the barriers of distance and separate channels of activity have intervened between us. Likewise, I could not comment on the events which led to his excommunication, for these are shrouded in mystery; yet, one thing I could do, and have done—this was to state his standing in the Cause which was won on his own merits, and to offer a picture of him based on his writings, for the benefit of the Bahai public of today and of the years to come.

Needless to say, I have not received a sign of approval from him, for excommunicated persons do not place themselves in one category, to make merry or lament on the same ground. Of this order, there are definite grades which are recognized not only by the Bahai community but by the outcasts themselves. Consequently I, who am close to black on the tone chart of untouchability, cannot expect to communicate with those who are listed under the greys; although, for my part, I confess to being rather color-blind in this respect and feel myself fundamentally involved with all shades of God's children, however different their opinions may be from my own.

The writing of a biographical sketch on a living person is not an easy task. In praising, one tries to be restrained; in implying a criticism, one hopes to be inoffensive. Through it all, truth is of first importance;

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otherwise, it were best either to lay down the pen or else devote one's time to fiction.

These difficulties were apparent to some of my friends within the Bahai organization and to the others outside of it. It was said that I had enough trouble on my hands, and that I should not go hunting for more. Also, I was reminded that my readers had small interest in the internal disputes of the Bahai organization and that they might lose patience with me altogether. This latter was sound advice and I realized it; nevertheless, an inner voice insisted that it was incumbent upon me to pay a tribute to his grandson of Abdul Baha, which task I have discharged to the best of my ability.

Reasons in Toto

The excommunication of Ruhi Effendi was a totally arbitrary act as can be estimated from the Guardian's cablegrams, passages of which I quote. The reasons given, and all of them, are as follows:—

- Reason I:—** Ruhi's sister married covenant-breaker Fayzi.
- Reason II:—** (The) flagrant disloyalty (of) Ruhi's family compels me (to) disclose information so long (and) patiently withheld (from) American believers concerning his failure (to) obtain my approval (of) his second visit (to) America.
- Reason III:—** His subsequent conduct regarding his marriage which I refrained from revealing (to) anyone except your Assembly, as well as Foad's departure (to) England without my knowledge should now be made known to believers.

Reason I

The First Reason applies to the marriage of Ruhi Effendi's sister to the son of Furighyyeh Khanum, daughter of Baha-O-Llah.

Now, I happen to have known the two elder brothers of this young man, the late Hussein Effendi Afnan when he was *aide-de-camp* to Fayzal, King of Iraq, and Nayyar Effendi Afnan who was Commissioner of Parks in Cairo, Egypt. Both of them were noble Bahais, who had achieved distinction in their respective fields; yet the Guardian has chosen to stigmatize this entire family, which incidentally was greatly cherished by Abdul Baha, with the name of covenant-breaker, and he therefore is displeased with the marriage which has taken place between these two cousins of his.

However, this is a story in itself and does not apply to Ruhi Effendi.

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He did not marry into the honorable family above-mentioned; therefore, I claim that the First Reason given for his excommunication is entirely beside the point and cannot be taken seriously.

Reason II

The Second Reason is on the grounds that Ruhi Effendi failed to obtain the Guardian's approval of his second visit to America.

It happens that my readers have seen the advance announcement of this visit, published in *Bahai News* by the National Spiritual Assembly, in which it was stated that *Ruhi Effendi was expected in this country and that he was coming with the approval of the Guardian*. Now, we can say with certainty that the National Assembly had been in communication with the Guardian in regard to this visit; that this announcement was made following his instructions, and that the warm welcome accorded to, and the series of meetings arranged for the distinguished guest were in conformance with Shoghi Effendi's wishes. It seems incredible that the printed words of the National Spiritual Assembly should now be flouted to so great an extent; yet, such is the case. The Guardian in his cablegram of excommunication goes back on his trusted administrative organ and brands it with untruth; an action which is unwise, for hereafter no one can put much weight on the statements made by the National Spiritual Assembly.

Let us suppose that Ruhi Effendi's visit to this country was made *without* the Guardian's approval, but with his *permission* which we know had to be granted. If such were the case, there was an excellent precedent for it which we will now review:—

Shortly before the Master's departure from this life, Shoghi Effendi determined to go to Oxford, England, to continue his education. He had suffered a disappointment at the University of Beirut, having failed to obtain the degree of M. A. upon which he had set his heart; and the fact that his fellow Bahai students had won this honor made the situation all the harder. Now, Abdul Baha was disappointed too, but he did not make a point of it. He felt that his grandson had derived much benefit from the University and that a degree was not absolutely essential. He wished Shoghi Effendi to remain in Haifa to take up the work of the Cause at his side. Undoubtedly, he needed him; also he probably felt that his time on this earth was not to be very long. So, Shoghi Effendi stayed in Haifa for a few years.

Now, Shoghi Effendi has a very strong scholastic leaning and he could not give up the desire for further education; consequently, the time at

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rived when a definite issue arose in Haifa: Shoghi Effendi insisted on going to Oxford, and the Master insisted that he should remain at home.

To make a long story short, Shoghi Effendi won his point, for the ladies of the household were so sympathetic to his distress that they interceded for him with Abdul Baha. Thus, Shoghi Effendi finally went to Oxford, without the Master's *approval* but with his *permission*. He was there when Abdul Baha passed away from this life and was unable to return until more than a month after the funeral services.

Naturally, the Master did not excommunicate his grandson for this determination to have his own way; therefore, by the same token, if Ruhi Effendi came to America without the Guardian's *approval* but with his *permission*, he likewise should not have received punishment. Also, in view of the fact that the National Spiritual Assembly had gone on record as saying that the visit was made with the Guardian's approval, the statement should have been honored. Consequently, I claim that the Second Reason given for the excommunication of Ruhi Effendi cannot be sustained in a court of ethics or of law.

Reason III

The Third Reason is in regard to his marriage, although nothing is told us of this event other than the fact. It would seem that Ruhi Effendi had a right to pick out his own wife, and as his choice fell within the family circle it is obvious that he did not marry outside of his class or of the Cause. This excuse of marriage brings to mind an event of world-wide importance which took place in the first family of England, which has a similar aspect to the one with which we are dealing, although it cannot be called a parallel.

In the case of Edward VIII there existed certain disadvantages: the lady was an American; she was divorced; she was not of royal birth. However, in view of prevailing modern conditions, an adjustment could have been made if the Tory element in England had so wished. Yet, the tragic break occurred; the King was deprived of his rights and sent into exile. Why was this? The answer is well known: Edward VIII was too liberal, too progressive, too democratic; the stand-pat dignitaries of the Empire thought him dangerous and longed for his downfall. So, the abdication was consummated and the idol of the nation became *persona non grata*. Thus, the royal house of England lost its most gifted and decorative representative, and the nation, a valuable asset which could not be replaced or supplemented.

Those who have studied the talks and writings of Ruhi Effendi can

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see very clearly that this material could not have been pleasing to the Administration, for it contained an inherent liberality and tolerance which did not fit into a totalitarian pattern. Doubtless, this descendant of Baha-O-Llah caused a good deal of anxiety to the authorities. He seemed to be of the old order of Abdul Baha, which is synonymous with being of the new order of a world society; and he constituted a threat to the system which had chosen to forget the universality in the Cause, which was its heritage, and its destiny. Consequently, reasons for his elimination from the picture had to be worked out; and one of the excuses was his marriage.

Now, I claim that the outworn method of excommunication applies to heresy in religion, having nothing to do with the private life of an individual, and that the Third Reason for the excommunication of Ruhi Effendi is totally invalid.

We have examined in their order the excuses given for the expulsion of Abdul Baha's grandson from the Bahai community; and can accept them as just, reject them as unjust, or pass on to other matters with a sigh of relief, finding the whole subject outside of our line of interests. However that may be, the case of the Guardian of the Bahai Cause against Ruhi Effendi, in which the extreme penalty was exacted on grounds that were not legal, nor logical, nor ethical, nor moral, must stand before history as one more example of the overriding irresponsibility of Fascism as expressed in this abnormal age. Let us however expect that, in the perspective of the future, organized terrorism will appear as but a phase of the great day of transition which will have developed into the day of Universal Democracy—the Day of Baha-O-Llah.

Foad

"But, who is Foad?" This question was asked of me by some Bahais who had noted the name in one of Shoghi Effendi's cables of excommunication. It is included in the Third Reason, as quoted in this chapter.

Foad is the youngest brother of Ruhi Effendi; but he is not merely part of a family that has been placed under *spiritual quarantine*. He is a wrongdoer in his own right. Quote:—*Foad's departure (to) England without my knowledge, should now be made known (to) believers.*

It is questionable whether this action was better or worse than was that of his brother. The latter went to England without the Guardian's approval; the former, without his knowledge. It seems to me that Foad Effendi was wise; he intended to go to England (I surmise, to pursue his

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studies), and, not wishing to run the risk of being forbidden to do so, he simply took French leave. I hope he got what he wanted out of his sojourn in that country and, certainly, I think no less of him for having conducted his private life as he saw fit.

I remember Foad as a baby of a year or so at the time when I left Palestine in 1918. Since then, I have not returned to that country, so the little knowledge I have of him is derived from the writings of the pilgrims. This actually is not knowledge, but rather a few glimpses of a child as seen through the eyes of visitors to Haifa. It appears that he was an independent little personality even at the age of three, and I have heard that he was a delight to his grandfather who found much amusement in his precocious ways.

In *The Light of the World* by William H. Randall, published in 1919, we read a description of *An Afternoon with the Household*. In the above-named chapter, on page 132, Foad makes his appearance as naturally as would any child in any ordinary family:—

At this point little Foad entered the room breathlessly and began speaking very fast and excitedly. It seemed that his pet donkey had a fever and he was asking Abdul Baha to pray for it. Earlier in the afternoon he had given two oranges to Abdul Baha. The Master now gave him one to eat. When he had finished, the other was given to him with the instruction: "Give this to the ladies." He firmly refused, saying the gardener had said that no one but Abdul Baha should eat the oranges, and no amount of persuasion could make him give it to the ladies—but he had already eaten one himself.

In the same book, on page 86, we find the children at the supper-table, in the presence of the ever-loving and indulgent Host:—

At supper, Foad and Riaz, the two three-year old grandchildren of Abdul Baha, were both seated at one end of the table, their faces shining with joy and happiness for this privilege. We learned that before dinner, the Greatest Holy Leaf had told Foad that as he had been there all the day, it were better for him to go home for dinner. He quickly left the room, going direct to Abdul Baha and complained of this. He replied with loving kindness: "Of course, you can stay with me for dinner." Immediately Foad returned triumphant to the rest of the family, saying:—"Now you see, the Master wants me to stay with him."

In an article by Miss Genevieve L. Coy printed in *Star of the West*, October 16, 1921, page 198, we come across the irrepressible Foad offering his services as protector to Abdul Baha:—

In a short time the Master came from around the eastern corner

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of the Tomb, followed by little Foad. The Master was radiantly beautiful. He wore a dove-colored overcoat or wrap, for the wind was cool on the mountainside. Foad was dressed in a stiffly starched white dress, and made a staunch little bodyguard for the Master. (Someone told us that one night Foad went up to the Master after supper and said, "You go to bed now and rest. I will take my gun and lie across the threshold. If any thieves come, I will scare them away!")

These simple anecdotes give a picture of Foad Effendi Afnan as he figured in Abdul Baha's household at the start of his life. Now at the age of twenty-five years, he has been excluded from the one-time happy family circle and from the Bahai community in all parts of the world. He will forever be classed as an enemy of the Cause and be relegated to the limbo of forgotten things, if the Bahais continue to agree that the punishment of excommunication fitted the crime, which was, I blush to remind my readers, that of traveling to England without permission.

Conclusion

The above digression from the account of Ruhi Effendi is not actually such, for his family is an inextricable part of the sad story which I have felt called upon to write. My task is now completed and I leave it for whatever it may be worth, happy in the fact that my tribute is paid and is on record. In this work, I have had no *arrière pensée* of any kind, and especially no expectation that Ruhi Effendi should, at any time, lend his talents to the aspect of Bahai endeavor for which I strive. The world is large; our pathways will probably never cross, but the Light which we follow is the same. It falls on us without distinction and will guide us to the same goal. I trust that his journey will be fruitful in the future as it has been in the past; that his name will continue to shine on the records of the Cause and that he, descendant of the Bab, Baha-O-Llah and Abdul Baha, will fulfill a glorious destiny as a man, the ramparts of whose spirit are unbreached.

Meanwhile, I must express my very ardent hope that the evaluation of an excommunicated person, as set down by the National Spiritual Assembly (*Baha'i News*, No. 134, March 1940, page 2), will seem as ridiculous to Ruhi Effendi as it does to me. This statement reads:—

... his expulsion or excommunication from the Faith, which can be effected by the Guardian alone, in his capacity as the supreme spiritual head of the community, has far-reaching spiritual implications affecting the very soul of that believer.

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And a little further in the same article:—

But in case he is excluded from the body of the Cause by an act of the Guardian he ceases to be a believer, and cannot possibly identify himself even nominally with the Faith.

I know that Ruhi Effendi is far too intelligent to take such an argument seriously; besides, he has had his instructions long since—instructions from Baha-O-Llah himself. They read:—

Verily God hath made it incumbent upon every soul to deliver His Cause according to his ability. Thus hath the command been recorded by the Finger of Might and Power upon the Tablet of Majesty and Greatness.

—Bahai Scriptures, p. 257

Again:—

Be as the blowing wind of the Merciful to the trees of the created world, and rear them up in the name of thy Lord, the Equitable, the Learned One.

—Bahai Scriptures, p. 189

These teachings cannot be abrogated; they are there to stay, as is the promise:—

Whosoever quickens one soul in this Cause is like unto one who quickeneth all the servants and the Lord shall bring him forth in the Day of Resurrection into the Rizwan of oneness, adorned with the Mantle of Himself.

—Bahai Scriptures, p. 258

And now comes the burden of Abdul Baha's message, delivered on earth. It is his message now, received according to our understanding; and, dare anyone doubt, conveyed at this time to his grandson with peculiar emphasis:—

Abandon silence and seclusion and solitary nooks and go forth into the arena of explanation. Convey the Message of thy Lord with clearest speech and most complete elucidation. This is better for thee than solitude.

—Tablets of Abdul Baha, Vol. III, p. 520

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