**Dorothy Baker**

When Dorothy Beecher was 13 years old, her grandmother took her to New York to see the Master ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Dorothy was terrified. Normally a happy child, she was also psychic; events of extreme emotion caused her to tremble. Her parents were not Bahá'ís, and young Dorothy knew little of her grandmother's faith, yet she sensed that something of a tremendous nature was about to occur. As she and her grandmother entered the room, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá greeted Mother Beecher but made no overture to Dorothy other than to motion for her to sit on a footstool at His feet, facing the audience. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke Dorothy turned slightly on her stool, peering at Him from the corners of her eyes. The longer He spoke, the more she turned until, toward the end of the talk, she was gazing at Him in adoration. There was, however, no verbal communication between them.

Several days later Dorothy told her grandmother, "I want to write to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá." "Well, I think you should," Mother Beecher replied. Shortly afterward a note arrived. In tiny handwriting it said, "Oh, dearest child. I will pray that your great desire may be fulfilled and that you serve this Cause." Mother Beecher became ill a day or two later, but received word that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wished to see her. Hurrying from her sick-bed, she asked, "What have I done?" "I called you," the Master said, "to tell you that your granddaughter is my own daughter. You must train her for me."

Mother Beecher's life was dedicated to the Bahá'í Faith and to her granddaughter; she was conscientious in training the girl in the teachings, especially during the summers at Green Acre School in Maine. On or about her 15th birthday, Dorothy declared her acceptance of the Word of Bahá’u’lláh.

Dorothy was educated at the Montclair Normal College in New Jersey and graduated in 1918. She accepted a position in the Newark public school system. In September 1920, she met Frank Baker, a very nice middle-aged man, Dorothy thought, with two children. On June 21, 1921, they were married at Budd Lake, New Jersey. Dorothy not only had a husband, she was now the mother of two young children, Conrad and Sally. Discipline was difficult: "You're not our mother," they would complain. Before long it would be, "Oh, mother, I love you so." Their own daughter, Winifred Louise, was born on May 24, 1922 and the family settled in Buffalo, New York, where William King Baker was born on November 26, 1923. In 1926 Dorothy was elected to serve on the Spiritual Assembly of Buffalo. The family moved to Lima, Ohio in 1927. The next year, Dorothy went to the Convention in Wilmette. She sat in the front row of Foundation Hall listening to the reports of the past year's Bahá'í activities. She felt ill and more than a little upset. Leaving the hall, she walked out to the cornerstone, the limestone rock that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Himself had placed in the ground some 17 years before. Dorothy never forgot those moments at the cornerstone. It was then that she laid her heart at the feet of her Beloved.

Back in Lima, Dorothy immersed herself in learning more about the teachings, studying the words of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with Mother Beecher for an hour or more each day. In 1932, Mother Beecher passed away. The Bakers began holding informal meetings in their home about a month after Mother Beecher's passing in August 1932, meetings at which Dorothy gave one-hour talks that were followed by question-and answer sessions with as many as 40 people seeking to learn more about this Faith. Her life was now dedicated to teaching, including three years of summer schools at Louhelen, and trips to Columbia and Venezuela, and Europe.

On December 24, 1951, a cablegram came from Shoghi Effendi naming Dorothy Baker a Hand of the Cause of God. Dorothy lost her voice. For three days she had laryngitis. Her duties as a Hand took her all over the world, Africa and India.

On January 10, 1954, Dorothy was en route home from India. Over the Mediterranean island of Elba the plane exploded. There were no survivors; only a Bahá'í pamphlet floated on the water. A friend reported that Dorothy had appeared to him in a dream, saying, "It's all right. I'm with my Lord. Don't worry. I wasn't on that plane at all. I was with Bahá’u’lláh the whole time." Dorothy Beecher Baker's worldly mission had ended at age 55.