



officer with whom she was in love and on hearing the story, Mary at once gave the medallion to Judas asking him if he could find a purchaser and with the money, buy Jesus another cloak. In an inn near Capernaum, Judas met the man who appears as "I" in A Man Seen Afar. Whether it is permissible to equate this "I" with Tudor Pole or not is a matter that can only be decided by a very careful and intuitive reading of the whole book—and perhaps not even then. For present purposes I refer to him simply as X, it being understood that X was a historical individual alive in Palestine at the time and on the periphery of the Gospel events.

Judas asked X if the medallion was marketable but X informed him that it was not. It was a coin struck for presentation to those receiving the Freedom of the city of Rome and as such it could not under Roman law be sold or bartered. X advised Judas to return the medallion to Mary. He then sent a servant to his Jerusalem home to fetch a nearly new camel-hair cloak which had been given to X by his father as a birthday present. This he gave to Judas, suggesting that Judas should get Mary to alter it as necessary and give it to Jesus. Some time later X saw Jesus and noticed with great pleasure that he was wearing [missing text]

Nineteen hundred years later Tudor Pole, then a major in the British Intelligence Service happened to be walking on Mount Carmel with a very saintly man who is the focus of this present section, Abdu'l Bahá Abbas. Noticing that T.P. was shivering in the cold of the late autumn evening, he removed his own camel-hair cloak and put it [missing text] ...

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At that instant T.P. hears a whisper on the wind which seemed to be saying: "Restitution after many days".

It would be unwise to draw facile conclusions from such a story. But I think it might also be a mistake not to draw any conclusions.

The mechanism which connects our temporal existence with a greater, timeless state is very rarely demonstrated in an evidential way. Yet all of us at one time or another have fleeting, half-remembered subjective experiences which we know with great certainty belong to this category. Very occasionally, however, do we meet an experience told by someone else which we feel intuitively possesses this same "touchstone" validity.

For me this story of a cloak has this. It simply IS. It could not have been invented. It stands outside evidence or argument, yet strangely enough the story is not at odds with logic if seen in terms of many of T.P.'s accounts of what he calls the "au celd". He believes that highly-developed souls—whom he refers to as Elder Brothers—are responsible for arranging the genetic vehicle of a Messenger from God. (C. S. Lewis has this same idea and presents it very simply in the dialogue of the Pendragon in *That Hideous Strength*.)

The Ruler of this planet arranges the mission of a Messenger. Then, using a human vehicle moulded by the loving care and perhaps generations-long guidance

of the Elder Brothers, the Ruler of the Planet asks the God-head for the services of the Christos.

The Ruler of the Planet is the channel through whom the Christos flows to overshadow the Messenger.

The Christos is a principle, an emanation of the God-head. It is not subject to the experiences of the Messenger

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and it cannot suffer and cannot in any way be subject to the human situation. Thus a Messenger is overshadowed (to a greater or lesser extent) by a divine principle for the period of his mission.

All Messengers are thus suffused with divinity either to the extent of their capacity or to the degree required for their mission. For T.P. this process has never taken place more completely, with a greater surrender or effect than in the case of Jesus. Adherents of some religions might well accept such a thesis while reserving for their own particular revelation the distinction of having the most perfect example. Islam clearly recognises a long series of divine Messengers and accords a very high place to Jesus—a catholicity which Christians appear unable to reciprocate. I would think it unlikely that any ordinary individual is qualified to arbitrate on levels of being so far above his own. What does seem important at the present time is to recognise that the spiritual fertilisation of humanity is a continuous process, utilised time and time again by Messengers from God, and while we may feel that Jesus is the most perfect example of the process, we have surely no right to deny that Deity enters human life at many levels.

To the several millions of adherents of the Bahá'í faith, Bahá'u'lláh, a Persian nobleman who was born in Persia 150 years ago, was a divine prophet and they believe that he was the Messenger destined to proclaim the dawn of a new age for the human race. For them, this Founder was the Christ Messenger charged with the task of proclaiming the advent of a religious synthesis on earth.

The Faith which he founded was regarded as heretical by orthodox Muslims and Bahá'u'lláh and his family

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were exiled, first to Baghdad, later to Turkey and finally in 1868 to Akka in Palestine where he died in 1892.

For a period of forty years the family existed in conditions of more or less close imprisonment yet, in spite of this fact, the Bahá'í Faith continued to spread. It was not until the Young Turks Revolution of 1908 that Abdu'l Bahá Abbas, the son of the founder, and his family, were finally freed. They then settled in Haifa. In the local conditions existing towards the close of the First World War, it became apparent that Abdu'l Bahá and his family were in great danger. The Turkish Military commander whose H.Q. was between Haifa and Beirut announced that should he be compelled by Allenby's advance to evacuate

Haifa, he would crucify the saintly Abdu'l Bahá and his entire family on Mount Carmel.

Tudor Pole was able to set in motion certain action which resulted in the lives of Abdu'l Bahá and his family being saved. He recounts the details himself in one of the passages which follows.

A relationship of a very intimate kind was established between T.P. and Abdu'l Bahá. This has been referred to by T.P. in previous books.

In consideration for the part which Tudor Pole played

in those days, and to meet many requests from Bahá'í friends, T.P. has included in the present book the scripts which now follow.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### Personal Recollections of Abdu'l Bahá Abbas and the Bahá'í Outlook

It was at Constantinople in 1908 that I first heard of a group of Persians, known as Bahá'ís who were said to be associated with a movement for the promotion of peace and brotherhood among members of all religious faiths. On further enquiry I discovered that their leader, known as Abdu'l Bahá (Servant of God), son of the Founder of the Movement, Bahá'u'lláh, had been a prisoner for nearly forty years and was still confined with his family in the fortress city of Akka in Palestine.

A few months later news was received in London that following the Young Turkish revolution, a general amnesty for religious and political prisoners had been granted and it was in this way that the head of the Bahá'í Community regained his freedom.

There can be few alive today who had personal contact with Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith; and there can be very few Westerners still alive who knew his son, Abdu'l Bahá.

My only link with Bahá'u'lláh apart from Abdu'l Bahá himself was the late Professor Browne, of Cambridge, who has left a record of his meeting in the 1880's with Bahá'u'lláh who, after spending many years in Persian and Turkish prisons, died in confinement at Akka in 1892.

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The impression left on Professor Browne was one of surpassing spiritual majesty, accompanied by an aura of holiness leaving no doubt that here one was in the presence of a Messenger from God.

The Coming of Bahá'u'lláh was heralded by a fore-runner known as the Báb (The Gate), who predicted the advent of a Prophet destined to bring fresh illumination to the world. Bahá'u'lláh was born at Nur in Persia in 1819.

The primary mission of the Bahá'í Faith is to enable every follower of earlier world beliefs to obtain a fuller understanding of the religion with which he already stands identified and to acquire a clear apprehension of its

purpose. In modern times this will involve the emergence of a world-wide community, a consciousness of universal citizenship and the founding of an international language and culture.

The Bahá'í credo is now increasingly demonstrating its right to be recognised not as one more religious system superimposed on the conflicting creeds which have divided mankind for so long, but rather as a restatement of the eternal verities underlying all religions. Its function would seem to be that of a unifying force, instilling into the followers of every Faith a spiritual vigour, infusing them with a new hope and love for mankind, fixing them with a new vision of fundamental unity and unfolding to their eyes the noble destiny that awaits the human race.

The basic principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that divine revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great "Faiths" 'are divine in origin, that their aims and purposes are the same,' [ t7 y ~ )4-r;Le ~ PDC.] that their functions are complementary, and that their missions represent successive stages in the evolution of human society.

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Although Abdu'l Bahá (who was always known to his family, followers and friends in affectionate reverence as "The Master") would often quote his father's sayings and relate various incidents from his life, he never gave descriptions of his personality, and we are told that the pictures which have come down to us give a very poor impression of his father's stature and dignity.

He wished to be remembered not by his person or his human frame, but by his teachings, and his actions. In this respect, one is sure that Abdu'l Bahá, too, would not wish his personality, his physical aspect, to obscure the inspiration of his teachings and the example of his life. I was in close contact with him on many occasions, in Palestine, Egypt, Paris, London and Bristol, and although I retain a clear picture of his gracious and dignified personality, it would not be easy to translate such a picture into adequate words.

The most abiding impression I received from intimate contact with him was his immense breadth of outlook, permeated with the spirit of deep and loving kindness. Whatever the topic under discussion—ranging from religion to the weather, from sunsets to the flowers, from ethics to personal behaviour, Abdu'l Bahá always struck the universal note, the note of Oneness as between the Creator and all His creation, great or small.

There is a certain similarity between the origin of the Christian Faith and this modern restatement of the same eternal truths.

As already mentioned, it was the Báb who acted as a John the Baptist in heralding the advent of a great Teacher. He and over 20,000 others were destined to be martyred for their beliefs.

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The fundamental truths of life and conduct as proclaimed through Jesus have been reaffirmed in picturesque language by the Bahá'í leaders, this reaffirmation being worded to meet the needs of our complex modern "civilisation". The Founders of both these Faiths possessed outstanding powers of healing and seership. Here the comparison ends, for Bahá'u'lláh was succeeded in his Messianic role by his son, whereas Jesus left no single successor behind him. The ultimate brotherhood of an Mankind, the Oneness of Truth, the spiritual basis behind all Religions, the appeal for the establishment of universal peace—all these are ideals which had been proclaimed by previous Messengers from God.

Like the Quakers, Bahá'ís renounce the use of force or violence of any kind. So far as I know no attempt was ever made to rescue their leaders from a period of forty years of confinement in Turkish prisons. Bahá'ís are as pacifist in outlook as the early Christians tried to be.

What is the special appeal voiced by Bahá'u'lláh and his son, which has resulted in so many of their followers the world over asserting that they are no longer Jews, Christians, Moslems or Buddhists, as such but have become Bahá'ís?

The answer may well be that as each religious revelation becomes crystallised, dogmatic and formal, the need arises for Truth to be restated in terms that conform to the needs of the new hour.

This book so far has been mainly concerned with an attempt to throw fresh light upon the life and times of Jesus as the supreme pioneer and exponent of the Christian ethic. This ethic has never yet been given a fair trial, with

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the result that we now find ourselves in a dangerous and parlous condition.

To what extent can the Bahá'í and other spiritual

movements of modern times bring this ethic into practice? It may be of some interest to set down my own fragmentary memories of the daily life and outlook of Abdu'l Bahá, as I knew him, and as a man rather than as a Prophet, not with the intention of making a comparison with Jesus, but in the hope of throwing some light upon the ways through which important spiritual movements come into being. Much of the material that follows is fragmentary and may often seem trivial. Trivial incidents in a context of this kind may, however, conceal significant lessons. I should make it clear that, in my view, Jesus' advent in our midst was and is a unique event in world history, an event that is as real and available present today as it ever was. There can be no question of comparing the status of the various Messengers who from time immemorial have descended among us, each inspired by the Christ principle in his own time and way.

It is from this standpoint that my memories of Abdu'l Bahá should be viewed.

He was a man of great spiritual stature and prophetic vision and I shall always cherish the affection he bestowed upon me and the inspiration that his life and example have given to me ever since he first came into my life in 1908.

Footnote: In the East the title of "Master" is given to the head of the family or the clan. It is also used to designate the leaders of both secular and religious movements. It is in this sense that I refer to Abdu'l Bahá as the Master.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"Ye Are All the Fruits of One Tree, and the Leaves of One Branch"

In the early years of this century the problem of translation was a very difficult one, because no English linguists were available, and the knowledge of English among those of the Master's entourage was scanty to a degree. Only rarely, as I have recorded elsewhere, was I privileged to overcome this problem, when I spoke easily with the Master in a language which surmounted the barriers of the human tongue. I have known times when he realised instinctively that he was being translated incorrectly and then insisted on a fresh interpretation.

There was an occasion in Ramleh when one of his Persian followers was being interviewed by newspaper correspondents. The Master was in the next room but within hearing distance. When asked about his Faith this follower proudly proclaimed that he was a Bahá'í and not a Christian. Abdu'l Bahá came into the room at this juncture and naturally the Press reporters turned their attention to him exclusively. One of them knew Arabic well and was able to glean the substance of the Master's discourse. To the surprise of most present, this consisted of an exposition of the spiritual principles which formed the basis for the teaching of "His Holiness the Christ".

He made it clear that these great principles also formed

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the foundations for the Message proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, but set forth in a manner most suitable for the needs of humanity in the modern world.

He insisted that his father had come to proclaim anew the unity underlying all religions. He also spoke of the danger of exclusiveness which could only lead to the establishment of a new sect and an abandonment of all that was best and true in Christianity and the ancient world scriptures.

Coffee was then served and to show his friendly tolerance, Abdu'l Bahá accepted a cigarette from one of the reporters, allowed it to be lighted, put it to his mouth, and then laid it aside.

Alas, that the full account of this very important occasion has disappeared in the mists of time. Although of a little less than medium height, Abdu'l Bahá made an impression on all who met him by his dignity, friendliness, and his aura of spiritual authority. His blue-grey eyes radiated a luminosity of their

own and his hands were beautiful in their grace and healing magnetism. Even his movements were infused with a kind of radiance.

His compassion for the aged, for children and the down-trodden knew no bounds. I remember once after he had visited a Salvation Army refuge near the Embankment, in London, tears came to his eyes. He could not understand how a wealthy nation like Britain could allow such poverty and loneliness in its midst. He spoke about this to Archdeacon Wilberforce of Westminster Abbey and to Dr. R. J. Campbell of the City Temple and he provided a sum of money through London's Lord Mayor for the succour of the poor and derelict, then so prominent a feature of the London scene.

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In speaking to me, he often referred to the need for providing food and sustenance for those in want, as a primary requisite to supplying moral and spiritual food for the heart and for the mind.

The famous declaration that we are all leaves of the same Tree was a constant theme in his conversation. He would dwell in this connection on the example of Jesus, the over-whelming love and understanding of "His Holiness the Christ".

The Master's visit to America left him sad and bewildered. He made it clear to me that the opportunity would be given to our Island and its people to lead the world out of its present darkness into the light of a new day.

At that time, now over half a century ago, it did not seem to me that Abdu'l Bahá envisaged the establishment of a new and separate "Religion". All the stress of his teaching was laid on the leavening effect of the Bahá'í message on the religions already in existence and which were themselves in such urgent need of spiritual regeneration from within. The Master made it clear that to create an entirely new and separate religious organisation at that time should be resisted vigorously.

It was on this occasion that I presented to the Master gifts from his English friends. I had travelled from Marseilles on a steamer called the Sphinx and intended to return overland via Damascus, Smyrna, Constantinople and Vienna. My return ticket and reservations for the round trip were arranged before I left London. On arrival at Alexandria I lost no time in visiting my revered friend and in carrying out the commission with which I had been entrusted. I speak no Persian and my knowledge of

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Arabic is rudimentary, and so our conversation was carried on through Abdu'l Bahá's grandson, acting as interpreter. At one point the latter was called away, but Abdu'l Bahá continued the conversation and I found myself replying! When the interpreter returned, my ability to do so ceased. To make sure that I had understood correctly, I asked for a translation of what Abdu'l Bahá had been saying in his absence, and this confirmed the fact that I had been able to understand and to reply accurately in a language of which I was completely

ignorant. (This curious experience was repeated some years later when visiting Abdu'l Bahá in Paris.)

On returning the next day for another interview, I asked the Master to give me his blessing for the journey that lay ahead of me. This he did, adding casually that I should be returning to Marseilles on the following day on the same steamer from which I had so recently disembarked. I then explained to the interpreter that I had made other arrangements and that all my overland bookings had been made. He replied to the effect that if the Master said I had to return to Marseilles now, then that was what would happen.

I went back to my hotel in a state of considerable annoyance because I saw no good reason for changing my plans. During the night, a very restless one, I found myself in two minds as to what I should do. Next morning, when I went to say goodbye, and much to my own surprise, I told Abdu'l Bahá that in fact I was leaving on the Sphinx for Marseilles later on that same day. He took this for granted and then requested me to carry out a commission for him on reaching Paris. He said that there I should meet a certain Persian student who was nearly blind, and he

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gave me  $\text{İ}ç$  in gold to pay his fare to Alexandria. (Travelling was much cheaper in those days!) I was to tell this young man, whose name was Tammadun ul Molk, to lose no time and to present himself to his Master as soon as he arrived. I accepted this commission with very bad grace because it seemed a poor reason for upsetting all my previous plans. When I asked for the student's address in Paris I was told that this was unknown but that a way would be found for bringing me into contact with him.

On reaching Paris I went to the Persian Consulate, only to find that Tammadun ul Molk was unknown to the officials there. I then visited the student's quarter on the left bank of the Seine and spent the whole day there and elsewhere in a task that yielded no results whatever. When one's mind is fearful or depressed, no interior guidance can be expected. This I have found to be true on many occasions throughout my life. In the present instance I gave up the search and set out for the Gare du Nord, where my luggage was already deposited in readiness for the return to England. En route I crossed the Seine by the Pont Royal. Happening to look across the bridge to the opposite pavement, I saw, among a crowd of pedestrians, a young man, evidently of Eastern origin, who was using a stick to tap his way along. I dodged through the traffic and accosted him. In reply to my question, he told me he was of Persian origin. I then enquired whether by chance he knew a certain Tammadun ul Molk. In surprise he replied "C'est moi", adding that he had only arrived in Paris from Vienna that very morning. In a Vienna clinic three serious operations on his eyes had been undertaken, but the results were negative

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and he had been told by the surgeon that his sight could not be saved.

I then gave Abdu'l Bahá's message and the  $\text{H}^{\text{I}}$  for his ticket to Alexandria. To watch the profound joy on his face was more than sufficient reward for all my previous disappointments, including the abandonment of my European tour. Tammadun duly reached Alexandria and visited his Master at once. Those present told me later that Abdu'l Bahá poured a few drops of attar of roses into a glass of water. He then gave the youth his blessing whilst anointing his eyes with the water in question. Immediately full sight was restored, and when I met Tammadun some years later he was still enjoying perfect vision.

The further sequel was both significant and instructive. I crossed to England late that night and, on reaching my office the next day, discovered that I was only just in time to avert a very serious crisis in my affairs. The change in my plans had indeed turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

On many other occasions the prophetic insight of the Bahá'í leader was made clear to me. As an instance of this, I recall that when visiting him at Haifa, just after the Armistice in November 1918, I spoke of the thankfulness we all must feel that the war "to end all wars" had been fought and won. He laid his hand upon my shoulder and told me that a still greater conflagration lay ahead of humanity. "It will be largely fought out in the air, on all continents, and on the sea. Victory will lie with no one. You, my son, will still be alive to witness this tragedy and to play your part. Beyond and following many tribulations, and through the beneficence of the Supreme One, the most great peace will dawn." He always emphasised the need for unity through love to bring about

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friendly understanding between followers of every creed, irrespective of race, colour or social status. (Extract from *The Silent Road*, Neville Spearman Ltd., London.)

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### The Fall of Haifa and the Safeguarding of Abdu'l Bahá and His Family

It must have been in the early spring of 1918 that I began to feel acute anxiety for the safety of Abdu'l Bahá and his family and followers in Haifa. I came out of the line in December 1917 during the attack on Jerusalem, and being temporarily incapacitated for active service, was transferred to Intelligence, first at Cairo and later at Ludd, Jaffa and Jerusalem.

Early in March 1918 information reached me from our own espionage service that the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, whose headquarters was then between Haifa and Beirut, had stated his definite intention to take the lives of Abdu'l Bahá and those around him should the Turkish Army be compelled to evacuate Haifa and retreat north.

With an advance base in and around Jaffa, we were beginning to prepare for a move towards Haifa at that time. For several reasons, including shortage of men and munitions, our advance was to be delayed well into the summer of 1918.

Meanwhile, the news reaching me personally concerning Abdu'l Bahá's imminent danger became more and more alarming. I tried to arouse interest in the matter among those who were responsible for Intelligence activities (including General Clayton, Sir Wyndham Deedes, and Sir Ronald Storrs — who had recently been appointed Governor of Jerusalem), and my own chief, Major-General Sir Arthur Money (Chief Administrator of Occupied Enemy Territory). None of them knew anything about Abdu'l Bahá, nor could they be made to realise the urgent need to ensure his safety.

At this time chance brought me into touch with a senior officer whose social and political connections were strong. Through his courtesy and interest I was enabled to get an urgent message through—uncensored—to the British Foreign Office in London.

Through friends associated with the Bahá'í Cause in England, and an influential member of my own circle, an independent avenue of approach to the ruling powers was discovered and utilised.

By these means Lord Balfour, Lord Curzon, Lloyd George, Lord Milner and others in the Cabinet were warned of the critical situation at Haifa. Lord Lamington's influence proved of special help at this time. The outcome of these various activities bore good fruit, and a Cabinet despatch was sent to General Allenby instructing him to ensure the safety of Abdu'l Bahá and his family and entourage so soon as the British Army captured Haifa.

This despatch passed through my hands in Cairo en route for Army H.Q. at Ludd and it was immediately passed on to be dealt with by the Staff there. No one at Headquarters had heard of Abdu'l Bahá or of the Bahá'í Movement, and Intelligence officials at Cairo were requested to make urgent enquiry. In due course this demand for information reached the Headquarters of Intelligence at the Savoy Hotel, Cairo, and ultimately (when other enquiries had proved fruitless) was passed to me for action.

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As a result, General Allenby was provided with full particulars of Abdu'l Bahá's life and an account of the movement of which he was the leader.

Allenby then issued orders to the General in command of the Haifa operations to the effect that immediately the town was entered, a British guard should be posted around Abdu'l Bahá's house, and a further guard placed at the disposal of his family and followers. Meanwhile, we found ways of making it known within the enemy lines that stern retribution would follow any attempt to cause death or injury to Abdu'l Bahá or to any of his household.

I have no doubt that this warning played an important part in averting tragedy. So soon as Haifa was captured, the instructions for posting a guard were immediately carried out, and all danger to the lives of the Master and his family was averted.

It is not possible to say for certain whether disaster would have resulted

otherwise, but as the town was full of Turkish spies for some time after its capture (many of whom knew of the Turkish Commander-in-Chief's firm intention to massacre Abdu'l Bahá and his family) action with this end in view might have been successfully attempted, were it not for the precautions which I have described above.

The honour and protection shown to the Bahá'í leader at that time were greatly appreciated by him, and this gave considerable help to British prestige in Persia and elsewhere in the Middle East. He told me this himself.

It was a wonderful experience in the midst of the chaos of war to visit the Master at his Mount Carmel home, which even at that time remained a haven of peace and refreshment.

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I well remember him, majestic yet gentle, pacing up and down the garden whilst he spoke to me about eternal realities, at a time when the whole material world was rocking on its foundations. The power of the spirit shone through his presence, giving one the feeling that a great prophet from Old Testament days had risen up in a war-stricken world, to guide and inspire all who would listen to him.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### The Master as a Seer

More than once in the presence of Abdu'l Bahá I was able to glimpse the extent to which he could see the future—not merely in the working of a single life but also in the broad sweep of history.

He not only predicted the outbreak of the first world war to me in 1910 but, in fact, indicated the whole course of the twentieth century. In a letter which I sent from Egypt at that time to a friend in Scotland I wrote as follows:

"The Master states definitely that regeneration and social

and moral progress will take place in Persia and that this country will ultimately become a free and constitutionally governed nation of considerable prestige. He told me that Britain had done much of real value and importance for the welfare of India and Egypt, but he anticipated nevertheless a world-wide upheaval, to be preceded by a European war, probably within the next five years. This, he said, nothing can avert.

"It would appear that the seeds for this grave conflict have already been sown in the Balkans. It is evident that we are to expect in our own lifetime a lengthy period of wars and revolutions embodying what could be interpreted as becoming the Armageddon prophesied to take place at the end of this present age or dispensation.

"Whilst the Master seems entirely confident that the

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coming of 'The Most Great Peace', accompanied by world-wide brotherhood, is destined to come into being following this long period of Armageddon, the date of such a consummation cannot be foretold.

"It was during this visit that the Master gave me his blessing and allowed me to understand that the time would come when I should be destined to play a particular role in human affairs, without, however, specifying in detail the direction in which my mission would lie . . ."

While the 1914-18 war was still being fought Abdu'l Bahá was able on more than one occasion to reassure his followers about the outcome of local events.

During the British advance from the south in 1918, field batteries had been placed in position immediately to the south east of Mount Carmel, the intention being to shell Haifa at long range over the Mount itself. Some of the Bahá'ís living on the Mount becoming agitated, went to Abdu'l Bahá's home to express their alarm. According to an eye witness of this scene (from whom I obtained the story when I reached Haifa), Abdu'l Bahá calmed all fears and called his followers to prayer. Then he assured them that all would be well, and that no British shells would cause death or damage to Haifa itself or to those living there. As a matter of historical fact, it turned out that the range of the field batteries in question proved inaccurate, the shells passing harmlessly over the town and falling into the Bay of Akka beyond.

Another incident of those times is worthy of record, although I am not able to vouch for its accuracy at first hand. I was told by a reliable witness that before the fall of Haifa, Abdu'l Bahá was discussing the British campaign with those around him. He then predicted that, contrary to

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the general expectation, the taking of Haifa and the walled town of Akka would be achieved almost without blood-shed. This prediction was borne out by events. He also stated that the Turks would surrender the fortress town of Akka (supposed to be impregnable) to two unarmed British soldiers. The facts so far as I was able to gather turned out to be as follows:

After our entry into Haifa, the front line was pushed forward halfway across the Bay of Akka, and outposts were placed in position on the sands of the Bay some five miles from Akka itself. Akka was believed to be filled with Turkish troops at this time.

Very early next morning two British Army Service men, who had lost their bearings in the night, found themselves at the gates of Akka, believing erroneously that the town was already in British hands. However, the Turkish rearguard troops had been secretly evacuated some hours earlier, and the Mayor of the town, seeing British soldiers outside the gates, came down and presented them with the keys of the town in token of surrender!

It was at about this time that the Master and I talked over the steps then being taken to prepare a home for the whole Jewish people in Palestine.

Currently I was deeply concerned about the probable fate of long existing Christian settlements in Palestine.

This concern was shared by the Master but he never allowed himself to become involved in political issues. The comment he made at the time, however, struck me with great force, and it is a tragedy that his words went unheeded both then and since. This is what he said: "The world of humanity owes to the Jews a homestead of their own. Those who are responsible for kindling the flame in this new hearth see to it that the heat warms and does not scorch both friends and neighbours alike." If such wisdom had been heeded we could have averted the wars and persecutions that have proved so tragic a feature of the birth and stormy history of the State of Israel.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

The Prison House of St. Jean D'Acre

(extract from a letter written in November 1918)

I have just visited the prison house of Bahá'u'lláh and spent some time in the company of Abdu'l Bahá and his family.

How often have I pictured myself in these surroundings. I have longed to be here ever since those distant days in 1908 when I first heard of the Bahá'ís and their Master.

A long stone stairway leads up to the living rooms in this prison house where Bahá'u'lláh spent the last portion of his life and where his son was confined until his release in 1908. The stairway is worn thin by the feet of the countless pilgrims who have passed up and down for so many years.

The Master was standing at the top waiting to greet me, with that sweet smile and cheery welcome for which he is famous. For the seventy-four years of his life Abdu'l Bahá has lived in the midst of tragedy and hardship, yet nothing affects his cheery optimism, spiritual insight and keen sense of humour. He was looking a little older than when I saw him seven years ago but certainly more vigorous than when in England after his exhausting American tour.

His voice is as strong as ever, his eyes clear, his step virile; his hair and beard are (if possible) more silvery white than before. He is delighted to welcome the change of regime, but I could detect a tragic note, for, if the British occupation had happened earlier he would still have felt young enough to travel throughout the Near and Middle East spreading his father's message. Bahá'í proselytising has never been allowed (by A.B.) in the Turkish Empire and now the Master is too old to stir far from his home on Mount Carmel. He still spends a few weeks now and again in the Akka prison house, that has recently become his property.

After lunch he drove me out to the garden tomb of Bahá'u'lláh about two miles from the city. His loving reverence for his father is unbounded. He approached the tomb in complete silence, praying with bowed head, a wonderfully venerable figure in his white turban and flowing robe. On reaching the portal to the Tomb

itself, the Master prostrated himself at full length and kissed the steps leading to the inner chamber. There was a majestic humility about the action defying description. I, with my Anglo-Saxon stolidity, could not find courage enough to follow his example in front of the Persian believers standing by.

We then took tea in the garden and A.B. told many stories about Bahá'u'lláh—his superhuman endurance, his courage and his noble teaching. When we returned to Akka, the Persian colony, consisting of perhaps thirty-five persons, had assembled and we sat round the room drinking tea, whilst A.B. described his visit to my home in Clifton and spoke of the people he had met there. I then left to pay my respects to Major Beaumont, the Military Governor, curious to discover what he knew

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of, and felt about the greatest religious personage in Asia today.

The Governor was much occupied with a demonstration he was arranging for the morrow in celebration of world peace. A band was coming, the notables of Akka were to process round the town, and the Governor would then acknowledge cheers and make a speech from the balcony of the Town Hall. A notable occasion for Akka and its people freed after so many hundreds of years from the harsh Turkish yoke!

I enquired whether Abdu'l Bahá had been invited to the function. "Do you mean Abbas Effendi? Well, no, I don't think we've asked him. Perhaps he should have an invitation!"

The man who has worked night and day for over fifty years to propagate the ideals of world peace and brotherhood, whose devoted followers number several million, whose cause is doing so much to lessen religious discord in the East—this man had not even received an invitation to take part in the peace celebrations of his native town! This is because (as it turned out) his name did not appear on the list of local notables prepared by the municipal authorities for the guidance of the Governor!

"A prophet in his own country without honour" with a vengeance! I expressed mild surprise (the shock had driven indignation from me) and an invitation was duly despatched. I then returned to the prison-house and spent the evening with the Master, supping with him and answering his questions about the new Palestine administration. I slept in the room next to A.B.'s (which had been his father's before him).

These were simple attics with stone floors and practically

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no furniture. A.B. still gives away all possessions and lives the life of poverty himself. Before breakfast the house was filled with believers who had come to receive the morning blessing. I had brought A.B. letters from many parts of the world, and he spent the morning in dictating replies for me to take away.

At lunch we had another heart-to-heart talk during which the Master referred to the truth that to human sense a life of service and integrity should not end in sorrow and distress, but it should merge naturally into to a wider world with joy and thanksgiving. I think he was referring, to a large extent, to those who, in doing their duty in wars and revolutions, had seemingly left earth life before their allotted span.

He then spoke of the oneness of Life, the ultimate victory over "death", that last enemy, which will be defeated when mankind conquers sin, selfishness and fear, and learns to reflect the light and love of the one Creator of us all.

The point of particular interest in connection with this experience was this. I understand and speak no Persian, and only a little Arabic. The Master spoke in Persian and no interpreter was present. It was only later on, when we were joined by others (one of whom spoke English) that I realised with amazement that I had understood all that he had been saying, and that it had seemed quite natural to have done so.

Soon after lunch came the leave taking and the Master's blessing. He sent greetings by me to all his friends in Egypt, Europe, England and America. As I drove off on my return to Haifa, I caught a parting glimpse of him, staff in hand, wending his way through the streets on

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his way to attend the local peace celebrations. Seen in his own eastern surroundings, he stands out a majestic figure, simple, wise beyond words, inspired—a fitting leader of a movement destined to influence the religious future of the world!

And here I am again on Mount Carmel writing this letter with the moonlit sea before me. I have paid my visit to the Governor of Haifa and tomorrow am free to explore the Mount, to visit the Tomb of the Báb. A.B. himself will not return here for another week. He is helping to solve religious problems that have arisen in the Akka area as the result of the British occupation.

Though by no means a fanatic, I am bound to say that my visit to these places, sacred to Bahá'u'lláh and his son, have deepened my conviction that the Bahá'í movement has an important part to play in the religious regeneration of the world, and especially the Eastern world.

In Abdu'l Bahá's presence, one became aware—dimly perhaps, but surely—of that serene security which comes from an understanding that One Mind embraces the whole universe, and that we are all brothers within this universe and are eternally at one with the Mind which controls it. Such a truth, familiar as it is to all religions, seems to be a far cry from our daily experience, but this practice of the Master to align all experience to a universal concept remains with me as the keynote to his life and teaching. I suppose it is inevitable that we should descend from the heights of such a concept, and slip back into the confines of sects, dogmas and conflicting organisations. As a result, the universal note is lost, and the realisation of the Fatherhood of God and the

Brotherhood of all men becomes dim  
and mythical.

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It is easier to become nearer to this truth in silence rather than in speech. In the deeps of silence, we are all one, and it is through interior stillness that knowledge of our oneness with the Creator reaches us. It has been truly said that the voice of silence carries infinitely farther than the loudest cry. Such a union as this can never be ours except in silence, and through stillness and deep prayer and meditation we can begin to comprehend the meaning of infinity and of that one Mind in which we all live and move and have our being.

On looking back after so many years have passed, to those times when I was privileged to know Abdu'l Bahá in bodily form, perhaps the most unfading memory left can be summed up by these two words: Unity and Silence: and it is not a far cry, in reality, to translate these two words into Love and Wisdom—Unity the outcome of Love and Wisdom the outcome of Silence.

Footnote: Further information about the Bahá'í Teaching can be obtained from the Bahá'í Trust, 27 Rutland Gate, London, S.W.7.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### Vision on the Mount

(on the evening of 18th of November 1918)

I was staying at the German Hospice on Mount Scopus overlooking the Mount of Olives. The moon was nearly full; a silvery grey mist crept up from the Jordan Valley, hiding the Mountains of Moab and the Dead Sea. The air seemed full of mystery. I retired early and sat out on my balcony. For a time my mind was full of the problems up for discussion that day; the political future of Damascus; the attitude of Lebanese Druses; the ever-present Jewish problems in Palestine; the situation at Beirut, and so on indefinitely. Soon all these thoughts vanished and then, as I gazed out upon the silver sea that surrounded the Mount, I saw Jesus walking on the "waves". When is vision actual? Who can tell? It was the Master of two thousand years ago; his eyes were full of light and he seemed to be watching, prophetically, the growth and spread of the Illumination he had come into the world to radiate . . . he seemed sad, yet full of hope and even fiery optimism; the first page of the Christian era was opening. And then the silvery mist rose around him and I saw no more, but later, as I was going to bed, Jesus stood upon the Mount and wept. It was the same figure, yet not the same, for two thousand years had nearly passed away and the book of the Christian Era was open in his hands, open towards the last page. I cannot describe the effect upon me of this vision of divine tragedy. The pages of the Book seemed to turn before my eyes, back, back through the centuries. And many pages were so black and the Christ spirit seemed to become dim as the pages turned, backward, forward, until again was shown the terrible writing on the last pages. When it seemed as if all were over and that a pit of darkness yawned before his feet, suddenly a new divine radiance descended around him and

he was caught up in a cloud of flame that seemed to bathe the whole world in the glorious hues of sunrise. I wonder what it all meant; Is the new Era on its way? Are there many Saviours coming to our rescue, or only One?

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