

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, THE MYSTERY OF GOD

A transcript of audio-cassette from series
WINDOWS TO THE PAST
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Of all these windows to the past, this window, and only this very unique window, will show you a priceless gem, a gift from Bahá'u'lláh. His most precious gift to mankind was His Revelation, the second was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Mystery of God, whose mystery no mortal tongue can ever disclose.

'Abdu'l-Bahá walked on this earth as an extraordinary man and a successor to Bahá'u'lláh, but He was more than a man leading and guarding the Cause of His Father. He was not a Manifestation of God, but indeed He was the repository of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. A moon in the orb of the Bahá'í Dispensation receiving its light from Bahá'u'lláh, and in the Guardian's words, "a perfect mirror reflecting the light of Bahá'u'lláh."

His station had been prophesied in the holy books of the past, and the spiritual intuition of that immortal heroine, Táhirih, enabled her to recognize His station when He was about five years old. When she was entertaining Him in the house of Bahá'u'lláh, the erudite and distinguished Vahíd had come to see her, but was kept waiting in the reception room. Someone told her, "Maybe you should not keep Vahíd waiting any longer." She turned to that young child, and said, "Shall I leave you, the Protector of the Cause, to go and visit a follower of the Cause?" What insight!

His relationship to Bahá'u'lláh was not that of an ordinary son and father. He truly recognized the supreme station of Bahá'u'lláh, and on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's begging, Bahá'u'lláh granted Him the bounty of servitude, the greatest attribute in the sight of God. In that, He became as lowly as offering Himself as dust in the pathway of His loved ones and thus achieved the highest station. Doesn't

the lowest valley collect the water flowing from the summit of a lofty mountain? So did He become the repository of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and after Bahá'u'lláh's Ascension, the fountainhead of the spiritual energies released by Bahá'u'lláh.

To enable you to ponder on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's station and His spiritual powers, it suffices to refer to the words of Bahá'u'lláh when one year before His Ascension He addressed the martyr-poet, Hand of the Cause Varqá in 'Akká. Bahá'u'lláh said, "There is a phenomenon in this world, those who possess it can exert such influence on the world which goes beyond their mortal life." In some of His tablets He has referred to this phenomenon as the "Most Great Elixir." Then He told Varqá, "Jesus was blessed with that power, and so is the Master." Varqá, being overjoyed, prostrated himself at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh and begged that he and one of his sons be accepted as a sacrifice in the path of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. His wish was granted. During the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he and his twelve-year-old son, Rúhu'lláh, attained the crown of martyrdom.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was born in Tehran, Iran, on May 23, 1844, the day of the Declaration of the Báb. His given name was 'Abbás, but in spite of many exalted titles conferred upon Him by Bahá'u'lláh, after the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, He chose the title of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, meaning the Servant of Bahá.

His first title was the Master, or Áqá, and shortly after, the Mystery of God, or Sirru'lláh, which was conferred upon Him by Bahá'u'lláh early in the Baghdád years. Later on the titles of He Around Whom All Names Revolve and Ghuṣn-i-A'zam, or The Most Great Branch, were given by Bahá'u'lláh. The designation of Exemplar, used by the believers, is from the writings of Shoghi Effendi, who stated 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the perfect exemplar of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith, and endowed with superhuman knowledge.

He was the eldest child of Bahá'u'lláh, but not the first-born. In His talk, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stated that when a child, possibly six years old, He sat on the lap of Ṭáhirih, when from behind the curtain, as was customary those days, she addressed the erudite Vaḥíd, encouraging him to show his faith with his action; and that he did, valiantly, until his martyrdom.

When He was seven years old, He became seriously ill with tuberculosis, and was not expected to live. Because of this, He could not go to their summer home in Mázindarán in the summer of 1852. As you recall, it was in August of 1852 when Bahá'u'lláh was thrown in the Siyáh-Chál of Tehran. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "Afterwards, the wisdom for this became evident. Were it not for that illness, I would have been in Mázindarán, but I remained in Tehran, and was there when the Blessed Perfection was imprisoned. Thus I travelled to Iraq in His company. And when the time came, although physicians had despaired of my recovery, I was suddenly cured."

In that summer of 1852, due to attempt on the life of the Sháh by crazy Bábís, Bahá'u'lláh was arrested and taken in chains to the Siyáh-Chál, or the Black Pit. Their mansion was ransacked. They also were shunned by the relatives being afraid for their own safety. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was barely nine years old. His younger sister, Bahíyyih Khánum, or the Greatest Holy Leaf, was seven, and the youngest brother, Mírzá Mihdí, or the Purest Branch, was five. Only the faithful servant, Isfandiár, courageously stayed and helped them. His mother, Asíyih Khánum, rented a very small apartment near the dungeon. All of a sudden they went from riches to rags. Being short of food one day, His mother gave Him a handful of dry flour to ease his hunger. At times, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was sent by His mother to sympathetic relatives to borrow money. Rowdy children, knowing the situation, used to chase and pelt Him, calling Him names. One day He decided it was enough of that so while being chased, He suddenly stopped and began to run towards them. This startled them, and seized with fear, they ran away and never bothered Him again.

He was so anxious to see His father. He begged His mother over and over until she permitted. He was taken to the dark and stench-filled dungeon by Isfandiár. On the shoulder of the servant, as they climbed down a few steps, Bahá'u'lláh saw Him and ordered them to take Him away at once. So they waited at the prison courtyard for the time that the prisoners were brought out for walking in the fresh air. As soon as His eyes fell on Bahá'u'lláh's unkempt appearance, chained to others, barely able to walk, He fainted and was taken home. How could He ever erase that gruesome memory from His mind? It was all too much for that barely nine-

year-old boy. First, to hear the news of His Father's arrest, and how on that hot summer day His shoes and hat were removed, and He was walked for hours in chains to the dungeon. How He was mocked and pelted by the onlookers; and, now actually seeing and smelling the dungeon, and what it had done to His once majestic Father.

In December, after four months, the good news of Bahá'u'lláh's impending release arrived. This was a relief since the rest of the prominent Bábí leaders had been brutally put to death. However, with the news came the edict of their exile to Iraq in the dead of winter.

The family began their journey in January 1853, after Bahá'u'lláh had somewhat recovered from deadly typhoid fever and leech wounds. With inadequate provisions, the journey began on foot and some pack mules. They had to go over the ice-covered and snowbound mountain passes of western Iran on their way to Baghdád. Sometimes facing blizzards, they had to go on narrow trails on the edge of steep mountainsides. Often 'Abdu'l-Bahá was carried on the shoulders of His uncle, Mírzá Músá, the faithful brother of Bahá'u'lláh. Two of Bahá'u'lláh's faithful brothers went with them. One was Mírzá Músá, a full brother, and the other Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí, a half-brother. Mírzá Yaḥyá, the timid half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, went into hiding and later joined them in Baghdád.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's blessed and tender feet froze on that trip, and caused Him pain for the rest of His life. The younger brother, Mírzá Mihdí, only five years old, had to be left behind with relatives because he was too young for the rigors of that harsh journey. He was separated for seven years. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's mother, who was pregnant, had to cook and wash. Her delicate hands were so badly chapped. 'Abdu'l-Bahá witnessed it all. Moses was alone when He was cast out of Egypt. Bahá'u'lláh was ill and had His family with Him; nevertheless, both had to withstand a hardship beyond endurance of ordinary men. Bahá'u'lláh suffered more seeing what His loved ones had to go through.

Finally they arrived in Baghdád in April of 1853. Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá was only nine years old, He had such spiritual power that

intuitively He recognized the station of His Father, and thus He was the first to discover His true station. 'Abdu'l-Bahá prostrated at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh, and implored for the privilege of laying down His life in His Path. Bahá'u'lláh granted that He become the Servant of the Cause. You see, the most pleasing thing in the sight of God is service. As the opposite poles of the magnet are attracted to each other, humility and servitude are the only attributes man can achieve which are the opposite of the attributes of majesty and sovereignty of God. All the other attributes which man could strive for are possessed by God in absolute perfection.

Although Bahá'u'lláh had alluded to His disappearance, no one understood its meaning. It was one year after their arrival in Baghdád when one morning the household of Bahá'u'lláh woke up to find Him gone. He had taken a servant and very little provisions. No one know His whereabouts. His departure was because of the disunity His half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá, was causing. While Yahyá wanted to be close to Bahá'u'lláh, yet he claimed that Bahá'u'lláh was interfering with the Bábí's recognition of him. So Bahá'u'lláh gave him the opportunity to prove himself. So inept and rejected he felt, that when Bahá'u'lláh's whereabouts were discovered, he sent a letter requesting Bahá'u'lláh's return.

Bahá'u'lláh's sudden departure for an unknown location was hard to bear. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, now about ten years old, suffered the most because not only was Bahá'u'lláh His Father, He was His Lord. He stated that in those two years He grew old. The family had no idea about His whereabouts until through various information reaching Baghdád about a holy man named Darvish Muḥammad-i-Írání, the name Bahá'u'lláh assumed during those two years in the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih, they learned about His location. 'Abdu'l-Baha, now twelve years old, and Bahá'u'lláh's full brother, Mírzá Músá, dispatched two believers to beg Bahá'u'lláh to return, which he accepted.

Mírzá Yahyá, who was about twenty-four years old, was conducting the affairs of the family and the believers. He had locked himself in the house fearing danger, but conducted the affairs by correspondence. He had such fear for his life that when the youngest child of Bahá'u'lláh, about one year old, became ill, he refused to permit a physician or even any neighbor to come for

help. When the little boy died, Mirza Yahya did not allow the family to have anybody come and prepare his body for burial. The body was given to a stranger who took it away. What a heartbreak for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's mother.

During those two years, 'Abdu'l-Bahá occupied His time with reading whatever of the Báb's writings that He could find. What a joyful moment when expectantly they heard the footsteps of Bahá'u'lláh, and saw Him appear at the door in the garb of a dervish. How touching was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's embrace of His Father, not letting go of Him.

In a few years, the extraordinary nature of 'Abdu'l-Bahá became manifest to foe and friend. A learned nobleman, 'Alí-Shawkat Páshá, requested that Bahá'u'lláh reveal a commentary on this sentence from Islámíc tradition, ascribed to Muḥammad, "I was a hidden treasure, I wished to be made known, and thus I called creation into being in order that I might be known." Bahá'u'lláh delegated this response to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, only a teenager without any schooling. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's commentary revealed His profound knowledge, mastery of the language, and rare qualities of mind, filling the recipient with awe and admiration. An enemy of Bahá'u'lláh once remarked that if Bahá'u'lláh had no other proof to substantiate His exceptional powers, raising a son such as 'Abdu'l-Bahá would have been sufficient.

On that April day in 1863, when Bahá'u'lláh left His house in Baghdád for the last time, as He crossed the river in a boat to enter the Garden of Ridván, the boat also carried 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then eighteen; Mírzá Mihdí, fourteen; and Muḥammad-'Alí, their half-brother, ten years old.

In the course of four months of their travel to Istanbul with a caravan of seventy-two companions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá rode a horse alongside His Father. What a majestic sight! He oversaw the progress of the journey. Provisions for that many people and animals, and arrangements for their stopping places were His responsibilities.

The five years in Adrianople saw the rise of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry to its zenith, and also witnessed the depths of Mírzá Yahyá's evil

deeds. In those years, Khurshíd Páshá became the governor of Adrianople, and his deputy, 'Azíz Páshá, recognized 'Abdu'l-Bahá's greatness. He constantly sought companionship of 'Abdu'l-Bahá who was then about twenty-three years old. Later on we will hear about this man again.

How distressed was 'Abdu'l-Bahá to see Bahá'u'lláh poisoned almost fatally by Mírzá Yaḥyá, and to hear Dr. Shíshmán, who attended Him at home, to pronounce His condition hopeless. The doctor fell at Bahá'u'lláh's feet, and without prescribing any remedy, left. In a few days, the doctor became ill. When Bahá'u'lláh's secretary, Mírzá Áqá Ján, visited him, the doctor said that God had answered his prayers. Bahá'u'lláh's illness lasted about a month. He stated that Dr. Shíshmán had sacrificed his life for Him.

Bahá'u'lláh, who had excellent penmanship, rarely took the pen after that poisoning due to shaking of His hands. Among His writings after the poisoning are His letters to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His Will. In years to follow, how heartbreaking it was for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to receive letters from His Father, and seeing evidence of His shaking hand, to remember those critical days.

You can imagine what it was to watch the depraved acts of the desperate Mírza Yaḥyá. If it was not poisoning of the well which provided water for the family and believers, it was instructing their mutual barber, a believer, to kill Bahá'u'lláh while in the bath. As mentioned earlier, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wished to shield Bahá'u'lláh, but some of the darts passed by Him, yet the Hand of Providence protected Bahá'u'lláh.

Then came the 'Most Great Separation' between Bahá'u'lláh's followers and a few who followed Mírzá Yaḥyá, soon to be followed by their exile to 'Akká. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was twenty-four years old when He accompanied His Father in exile to 'Akká. His youthful portrait is the passport photo taken for that trip when the only photographic portrait of Bahá'u'lláh was also taken.

In the barracks of 'Akká, where Bahá'u'lláh was confined in a solitary cell, the rest of nearly seventy companions were placed in crowded spaces. It was at first a strict decree by the government, but these harsh measures did not last long.

At the beginning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, noticing the crowded situation, chose to sleep in the room that formerly had been used as a morgue. Many believers became ill and a few died. For four months, 'Abdu'l-Bahá personally supervised their care and diet, and made sure those believers in charge of shopping would not bring anything contaminated. Even He inspected their pockets. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá fell ill Himself, but miraculously recovered in spite of His having had childhood tuberculosis.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was instrumental in Badí' meeting Bahá'u'lláh in His cell, to be transformed; and, by taking the message of Bahá'u'lláh to the King of Persia, attained the glory of becoming the Pride of Martyrs, or Fakhru'sh-Shuhadá.

Then on that June 22nd, 1870, two months short of two years since their arrival in 'Akká, a tragedy struck. The twenty-two year old Mírzá Mihdí, the Purest Branch, while pacing on the prison roof in deep prayer, fell through an open skylight with fatal injury to his chest. Members of the family and some believers, grief-stricken, gathered around him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with tearful eyes entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, prostrated and begged for healing. Bahá'u'lláh stated, "O My Greatest Branch, leave him in the hands of his God." You see, earlier in the first few months in the barracks when disease struck, a physician was brought to the bedside of one of the dying believers. When he arrived, after checking the pulse, he angrily protested being called to examine a dead man. He exclaimed, "I am not Christ!" and left. On Bahá'u'lláh's instruction, a healing prayer was read, and the believer came back to life. Doesn't it speak for itself?

'Abdu'l-Bahá, being aware of the power of the Holy Spirit within Bahá'u'lláh, begged His Father to heal Mírzá Mihdí. Bahá'u'lláh went to the bedside of His injured son and dismissed everyone. It is stated that Bahá'u'lláh, having the power of life and death in His hands, asked His dying son what his wish was. He assured him that if he wished to live, God would make him recover and grant him a good health, but the Purest Branch begged his Father and his Lord to accept his life as a ransom for opening the gates of the prison to many believers who longed to attain Bahá'u'lláh's presence. It was granted. Twenty-two hours after his fall, he took his last breath.

He was twelve years old, when after seven years of separation, he was sent to his parents, then in exile in Baghdád, and now this tragic separation broke his mother's heart who wept constantly until Bahá'u'lláh consoled her about the effects of his death.

Four months later the restrictions were relaxed. The prisoners were placed in houses within the walled city because the government needed the barracks for military purposes. After living in a few houses for a short time, the large family of Bahá'u'lláh settled into the House of 'Údí Khammár. It was so crowded that in one room thirteen persons of both sexes had to live. Of course, with bad publicity about the prisoners, people were not friendly to them. Matter of fact, when 'Údí Khammár moved to his large mansion which later became Bahá'u'lláh's Mansion of Bahjí, and rented his house in town to Bahá'u'lláh, it displeased 'Abbúd. Both were Christians. 'Abbúd, who lived next door, was a nephew and partner of 'Údí Khammár. Abbud was so upset that he wanted to prevent the transaction.

Then a shameful event made 'Abbúd feel justified in his fear. It was shortly after they moved to that house when three followers of Mírzá Yahyá were killed by seven followers of Bahá'u'lláh. These had been sent with Bahá'u'lláh to 'Akká by the order of the government for making mischief. One of their activities was constantly reporting to the authorities the arrival of any follower so they could be expelled before being able to see Bahá'u'lláh. One such believer was the historian, Nabíl-i-A'zam, who had to live in a cave in Haifá. Bahá'u'lláh, foreseeing their action, had admonished His followers to be forbearing and patient, but to no avail. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was always so vigilant about shielding His Father, but He had too many fronts to cover. This time the darts which bypassed Him were from the friends. Bahá'u'lláh in that regard stated, "My captivity cannot harm Me. That which can harm Me is the conduct of those who love Me, who claim to be related to Me, and yet perpetrate what causeth My heart and My pen to moan."

This horrible incidence caused jailing of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with 'Abdu'l-Bahá being chained. They spent three days in jail, but the perpetrators were imprisoned much longer. Of course, poor 'Abbúd, being afraid for his safety, barricaded his house against any access from the house of Bahá'u'lláh. You can realize

what this noble and holy family had to go through, now being considered dangerous by their neighbor.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who represented the family, in no time won them all with His love and charming personality. It was not unusual for the people of 'Akká who had not seen Bahá'u'lláh to refer to Him as the Father of 'Abbás Effendí, meaning 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Soon we will see that the antagonistic 'Abbúd made one hundred eighty degrees change in his attitude. That is why so many times those two houses are referred to as the House of 'Abbúd.

Let us not lose track of time. Now we are in 1873, five years after their exile to 'Akká, and about three years since they left the barracks. That was a memorable year for that little house and the whole world. It was within the confines of the House of 'Abbúd that the Most Holy Book, or the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, was revealed in the summer of that year, and also that house witnessed the wedding of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Munírih Khánum. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was twenty-nine years old and she was twenty-six. Munírih Khánum's given name was Fátimih. She was born to a childless couple whom the Báb blessed while in Isfahan by giving them a portion of food from His plate.

Bahá'u'lláh had intended to have His niece, Shahr-Bánú Khánum, the daughter of His older half-brother, who was a believer, become the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which was also the wish of her father. It is interesting that when Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in His teens, this brother went there, and asked Bahá'u'lláh to bring about the wedding. However, this brother died before 'Abdu'l-Bahá became older. Later on when Bahá'u'lláh sent a believer to Tehran with a ring and cashmere shawl, which was the customary gift for asking for a woman's hand in marriage, the other half-sister and half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh who were not believers and who had become the guardians of Shahr-Bánú Khánum, refused to let her go to marry 'Abdu'l-Bahá. She was given to the son of the prime minister instead. This forced marriage brought her immense grief, and she died from tuberculosis.

Bahá'u'lláh stated that He saw in His dream that the charming face of Shahr-Bánú Khánum became darker and darker and faded away, and

then one with luminous face and luminous heart appeared to Him, and He chose her for the Master. Luminous is the translation of Munírih.

Now we go to Işfahán, the famous city in Iran well-known for the turquoise blue mosaic tiles decorating many beautiful domes, unless you rather stay in drab 'Akká. Well, we are not going there to see the colorful mosaics, but to witness the divine mosaic work. In 1872 from 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh sent a tablet to the King of Martyrs, then a famous merchant in Işfahán, stating, "We have considered you as related to Us." This great believer could not figure out what Bahá'u'lláh was alluding to. A few months later Shaykh Salmán, the famous courier of Bahá'u'lláh, arrived in Işfahán, and gave the glad tidings that Bahá'u'lláh had sent him to escort Fátimih Khánum to 'Akká. She was the cousin of the King of Martyrs.

After they arrived in 'Akká, she stayed for five months at the home of Mírzá Músá, Bahá'u'lláh's brother, and at times attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Mírzá Músá often used to bring her gifts from Bahá'u'lláh. You would guess that she was sure that she was chosen for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The answer is maybe, until one day when Mírzá Músá told her the joyous news that Bahá'u'lláh had sent her the most wonderful gift, and that was the title of Munírih, meaning luminous. She became overjoyed having heard about Bahá'u'lláh's dream when He chose the luminous girl, Munírih, for 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Now we can say she was sure.

'Abbúd detected that the reason the wedding was not taking place was because of lack of room, so he opened a room from his house into Bahá'u'lláh's house, and offered it for 'Abdu'l-Bahá which Bahá'u'lláh accepted. Then the Greatest Holy Leaf gave Munírih Khánum a plain white dress, and took her to the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, Who told her, "O My Leaf and My Handmaiden. Verily, We chose thee, and accepted thee to serve My Most Great Branch, and this is by My grace which is not equalled by all the treasures of the earth and heaven" What a spiritual banquet. No earthly festivity could match it.

In a short time, the unfriendly governor of 'Akká was replaced by Aḥmad Big Tawfiq who sought Bahá'u'lláh's advice, and had great respect for the Cause.

In 1875 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote His first book which is The Secret of Divine Civilization."

As we get closer to the end of Bahá'u'lláh's stay within the walled city of 'Akká, something unusual happened. No, it was not the dethronement of Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz and his assassination. That had been foretold by Bahá'u'lláh when they were exiled to 'Akká. This was something extraordinary. After Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz was killed, Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd replaced him. The edict of Sulṭán was still in force about most strict imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh and His family. Now listen to this. Do you remember earlier I told you we will hear more about 'Azíz Páshá who was the deputy governor of Adrianople during Bahá'u'lláh's stay there? Well! Now he has become the válí or the governor general of Beirut. He made two separate trips to 'Akká to pay his respects to Bahá'u'lláh and seek companionship of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which he treasured so much. Then Midḥat Páshá, the prime minister, invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Beirut. Who has heard of a governor general to go and visit a prisoner, and then the prime minister of the realm invite the prisoner to be his guest?

'Abdu'l-Bahá, though considered a prisoner in 'Akká, without difficulty left for Beirut, and was received honorably by the dignitaries. This was about 1878 when this liberal prime minister was in office. Being a reformer, unfortunately, he did not last too long in that office.

It was during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's stay in Beirut when Bahá'u'lláh wrote to Him in these words, "Praise be to Him Who hath honored the Land of Bá (meaning Beirut) through the presence of Him round Whom all names revolve..." and further He states, "Blessed, doubly blessed is the ground which His footsteps have trodden..." He finishes the letter by saying, "We beseech God - blessed and exalted be He - that He may honor us with meeting Him soon."

You can see the love relationship between the Lord and His servant and vice versa. Sovereignty and humility are the two opposite poles and attract each other. As was mentioned before, their relationship was not that of a father and son with its usual and casual intimacy. When at home, 'Abdu'l-Bahá never entered the presence of Bahá'u'lláh without permission. The half-brothers

of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who were blind to the station of Bahá'u'lláh, treated Bahá'u'lláh as their respectable father, but not their Lord.

When through allusions of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sensed that the time was at hand for Bahá'u'lláh to leave the prison city of 'Akká, through the Muftí of 'Akká, He persuaded Bahá'u'lláh to leave the walled city for the country, namely the Mansion of Mazra'ih. Age-wise, Bahá'u'lláh was sixty years old and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, thirty-three. While in Mazra'ih, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed in 'Akká as He continued to do so even after Bahá'u'lláh had moved to the spacious Mansion of Bahjí. 'Abdu'l-Bahá negotiated rental, repair and every requirement for Bahá'u'lláh's moves, but He, His family, sister and mother did not move to that Mansion. The rest of the family moved to the Mansion of Bahjí, and enjoyed the undeserved bounty of living so close to Bahá'u'lláh.

'Abdu'l-Bahá used to walk or ride a donkey between 'Akká and the Mansion of Bahjí. When riding, as soon as the Mansion came into view (like in a mile or so) He would dismount, and walk the rest of the way. A servant never goes to see his Lord while riding. Bahá'u'lláh would send the believers in attendance to go for a distance to welcome Him. Then He would stand at the balcony and state to the women and children, "Look at the Master. Look at the majesty of His walk." Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá would climb the stairs, and prostrate at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh. No one has surpassed 'Abdu'l-Bahá in humility and servitude.

Two years before the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, when Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge, England, was granted interviews with Bahá'u'lláh, he also wrote this about 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who then was forty-six years old, "Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed me more. A tall, strongly-built man holding himself straight as an arrow, with white turban and raiment, long black locks reaching almost to the shoulder, broad, powerful forehead indicating a strong intellect, combined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk's, and strongly-marked but pleasing features—such were my first impressions of 'Abbás Effendí, the Master as He is called by the Bábís." (Here I wish to interject that for many years Bahá'ís were called Bábís.) I will repeat the last sentence. "...such were my first impressions of 'Abbás Effendí, the Master as He is called by the Bábís."

"Subsequent conversation with him served to heighten the respect with which his appearance had from the first inspired me. One more eloquent of speech, more ready of argument, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians and Muḥammadans, could, I should think, scarcely be found even amongst the eloquent, ready and subtle race to which he belongs. The qualities, combined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the circle of his father's followers."

The descriptive pen-portrait by Edward Browne ends with this final touch, "About the greatness of this man and his power, no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt." What a powerful pen. You can almost see and feel the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

I told you how 'Abdu'l-Bahá, when they lived together with Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká, never went into His presence without permission. Now, listen to this. Once at the presence of some believers, a younger half-brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá came casually to Bahá'u'lláh and said, "The Master wishes that we go to such a garden, can we?" He was referring to Muḥammad-'Alí. Bahá'u'lláh said, "There is only one Master, the rest have their names!"

As mentioned earlier, it was about one year before Bahá'u'lláh's Ascension when He told Varqá, the martyr-poet, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá also was blessed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

During His last illness, Bahá'u'lláh entrusted His Will, written in His own handwriting, sealed in an envelope, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. On May 29, 1892, Bahá'u'lláh ascended early in the morning. At dawn 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His half-brother, Muḥammad-'Alí, washed His body. Before washing, Muḥammad-'Alí told 'Abdu'l-Bahá that the two cases containing personal items and writings of Bahá'u'lláh, which were close to the bed, might get splashed, and better be moved to another room. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as you remember, was not living in the Mansion of Bahjí, but Muḥammad-'Alí was. So Muḥammad-'Alí moved the two cases to his own quarters. Shortly after the Ascension, a believer came to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, stating that he had been honored with a tablet by Bahá'u'lláh, and asked if 'Abdu'l-Bahá could affix Bahá'u'lláh's seal on it. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá

asked Muḥammad-‘Alí to bring the cases, he denied having any knowledge of them. How badly he wished he could find Bahá'u'lláh's Will in order to alter it.

Nine days after the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, in the presence of nine believers and the family members, the seal on Bahá'u'lláh's Will was broken, and the Will, which Bahá'u'lláh called Kitáb-i-‘Ahdí, or the Book of My Covenant, was read. In English it is referred to as Kitáb-i-‘Ahd. It clearly appointed ‘Abdu'l-Bahá as the unquestionable successor to Bahá'u'lláh and authorized interpreter of His words.

On the same day in the afternoon, the Will was read aloud to all the family members and believers who were in ‘Akká. The one who read it was Majdi'd-Dín, the son of Mírzá Músá, the faithful brother of Bahá'u'lláh, who had passed away five years earlier. This man, Majdi'd-Dín, who had married a sister of Muḥammad-‘Alí, became a covenant-breaker and with the half-brother of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, rose against the Covenant. As ‘Abdu'l-Bahá once told him, he lived long enough to see the glorious days of the Guardian while paralyzed and without speech, exactly as predicted by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá. He died in 1955 when more than one hundred years old. His house was the last property occupied by the covenant-breakers, close to the Mansion of Bahjí, which was torn down by the Guardian.

Muḥammád-‘Alí, the half-brother of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, eight years younger than Him, with full knowledge of the wishes of Bahá'u'lláh, broke the Covenant, and was announced by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá as the Arch-breaker of the Covenant. He was so deceitful that even when Bahá'u'lláh was living, he altered some of His writings, and had to be reprimanded and chastised by Bahá'u'lláh's own hand. For four years ‘Abdu'l-Bahá was patient with him, and assured him that according to Bahá'u'lláh's Will, he would be next in line for successorship, but he arrogantly declared that there was no guarantee that he would outlive ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, and he planned to usurp the position from ‘Abdu'l-Bahá exactly the way ‘Umar usurped the successorship from ‘Alí, the rightful successor to Muḥammad. What arrogance!

With various intrigues and promises, he drew all the half-sisters and brothers of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá (and their families), nearly forty

people, into his camp. His main cause was that 'Abdu'l-Bahá claimed to be a prophet which was against Bahá'u'lláh's writings that no Manifestation shall appear before one thousand years. What a curse Muḥammad-'Alí brought upon himself and others. These unfortunate people, through their choice, transgressed and sinned against the Holy Spirit, and therefore their souls will not be forgiven by God to the end of time which has no end.

It is timely to mention how Bahá'u'lláh knew what was coming. In one of His tablets, He reveals, "My sorrow is not for Myself, but for Him Who shall come after Me, in the shadow of My Cause, with manifest and undoubted sovereignty, inasmuch as they will not welcome His appearance, will repudiate His signs, will dispute His sovereignty, will contend with Him, and will betray His Cause..." Bahá'u'lláh in many of His tablets had cursed the breakers of His Covenant.

Now all of the covenant-breakers were in the Mansion of Bahjí, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife and four unmarried daughters lived as before within the walled city of 'Akká. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's mother, Asíyih Khánum, had passed away six years before the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. The only other male in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's household was the faithful half-brother of Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Muḥammad-Qulí.

How unfortunate was Mírzá Aqá Ján, Bahá'u'lláh's secretary for forty years who chose to go into the camp of the covenant-breakers. With all of the wealth he had accumulated through gifts which believers sent to Bahá'u'lláh, he became their financial support.

The first group of the Western believers, including Phoebe Hearst and May Bolles (the mother of Amatu'l-Bahá Rúḥíyyih Khánum) attained His presence in December of 1898. This group of fifteen went to 'Akká in three successive parties, each one staying only for three days.

As you recall, Bahá'u'lláh, before His Ascension, while in Haifa, pointed out to 'Abdu'l-Bahá where the Shrine of the Báb should be built. After His Ascension, 'Abdu'l-Bahá purchased that specific parcel of land. Soon the covenant-breakers informed the property owners of surrounding lots that their property would become

very valuable to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and should any of them decide to sell to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the covenant-breakers should be contacted so they could outbid 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The piece of land for the Shrine had no access to the road for getting the supplies and equipment there, and the owner of the needed lot was not willing to sell it to 'Abdu'l-Bahá for any price. So, one night 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed up all night, reciting prayers by the Báb over and over. The next morning the stubborn owner approached Him and indicated his willingness to negotiate, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá would not show any interest. The owner felt very guilty, saying he had been a victim of the mischief of the covenant-breakers. He kept bringing the price down, and even offered to give it away free. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told His attendant to purchase it for a fair price.

In 1899, the same year that the holy dust of the Báb was brought to the Holy Land, 'Abdu'l-Bahá laid with His own hands the cornerstone of the Shrine. These covenant-breakers did everything to make life miserable for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His family and the steadfast followers. In particular, Muḥammad-'Alí was determined to cause 'Abdu'l-Bahá's execution or exile to a very remote place. Since they occupied the Mansion of Bahjí, any time 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the believers went to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, they would stand on the balcony and harrass them.

With repeated reports to the government Muḥammad-'Alí and his allies stated that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, with the help of the Westerners, was building a fortress on Mount Carmel to take over the government. You should know that during this period, 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived in 'Akka, but had a temporary residence and guest house in Haifa where He often visited, and stayed for short periods.

To bribe the officials against 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they gave them some of the personal belongings of Bahá'u'lláh. One official who had such an item tried to tease 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but soon learned not to do it again. He had the prayer beads of Bahá'u'lláh in his hands which 'Abdu'l-Bahá immediately recognized. What his intentions were, we don't know. If he wanted to make a fortune or just tease, God knows. He asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "How much do you think these beads are worth?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "It depends in whose hands they are!"

It was on a hot August night in 1901 when 'Abdu'l-Bahá, just having returned from Bahjí where He had celebrated the anniversary of the Declaration of the Báb, was informed about the edict of the Sultan. The order was that 'Abdu'l-Bahá must stay strictly within the confines of the walled city of 'Akká, and in this process, the covenant-breakers were also caught in their own web. They were ordered to move from the Mansion of Bahjí to 'Akká. Who else except 'Abdu'l-Bahá would intercede on their behalf to the government so they could stay in the Mansion? They stabbed Him with daggers, He balméd their wounds; they caused Him agony, He brought them comfort. Yes, indeed, who else, except the Exemplar, the Master. But this did not stop them. They became bolder, and their intrigues became wilder.

The reincarceration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and His strict confinement within the city of 'Akká lasted from 1901 to 1908. During those seven years, the flow of pilgrims slowed down considerably, and towards the end stopped due to the restrictions imposed upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

While 'Abdu'l-Bahá was confined within the city of 'Akká, the construction of the Shrine of the Báb was not interrupted. The covenant-breakers, living comfortably in the Mansion of Bahjí, felt ever more at liberty to pursue their evil schemes by bribing the authorities and giving receptions. Their ultimate goal was total elimination of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and taking leadership of the Cause for personal gain.

As stated by 'Abdu'l-Baha, His greatest suffering during those years was His inability and deprivation from visiting the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. He continued His correspondence with the believers in the East and the West. Many so-called non-Bahá'í friends in 'Akká kept their distance, worrying about their own status and positions. The most descriptive book about those years is The Memoirs of Nine Years in 'Akká, by Dr. Yúnis-i-Afrúkhtih, which hopefully will be translated into English.

In those years to follow, Muḥammad-'Alí even conspired to take 'Abdu'l-Bahá's life through assassins. Like his cousin, Majdi'd-Dín, Muḥammad-'Alí also outlived 'Abdu'l-Bahá by sixteen years, and with envy watched the establishment of the power of the Covenant

and ministry of the Guardian. However, they caused great hardship for 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

It is interesting that the youngest half-brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Mírzá Badí'u'lláh, who was in his mid-thirties, decided to change camps, and began to attend the meetings of the believers at the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He definitely had his eye on the successorship. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told him that He would accept his repentance, and forgive him if he would write down all of the evil doings that were implemented by older brother Muḥammad-'Alí and his allies. Badí'u'lláh did as he was told, and by this he left a clear record of their activities. Being forgiven by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he began to feel the status of being a son of Bahá'u'lláh. Some believers went to the extreme of kissing his hand.

Then in one gathering of the believers where Badí'u'lláh was also present, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said everyone should take note of what He had to say. He stated that in case of His passing away, the Universal House of Justice should be elected to conduct the affairs of the Faith. Well, what do you think! It was a clear message to Badí'u'lláh, who after a short time went back to his old camp, because his hopes of leadership after 'Abdu'l-Bahá were dashed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's daily work of attending the sick and the poor was not interrupted for a moment. In those distressful days, He stayed up until way past midnight keeping up His communications. He wrote as many as ninety letters per day. Now you know how there are between twenty-six to twenty-seven thousand letters from His pen.

Early in the winter of 1907, a few days before the arrival of the henchmen of the Sultán, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a dream which He shared with the believers. He saw a ship cast its anchor near 'Akká, and from it flew a few birds which resembled sticks of dynamite. These came inland, and circled around His head while He was standing amidst the multitude of frightened inhabitants. Then the dynamites returned back to the ship without ever exploding. The dreaded moment arrived with the four-member board of inquiry sent by the central government to complete their long-stretched and off and on investigations. Upon their arrival, the governor of 'Akká, who was friendly towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was dismissed. The board also took over the telephone and telegraph office, the nerve center of

communication to isolate 'Akká from any communication except for their own direct contact with the capitol.

Rumors of every kind were spread all over. Some said that 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be sent to the remote desert of Fízán in Libya, which meant no survival. The others said He would be thrown into the sea, and yet another group said He would be hanged on the gallows. You could imagine the joy of the covenant-breakers and the despair of the believers. To fan the flames, the covenant-breakers showed hospitality to the members of the board, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá, totally unperturbed, carried on His usual day-to-day schedule, including repair of His house, planting trees, and storing fuel for winter. This surprised the inhabitants who were sure His days were numbered. Somehow, I cannot put any suspense in this story because we know that the forces of evil are always defeated, but do you think we could have convinced those believers with their hearts in their throats? For 'Abdu'l-Bahá there was no problem, but His concern was the distress of the believers about the impending separation and possible execution.

The telephone and telegraph office was sealed to the public, but no one could block 'Abdu'l-Bahá's channels. While the board was there, the consul of Spain, whose relatives had the agency of an Italian steamship company, secretly came to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's house. He said he had dispatched a ship to the Bay, and under his order it was moving around to distract suspicion. He offered to take 'Abdu'l-Bahá to any port in the world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá told a few of the prominent believers to consult on this, and report their conclusion to Him. They unanimously suggested that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should accept the offer which to you and me makes sense. Why should 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, the builder of the World Order, jeopardize His life. Well, He really did not need their advice, or your and my opinion. He wished to show frailty of human mind in relation to Divine Will. We are always tested in our faith in Bahá'u'lláh's power and the invincibility of His Cause. Let us pray for steadfastness. Crisis of Badasht and tests of faith have been repeated over and over, and is not over yet. He thanked them for their earnest conclusion, and told them, "The Báb did not run away, and I shall not run away."

The tension in those days was at its height, because the board

had come to take 'Abdu'l-Bahá with them. The believers could not sleep. They kept vigil until the final day arrived. You can almost hear the pounding of their hearts and feel their shattered nerves. The board made its last inspection of the Shrine of the Báb which was still under construction. Seeing the underground vault left no doubt in their minds about the purpose of that unusual and solid construction. The believers along the shore kept their vigil, and watched the movement of the ship in the bay as it left Haifa. Well, that was it. They were coming to 'Akká to take 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Now that the sun was setting they could see the ship even better with its lights on. The ship began slowly to move back towards 'Akká, and this was the sure sign that 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be arrested at any moment.

Meanwhile, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was calmly pacing in the courtyard of His house. All of a sudden, to great surprise of the believers, the ship changed its course, and headed towards the open sea. Apparently, urgent news had come to the officials that a bomb had exploded near the carriage of Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd while he was returning from the mosque. With the gravity of such an attempt on the life of the sulṭán, everything else was put on the back burner, and the officials were summoned to return at once to Iṣṭánbul. It did not take too long before the sulṭán was forced to submit to the demand of the revolutionaries. In the summer of 1908, the constitution was reinstated, and all the religious and political prisoners were freed.

Then on that Naw-Rúz day of 1909, He laid with His own hands the sacred remains of the Báb and His companion-martyr in the heart of Mount Carmel at the shrine which as stated by Him, "Every brick of it was laid with the labor of love, and every inch of it was raised with tears of agony." At the final moment of that emotional event, He took off His turban, shoes, and cloak, and laid His blessed head on the corner of the casket, and cried so intensely that it made everyone there weep with Him. With all the services that 'Abdu'l-Bahá rendered, He considered this one His greatest accomplishment. The same night a telegram arrived about the formation of the first Bahá'í national convention of delegates in Chicago.

Within the course of one year, His household was gradually trans-

ferred to His newly-built house in Haifa. At the age of sixty-five, He left 'Akká forever, never to set foot within the city gates of 'Akká again. He was twenty-four years old when He entered 'Akká as a prisoner.

With the gates opened, the flood of believers began to flow, and His correspondence ever increased. It was not unusual that He simultaneously kept three secretaries writing separate letters in three languages of Persian, Arabic and Turkish. Shoghi Effendi, His eldest grandson, at times acted as His secretary for correspondence in English. 'Abdu'l-Bahá slept and ate very little. His diet included bread, goat milk, cheese, tea and olives. Many times at dinner table He served the believers and the company Himself. While some were spellbound by His presence, He would remind them to eat.

In the evening of His life at the age of sixty-seven in 1911, He began His extensive journeys. First He went to Egypt, and on April 11, 1912, He arrived in New York on the steamship Cedric, having refused the reservation which dedicated believers had made on the maiden voyage of the luxurious Titanic. You can guess why? He covered many cities from coast-to-coast, speaking about the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in churches, synagogues, and universities. From lonesome imprisonment in the desolate 'Akká to the overcrowded lecture halls of the United States and Europe! If that animation was not from the power of the Holy Spirit, what else could it be?

He met politicians and scientists such as Theodore Roosevelt and Alexander Graham Bell. After meeting Lee McClung, the United States treasurer, Juliet Thompson asked McClung what was his impression of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. These are his exact words, "I seemed to be in the presence of one of the great old prophets - Isaiah, Elijah, Moses. And yet it was more than that - He was like Christ. No, now I have it - He seemed to me like my Divine Father."

'Abdu'l-Bahá laid the corner-stone of the House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois in May, 1912. While in the United States, He made a side trip to Montreal, Canada. While on the West Coast, He visited the grave of Thornton Chase in Los Angeles who had died just before His arrival in California. He returned to New York, the City of the Covenant, and on December 5, 1912, He left New

York by a steamship for Liverpool on His way to London. Then He visited a few European cities such as Paris and Stuttgart. The last leg of His extensive and historic journey was Egypt where He spent about five months. He returned to the Holy Land on December 5, 1913, at the eve of World War I which He had predicted.

His journey to the West and long absence from the Holy Land had two purposes; one was to raise the call of Yá Baha'u'l-Abhá first-hand in the remote cities of the West; and, the second was to show the world that the institution of the Covenant was so firmly established that His half-brother, the arch-breaker, and his allies, in spite of His absence, had no power. He accomplished both missions to perfection.

Before the onset of the world war and after it began, He advised the believers to cultivate large fields of land and plant grain which was stored. When the famine struck, He gave grain to the needy.

It was towards the end of that war when Jamál Páshá, the Turkish commander-in-chief and a bitter enemy of the Faith, allied with Germans, expressed his intention to crucify 'Abdu'l-Bahá and level the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. However, through the efforts of the British believers, the Foreign Office advised General Allenby, the commanding officer in that region, to extend all protection to 'Abdu'l-Bahá which was done promptly and effectively.

After the liberation of Palestine by the British forces, at a ceremony specially held for His sake in Haifa, General Allenby conferred the British knighthood upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá for His humanitarian services to the public during the famine in those gloomy days of war.

Among other highlights of twenty-nine years of His ministry were the erection of the first House of Worship in 'Ishqábád in Russian Turkistan, and repair of the House of the Báb in Shíráz.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings could be classified in these categories:

1. The Will and Testament, that unmatched document which established the Administrative Order and appointment of Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian.

2. The books He wrote are three:

- The Secret of Divine Civilization, written in 1875.
- A Traveller's Narrative which is a brief history of the Faith.
- Memorials of the Faithful, in which He honors a number of outstanding early believers.

The third category are the compilations of His talks and tablets under the following titles:

- Some Answered Questions by Laura Clifford Barney which are His table-talks in Akka during His reincarceration.
- Paris Talks.
- Promulgation of Universal Peace, which are His talks in the United States.
- The Tablets of the Divine Plan, which are fourteen tablets written in 1916 and 1917 addressed to the believers in the U.S. and Canada for the spiritual conquest of the planet.

The last in this category is Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The fourth category are His numerous letters to individuals in regard to explanations of Bahá'u'lláh's writings and other matters.

His mission fully accomplished, the Mystery of God, or as He wished to be known, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, ascended to the world of mysteries on November 28, 1921, in Haifa at the age of seventy-seven.

His funeral, the like of which the Holy Land had never witnessed before, was attended by nearly ten thousand people from every class, color, and creed; as high as the High Commissioner of Palestine, and as low as the beggars who received alms from His hands. All united as He wished them to be, mourned the loss of their beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He was laid to rest in a vault in a room adjacent to the room of the resting-place of the Báb under the same shrine which He built so fervently with the labor of love and tears of agony. Messages of sympathy began to pour in from far and near. One was from no less a person than the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Winston Churchill, who conveyed the sympathy and condolences on behalf of His Majesty's government.

His Will and Testament, which was addressed to Shoghi Effendi,

was read five weeks after His Ascension. Shoghi Effendi was in London when 'Abdu'l-Bahá passed away, and sailed to Haifa after his recovery from that shocking news.

Friends, by reading three excellent books, God Passes By, by Shoghi Effendi; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, by the late Hand of the Cause H. M. Balyuzi; and The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, by Adib Taherzadeh, you can easily recognize the limitation of this short presentation. Let us hope that this brief account of such a momentous life has excited your interest for deeper study of the life and ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Mystery of God.