

‘Abdu’lláh Baghdádí

When he was very young, people thought of ‘Abdu’lláh Baghdádí as a libertine, solely devoted to pleasure. He was regarded by all as the sport of inordinate desires, mired down in his physical passions. But the moment he became a believer, he was carried away by the sweet savors of God, and was changed into a new creation. He found himself in a strange rapture, completely transformed. He had been of the world, now he was of Heaven; he had lived by the flesh, now he lived by the spirit; he had walked in darkness; now he walked in light. He had been a slave to his senses, now he was a thrall of God. He had been clay and earthenware before, now he was a dear-bought pearl; a dull and lusterless stone before, now a ruby glowing.

Even among the non-believers, people were astonished at the change. What could have come over this youth, they wanted to know; how did it happen that he was suddenly detached from the world, eager and devoted? “He was tainted, corrupted,” they said; “today he is abstemious and chaste. He was sunk in his appetites, but is now the soul of purity, living a righteous life. He has left the world behind him. He has broken up the feast, dismissed the revelers, and folded the banquet cloth away. His mind is distracted by love.”

Briefly, he let go his pleasures and possessions, and journeyed to Akká on foot. His face had turned so bright, his nature so luminous, that it was a joy to look at him. I used to say: “Áqá ‘Abdu’lláh, what condition are you in?” And he would answer to this effect: “I was in darkness; now, by the favor of the Blessed Beauty, I am in light. I was a heap of dust; He changed me to a fertile field. I was in constant torment; I am now at

peace. I was in love with my chains; He has broken them. I was avid for this one and that; now I cling to the Lord. I was a bird in a cage; He let me out. Today, though I live in the desert, and I have the bare ground for my bed and pillow, it feels like silk. In the old time, my coverlet was satin, and my soul was on the rack. Now I am homeless, and happy.”

But his burning heart broke when he saw how victimized was Bahá'u'lláh, how patiently He suffered. ‘Abdu'lláh yearned to die for Him. And thus it came about that he offered up his life for his tender Companion, and hastened away, out of this dark world to the country of light. His luminous grave is in Akká. Upon him be the glory of the All-Glorious; upon him be mercy, out of the grace of the Lord.