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January, 1922

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THE ASCENSION OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

A compilation prepared in January, 1922 By Lady Blomfield and Shoghi Effendi

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Dear Friends,

It is well known that the loved ones of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in every part of the world, are anxiously waiting to receive some details of the closing events of His unique and wonderful life. For this reason the present account is being written.

We have now come to realize that the Master knew the day and hour when, His mission on earth being finished, He would return to the shelter of heaven. He was, however, careful that His family should not have any premonition of the coming sorrow. It seemed as though their eyes were veiled by Him, with His ever-loving consideration for His dear ones, that they should not see the significance of certain dreams and other signs of the culminating event. This they now realize was His thought for them, in order that their strength might

be preserved to face the great ordeal when it should arrive, that they should not be devitalized by anguish of mind in its anticipation.

Out of the many signs of the approach of the hour when He could say of His work on earth: "It is finished," the following two dreams seem remarkable. Less than eight weeks before His passing the Master related this to His family:

"I seemed to be standing within a great Mosque, in the inmost shrine, facing the Qiblih (that Point of Adoration whereunto the worshippers turn, as in a Christian church to the East) in the place of the Imám himself. I became aware that a large number of people were flocking into the Mosque; more and yet more crowded in, taking their places in rows behind me, until there was a vast multitude. As I stood I raised loudly the 'Call to Prayer.' Suddenly the thought came to me to go forth from the Mosque.

When I found myself outside I said within myself, 'For what reason came I forth, not having led the prayer? But it matters not; now that I have uttered the Call to Prayer, the vast multitude will of themselves chant the prayer.'"

When the Master had passed away, His family pondered over this dream and interpreted it thus:

He had called that same vast multitude all peoples, all religions, all races, all nations and all kingdoms to Unity and Peace, to universal Love and Brotherhood; and having called them, He returned to God the Beloved, at Whose command He had raised the Majestic Call, had given the Divine Message. This same multitude the peoples, religions, races, nations and kingdoms would continue the WORK to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá had called them, and would of themselves press forward to its accomplishment.

A few weeks after the preceding dream the Master came in from the solitary room in the garden, which He had occupied of late, and said:

I dreamed a dream, and behold, the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] came and said unto me, 'Destroy this room!'"

The family, who had been wishing that He would come and sleep in the house, not being happy that He should be alone at night, exclaimed, "Yes Master, we think your dream means that You should leave that room and come into the house." When He heard this from us, He smiled meaningly, as though not agreeing with our interpretation. Afterwards we understood that by the "room" was meant the temple of His body.

A month before His last hour, Doctor Sulaymán Rafat Bey, a Turkish friend, who was a guest in the house, received a telegram telling him of the sudden death of his brother. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, speaking words of comfort to him, whispered, "Sorrow not, for he is only transferred from this plane to a higher one; I too shall soon be transferred, for my days are numbered." Then, patting him gently on the shoulder, He looked him in the face and said, "And it will be in the days that are shortly to come."

In the same week He revealed a Tablet to America, in which is the following prayer:

“Ya Bahá’u’l-Abhá [O Thou the Glory of Glories]! I have renounced the world and the people thereof, and am heartbroken and sorely afflicted because of the unfaithful. In the cage of this world I flutter even as a frightened bird, and yearn every day to take my flight unto Thy Kingdom.

“Ya Bahá’u’l-Abhá! Make me to drink of the cup of sacrifice, and set me free. Relieve me from these woes and trials, from these afflictions and troubles. Thou art He that aideth, that succoureth, that protecteth, that stretcheth forth the hand of help.”

On the last Friday morning of His stay on earth (November 25th), He said to His daughters: “The wedding of Khusraw must take place today. If you are too much occupied, I myself will make the necessary preparations, for it must take place this day.” (Khusraw is one of the favoured and trusted servants of the Master’s Household).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá attended the noonday prayer at the Mosque. When He came out He found the poor waiting for the alms, which it was His custom to give every Friday. This day, as usual, He stood, in spite of very great fatigue, whilst He gave a coin to every one with His own hands.

After lunch He dictated some Tablets, His last ones, to Rúhí Effendi. When He had rested He walked in the garden. He seemed to be in a deep reverie.

His good and faithful servant, Isma’il Áqá, relates the following:

“Some time, about twenty days before my Master passed away, I was near the garden when I heard Him summon an old believer saying:

‘Come with me that we may admire together the beauty of the garden. Behold, what the spirit of devotion is able to achieve! This flourishing place was, a few years ago, but a heap of stones, and now it is verdant with foliage and flowers. My desire is that after I am gone the loved ones may all arise to serve the Divine Cause and, please God, so it shall be. Ere long men will arise who shall bring life to the world.’

“A few days after this He said: ‘I am fatigued! The hour is come when I must leave everything and take my flight. I am too weary to walk.’ Then He said: ‘It was during the closing days of the Blessed Beauty, when I was engaged in gathering together His papers, which were strewn over the sofa in His writing chamber at Bahjí, that He turned to me and said, “It is of no use to gather them, I must leave them and flee away.”

‘I also have finished my work, I can do nothing more, therefore must I leave it and take my departure.’

“Three Days before His ascension whilst seated in the garden, He called me and said, ‘I am sick with fatigue. Bring two of your oranges for me that I may

eat them for your sake.' This I did, and He, having eaten them, turned to me, saying, 'Have you any of your sweet lemons?' He bade me fetch a few.... Whilst I was plucking them, He came over to the tree, saying, 'Nay, but I must gather them with my own hands.' Having eaten of the fruit, He turned to me and asked, 'Do you desire anything more?' Then with a pathetic gesture of His hands, He touchingly, emphatically and deliberately said:

'Now it is finished, it is finished!'

These significant words penetrated my very soul. I felt each time He uttered them as if a knife were struck into my heart. I understood His meaning but never dreamed His end was so nigh."

It was Isma'il Áqá who had been the Master's gardener for well nigh thirty years who, in the first week after his bereavement, driven by hopeless grief, quietly disposed of all his belongings, made his will, went to the Master's sister and craved her pardon for any misdeeds he had committed. He then delivered the key of the garden to a trusted servant of the Household and, taking with him means whereby to end his life at his beloved Master's Tomb, walked up the Mountain to that sacred place, three times circled round it and would have succeeded in taking his life had it not been for the opportune arrival of a friend, who reached him in time to prevent the accomplishment of his tragic intention.

Later in the evening of Friday, He ['Abdu'l-Bahá] blessed the bride and bridegroom who had just been married. He spoke impressively to them. "Khusraw," He said, "you have spent your childhood and youth in the service of this house; it is my hope that you will grow old under the same roof, ever and always serving God."

During the evening He attended the usual meeting of the friends in His own audience chamber.

In the morning of Saturday, November 26th, He arose early, came to the tea room and had some tea. He asked for the fur-lined coat which had belonged to Bahá'u'lláh. He often put on this coat when He was cold or did not feel well, He so loved it. He then withdrew to His room, lay down on His bed and said, "Cover me up. I am very cold. Last night I did not sleep well, I felt cold. This is serious, it is the beginning."

After more blankets had been put on, He asked for the fur coat He had taken off to be placed over Him. That day He was rather feverish. In the evening His temperature rose still higher, but during the night the fever left Him. After midnight He asked for some tea.

On Sunday morning (November 27th) He said, "I am quite well and will get up as usual and have tea with you in the tea room." After He had dressed He was persuaded to remain on the sofa in His room.

In the afternoon He sent all the friends up to the Tomb of the Báb, where on the occasion of the anniversary of the declaration of the Covenant a feast was being held, offered by a Parsi pilgrim who had lately arrived from India.

At four in the afternoon, being on the sofa in His room, He said: "Ask my sister and all the family to come and have tea with me."

After tea the Mufti of Haifa and the head of the Municipality, with another visitor, were received by Him. They remained about an hour. He spoke to them about Bahá'u'lláh, related to them His second dream, showed them extraordinary kindness and even more than His usual courtesy. He then bade them farewell, walking with them to the outer door in spite of their pleading that He should remain resting on His sofa. He then received a visit from the head of the police, an Englishman, who, too, had his share of the Master's gracious kindness. To him He gave some silk hand-woven Persian handkerchiefs, which he very greatly appreciated.

His four sons-in-law and Rúhí Effendi came to Him after returning from the gathering on the mountain. They said to Him: "The giver of the feast was unhappy because You were not there." He said unto them:

"But I was there, though my body was absent, my spirit was there in your midst. I was present with the friends at the Tomb. The friends must not attach any importance to the absence of my body. In spirit I am, and shall always be, with the friends, even though I be far away."

The same evening He asked after the health of every member of the Household, of the pilgrims and of the friends in Haifa. "Very good, very good" He said when told that none were ill. This was His very last utterance concerning His friends.

At eight in the evening He retired to bed after taking a little nourishment, saying: "I am quite well."

He told all the family to go to bed and rest. Two of His daughters, however, stayed with Him. That night the Master had gone to sleep very calmly, quite free from fever. He awoke about 1:15 a.m., got up and walked across to a table where He drank some water. He took off an outer night garment, saying: "I am too warm." He went back to bed and when His daughter, Rúhí Khánum, later on approached, she found Him lying peacefully, and, as He looked into her face, He asked her to lift up the net curtains, saying:

"I have difficulty in breathing, give me more air." Some rose water was brought of which He drank, sitting up in bed to do so, without any help. He again lay down, and as some food was offered Him, He remarked in a clear and distinct voice:

"You wish me to take some food, and I am going?" He gave them a beautiful look. His face was so calm, His expression so serene, they thought Him asleep.

He had gone from the gaze of His loved ones!

The eyes that had always looked out with loving-kindness upon humanity, whether friends or foes, were now closed. The hands that had ever been stretched forth to give alms to the poor and the needy, the halt and the maimed, the blind, the orphan and the widow, had now finished their labour. The feet that, with untiring zeal, had gone upon the ceaseless errands of the Lord of Compassion were now at rest. The lips that had so eloquently championed the cause of the suffering sons of men, were now hushed in silence. The heart that had so powerfully throbbed with wondrous love for the children of God was now stilled. His glorious spirit had passed from the life of earth, from the persecutions of the enemies of righteousness, from the storm and stress of well nigh eighty years of indefatigable toil for the good of others.

His long martyrdom was ended!

Whilst yet the gloom of their bereavement was hanging darkly over the disconsolate ladies of the Household, a grand-daughter of the Master had a wondrous dream of Him; He was speaking with His beloved sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf, in the very room where, in the early hours of the day, it was the custom of the ladies to assemble in His presence, chanting the morning prayers, and to take their morning tea. He turned to her and said: "Wherefore are ye all perturbed, why lament and be sorrowful? With you all I am well pleased. For a long time have I desired to join my Father, the Blessed Beauty. I was ever beseeching Him to take me to His Rose-garden above, and now that my prayer is granted, how happy, how joyous, how rested I am. Therefore grieve not." He then counselled them in many ways, exhorting them to follow at all times the commandments of Bahá'u'lláh.

Early on Monday morning, November 28th, the news of this sudden calamity had spread over the city, causing an unprecedented stir and tumult, and filling all hearts with unutterable grief.

The next morning, Tuesday November 29th, the funeral took place; a funeral the like of which Haifa, nay Palestine itself, had surely never seen, so deep was the feeling that brought so many thousands of mourners together, representative of so many religions, races and tongues.

The High Commissioner of Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel, the Governor of Jerusalem, the Governor of Phoenicia, the Chief Officials of the Government, the Consuls of the various countries resident in Haifa, the heads of the various religious communities, the notables of Palestine, Jews, Christians, Moslems, Druses, Egyptians, Greeks, Turks, Kurds, and a host of His American, European and native friends, men, women and children, both of high and low degree, all, about ten thousand in number, mourning the loss of their Beloved One.

This impressive, triumphal procession was headed by a guard of honour, consisting of the City Constabulary Force, followed by the Boy Scouts of the Moslem and Christian communities holding aloft their banners, a company of Moslem choristers chanting their verses from the Qur'an, the chiefs of the Moslem community headed by the Mufti, a number of Christian priests, Latin, Greek and

Anglican, all preceding the sacred coffin, upraised on the shoulders of His loved ones. Immediately behind it came the members of His family, next to them walked the British High Commissioner, the Governor of Jerusalem, and the Governor of Phoenicia. After them came the Consuls and the notables of the land, followed by the vast multitude of those who revered and loved Him.

On this day there was no cloud in the sky, nor any sound in all the town and surrounding country through which they went, save only the soft, slow, rhythmic chanting of Islám in the Call to Prayer, or the convulsed sobbing moan of those helpless ones, bewailing the loss of their one friend, who had protected them in all their difficulties and sorrows, whose generous bounty had saved them and their little ones from starvation through the terrible years of the “Great Woe.”

“O God, my God!” the people wailed with one accord, “Our father has left us, our father has left us!”

O the wonder of that great throng! Peoples of every religion and race and colour, united in heart through the Manifestation of Servitude in the life-long work of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá!

As they slowly wended their way up Mount Carmel, the Vineyard of God, the casket appeared in the distance to be borne aloft by invisible hands, so high above the heads of the people was it carried. After two hours walking, they reached the garden of the Tomb of the Báb. Tenderly was the sacred coffin placed upon a plain table covered with a fair white linen cloth. As the vast concourse pressed round the Tabernacle of His body, waiting to be laid in its resting place, within the vault, next to that of the Báb, representatives of the various denominations, Moslems, Christians and Jews, all hearts being ablaze with fervent love of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, some on the impulse of the moment, others prepared, raised their voices in eulogy and regret, paying their last homage of farewell to their loved one. So united were they in their acclamation of Him, as the wise educator and reconciler of the human race in this perplexed and sorrowful age, that there seemed to be nothing left for the Bahá’ís to say.

The following are extracts from some of the speeches delivered on that memorable occasion.

The Moslem voicing the sentiments of his co-religionists spoke as follows:

[^] In Ḥasan Balyuzi’s book entitled ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 466, we find that “The first speaker was Yusuf al-Khaib, a well-known Muslim orator.”

“O concourse of Arabians and Persians! Whom are ye bewailing? Is it he who but yesterday was great in his life and is today in his death greater still? Shed no tears for the one that hath departed to the world of Eternity, but weep over the passing of Virtue and Wisdom, of Knowledge and Generosity. Lament for yourselves, for yours is the loss, whilst he, your lost one, is but a revered Wayfarer, stepping from your mortal world into the everlasting Home. Weep one hour for the sake of him who, for well nigh eighty years, hath wept for you! Look to your right, look to your left, look East and look West and behold, what

glory and greatness have vanished! What a pillar of peace hath crumbled! What eloquent lips are hushed! Alas! In this tribulation there is no heart but aches with anguish, no eye but is filled with tears. Woe unto the poor, for lo! goodness hath departed from them, woe unto the orphans, for their loving father is no more with them! Could the life of Sir ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás have been redeemed by the sacrifices of many a precious soul, they of a certainty would gladly have offered up their lives for his life. But Fate hath otherwise ordained. Every destiny is predetermined and none can change the Divine Decree. What am I to set forth the achievements of this leader of mankind? They are too glorious to be praised, too many to recount. Suffice it to say, that he has left in every heart the most profound impression, on every tongue most wondrous praise. And he that leaveth a memory so lovely, so imperishable, he, indeed, is not dead. Be solaced then, O ye people of Bahá! Endure and be patient; for no man, be he of the East or of the West, can ever comfort you, nay he himself is even in greater need of consolation.”

The Christian then came forward and thus spoke:

[^] Mr. Balyuzi, on p. 467 of the same book, advises, “The next speaker was Ibrahim Nasar, a celebrated Christian writer...”

“I weep for the world, in that my Lord hath died; others there are who, like unto me, weep the death of their Lord... O bitter is the anguish caused by this heartrending calamity! It is not only our country’s loss but a world affliction... He hath lived for well-nigh eighty years the life of the Messengers and Apostles of God. He hath educated the souls of men, hath been benevolent unto them, hath led them to the Way of Truth. Thus he raised his people to the pinnacle of glory, and great shall be his reward from God, the reward of the righteous! Hear me O people! ‘Abbás is not dead, neither hath the light of Bahá been extinguished! Nay, nay! this light shall shine with everlasting splendour. The Lamp of Bahá, ‘Abbás, hath lived a goodly life, hath manifested in himself the true life of the Spirit. And now he is gathered to glory, a pure angel, richly robed in benevolent deeds, noble in his precious virtues. Fellow Christians! Truly ye are bearing the mortal remains of this ever lamented one to his last resting place, yet know of a certainty that your ‘Abbás will live forever in spirit amongst you, through his deeds, his words, his virtues and all the essence of his life. We say farewell to the material body of our ‘Abbás, and his material body vanisheth from our gaze, but his reality, our spiritual ‘Abbás, will never leave our minds, our thoughts, our hearts, our tongues.”

Yet another Moslem, the Mufti of Haifa, spoke as follows: [^] According to Mr. Balyuzi on p. 468, this person was Muḥammad Murad.

“I do not wish to exaggerate in my eulogy of this great one, for his ready and helping hand in the service of mankind and the beautiful and wondrous story of his life, spent in doing that which is right and good, none can deny, save him whose heart is blinded...”

O thou revered voyager! Thou hast lived greatly and hast died greatly! This

great funeral procession is but a glorious proof of thy greatness in thy life and in thy death. But O, thou whom we have lost! Thou leader of men, generous and benevolent! To whom shall the poor now look? Who shall care for the hungry? and the desolate, the widow and the orphan?

May the Lord inspire all thy household and thy kindred with patience in this grievous calamity, and immerse thee in the ocean of His grace and mercy! He verily is the prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God.”

[The following several paragraphs are from Mr. Balyuzi’s book, pp. 469-474. They were not included in the original compilation prepared by Lady Blomfield and Shoghi Effendi:]

Another distinguished Muslim, ‘Abdu’lláh Mukhlis, followed the Mufti of Haifa:

“...the sun of knowledge has set; the moon of virtues has disappeared; the throne of glory has crumbled, and the mountain of kindness is levelled by the departure of this benevolent one from the mortal world to the immortal realm. I do not need to explain the sublimity of the great one whom we have lost or to enumerate his great qualities, for all of you who are just are witnesses and can testify to what has been given him of personal beauty, beauty of his character, greatness of his heart, vastness of the sea of his knowledge and generosity... I beg your pardon if I fail in doing my duty as far as faithfulness is concerned or if I am unable to pay the generous one who has departed what he deserves of the best and highest praise, because what my tongue utters has emanated from a tender memory and broken heart. Indeed, they are wounds and not words; they are tears and not phrases... ‘This calamity has made all previous calamities to be forgotten. But this calamity will never be forgotten.’ ”

Next, Shaykh Yunus al-Khatib, a Muslim poet of note, recited a poem he had composed; and he was followed by Bishop Basilious, the head of the Greek Catholic Church of Haifa, who dwelt particularly on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s humanitarian deeds, His generosity to the poor, His charm and majesty of mien. Then came the turn of the youth to pay homage and tribute. Wadi’ Bustanj, a young Christian, had a poem to offer. Here are some lines from it:

“In the souls and in the minds thou art immortal. One like thee, who has all perfections, virtues and honors, is eternal... O ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, O son of Bahá’u’lláh! May my life be a sacrifice to one like thee. Thou art the all-wise, and all else beside thee are only learned. What can the poets say in thy day? O ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, O son of Bahá’u’lláh! Thou wert just as God wanted thee to be and not as others wished. Thou hast departed in the Holy Land wherein Christ and the Virgin Mary lived. The land that received Muḥammad; the land the dust of which is blessing and wealth... We shall be sustained by this Tomb and the One it contains. The covenant of love and devotion will remain forever between us.”

The eighth speaker was Salomon Bouzaglo, one of the leading figures of the Jewish population of Haifa, who spoke most eloquently in French... [a resume, in English is presented here]:

“It is indeed strange that in an age of gross materialism and lack of faith a great philosopher such as He whom we mourn ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás should appear. He speaks to our hearts, our consciences. He satisfies our thirsty souls with teachings and principles that are the basis of all religion and morality. In His writings and public talks, and in His intimate conversations He could always convince the most learned and the most orthodox. His life was the living example of self-sacrifice, of preferring the good of others to one’s own.

“The philosophy of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is simple and plain, yet sublime. It accords with human character. Its virtues overcome prejudice and superstition... ‘Abbás has passed away in Haifa, in Palestine, in the Holy Land wherein prophets have always appeared. The ancient glory of this land is restored. We are not the only ones who weep for Him, in Whom we take pride. In Europe, in America, in every country, people athirst for social justice and brotherhood also weep for Him. He suffered from despotism, fanaticism and intolerance. For decades, ‘Akká the Bastille of the Ottomans held Him a prisoner. Baghdád the ‘Abbásid capital also served as a prison for Him and for His Father. Persia the ancient cradle of divine philosophy threw out her children, whose ideas were conceived in her land. Cannot we witness the manifestation of Divine Will to exalt the Holy Land that it become, once again, the cradle of noble and generous ideals? He, Who has left such a glorious heritage, is not dead. He, Who has promulgated such great principles, is immortal in the memory of posterity.”

Shaykh As’ad Shuqayr, a prominent Muslim citizen of ‘Akká, admired for his scholarship and eloquence, was the next speaker, after whom Muammad Hafadi, a well-known Muslim poet, read his threnody. Shaykh As’ad spoke of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as:

“...one of the inhabitants of ‘Akká because these inhabitants lived with him for more than forty years. His meetings were meetings of learning wherein he explained all the heavenly books and traditions... His philanthropies to the widows and orphans were never interrupted... He had so great a station; yet he never failed to help the distressed! In the winter season he met with the learned and notables of ‘Akká at the home of Shaykh ‘Alí Meeri, and in the summer the meetings were held in a court in the Fakhoreh ... In both of those meetings the attendants found him a book of history, a commentary on all the heavenly Scriptures, a philosophy of the pages of contemporary events that pertain to scientific or artistic topics. Then he moved to Haifa, and then went to Europe and America where he gave comprehensive and eloquent addresses and exhortations. His intention was to bring about unity among religions and sects and to remove the severe strife from their hearts and from their tongues, to urge them to take hold of the essence and let go the non-essential. He did that by presenting his message in a scientific manner. A group of Persians and others criticized him and found fault with his ideals in pamphlets they published and spread.

Nevertheless, without paying any attention to their criticism and opposition, nor being hurt by their hatred and enmity, he went forward and proclaimed his teachings. It is the law of God among His creatures a law which will not be changed — that the originator and declarer of principles must inevitably have those who agree and praise and those who disagree and reject.”

[^] 5. “The district in which the house of ‘Abbúd is situated,” according to a footnote on p. 472 of Mr. Balyuzi’s book.

And here are a few lines from Muammad Hafadi’s poem:

On Sunday night heaven was opened and the spirit of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá flew with its glory. It was received and entertained by the prophets... O Mount Carmel, thou art now more proud than the heaven, for thou hast become the holiest mountain... I shall weep with tears for thee as long as I am living; how often thou didst wipe them with thy hands...

[Here we continue with Lady Blomfield’s and Shoghi Effendi’s compilation:]

The nine speakers having delivered their funeral orations, then came the moment when the casket which held the pearl of loving servitude passed slowly and triumphantly into its simple, hallowed resting place.

O the infinite pathos! that the beloved feet should no longer tread this earth! That the presence which inspired such devotion and reverence should be withdrawn!

Of the many and diverse journals that throughout the East and West have given in their columns accounts of this momentous event, the following stand as foremost among them:

“Le Temps,” the leading French paper, in its issue of December 19, 1921, under the title ‘Un Conciliateur’ (a peacemaker), portray[ed] graphically the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá... [The excerpt was entirely in French, and is not reproduced here.]

The “Morning Post,” two days after His passing, among other highly favourable comments, concluded its report of the Movement in the following words:

‘The venerated Bahá’u’lláh died in 1892 and the mantle of his religious insight fell on his son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, when, after forty years of prison life, Turkish constitutional changes permitted him to visit England, France and America. His persistent messages as to the divine origin and unity of mankind were as impressive as the Messenger himself. He possessed singular courtesy. At his table Buddhist and Muḥammadan, Hindu and Zoroastrian, Jew and Christian, sat in amity. ‘Creatures,’ he said, ‘were created through love; let them live in peace and amity.’

The “New York World” of December 1921 publishes the following:

“Never before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did the leader of an Oriental religious movement visit the United States... As recently as June of this year a special correspondent of “The World” who visited this seer thus described him: ‘Having once looked

upon ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, his personality is indelibly impressed upon the mind: the majestic venerable figure clad in the flowing aba, his head crowned with a turban white as his head and hair; the piercing deep set eyes whose glances shake the heart; the smile that pours its sweetness over all.’...

“Even in the twilight of his life ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took the liveliest interest in world affairs. When General Allenby swept up the coast from Egypt he went for counsel first to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. When Zionists arrived in their Promised Land they sought ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for advice. For Palestine he had the brightest hopes. ‘Abdu’l-Bah believed that Bolshevism would prove an admonition to the irreligious world. He taught the equality of man and woman, saying: ‘The world of humanity has two wings, man and woman. If one wing is weak, then the bird cannot fly’...”

“The Times of India” in its issue of January 1922, opens one of its editorial articles as follows:

“In more normal times than the present the death of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which was sorrowfully referred to at the Bahá’í Conference in Bombay, would have stirred the feelings of many who, without belonging to the Bahá’í brotherhood, sympathize with its tenets and admire the life-work of those who founded it. As it is we have learned almost by chance of this great religious leader’s death, but that fact need not prevent our turning aside from politics and the turmoil of current events to consider what this man did and what he aimed at.”

Sketching then in brief an account of the History of the Movement it concludes as follows:

“It is not for us now to judge whether the purity, the mysticism and the exalted ideas of Bahá’ism will continue unchanged after the loss of the great leader, or to speculate on whether Bahá’ism will some day become a force in the world as great or greater than Christianity or Islám; but we would pay a tribute to the memory of a man who wielded a vast influence for good, and who, if he was destined to see many of his ideas seemingly shattered in the world war, remained true to his convictions and to his belief in the possibility of a reign of peace and love, and who, far more effectively than Tolstoi, showed the West that religion is a vital force that can never be disregarded.”

Out of the vast number of telegrams and cables of condolence that have poured in, these may be mentioned:

His Britannic Majesty’s Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Winston Churchill, telegraphing to His Excellency the High Commissioner for Palestine, desires him to convey to the Bahá’í Community, on behalf of His Majesty’s Government, their sympathy and condolence on the death of Sir ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás K.B.E.

On behalf of the Executive Board of the Bahá’í American Convention, this message of condolence has been received:

“He doeth whatsoever He willeth. Hearts weep at most great tribulation. American friends send through Unity Board radiant love, boundless sympathy, devotion. Standing steadfast, conscious of his unceasing presence and nearness.”

Viscount Allenby, the High Commissioner for Egypt, has wired the following message, through the intermediary of His Excellency the High Commissioner for Palestine dated November 29th, 1921:

“Please convey to the relatives of the late Sir ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás Effendi and to the Bahá’í community my sincere sympathy in the loss of their revered leader.”

The loved ones in Germany assured the Greatest Holy Leaf of their fidelity in these terms:

“All believers deeply moved by irrevocable loss of our Master’s precious life. We pray for heavenly protection of Holy Cause and promise faithfulness and obedience to Centre of Covenant.”

An official message forwarded by the Council of Ministers in Baghdád, and dated December 8th, 1921, reads as follows:

“His highness Sayed Abdurrahman, the Prime Minister, desires to extend his sympathy to the family of His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in their bereavement.”

The Commander in Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force sent through His Excellency the High Commissioner for Palestine these words of sympathy:

“General Congreve begs that you will convey his deepest sympathy to the family of the late Sir ‘Abbás al-Bahá’í.”

The Theosophical Society in London communicated as follows with one of the followers of the Faith in Haifa:

“For the Holy Family Theosophical Society send affectionate thoughts.”

One of the foremost figures in the little and hollowed town of Nazareth wired the following:

“With the profoundest sorrow and regret we condole with you on the occasion of the setting of the Day-Star of the East. We are of God, and to Him we shall return.”

The thousands of Bahá’ís in Tíhrán, the capital of Persia, remembering their Western brethren and sisters in London assure them of their steadfast faith in these words:

“Light of Covenant transferred from eye to heart. Day of teaching, of union, of self-sacrifice.”

And lastly, one of the distinguished figures in the academic life of the University of Oxford, a renowned professor and an accomplished scholar, whose knowledge of the Cause stands foremost among that of his colleagues, in the message of condolence written on behalf of himself and wife, expresses himself as follows:

“The passing beyond the veil into fuller life must be specially wonderful and blessed for one, who has always fixed his thoughts on high and striven to lead an exalted life here below.”

On the seventh day after the passing of the Master, corn was distributed in His name to about a thousand poor of Haifa, irrespective of race or religion, to whom He had always been a friend and a protector. Their grief at losing the “Father of the Poor” was extremely pathetic. In the first seven days also from fifty to a hundred poor were fed daily at the Master’s house, in the very place where it had been His custom to give alms to them.

On the fortieth day there was a memorial feast, given to over six hundred of the people of Haifa, Acre and the surrounding parts of Palestine and Syria, people of various religions, races and colour. More than a hundred of the poor were also fed on this day. The Governor of Phoenicia, many other officials and some Europeans were present.

The feast was entirely arranged by the members of the Master’s household. The long tables were decorated with trailing branches of Bougainvilliers [sic]. Its lovely purple blooms mingled with the white narcissus, and with the large dishes of golden oranges out of the beloved Master’s garden made a picture of loveliness in those spacious lofty rooms, whose only other decoration was the gorgeous yet subdued colouring of rare Persian rugs. No useless trivial ornaments marred the extreme dignity of simplicity.

The guests received, each and all, the same welcome. There were no “chief places.” Here as always in the Master’s home, there was no respecting of persons.

After the luncheon the guests came into the large central hall, this also bare of ornament, save only for the portrait of Him they had assembled to honour and some antique Persian tapestries hung upon one wall. Before this was placed a platform from which the speeches were made to the wrapt and silent throng, whose very hearts were listening.

The Governor of Phoenicia, in the course of his address, spoke the following:”Most of us here have I think, a clear picture of Sir ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás, of his dignified figure walking thoughtfully in our streets, of his courteous and gracious manner, of his kindness, of his love for little children and flowers, of his generosity and care for the poor and suffering. So gentle was he, and so simple that, in his presence, one almost forgot that he was also a great teacher and that his writings and his conversations have been a solace and an inspiration to hundreds and thousands of people in the East and in the West.”...

Others who followed spoke in appreciation of the work and life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The following are only a few extracts from their addresses:

“A voice calling aloud from Tīhrán, echoed from ‘Iráq, sounding in Turkish lands, swaying the Holy Land which hearkened to its melody, and wherein it rose, developed and deepened, till at last its reverberations resounded throughout Egypt, stretched across the seas to the West and thence to the New World.

“A voice summoning mankind to love, to unity and to peace; a voice the source whereof, had it been anything but purity of motive, could in no wise have succeeded in sending its waves with the swiftness of lightning throughout the world.

“Hail to ‘Abbás, the pride and glory of the East, in an age that has witnessed the rise of knowledge and the fall of prejudice; he who has attained the glorious summit of greatness; he whom the Standards of triumph have hastened to welcome; he whose star arose in Persia, shedding its light upon the minds of men, the signs of which have multiplied in the heaven of glory till it set in full radiance on this our horizon; he whose principles have humbled the peoples and kindreds of the world even as Bah himself had done before him...

“I believe and firmly believe, that he whose loss we now lament, having lived eighty years in this world below counselling the peoples of the world with his tongue, guiding them by his pen, setting before them a goodly example by his glorious deeds, has now chosen to lead and guide them by his silence.

“Let us then in our thoughts and meditations pay our tribute to him. And though the other day at his door I made you weep, yet now it is my duty to appeal and ask you to forget your sorrow and refrain from lamentation and cease from shedding tears. Truly, Sir ‘Abbás departed from us in body, but he ever lives with us in his abiding spirit, in his wondrous deeds. Though he has passed away, yet he has left for us a glorious heritage in the wisdom of his counsels, the rectitude of his teachings, the benevolence of his deeds, the example of his precious life, the sublimity of his effort, the power of his will, his patience and fortitude, his steadfastness to the end.”

And now finally let us turn to the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bah, to His words of farewell, His counsels, His prayers, His appeal and His prediction. His detailed and powerfully written Will and Testament reveals the following words of general counsel to all His friends:

And now finally let us turn to the writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bah, to His words of farewell, His counsels, His prayers, His appeal and His prediction. His detailed and powerfully written Will and Testament reveals the following words of general counsel to all His friends:

“O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God’s grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. So intense must be the spirit of love and loving kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them. For universality is of God and all limitations earthly. Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples. The vivifying breeze reviveth every

living creature and all beings endued with life obtain their share and portion at His heavenly board. In like manner, the affections and loving kindness of the servants of the One True God must be bountifully and universally extended to all mankind. Regarding this, restrictions and limitations are in no wise permitted.

“Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancor may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourselves, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful...

“O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive with all your heart to shield the Cause of God from the onslaught of the insincere, for souls such as these cause the straight to become crooked and all benevolent efforts to produce contrary results.”

Regarding the afflictions and trials that have befallen Him in this world and His desire for martyrdom, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reveals the following:

“O God, my God! Thou seest this wronged servant of Thine, held fast in the talons of ferocious lions, of ravening wolves, of bloodthirsty beasts. Graciously assist me, through my love for Thee, that I may drink deep of the chalice that brimmeth over with faithfulness to Thee and is filled with Thy bountiful Grace; so that, fallen upon the dust, I may sink prostrate and senseless whilst my vesture is dyed crimson with my blood. This is my wish, my heart’s desire, my hope, my pride, my glory. Grant, O Lord my God, and my Refuge, that in my last hour, my end may even as musk shed its fragrance of glory! Is there a bounty greater than this? Nay, by Thy Glory! I call Thee to witness that no day passeth but that I quaff my fill from this cup, so grievous are the misdeeds wrought by them that have broken the Covenant, kindled discord, showed their malice, stirred sedition in the land and dishonored Thee amidst Thy servants. Lord! Shield Thou from these Covenant-breakers the mighty Stronghold of Thy Faith and protect Thy secret Sanctuary from the onslaught of the ungodly. Thou art in truth the Mighty, the Powerful, the Gracious, the Strong...

“Lord! Thou seest all things weeping over me and my kindred rejoicing in my woes. By Thy Glory, O my God! Even amongst mine enemies, some have lamented my troubles and my distress, and of the envious ones a number have shed tears because of my cares, my exile and my afflictions. They did this because they found naught in me but affection and care and witnessed naught but kindness and mercy. As they saw me swept into the flood of tribulation and adversity and exposed even as a target to the arrows of fate, their

hearts were moved with compassion, tears came to their eyes and they testified declaring: 'The Lord is our witness; naught have we seen from him but faithfulness, generosity and extreme compassion.' The Covenant-breakers, foreboders of evil, however, waxed fiercer in their rancor, rejoiced as I fell a victim to the most grievous ordeal, bestirred themselves against me and made merry over the heartrending happenings around me..."

Touching the importance of teaching the Cause of God, these are His words:

"O ye that stand fast in the Covenant! When the hour cometh that this wronged and broken-winged bird will have taken its flight into the Celestial Concourse, when it will have hastened to the Realm of the Unseen and its mortal frame will have been either lost or hidden neath the dust, it is incumbent upon the Afnán, that are steadfast in the Covenant of God and have branched from the Tree of Holiness; the Hands, (pillars) of the Cause of God (the glory of the Lord rest upon them), and all the friends and loved ones, one and all to bestir themselves and arise with heart and soul and in one accord, to diffuse the sweet savors of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith. It behooveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime, and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest, and steadfast to the end, they must raise in every land the triumphal cry "Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá!" (O Thou the Glory of Glories), must achieve renown in the world wherever they go, must burn brightly even as a candle in every meeting and must kindle the flame of Divine love in every assembly; that the light of truth may rise resplendent in the midmost heart of the world, that throughout the East and throughout the West a vast concourse may gather under the shadow of the Word of God, that the sweet savors of holiness may be diffused, that faces may shine radiantly, hearts be filled with the Divine spirit and souls be made heavenly.

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

"Whosoever and whatsoever meeting becometh a hindrance to the diffusion of the Light of Faith, let the loved ones give them counsel and say: 'Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves? Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abh Beauty and teach the Cause of God.' Caution and prudence, however, must be observed even as recorded in the Book. The veil must in no wise be suddenly rent asunder..."

As to the foundation of the faith of the people of Bahá:

“...This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them): ‘His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Báb), is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abhá Beauty (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.’ Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant...”

Regarding the loyalty of the people of Bahá to sovereign authority and the laws of the country He reveals:

“O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon you to be submissive to all monarchs that are just and to show your fidelity to every righteous king. Serve ye the sovereigns of the world with utmost truthfulness and loyalty. Show obedience unto them and be their well-wishers. Without their leave and permission do not meddle with political affairs, for disloyalty to the just sovereign is disloyalty to God Himself. This is my counsel and the commandment of God unto you. Well is it with them that act accordingly.”

He concludes one of the sections of His Testament with this prayer:

“O God, my God! I call Thee, Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, Thy Saints and Thy Holy Ones, to witness that I have declared conclusively Thy Proofs unto Thy loved ones and set forth clearly all things unto them, that they may watch over Thy Faith, guard Thy Straight Path and protect Thy Resplendent Law. Thou art, verily, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise!”

And now, turning from His Will and Testament to His epistles and Tablets, we read the following, a word of caution, which He reveals in His last general Tablet to His loved ones all over the world:

“O ye beloved ones, guard the Cause of God! Let no sweetness of tongue beguile you nay, rather consider the motive of every soul, and ponder the thought he cherisheth. Be ye straightway mindful and on your guard. Avoid him, yet be not aggressive! Refrain from censure and from slander, and leave him in the Hand of God...”

A clear and unmistakable prediction which He made regarding the glorious unfolding of the Cause in the not distant future is forcibly revealed in a letter He wrote whilst under the threat of the Committee of Investigation during the darkest days of His incarceration in Acre:

“Now in the world of being the Hand of divine power hath firmly laid the foun-

dations of this all-highest bounty and this wondrous gift. Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the dayspring of the revelation of its signs. Ere the close of this century and of this age, it shall be made clear and evident how wondrous was that springtide and how heavenly was that gift!”

A similar and even more definite utterance, prophesying the rise of the Movement, He makes in a Tablet revealed after the Great War [World War I] to a Kurdish friend, resident in Egypt. These are His very words:

“Now concerning the verse in Daniel, the interpretation whereof thou didst ask, namely, ‘Blessed is he who cometh unto the thousand three hundred and thirty five days.’ These days must be reckoned as solar and not lunar years. For according to this calculation a century will have elapsed from the dawn of the Sun of Truth, then will the teachings of God be firmly established upon the earth, and the Divine Light shall flood the world from the East even unto the West. Then, on this day, will the faithful rejoice.”

Confirming and explaining further the hidden meaning of the above mentioned verse, He reveals the following in one of His earlier Tablets:

“O servant of God! The afore-mentioned thousand three hundred and thirty-five years must be reckoned from the day of the flight (Hegira) of His Holiness Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, salutations and blessings rest upon Him, at the close of which time the signs of the rise, the glory, the exaltation, the spread of the Word of God throughout the East and the West shall appear.”

In one of His last Tablets, counselling the company of the friends of God, He breathes this fresh, encouraging spirit:

“Regard not the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, for he will eventually take his leave of you all; nay, fix your gaze upon the Word of God. Should it rise and be exalted, rejoice, be glad and thankful even if ‘Abdu’l-Bahá be under a drawn sword, be confined or be cast into bonds. For that which is of transcending importance is the Holy Temple of the Cause of God, and not the mortal frame of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The loved ones of God must arise with such steadfastness, that should in one moment hundreds of souls, even as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself, be made a target for the darts of woe, nothing whatsoever shall affect or lessen their firm resolve, their intention, their ardour, their enkindlement, their service to the Cause of God.... This, O ye beloved of the Lord, is my counsel and my exhortation unto you. Well is it with him whom the Lord aideth to do even as bidden in this pure and sanctified Tablet.”

The circular letter published on the occasion of the Master’s departure from this world by the Spiritual Assembly of Ṭihrán, contains extracts of a Tablet revealed fourteen years ago by the pen of the Centre of the Covenant, some of which are the following:

“O ye My faithful loved ones! Should at any time afflicting events come to pass in the Holy Land, never feel disturbed or agitated. Fear not, neither grieve.

For whatsoever thing happeneth will cause the Word of God to be exalted, and His Divine fragrances to be diffused. Make firm your steps and with utmost steadfastness arise to serve His Cause.... The Spirit of God and His glory rest upon him that is firm and steadfast in the Covenant!"

Among His utterances regarding His passing away from this world, He assures us as follows:

"Remember whether or not I be on earth, my presence will be with you always."

Again in a Tablet addressed to one of the friends in the United States of America, He depicts the future glory of the Sacred Tree of God whereof He is the Most Great Branch:

"Fear not if this Branch be severed from this material world and cast aside its leaves; nay, the leaves thereof shall flourish, for this Branch will grow after it is cut off from this world below, it shall reach the loftiest pinnacles of glory, and it shall bear such fruits as will perfume the world with their fragrance."

His very last Tablet, graciously revealed for His loved ones in Stuttgart, conveys His reflections upon this transient world, and His counsels to His loved ones that dwell therein:

"O ye beloved of the Lord! In this mortal world, nothing whatsoever endureth. The peoples of the earth dwell therein and spend a number of days uselessly, ultimately descending neath the dust, repairing to the home of eternal silence, leaving behind them no achievement, no blessing, no result, no fruit. All the days of their life are thus brought to naught. Whereas the children of the Kingdom sow seeds in the fertile soil of Truth, that will eventually spring up and bring forth many a harvest and shall forever bestow upon mankind its increase and bountiful grace. They shall obtain eternal life, attain unto the imperishable bounty, and shine even as radiant stars in the firmament of the Divine Kingdom. The Glory of Glories rest upon you!"

And now, what appeal more direct, more moving, with which to close this sad yet stirring account of His last days, than these, His most touching, most inspiring words?

"Friends! The time is coming when I shall be no longer with you. I have done all that could be done. I have served the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh to the utmost of My ability. I have labored night and day all the years of My life. O how I long to see the believers shouldering the responsibilities of the Cause! Now is the time to proclaim the Kingdom of Bahá! Now is the hour of love and union! This is the day of the spiritual harmony of the loved ones of God! All the resources of My physical strength I have exhausted, and the spirit of My life is the welcome tidings of the unity of the people of Bahá. I am straining my ears toward the East and toward the West, toward the North and toward the South that haply I may hear the songs of love and fellowship chanted in the meetings of the faithful. My days are numbered, and, but for this there is no joy left unto me. O how I yearn to see the friends united even as a string of

gleaming pearls, as the brilliant Pleiades, as rays of the sun, as the gazelles of one meadow!

“The mystic Nightingale is warbling for them all; will they not listen? The Bird of Paradise is singing; will they not heed? The Angel of Abhá is calling to them; will they not hearken? The Herald of the Covenant is pleading; will they not obey?

“Ah Me, I am waiting, waiting, to hear the joyful tidings that the believers are the very embodiment of sincerity and truthfulness, the incarnation of love and amity, the living symbols of unity and concord. Will they not gladden my heart? Will they not satisfy my yearning? Will they not manifest my wish? Will they not fulfil my heart’s desire? Will they not give ear to my call?

“I am waiting, I am patiently waiting.”

[The booklet ends with The Tablet of Visitation for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.]