

*Baha'i Studies Review* 13 (2005) 75–103

## **‘Abdu’l-Baha in Abu-Sinan: September 1914–May 1915**

AHANG RABBANI

### **Abstract**

*Abu-Sinan is a Druze village about seven miles east of ‘Akka. To protect the Baha’i community of Haifa–‘Akka from the onslaught of the First World War and its effects on the coastal plain, ‘Abdu’l-Baha temporarily relocated the entire community of about 140 people to this village in the autumn of 1914. By the beginning of May 1915 the situation had calmed, the region was no longer threatened by bombardment or other aggression, and the Baha’is were able to return home. This paper describes the actions of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, records some of the words that he spoke during this period, and depicts the condition of the Baha’i community of the Holy Land during the time.*

Baha’u’llah arrived in ‘Akka on 31 August 1868, accompanied by his immediate family and some 70 close companions. With his arrival, the nucleus of an ever-growing Baha’i community was formed in the region. During the first decade, the only Baha’is allowed to live in ‘Akka were those who had accompanied Baha’u’llah, and visitors were encouraged by him to return home in order to propagate the Baha’i Faith, although a few were instructed to find an occupation either in the vicinity or in Haifa. In the course of the following two decades the situation improved and gradually other Baha’is were able to settle in ‘Akka, some being family members of the resident Baha’is, others being brought there for specific purposes, such as tending the Ridvan and Firdaws Gardens. During this period, the family of Mirza Muhammad-Quli – Baha’u’llah’s faithful half-brother – settled in the village of Nuqayb, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, as farmers. As conditions permitted, ‘Abdu’l-Baha bought some inexpensive land in various villages, such as two parcels in the villages of Asfiya and Daliya near Haifa, which, at Baha’u’llah’s request, he gave to his younger half-brothers, Diyā’u’llāh and Badi’u’llāh.

During an earlier period, the Baha’i community of Baghdad had been forced to evacuate to Mosul, where many other Baha’i refugees from Iran soon joined them. In the 1880s they were compelled to leave Mosul, and some 180 settled in ‘Akka, or in nearby villages or in Haifa.<sup>1</sup> Many of them opened small shops, carrying on with their trades and professions and making modest livings.

In addition to Mirza Muhammad-Quli’s family, a number of Zoroastrian Baha’is, mostly from Yazd, settled in Nuqayb and engaged in cultivating land that had been purchased by ‘Abdu’l-Baha. He also acquired land in the villages of Samrih and ‘Adasiyyih, situated near the River Jordan, where a few Baha’is lived. Among other things that these industrious Baha’i farmers were producing was grain, a tenth of which was sent to ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s household,

<sup>1</sup> Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway* (London: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1956) 130, based on recollections of Sakinih-Sultan Khanum.

## AHANG RABBANI

---

the remainder being stored in pits<sup>2</sup> (some of which had been made by the Romans), sold or shared with other Baha'is and neighbours.

By 1907, because of the pressures brought about by the Committee of Investigation sent from Istanbul, 'Abdu'l-Baha had sent some 70 of the Baha'is, including his brother-in-law Mirza Asadu'llah and his family, to Egypt. He paid for their journey and other needs with funds that he 'borrowed ... from an American in Paris'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1909, following the change of regime in Turkey, 'Abdu'l-Baha gained his freedom. At the end of August 1910 he left the Holy Land for Egypt, from where he proceeded on his journeys to Europe and North America of 1911–13, returning to Egypt in June 1913 and eventually arriving back at Haifa in December 1913, to the great welcoming joy of his family and friends. In the summer of 1914 he sent a number of Baha'is on various missions: among others, Mirza Mahmud Zarqani was sent to India, 'Ali-Akbar Nakhjavani to Russia, Mrs Emogene Hoagg to Italy, Dr Habib Mu'ayyad and Mirza 'Azizu'llah Bahadur to Germany, Haji Sayyid Yahya and Mirza Asadu'llah Isfahani to London.

By the summer's end, the First World War had broken out, and the Ottoman Empire was about to commit itself to the cause of the Central Powers: Germany and Austria-Hungary. Although it had suffered successive and decisive defeats in Tripolitania and in the Balkans within the previous three years, its rulers, the Young Turks, and particularly the triumvirate of Enver Pasha, Tal'at Pasha and Jamal Pasha, forced it into another massive military campaign.

'Abdu'l-Baha observed that the situation across the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East had become perilous, with British occupation of Egypt, the repressive measures of Jamal Pasha and the spread of the war to the Haifa-'Akka region, where the population was panic-stricken. Most of the inhabitants fled inland, apprehensive of bombardment by the allied powers. All merchants, including Baha'i traders, suffered great losses, for the government commandeered their entire inventories. The Baha'i community, in spite of 'Abdu'l-Baha's incessant reassurances that no guns would be turned on Haifa, were living in constant fear.

It was under these circumstances that 'Abdu'l-Baha began to plan the removal of the remaining Baha'i community from the Haifa-'Akka area to Abu-Sinan.

## Sources

There are three main sources for study of 'Abdu'l-Baha's life during the Abu-Sinan period: the diary of Dr Habib Mu'ayyad, the memoirs of Mirza Badi' Bushru'i, and the diary notes of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Habib Mu'ayyad (1888–1971) came to Haifa in 1907 on pilgrimage, and on 'Abdu'l-Baha's instructions went to Beirut to study medicine. For the next eight years he often visited the Haifa-'Akka area, spending the summer months and holidays there. In the summer of 1914 he went to Germany on a mission for 'Abdu'l-Baha, and there he learned to keep a diary. Upon his return from Germany he went to the Holy Land, where he arrived on 5 October, and stayed with 'Abdu'l-Baha in Abu-Sinan until May 1915, when he returned to Iran. During this period he took careful notes of 'Abdu'l-Baha's discourses. In early 1950s, on the instructions of Shoghi Effendi, these notes were organized and published under the title *Khāṭirāt Ḥabīb*

<sup>2</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha used this grain to feed many in Haifa-'Akka in the famine years of 1914–18.

<sup>3</sup> Hasan Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahā, the Centre of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1970) 112.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

(Memoirs of Habib).<sup>4</sup> A complete translation has been prepared by the present writer and will be published by George Ronald.

The second source, the unpublished memoirs of Mirza Badi‘ Bushru‘i, is of similar length, over 400 densely written pages, and represents Bushru‘i’s recollections of ‘Abdu’l-Baha during the years of the First World War, although it is titled ‘Nūzdah Sāl Shādimānī’ (nineteen years of bliss).

The third set of notes, the daily diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, who from 1912 to 1919 captured thousands of pages of notes on ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s activities and sayings, is perhaps the most useful for students of history.

Unless otherwise stated, Dr Mu‘ayyad’s diary is the source of the information in this paper and of the words of ‘Abdu’l-Baha that are quoted. Page references for the published Persian edition of the diary are provided in brackets.

### Departure for Abu-Sinan

Dr Habib Mu‘ayyad returned to the Holy Land from Beirut in October 1914, and thus he participated in the move to Abu-Sinan. He describes the conditions at that time as follows:

Day by day, the situation of the war grew worse and intensified. The means of acquiring daily necessities and provisions became correspondingly more difficult and restricted. With the passage of each day, worries and apprehensions grew more desperate. Power rested in the hands of a number of ruthless military men who did not consider themselves accountable to anyone. It was a time of mayhem and plunder by the Ottoman officials. They caused difficulties for whomever they chose and destroyed the innocent with the most trivial of charges. No one had the least control over his possessions or life. The government was under the control of a number of faithless, bloodthirsty and cruel men ... Gallows were active in every town, and all prominent citizens were eliminated ...

Jamal Pasha was an independent-minded military commander and a man of truly ruthless character. He would instantly kill anyone whom he discovered to have a prominent reputation. As one of the highest army generals, he had assembled an enormous force to attack and reduce Egypt and [capture] the Suez Canal. Tens of thousands of camels were arrayed solely for the transportation of the army’s water rations. His agents had confiscated whatever food, clothing, weapons, money, surplus and stored grains they could find. Thoroughly desolate, the citizens were left without the most basic provisions while the realm was cleansed of everything useful for the needs of the military. If anyone protested, hanging was the immediate response. They would perpetrate whatever act of tyranny, oppression, injury, calumny, murder, treachery and sedition was needed to achieve their end under the umbrella of the Committee for National Defence.

Taking advantage of this most perilous situation, each passing day the spiteful Covenant-breakers came up with a new way to provoke Jamal Pasha against the Faith and further agitate him in this regard. Sometimes they went to Damascus and provoked the enemies of the Cause [into action]. On other occasions they sought the help of Jerusalem, presenting such extravagant gifts as the tent of the Blessed

---

<sup>4</sup> Dr Habib Mu‘ayyad, *Khātirāt Habib*, vol. 1, Hofheim: Bahā’i-Verlag, 1998.

## AHANG RABBANI

---

Beauty [Baha'u'llah], which was the tabernacle of the Most Great Peace and a precious memento of Baha'u'llah's days. In addition, they offered such sacred [Persian] carpets as remained from his time.

When giving these gifts, they always registered a complaint against 'Abdu'l-Baha, representing themselves as the wronged and the victimized. At times, they depicted 'Abdu'l-Baha as a political mischief-maker and a religious rabble-rouser, thereby sowing seeds of sedition. At other times, they accused the Master [Abdu'l-Baha] of having designs to inaugurate a new monarchy and described his communications with the East and the West as a means for inciting political chaos; or they accused him of being a foreign agent. In other instances, the Shrines of Baha'u'llah and the Bab were represented as military forts, and at other times, as the [new] Mecca and Medina. To confuse and provoke [Jamal Pasha], they had painted the Greatest Name on a flag and presented it as 'Abdu'l-Baha's new 'Standard of Monarchy'.

In response, in a meeting of the 'ulama in Jerusalem, Jamal Pasha, being a ruthless and rash man, had promised to slay 'Abdu'l-Baha and to level the Shrines of both Baha'u'llah and the Bab. This had greatly excited the Covenant-breakers, giving them courage to redouble their efforts against the Master.

This time, they submitted another written complaint, outlining various charges against 'Abdu'l-Baha ... Clearly, the friends of God needed to avoid troubles during such a time when the entire Ottoman Empire was in turmoil and revolution, the government in disorder and unsettled, when blood was being spilled at every turn, when no accountability or responsibility was assumed by anyone, and the Covenant-breakers unceasingly appealed to this ruthless man (Jamal Pasha) for action. [133–4]

By September, 'Abdu'l-Baha had decided to accept the invitation of the Druze Shaykhs in Abu-Sinan to remove the Baha'is and their children to that peaceful village, out of reach of the potential bombardments and troubles in the Haifa-'Akka area. In this village the limited resources of the Baha'is (who lived with the strictest economy), augmented by corn from 'Abdu'l-Baha's stores, would be sufficient for their survival.

Shaykh Şālih placed his house at the disposal of 'Abdu'l-Baha and his family and they were warmly welcomed, along with the entire Baha'i community, who were distributed among other homes in the village. The number of Baha'is was about 140 adults and at least the same number of children.

### The Druze

Before going further, it may be useful to describe briefly the Druze, their beliefs and their presence in the Holy Land. The Druze religion has its genesis in Isma'ilism, a religio-philosophical movement that founded the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt in the 10th century. During the reign of al-Hakim (996–1021) the Druze creed came into being, blending Islamic

---

<sup>5</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha, is reported to have said: 'Speaking of the name "Druzes," the hospitable dwellers in Abu-Sinan, the Master said: "A few hundred years ago, Darzi, a tailor, came from Persia to Syria, where he established the Druze cult. 'Druze' is a corruption of the word 'Darzi'.'" (Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway* 195). The Druze, however, revere the Caliph al-Hakim as the founder of their movement, consider Hamzah ibn 'Ali as its original organizer and Muhammad al-Darzi or al-Darazi as a heretic who tried to undermine it.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

thought with Greek philosophy and Hindu and Zoroastrian influences.<sup>5</sup> Active proselytizing of the new faith lasted for less than a century, and since about 1050 the community has been closed to outsiders.

The first Druze community was formed in the region that is now southern Lebanon and northern Israel. By the time of the Ottoman conquest of Syria (1516), the Druze also lived in the hill country near Aleppo, and during the second half of the 19th century the centre of the community moved to Jebel-el-Druze (Mountain of the Druze) – the former name of Mount Lebanon – in Syria. The Druze in Galilee and on Mount Carmel have always maintained contact with the other branches of the community, especially with those of Mount Hermon and the Lebanon. During the British Mandate in Palestine they refrained from taking part in the Arab–Jewish conflict, later emerging in support of Israel, and they are now recognized as a separate religious entity. Their language is Arabic. Worldwide there are about one million Druze, living mainly in Syria and the Lebanon; over 100,000 live in Israel, and several thousand have emigrated to Europe and North and South America.

The Druze consider their faith to be an innovative interpretation of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For them, Adam represents the first human being who believed in a single god. Since then, the idea of monotheism has been disseminated and embodied by prophets (guided by mentors). The mentors and prophets come from all three religions, and include Jethro, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus, Salman the Persian, Muhammad and al-Hakim – all reinforcing the same monotheistic teaching.

Although the Druze recognize the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religions, they believe that rituals and ceremonies have caused them to turn aside from the ‘pure religion’. They perform their spiritual reckoning with God at all times, and consequently need no special days of fasting or atonement, nor ritualistic elements such as daily liturgy, holy days and pilgrimage. The Druze are forbidden to eat pork, use tobacco, or drink alcohol. They are taught to speak the truth, support their brethren, abandon the old creeds, accept the unity of God, and submit to the will of God. Druze religious books are accessible only to the initiates, the *‘uqqāl* (‘knowers’) who may be men or women – indeed, women are considered more suitable in some ways for this position. (The *‘uqqāl* men have shaven heads which they cover with white turbans, and have moustaches and beards; the women wear white head scarves.) The *juhāl* (‘ignorant ones’) accept the faith on the basis of what is taught to them by the *‘uqqāl*. Monogamy is enjoined on all. Both men and women are encouraged to guard themselves against immodest or impulsive behaviour.

At the beginning of the 20th century most of the 20 Druze villages in Palestine were populated exclusively by Druze, though since then Christian and Muslim minorities have emerged in some of them. These villages are located in northern Israel, mainly on hilltops – historically as a defence against attack and persecution. Among those that are favourite shopping spots for Baha’i visitors and others is Daliyat el-Carmel, the largest Druze village in Israel, which is located on Mount Carmel, south-east of Haifa (population 15,000). It has a large market in the centre of the town, selling traditional Druze and Arab goods, which draws both local and foreign tourists. The only all-Druze town in western Galilee, the historically important Yirkih (Yirka), is very prosperous, having well-established industries and a population of 11,000 (its population was 1,000 in 1914). From a Baha’i perspective, this town is of great importance, since ‘for three months, Baha’u’llah stayed there, in the home of Shaykh Marzuq. The sons of Shaykh Marzuq, Shaykh Sa’id and Shaykh Salman, had shown great devotion to him and dealt with Baha’is with utmost affection. They considered the room [used by] Baha’u’llah during his sojourn as a sacred shrine, illuminating it each Friday night with a candle. They never allowed anyone into that room, nor furnished it in any way; and

## AHANG RABBANI

---

indeed considered it a sanctified spot. During these three months, Baha'u'llah's tent was pitched in the hills of Yirkih.<sup>6</sup> Abu-Sinan, situated east of 'Akka (and west of Yirkih), is another large Druze town. It became important during the reign of the Druze Emir Fahu'd-Din Mani, who built a palace there for his son Ali in 1617. Today, Abu-Sinan is home to about 10,000 persons – 35 per cent Druze and the rest Christians and Muslims. The tombs of the prophet Zechariah and of Sheikh Hanbali are located in the town. The following is a description of the village in 1914, recorded by Dr Mu'ayyad:

The village of Abu-Sinan was a hamlet on the eastern side of 'Akka, situated on a choice hill, with pleasant and vivifying air and water. The people cultivated fig and olive trees and grew grapevines. The inhabitants were mostly Druze, with a few Catholic or Jewish residents, all of whom were engaged in farming. The Druze are mostly robust people, adapted to mountain life. Though their religious convictions are not known with any degree of certainty, they consider themselves monotheistic; that is, they believe in a single, all-powerful Omnipotent One Who revealed Himself through His manifestations. One of these manifestations, al-Hakim, the sixth Caliph of the Fatimid dynasty, will appear once more at the end of time, when the world is filled with tyranny and oppression and believers are surrounded by repression and hardship and he will establish justice and equity throughout the world and his religion would then be triumphant. They believe he will then reassemble the dispersed Druze tribe in Syria and, when the standard of his faith is hoisted over Mecca and Jerusalem, he will bring the whole of the earth under his own rule and establish justice.

The Druze of Abu-Sinan had a particular affinity for and attachment to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah and considered 'Abdu'l-Baha as one of God's chosen ones. When one of them fell ill, they would circumambulate the Shrine of Baha'u'llah with the sick person and give him or her some of the left-over food from the plate of the Master ['Abdu'l-Baha]. They showed great consideration and attraction [to the Baha'is]. Since the old days, all their chiefs and shaykhs have had profound affection [for Baha'is] because, from the time of the Blessed Beauty, they had only experienced love, sincerity and spirituality. With great devotion and sincerity they sought the presence of the Master. [135–6]

### The Baha'is in Abu-Sinan

By September 1914, 'Abdu'l-Baha had sent most of the Baha'is to Abu-Sinan while he went back and forth between Haifa-'Akka and that village. During this time, he avoided association with non-family members, keeping only one Baha'i in 'Akka, and permitting Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali to remain in the Haifa pilgrim house (chiefly on account of his advanced age and ill health). All other Baha'is remained far from the turmoil, and this precaution proved necessary since, in addition to other considerations, it silenced the enemies of the Baha'i Faith.

'Abdu'l-Baha's family, which included Bahiyih Khanum (his sister), Munirih Khanum (his wife), his daughters and their respective families and the Americans Miss Edith Sanderson and Lua Getsinger, settled in the residence of the village head of Abu-Sinan.

---

<sup>6</sup> Mu'ayyad, *Khatirat* 206.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

Shaykh Salih, who displayed enormous respect towards ‘Abdu’l-Baha and his family, and his two sons, Shaykh Salman and Shaykh Yusuf, eagerly and warmly welcomed the Baha’is. ‘They considered [‘Abdu’l-Baha’s] presence in their midst a profound source of bounty, honour and distinction, and his shadow, the fount of their everlasting happiness and salvation.’<sup>7</sup> Once every few days ‘Abdu’l-Baha would come to Abu-Sinan to visit the Baha’is and oversee their affairs. After a stay of one or two nights, he would return to ‘Akka or Haifa. Most of the dwellings in the village were dilapidated farmhouses, which the Baha’is rented.

‘Abdu’l-Baha instructed Mirza Badi‘ Bushru’i, who had recently completed his college training in Beirut, to set up a school for the children. It consisted of 25 pupils, mainly the children of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s household, of the Baha’i residents and of the Druze chiefs.

Dr Habib Mu’ayyad, recently graduated from the Beirut medical school, was asked to set up a dispensary. This latter step was particularly important as most of the Ottoman physicians had been sent to the battle-fronts and there was an acute shortage of medical personnel. Lua Getsinger served as anaesthetic technician to Dr Mu’ayyad (or occasionally Badi‘ Bushru’i would assist in this regard). The room that served as Mu’ayyad’s infirmary also served as the Baha’i pilgrim house, where visitors would stay.

The Baha’i community lived most modestly and the strictest economy was the rule. Their food was simple: lentils, dried beans, olives and olive oil, and sometimes millet, eggs and even some goat meat. ‘Abdu’l-Baha had taught the Baha’is to grow vegetables, which, with the wheat and corn from his village of ‘Adasiyyih, kept many from dying of hunger. The air was pure and fresh, and the community quickly settled into a new routine.

On his regular visits, ‘Abdu’l-Baha brought any news from the outside world that was available, and would first visit his family, asking about the health of each member separately. There were some American guests in the early days, but ‘Abdu’l-Baha thought it unwise for them to remain. Most left by the last boat that sailed from Haifa to Alexandria in January 1915, and everyone was relieved when the American Baha’is had succeeded in reaching safety.

The Shaykh and his sons would gather in the divan. This was the reception room, vast and comfortable, of the male portion of the family. Here, with their friends and guests, they waited to hear any news ‘Abdu’l-Baha might bring. They loved, trusted and honoured him with all their hearts, feeling and believing that his wisdom grasped the future as well as the present. Prayers were chanted at these gatherings, the Druze joining with the Baha’is. For five months there was no word from any part of the outside world.

Sometimes the governor of ‘Akka, or the Commandant, the Chief Magistrate, the Mufti, or other high officials, would come to visit ‘Abdu’l-Baha, staying at the village as guests for one or two nights. All consulted him on many questions regarding feeding or otherwise caring for the population during this time of difficulty, and many other problems were discussed. Great was his wisdom. He answered many questions and explained many incidents.

What follow are glimpses into the daily life of ‘Abdu’l-Baha during this period and some of his discourses, mainly as captured by Dr Mu’ayyad. They are presented in chronological order.

---

<sup>7</sup> Mu’ayyad, *Khatirat* 136. Mirza Badi‘ Bushru’i, ‘Nuzdah Sal Shadmani’ (‘Nineteen years of bliss’, undated manuscript in private hands, 402 pp.), p. 37, indicates that, in response to ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s encouragement, Shaykh Salih had served in ‘Akka as the Iranian Consul.

---

 AHANG RABBANI
 

---

*30 October–1 November 1914*

For three days ‘Abdu’l-Baha and several Baha’is tarried at Bahji, staying at a building connected to the Shrine of Baha’u’llah that served as the Bahji pilgrim house. In the morning and evening, ‘Abdu’l-Baha led the Baha’is on a visit to the Shrine, where he chanted the Tablet of Visitation. Also, twice daily, for 20 minutes each time, he pumped water for the trees and plants in the gardens surrounding the Shrine.

On November 1, early in the afternoon, ‘Abdu’l-Baha instructed everyone to leave for Abu-Sinan aboard his carriage. En route they were greeted by the locals, who would recognize the carriage and immediately show great humility and respect towards ‘Abdu’l-Baha, and approach him and kiss his hands with reverence and affection. The carriage stopped at a military camp, where ‘Abdu’l-Baha went to meet the commander, who recounted the army’s defeat in the Battle of Sarab even though it numbered 70,000 strong. When ‘Abdu’l-Baha returned to the carriage, he spoke about the history of the Baha’i community’s relations with the Druze, as a means of preparing the group for their long stay at Abu-Sinan:

The Blessed Beauty journeyed to the village of Yirkih three times. On the first visit, I walked at the side of Baha’u’llah’s steed until [reaching] the proximity of Abu-Sinan. Those days were marvellously pleasant! The Turks have a saying, ‘The memory and reminiscence of those days are worth the world!’

At one time, after eight or nine years of confinement in ‘Akka, [my uncle,] the late Mirza Muhammad-Quli and I came out to explore the countryside. The trees had only recently blossomed, the countryside was most enchanting, and we enjoyed the scenery immensely. There, the late [Mirza Muhammad-Quli] encountered a friend and enquired as to his destination. The friend responded, ‘I am going to Abu-Sinan and Yirkih’. My late [uncle] sighed in sadness and I said to him, ‘Do not be sad, for one day we shall do the same’. Now, every time I visit this village, I think of him. [131–2]

Upon his arrival, ‘Abdu’l-Baha joined his family as a guest of Shaykh Salih.<sup>8</sup> That evening, Shaykh Salih organized a large feast in the main hall of his residence at which a number of Baha’is and others were present. ‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke about the need of ‘wise and sound policies’ [132] in political affairs, noting that the European leaders were not prudent and their actions had led to the raging World War. He gave the example of Mirza Abu’l-Qasim Farahani, known as the Qa’im-Maqam (d. 1835), who, as Fath-‘Ali Shah’s Prime Minister, had prevented serious bloodshed during the Russo-Iranian War.

*2 November 1914*

In the morning a group of Druze and their chiefs came to meet with ‘Abdu’l-Baha. Shaykh Salih expressed his fear of the war, to which ‘Abdu’l-Baha responded:

You have not experienced genuinely difficult times, for if you had, such occurrences would not perturb you. One night we owned a vast estate and possessed all manner of comforts, but in the morning we were evicted and deprived

---

<sup>8</sup> Bushru’i, ‘Nuzdah’ 36.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

of all belongings. Not even a coat was left to us. In the midst of the most agonizing cold, we were banished from one country to another. I went to my mother, asking for some food, but she had none to give. I asked for some flour and ate it in place of food. En route, in the hope of a good meal, I purchased syrup, flour and oil [to make halvah]. Instead, they mistakenly added a large quantity of pepper, which severely burned our mouths and insides. One of our friends was branded seventy times. Others had their noses cut off. Yet others were hanged upside down, until all their intestines fell out. We have weathered such storms. I pray that everything goes well and that God will protect all. [137]<sup>9</sup>

At lunch-time Shaykh Salih gave a large feast with a variety of dishes. He had invited fifteen of Arab chiefs and had exerted much effort for this event beforehand.

#### *4 November 1914*

The remaining Baha’is of Haifa came to Abu-Sinan on this date and ‘Abdu’l-Baha left for ‘Akka. Also, it was at this period that a box containing Tablets and holy relics was sent to Abu-Sinan for safe-keeping. The contents of this box formed the nucleus of the future International Baha’i Archives.<sup>10</sup>

#### *11 November 1914*

‘Akka: Dr Mu’ayyad reports that ‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke about certain ancient Arab tribes. Afterwards ‘Abdu’l-Baha and Mu’ayyad walked to the House of ‘Abdu’llah Pasha, where an Arab beggar with filthy clothes and dirty, uncombed hair came to ‘Abdu’l-Baha. With utmost affection ‘Abdu’l-Baha caressed his face and beard and spoke many words of encouragement and humour to him: ‘May God grant you bounties. May God gladden your heart. What a wonderful chin! How is your health?’ After the beggar had left, ‘Abdu’l-Baha said:

When it is revealed, ‘Consort with all the religions’,<sup>11</sup> the intention is association with such people. Although there is no connection between us, I have served him for twenty years. [The intention of Baha’u’llah’s exhortation] is not to associate with a Covenant-breaker or those who curse the Blessed Beauty, or the likes of Haji Muhammad-Karim Khan who wrote in refutation of His Holiness the Exalted One [the Bab].

The intention is to consort with such people as are not antagonistic, or two-faced, or conniving, or hypocritical.<sup>12</sup> Such people [as this poor Arab] are not believers, and there is no harm in that; let him believe in his own convictions. It is exhorted that if we disfavour someone, it should not be over his religion. For

---

<sup>9</sup> This is a reference to the severe anti-Babi pogrom in 1852 following the attempt on the life of Nasiri’d-Din Shah; see Nabil-i-A’zam, *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā’i Revelation* (Wilmette: Bahā’i Publishing Trust, 1970) 595–650.

<sup>10</sup> Bushru’i, ‘Nuzdah’ 55–6.

<sup>11</sup> *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā’u’llāh* (Wilmette, IL: Bahā’i Publishing Trust, 1983) 95.

<sup>12</sup> The original is ‘*munāfiq*’, which may be understood in this context to refer to those who rebel against the Covenant.

---

 AHANG RABBANI
 

---

instance, we should not avoid a Christian because of his beliefs. However, we should eschew people with abhorrent behaviour, such as a thief, or a philanderer, or a murderer. 'Consort with all the religions' does not apply to such people. That is, if you know that someone sows the seeds of rebellion and enmity against the Blessed Beauty, then you should not associate with him. We have no relations with these people and leave them to their own devices. [265–6]

'Abdu'l-Baha and several friends continued to stroll to the sea-shore. When they first reached the shore, portions of the sea-wall looked in complete disrepair. 'Abdu'l-Baha said:

This world is the plane of creation and disintegration. The process never stops: on one hand it creates new people, and on the other it destroys what it has created. The world will not grow tired. How numerous are the days witnessed by the world! They had buildings along this section [of the walls] and in front of them they built a bath house. With these rocks they made a natural pool and would wash their clothes there ... [266]

While in Europe, I always proclaimed, 'The Cause of Baha'u'llah embraces all the past Dispensations and manifests all their benefits to human society. It is like a tree that has many strong branches. The Faith of Baha'u'llah contains all the teachings beneficial to the world of humanity and will profit every segment of society. For instance, the New Testament speaks of compassion, kindness, forgiveness and clemency. These same teachings exist in the Faith of Baha'u'llah. The Qur'an speaks of justice and punishment, and these same concepts are preserved in the Cause of Baha'u'llah. In short, whatever good and productive precepts exist among the diverse groups of humanity, all are present in the Cause of God. In addition, the Faith offers certain principles, which others lack. For instance, [the principle of] the oneness of humanity; religion must be the cause of love and fellowship; religion must be in accord with reason and science; the proclamation of universal peace; the equality of men and women; the promotion of learning and spirituality, and many others.' [268]

The group continued walking in the company of 'Abdu'l-Baha to the cemetery, where a number of the early Baha'is were buried. 'Abdu'l-Baha stood by the graves and, with hands raised heavenwards, whispered prayers and supplicated divine mercy for those resting in their eternal abode.

The group strolled on further, to the railway station, where 'Abdu'l-Baha sat down and said to Dr Mu'ayyad, 'Now that you have become a physician, come and take my pulse.' When he checked 'Abdu'l-Baha's pulse he was shocked, and reported, 'Your pulse is very slow, but regular. The arteries seem to have the proper flow.' 'Abdu'l-Baha remarked, 'From the age of 30 I have had a slow pulse. All others have a pulse rate of about 75 to 80 [per minute] and therefore greatly wonder about my pulse rate. What rate did you measure?' Mu'ayyad said, 'I did not count the rate, but suspect that it is about 40 [per minute].' He replied, 'No, it is 45 to 46. Count for yourself.' Mu'ayyad reports that he counted closely, using his watch, and it was 45. So he reported the result. 'Abdu'l-Baha stated, 'If I have a fever, it goes up to 50.'<sup>13</sup> [269]

---

<sup>13</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha requested Dr Mu'ayyad to give him a complete physical examination; this was carried out and the report is included in Mu'ayyad, *Khatirat* 270.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

The friends proceeded to stroll through the streets of ‘Akka in the company of ‘Abdu’l-Baha. Along the way, wherever the people of ‘Akka were congregated or sitting, at the sight of ‘Abdu’l-Baha they would rise to full height and greet him affectionately. Whoever they passed by, that person would instantly bend low, with hands reaching the ground, then bring them up over the head, thereby offering the customary expressions of submissiveness, reverence and humility. Children playing in the streets would quit playing and run up to him and kiss his hands, and then return to their games.

*19–20 November 1914*

During this time Prince Shaykhu’r-Ra’is arrived in the Holy Land, and the Birth of the Bab was observed on 19 November<sup>14</sup> at Bahji. With utmost joy and excitement, all the Baha’is residing in Abu-Sinan walked to Bahji, where a feast was given by Aqa Mirza Sayyid Husayn. The friends visited the Shrine of Baha’u’llah twice, and before dusk they returned to the village of Abu-Sinan. ‘Abdu’l-Baha and Shaykhu’r-Ra’is returned to ‘Akka.

The following day, the Birth of Baha’u’llah was celebrated in Abu-Sinan, where 19 Baha’i children sang songs and engaged in a game of questions and answers, as a means of deepening and character training.<sup>15</sup>

*24 November 1914*

Aqa Mirza Nuru’d-Din Zayn came from ‘Akka to Abu-Sinan and reported the words of ‘Abdu’l-Baha spoken earlier in the day: ‘If the Covenant-breakers had not frustrated my efforts, I would have assembled some of the Muslim and the Christian chiefs and exhorted them to disallow internal conflict [in the nation]. However, the violators of the Covenant resisted and blocked me.’ [297]

*30 November 1914*

It was a clear, bright day with a calm sea. From afar, the Zeeb underwater reefs, which were typically covered by the waves, could now be seen, and the people of ‘Akka mistook them for warships. Therefore the entire population of ‘Akka fled in fear, leaving behind only a few handicapped people. The whole city was evacuated. Doors and windows were left open. Under these conditions, ‘Abdu’l-Baha stayed in ‘Akka, with Aqa Asadu’llah Kashi in his service. The Mutasarrif of ‘Akka had cabled Beirut that four enemy warships were fast approaching the city, and this news had further perturbed the citizens of ‘Akka.

Dr Mu’ayyad was in Abu-Sinan while all this was happening. Mrs Sanderson arrived in Isfandiyar’s carriage and informed him that ‘Abdu’l-Baha had summoned him. He immediately left for ‘Akka and arrived as people were beginning to return to the city.

In the evening, a number of the Baha’is were present at the House of ‘Abbud. Because of the disturbances, ‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke at length and most fervently about the storm of persecution that had occurred after the failed attempt on the life of Nasiri’d-Din Shah in 1852. He concluded his remarks by saying: ‘The point is that I told these people of ‘Akka what days

---

<sup>14</sup> In the Near and Middle East, the observance of the Birth of the Bab and some other Baha’i Holy Days is marked in accordance with the lunar calendar.

<sup>15</sup> Bushru’i, ‘Nuzdah’ 56–7; *ibid* 57–8 has detailed entries for 21–22 November.

## AHANG RABBANI

---

we had witnessed, and that the threat of warships, in comparison, is like the sweetness of halvah. Indeed one cannot even call them threats.' [279–80]

### 4 December 1914

Dr Mu'ayyad was summoned to 'Abdu'l-Baha's presence alone in 'Akka. He gave him a mission that required his going to Beirut by way of Damascus.

### 31 December 1914

In the morning 'Abdu'l-Baha was pacing in the garden and Dr Mu'ayyad was in attendance.

'To what should I devote my time in Abu-Sinan?' Mu'ayyad asked.

'I wish for you to go to Iran,' 'Abdu'l-Baha replied. 'For now, however, remain in Abu-Sinan and, for the good pleasure of God, cure the ailing. Also, read from the treatise on proofs as well as *Ishraqat*, *Kalimat* [Firdawsiyyih] and *Tarazat*, and memorize them.'

'Should I also tend to the non-Baha'is?' Mu'ayyad asked.

'Yes, indeed,' 'Abdu'l-Baha remarked, 'We too are devoted to the poor. By all means, attend to all, particularly the needy.'

Mu'ayyad remarked, 'Aqa Shaykh Badru'd-Din has said, "The Shaykhu'l-Islam wants to proclaim *jihad*!"'

'Abdu'l-Baha replied, 'Shaykhu'l-Islam is a simple, common man with no religious convictions. He is utterly ignorant of the religion of God. *Jihad* had an effect at a time when people were devoted to God's Faith, but now that spirit is completely gone. They themselves do not believe what they say. They claim this issue is a global war and *jihad* must be a matter of national concern. If in truth these people believed in religion, by now the world would have become the Abha paradise. If you offered them a bribe, they would say the exact opposite of what they ruled earlier. No trace of spirit, sincerity, faith, certitude or firmness has remained in Islam. Only mere words have survived.' [307–8]<sup>16</sup>

### 9 January 1915

After several days' absence, 'Abdu'l-Baha returned to Abu-Sinan. At night, a number of Baha'i and Arab friends met with him and his discourse concerned the situation of the war. He stated:

This war is indeed ruinous and devastating in its effects. However, afterwards, the number of peace-loving people will grow considerably, and the commotion, uproar and the mighty tumult will precipitate [universal] peace. For the West, the most important thing is the war. If Germany is victorious, then the Ottoman Empire will be triumphant as well. Otherwise, if the Ottoman army advances into Egyptian territory, their victory will be temporary.

May God deal justly with those who caused these wars and conflicts, who have caused so much bloodshed and trouble. Indeed, they have undermined the prosperity of the people. [145]

---

<sup>16</sup> Bushru'i, 'Nuzdah' 59–62 has several detailed entries for December 1914 which augment the information given by Dr Mu'ayyad.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

*10 January 1915*

In the morning a number of non-Baha’is met with ‘Abdu’l-Baha. He spoke formally and on a variety of topics. In the afternoon, Shaykh Salman asked about the education of children and ‘Abdu’l-Baha replied:

It is universally recognized that evil is stronger than good. Evil has a rapid effect, whereas good is slow in its impact. If a trustworthy person and a thief were together, the thief would never become righteous, but the converse might occur. Because of their association, a truthful person may become a liar, but it is rare for the perjurer to become truthful, or for the parsimonious to become generous by reason of his association with the charitable, or for the wicked to become virtuous, and so forth. This is because evil is stronger and its influence is more penetrating. This issue does not require proof, it is as evident as the noon-time sun. If there were a thousand healthy men, but one among them had a contagious disease, the thousand would have no effect on the ill, but the illness of that one would spread to the remaining thousand. For instance, if a person is afflicted with smallpox and comes into contact with many healthy children, all will be infected, while it is not possible for the healthy to influence the sick. It is similar with the black plague or leprosy, where the healthy may be affected but the converse would not hold.

Consider how much time it takes to raise a building, but dynamite can destroy it in the blink of an eye. It takes five years to build an armoured ship, but only a minute for a torpedo to sink it to the bottom of the ocean. It takes twenty years to raise a person to maturity, but he perishes in an instant by the assassin’s bullet.

Therefore, if you desire for your children to be raised properly and remain protected, they must be cared for adequately. You must ensure that they do not meet or associate with ill-mannered persons. Either establish your own schools or do as we are doing. We have many students in the University [of Beirut]. Last year there were thirty of them. They associate only with each other [i.e. other Baha’is] and at the time of instruction they attend classes. Therefore they are well protected. However, there are other [Muslim] Iranians in Beirut and they are all vagabonds. Even the teachers despise them, to the point that they are expelled from the school. It is amazing! Most bewildering!

The Iranian children in ‘Akka were like angels, but alas, some of them associated with the Arabs or with ill-mannered children. When they argued, all their speech was in Persian, but then they would curse in Arabic, as they were not taught similar words in Persian. When they became youth, they associated with non-Baha’is and became totally corrupt. Soon I had no choice but to expel them all.

There is a story of a Shaykh meeting a Bektash and saying to him, ‘Why do you continue causing mischief and spending your time gratifying your carnal desires? Come with me and pray, meditate, fast for forty days, fear God and become righteous. Once you have become accustomed to praying and fasting, then you will no longer commit unseemly acts.’ The Bektash responded, ‘There is no need for forty days of prayer. You stay with me for just one night and all religion will be forgotten to you!’

Therefore, I exhort you to protect your children from the evil influence of the wayward. [145–7]

---

 AHANG RABBANI
 

---

*11 January 1915*

In the afternoon 'Abdu'l-Baha went to 'Umqih, and returned near dusk. He was in great spirits, laughed frequently and shared humorous stories. 'Abdu'l-Baha related a dream that he had had some years earlier, about the arrival of the Commission of Investigation and its activities. He described at length the collusion of the Commissioners with his half-brothers, the failure of their opposition to him and their eventual bitter end. After this fervent presentation he arose and left, his visage excited and filled with joy and energy.

*12 January 1915*

A number of Baha'is boarded 'Abdu'l-Baha's carriage and went to Haifa to accompany Mrs Edith Sanderson to her departure on board an Italian ship. The group remained in Haifa on 13 and 14 January.<sup>17</sup>

*14 January 1915*

Dr Mu'ayyad reports that he had earned a small sum from his medical practice in Abu-Sinan and contributed this to 'Abdu'l-Baha so that flour could be purchased and distributed among the village poor. At first, the Druze Shaykhs refused the offering, but after 'Abdu'l-Baha had pressed them, they consented and the entire amount, which included a sum contributed by 'Abdu'l-Baha, was given to the Catholics.

*19 January 1915*

It was Dr Mu'ayyad's birthday. A small festivity was organized and several gifts were presented to him. Faḍlu'llāh Khan [Banān] Shirazi<sup>18</sup> came [from Iran] with great difficulty to obtain some news of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Baha'is. This was the last outside Baha'i that they saw for a long time. Some days later Fadlu'llah took the last Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Baha to Cairo, which was copied and dispersed to other communities – then there were no more communications.

*22 January 1915*

A group of Baha'is went for a visit to the village of Yirkih.

*30 January 1915*

A number of notables and affluent citizens of 'Akka came to Abu-Sinan, including Nazmy Bey Bashi, Alay Amini, Jawdat Bey, Yuzbashi Nazmy Effendi Bey and the city's physician, Dr Tahir Bey. The Druze Shaykhs prepared a dinner feast, and Badi' Effendi and Habib Mu'ayyad were invited as well. Before dinner, the ranking officer, Nazmy Bey Bashi Effendi, had mentioned that earlier in the day a feast had been given in 'Akka by Mirza Badi'u'llah,

---

<sup>17</sup> Bushru'i, 'Nuzdah' 64 records more detail of 'Abdu'l-Baha's discourse on that day.

<sup>18</sup> A prominent Baha'i, who served as the secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of Shiraz during the 1930s and 1940s; see *In the Land of Refuge* (forthcoming).

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

the half-brother of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, who had invited the military commanders of the region, the guest of honour being Haydar Bey, the chief of gendarmes. The guests were entertained with great quantities of food and alcoholic drinks and by Sadhijih, Mirza Badi‘u’llah’s daughter. She had planned to provoke Haydar Bey, who had complete authority over the region’s military, into imprisoning, exiling or murdering ‘Abdu’l-Baha. This scheme had backfired however, and a huge uproar against Mirza Badi‘u’llah had ensued in ‘Akka.

*7 February 1915*

Dr Mu’ayyad reports that on this day he went to Haifa and in the streets of the city he met ‘Abdu’l-Baha, who, after a short conversation, assured Mu’ayyad of a second meeting that day and went to the home of one of the Turks. Soon, he returned and they boarded his carriage. Mirza Ahmad Sohrab was also summoned, and together they went sight-seeing.

‘Abdu’l-Baha said, ‘I go to dangerous places by myself, but for sight-seeing, I like to take the friends with me. Today I want to take you on this excursion. Tell me, how do you spend your time in Abu-Sinan?’

Mu’ayyad replied, ‘Holding surgeries, and at night replying to polemics and reading books. I spend the afternoons doing operations and the evenings outlining [responses to] the polemics of [Muhammad-]Javad Qazvini. He has translated A‘zam as ‘Great’ and Akbar as ‘the Most Great’, whereas it should be the reverse.<sup>19</sup> (‘Abdu’l-Baha smiled.) Among his base accusations is that instead of bringing unity, ‘Abdu’l-Baha separated men from their wives, fathers from sons, and daughters from their mothers.’

‘Abdu’l-Baha said, ‘I never caused their separation. They separated themselves. The Blessed Beauty established a Covenant and they broke it, therefore, separation took place. If they obey and remain firm, there will be unity. The Cause of God has united easterner, westerner, southerner, northerner, Turk, Arab, Indian and American. All are united and would give their lives for one another. The ones that were far became near; the enemies became brothers. But he who violates the Covenant, be it one’s brother, sister, father or mother, naturally a firm believer will sever relations with him.’

The conversation continued. At that point ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s carriage reached the cave of Elijah, and about 200 needy women and children were near by. At ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s instruction, Isfandiyar, his coachman, distributed money among the poor. After a short walk, the group returned to ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s residence. That night, about 30 Baha’is were assembled at his house and ‘Abdu’l-Baha remarked: ‘Praised be God that out of the favours of the Blessed Beauty, I am well and healthy. Indeed, I am very well. After such an arduous journey [to Europe and America], I needed a repose. Now I am forced to rest a little, otherwise I would not relax.’ [164–7]

*8 February 1915*

‘Abdu’l-Baha was sitting in the sun by the entrance of his residence in Haifa. Aqa Mirza Fadlu’llah Banan Shirazi was also present. ‘Abdu’l-Baha said, ‘The call of the Supreme

---

<sup>19</sup> Most likely, the issue had to do with the translation of ‘Ghusn-i A‘zam’ and ‘Ghusn-i Akbar’. The former is a title of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, which would be translated as ‘the Most Mighty Branch’, whereas the latter is a reference to Mirza Muhammad ‘Ali and means ‘the Greater Branch’. Baha‘u’llah had emphasized that ‘A‘zam’ is superior in rank to ‘Akbar’ in his Kitāb-i-Ahd (Book of the Covenant).

## AHANG RABBANI

---

Concourse and the fame of the Cause of God have enveloped the whole earth, but the Iranians have not yet awakened to it.' A Christian entered, carrying a basket. When he saw 'Abdu'l-Baha he was overwhelmed and dropped the basket, saying, 'There was no porter, so I was forced to carry the basket myself'. 'A person must be proud of his labour,' 'Abdu'l-Baha said, 'and only ashamed of his sins, not of his work and service.' [167]

In the afternoon some friends had tea in the company of 'Abdu'l-Baha. He said, 'Bring my overcoat so we can walk to the Shrine of the Bab.' A number of friends accompanied him. His carriage followed behind. En route, he rested in two places. Upon reaching a bend in the road, he spoke of the benefits of paved roads, noting, 'This is indeed an amazing mountain and now it has good roads as well'. (He meant that the large boulders had been removed.) Haji Sayyid Javad asked, 'Will there be a time that electricity will be available on this mountain?' 'Abdu'l-Baha said, 'Without a doubt! But not so soon. Eventually this mountain will be filled with light.'

The group reached a particular spot, and 'Abdu'l-Baha said, 'I purchased this parcel of land in order to make the road wider. The wretched Matran seized it and fenced it with a wall; but now he has lost that as well.' [168]

Half-way to the Shrine, his carriage arrived and 'Abdu'l-Baha boarded it. He spoke most appreciatively of the almond blossom, saying how it had adorned the mountain. After he had chanted the Tablet of Visitation the group retired to the pilgrim house, where he remarked to the resident Baha'is, 'Plant fruit trees, since they are productive. I am very fond of fruit trees, though I never eat fruits, except an occasional sweet tangerine. Nevertheless, I love for the tree to bear fruits. Similarly I like people who produce goodly results. Otherwise it is of no use.' [169]

That night, when some of the friends were gathered at 'Abdu'l-Baha's house, he said:

Cleanliness has a profound effect on the spirit. Even though cleanliness is related to worldly affairs, yet its effect is manifested in the soul. Now the Cause of God is not established, but when it is, you will see that cleanliness and refinement are one of the foundations of God's religion. Sometimes I am invited to places that serve wonderful food, but since it is not made in sanitary ways, I partake of it with hesitation. And actually there is no choice but to eat it ...

Even though some things are earth-bound, they have a great effect on the soul, such as cleanliness or a good voice. The voice is no more than airwaves that reach one's ear and cause the vibration of the eardrums. Yet, consider its profound effect on the spirit. Similarly, cleanliness affects the soul. [169-70]

### 9 February 1915

The German Mr Rothschild was a competent artist and had skilfully drawn a portrait of 'Abdu'l-Baha. He presented this drawing to him and asked that a few words be inscribed below the picture so that a German translation of them would further adorn the portrait. 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote:

*Humanity is created in the image of the Merciful [God], that is to say with Divine attributes. And so, the physical form will perish, but the heavenly character will endure. The soul is an effulgence of the divine, while the human body is composed of earthly elements. Therefore may a heavenly form be thine. 'Abdu'l-Baha 'Abbas. [172]*

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

*15–17 February 1915*

Because of the humidity and the cold of Haifa, Haji Mirza Haydar-‘Ali, who was 85 years old, contracted a severe fever and unrelenting cough. When one of the friends suggested to him that a doctor should visit, he refused. Instead, he indicated his desire to be examined by Dr Mu’ayyad. On 17 February, one of the Afnans informed ‘Abdu’l-Baha and instructions were issued for Mu’ayyad to leave for Haifa on the following day to attend him.

*18–20 February 1915*

Dr Mu’ayyad arrived at the Haifa pilgrim house, where a number of the friends were gathered around the Haji’s bed. On examination, he was found to have pneumonia and heart disease. Mu’ayyad began to treat him, and for the next six days he remained in the pilgrim house, attending to him.

*21 February 1915*

Haji had become well enough to bathe. All day he related many virtuous stories, one example being: Mirza Badi‘u’llah gave a promissory note of 1200 liras to Yahya Bey, the Damascene, known as Tabur Aqasi, for him to arrange ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s exile to Fizan. However, after their plans fell apart Yahya Bey enforced the payment of the note. Mirza Badi‘u’llah was compelled to sell two pieces of land for six hundred liras and to sell the ownership of one-third of the Mansion of Bahji to Tabur Aqasi for the remainder of the debt.<sup>20</sup> Dr Mu’ayyad notes that, paradoxically, shortly thereafter ‘Abdu’l-Baha travelled, with the utmost majesty, to Europe and America to demonstrate that ‘God is the best of plotters’.<sup>21</sup>

*23 February 1915*

Mu’ayyad reports that in the morning he was in Haifa with Haji Mirza Haydar-‘Ali. Afterwards, he left for ‘Akka with Aqa Mirza Jalil and Aqa Mirza Husayn Yazdi and came into the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Baha. An Egyptian youth had come from Switzerland and was with him, discussing the World War. ‘Abdu’l-Baha stated:

In the loudest voice, I cried out in all the synagogues, and churches: O people! The world of humanity is in peril and Europe is like a barrel of gunpowder waiting for a single spark for it to explode. You must endeavour to prevent this occurrence. You must protect humanity. For six thousand years people have been afflicted with ills and prejudices in the religious, temporal, national and political realms. Have you not discerned that it has come to naught? Come, embrace divine politics, that is, the politics of love. This is an easy matter. Is it not better for us to embrace divine teachings above human conceptions? If God was indeed heedless of man, then He would not have created him in the first place, provided nourishment for him or educated him. Therefore, God loves man.

---

<sup>20</sup> Shoghi Effendi purchased the remaining portion of the Mansion from the descendants of Tabur Aqasi. (Mu’ayyad, p. 176, n. 1.)

<sup>21</sup> Qur’an 8:29.

## AHANG RABBANI

---

Similarly, I announced: Religion must be the promoter of science and civilization. Otherwise, its absence is preferable. Why do we have inequality of the sexes? We all are children of the same father and the same mother.

Now, different groups of people in the world have made claims to various portions of the earth and have drawn lines around each, considering it to be solely theirs. They say, 'This is my nation and that is yours!' On this side of one line is a friend, on the other they see an enemy. We behave like dogs, considering a corner of a street to be ours, and, as soon as another dog approaches our territory, we attack. The only earth that belongs to man is the one that will ultimately be poured over him. Is it not a waste, so much bloodshed for this worthless soil? ... [178-9]

### *28 February 1915*

'Abdu'l-Baha returned to Abu-Sinan. In his company were a number of military officers, such as the Qumandan [Commandant?], Nazmi Bey and Jawdat Bey. In another carriage rode Dr Finkelstein, who was a German and the principal of the German Polytechnic in Haifa,<sup>22</sup> his sister and three other Germans. As soon as 'Abdu'l-Baha's carriage came into view, the Druze took four horses for the guests to ride. Out of deference to 'Abdu'l-Baha and with his permission, the Qumandan preferred to walk. However, he insisted that 'Abdu'l-Baha should ride as it was uphill and difficult for him. 'Abdu'l-Baha mounted a donkey and slowly came from behind, ordering all the others to accompany the Qumandan. That night, 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke in the gathering of the villagers and Dr Mu'ayyad served as the translator. Some of that discussion is as follows:

Dr Finkelstein: 'We are exceedingly happy and joyous that we have gained the bounty of being in the Master's presence, which is the ultimate desire of so many people. I too have always longed for a day such as this and for beholding an assemblage like this.'

'Abdu'l-Baha: 'Such gatherings are only possible through the divine bounties and favours. Otherwise, how could the two of us ever hope to meet? A gathering such as this, in such a location, at a time when no one draws a breath of comfort, is not possible unless decreed through God's benevolence.'

Dr Finkelstein: 'Throughout all of Europe, a meeting similar to this, with such depth of love and spirituality, is never seen. Even among members of the same family, such affection is not experienced. We have much to learn from the East, especially culture, humanity and spirituality. In its place, we can offer science, technology and industry.'

'Abdu'l-Baha: 'Yes, indeed. The relationship between the East and the West must be like that, otherwise it is of no benefit... the Germans were very kind to us. I am well pleased with the Germans. The spiritual future of Germany is very glorious. The word "German" in Persian means "Our kinsmen".<sup>23</sup> I was happier in Germany than anywhere else.' [180-2]

---

<sup>22</sup> This was established by the German-Jewish Ezra Fund and was a predecessor of the Technion in Haifa.

<sup>23</sup> In Persian the French word *Allemagne* is used for Germany. In Persian, *Ālimān* means 'our family', 'our kin'.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

At night, the German visitors stayed in Abu-Sinan; the following day they had lunch with ‘Abdu’l-Baha and then returned to Haifa. At the time of his departure, Dr Finkelstein said to ‘Abdu’l-Baha, ‘These two days in your august presence were the sweetest time of my life.’ [182]

### *1 March 1915*

In Abu-Sinan, ‘Abdu’l-Baha instructed Dr Mu’ayyad to travel in his carriage to Haifa and visit Haji Mirza Haydar-‘Ali, and then to return the following day. At dusk, Dr Mu’ayyad was summoned to his presence. ‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke about Dr Finkelstein and the other guests, remarking:

Consider what an immense love and devotion governs our relationship and how devotedly we cherish them. They have no prejudice; they eat everything, unlike the Jews in this land. The Jews in America have similar traits and listen attentively. [183]

That night, in the home of Shaykh Salih, ‘Abdu’l-Baha remarked:

Piety is the mother of all goodly characters, and its absence is the mother of all evil ... One time in ‘Akka, fifty Christians were imprisoned. Their [Muslim] gaoler would beat and torture them, considering this a meritorious deed before God. Through [inflicting] various injuries, he would also exact money from the prisoners, and when they did not pay, would beat them even more severely, claiming, ‘This is *jihad!*’ Eventually one of them came to me. I complained to the governor, ‘Though the prisoners are Christians, such treatment is unwarranted. If any Muslim wishes to wage *jihad*, let him go to the battlefield and war against the Russians. Otherwise, what is the point of beating defenceless prisoners?’ The governor summoned the gaoler and ordered that he receive fifty strokes of the cane. Eventually, the situation of the gaoler deteriorated so that he would come to me, asking for alms for his needy wife and children. He became a beggar. [183–4]

### *2 March 1915*

Dr Mu’ayyad was summoned to ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s presence early in the morning and had tea with him. He remarked, ‘When you go to Haifa [today], give my greetings to that Egyptian youth and tell him that his letter was received. However, for his protection, I will not reply, as they search all the papers closely. Through divine bounties, without need for paper and pen, our spiritual communion will be everlasting.’ He added: ‘I use hyssop. Is it used in modern medicine?’ Mu’ayyad responded: ‘I do not know its chemical composition.’ ‘Abdu’l-Baha said:

It has a diuretic effect, and therefore it is beneficial. It is also very useful for curing shortness of breath. It has an indirect influence. The root of corn and cherry bark are also diuretic. But all healing resides with God. These are all instruments.

For healing, two causes are necessary: physical and spiritual. For a material remedy, physicians and medicine are needed. And for the spiritual cure, confirmations and divine healing are required.

## AHANG RABBANI

---

Similarly for commerce, two causes have been decreed. The material cause is having capital and expertise, and the spiritual cause requires divine confirmation. If the material means are not available, then all efforts are squandered. And should the divine confirmations accompany a deed, then its benefits will be immense and universal. If both are present, then it will be light upon light. Otherwise, efforts will be wasted. Confirmation and divine affirmation must surround all undertakings – this is true even in war ... [186]

### 3 March 1915

Shaykh Yusuf and Mirza Tarazu'llah, son of Mirza Mahmud Kashi, came to meet with 'Abdu'l-Baha in Abu-Sinan and reported, 'The governor is preparing for defensive measures and predicts that warships will bombard the city'. 'Abdu'l-Baha remarked:

In these days, it is time for calmness and dignity; it is time for confidence and assurance. We must rely upon God. Be most vigilant, so that you do not grow perturbed and perplexed. They say that [one day] when Napoleon was writing a letter, an enemy artillery shell exploded near his tent and dirt fell over the letter. He was not perturbed in the least, and paused for a minute to say, 'I am thankful to our foes for helping me in my work. I was going to pour some sand over this letter to dry the ink, but now our enemy has helped, so that I can finish this task and issue the command for attack.' With that, he ordered his men into the field with trumpet blasts. It so happened that they were victorious.

May God provide means for our succour. At present the situation is very troublesome. Some things can be tolerated, but others cannot. For instance, when we arrived in 'Akka, the situation was very difficult. We were imprisoned, and two of our friends passed away. No money was available for their burial. There was one small carpet which we sold for a few *qurush* and gave this to the Imam Jum'ih, who placed those two in a ditch and scattered a little dirt over them. We had to feed one hundred and fifty people.

Thinking about troubles is more difficult than the actual experience. How wonderful it would have been if human beings were like the birds of the air, which are carefree and never save for their next meal. I hope that soon God will fling open His gate of mercy upon His servants. It has been very difficult for people. Before my journey to America, I knew two or three hundred of the poor. But now, save for a handful, they have perished. [190–1]

### 5 March 1915

The news of the passing of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rahim<sup>24</sup> was received, and for that reason, 'Abdu'l-Baha left for 'Akka. He remarked to Dr Mu'ayyad, 'Today I was not feeling well, and the household advised me not to leave. It is also rainy and very cold, but I want to go to 'Akka, and from there to the resting-place of Aqa 'Abdu'r-Rahim and then to Haifa. What do you think?' Dr Mu'ayyad responded, 'Whatever is your august will.' He replied, 'Confident of the bounties and favours of the Blessed Beauty, I will go and will complete this journey in good health ...' [192–3]

---

<sup>24</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahā, *Memorials of the Faithful* (trans. Marzieh Gail, Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1971) 64.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

*20 March 1915*

This day corresponded to the anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab<sup>25</sup> and also concluded the fasting period. In the morning, some of the Baha’is of Abu-Sinan left for ‘Akka, so that on this Holy Day they would have the bounty of visiting ‘Abdu’l-Baha, as it was also his birthday. They had tea with him. He enquired of Dr Mu’ayyad about the condition of the sick left in his care, as well as his own health. Then he spoke of the trenches dug on the beach.

Also on this day, Dr Mu’ayyad received a Tablet from ‘Abdu’l-Baha, of which a provisional translation follows. Paying their homage, the group returned to Abu-Sinan.

*Abu-Sinan. The honoured Doctor Aqa Mirza Habib, upon him rest the Glory of God, the Most Glorious.*

*He is God.*

*O God, my God! I have turned to Thee, supplicating bounties from the ocean of Thy healing. O Lord, assist me in the service of Thy servants and in the healing of Thy bondslaves. If Thou dost assist me, my medicine will be a remedy for every sickness, fresh water for every thirst and cool relief for every raging ill. If Thou dost not assist me, then my medication would be the same as an illness and I would scarcely treat a single person.*

*O Lord, my God! Aid and assist me through Thy healing of the sick. Thou art the Healer, the Self-Sufficient, the Remover of every adversity and illness. And Thou art, verily, supreme over all things. ‘Abdu’l-Baha ‘Abbas. [195]*

*21 March 1915, Naw-Ruz*

All the Baha’is in Abu-Sinan, ‘Akka, Haifa, Bahji, and the Ridvan and Firdaws Gardens were present, and they numbered about 140, men and women in approximately equal proportions.<sup>26</sup> The community gathered at Bahji in the morning and visited the Shrine of Baha’u’llah. In addition to tea, plentiful fruits and sweetmeats, ‘Abdu’l-Baha had purchased two cooked lambs for lunch. Early in the morning, he came from ‘Akka to Bahji and prepared food in the kitchen for the friends.

After ‘Abdu’l-Baha had seen to all the work and supervised the preparation of the food, he joined the gathering and gave instructions for appropriate prayers, Tablets and poems to be chanted. Afterwards, he spoke at length on the significance of Naw-Ruz.

*26 March 1915*

‘Abdu’l-Baha returned on this Friday to Abu-Sinan, and some of his discourse was as follows:

Through the power of the Kingdom, human beings are saved from the grip of nature by the sanctified Manifestations of God and are illumined by the light of divinity. That is, they are released from the clutches of the animal world and guided to the

---

<sup>25</sup> See note 14.

<sup>26</sup> In conformity with the exigencies of time, the Baha’i gatherings in the Holy Land were conducted separately for the men and women until the ministry of Shoghi Effendi.

---

 AHANG RABBANI
 

---

highest pinnacle of humanity. The state of human nature is injustice, butchery, tyranny, treachery, lechery, achievement of selfish motives, neglect of God and fulfilment of carnal desires. The sanctified Manifestations of God rescue humanity from this black pit and guide it to the highest stations of spirituality. Thereupon, human beings gain faith, attraction to the divine fragrance, the ability to discover mysteries, recognition of the Divine, knowledge of hidden secrets, trustworthiness, fidelity, charity, nobility and spirituality.

However, after the passage of time, human beings return once again to their base nature and are seized in the grip of darkness and unfaithfulness. The original condition is reinstated, the bright day is darkened, the world of humanity becomes the animal world, splendour is transmuted into obscurity, and heavenly attraction turns into fulfilment of carnal desires. Indeed, if we were to consider this closely, we would see that older societies are completely unaware of religion and are captives of nature. No sign of divine bounties is discerned among them, nor is any heavenly fragrance inhaled from them. They are governed by certain traditions and customs and follow the ways of their forefathers.

Thus, day is followed by night and the night-season overtaken by day. After a period of time, a new Dispensation of Reality dawns and divine effulgences shine forth from the horizon of truth. Spring then becomes summer, and then autumn, and eventually winter. After winter, once more, the spiritual spring is born. And this is how divine bounties are propagated for evermore.

Some negligent men think that the spring season has concluded and nothing but winter remains. They are immersed in their own vain imaginings. [197–8]

### *27 March 1915*

‘Abdu’l-Baha remained with his family in his private quarters. Only when he was leaving Abu-Sinan did he pass by Mu’ayyad’s room and say, ‘I must go. Do not trouble yourself. Be under God’s care.’ And with that, he left. [198]

### *28–30 March 1915*

An astounding locust attack took place during this period. Mu’ayyad reports that, like a thick cloud, the locusts blocked the rays of the sun, and when they landed, they formed several layers on top of each other. In no time, even the finest of farms were reduced to desolate, barren land.

### *6 April 1915*

According to Bushru’i, ‘Abdu’l-Baha visited ‘Akka briefly on this day, and then returned [to Abu Sinan] the same day, this time staying until 17 April.

‘Abdu’l-Baha arrived at the guest-hall of Shaykh Salih, where a group of Baha’is and others were present. The entire conversation revolved around everyday topics and was in accordance with the aptitude and interest of the audience who had the pleasure of attending. Regarding people’s fear of the locust attacks, ‘Abdu’l-Baha stated:

It is amazing that people are afraid of physical afflictions, but have no worries of spiritual handicaps. They are heedless of being afflicted with a myriad spiritual catastrophes, but do not desire the least harm to come to this transient body, or to

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

be exposed to any jeopardy. They say whatever may happen to our souls, let it happen; but nothing less than utmost comfort for our bodies! [204]

*7 April 1915*

It was a rainy day. Mu’ayyad reports that he returned from Bahji and twice met with ‘Abdu’l-Baha in Abu-Sinan. ‘Abdu’l-Baha said:

Consider man’s infidelity. With a thousand worries, troubles and tears he raises a child. Then, he readily puts thousands upon thousands to the sword. It takes twenty years for a person to grow to maturity and full strength, but in an instant, these people massacre tens of thousands of men and allow them to perish. How many cities are thoroughly destroyed, how many villages are reduced to heaps of dust, how much blood reddens the earth and how immense are the properties that are plundered and wrecked? And yet, there is no benefit in any of this! Their purpose is to be victorious. At one time, France was triumphant over Germany, and at another time, the converse was true. None of these victories is lasting and no good will come of them, just as they did not benefit them in the past ... [204]

*8 April 1915*

It was a cold and rainy day, and until about dusk the friends did not have the bounty of entering ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s presence. In the early evening, ‘Abdu’l-Baha summoned Dr Mu’ayyad and asked after the condition of Aqa Muhammad Ibrahim<sup>27</sup> ... Dr Mu’ayyad enquired from ‘Abdu’l-Baha of his health and general condition, and he stated: ‘I am well. There is no illness. Only my nerves are shattered, and this is because, after Baha’u’llah’s ascension, I was enveloped in a depression and grief that words cannot describe. Now, when I work hard or speak for a long time, my health is affected. The burdens of the recent journey [to Europe and America] ruined my health and melted my bones. My feeble temple was not able to withstand such difficulties.’ [205–6]

Dr Mu’ayyad suggested, ‘A few days ago, when we went to Yirkih, it was a most pleasant and invigorating location. It would seem to be most suitable for your well-being if you would go there and rest beneath its trees.’ ‘Abdu’l-Baha remarked, ‘Of what use is good health to me? I want to wholly sacrifice myself in the path of the Blessed Beauty and give no thought to commerce, farming, or possessions. Only through absolute sacrifice and detachment can one be faithful to the love of the Ancient Beauty. There should be no other thoughts besides service to His Threshold. I hope that you will attain unto this station. The Cause of God is very great indeed!’ [206–7]

Aqa Mirza Tarazu’llah Kashi said that the violators of the Covenant had given a feast for the Mutasarrif of ‘Akka, who was here on Sunday. ‘Abdu’l-Baha responded:

I wish the end of my life to be musk-laden. That is, I wish to drink from the chalice of martyrdom in the path of the Blessed Beauty. I cherish no other desire than this. It would make no difference for me, for I have no comfort to miss or happiness to

---

<sup>27</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Baha, *Memorials of the Faithful* 81.

---

 AHANG RABBANI
 

---

grieve over. I have no joy, so I will not be saddened by its absence, and I have no delight, to lament over its loss. Whatever happens is of no difference to me. However, these people (i.e. the Covenant-breakers) exert effort night and day to cause tumult in 'Akka. And if there is turmoil in that city and it results in my capture, imprisonment and death, it is of no consequence! Inshā'llāh (God willing), they will crucify me! Or pierce my chest with a thousand bullets! ...

My trust unto you is this: Never forget the bounties and favours of the Blessed Perfection. Never forget his admonishments and exhortations. Not for a moment should you neglect your fidelity to him. You and I must be thinking ceaselessly of his ordinances, inattentive to any other thought or consideration. We must concentrate all our thoughts on his affection. Know that, by God, besides Whom there is no other God, all existence is not worth the skin of a peanut. It will give no benefit or reward. The only thing that remains is service to his Cause, exaltation of his Faith and diffusion of divine fragrance. Fī Amānu'llāh (Go in the protection of God). [207–8]

*9 April 1915*

On the occasion of the martyrdom of Shaykh 'Ali Akbar Quchani in Khurasan, 'Abdu'l-Baha commented:

These wretched soldiers die for the sake of some earth, which is the lowest form of creation, and do not know why they are slain. Consider how some are refined and how some abase themselves. In the world of humanity, some sanctified souls appear in the human temple who are revered by the whole of creation, while some others appear who worship the earth and give their lives in the path of dirt and rock. The latter are the abased! And yet there are some others who readily give their all – their lives, possessions, comfort and positions – in the path of the Blessed Beauty. How vast is the difference between those who sacrifice in the path of the earth and those who sacrifice in the path of the Blessed Beauty! The former are inferior to the earth, while the latter have won the eternal crown of glory. The former will gain naught but grievous loss, but the latter will give life to the world by their sacrifice.

Similarly to the honoured Shaykh 'Ali Akbar, many have quaffed from the chalice of martyrdom at the time when they were raising the call of the Abha Kingdom, guiding some to the religion of God, giving existence to others, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, a voice to the mute and life to the dead. In such a state, in the utmost detachment, they drank from the cup of renunciation.

Thousands upon thousands of people are presently being killed on the battlefield, though their deaths will bear no fruit or benefit whatsoever. But one sanctified soul is martyred in the path of God and thousands of others are given life. They water the tree of God with their blood. Though they close one eye to this mortal life, they open the other to everlasting existence. They will shine resplendent as a morning star in all the worlds of God and, even on earth, their fame shall be exalted, their star will shine, their pavilion will be lofty. The spiritual fragrance wafted from their direction will be a sweet perfume. Consider how vast is the difference, which is why it has been revealed, 'And think not of those slain on God's path as dead. Nay, alive with their Lord, are they, richly sustained.'<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Qur'an 3:163.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

This sanctified soul, the honoured Aqa Shaykh ‘Ali Akbar, embraced the Faith some time ago and attained to certitude. He was instrumental in guiding others as well. He travelled frequently in Iran, the Caucasus and India and, in most instances, left behind radiant evidences and enrolled others under the banner of the Cause. The end of his life was musk-laden. With the utmost sanctity, purity and attraction to God, thrilled by divine promises and afire with the love of God, he drank from the mighty chalice of martyrdom in the path of the Beloved. What a hallowed personage he was! Blessed was he, and his end. His Holiness the Exalted One [the Bab] has revealed, ‘Those that seek martyrdom in God’s path do so by the grace of God. He bestoweth upon whomsoever He willeth and is the possessor of great bounties.’

Out of divine bounty and favour, I implore that we too may partake of this overflowing cup and this life-giving chalice so that, with the utmost joy and spirit, and enthralled by the breeze of the Merciful, out of love, we too will hasten to the field of martyrdom, and sacrifice this drooping life in the path of the Almighty God.

How cruel are the Iranians! They have not eased their oppression. So many calamities and adversities have befallen them and yet they continue with their former persecutions. But they must pay some day. It is revealed, ‘God gives them time but does not overlook them.’<sup>29</sup> [295–6]

‘Abdu’l-Baha telegraphed the following cable: ‘Mashhad. Mirza Ahmad Qa’ini. May my life be a sacrifice unto ‘Ali Akbar. I am well and in good health. ‘Abbas.’ [296]

### *10 April 1915*

‘Abdu’l-Baha visited Aqa Muhammad Ibrahim, who was ill in bed. The latter welcomed ‘Abdu’l-Baha excitedly and warmly. Dr Mu’ayyad was asked to attend to him, and subsequently reported the results to ‘Abdu’l-Baha.

That afternoon, ‘Abdu’l-Baha and a few friends went to Bahji, and in the evening they returned to Abu-Sinan and attended a gathering in the guest-hall of Shaykh Salih. ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s discourse covered ordinary topics, in response to various questions put to him by the Shaykhs.

### *11 April 1915*<sup>30</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Baha remained with his family most of the day. At night he came to the guest-hall of Shaykh Salih and, since Mirza Ahmad Sohrab had arrived, ‘Abdu’l-Baha enquired: ‘Aqa Mirza Ahmad, how long has it been since we left America?’ He responded, ‘Two and a half years.’ ‘Abdu’l-Baha continued:

Truly, this period has not been productive. At least when we were in America, we were busy and constantly met with people and corresponded with the friends. But now, time goes by unprofitably: no meetings, no communication, no travels, no

---

<sup>29</sup> This verse is an allusion to the Qur’an 86:17, ‘Give a respite to the infidels; deal gently with them for a time’.

<sup>30</sup> Bushru’i, ‘Nuzdah’ 62–3 states that ‘Abdu’l-Baha was in Haifa on this evening, and gives a summary of his talk which differs considerably from Dr Mu’ayyad’s diary.

---

 AHANG RABBANI
 

---

service. It would have been better if we had gone directly to India. But what can we do? Such are God's decrees. He has not created us for comfort. My weakness and illness is because I am not occupied. What a wonderful time we had in America, all spent in the service of the Cause, and every minute of it filled with delight and high spirits. How much better it would have been if we had not returned here, had stayed there serving the Faith of God and day and night raising the cry of the divine Kingdom. Here we are wasting our lives. I am very sad that the means of service to the Cause are not available at present. My happiness resides in serving the spiritual friends and elevating the Word of God. All of these are now absent and, therefore, we are deprived of all bounties. [209–10]

Mirza Ahmad Sohrab responded, 'God willing, after the war', and 'Abdu'l-Baha continued:

Indeed, at that time [in America] every means of felicity and blissfulness was prepared. Joy and happiness are the cause of cures, and no joy can ever hope to rival service to the Cause of God. When a person is truly sacrificial, then he thoroughly forgets himself, dedicates his all in the path of the Blessed Beauty and arises in servitude, in His love. No exultation and delight can ever be greater than this.

A person serving the Cause is like a lamp, which has no joy and happiness greater than to be kindled. The ultimate satisfaction of the lamp is to be lit, to give illumination and to brighten the whole of the surrounding area. Similarly, our ultimate joy is in servitude to the sacred Threshold. And that servitude requires that with a brightened face, unsullied heart, illumined spirit and sanctified presence, we arise and teach His Cause. The Blessed Beauty did not create and educate us for the comfort, the joy and the cares of this world. He endured all these trials and tribulations so that we would be edified and enlighten the world. [210]

At this point a number of non-Baha'is arrived and 'Abdu'l-Baha's discourse moved on to conventional themes.

*12 April 1915*<sup>31</sup>

During the evening hours in Abu-Sinan, one of the friends remarked to 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'From the bounties of 'Abdu'l-Baha's teachings, the Iranians in Beirut are submissive'. 'Abdu'l-Baha responded:

People do not become submissive because of virtuous dictums; but rather, when they observe righteous deeds, they grow submissive. By God, besides Whom there is no God, if the friends were to follow the teachings and exhortations of the Blessed Beauty, then the necks of the kings of the earth would be humbled.

Consider the difference between the one who speaks of generosity and the one who is generous; between the one who claims justice and equity, and the one who is just and equitable. Or how significant is the contrast between the one who speaks

---

<sup>31</sup> Bushru'i, 'Nuzdah' 63 indicates that 'Abdu'l-Baha was in Haifa on this occasion and gives a synopsis of his talk that considerably augments Dr Mu'ayyad's diary.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

of light, and the one who is illumined. If we were to follow the teachings and dictums of the Blessed Beauty, even stones and plants would be affected.

The Blessed Beauty sustained all these trials and tribulations so that we would attain to deeds, not so that we would only make mention of our intentions. The sun dawns so that people are able to perform their duties, not merely speak of them. It is revealed, ‘Adorn thyself through deeds, if thou art of the righteous’ and not ‘Adorn thyself through words, if thou art of the righteous’.

How many people exist who constantly state their readiness for self-sacrifice. Several thousand times they state: ‘May my life be a sacrifice unto you!’ Forfeiting possessions, rank and name in the path of Love is the first station. They express their desire for sacrifice, and perhaps it is based on truth. But how different it is to say such a thing and actually to be sacrificed on the field of martyrdom! That is why deeds have an effect. [212]

### *13 April 1915*

‘Abdu’l-Baha was in Abu-Sinan and his remarks included, ‘Greed and avarice are ingrained in human nature. However, divine teachings will change these attributes. The Prophets and chosen ones have not appeared so that people will worship them and shower them with praise and tributes. They have sustained all their trials so that they may guide and educate people.’ [215]

### *14 April 1915*

‘Abdu’l-Baha visited Aqa Muhammad Ibrahim, who had been ill for 21 days. Because of his illness, he was not able to talk, but when he opened his eyes and saw ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s countenance, he said, ‘How sweet to expire in the arms of the Beloved!’

### *15 April 1915*

Two warships of the French armoured naval division came into the bay, one [sailing] towards Haifa and the other towards ‘Akka. At the same time, a fresh swarm of locusts descended – this being the eighteenth day of such attacks. Suddenly the roar of the warships’ cannon was heard. They succeeded in destroying the steel Na‘mayn bridge between Haifa and ‘Akka. In all, 26 shells were fired, one of which fell in the Garden of Firdaws but did not explode. The people of ‘Akka were greatly perturbed. Women and children were permitted to leave the city, but the men were barred from so doing. After an hour the warships left, disappearing in a haze of dark smoke.

That day was the funeral of Aqa Muhammad Ibrahim and the entire village, including all Christians, Muslims, Druze and Baha’is attended.

### *16 April 1915*

Some of the Baha’is were in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Baha in the morning. Afterwards, he strolled around the village of Abu-Sinan. At noon, the Qumandan and some others visited him. In the evening, a number of Baha’is and others were with ‘Abdu’l-Baha and he spoke for two hours on a variety of topics, including the history of the Egyptian pyramids. ‘Abdu’l-Baha remarked:

---

 AHANG RABBANI
 

---

One thing that has enabled European civilization to advance so considerably is the aptitude for accepting the truth. After investigation and research, even if it is against previously held notions, people do not reject the truth, but testify to its veracity.

I gave a talk for the professors at the renowned Oxford University, which ranks foremost in the world.<sup>32</sup> They published my talk in the university's newspaper and in *The Christian Commonwealth*. Many things were said in this talk. For instance, I told them about the fact that all things are captive in the hand of nature. For all its majesty, our sun is governed by certain universal laws, from which it cannot deviate by even a hair's breath. However, humanity has seized the sword from nature and with it is beating nature back. For example, the natural law is for human beings to remain on earth. Yet they swim in the sea like fish, or fly in the air like a bird. Or the law of nature is for electricity to flow freely. But we see that human beings have captured this power in the confines of a bulb. The nature of humans is to see for a prescribed distance and to hear only over a limited space. However, human beings have devised means to observe the heavens above and to communicate with every corner of the globe. Nature is tyrannical, uninformed of the past or the future. But humanity is not like that. Therefore, is it proper for human beings to continue thinking of themselves as captive in the grip of nature? [219]

### 17 April 1915

Mirza Husayn Yazdi came from Haifa and visited with 'Abdu'l-Baha. After enquiring about certain matters, 'Abdu'l-Baha decided to leave for Haifa. At the time of bidding the friends farewell, the topics of the war, the onslaught of the locusts, famine and various illnesses were discussed, and he said, 'These tribulations matter not and will pass by. The true calamity is to be far and removed from the divine fragrance.' [220]

### 5 May 1915

The days of sojourn in Abu-Sinan had come to an end. All of the Baha'is, being safe and protected, now started to return to their homes in 'Akka and Haifa. Badi' Effendi and Dr Mu'ayyad also closed the school and the dispensary, and proceeded to 'Akka. They carried with them the box containing the portraits of Baha'u'llah and the Bab, and upon arrival they proceeded directly to the residence of 'Abdu'l-Baha (the House of 'Abdu'llah Pasha) and conveyed them safely to Bahiyyih Khanum, the Greatest Holy Leaf, who was the custodian of the holy relics throughout 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry and beyond. In the afternoon, the two left for Haifa. There, they were summoned to the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha and he spoke to them:

I wish for you consecrated service to the Cause of God. I wish for you to manifest radiant attributes under all conditions and to raise the Word of God.

All that you have seen or experienced, all that exists in the world of humanity is like a picture reflected on water [insubstantial and transitory]. Consider how many men are engaged most devotedly in the present war, how they sacrifice and give their lives and possessions, how great is the number of soldiers among them.

---

<sup>32</sup> Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Bahā 352–4; Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway* 168.

---

‘ABDU’L-BAHA IN ABU-SINAN: SEPTEMBER 1914–MAY 1915

---

They are commanded by men who have dedicated their lives to the study of the science of war. They are all ready to sacrifice themselves in an instant. And yet their sacrifice has no benefit – [it is transient] like a picture reflected on water. The most they can hope for is to have the names of the most prominent among them recorded in history, remembered for having loved their nation and sacrificed their lives and possessions for its sake.

However, for those who sacrifice in the path of the divine Cause and exert every effort to raise the Word of God, their glory is everlasting. It will neither change nor be forgotten over the passage of time, and their effulgence will remain ever resplendent.

A person must exert his very best in every undertaking and in all fields of endeavour and must employ the means and techniques of that field; otherwise, there will be no benefit. For instance, a person who arises to diffuse the divine fragrance in the path of the Blessed Beauty must be completely detached. He must be attracted, sanctified, righteous, itinerant and consecrated. Otherwise, the desired results will not be wholly achieved. In fact, great efforts may be lost through the slightest negligence. [221–2]

‘Abdu’l-Baha’s foresight had protected the Baha’i communities of the Haifa–‘Akka area and kept them safe during these difficult months. He greatly enhanced the relationship of the Baha’is with the local Druze by allowing them to live together and to get to know each other – an important relationship which has survived to the present day and has benefited both communities.