

Home of Baha-Allah
 Acca Syria Nov. 23d 1914

Dear friends!

This afternoon we were drinking tea in the Presence of the Beloved. Already half a dozen people have been with him and he had spoken much, therefore we preferred to keep silent and speak with him in the subtle language of spirit. Ostad Mohamad Ali had arrived last night from Haifa and was in the room. The Master asked him what news he has brought with himself from Haifa. He answered: "All the Christians are sorely afraid of the declaration of Jihad and are not at all sure of their future security. They believe that one spark may any hour set aflame the whole Mahomadan world with the conflagration of religious fanaticism, causing the flowing of streams of blood through the streets and bazaars of Turkish Empire. The other day an old inhabitant of Acca passing through Haifa told me that forty years ago when the war was declared between Russia and Turkey a recrudescence of this same religious fanaticism appeared in the Mahomadan world and the fanatical Muslims of Acca planned a wholesale slaughter of the Christians. Their plan was, however, frustrated by Abbas Effendi. He called all the ringleaders to a meeting, gave them a long speech and impressed upon their minds the importance of keeping their hands white and pure in that great national crisis. He said in part: 'If one hair of these Christians is touched the first person that will be hanged will be the Mofti (Judge) of this town. [The Mofti was present and gave his assent to this] If you are so anxious to enter in the holy war, well and good. The place for the demonstration of your faith and zeal is not the street of your own town and the shedding of the blood of your law-abiding Christian neighbors but right in the front of serried ranks in the battlefield. If you are so desirous to do this I will help you to enter the army, will ask the command to enlist you and will give you even money and clothes and you may go in the field of action and show your courage and constancy. The plan that you have drawn to kill these innocent people, unaware, is neither manly nor creditable to Islam. Even Mohamad will denounce you on judgment day as criminal followers and not worth divine Grace

Have you not realized that these Christians are your guests? Will you ^{so in-} sensible to all the codes of hospitality as to put to sword the guests living in your homes with perfect confidence and laying the utmost trust in you? Are you such moral cowards? Will you gain for the Moslems of Acre through your black deeds an eternal shame and disgrace? Is this the way you are going to fulfill the Command of your prophet? In brief, through such words of threats and counsels he cooled down their fire of antagonism and the clouds of fanaticism passed over Acre without any bloody delay. From that time all the Christians have cherished the memory of that signal service and consider themselves under deep gratitude to Agha Effendi in ^{thus} saving the lives of many hundred people. Now it seems to me, we are face to face with the same difficult problem and if the worse threatens us no one can ~~save~~ ^{come} to our salvation save Agha Effendi."

The Master said: "The law of Jihad has ever been a veritable firebrand with which the Ulemas of Islam have threatened the world from time to time. In former ages its moral influence upon the army and the public at large was tremendous, because it placed in the soul of the soldiers an unconquering spiritual motive. They were no more fighting for their country, they were fighting for the religion of God. If any one of them came out of the struggle alive he was satisfied, because he had served ^{his} God and if he fell with the sword or the bullet ^{of the enemy} he ^{believed by} would go to Paradise and enjoy the fruits of a martyred life. Once this law was promulgated by the Sheik-ul-Islam, the power of restraining ^{the} religious fury of the Moslems was entirely out of his hand. Even if he desired he could not bring down the floodgate of fanaticism, till it had spent its fury and force. In these days, the law of Jihad is shorn of much of its spiritual power, because the Mohamadians have become more intelligent and are not easily swept away by a ^{seeming} torrent of prejudices. Some, however, think that the Mohamadan world is divested of much of its former Faith and Zeal on account of clerical innovations. Be it as it may, there is no need of much feverish anxiety on account of Jihad. According to the theological theories of the Ulemas the inhabitants of the world are divided into two classes. The first

class are the "people of the Book" such as Jews, Christians and Mahomedans. The ^{second} class are the infidels, idolaters and polytheists. The "people of the Book" are divided in turn into two groups. The first group are those nations in alliance with the Islamic Powers. These are accounted the friends of Islam and practically receive the same privileges and considerations as the Moslems and the utmost attention is devoted to the protection of their persons and rights. The second group are those nations who are confederated against the Islamic religion and its followers. The Ulemas consider these second groups as the enemy of ^{the} faith, the object of their hatred and worthy foes to fight with by the aid of Allah, exterminate them if possible, clear the earth from their excesses and thus gain the reward of paradise.

"The second class of mankind, being the infidels are also divided into two divisions. The first divisions are those governments who are united with the Islamic Thrones through political treaties. So long as they keep strong the bond of affiliation, with them there must exist no ^{enmity} strife or war. The second division are those people who are ^{leagued} against the Mahomedan Powers. To war with these, they think, and crush their forces, is a religious obligation.

"Moreover there are two kinds of Jihad: minor and major. Minor Jihad means fighting with the enemies of the religion of Islam; major Jihad signifies fighting with the enemy of the self. For this reason the following tradition is recorded from the lips of a god-fearing adept: 'From minor Jihad we have turned our attention to the major Jihad;— that is, we have quitted fighting with the outside enemy and are concentrating our forces on the defeat of the inside foe—the foe of the spirit. This is interpreted as the real Jihad. Consider the condition of a King who has overcome and conquered the East and the West, whose fame has encircled the globe, whose very name strikes terror at the hearts of other rulers but his reason ruled by passion and his heart defeated by greed and lust. He is like a horse on whose back these malevolent qualities are riding, causing him to gallop through marshy fields of heedlessness and craggy heights of egotism. Sultan Salayman has expressed this idea in a fine verse:— 'The lions of the jungle are covered before me and are captives in my hand. But in the hand of self I am like a helpless, panting sparrow

Of I was sure that the people would have listened to my advice, I could have arranged a large meeting and bring together the representatives of the three dominant religions in Syria and propose to them a plan of reconciliation which would have accorded to them untold benefits. However, I know they would have listened with one ear and let it go out by another. On the other hand they are now so pre-occupied with their own ideas that they would not have time to hearken to my message. They are full of ^{concepts} and prejudices. Under these extraordinary circumstances, the speaker before ^{uttering} his matured thoughts must gauge the intelligence and the adaptability of his audience. If he sees they are in a condition of receptivity he will divulge them; but if he feels they will not accept it, it will be considered an act of folly to even open his mouth. During the lifetime of Baha o llah, because of the combinations of a number of favorable spiritual and material conditions the influence of the Cause and its potency was felt by all the inhabitants but during the last few years owing to my absence and devoting my attention to other important affairs and the presence of unforeseen elements the former conditions do not exist. At one time the Mohamadans were holding a festive procession. The Blessed Perfection was in this very room watching it passing by and I was down in the square sitting with Motasaref and other officers. The procession entered from that street and each group stopped before us ^{a few minutes} to play their antics. When the group of sword dancers arrived and started to display their agility, all of them turning their faces towards me cried in unison: "Master! why dost thou not grasp in thy hand the government of Syria? All the ^{officers} heard it and did not utter a word. Although our sovereignty has been and is and will ever be spiritual yet the Power of the Blessed Perfection was so prevalent."

This morning long before sunrise Sheik-or-Rais left for ^{Damascus} and the Beloved was up to bid him farewell. The rest of the day was spent with meeting the strangers and speaking to them. I wish I could write everything the Beloved says in these days but it is simply impossible. Tonight at the supper time he spoke in detail about the enmity of one of the former Motasarrifs of Acca and how God intervened and deposed him from his seemingly secure position.