



‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ
The Perfect Exemplar





“Whosoever has consorted with Him has seen in Him a man exceedingly well-informed, Whose speech is captivating, Who attracts minds and souls, Who is dedicated to belief in the oneness of mankind...”


— AL-MU'AYYAD NEWSPAPER, EGYPT, 16 OCTOBER 1910

The Perfect Exemplar

In the early years of the 20th century, 'Abdu'l-Bahá – the eldest Son of Bahá'u'lláh – was the Bahá'í Faith's leading exponent, renowned as a champion of social justice and an ambassador for international peace.

 Upholding unity as the fundamental principle of His teachings, Bahá'u'lláh established the necessary safeguard to ensure that His religion would never suffer the same fate as others that split into sects after the deaths of their Founders. In His Writings, He instructed all to turn to His eldest Son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, not only as the authorised interpreter of the Bahá'í Writings but also as the perfect exemplar of the Faith's spirit and teachings.


 Following Bahá'u'lláh's passing, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's extraordinary qualities of character, His knowledge and His service to humanity offered a vivid demonstration of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings in action, and brought great prestige to the rapidly expanding community throughout the world.

 'Abdu'l-Bahá devoted His ministry to furthering His Father's Faith and to promoting the ideals of peace and unity. He encouraged the establishment of local Bahá'í institutions, and guided nascent educational, social and economic initiatives. After His release from a lifetime of imprisonment, 'Abdu'l-Bahá set out on a series of journeys which took Him to Egypt, Europe and North America. Throughout His life, He presented with brilliant simplicity, to high and low alike, Bahá'u'lláh's prescription for the spiritual and social renewal of society.

The Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá


the Báb declared the beginning of a new religious cycle for the world.


On the evening of 22 May 1844, a significant moment in human history occurred. In the city of Shíráz, Iran,

 At midnight, on that same evening, a baby was born in Tehran. Bahá'u'lláh, in honour of His own father, named His newborn son, 'Abbás. But, in time, 'Abbás chose to call Himself 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the "Servant of Bahá", and, through His life of service to humanity, became known as the living embodiment and exemplar of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

Childhood

'Abdu'l-Bahá enjoyed a privileged childhood until fierce persecutions broke out against the Báb's followers – of whom Bahá'u'lláh was the most prominent. Bahá'u'lláh's incarceration for being a Bábí marked a turning point for His family. Seeing Bahá'u'lláh in prison – His hair and beard unkempt, His neck swollen from the heavy steel collar, His body bent by chains – made an indelible impression on the mind of His eight year-old son.


 In December 1852, Bahá'u'lláh was released from prison after four months. Almost immediately, He was banished from Iran with His family. They were never to see their native land again. On the trek to Baghdad, 'Abdu'l-Bahá suffered frostbite and grieved over the separation from his baby brother, Mihdí, who was not well enough to make the gruelling journey.


 Soon after their arrival in Baghdad, another painful separation followed when Bahá'u'lláh retreated into the mountains of Kurdistán for a period of two years. With His beloved Father away, 'Abdu'l-Bahá occupied His time reading and meditating upon the Writings of the Báb.

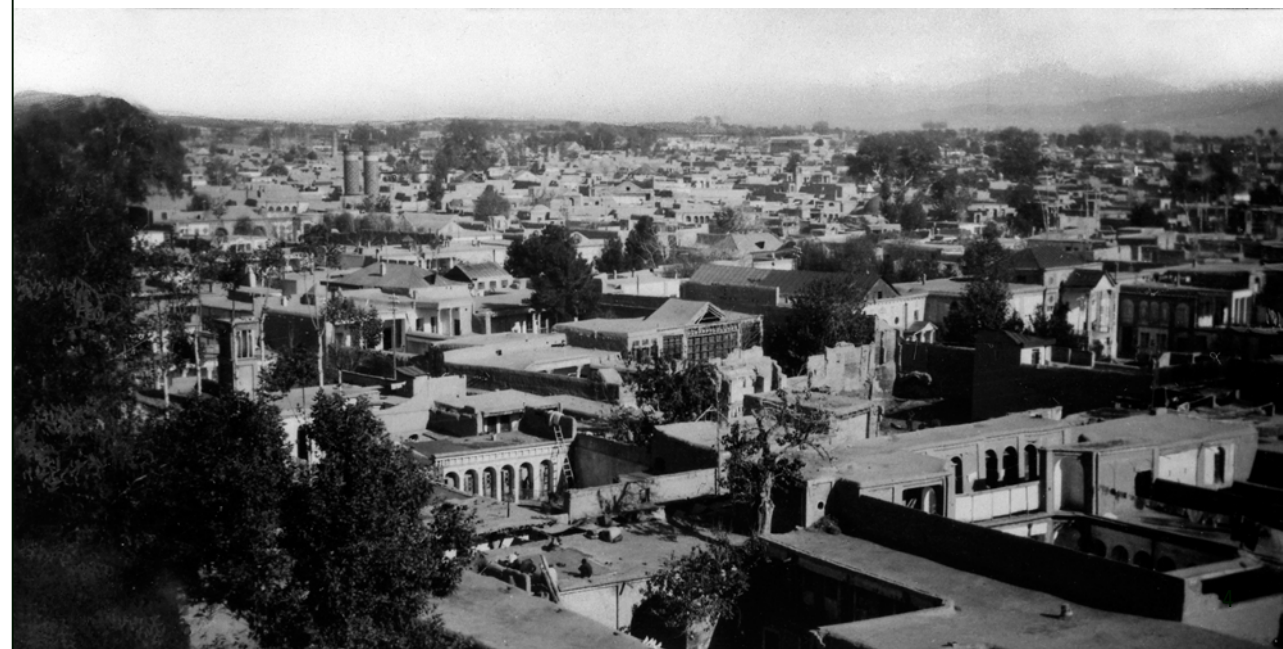
Service to Bahá'u'lláh

already intuitively recognised the station of His Father. In the years that immediately followed, 'Abdu'l-Bahá became Bahá'u'lláh's representative and His secretary.

When Bahá'u'lláh finally returned, the 12 year-old boy was overwhelmed with joy. Despite His tender age, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had

 He shielded His Father from unnecessary intrusions and the malice of those who wished Him ill and became revered in circles beyond His Father's followers, conversing with the wise and learned on themes and topics that occupied their minds. One commentary He wrote while still in His teens demonstrated His already profound knowledge and understanding, and a striking mastery of language. Throughout their exiles, 'Abdu'l-Bahá also assumed the burden of various negotiations with civil authorities.

 During Bahá'u'lláh's final banishment to 'Akká, 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued to protect His Father, took care of His followers, tended to the sick and the poor in the city, and held His ground on matters of justice with callous jailers, brutal guards and hostile officials. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's generosity of spirit, selfless service and adherence to principle endeared Him to those who came to know Him and, in time, won over even the most hard-hearted of enemies.



The city of Tehran, Iran, c. 1930 where 'Abdu'l-Bahá was born in 1844



The Centre of the Covenant

In His Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh established a Covenant with His followers,

enjoining them to turn, after His passing, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who He describes as "Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority as the "Centre of the Covenant" was also established in other texts, including Bahá'u'lláh's Will and Testament.



From the time of Bahá'u'lláh's passing, 'Abdu'l-Bahá oversaw the spread of His Father's Faith to new territories, including North America and Europe. He received a steady flow of pilgrims from both the East and the West, carried out an extensive correspondence with Bahá'ís and inquirers in all parts of the world, and lived an exemplary life of service to the people of 'Akká.



Envious of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's influence, His younger half-brother – Mirza Muhammad 'Alí – tried to undermine and usurp 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority. Efforts to stir up further suspicion against 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the minds of the already hostile authorities resulted in restrictions that had gradually been relaxed over the years being re-imposed. Although these attacks caused great pain to Him and His loyal followers, they failed to cause lasting damage to the unity of the community or the spread of the Bahá'í Faith.

Travel to the West

As early as 1907, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had begun moving His family to Haifa, across the bay from 'Akká, where He had built a house at the foot of Mount Carmel. In 1908, turmoil in the Ottoman

capital culminated in the Young Turk Revolution. The Sultan released all of the empire's religious and political prisoners and, after decades of imprisonment and exile, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was free.

Despite tremendous challenges, work on a tomb for the Báb had proceeded, midway up the mountain, in a spot designated by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. In March 1909, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was able to place the Báb's remains in the Shrine He had constructed.

The following year, 'Abdu'l-Bahá departed Haifa for Egypt, where He stayed one year, spending His days meeting diplomats, intellectuals, religious leaders and journalists. In the late summer of 1911, He sailed for Europe, stopping at the French resort of Thonon-les-Bains before travelling to London.

On 10 September 1911, from the pulpit of the City Temple church in London, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave a public address for the first time in His life. His subsequent month-long stay in England was filled with ceaseless activity, promoting Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and their application to many contemporary issues and problems, through public talks, meetings with the press and interviews with individuals. The days in London, and then Paris, set a pattern that He would follow throughout all of His travels.

In the spring of 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá journeyed to the United States and Canada for nine months. He travelled from coast to coast, addressing every kind of audience, meeting people of all ranks and stations. At the end of the year, He returned to Britain and early in 1913, to France, from where He proceeded to Germany, Hungary and Austria, returning in May to Egypt, and on 5 December 1913, to the Holy Land.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in the West contributed significantly to the spread of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and the firm establishment of Bahá'í communities in Europe and North America. On both continents, He received a highly appreciative welcome from distinguished audiences concerned about the condition of modern society, devoted to such concerns as peace, women's rights, racial equality, social reform and moral development.

During His travels, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's message was the announcement that the long-promised age for the unification of humanity had come. He frequently spoke of the need to create the social conditions and the international political instruments necessary to establish peace. Less than two years later, His premonitions of a world-encircling conflict became a reality.



'Abdu'l-Bahá with a group of Egyptian, Turkish, Indian and British friends in a mosque's courtyard in Woking, England, January 1913



Above: 'Abdu'l-Bahá with a group of friends in Stuttgart, Germany, 1913

Below: 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressing a large gathering at the Plymouth Congregational Church, Chicago, Illinois, 5 May 1912



Above: 'Abdu'l-Bahá with a group of friends at Lincoln Park, Chicago, Illinois, 3 May 1912


Below: 'Abdu'l-Bahá with a group of Bahá'ís under the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, January 1913






The Great War


When the First World War broke out, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's communication with the Bahá'ís abroad was almost completely cut off. He spent the war years ministering to the material and spiritual needs of the people around Him, personally organising extensive agricultural operations, and averting a famine for the poor of all religions in Haifa and 'Akká. His service to the people of Palestine was honoured with a knighthood from the British Empire in April 1920.

 During the war years, 'Abdu'l-Bahá produced one of the most important works of His ministry: fourteen letters, known collectively as the Tablets of the Divine Plan, addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America outlining the spiritual qualities and attitudes as well as the practical actions needed to spread the Bahá'í teachings throughout the world.

Final years

In His old age, 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained remarkably vigorous. He was a loving father not only to the community of Bahá'ís in Haifa, but to a burgeoning international movement. His correspondence guided global efforts to establish an organisational framework for the community. His interaction with a stream of pilgrims to the Holy Land provided another instrument for instructing and encouraging believers from around the world.

 When He passed away at the age of 77 on 28 November 1921, His funeral was attended by 10,000 mourners of numerous religious backgrounds. In spontaneous tributes to an admired personality, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was eulogised as One who led humanity to the "Way of Truth," as a "pillar of peace" and the embodiment of "glory and greatness."


 'Abdu'l-Bahá's mortal remains were laid to rest in one of the chambers of the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel.




Left top: 'Abdu'l-Bahá receiving a knighthood for relief of distress and famine during the war, 27 April 1920

Left bottom: Ten thousand mourners from numerous religious backgrounds attend the funeral of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa, 29 November 1921


The Significance of 'Abdu'l Bahá


 *"Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed me more,"* said Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University after meeting 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *"About the greatness of this man and his power no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt."*


 Yet, however magnetic 'Abdu'l-Bahá's personality or however penetrating His insights, such tributes cannot adequately capture such a unique character in religious history. The Bahá'í Writings affirm that:

"in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized."


The Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant

 The question of religious succession has been critical to all Faiths. The ambiguity surrounding the true successors of Jesus and Muhammad, for example, led to differing interpretations of sacred scripture and deep discord within both Christianity and Islam.


 Guaranteeing through 'Abdu'l-Bahá a Centre to Whom all would turn was the means by which Bahá'u'lláh could diffuse His message of hope and universal peace to every corner of the world. This Covenant was the instrument that ensured the unity of the Bahá'í community and preserved the integrity of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. Without 'Abdu'l-Bahá as its Centre, the enormous creative power of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation could not have been transmitted to humanity, nor its significance fully comprehended.


 'Abdu'l-Bahá interpreted the teachings of His Father's Faith, amplified its doctrines, and outlined the central features of its administrative institutions. He was the unerring guide and architect of a rapidly expanding Bahá'í community. In addition, 'Abdu'l-Bahá exemplified such perfection in His personal and social behaviour, that humanity was given an enduring model to emulate.

Proclaiming Vital Truths

 In His Writings and during His travels, 'Abdu'l-Bahá tirelessly proclaimed certain vital truths to leaders of thought as well as to countless groups and individuals. Among these truths were: "The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race, the pivotal principle and fundamental doctrine of the Faith; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of humankind is able to soar; the introduction of compulsory education; the adoption of a universal auxiliary language; the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty; the institution of a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; the exaltation of work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship; the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society, and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations; and the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all mankind."

The Servant of Glory

 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirmed time and again that He was a "herald of peace and reconciliation", "an advocate of the oneness of humanity", and an agent calling humanity to the "Kingdom of God".

 Despite the acclaim given to Him, 'Abdu'l-Bahá always made clear that Bahá'u'lláh was the Source of His thought. In a letter to His followers in America He wrote:




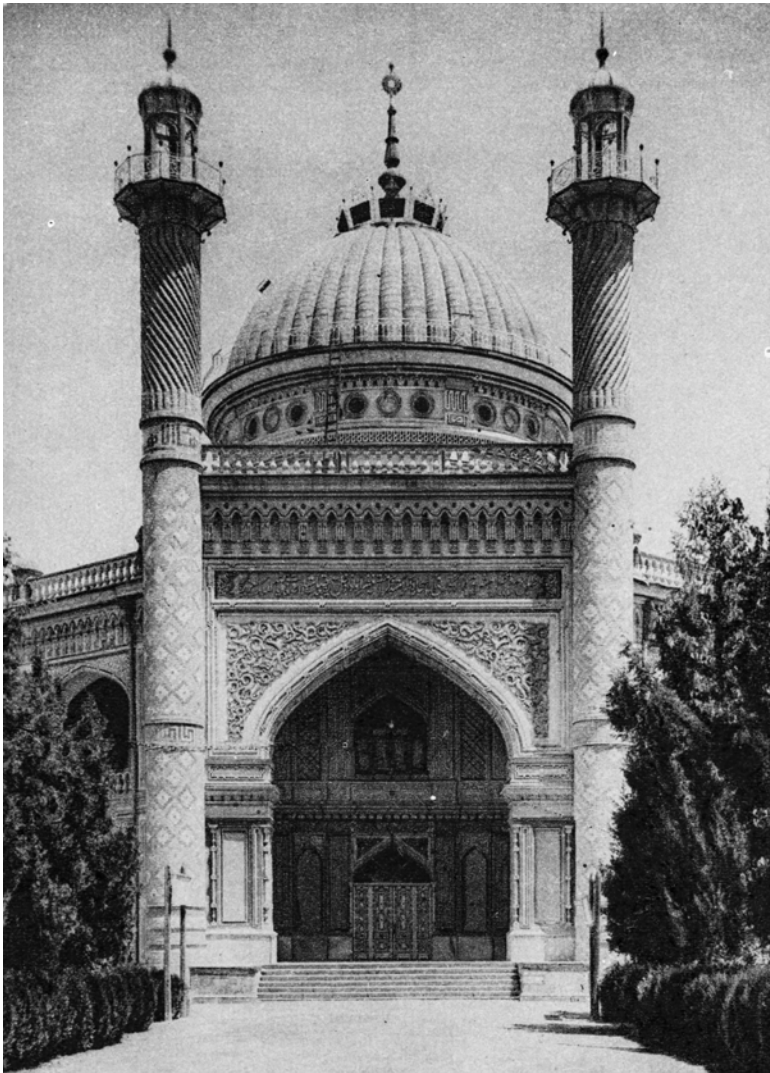
*"My name is 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
My qualification is 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
My reality is 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
My praise is 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
Thralldom to the Blessed Perfection
[Bahá'u'lláh] is my glorious and
refulgent diadem, and servitude to all
the human race my perpetual religion...
No name, no title, no mention, no
commendation have I, nor will ever
have, except 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
This is my longing.
This is my greatest yearning.
This is my eternal life.
This is my everlasting glory."*

Colour portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris, France, October 1911


The name "'Abdu'l-Bahá" means "Servant of Bahá'u'lláh"


The Development of the Bahá'í Community in the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá


 Throughout His ministry which lasted 29 years, 'Abdu'l-Bahá laboured to spread the Bahá'í Faith to every part of the world and fostered the development of the administrative institutions ordained by Bahá'u'lláh.




Expansion and Consolidation of the Bahá'í Community

 Under the guidance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a network of Spiritual Assemblies evolved in Iran that managed the affairs of the Bahá'í community, promoted the moral development of its members, organised schools with particular concern for the education of girls, provided for the sick, and engaged in the promotion of the Bahá'í teachings.


 'Abdu'l-Bahá placed great emphasis on the advancement of women, who began to play their role in community activities, ultimately attaining equality with men as members of Spiritual Assemblies, both local and national, who were elected from among the body of believers in Iran.

 'Abdu'l-Bahá also directed the spread of the Bahá'í Faith in the Caucasus and Russian Central Asia, where Ashkhabad with its Bahá'í House of Worship, schools, and publications, unhampered by government restrictions, became a model Bahá'í community.

 Egypt, which greatly benefitted from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in that country, also witnessed the growth of a Bahá'í community that included people of both Muslim and Coptic backgrounds as well as Iranians, Kurds, and Armenians. In Turkey, Ottoman Iraq, Tunisia, and even in distant China and Japan, Bahá'í communities sprang up or were strengthened under 'Abdu'l-Bahá's leadership.

Continental Bahá'í House of Worship of Central Asia (Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan), early 1930s


Opposition from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Family


 The most pressing problem for 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the years immediately following the passing of Bahá'u'lláh was the sustained opposition of His half-brother, Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí. Spurred by uncontrollable jealousy, He falsely accused 'Abdu'l-Bahá of claiming for Himself a station equal to Bahá'u'lláh, of usurping the rights of Bahá'u'lláh's other offspring, and of stirring up sedition against the civil authorities. Muḥammad 'Alí's activities culminated in a period of renewal of the strict incarceration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá within the walls of 'Akká from 1901 to 1909. Muḥammad 'Alí was able to influence a number of the Bahá'ís living in the Haifa-'Akká area as well as the man who had taken the Faith to America. All but a small handful of members of the worldwide Bahá'í community, however, remained faithful to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

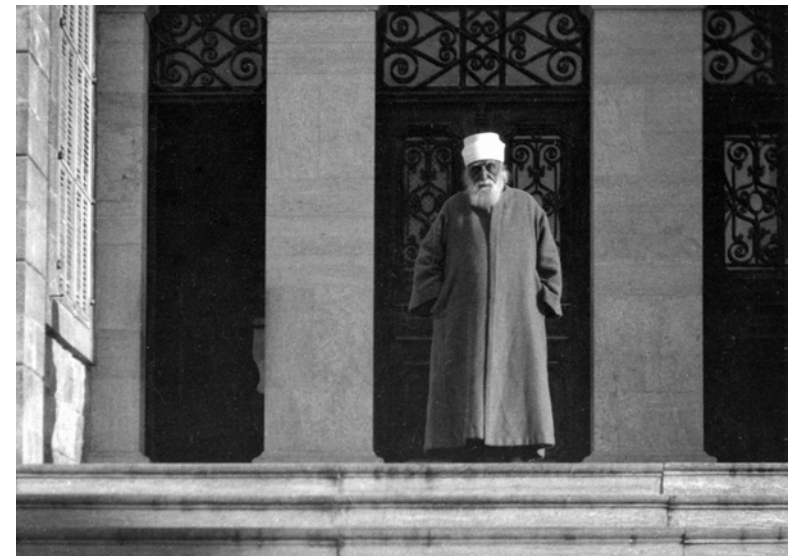


'Abdu'l-Bahá resided in this house in Haifa after returning to the Holy Land from the West. From this house, He was able to supervise the construction of the Shrine of the Báb.

Other Achievements

 Other events of importance during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry were: the transfer of the remains of the Báb from Iran to 'Akká and their entombment in a Shrine on Mount Carmel; the writing by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which were to become the framework for the spread of the Bahá'í Faith; the first steps in the building up of the modern administrative institutions of the Bahá'í Faith in both the East and West; the measures taken by the Bahá'í community of Ashkhabad in Russian Turkestan to develop many aspects of Bahá'í community life, culminating in the erection of a House of Worship; the initiation of construction of a House of Worship in North America; the activities of the renowned Bahá'í scholar Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpáygání in teaching the Bahá'í Faith at the University of al-Azhar in Cairo, the foremost place of learning in the Islamic world; and the extensive international travels of a small number of Bahá'ís, which helped to create the beginnings of a worldwide religious movement.

 By the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, the Bahá'í Faith had spread to some 35 countries.



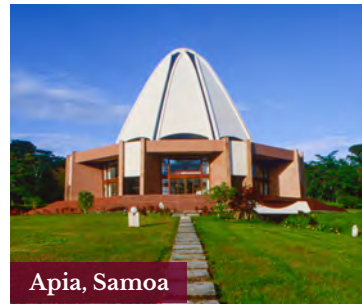
'Abdu'l-Bahá on the steps of 7 Haparsim Street, His home in the last years of His life, May 1921



Sydney, Australia



Tanna, Vanuatu



Apia, Samoa



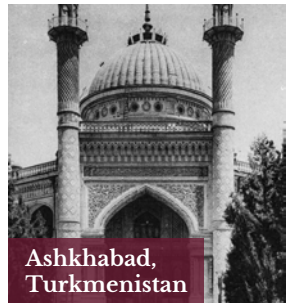
Battambang, Cambodia



The Democratic Republic of the Congo



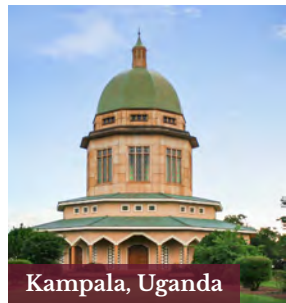
New Delhi, India



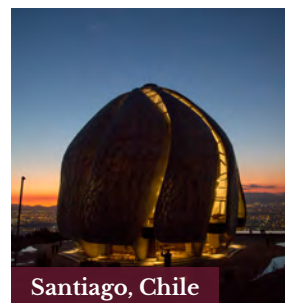
Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan



Wilmette, Illinois, United States



Kampala, Uganda



Santiago, Chile



Norte del Cauca, Colombia



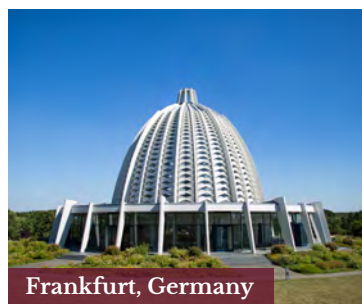
Papua New Guinea



Panama City, Panama



Bihar Sharif, India



Frankfurt, Germany





Matunda Soy, Kenya

Growth in the West

A significant development for the future of the Bahá'í Faith immediately following the passing of Bahá'u'lláh was its spread to North America. It was initially

established there through the efforts of a Syrian Bahá'í of Christian origin. 'Abdu'l-Bahá paid particular attention to the development of the believers and Bahá'í institutions in the United States and Canada and entrusted to the Bahá'ís of North America the task of carrying the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to most of the rest of the world. From 1898 onwards, there was a flow of American and European pilgrims visiting 'Akká to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who encouraged them in their teaching efforts. In the last years of His ministry, at His urging and in response to His Tablets of the Divine Plan, Bahá'ís first reached South America and Australia.

 Its Western expansion released the Bahá'í Faith from the predominantly Muslim milieu in which it had initially grown. 'Abdu'l-Bahá played a major role in introducing the Bahá'í teachings to a Christian audience. Important in this regard was a collection of His talks to Western pilgrims, *Some Answered Questions*, in which He dealt with religious and philosophical themes.

 'Abdu'l-Bahá's journeys to Egypt, Europe and North America firmly established knowledge and appreciation of the Bahá'í Faith in the West. Not only did they allow the Bahá'ís in those countries direct contact with the Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but they introduced Bahá'u'lláh's teachings to a wide range of people who would not otherwise have heard of them. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's numerous public addresses to universities, churches, synagogues, mosques, and philanthropic societies had the effect of gaining a large number of new admirers and adherents for the religion. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks were to form the basis of the standard presentation of the Bahá'í teachings, especially the social teachings, for many decades after. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's laying, with His own hands, the cornerstone of the first Bahá'í House of Worship in the West, near to Chicago, also marked the inauguration of Bahá'í institutions in North America.

Middle: 'Abdu'l-Bahá strides by the Cornerstone on the day of the Dedication of the First House of Worship in North America, 1 May 1912

Surrounding: Continental, national and local Bahá'í Houses of Worship around the world

Quotations from 'Abdu'l Bahá

The Writings and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are the fruit of more than half a century of prolific labour. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not a prophet and at no time claimed to have received direct revelation from God. But as the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant with His followers, and the appointed interpreter of the Bahá'í Revelation, His Writings both interpret and form a part of Bahá'í scripture.

His prodigious output so far gathered in published volumes consists of personal correspondence, general letters, expositions of specific themes, books, prayers, poems, public talks, and recorded conversations. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was recognised by all who came into contact with Him as a paragon of distinctive style and eloquence.

His words are as simple as the sunlight; again like the sunlight, they are universal...

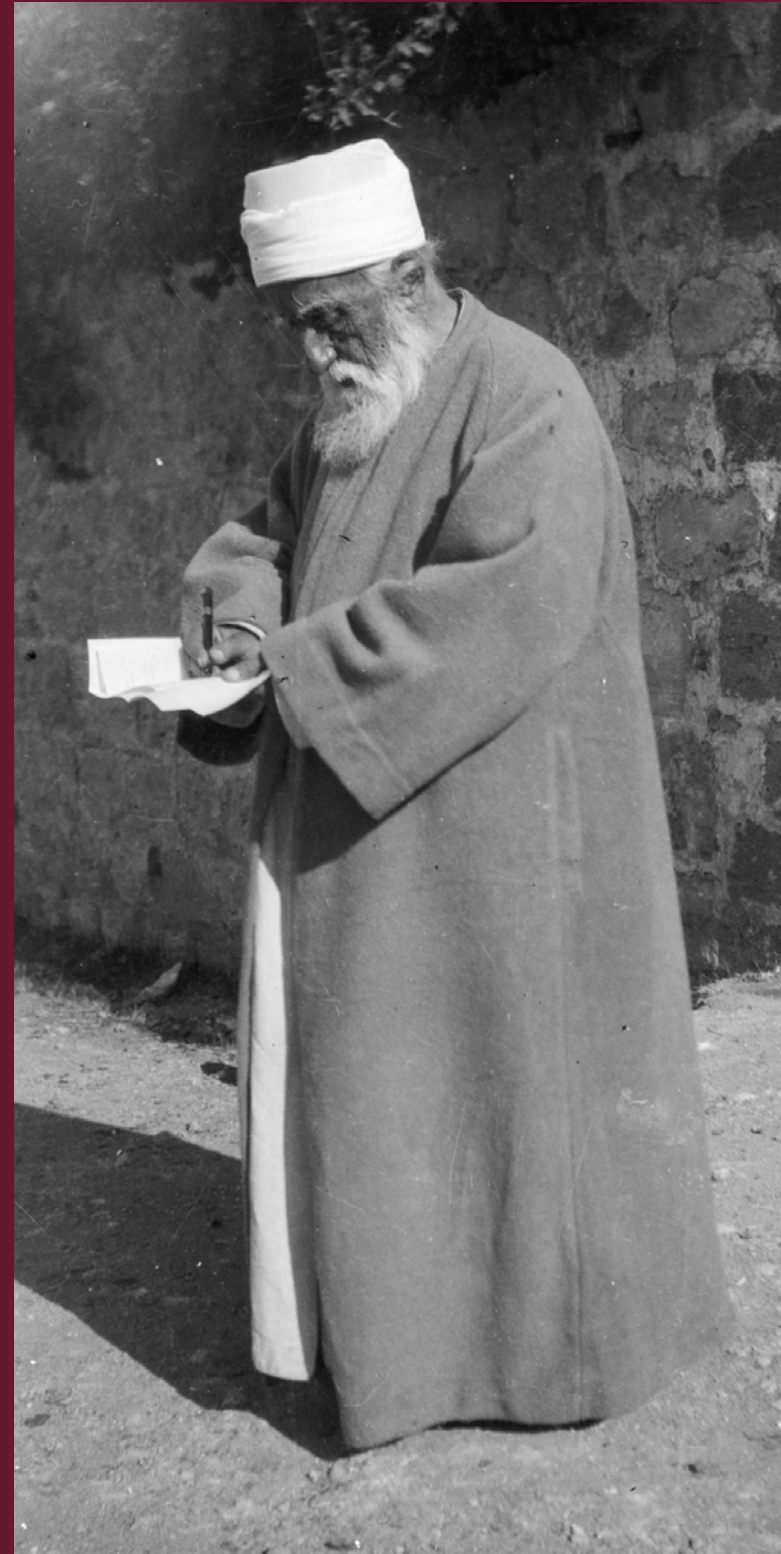
– Yone Noguchi, Japanese writer

Below is a small selection of extracts from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings and talks.



*There is one God; mankind is one;
the foundations of religion are one.
Let us worship Him, and give praise
for all His great Prophets and
Messengers who have manifested
His brightness and glory.*

'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land, c. 1920





It is certain and indisputable that the creator of man is not like man because a powerless creature cannot create another being. The maker, the creator, has to possess all perfections in order that he may create... The contingent world is the source of imperfections: God is the origin of perfections. The imperfections of the contingent world are in themselves a proof of the perfections of God.



The highest station, the supreme sphere, the noblest, most sublime position in creation, whether visible or invisible, whether alpha or omega, is that of the Prophets of God, notwithstanding the fact that for the most part they have to outward seeming been possessed of nothing but their own poverty.



The divine religions were founded for the purpose of unifying humanity and establishing universal peace. Any movement which brings about peace and agreement in human society is truly a divine movement; any reform which causes people to come together under the shelter of the same tabernacle is surely animated by heavenly motives.



Now the new age is here and creation is reborn. Humanity hath taken on new life. The autumn hath gone by, and the reviving spring is here. All things are now made new. Arts and industries have been reborn, there are new discoveries in science, and there are new inventions; even the details of human affairs, such as dress and personal effects—even weapons—all these have likewise been renewed. The laws and procedures of every government have been revised. Renewal is the order of the day.

And all this newness hath its source in the fresh outpourings of wondrous grace and favor from the Lord of the Kingdom, which have renewed the world. The people, therefore, must be set completely free from their old patterns of thought, that all their attention may be focused upon these new principles, for these are the light of this time and the very spirit of this age.



The day is coming when all the religions of the world will unite, for in principle they are one already. There is no need for division, seeing that it is only the outward forms that separate them. Among the sons of men some souls are suffering through ignorance, let us hasten to teach them; others are like children needing care and education until they are grown, and some are sick—to these we must carry Divine healing.



Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms.



The divine Manifestations of God had a universal and all-inclusive conception. They endeavored for the sake of everyone's life and engaged in the service of universal education. The area of their aims was not limited—nay, rather, it was wide and all-inclusive.

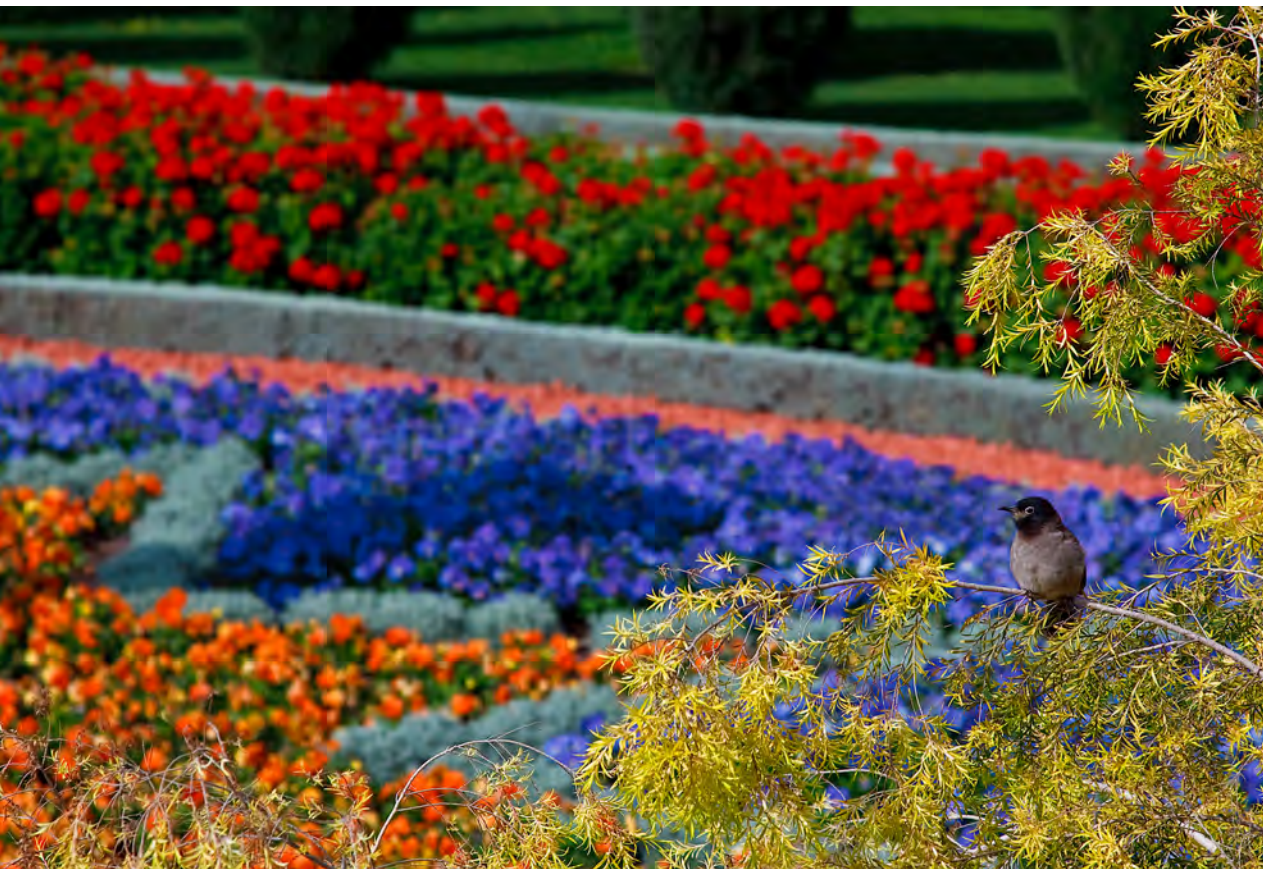




Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity, He has made a design for the uniting of all the peoples, and for the gathering of them all under the shelter of the tent of universal unity. This is the work of the Divine Bounty, and we must all strive with heart and soul until we have the reality of unity in our midst, and as we work, so will strength be given unto us.



Consider the flowers of a garden. Though differing in kind, color, form, and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men.





True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking—the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world—should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth.



Sincerity is the foundation-stone of faith. That is, a religious individual must disregard his personal desires and seek in whatever way he can wholeheartedly to serve the public interest; and it is impossible for a human being to turn aside from his own selfish advantages and sacrifice his own good for the good of the community except through true religious faith.



The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory.



The reality of man is his thought, not his material body. The thought force and the animal force are partners. Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings.

If a man's thought is constantly aspiring towards heavenly subjects then does he become saintly; if on the other hand his thought does not soar, but is directed downwards to center itself upon the things of this world, he grows more and more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal...

Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds.





*When a thought of war comes,
oppose it by a stronger thought of
peace. A thought of hatred must be
destroyed by a more powerful
thought of love.*



*O ye beloved of the Lord! In this
sacred Dispensation, conflict and
contention are in no wise permitted.
Every aggressor deprives himself of
God's grace.*



*If you desire with all your heart,
friendship with every race on
earth, your thought, spiritual and
positive, will spread; it will become
the desire of others, growing
stronger and stronger, until it
reaches the minds of all men.*



Graphic rendering of the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá



Be in perfect unity. Never become angry with one another... Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God. Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being, and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God, you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy.



The most vital duty, in this day, is to purify your characters, to correct your manners, and improve your conduct. The beloved of the Merciful must show forth such character and conduct among His creatures, that the fragrance of their holiness may be shed upon the whole world, and may quicken the dead, inasmuch as the purpose of the Manifestation of God and the dawning of the limitless lights of the Invisible is to educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man—so that blessed individuals, who have freed themselves from the murk of the animal world, shall rise up with those qualities which are the adornings of the reality of man.



More from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Published anthologies of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings and talks can be found in full at the Bahá'í Reference Library (bahai.org/library).

You can find out more about the numerous volumes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings and talks available in English, and read selected extracts in the **Articles and Resources** section of bahai.org (bahai.org/abdul-baha/articles-resources).



WHAT BAHÁ'ÍS DO

In neighbourhoods across New Zealand, Bahá'ís are striving to bring the vision of the oneness of humanity into reality. All individuals, of whatever race, gender, religion or social status, are invited to contribute to this effort.



GET IN TOUCH

Contact the Bahá'í community for more information about the Bahá'í Faith:

Websites: bahai.org.nz / bahai.org

Facebook Page: facebook.com/newzealandbahaicomunity

Bookshop: bds.bahai.org.nz

Phone: 0800 BAH AIS (0800 224 247)



SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Section on 'Abdu'l-Bahá: bahai.org
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of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand

Te Rūnanga Wairua Tapu o nga Bahá'í o Aotearoa