



His Revelation. As a child, Myrta never could understand the strange fact that her weekly playmates dressed in their best clothes and attended different Sunday Schools while she, herself, went to still another one. This thought remained with her throughout her life, and she often spoke about it. As a child, Charles Manning sat morning and evening with his brothers and sisters in a log cabin home, deep in the verdant hills of Muskingum County (Ohio), listening to his father read from the Bible the prophecies about the Latter Days. He heard his father say, in effect, that he didn't expect that he would see the Coming of the Lord but that his children might and that they should be aware of that probability in their lifetime.

Early in their married life while her husband was principal of the high school in Bowling Green, Ohio, Myrta, because of ill health, went for treatment to the Battle Creek Sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan. Seventh Day Adventists operated the institution, and they spoke a great deal about the Second Coming of Christ. Myrta often remarked that she was grateful to them for their insistent conversation on the Return of Christ because it made her ready for the Message of Baha'u'llah.

Under the influence of the Seventh Day Adventists Myrta often stood gazing, in the days before she had heard of the Baha'i Cause, into the heavens for the Second Coming of the Christ. She continued to stand and gaze until she met -- the Woodcocks. Then she understood the meaning of Acts 1:11 "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up to heaven?"

Mr. Percy Woodcock is a well-known Canadian artist, some of whose paintings hang in the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. It was in 1905 that he, his wife, and two daughters had the privilege of a trip to the Holy Land, where they had gone to see and talk with Abdu'l-Baha.

On their return they stopped in Cleveland to speak for a group, selected by Dr. Pauline Barton Peeke, an early Cleveland Baha'i. She it was who had invited Mr. and Mrs. Swingle to hear, for the first time, of the Baha'i Movement (as it was sometimes called then), and to listen to a description of the visit of the Woodcocks with Abdu'l-Baha. Dr. Peeke also included in the invitation Mrs. Swingle's oldest sister, Mrs. Martha Hoge, who was visiting in their home at the time.

But let Myrta Swingle tell the story in her own words! (The following remarks are from a tape recording she made at the age of eighty. They have been edited, shortened, and rearranged chronologically.)

Mr. Woodcock explained that he and his family had come to Cleveland expressly to find souls who would listen to the Baha'i Message. He spoke about writing to Abdu'l-Baha for permission to take his family to visit Him in the Holy Land. This had been granted, and they had spent nine wonderful days there. When it came time to leave, the Woodcocks had not wished to leave Acca where Abdu'l-Baha had showered so much love on them.

"Abdu'l-Baha said to us, 'Yes, you must go. You must go and feed my

sheep."

Mr. Woodcock told his story in a manner that impressed me deeply.

"Abdu'l-Baha," he said, "told me to give this Message to the people: "Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one sea. Ye are all from God and to God ye return." I never forgot these words and today, fifty years later, they are still very precious to me. These are still the words that keep me inspired and on the path.

Someone at the meeting with the Woodcocks had handed me a prayer. On our return home I read that prayer over and over, and I wept as an understanding of the import of that meeting penetrated my inner being. I realized that this was the true Message from God, that the long prophesied Day had truly come as "a thief in the night" and that the Revelation was far more wondrous than I had ever been able to anticipate in my years of yearning.

O people! The Doors of the Kingdom are opened. The Sun of Truth is shining upon the world. The Fountains of Life are flowing. The Daysprings of Mercy have appeared. The Greatest and Most Glorious Light is now manifest to illuminate the hearts of men. Wake up and hear the Voice of God, calling from all parts of the Supreme World, "Come unto me, O ye who are thirsty, and drink from this sweet Water which is descending in torrents upon all parts of the globe. Now is the time! Now is the accepted time!

My sister Martha, who had been with us that night at the meeting, could not understand what was going on in my mind. She asked, "What's wrong with you? What are you crying about?" I continued to weep with joy for the bounty of understanding the Revelation of Baha'u'llah. My whole being seemed flooded with light from a Spiritual Sun. I kept saying, "It is the Truth. It is the Truth. It is the Promised Return. It is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures."

My husband's reaction was quite different. His was that of a scholar. He poured over his Bible for three years. He asked questions of the few Baha'i travelers who came to the city. At last he realized in the depths of himself that, indeed, God had ushered in His Great Day. He expressed in a letter to Abdu'l-Baha his acceptance of the Revelation. I would like to quote a part of the first paragraph of the Tablet he received in response because of the tribute paid our spiritual teacher.

Thy Epistle was received, and from beginning to end, it was a statement of faith and certainty. What a wonderful breath of life did Mr. Woodcock breathe into thee, that it conferred life, and the latent mystery became manifest. Thou must with life and heart, be thankful and grateful to Him, for He proved the cause of Guidance; and the Light of Bestowal glistened....

The summer of 1911 I developed a tumor of the breast. The physicians with whom Dr. Swingle consulted were not optimistic about my condition. As a result

I went to Bethesda, Ohio, my childhood home, to rest at the home of my beloved oldest sister Martha.

Martha had attended that first meeting with the Woodcocks. She had been unable to understand why I was so stirred that night after hearing of the Baha'i Revelation. She had said, "We must ask the minister about this." She did. He said, "O, there's nothing to it." That ended Martha's search; she never understood. She had, however, led an exemplary Christian life and met with unusual patience a very great trial. She passed into the next world without grasping what it was all about. To understand seems to be given only to certain ones, we cannot tell to whom. But what a blessing to comprehend this Message and to realize something of the value of it ... to us!

At her home in Bethesda, then, I rested, prayed for healing; and meditated. One of my daughters was with me. I told her of my great sadness that no one in Bethesda was a Baha'i. Even after we had made many summer trips there, and I had spoken to many about the Revelation, no one had accepted it. "Just think! No one in the place of my birth! I may not live long. I must find some soul worthy of the Message."

One night the subject disturbed me more than usual. I prayed fervently and urgently. "Give me, O God, a soul to teach!"

In the morning I was impressed to go down the hill and past the railroad station, which was in sight below Martha's home, to tell Cora Jenkins of the New Day. To my amazement Cora Jenkins was in a state of excitement over a strange vision she had had the night before. Cora Jenkins did most of the talking, telling of seeing a turbaned head, some strange hieroglyphics, and a ring with a peculiar stone. All I needed to do was to interpret these symbols for her. She became a confirmed believer and staunchly withstood the criticism and occasional ridicule of her family and friends in that little town.

The Baha'is in Cleveland were all anxious to know whether Abdu'l-Baha would ever come to the United States. He had written, "It will be the love of the Baha'is that will bring me to America." In 1912 we suddenly learned that He was coming. We were ecstatic with joy at the possibility of seeing Him. Of course, all the Cleveland believers wanted to go to Chicago where He would be laying the cornerstone of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. But I still had that tumor of the breast and was waiting for my appointment to enter the hospital to have it removed.

One night, just as though someone spoke to me, I heard, "Arise, you must go to the Divine Physician." I could not dismiss the thought. I was the last Clevelander to make hurried preparations for the trip. I went to Chicago, not the hospital. I was going to Chicago to be healed. "You must arise and go to the Divine Physician," kept resounding in my mind.

In planning the trip I thought like a child. I'll go to Chicago today, see Abdu'l-Baha tomorrow, and return the next day. Instead it took me a week to see Him. Mrs. Elizabeth R. Greenleaf, an early Baha'i whose home was

in Chicago, recognized my consternation at having to wait so long for an appointment. She said to me, "You are going home with me and wait for your appointment." We had such a happy time together all that week as we wrote out our questions. We said it was the opportunity of a lifetime. We can get answers to a lot of questions. We had them all written down on a pad and ready to take on that Friday at 4 o'clock.

When we had arrived and the secretary had motioned for me to come, I forgot all the questions. I couldn't think of a question, and my pad of questions had dropped to the floor. The great brightness in the room stunned me. I didn't seem to know anything. I didn't grasp what Abdu'l-Baha was saying. It was as if I were out of the body. I walked over to where Abdu'l-Baha was. As I was approaching Him, for some reason great pain took hold of me, and I silently begged God to release me from the pain.

The absent-from-the body feeling continued. I couldn't talk. It wasn't a pleasant feeling. I was ... really suffering. I was barely conscious that He raised his hand and that it passed near me with a simple downward motion, not touching me, and ... there was no trace of the tumor after that.

But far more important than the healing of the physical condition was a spiritual gift. Something within me was touched, and I felt that my capacity to express love toward other human beings had suddenly been increased.

Because of my condition I had not understood the interpreter. After the interview Dr. Zia Bagdadi stayed with me and tried to convey what had been said by Abdu'l-Baha. Among other things he said, "You know, that one sentence which He uttered was a wonderful thing to say to you." He urged me to write it down. He repeated it. "You will be a star scintillating down through the age." He added, "You must always remember it." Abdu'l-Baha knew the great difficulties that were to come. I have leaned upon that wonderful sentence many times in my life. It is a beautiful promise on which all dedicated Baha'is may rely for support and comfort in the springtime of this glorious Faith.

Can you imagine the great happiness these extraordinary experiences brought me as I continued my association with the believers in Chicago?

All the Baha'is would follow Abdu'l-Baha around, and every time He entered to speak, we all stood up. I thought this recognition of Him was beautiful. However, we noticed that He did not always follow what had been scheduled for Him. He acted according to an inner Guidance.

One time He went to the park in a carriage. We followed Him. Mrs. Getsinger and Dr. Bagdadi were among those present. When He walked about, it seemed as though the animals loved Him. The horses would whinny and put their heads out as though they were glad to see Him.

When you walked with Abdu'l-Baha, in a way it was as if you were walking with God. It meant you had to give up your life for the Cause of Baha'u'llah. As we were returning to the hotel, those were the thoughts in

my mind. Serving the Faith would mean sacrifice, almost crucifixion; but I was willing. I was happy about it. It was all right, if that was what it was to mean.

Abdu'l-Baha did not accept money or gifts of value. However, when I went to Chicago, I had with me twenty-three pennies, the contents of my children's banks, which they wanted me to give to Him. He slipped the pennies into the pocket of His robe. He must have known how happy it would make the children in the future to know that He had accepted their offering. What a precious memory for Eva Mae and Mildred!

Again, while there, Mrs. Ella Priday Filkins and I felt impelled to give Abdu'l-Baha something. We kept seeing the elegant arrangements of flowers that continued to arrive for His apartment at the Hotel Plaza. We left the hotel and found a flower shop. We returned with a small, unpretentious bouquet of violets and lilies-of-the-valley. It was, perhaps, because it was so modest that He smiled and took it.

One day when I went to the seventh floor of the Hotel Plaza, where a lady was registering the names for His appointments, I became aware of an unusual thing. Everyone was so happy. Most of the persons were crying for joy. They were just milling around, happy and crying for joy.

Now, what will you think of me if I tell you this? Abdu'l-Baha had left his suite. I asked the lady at the desk if I could go into His room and put Abdu'l-Baha's blanket around me. She said, "Yes, if you would like to." I didn't know then the spiritual significance of what I was doing, taking His blanket, getting up on His bed, and putting the blanket around me. Of course, now I know what it meant.

I had telegraphed my husband in Cleveland about my remarkable healing. He immediately addressed to Abdu'l-Baha the request that He include Cleveland in His itinerary. We Cleveland believers who were in Chicago were eager to know His answer and kept inquiring about it on the telephone. Through His secretary, He said, "It has not yet been revealed." We remained in prayerful suspense for some time before we learned that He would, indeed, come to Cleveland on the following Monday.

Ella Filkins and I bought government postal cards to address on the train to invite Clevelanders to our home (the sanitarium), to listen to Abdu'l-Baha, and to the Hotel Euclid in the evening when He would address a public meeting.

During the preparations for His arrival there was much to be accomplished at home. It was all so important! If Abdu'l-Baha were coming to your home, you'd want everything in order. I had just returned from Chicago, and I was happy but weary. I said to myself, "I don't know whether I can have everything just right." I said, "Am I going to be Mary of the Bible or am I going to be Martha now?" I answered, "I'm going to be Mary." Consequently when there came requests for beads for Abdu'l-Baha to bless, I left the preparation of the

house and rushed downtown to buy beads. "That was the more important, spiritually," I thought.

When I reached home, I saw that everyone had hurried and bustled about to make things presentable. Even some of the curtains that I had thought were soiled had been washed and hung again. I thought to myself, "Isn't it wonderful, how God takes care of everything? If you do God's work, the rest of the work is done somehow."

One thing we had to be sure of was that we had enough dates and figs, for I had heard that Abdu'l-Baha liked dates. We knew He at lightly so that it was all the more necessary to have something He would enjoy.

I knew what the spiritual atmosphere around Him would be. It wouldn't be like any other that you could experience. Oh, I remembered how it had been in His presence in Chicago. I knew that I wouldn't be able to talk with Him in ordinary language. All that I would be able to do would be to look at Him.

When the limousines arrived, I encouraged our daughters to meet Abdu'l-Baha on the walk with white roses. I couldn't say anything, I couldn't say, "Why, Abdu'l-Baha, we are so happy to have You here. Do come in." We had planned to have Him go first to a certain room upstairs, but we didn't have presence enough of mind -- or something -- whatever it was -- to say, "Abdu'l-Baha, upstairs is the room where You are to go until you speak." He walked majestically past the group of us who stood in awe on the porch and went directly up to that room which had been especially readied for Him. A later inquiry among the guests made it clear that no one had directed Him.

In that room He asked Mirza Mahmud to make tea. He said He wanted my husband and me to have tea from the Holy Land. So that's what He did. The children were present. We were so elated. We were so blessed.

He knew when to come downstairs. He took a seat by the door leading to the pantry, and those who didn't have chairs sat on the floor or on cushions and just looked at Him. A number of adults and children sat right around His feet. It was a beautiful sight. I wish I had a picture of it. It was such a bounty to all of us who were present.

(Note: The addresses Abdu'l-Baha gave at the Swingle Sanitarium on May 6, 1912, and the one given in the evening on the same date, may be found in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pages 97 through 100.

A reproduction of a group picture taken on the porch may be found in the *Star of the West*, Vol. 3, no. 1. [Correction: This photograph is actually on page 5 of volume 3, no. 6 (24 June 1912).]

After His talk Abdu'l-Baha entered a room near the dining-room where he autographed a copy of the "Hidden Words" and blessed a Baha'i ring and the strands of beads.

Then He and some of His Persian companions walked for a while in front and

at the side of the house while the friends were preparing to take Him to his suite at the Hotel Euclid, at the corner of E. 14 Street and Euclid Avenue, where He spoke that evening to about three hundred persons. On the way to the hotel, Mildred, my younger daughter, who was then nine years old, sat in the limousine on Abdu'l-Baha's lap.

After the public meeting some of the friends crowded in Abdu'l-Baha's apartment at the hotel to hear remarks, addressed especially to a colored minister from the South. Among those present was a press reporter who was surprised by the world-embracing principles he had heard.

The following day reporters began to phone to know who that "peculiar" man was who was visiting us. "Did we think the time would come when black and white would marry?" The next day a large picture of Abdu'l-Baha appeared in the newspaper with a smaller one of me, stating in the headlines that Mrs. C. M. Swingle believed in the inter-marriage of the races. Little did I realize then, in the rarefied spiritual atmosphere in which we were living, how unprepared was the average person for this glorious Revelation.

At that time I was an active club woman. I had been conducting physical education classes for women and children in the greater Cleveland area and was the physical education representative of the Cleveland Federation of Women's Clubs. Some of the women in these various clubs were greatly disturbed and called me to a Council meeting.

Forty women were on that platform to "try" me for my religion. At first I didn't have the opportunity to say much. Providence took care of their questions. Some woman would jump up quickly to defend me. The first one, a Catholic, said, "Well, this isn't right. I belong to the WCTU, and we can take anybody into that group. Why do you try Mrs. Swingle for her religion?" Another said, "Why don't you try us, all of us? We're probably wrong in this." Another question was asked. Then another woman rose and said, "This is all wrong. Why do we do this? Aren't we broader than this?"

Finally my turn to speak came. I hadn't made any preparation, but I didn't seem nervous because I knew the truth of the Cause of Baha'u'llah. I said something like this: "You know I've always loved all of you, and you've always loved me. We have had such lovely times together in all our groups. You know what Jesus said on the Cross to persons who accused others of things they knew nothing about, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' I have the same attitude toward you today. I forgive you. When you understand what the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is, and who He is, your attitude will change."

Many of them were crying when I finished. So I remained the physical education representative of the Cleveland Federation of Women's Clubs until the end of the year. However, I noticed that I didn't care so much to attend meetings. You know how you'd feel in such a case. They'd say, "There she comes; there she comes." I was as yet insufficiently developed to meet their ridicule with complete forgiveness and equanimity, although I had talked about

it on the day they had tried me. I pray that some of them came to know that they were living "in the dawn of a cycle when the Sun of Truth is again shining forth from the East, illumining all regions."

(This ends the selections from the tape recording.)

Myrta Swingle became a mechano-therapist and was able through this means to be in constant touch with the public. It was her habit always to stress the healing of the spirit along with that of the body. Her husband, Dr. Swingle, until his passing, frequently gave talks on the Baha'i Revelation, often with prophetic references. Among other writings he composed an allegorical Biblical poem of some 1500 or so stanzas which his daughters still hope to make public. In the Swingle home Baha'i meetings were part of the weekly schedule.

Mr. Swingle liked to recall the visit of Thornton Chase in 1906. In spite of strenuous efforts to have a large attendance, there was an audience of only three, Dr. and Mrs. Swingle, and Mrs. Emma Noble, the artist who was the first Cleveland Baha'i. If Thornton Chase felt any disappointment whatever, he certainly did not show it. He said he found his audience "just wonderful."

Among the other traveling teachers there had been Dr. Zia Bagdadi, the Knobloch sisters, Mary Hanford Ford, Ali Kuli Khan, Elizabeth R. Greenleaf, James F. Morten, George Orr Latimer, the Harlan Obers, Howard Colby Ives, Louis Gregory and other devoted souls.

Later Myrta Married William Sandoz, a world traveler, to whom accepting the Faith presented no hurdles, mental or spiritual. The meetings continued.

Throughout the many years of her life, her home and her heart were open to anyone who was struggling with an illness, a problem, or a sorrow. No one ever came for counsel or comfort who did not leave refreshed in spirit, with a better attitude and a more tranquil heart, and usually with some glimpse of the New Day. Others may have thought some of these were unworthy of her time and effort, but to her they were all God's children.

It seemed so natural for her "to be loving to all the people of the world." The gift of loving all humanity which she had received in the presence of Abdu'l-Baha remained with her throughout the years of her life.

We must not consider any people the people of Satan, but know and recognize all as the servants of the one God.... Some are ignorant; they must be informed. Some are children, undeveloped; they must be helped to reach maturity. Some are ailing, their moral condition is unhealthy; they must be treated until their morals are purified. But the sick man is not to be hated because he is sick, the child must not be shunned because he is a child, the ignorant one is not to be despised because he lacks knowledge. They must all be treated, educated, trained, and assisted in love.

Abdu'l-Baha

For some years one of her choicest dreams had been to be a traveling lecturer, to give a series on health, followed by a free course on the Baha'i Faith. Her prayer, she felt, was answered when it was her privilege to present the Faith to Orcella Rexford when she was giving a course of lectures in Cleveland. She was later confirmed in the Faith and continued her lecture tours, adding Baha'i talks, as Mrs. Swingle had long prayed to do. A record of her meeting with Orcella Rexford appears on page 495 of the Baha'i World Book (1946-1950). What a dynamic teacher Orcella Rexford was! What vicarious spiritual ecstasy Mrs. Swingle enjoyed as she learned of Orcella's remarkable contribution to the Faith.

There was a spiritual sparkle which her endeavors in the Baha'i Faith had brought to Myrta Swingle's personality. There was always a kind of child-like joy about her. There was an inner satisfaction from the many personal sacrifices she had made to the Faith. At one period of her busy life her personal goal had been to give the Message to two persons daily.

Abdu'l-Baha had asked all the Baha'is, "Are you happy? You must be happy. Be happy." She obeyed. She stood "porter at the door of thought", and rare were the times in which she failed to be obedient. Everyone, persons of all ages, who came near her felt the radiance and the power of her Baha'i being. The sparkle, the brightness, and the youthfulness and her personality were the reflection of the spiritual sunlight in which she lived.

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