

Intergenerational Responses to the Persecution of the Baha'is of Iran

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Persecution and torture in physical and psychological forms have been associated with religious and societal movements throughout history. In view of the fact that this chapter examines the psychological and spiritual dimensions of persecution based on the Baha'i teachings, and in particular explores the impact of persecution and atrocities on the Baha'is of Iran, it is necessary to briefly acquaint the readers with the Baha'i faith.

Founded in 1844, the Baha'i faith is the youngest and among the fastest growing of the world's independent religions. With followers in over 233 countries and dependent territories, it has become the second most widespread faith, surpassing every religion but Christianity around the globe (Barrett, 1992, p. 269). Its founder, Baha'u'llah (1817–1892), who was born in Iran, was persecuted and banished from His native land and is regarded by Baha'is as the most recent of God's chosen Messengers, including Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Christ, and Mohammed. Baha'u'llah appointed His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921), as His successor and interpreter of His teachings. 'Abdu'l-Baha in His will and testament appointed His grandson Shoghi Effendi as his interpreter and successor.

The Revelation proclaimed by Baha'u'llah, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. . . . The Baha'i Faith recognizes the unity of God and of His Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand-in-hand with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an ordered and progressive society. It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education, abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an auxiliary international language and provides the

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necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace. (Shoghi Effendi, 1938, pp. 44–46)

With the advancement of science and technology, humankind has acquired new skills for inflicting physical and psychological pain and suffering. Torture has been used in different forms and in many countries of the world. According to Amnesty International, the use of “brutal torture and ill-treatment” was practiced in more than ninety countries in 1980 (Turner & Gorst-Unsworth, 1990). The figure has risen considerably in recent years. The 1995 Amnesty International annual report reveals that, despite the extraordinary global political changes since 1989, violations of human rights increased in virtually every category (Wright, 1995). Accordingly, in 1994, torture was documented in at least 120 countries, which is almost two-thirds of the countries of the world. The report indicates that opposition groups and governments no longer try to hide evidence of their atrocities, because they do not believe that the international community will make them pay the price. Sadly, some countries even legislate freedom from prosecution. The human atrocities are not limited to ethnic cleansing, religious persecutions, or political strife. They extend to the family, the basic unit of society, and, more specifically, to women. The Amnesty International report shows that “countless women are battered to death by their husbands, burned alive for bringing ‘disgrace’ on the family, killed for non-payment of dowries, bought and sold in unacknowledged slave markets” (Wright, 1995, p. B1). The report includes the following conclusions:

- At least 54 governments or their agents have carried out extrajudicial executions.
- At least 78 countries have detained or imprisoned prisoners of conscience.
- In 34 countries, prisoners died of poor treatment.
- In 29 countries, people “disappeared” under suspicious circumstances.
- In 36 countries, torture, hostage taking, and deliberate or arbitrary killings were undertaken by armed opposition groups (Wright, 1995).

The Report of the Task Force on Human Rights of the American Psychiatric Association (1985) outlines the techniques of torture used in certain countries, including some in South America, consisting of “beatings; electric shocks; sexual abuse; drugs; underwater submersion; deprivation of food, water and/or sleep; various forms of personal humiliation; confinement to very small spaces; sham executions and death threats against family members” (p. 1393). The Task Force concluded that the impact of these tortures was felt both psychologically and physically. However, the physical effect disappeared earlier, while the psychological impact lasted longer.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: (1) to examine the nature and characteristics of persecution and suffering in the light of current knowledge and the Baha’i teachings as well as to elaborate on tests and trials in personal development and the role of empowerment in overcoming personal adversities; (2) to explore the psychological as well as spiritual dimensions of adversity and martyrdom and to dispel myths and misconceptions about them; and (3) to elaborate on the recent persecution of the Baha’is of Iran as an example of human rights violations in the land where the religion was born. With these objectives in mind, I set out a general outline of the physical and psychological aspects of persecution and suffering. Then, I examine the concept of suffering and martyrdom by bringing individual cases from the lives of persecuted Baha’is of Iran as tangible examples of human atrocities.

TRAUMA OF PERSECUTION: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

Torture is defined as a willful act of infliction of severe pain or suffering (physical or psychological) on a human subject for the purpose of obtaining information, exerting discrimination and punishment, and creating intimidation or coercion against the will of the victim (Turner & Gorst-Unsworth, 1990).

One of the common features of torture is subjugation of the will of the victim by the perpetrator (Turner & Gorst-Unsworth, 1990). For each person who suffers torture and persecution, there are many more who also suffer with them, particularly family and friends. Federico Allodi (1993) refers to one study in which 500 victims of eight hostage-taking episodes were followed up in The Netherlands. In an examination 9 years after the incident, it was reported that 50% of the victims and 29% of the families showed symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, phobias, and psychosomatic symptoms. According to Allodi, victims of persecution experienced the following symptoms:

- Denial is the most common and first defense to appear. Its variants are avoidance, forgetfulness, shifting themes, silences, confusion, and so on.
- Fearfulness and anxiety.
- Feelings of vulnerability, aberration, distress, helplessness, and apocalyptic fear.
- Depression and inability to experience other emotions, particularly love or pleasure.
- Acting out in the form of alcohol or drug abuse.

Traumatized individuals have low tolerance for psychological and physical irritation (van Kolk, 1987). Their reaction to a stressor is either physical aggression toward self or others, or passivity and withdrawal. They may experience emotional excitement or emotional numbing, depending on their personality and their coping defense mechanisms.

Dehumanization of victims is another phenomenon often observed in persecuted subjects. A closer look and deeper reflection on the plight of those who suffered in the Nazi concentration camps during World War II and in the refugee camps in Asia after the Vietnam War or, in more recent times, the tragic events of genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda show that victims of violence were treated as less-than-human objects. They could be entirely innocent, but innocence did not count, because the perpetrators saw virtually everyone else as a real or potential enemy.

Pain and Suffering

Although pain and suffering are often used interchangeably, a distinction between them is necessary. Cassell (1983) states that suffering is usually perceived as a psychological experience, whereas pain is quite often referred to as a physical experience. Patients may tolerate severe pain and not consider it as suffering if they know that the pain is controllable and will end. In contrast, a minor pain may become the source of suffering if that pain stems from a dire and uncontrollable cause such as cancer. In such circumstances, the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness may intensify suffering.

Cassell defines suffering as “the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness and wholeness (or integrity) of the person. Suffering continues until the threat is gone or the integrity of the person can be restored in some other fashion” (p. 522).

Suffering, Masochism, and Fanaticism

Masochism has been described as “pleasure derived from physical or psychological pain inflicted either by oneself or by others” (Stone, 1988, p. 97). Today, it is very tempting and even fashionable to think of contentment in personal suffering as a masochistic response to life crises. Very often, such a judgment is not only inspired by the materialistic orientation of contemporary psychology but also indicates an inability to see beyond the limitations of the present “state-of-the-art” psychology and discover the spiritual dimension of human reality. The power of faith and its effect in the transformation of human character, as noted in each religious epoch, have baffled many behavioral scientists.

I believe that acceptance of pain and suffering for persevering in one’s belief in truth, whether spiritual or scientific, should not be confused with masochism. Scientists who make new discoveries often face the challenge of resistance, rejection, or opposition until the new thesis is proven to be true. Likewise, a person who chooses to tread the path of a new spiritual truth may have to be content with adversities for having dared to be different from those who oppose his or her views. Neither the former nor the latter person intentionally seeks pain and torment for personal satisfaction in the pursuit of perfection. In masochistic pursuit, however, the individual seeks or incites situations where pain or punishment becomes a means of gratification for certain emotional or instinctual needs.

Fanaticism is defined as an excessive and unreasonable enthusiasm or zeal, often involving blind religious fervor and superstitions. When a religious belief departs from logic and proven scientific knowledge, it may very easily lend itself to superstition and fanaticism. However, the Baha’i concept of proclaiming truth is compatible with neither masochism nor fanaticism: It rejects asceticism and intentional infliction of pain upon one’s physical or psychological self. The human body is viewed as a temple of the soul, to be cared for and protected. Moreover, the Baha’i faith teaches harmony between science and religion, and repudiates superstition, fanaticism, and any form of prejudice.

The Baha’i view of suffering differs from that of some other religions in that suffering is not seen as a means for personal salvation or to attain the reward of paradise. Nor is it believed that an individual is born sinful and therefore should suffer. The Baha’i faith teaches nobility of the human being and sees in inevitable suffering a challenge for personal growth. The human soul is believed to be unaffected by physical pain and afflictions (Baha’u’llah & ‘Abdu’l-Baha, 1971). An example of this can be seen in the life of persecuted Baha’is of Iran and early believers of other religions of the world. In spite of every conceivable type of torture and inhuman adversity, they remained calm and content, reflecting many noble attributes. Indeed, undergoing suffering may have transformed their lower and material qualities into higher and spiritual attributes.

In many of these circumstances, the faith and certitude of the victim may empower him or her to endure pain and suffering. But the victim can also become an embodiment of fanatical emotions and prejudices within a certain movement. The question is, then, what is the prime motive and nature of the movement that has led to this struggle? Does it promote an altruistic, mature, and peace-loving attitude toward humanity, or does it encourage a power struggle for personal or political gain? What is the difference between the gentle disciples of Christ, who suffered brutal persecution, and devout followers of Hitler, many of whom also suffered in their plight? The message of the former was a message of true love and fellowship, whereas the dictum of the latter was hate and power. At the root of suffering and adversity, one can find prejudices of many kinds. From Auschwitz to Hiroshima, from Vietnam to Bosnia, from Kampuchea to Lebanon and Rwanda, one can discern the impact of various forms of prejudice disguised in struggles for ethnic cleansing, religious intolerance, or political dominance.

ON MARTYRDOM

The term *martyrdom* has also been misused by various groups for political reasons to exploit opportunities for enhancement of certain objectives toward which a group or society is striving. Thus, the meaning of slaying has been modified and controlled by the societies of the slayer and the slain in order to convey to the world a desired perception of martyrdom or a judicial retribution depending on the suitability of the one that can serve them best (Eliade, 1987). As a result, an IRA (Irish Republican Army) soldier who died of self-imposed starvation in a British jail, or a Muslim suicide bomber who attacked an Israeli military post or public place in the name of Allah, or a self-immolating Buddhist monk in Vietnam can all be declared “martyrs” alongside disciples of Christ or other prophets who were subjected to violent persecution and death. In the former, the “martyrdom” becomes a means to break through the ideological and social boundaries between conflicting groups, which often have a politically or religiously based power, whereas in the latter, it is a form of submission to a higher spiritual power and unifying divine force for which the prophets themselves suffered grievously.

It has been said that “the martyr dies convinced of his or her legitimate authority, an authority challenging that of executioners. . . . Such charismatic authority discards an older order in a breakthrough to a new social and cultural order, often conceived as a spiritual order” (Eliade, 1987, Vol. 11, p. 231). It has furthermore been stated that

with martyrdom, the culture of the minority, its ideology and law, is sanctified, a covenant established, stamped with blood. It is written in Mekhilta, a Jewish interpretative work, that every commandment that the Israelites have not died for is not really established, and every commandment that they have died for will be established among them. (p. 233)

Baha’u’llah advised His believers to act with prudence and care and not volunteer to give their lives. Martyrdom in the path of God is the greatest bounty, provided that it takes place through circumstances beyond one’s control (Taherzadeh, 1987). Indeed, in response to a believer who asked Baha’u’llah whether it was more meritorious to give one’s life for the love of God or to teach the faith with wisdom and the power of utterance, Baha’u’llah replied that the latter was preferable. This view stands in contrast to some of the fundamentalists’ indoctrinations to engage willfully in violent suicide attacks and “martyrdom” to promote their cause. Fundamentalism by itself may be an expression of certain mental attitudes rather than a religious belief per se: “There is a difference between the spiritual message at the core of a religion and the blind expression of that faith grounded in fear” (Nakhjavani, 1990, p. 59). This mental attitude of fanatics is charged with emotions such as hate and rage, culminating in a self-imposed “martyrdom.” In contrast, the pages of history of the persecution and martyrdom of Baha’is show that these individuals, even in the moments before their death, were submissive and prayed that their tormentors and executioners be guided and forgiven (Nabili-Azam, 1932).

Table 1 illustrates reflections on the differing features of true (natural) martyrdom and self-imposed “martyrdom.” It is to be noted, however, that the boundaries separating these two can be extremely elusive and subjective, shrouded in mystery, with many unknown areas yet to be explored.

For example, Bhatia (1995) reports of a 15-year-old Muslim teenager in Gaza City, who planned to strap 8 kilograms of TNT to his body and to blow himself up in Israel. His plan was foiled by his parents a few nights before it was to be carried out. He later admitted to having been indoctrinated by fundamentalist mentors with the notion of “martyrdom” and “special privileges enjoyed by a Muslim who is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of his homeland

Table 1. Differing Features of True and Self-Imposed Martyrdom

Natural martyrs	Self-imposed "martyrs"
Condemned to death due to their refusal to recant their belief.	Not condemned to death. Suicide wilfully planned and often intended to cause death and destruction to others to promote a cause.
Empowered with a universal love and compassion.	Often inspired by hate and instigated to punish or kill those perceived as enemies.
Death is imposed by external forces beyond one's control; true martyrdom is preordained.	Death is chosen by free will to serve dogmatic ideology and is avoidable.
Victim prays for forgiveness and guidance of tormentors.	Victim may pray for victory of self against the evil of those who are wrong.
Faithfulness to covenant rather than the desire to attain paradise is the primary goal.	The reward of paradise is often the motivating force to choose death.
Self-abnegation, detachment, and utter submission to the Will of God are the hallmarks of final hours with martyrs seeking no material power.	Self-righteousness and seeking entitlement with passion to destroy in the name of God or an ideology and search for power as a driving force for the action.
Accepts suffering and sacrifice with altruism and freedom from prejudices toward others.	Accepts suffering and sacrifice for specific religious or political reward and is motivated by prejudices.
Death becomes the ultimate witness to the truth of one's belief when all other alternatives are refused.	Death intended to arouse emotional support for a religious or political ambition.
Acknowledges absolute nothingness and seeks no name or fame save the good pleasure of the Lord.	Seeks power and sympathy in name of "martyrdom" when other attempts to that effect fail.

and Allah" (p. B1). He was so strongly brainwashed by the promise of paradise and a face-to-face encounter with Allah that he could hardly wait. His training included daily learning of the Qur'an by rote. He was instructed to carry a dummy pack of explosives around his waist or his shoulders. In his will, addressed to his parents, he expressed his clear expectation of dying a martyr and consoled them with these words: "Oh parents, rejoice. For by becoming a martyr I have opened the gates of Paradise for you and all other members of our family. Farewell with my hopes of meeting you all soon in Paradise" (p. B1). He later confessed to the Palestinian police in Gaza that he had indeed been serious about blowing himself up, with the aim of killing "as many Jews as possible" (p. B1).

SUFFERING AND HUMAN VALUES

Human values are the highest expression of a person's conviction, integrity, and character. They are the fruits of acquired and innate knowledge and personal development. To defend one's spiritual values in the face of adversity is an act of faith and fulfillment. It has been said the sign of a civilized individual is his or her ability to stand unflinchingly for his or her convictions while recognizing their relativity (Berlin, 1969).

In this connection, Shoghi Effendi (1988) stated:

It is only through suffering that the nobility of character can make itself manifest. The energy we expend in enduring the intolerance of some individuals . . . is not lost. It is trans-

formed into fortitude, steadfastness and magnanimity. . . . Sacrifices in the path of one's religion produces always immortal results, "Out of the ashes rises the phoenix." (p. 603)

RESILIENCE TO ADVERSITY

Although severe life stressors and adversities may increase the risk of emotional disturbances (i.e., depression in the face of personal losses), most people do not succumb to these diseases (i.e., most of those who suffer personal losses do not necessarily become clinically depressed and incapacitated, although they are affected by them). According to Rutter (1985), "Resistance to stress is relative, not absolute; the bases of the resistance are both environmental and constitutional; and the degree of resistance is not a fixed quality—rather it varies over time and according to circumstances" (p. 599). Resistance can also have a spiritual dimension, which has not yet been fully explored in modern psychology. This dimension is based on spiritual education, belief, and insight into the nature of human beings and the purpose of their creation.

Exposure to adversities as they come about in the course of life may improve our adaptational capability in facing life events. Indeed, on the one hand, hardship and difficult experiences of an earlier period of life may serve as a form of psychological vaccination and personal preparation that would strengthen the individual to cope better in the future. On the other hand, unresolved traumatic conflicts of childhood may create a psychological climate that would complicate personal development in later life. These kinds of traumatic experiences requiring treatment should not be confused with hardship and difficulties due to, for example, socio-economic deprivations that many have had to face at some point in life.

Shoghi Effendi (1988), states that through overcoming hardship and tribulation, an essential characteristic of this world, we achieve moral and spiritual development. Using an analogy from Abdu'l-Baha, he compares sorrow to a ploughman's furrow—the deeper the furrow, the greater the harvest.

Recent research studies on the survivors of torture show that repeated exposure to stress may immunize some survivors against subsequent traumatic stress experiences. Social and emotional support by the family and friends plays an important role in protecting against or overcoming traumatic experiences (Basoglu, Paker, & Paker, 1994). Researchers have debated about the impact of stress on individuals and development of PTSD. Although some believe that a person develops a form of neurosis if the stress is strong enough, others maintain that although the stressor is a necessary element, it is not sufficient to cause PTSD in every person exposed to a stressor (Choy & de Bosset, 1992). This shows the complex and multidimensional nature of human vulnerability and resilience to stressful events.

In addition to psychological coping mechanisms, one also needs to come to terms with the reality of the stressful life events and their meaning. This is a process of making an internal adjustment to a difficult problem of an external nature. Depending on educational and cultural attitudes, the coping mechanisms may vary greatly from person to person. In a life crisis of serious proportion, such as a death in the family, the following phases of mourning may take place: shock, denial, despair, recognition, and acceptance. An individual's attitude toward death and belief in life after death will have an important bearing on the ability to cope.

Tolerance and magnanimity have been observed among the early believers of each religion and even among certain pioneers of science who defied opposition with peaceful tolerance and raised questions concerning the validity of stress response theory in the face of life crises. One explanation could be that when the life threat, whether psychological or physical, can be

explained and made sense of in the light of scientific or spiritual conviction, that insight will arouse considerable courage that will, in turn, abate the fear and anxiety created by the threat. Moreover, faith itself is a potent force in which human beings find their "ultimate fulfillment" (Tillich, 1957). With true faith, one sees in an inevitable death a fulfillment of one's spiritual convictions. Thus, faith gives a new meaning to suffering, which can transform fear into joy and despair into hope. The heroic lives of the martyrs, their determination and perseverance for their cause in spite of torture and torments inflicted upon them, testify to the strength of their faith and loftiness of their belief, for which they give their most precious possession: life itself.

The history of religions shows that human tolerance to suffering goes far beyond the psychological formulation of defenses and stress adaptation. In such cases, I think, suffering is neither perceived as a traumatic state of despair, nor as a grievous blow to human defenses. Rather, it is welcomed with faith and contentment. This does not imply that victims of religious persecution are free from pain and sorrow; rather, it suggests that their spiritual conviction and faith have changed their perception and attitude toward suffering, and have empowered them to gain greater tolerance. No one knows with scientific certainty at present how a profound spiritual conviction can raise the physiological threshold to pain and suffering, as neither spirituality nor suffering is an experience that can be measured and quantified biochemically or physiologically.

THE TRIAD OF OPPRESSION—RESILIENCE

On the basis of this analysis, the impact of a stressor such as oppression may depend on the following three factors:

- Intensity of oppression.
- Personal endurance and resilience.
- Spiritual or ideological perception and attitude toward oppression (personal interpretation of the event).

Based on this model, the severity of oppression (e.g., trauma, torment, persecution) may not significantly disturb the subject if he or she is prepared to endure for a cause and finds a meaning in it that would give a purpose to his or her life. Although the severity of oppression directed toward an individual is usually beyond his or her control, resilience and behavioral attitude are important factors within his or her power, and both resilience and attitude are influenced by spiritual or sociocultural beliefs. In this process, the attitude will strengthen the will to endure and to resist the oppression. In concentration camps, those who maintained a hopeful and positive attitude or displayed active resistance are reported to have fared and survived better than those who were passive victims, because the resistance activated self-esteem and contact with the outside world (Berger, 1985). One of the most common forms of resistance in the persecution of the Baha'is of Iran was the refusal of the believers to recant their faith and, instead, actively to proclaim their belief. This refusal angered the authorities, who intensified their repression.

TRANSFORMATION OF HATE INTO LOVE

The mystic transformation of hate into love is the result of a spiritual education free from prejudices, which empowers a person to change. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for one to develop such a capacity for personal transformation without the aid of spiritual insight and faith. This insight and faith can be acquired through the knowledge of and love for God.

Prejudices, whether religious or political, play a powerful role in the perception and suffering of the victim in the mind of the persecutor. Under the influence of political ideology or religious fanaticism, the mind can dissociate the knowledge of pain and suffering from its real feeling and experience. When feeling is dissociated from the reality of perception, and when the conscience is no longer in contact with the mind, the behavioral consequences can be tragic (MacLeish, 1959). A distinguishing feature of responses elicited by the brutal persecution of the Baha'is of Iran is the nonviolent and peaceful attitude of this people in the face of adversity. They reacted with patience and tolerance to aggression and hatred.

The process of transformation of attributes is illustrated by the example of iron, which ordinarily has the qualities of being solid, black, and cold. However, when the same metal absorbs heat from fire, its natural attributes will be sacrificed and transformed into new qualities: its solidity to fluidity, its darkness to light, and its cold to heat. Thus, as the original qualities of iron disappear, the qualities of the fire appear in their place. Likewise, in the fire of ordeals, one sacrifices one's material desires and qualities for spiritual attributes (Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, 1971).

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OF SUFFERING

In the Baha'i writings, trials and tribulations are "preordained" (Baha'u'llah & 'Abdu'l-Baha, 1955). According to Shoghi Effendi (1968) sufferings and privations are blessings in disguise, for they stimulate, purify, and ennoble our inner spiritual forces. Moreover, there is a great wisdom in their occurrence: "Whatsoever comes to pass in the Cause of God, however disquieting in its immediate effects, is fraught with infinite Wisdom and tends ultimately to promote its interests in the world" (p. 27). Submission to the Will of God is an essential attitude of Baha'is who are faced with adversities beyond their control.

In materialistic societies, self-centeredness and material attachment become impediments to one's submission to the greater Will, and therefore discontentment is prevalent. In such an environment, personal contentment is often sought through material qualifications and success rather than through spiritual fulfillment. "Were it not for tests, pure gold could not be distinguished from the impure. Were it not for tests, the courageous could not be separated from the cowardly. Were it not for tests, the people of faithfulness could not be known from the disloyal" (Baha'u'llah & 'Abdu'l-Baha, 1986, p. 87). He (Baha'u'llah, 1985) emphatically adds, "O Son of Man! If adversity befall thee not in My path, how canst thou walk in the ways of them that are content with My pleasure? If trials afflict thee not in thy longing to meet Me, how wilt thou attain the light in thy love for my beauty?" (p. 20). It is interesting to note that our interpretation of tests and trials can be very different from the wisdom inherent in the occurrence of these events. Our judgment is finite and limited, while the divine purpose of these calamities is limitless and infinite.

SUFFERING AND RELIGION

The major religions of the world, at the height of their development, were the source of the renewal of civilization and progress in the material and spiritual affairs of humankind (Hofman, 1960).

The birth of every religion has been marked by fierce opposition to, and oppression of, its followers. Throughout history, we have seen this pattern repeat itself. As the Baha'i Faith is a new religion, the persecution of its followers in Iran is a human experience closer to our time,

making it possible to analyze objectively the tragic events following its inception. Having discussed the nature and characteristics of persecution and adversity in general, the following focuses on the psychological and spiritual responses of persecuted Baha'is of Iran. The manner of response of these individuals and their attitude toward religious atrocities reflects human response to suffering in light of the Baha'i teachings.

Targeted Victims of Persecution

In recent times, various forms of psychological intimidation and torture of the mind have become potent instruments for aggressors in the religious and political arena to crush human will and defenses. Among different psychological methods used to torment, subjugate, intimidate and oppress innocent Baha'is in Iran, the following are but a few.

Torture the Victims

- Mock executions and other acts of terror as an attempt to force Baha'is to recant their faith or admit to false accusations.
- Forced exposure of the Baha'is to the torture of their family members and friends, or to witness the horrifying scene of the lacerated and injured bodies of these victims in order to arouse fear.
- Total solitary confinement in isolated cells (i.e., 1.72 × 2 meters) without verbal contact with anyone, including prison guards, for weeks or even months (Universal House of Justice, 1984). Such sensory deprivation and human isolation for a long period of time usually leads to serious psychological consequences.

Psychological and physical intimidation, threats, and torture of victims were common. Kidnapping prominent Baha'is and leveling false accusations to humiliate the victims and incite the mob were carried out to extend repression.

Terrorizing the Families and Community

- In some cases, after issuing the death sentence of a group of Baha'i prisoners, the government withheld the identity of those condemned, causing enormous psychological stress and anguish among relatives and friends. The relatives were left to speculate constantly and painfully about the fate of their loved ones and possible reunion with them (*The Baha'i Question*, 1993).
- Often, after the execution of Baha'is, family members were not informed, and when the death was eventually discovered, the authorities would refuse them any access to the body, thus increasing the sorrow of the grieving survivors. Many of the martyrs whose bodies were not delivered to the family most likely were subjected to cruel physical torture and injuries prior to death.
- After the victim was executed, his or her house and belongings were confiscated, leaving the surviving spouse and children homeless. To add insult to injury, the survivors of those who were executed by firing squad were ordered to pay for the cost of the bullets that took the lives of their loved ones. Family members in some areas were asked to make regular monthly payments for the expenses of the inmates, another example of contempt for the Baha'is (*The Baha'i Question*, 1993).
- Mobs in some towns or cities attacked Baha'i cemeteries and desecrated graves. This reflects the extent of out-of-control violence. Attacks were also directed toward the Baha'i sacred writings.

Assault on Children

- Baha'i children have also experienced psychological pressure in their neighborhoods by being labeled as the offspring of heretics. Young girls were abducted to be converted to Islam.
- Many Baha'i women or girls were victims of rape and assaults. Some were forced to marry Muslims under Islamic law and were deprived of the right to rear children as Baha'is.
- Hundreds of children were expelled from primary and secondary schools because they refused to recant their faith. This caused significant hardship, and although they were later permitted to return to school, they suffered discrimination and insult. University students were also expelled, some in their final year, and even just prior to their final examination. They continued to be denied admission into Iranian universities.

THE ATTACK OF PERSECUTORS—A PROFILE

Persecution is very often the consequence of racial, economic, political, or religious strife. The primary aims of persecution arising from these sources are twofold: (1) rejection of the belief to invalidate, discredit, or undermine the basic beliefs and precepts of the victim; and (2) rejection of the believer, characterized by physical assaults, torture, imprisonment, starvation, and death, or psychological insults and abuses by means of false accusations, humiliation, threats, and deprivation from personal and social rights and privileges.

In 1981, Professor Manuchihr Hakim, an outstanding, gentle, and much-loved physician, was murdered in his office while caring for patients in Tehran. His assailant posed as a patient who needed medical advice after office hours. Professor Hakim's only "crime" was to be a member of the Baha'i Faith. Five years earlier, he had been decorated by the French government with the Legion of Honor for his humanitarian services. Well known for his scientific endeavors, he graduated from the Medial College of Paris and was cited in the prestigious *Le Rouviere*, the French medical encyclopedia, for his anatomical discoveries (Hakim-Samandari, 1985). As a physician and academician, he served thousands of his sick and suffering fellow citizens with the highest degree of dedication and professional integrity, but even his profile of service to humanity did not spare his life from those who could not come to terms with his belief as a Baha'i. This is more evidence of the terrible influence of blind prejudices that dissociate human virtue and noble accomplishment from personal belief in another religion or ideology.

Steadfastness by the believer can evoke an even greater hatred in the persecutors, as this is seen as a sign of the latter's failure. Distortion of truth and manipulation of public conscience as a means of discrediting the subject and justifying the hatred against the victim is quite common. In such circumstances, the public's ignorance creates an ideal climate for accomplishing fanatical objectives. As an example, in the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran, the principle of equality of the rights of men and women in the Baha'i community, and the fact that there is no segregation of sexes in the Baha'i gatherings, have been attacked by the Muslim clergy as immoral deviation in a society where male domination has been the rule for centuries (*The Baha'i Question*, 1993).

MOTIVES FOR ACCUSATION

Accusations against Baha'is have taken different forms at various stages of the history of this religion in Iran. At one point, Baha'is were accused of being connected to the Russian tsars; at another time they were labeled as servants of British or American imperialism. In

recent times, they have been accused of being agents of Israel and Zionism. The Baha'is were declared to be *mahdur-addamm* ("those whose blood may be shed") (Martin, 1984), or involved in the "corruption of the earth," "warring against God," and so on. Faced with mounting negative world opinion and pressured by the criticism of human rights violations, the Islamic Republic of Iran denied that the Baha'is were being killed because of their religious beliefs. Rather, they stated, they were being punished for the crime of serving as spies of foreign powers. This was a clear concealment of the earlier actions of their revolutionary courts, which sentenced Baha'is to death on religious grounds. Baha'is were viewed as pagans and heretics who were not people of the Book (Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians) and thus must be eliminated. Hence, acts of violence toward Baha'is were sanctioned with the promise of paradise for the perpetrator. The condemned Baha'is reacted with forbearance and compassion, and transcended their physical sorrow and suffering by relying on the Will of God. They embraced their ultimate destiny, an imposed death, and refused to recant their belief. This noble response to the brutal punishment of perpetrators further enraged and frustrated the clergy and government officials, as it was a clear affirmation of faith and reliance on an inner truth that no exterior power could eradicate. Ironically, if the victims had recanted their faith, their "sins" would have been washed away, and they would have been freed with publicity and fanfare. This clearly unmasked the real intention of total extinction of a minority the Islamic regime would neither tolerate nor recognize.

RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION

According to the Baha'i teachings, the creative words of a divine revelation can empower the soul, transform the heart of individuals, and create a new race of people as a result of their unique vision of life. This transformation gives a new meaning and purpose to life that dissipates existential fears and anxieties, replacing them with tolerance and contentment. When the vision of the true purpose of life and its ultimate destiny is blurred with doubts and superstitions, these individuals are no longer able to maintain that sense of security and forbearance at the time of trials and tribulations.

Baha'u'llah (1955) reveals that the suffering his followers experience is preordained to proclaim the Cause of God in this new dispensation and, therefore, empathizes with his followers in their suffering. Moreover, He elucidates that one's love of God will enable one to resist the powers arising against him or her and to overcome any fear. The result is courage and confidence, as observed in the multitude of Baha'is who have experienced torture and atrocity.

He also described a significant association between true love and pain in *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*:

The steed of this Valley (Love) is pain; and if there be no pain this journey will never end. In this station the lover hath no thought save the Beloved, and seeketh no refuge save the Friend. At every moment he offereth a hundred lives in the path of the Loved One, at every step he throweth a thousand heads at the feet of the Beloved. (pp. 8-9)

IMPACT OF PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM ON SURVIVING FAMILY MEMBERS

In view of the fact that intergenerational impact of persecution and martyrdom has not been systematically studied among first-degree relatives of Baha'is who were persecuted and executed in Iran, the following survey was designed and carried out on a sample of popula-

tion affected by the recent persecution of Baha'is of Iran. The survey was not intended, however, to be a large-scale study with exhaustive statistical data and detailed analysis. Such an endeavor would require greater freedom of contact with family members, who are still largely in Iran, than the present sociopolitical climate of oppression toward the Baha'i religious minority permits. In fact, it renders that goal dangerous and unattainable. Thus, the present study is confined to those children and grandchildren, as well as spouses of the Baha'i martyrs, who, during the past two decades, have left Iran and settled in different parts of the world. The author was able to contact some of them who reside in North America in order to accomplish this objective as is outlined later.

The Sample Description

The sample consisted of 27 Persian members of families of victims who were killed by the Islamic Revolutionary Government of Iran from 1979 to 1989. The participants, all of whom were contacted by mail, consisted of 19 children and grandchildren (only 2), and 8 spouses (all wives). The mean age of children and of grandchildren was 33 years, whereas the mean age of wives was 60.12 years. The mean age of the entire sample was 41.03 years. Gender distribution was 19 females and 8 males. The objects of these responses were 17 adult Baha'is who were killed: All but one were men.

Each participant received by mail a structured and uniform questionnaire, and their participation in this survey was entirely voluntary. Only those who agreed to respond through the initial telephone call received the questionnaire and the explanatory letter by mail. Out of 31 survivors who were contacted, 4 declined and 27 responded. One of those who declined, a daughter, indicated that the memories of her father's suffering and execution were too painful to relive. Another, a wife of North American origin, indicated that she did not wish to respond, but no reason was given. The remaining 2 simply did not respond. One of these was a son who had been in Iran at the time of his father's imprisonment and execution and was deeply affected emotionally. All of the respondents were living outside of Iran at the time of contact.

Identification of individuals to participate in this program was through informal contact in the Baha'i Community of Canada. All but 7 respondents were residents of Canada at the time of responding to the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a brief demographic section, followed by five questions, as follows:

1. What do you know or remember about the martyred person in your family before he or she was killed?
2. What are your thoughts and impressions (imagined or perceived) of the moments when he or she was being martyred? (Please answer even if you were not there.)
3. What impression do you have in your mind about him or her after the martyrdom?
4. Do you think that you were affected in any way by his or her martyrdom? Yes __ No __
If the answer is yes, please explain how.
5. What are your thoughts and feelings about those who were responsible for the execution of your martyred family member?

Data Analysis. Study of the responses was conducted on the basis of careful content analysis. There were five variables in this study: four of them were independent variables (questions 1, 2, 3, and 5) and the other (question 4) was a dependent variable. Descriptive findings and analysis are outlined. In the following results, the responses to each question are treated separately.

Results

Knowledge and Memory of the Martyr before Execution. Question 1: What do you know or remember about the martyred person in your family before he or she was killed?

Respondents pointed out attributes and defenses of the deceased person. These attributes, without exception, were positive in nature. Some noted the deceased person's emotional strength and will to persevere. Others described positive affect such as happiness and joy in life. But these are the views of those who lived for years, or most of their lives, with the martyrs, and the impression imprinted upon them is reflected in their statement. Knowledge and memory of survivors of their loved ones who were executed were all positive. Among the positive emotions they recalled of these individuals were a sense of happiness and calmness that prevailed in the days prior to the execution of some of the martyrs. With regard to the will to face the tragic ending of life, the survivors sensed a remarkable courage in their loved ones before their death. This courage has special significance given the fact that each one of the executed persons was offered release from prison should they repudiate their belief in Baha'u'llah, the Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith. Despite this enticing option, the martyrs chose not to recant and remained faithful and submissive to the will of God. This submission is part of the Baha'i teachings to accept suffering in the path of God.

Among the personal attributes of the martyrs, there were a number of noble characteristics reported, such as their eagerness to serve humanity with altruism, their kindness, detachment, devotion to their family, resilience in the face of adversity, love for their Faith, love for life and nature, and deep literary interest. A son whose father was killed wrote that "he taught us from an early age to be useful and serve society to the best of our capability." A young boy depicted the tender memory of his grandfather, who was executed in the city of Tabriz, with these words: "He taught me to love and value nature and everything in creation." Another person described his father as "the best father anybody could ask for . . . kind and full of love for his family and everybody around him."

Thoughts and Images of Execution. Question 2: What are your thoughts and impressions (imagined or perceived) of the moments when he or she was being martyred?

Answers to this question had to be subjective and impressionistic, as no one was allowed to be present at the sites of execution which were mostly done in secret and in some cases after brutal torture (*The Baha'i Question*, 1993).

Several family members experienced emotional pain and agony in the days before or just after the execution. Some described a period of serenity before the storm as they were waiting for the news of the fate of their loved ones. A daughter wrote, "Prior to his martyrdom, emotionally I was in a turmoil. For 3 years, I grieved and had a lot of anxiety. . . . Fortunately his imprisonment was only 2 weeks. Toward the end of his imprisonment, one day, when I was getting home, I suddenly experienced a change in my heart. . . . That change was my surrender to the will of Baha'u'llah. So the next day [when] I was informed about his martyrdom, I easily accepted and did not grieve the way I thought that I would."

A wife, whose husband was arrested and imprisoned, wrote about a deep feeling of calm and serenity she had before the execution, the like of which she had never experienced before. "This was the quiet period before the coming of a violent storm and the silence preceding the fury. I felt the coming of a tempestuous occurrence, an unprecedented event which would change the destiny of mankind. . . . The images of opposing forces of oppression, destruction and calamities on the one hand, and the divine light of glory and majesty on the other, like two theatrical scenes, flashed before my eyes."

Another spouse described her impression of the moments of her husband's execution with these words: "I knew that at the time of his martyrdom, my husband, with full submission and detachment, stepped into the arena of sacrifice. . . . Therefore, we have to accept it wholeheartedly. We have to be thankful that a lover has attained the presence of his Beloved." This reflects a mystic perception of death in the path of God, the outcome of which is leading the lover to his Beloved, God.

Another woman praised her husband's steadfastness and prayerful attitude at the final moments of his life. "It is related that at the very moment my husband faced the bullets of the enemies, he had lifted up his face for prayers and communication with his Beloved (God), for the autopsy showed that the first bullet had struck him in the throat. Such was his joy to offer up his life in the path of his Lord." And as to how she, herself, felt about her husband and his dire fate, she wrote, "I yearned for his life to be spared, and yet I prayed for his steadfastness in the path of Baha'u'llah."

A woman, who was 10 years old at the time of her father's execution, reacted to the news of his death with these words: "I felt such a wave of heat, it was as if I was being scorched in a fire." Another daughter described her reaction by saying, "I felt lost thinking how life without my dad could exist and how it would be. I had and still have many questions about the last days of his life in prison, his thoughts and feelings, his trial, how he faced his firing squad and so on. Although these questions are partly answered, I don't feel the need to know the rest. I believe these questions are born out of human curiosity and mean very little in the great scheme of things."

Not all were comforted with faith and serenity. One daughter noted that after she heard the news of the killing of her father, she went into "shock" and could not believe what had happened. She feared that he felt abandoned in those final hours of his life in prison.

Many expressed their impressions in terms of certain attributes that they assumed characterized their martyr's final hours of life, such as being calm, detached, happy, steadfast, and brave. No adversarial expressions, such as aggression, vengeance, and violence, were noted throughout the responses. One person reported that eyewitnesses (Baha'i and non-Baha'i) reported that the martyr went to his death while chanting prayers. Even an Islamic court authority responsible for his execution admitted to his bravery.

Psychological and Spiritual Imagery of the Victim after Execution. Question 3: What impression do you have in your mind about him or her after the martyrdom?

The immediate response was a sense of loss. "I miss him terribly as 'my dad,'" one said. One woman, now 47 years old, mentioned that although on the logical level she accepted the martyrdom of her father, on the emotional level, even after 14 years, she had not come to grips with it. However, because it was in the path of God, this separation caused less agony than it otherwise would have. Many viewed the martyrdom of their loved one as an honor of which they were proud and felt closer to the martyr after his or her death. They also felt that the principle of obedience to the will of God, enshrined in the Baha'i teachings, enabled them to accept and endure this suffering. As for the victim,, they felt that he or she was spiritually elevated to a new rank and was probably beaming with joy in the world beyond.

Several family members indicated their images of the martyr being happy and peaceful after his or her death and endowed with courage, steadfastness, dignity, and honor.

The Impact of Martyrdom on the Families. Question 4: Do you think that you were affected in any way by his or her martyrdom?

Of 27 respondents, 24 stated that the death of their father, mother, husband, or grandfather affected their lives. Two said it had no effect, and one said he had no response. Of those

who were affected, 10 experienced a negative effect such as being deprived of the person, being abandoned by him or her, missing him or her and feeling sad about his or her absence. Fourteen felt it had a positive effect on them. It caused them to become more mature, more dedicated; it created a spiritual atmosphere, strengthened the person, and empowered the family with unprecedented courage.

The family members reacted to the death of their loved one in both positive and negative ways. For example, one widow said it was a shock for her to learn that her husband had been killed, but on the other hand, it led her to develop patience and forbearance in the face of afflictions. Others felt that the loss inspired them to greater devotion, courage, and steadfastness in their faith. One person who witnessed the mutilated corpses of her husband and companions was inspired by an unprecedented courage and bravery. "For days it seemed as if I moved in a different realm, and to this day, I remember those moments with great joy and longing." She felt this change of her weakness into strength was through the assistance of Providence. The event "changed me into a volcano possessed of such driving power that, fearless and oblivious of all the dangers which surrounded me, I cried out to the truth of this revelation and to the innocence of the martyrs against the onslaught of the oppressors," she remarked.

Another widow, a 67-year-old woman and a mother, described the effect of the martyrdom of her husband in two ways. On the one hand, it created a more spiritual and unifying climate within their family and fostered a strong spirit of faith in her older children. On the other hand, the loss of her husband created a vacuum in their lives:

Deprived of his presence, we felt despondent and abandoned. My youngest son, who was 13 years old at that time and very attached to his father, missed him dearly and remained affected for a long time. It took him a great deal of time to come to understand the significance of the event and the station of those souls who sacrificed their lives in the path of God. I remember very well the day when we had to sell the car which belonged to my husband. On that day (my son) was so unhappy that he wept and did not want us to hand over the car key to the new owner. You can well imagine the depth of our agony and the anguish of our souls.

This human dimension of suffering underlines the other side of the impact of loss of a parental figure and the daily struggle of the spouse and offspring to cope with the brutal consequences of persecution and death.

Reaction toward the Persecutors. Question 5: What are your thoughts and feelings about those who were responsible for the execution of your martyred family member?

Some of the respondents reacted by saying that although initially they had a feeling of hatred and anger, later on, they developed a sense of forgiveness. Others felt that the persecution was part of a greater plan of God to promote His Cause: "He doeth what He willeth." In this plan, the protagonists on the scene of persecution played their role, while submission and acceptance became the lot of those who suffered. One person blamed the cleric system and not the individuals for the tragedy. As a whole, there was no sense of revenge. This is not a denial of underlying anger as much as it is an expression of belief based on tolerance and forgiveness. It also reflects a broader vision of calamity, which is viewed as a disguised blessing that ultimately leads to the expansion of the Faith. For example, a daughter grieving the death of her executed father commented that because of the Divine Plan, "I do not feel any hatred toward those who contaminated their hand with the blood of my father. . . . May God forgive their transgressions. I pray fervently for them."

What is interesting is that several of the respondents reacted initially with anger and hate, but soon these feelings yielded to more positive effects as compassion and forgiveness prevailed. This is a transformation of hate into love. Some left the aggressors to be judged and dealt with by God. Others pitied them for their ignorance.

Of the 27 first-degree family members, 3 declined to forgive and hoped that justice would be done, but felt pity for the perpetrators. There were 2 siblings who lost both of their parents. One stated that she had "absolutely no feeling, since any feeling is too good for anyone who can kill my wonderful parents." Here is a repressed rage and anger that is not allowed any expression, as the tragedy of oppression is too hideous to be confronted with words. Yet her brother, on the same question, spoke of his feeling openly saying, "I have no hate for those responsible for my parents' martyrdom. I feel pity towards these individuals."

One person whose father was executed believed that the perpetrators would experience their own punishment through realization of the truth of the Baha'i faith in this world or in the worlds to come. "Revelation of truth," she pronounced, "to these people will pain their conscience to a degree that death may be an easier choice." The perception of this young woman conveys a profound sense of maturity and vision on the basis of which human conscience will stand on trial at the moment of its awakening to a reality that it refused to acknowledge at the moment of committing the hideous act. Such an enlightened concept releases the persecutee or the relatives from the rage of revenge or hatred.

INTERGENERATIONAL PERCEPTION OF MARTYRDOM: RESPONSES OF GRANDCHILDREN

Among the respondents were 2 grandchildren, 1 male and 1 female, from two different families, who lived or were associated closely with the martyred person during their childhood in Iran. Their responses are analyzed and compared with the reactions of their mothers, who also participated in this study. The grandchildren were less emotionally distraught than their parents and more able to recall fond childhood memories. Both idealized their grandfathers, stating that they wished to strive to attain their nobility of character. With regard to question 4, in one case, the mother denied having been affected by the arrest and execution of her father, while her son stated that he had been deeply affected, wishing to emulate his grandfather. In the second case, both daughter and mother were greatly affected in a very positive way, stating that the experience had caused them to become more peaceful and mature.

Regarding the last question, concerning the attitude toward the persecutors, one grandchild stated that he felt neither anger nor empathy toward the persecutors, while his mother denied hatred and expressed prayerful forgiveness toward them. In the second case, the grandchild felt great anger at first toward her grandfather's executioners for taking him away from her, but later she forgave them. Her mother also had an initial feeling of anger toward her father's executioners, but she, too, decided to leave them to God and to pray for them.

A comparison of the responses of children and grandchildren of the martyrs reflects a difference in perception of and attitude toward forces beyond their control, which may be related to age and personal development. Although the number of grandchildren in this study was limited, their responses, like those of their parents, were guided by their Baha'i belief in the importance of maintaining a peace-loving and forgiving attitude. One might ask, if the grandchildren had not been Baha'is, would their reaction have been the same? It is my hope to repeat this study 5 or 10 years from now, expanding it to a larger number of respondents to see if, with the passage of time, changes in perception occur.

Discussion

This brief survey reflects certain reactions and defenses of wives and children of Baha'is of Iran who were recently executed. For the most part, these defenses included idealization of martyrs and transformation of anger and rage into submission to the Will of God, leading to acceptance. Nevertheless, several respondents admitted experiencing emotional turmoil and agony in the perplexing days and hours prior to execution. Two referred to this period as one of "serenity before the storm." And when the storm struck (announcement of execution), the sudden stroke of grief ultimately yielded to tolerance and contentment, to a greater Will. Indeed, some rejoiced at the victory of the soul over the violent and fatal attack to their loved ones. They praised the martyrs for their courage, steadfastness, and their unflinching determination to remain constant in their faith. But the "storm" was not a messenger of joy for everyone. Some suffered bitterly and, as one person stated, it was like being "scorched in a fire." Particularly intense was the pain of despair affecting the younger children who could not make sense out of the loss of their fathers in the fire of ordeal and fanatic persecution. (It is to be noted that the execution occurred 10–15 years ago and some of the respondents were quite young at the time.)

After the killing, a sense of loss was felt by all, and yet many felt this event was an honor bestowed upon their family. Had the martyrs denied their faith, for which they and their families were being persecuted, and survived, the impact may have been more devastating, as it would have been a rejection of truth.

As a whole, the death of the martyrs in defense of truth enhanced and augmented the affiliation of family members to the Baha'i faith and had a unifying effect on the lives of the survivors. They discovered that love more than hatred could become an instrument to awaken the souls and bind together hearts, allowing the healing process to take place. No doubt Baha'i teachings played a crucial role in bringing about such a peaceful attitude. These positive defenses were ego-syntonic and not ego-alien in this population.

Sigal (1995), in his study of Holocaust survivors, pointed out that "endowment, temperament, or familial environmental factors that preceded the persecution can be advanced to explain these resilience producing traits" (p. 8). This can explain the steadfastness and resilience of the family members prior, during, and after the execution, owing to the educational influences of the teachings of Baha'u'llah. As Viktor Frankl (1963) stated, "Suffering ceases to be suffering in some way at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of sacrifice" (p. 179).

Conclusion

Persecution, suffering, and martyrdom characterize the evolution of world religions, particularly in their early stage of development and expansion. Although there is a general pattern of tolerance and submission to the Will of God in the persecution of the early believers of each religion, it is only recently that we have been able to explore the psychological dimension of these atrocities in relation to their spiritual aspects. The persecution of the adherents of the Baha'i faith, which is the most recent divine religion, allows us to study more closely the attitude of the persecuted individuals, more notably the martyrs close to our time, as well as the reaction of their family members, and to discover the uniqueness of their psychological and spiritual perceptivity and submission to the Will of God and dedication of their lives to humanity. The chapter also outlines the differential features between militant and self-imposed "martyrdom" and real martyrdom. It furthermore delineates different as-

pects of human values, resilience, and responses to various forms of human suffering and adversity. It is hoped that more research will be done in the future to illuminate further this dark side of human suffering in order to appreciate the true spiritual destiny of humankind on this planet.

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