

Eagles

O servant of God! Through the power of God's love the weak become mighty, the poor become rich, the little bird becomes a great **eagle** soaring on the ethereal wave, the tiny plant grows into a great palm tree. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v1*, p. 63

These three were like **eagles** soaring; they were three stars of the Faith, pulsing with the light of the love of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials of the Faithful*, p. 122

Therefore should every servant of the One God be obedient to the law of love, avoiding all hatred, discord, and strife. We find when we observe nature, that the gentler animals group themselves together into flocks and herds, whereas the savage, ferocious creatures, such as the lion, the tiger, and the wolf, live in wild forests, apart from civilization. Two wolves, or two lions, may live amicably together; but a thousand lambs may share the same fold and a large number of deer can form one herd. Two **eagles** can dwell in the same place, but a thousand doves can gather into one habitation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 139

If in this day a soul shall act according to the precepts and the counsels of God, he will serve as a divine physician to mankind, and like the trump of Israfil,[1] he will call the dead of this contingent world to life; for the confirmations of the Abha Realm are never interrupted, and such a virtuous soul hath, to befriend him, the unfailing help of the Company on high. Thus shall a sorry gnat become an **eagle** in the fulness of his strength, and a feeble sparrow change to a royal falcon in the heights of ancient glory.

[1 Believed to be the angel appointed to sound the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection to raise the dead at the bidding of the Lord.]

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 23

Another of the signs is this, that in His reign justice will be so advanced that righteousness and well-doing will extend from the human even to the animal world -- the snake and the mouse will share one hole, and the **eagle** and the partridge one nest, the lion and the gazelle shall dwell in one pasture, and the wolf and the kid shall drink from one fountain.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 44

Be constantly attached to and seek always the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh for these turn the drop into a sea and convert the gnat into an **eagle**.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 103

So the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles means their attraction by the Christ Spirit, whereby they acquired stability and firmness. Through the spirit of the love of God they gained a new life, and they saw Christ living, helping and protecting them. They were like drops, and they became seas; they were like feeble insects, and they became majestic **eagles**; they were weak and became powerful. They were like mirrors facing the sun; verily, some of the light became manifest in them.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 106

Verily, I, through the grace of my Lord, have never heeded these souls, even to reading their articles, inasmuch as their articles signify no other than the buzzing of flies to the hearing of an **eagle**, or the croaking of a frog of the material world to the ears of the leviathan of the sea of the Kingdom. Is it to be considered as anything? No, by no means! Verily, the **eagle** soareth high in the supreme apex while the flies rumble in the lowest rubbish.

But it is incumbent upon you to block them up as a stone with decisive arguments before which heads are bowed and voices are made humble. God will strengthen you therein. You will surely find these Pharisees in manifest loss. Can one ever prevent the waves of the sea of the Lofty One from rolling? Or is it possible for me to restrain the fragrances of sanctity from diffusion? Or can one withhold the sun from

casting its rays to all regions? No, by no means! Nay, rather such souls make the table sent down from heaven unlawful unto themselves.

How is the bat to be compared with the most great orb which bestows bounty upon all regions! How is the gnat to be compared with the **eagle** soaring in the spacious firmament!

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2, p. 349*

The weak gnat will become the strong royal falcon and the sparrow is transformed into the **eagle** soaring toward the apex of the Ancient Glory.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2, p. 388*

O MY God! O my God! Thou seest me in my lowliness and weakness, occupied with the greatest undertaking, determined to raise Thy word among the masses and to spread Thy teachings among Thy peoples. How can I succeed unless Thou assist me with the breath of the Holy Spirit, help me to triumph by the hosts of Thy glorious kingdom, and shower upon me Thy confirmations, which alone can change a gnat into an **eagle**, a drop of water into rivers and seas, and an atom into lights and suns? O my Lord! Assist me with Thy triumphant and effective might, so that my tongue may utter Thy praises and attributes among all people and my soul overflow with the wine of Thy love and knowledge.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 72*

And if, confirmed by the Creator, the lover escapes from the claws of the **eagle** of love, he will enter THE VALLEY OF KNOWLEDGE and come out of doubt into certitude, and turn from the darkness of illusion to the guiding light of the fear of God. His inner eyes will open and he will privily converse with his Beloved; he will set ajar the gate of truth and piety, and shut the doors of vain imaginings.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys, p. 11*

By Myself, the True One! Were His servants to know Him as He is to be known, they would all sever themselves from everything, and would make themselves subject to Him, their King, and the sultans would abandon their crowns and hasten toward His direction in the path of His good-pleasure; but since He was hidden from them, they have fixed their gaze upon others beside, and are flying with the wings of **eagles**, in the sky of their superstitions and imaginations.

Compilations, *Baha'i Scriptures, p. 205*

Make me victorious through the armies of Thy Supreme Kingdom and encircle me with Thy confirmations, which shall make the moth the **eagle**, the drop the river and the seas, and the scintillas the suns and the moons!

Compilations, *Baha'i Scriptures, p. 513*

"O my God! O my God! Thou sees me in my lowliness and weakness, occupied with the greatest undertaking, determined to raise Thy word among the masses and to spread Thy teachings among Thy peoples. How can I succeed unless Thou assist me with the breath of the Holy Spirit, help me to triumph by the hosts of Thy glorious kingdom, and shower upon me Thy confirmations, which alone can change a gnat into an **eagle**, a drop of water into rivers and seas, and an atom into lights and suns? O my Lord! Assist me with Thy triumphant and effective might, so that my tongue may utter Thy praises and attributes among all people and my soul overflow with the wine of Thy love and knowledge.

"Thou art the Omnipotent and the Doer of whatsoever Thou willest.

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan, 1977 Edition, p. 68, Compilations, Quickeners of Mankind, p.*

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The monument erected on the grave of the beloved Guardian was completed just two days before the anniversary of his passing; the gleaming pillar of pure white Carrara marble, resting on a base of three steps and surmounted by a Corinthian capital bearing a globe of the world, all of the same stone, rose up against the grey autumn skies of London, in its simplicity and beauty a befitting memorial to that great being who himself created so much beauty on the slopes of Mt. Carmel and around the Holiest Spot on this planet, the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh. Perched, as if about to take off in flight, or just settling from the skies,

a gilded bronze **eagle**, the emblem of so many victories, crowns the monument. A dignified white stone balustrade, surmounted at the four corners by ornate stone urns, encloses the inner garden where the grave lies; adjoining this sanctuary, and constituting its approach, is a second larger garden surrounded by a red brick wall; a red path stretches from the two white steps leading down from the inner garden straight to the beautiful gilded wrought iron gates at the bottom of the second garden-which constitute the main entrance to the Guardian's resting-place. On either side of these gates two cypress trees, reminiscent of the hundreds of cypress trees the Guardian himself planted in the Shrine gardens at the World Centre of the Faith, stand guard. Two lovely weeping holly trees, two white pedestals with white Carrara marble vases planted with flowers, decorate the grounds as one approaches, through this outer garden, that sacred spot where the Beloved of our hearts is laid to rest. Many hundreds of Bahá'ís have already made a pilgrimage to this shrine. Many hundreds of non-Bahá'ís have likewise visited it, drawn by the powerful spirit they feel there, attracted by what they see in the faces of the believers who come there to pray, and by the abundance of radiant flowers which constantly surround the foot of the monument. *Custodians, Ministry of the Custodians, p. 135*

This is also a mark of recognition of the power of the Hand of Omnipotence to turn gnats into **eagles**. His bounties embolden us. Broken-winged birds are we; yet, with His assurances resounding in our souls, we soar to ever greater heights in His service. "I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty!" He declares, benevolently adding: "I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight." How then can we fail?

We here make this vow: With a stirring history of divine support behind us and a clear vision of unfolding destiny before us, we move onward, renewed, reconsecrated, resolute, until the consciousness of every human being has been touched by the knowledge of God's triumphant Faith. And, intoning the expectant words of His Martyr-Herald, we exclaim: "Exalted be His glory, and magnified be His might, and sanctified be His holiness, and glorified be His grandeur, and lauded be His ways!" *The Universal House of Justice, A Wider Horizon, Selected Letters 1983-1992, p. 240*

All the signs of the times indicate that we are at the dawn of a new era in the history of mankind. Hitherto the young **eagle** of humanity has clung to the old aerie in the solid rock of selfishness and materialism. Its attempts to use its wings have been timid and tentative. It has had restless longings for something still unattained. More and more it has been chafing in the confinement of the old dogmas and orthodoxies. But now the era of confinement is at an end, and it can launch on the wings of faith and reason into the higher realms of spiritual love and truth. It will no longer be earthbound as it was before its wings had grown, but will soar at will to the regions of wide outlook and glorious freedom. One thing is necessary, however, if its flight is to be sure and steady. Its wings must not only be strong, but they must act in perfect harmony and coordination. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says: -- "It cannot fly with one wing alone. If it tries to fly with the wing of religion alone it will land in the slough of superstition, and if it tries to fly with the wing of science alone it will end in the dreary bog of materialism." *Dr. J.E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 209*

As 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said referring to Bahá'u'lláh when confronting His deniers and opposers: "How can darkness assert itself in the Presence of Light? Can a fly attack an **eagle**? Or the shadow defy the sun?" *Howard Colby Ives, Portals to Freedom, p. 96*

"Those of you who are working separately are as ants, but working together you will be as **eagles**; when working separately you will be as drops or little rivulets of water, but when working in union you will be as mighty river carrying the Water of Life into the barren desert places of the world; and," He added, "it is rather dangerous to be an isolated drop; you might be spilt or blown away." *Lady Blomfield, The Chosen Highway, p. 4*

The second section of the book consists of a series of letters written in the aftermath of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing. "Caught in the talons of the **eagle** of sorrow," Munirih Khanum gives voice to her lament at her separation from her beloved.

Misc Baha'i, Munirih - Memoirs and Letters, p. viii

O Baha, Knower of our inmost thoughts,
Thou seest the fire in our souls.
Yet, Thou inquirest not, Thou Self-Subsisting,
After the nightingales so lovingly nurtured by Thee.
My home is in ruins, its foundations destroyed;
I am caught in the talons of the **eagle** of sorrow.
Call me to that other land, by Thy leave,
To build my home in another nest, another tree.
This wide world, this limitless space
without Thee, Beloved One, encages me.
Turn our night into day, O Generous One;
Grant us wings to soar towards Thee.
Bestow upon Haifa a new creation,
Whose eyes will never gaze upon the likes of Thee,
Or behold Thy exalted stature,
Or those life-giving smiles of Thine.
Munirih - *Memoirs and Letters*, p. 58

In 1958 his grave was built of the same dazzling white Carrara marble he had himself chosen for the monuments of his illustrious relatives in Haifa, a simple grave as he would have wished it to be. A single marble column, crowned by a Corinthian capital is surmounted by a globe, the map of Africa facing forward -- for had not the victories won in Africa brought him the greatest joy during that last year of his life? -- and on this globe is a large gilded bronze **eagle**, a reproduction of a beautiful Japanese sculpture of an **eagle** which he greatly admired and which he had placed in his own room. No better emblem than this symbol of victory could have been found for the resting-place of him who had won so many victories as he led the hosts of Bahá'u'lláh's followers on their ceaseless conquests through the five continents of the world. Having, with adamant fortitude in the face of every trial, accomplished "the toilsome task of fixing the pattern, of laying the foundations, of erecting the machinery, and of setting in operation Ruhyyih Khanum, *The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith*, p. 238

Little by little Shoghi Effendi entrusted Mr. Maxwell with many details for beautification of the grounds. Mr. Maxwell, in his turn, produced some of the most outstanding decorative structures, such as the carved stone and wrought-iron main gate to the Shrine gardens, the lesser gates of the Monument gardens, the stone and marble bases of ornamental amphorae, vases and **eagles**, the sets of marble steps connecting the different levels within the grounds, the iron lamp-posts and an infinite number of other embellishments that add to the atmosphere of rare beauty characteristic of all the Bahá'í Holy Places, in Haifa and 'Akká. Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi - Recollections*, p. 61

Cypress trees were planted along the northern aspect of the terrace, new lampposts were ordered in Italy, and later erected, and iron fences, gates, urns, **eagles** and peacocks were placed on marble or stone bases, to enhance the grandeur and the mystic beauty of that blessed spot. Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi - Recollections*, p. 109

One other outstanding and yet most attractive feature of the gardens is provided by decorative objects spread throughout the grounds, in positions where they produce an impressive effect. They include vases, obelisks, urns, fountains and birds, placed on pedestals of dressed local stone or of Carrara marble. Some urns are beautiful examples of Italian carving; others are reproductions of peacocks, **eagles**, or flowers - mostly tulips - made of pewter or other lead alloy, which Shoghi Effendi purchased from time to time in Europe. They are fine works of art endowed with graceful elegance which add considerably to the beauty and magnificence of the gardens surrounding the Shrine. I well remember the eagerness of Shoghi Effendi in placing such ornamentations as soon as the ground of the terrace was made ready. Often I was charged with the purchase in Italy of pedestals, marble blocks, columns, and bird-baths, and with making sure that such valuable ornamentations were securely fastened to their bases, to discourage souvenir hunters. Visitors or pilgrims would often ask the meaning of peacocks and **eagles** situated in the proximity of the Shrine, imagining that perhaps an esoteric or mystical significance was connected with the Bahá'í Revelation. The beloved Guardian, at times much amused, always

infinitely patient, would explain how in ancient Persian literature the peacock was considered the symbol of eternal life, while the **eagle** he considered the symbol of victory. Therefore they were befitting ornaments to decorate the earth ennobled by the 'Dust' of the Martyr-Prophet, the Báb, Whose ancient roots stemmed from the land of Fars Persia.

Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi - Recollections*

Here I would like to add that on each of the two side platforms of the main entrance staircase Shoghi Effendi wanted to place a large marble **eagle**, for which sketches and scale drawings were made and approved: the two **eagles** having semi-spread wings, ready to fly. One day a cablegram from him was received in which the plan for the **eagles** was abandoned. In their place there are now two beautiful wrought-iron torch holders, bought by Shoghi Effendi, which have been transformed into electric beacons - a luminous and friendly welcome to those who approach the Archives after sundown; the simulated glass flames were specially made in Murano, Venice, Italy.

Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi - Recollections*

Placed upon the capital is a globe of the same marble, representing our planet, and traced in low relief with the various continents. It is oriented in such a way that the continent of Africa faces east towards the Qiblah of our Faith, for Africa was one of the continents visited and much loved by Shoghi Effendi. Perched on top of this globe is a gilded, bronze adult **eagle**, ready to start its flight, with one wing fully extended and the other in the process of opening. Both the **eagle** and the inscription engraved on the body of the column, half-way between the base and the capital, also face the Qiblah.

The reason the **eagle** was placed there is twofold: Shoghi Effendi deeply admired **eagles** because, as he often stated, 'the **eagle** is the symbol of victory', and for this reason he had placed many marble and lead **eagles** upon pedestals around the Bahá'í gardens both on Mt. Carmel and at Bahji. Moreover, in his room he had a silver **eagle** of Japanese origin, mounted upon a piece of hardwood simulating a rock, and this he much admired for its beauty, faultless execution and verisimilitude.

Later, this decorative trophy was brought to Italy and delivered to me. I entrusted it to a sculptor who reproduced the **eagle** - enlarged six times - first in clay, and then in gypsum. It was then cast in bronze, electroplated in silver, and taken to Florence for fire-gilding.

Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi - Recollections*, p. 184