

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh

A Compilation

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PREFACE

This book comprises a compilation of quotations from Scripture—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Bábí, and Bahá'í—bearing on the triple theme of the Covenant of God, the Eternal Covenant, and the Greater and Lesser Covenants.

The quotations from the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Qur'án are concerned with the note of anticipation which overhangs them all. Those from the Bayán, the work of the Báb, derive their chief significance from the heightened awareness of the full glory, so near at hand, of the consummation of the promises of all the prophets in the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh, after the fullest and most cogent statements regarding man's relationship with the divine, in His Will or Book of the Covenant, clearly established 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His eldest son, as His Mystery; the Exemplar of the fully balanced qualities of adult mankind and the Centre of His Covenant. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His turn leaves no doubt in His Will and Testament, here published in full, that after His passing all must turn to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, and to his lineal descendants after him.

There are also several substantial selections from the writings of Shoghi Effendi, chosen to fill out and explain the pattern of development and the themes of man's unfolding social requirements in a world made one by the universal teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. These are shown in smaller type to distinguish the intrinsic value of the statements.

Wherever available, the translations made by Shoghi Effendi of the Writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have been included since they carry a special authenticity. Certain of the Bahá'í Writings suffer considerably from the inadequacy of the translation, notably Bahá'u'lláh's Book of the Covenant (Kitáb-i-'Ahd) and Tablet of the Branch. The reader must make appropriate allowances, realizing his good fortune that so much is available in wholly reliable translation after so short an interval of time has elapsed from the original Authorship.

The book is divided into three distinct but unequal parts. The chapter on Expectancy comprises the selections from the older Scriptures, that on Fulfilment takes in the bulk of the book and includes the passages from the

works of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Finally, the chapter on Denial shows the effects of violation of God's Covenant.

It is hoped that the transcendently important subject of the Covenant, or conditional compact between God and man, will be clarified by this compilation. To this end there have been incorporated not only many passages elucidating the significance of the power of the Covenant and the effects of steadfastness in it and of defection from it, but also certain other quotations that show the reward that is open to mankind. Not only in his full maturity will individual man stand forth unique and spiritually mature, but collectively he will share the full responsibility of service to God in rulership of the entire planet through the Universal House of Justice over which God's vice-regent, the Guardian, will preside.

It is this integrated system of perfectly and organically functioning world order that must crown the work of all the Messengers of God, for this is the instrument through which God will rule mankind. There can be no higher goal for man on this planet in this physical form than attainment of his full share in this work.

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INTRODUCTION

*Say: 'The light hath shone forth from the horizon of Revelation, and the whole earth hath been illumined at the coming of Him Who is the Lord of the Day of the Covenant!'*¹

*The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.*²

*"So firm and mighty is this Covenant," He Who is its appointed Centre has affirmed, "that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like." "It is indubitably clear," He, furthermore, has stated, "that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant." ... And again: "The lamp of the Covenant is the light of the world, and the words traced by the Pen of the Most High a limitless ocean." ... And finally: "The power of the Covenant is as the heat of the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created things on earth. The light of the Covenant, in like manner, is the educator of the minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men."*³

*All created things have their degree, or stage, of maturity.*⁴

Nothing has been created without a special destiny, for every creature has an innate station of attainment.

*For He hath, through irrefutable Texts, entered into a binding Covenant with us all, requiring us to act in accordance with His sacred instructions and counsels.*⁵

The new believers must be deepened in the Covenant. This is really the only source of the fire of the love of God.⁶

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 133–134.

² Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 85.

³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, p. 238–9.

⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 438.

⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 71.

⁶ Shoghi Effendi

The Covenant stands at the core and centre of the “*changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future*”.⁷ It is the Covenant that provides religion with a continuing, firm basis for realization of its true source, pivot, motive-power, and goal. The Covenant is the “strong cord” which binds the creature, man, to the Creator, God.

In this day, this “time of the end”, every false avenue, whether of religion, philosophy, politics, or fantasy, is being explored to the utmost, to the final end of disillusion for the explorers. In contrast, the urgent, vital, essential, pivotal importance of the Covenant stands out for all believers and indeed for all men everywhere, as once did the pillar of fire for the children of Israel—the sole refuge and source of salvation for mankind.

As with almost every other concept of religion, the full meaning of the Covenant has been made known only during this age, through the Bahá’í Faith.

The Oxford Dictionary definition of the word “covenant” is:

“A mutual agreement between two or more people to do or refrain from doing certain acts; the undertaking of either party in such an agreement.”

Its significance in the religious sense would take many lifetimes to expound in its entirety, yet it too can be briefly stated.

The Covenant of religion enshrines a promise by God the fruition of which depends upon the fulfilment by man of certain conditions. These conditions are announced by Bahá’u’lláh Himself, speaking with the accents of God:

O son Of man!

Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.

O Son of man!

I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.

O Son of being!

⁷ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 85.

*Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.*⁸

In these three successive statements of matchless and concentrated brilliance are made dear the fundamentals of Creation in so far as man can apprehend them.

Herein are stated:

The reason why God created man, *“I loved thy creation ...,” “I knew My love for thee ...”*;

What man really is, *“have engraved on thee Mine image ...”*; God’s method whereby He enables man’s soul to unfold its powers and qualities, *“revealed to thee My beauty ...”* through His Self-revelation;

The immutable fact that if man is not attracted by the beauty of the perfections of God, wherever and through whomsoever they appear, his soul cannot but to that extent be deprived, *“If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee ...”*;

Man’s obligation, his necessary response, *“do thou love Me ...,” “Love Me ...”* upon which his reward entirely depends;

The reward that constitutes the fulfilment and very meaning of his existence, *“that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life ...,” “that I may love thee ...”*;

That through service this reward of love is reached, *“know this, O servant ...”*

Indeed the true condition of spiritual dependence of man on God, in and through the mutual relation of love, is made evident. The call to man is clear; clear too is the reward of his response. Within the scope of the freewill of man it lies to bring about either life or deprivation of life, heaven or hell.

Throughout man’s struggle upwards from his earliest beginnings in the days of Adam, the Messengers of God have made known this law of reality, wherever God has established His religion in all parts of the earth, and in whatever form, for *“all are created by God”*. Ever lying at the heart of religion

⁸ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic Nos. 3–5.

has been the law of love for His perfections and beauty. Thus throughout history there have been meek and saintly people in all parts of the world under many different forms of religion, who, by their whole-hearted love and worship of God, have individually achieved this fulfilment and have been endowed with the spiritual gifts, *“the spirit of life”*, pertaining to God’s eternal, heavenly kingdom.

In the earlier stages of the gradual, collective unfoldment of human society no more than this has ever been possible. In the days of man’s immaturity the pull of his earth-bound origin, the selfish propensities of his lower nature, and his constant striving to accumulate the outward ephemeral things of this world have been too strong. They have caused most men to follow the jungle laws of competition and struggle in which each participant suffers defeat in some measure. And this in spite of the constant, reiterated call of God, through His successive Messengers, to live in love, friendship, co-operation each with each.

“By their fruits ye shall know them,” said Jesus, and by their fruits, both outward and inward, social and personal, we can recognize, according to a basic Bahá’í principle, that all the living religions of the world have the same origin and divine foundation; that they are complementary in the aspects of divinity which have been successively revealed through them, and that each holds enshrined in its Scriptures a great Promise. This Promise, but for the fulfilment of which the Founder-Messenger of each might be convicted of speaking falsely, is the coming of a great and perfect Day, the Day of God Himself, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

In this age mankind is called to fulfil the conditions of the Covenant collectively by the building of this Kingdom.

It is with this culmination of the process of social evolution on the planet, analogous to the stage of adult maturity in the individual, that the Bahá’í Faith is directly associated. The conditions of its establishment are the conditions of the Covenant of God in this age. The complexities of a world grown adult are infinitely manifold. Because all men are created different, the opinions of men vary greatly. It is for this reason that there must exist some absolute standard by which men can be reconciled; for otherwise the descent into the anarchy of

the kingdom of expediency is inevitable. It is solely through the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh that this standard will be upraised and maintained.

In the arena of existence, *“the court of objectivity”*, all things are subject to the same organic process of unfoldment under the universal laws of God. To this unfolding process man himself, whether individual or collective, is no exception. He too has degrees or stages of evolution and a condition of full maturity. The achievement of each stage is thus supported by all the forces of the universe. Like a tree, man as an individual can achieve, if he will fulfil the conditions, a personal mature fruition as a developed soul, whether that soul is the fruit of the life on this physical plane or is completed in another spiritual state. Similarly, the mature stage of this planet is the collective fruition of mankind, its highest form and fairest product. The qualities of this unique fruit will become more and more clearly determined as the potentialities latent in collective man are evoked by interaction of wider and deeper fellowship and love, expressed and practised by more and more people integrated into one organic system. Those who find the true essence of religion expressed by their reflection of the love of God in mutual love of fellow-human beings, are the servants of this Covenant of God, the Covenant that is the foundation of unity itself and the sole source of the fire of God's love in this age, the age destined to witness the integration of the whole world.

Each time God has sent a Messenger to declare His Word, men have eventually responded and the salt has been re-seasoned. Each time and in all parts of the earth the salt in the end has lost its savour and imitations have been substituted. Man-made concepts and descriptions replaced the universal reality, but man could not tolerate substitutes for ever. As these, substitutes lost favour, belief in God Himself everywhere ebbed away. The universal loss of savour in this age, the blindness to God's reality, the deafness to the melody of His words, *“the famine of the hearing of the words of the Lord”*, has called for a much greater measure of the outpouring grace of God's bounty than ever before. The need was great, the time ripe, and He, never failing in His mercy, gave to man that greater measure through the Revelation of His two chosen Ones, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. They have, between Them, abolished all that has been, the cause of the barriers between the peoples of the earth and

provided all the necessary means for the establishment of the fairest fruit of the earth, the unification of mankind in “*one universal Cause, one common Faith.*”

The Eternal Covenant of God is the recognition of, and response to, His Ancient Beauty through whomsoever It may be revealed. The complete revelation of that Beauty in the “Day of God” necessitates the complete response of the whole of mankind and the maintenance of the fullest relation of love towards It, through the Centre of that Covenant, Who is appointed to sustain the balance of truth amid the changing relativities of the world.

Of this one Eternal Covenant all other Covenants form a part, whether that between God and His Messengers allotting each His degree of revelation, or those between His Messengers and the faithful, keeping alive for forgetful mankind the fuller promise to come—the “Greater Covenant”, to accept the next Messenger, and the “Lesser Covenant”, of obedience to the appointed head of the divinely established faith.

It is through conscious faith in God and His promises that man is led to practise the right way of life, and it is this faith which constitutes the second birth of spiritual fire and understanding by which individuals attain their personal fulfilment. Awakened to the eternal qualitative life of the spirit, to spirituality, man grows more and more to display his faith in deeds of ever greater worth, and may at last become as a gleaming star in the firmament of eternity. With the fulfilment in this Day of the Eternal Covenant the fruition of the earth is fore-ordained. All men, throughout the planet, will eventually come to show forth that of which they are capable, until the unfolding glories of the earth ever more radiantly reflect the perfections of the true spiritual state, God’s Will done on earth as in heaven.

All things emanate from God, the Creator, are dependent upon Him, and exist to reflect each one a sign of Him; man alone has the potential capacity for reflecting all the signs and attributes of God. Will, as expression of activity, is an attribute of God which man possesses. Through it he can rise to fullest height of his potentiality, knowing Him, and becoming as much like Him as is possible for a dependent being. In proportion to his attainment of his true nature, the shadows of evil (the relative absence of good) are dispersed. This unending purpose is the animating principle of the whole of creation. Indeed

the very meaning of “good” is that which pertains to the advancement of this spiritual unfoldment of life. “*I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly,*” said Jesus, and so it shall be. But this life, for man grown adult, is to be stabilized in a unity founded upon a divine structure of organization, reconciling the expression of the individual conscience with the necessary restraint of the basic authority of the Word of God, and collective responsibility for the whole community, under the guidance of God’s finger through the Centre of His Covenant. For the first time God’s representative will be continually associated with men in the work of safeguarding the interests of the whole earth as one entity and one family acknowledging one Father.

Bahá’u’lláh, “the Blessed Perfection”, “the Most Great Beauty through Whom truth shall be distinguished from error and the wisdom of every command shall be tested”, the complete fulfilment of the age of prophecy, made a provision for the protection of His Cause that was not open to His great Predecessors, for men in those times, our New Testament tells us, were not ready, and could not have borne it. Bahá’u’lláh in unequivocal terms established His own first-born son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in His written Will, the Book of the Covenant, as the Centre of the Covenant of God, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His turn, in His own written Will and Testament, has established Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Cause of God. They, and all the Guardians who will [were supposed to]⁹ succeed Shoghi Effendi, are alone the ones through whom the absolute truth of the Word of Bahá’u’lláh can be known whenever there is need for the authority of God to reconcile the divergent relative opinions of men. The *Will and Testament* of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, providing as it does the Charter of the New World, gives the Guardianship the function of interpretative guidance of man. Shoghi Effendi, “*the blessed and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees*”, combines the lineage of both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh and is “*the priceless pearl*”, fruit of the “*twin surging seas*”. His loving influence and guiding hand are those of the “true brother”.

⁹ Shoghi Effendi did not appoint a Guardian to follow him. The Universal House of Justice was elected in 1963 according to the principles set down by Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi.

“We that rejecteth him hath rejected God.” Those who, after recognition of the full light of God, the perfect beauty of God, wherever expressed, whether through the Messenger Himself, or His Successor, the Centre of His Covenant, have deliberately and with malice turned to deny Them and attack Them, knowing full well what they are doing, but blinded by their selfish ambition, they are the malignant cancers that feed on the body of the Faith of God. Drawing strength from it, built up through it, they are the wolves who batten upon the sheep of the fold, they are the violators of the Covenant about whom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes such clear statements in the last Tablet to America, and in His *Will and Testament*. One who is a Covenant-breaker must first have recognized and loved, and then, like Judas or Yahyá, or Muhammad-‘Alí, allowed personal pride and ambition to take such hold that they consciously work against the Faith of God and have to be turned out from Its fold. They deprive themselves, though they serve a purpose. They must be totally shunned.

With the hereditary office of Guardianship, preserved by the divine safeguards clearly outlined in the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, is coupled the future Universal House of justice¹⁰, the most perfect form of representative government, which will share with the Guardian the privilege of that *“service in love for mankind which is unity with God”*. God will then indeed come to be King and reign on earth, for His perfections will then be put into effect to the utmost possible extent. The revealed text of His Book, containing the fullest measure of the beauty of His revelation, applied at need through the scion of the great line of His Messengers, providing the stability of conservation, together with the perfect democratic instrument, elected, representative of the best of the whole of mankind, ensuring the flexibility necessary to meet the processes of change in the unfolding development of the earth, of a surety these are the twin pillars designed to support the Most Great Peace, the Golden Age of man.

Individually and collectively man will thus attain the promises of God declared in all His Scriptures, and God’s mighty Covenant will be impregably established for ever upon an unassailable foundation, the rock of God’s Word.

1950

¹⁰ The Universal House of Justice was elected in 1963.

The Old Testament

Signs

The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts [shall be] upon every [one that is] proud and lofty, and upon every [one that is] lifted up; and he shall be brought low:¹¹

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.¹²

And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.¹³

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever [in that] which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.¹⁴

They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they [are] the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust [shall be] the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.¹⁵

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

¹¹ Isaiah 2:11–12

¹² Isaiah 60:1–2

¹³ Isaiah 62:2

¹⁴ Isaiah 65:17–19

¹⁵ Isaiah 65:23–25

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame [and] everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, [even] to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.¹⁶

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness [is] great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD [is] near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.¹⁷

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: 12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find [it].¹⁸

For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.¹⁹

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it [is] a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry [land]; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.²⁰

The Covenant

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth [is] mine.²¹

¹⁶ Daniel 12:1–4

¹⁷ Joel 3:13–15

¹⁸ Amos 8:11–12

¹⁹ Zephaniah 3:9

²⁰ Haggai 2:6–7

²¹ Exodus 19:5

The earth [is] the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.²²

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this [is] my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that [is] upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.²³

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.²⁴

And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.²⁵

²² Psalms 24:1–5

²³ Isaiah 59:20–21

²⁴ Jeremiah 31:31–34

²⁵ Jeremiah 32:38–40

He hath showed thee, O man, what [is] good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?²⁶

The promised One

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took [it] from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.²⁷

Give unto the LORD the glory [due] unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let [men] say among the nations, The LORD reigneth. Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that [is] therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the LORD; for [he is] good; for his mercy [endureth] for ever.²⁸

For I know [that] my redeemer liveth, and [that] he shall stand at the latter [day] upon the earth.²⁹

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift [them] up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he [is] the King of glory.³⁰

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.³¹

²⁶ Micah 6:8

²⁷ II Samuel 7:12–16

²⁸ I Chronicles 16:29–34

²⁹ Job 19:25

³⁰ Psalms 24:9–10

³¹ Psalms 50:2

He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgement. ... He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. ... He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers [that] water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. ... Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and [him] that hath no helper. ... His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and [men] shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.³²

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.³³

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of [his] government and peace [there shall be] no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.³⁴

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this [is] our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this [is] the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.³⁵

Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the

³² Psalms 72:2, 4, 6–8, 11–12, 17

³³ Isaiah 2:3–4

³⁴ Isaiah 9:6–7

³⁵ Isaiah 25:9

LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.³⁶

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, [and] the excellency of our God.³⁷

Afterward he brought me to the gate, [even] the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice [was] like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. ... And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect [is] toward the east.³⁸

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment [was] white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne [was like] the fiery flame, [and] his wheels [as] burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgement was set, and the books were opened. ... I saw in the night visions, and, behold, [one] like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom [that] which shall not be destroyed.³⁹

[In] that day [also] he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and [from] the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and [from] mountain to mountain.⁴⁰

³⁶ Isaiah 30:26

³⁷ Isaiah 35:1-2

³⁸ Ezekiel 43:1-2,4

³⁹ Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

⁴⁰ Micah 7:12

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.⁴¹

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.⁴²

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.⁴³

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.⁴⁴

The Branch⁴⁵

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth [shall be] excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.⁴⁶

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and

⁴¹ Habakkuk 2:14

⁴² Zechariah 2:10–11

⁴³ Malachi 3:1

⁴⁴ Malachi 4:2

⁴⁵ In the Old Testament, “The Branch” refers forward to Bahá’u’lláh.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 4:1–2

faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.⁴⁷

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this [is] his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.⁴⁸

Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they [are] men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone [shall be] seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.⁴⁹

And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name [is] The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall

⁴⁷ Isaiah 11:1-9

⁴⁸ Jeremiah 23:5-8

⁴⁹ Zechariah 3:8-10

be between them both.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Zechariah 6:12–13

(a) Words of Christ

When shall these things be?

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these [are] the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.⁵¹

Great tribulations

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here [is] Christ, or there; believe [it] not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were] possible, they shall deceive the very elect.⁵²

Son of man cometh as the lightning

⁵¹ Matthew 24:3–14

⁵² Matthew 24:21–24

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.⁵³

Son of man with power and glory

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.⁵⁴

Gathering and separating the nations

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:⁵⁵

Watch for an unknown hour

But of that day and [that] hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. [For the Son of man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.⁵⁶

As in Noah's day

⁵³ Matthew 24:27

⁵⁴ Matthew 24:29–31

⁵⁵ Matthew 25:31–34

⁵⁶ Mark 13:32–37

And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after [them], nor follow [them]. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one [part] under heaven, shineth unto the other [part] under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed [them] all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.⁵⁷

Watch and pray always

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and [so] that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.⁵⁸

Keep my commandments

If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I [am] in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth

⁵⁷ Luke 17:23–33

⁵⁸ Luke 21:34–36

me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.⁵⁹

Spirit of truth to come

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show [it] unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show [it] unto you.⁶⁰

(b) Words of early followers of Christ

Judge nothing before the time

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.⁶¹

Signs of the last days

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.⁶²

Live soberly and look to the glorious advent

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed

⁵⁹ John 14:15–21

⁶⁰ John 16:12–15

⁶¹ I Corinthians 4:5

⁶² II Timothy 3:1–5

hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;⁶³

As a thief in the night

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.⁶⁴

A new heaven and a new earth

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.⁶⁵

The Glory of God to light the holy city

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb [is] the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither [whatsoever] worketh abomination, or [maketh] a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.⁶⁶

⁶³ Titus 2:11–13

⁶⁴ II Peter 3:10

⁶⁵ Revelation 21:1–5

⁶⁶ Revelation 21:22–27

(a) The Qur'án

The Covenant

O children of Adam! there shall come to you Apostles from among yourselves, rehearsing my signs to you; and whoso shall fear God and do good works, no fear shall be upon them, neither shall they be put to grief. But they who charge our signs with falsehood, and turn away from them in their pride, shall be inmates of the fire: for ever shall they abide therein.⁶⁷

When God entered into covenant with the prophets, he said, “This is the Book and the Wisdom which I give you. Hereafter shall a prophet come unto you to confirm the Scriptures already with you. Ye shall surely believe on him, and ye shall surely aid him. Are ye resolved?” said he, “and do ye accept the covenant on these terms?” They said, “We are resolved;” “Be ye then the witnesses,” said he, “and I will be a witness as well as you. And whoever turneth back after this, these are surely the perverse.”⁶⁸

And remember that we have entered into covenant with the Prophets, and with thee, and with Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus, Son of Mary: and we formed with them a strict covenant,⁶⁹

No change in God's way

Set thou thy face then, as a true convert, towards the Faith which God hath made, and for which He hath made man. No change is there in the creation of God. This is the right Faith, but the greater part of men know it not.⁷⁰

Effect of lapse from faith

O believers! enter completely into the true religion, and follow not the steps of Satan, for he is your declared enemy. But if ye lapse after that our clear signs have come to you, know that God is Mighty, Wise. What can such expect

⁶⁷ Qur'án 7:33–4 (The Heights (Al-Aráf))

⁶⁸ Qur'án 3:75–6 (The Family of Imrán (Al-Imrán))

⁶⁹ Qur'án 33:7 (The Confederates (Al-Ahzáb))

⁷⁰ Qur'án 30:29 (The Romans (Ar-Rúm))

but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds, and the angels also, and their doom be sealed? And to God shall all things return.⁷¹

Understanding the Book

He it is who hath sent down to thee “the Book.” Some of its signs are of themselves perspicuous,—these are the basis of the Book—and others are figurative. But they whose hearts are given to err, follow its figures, craving discord, craving an interpretation; yet none knoweth its interpretation but God. And the stable in knowledge say, “We believe in it: it is all from our Lord.” But none will bear this in mind, save men endued with understanding.⁷²

Need for interpretation

And now have we brought them the Book: with knowledge have we explained it; a guidance and a mercy to them that believe. What have they to wait for now but its interpretation? When its interpretation shall come, they who aforesaid were oblivious of it shall say, “The Prophets of our Lord did indeed bring the truth; shall we have any intercessor to intercede for us? or could we not be sent back? Then would we act otherwise than we have acted.” But they have ruined themselves; and the deities of their own devising have fled from them!⁷³

The gateway

... But between them shall be set a wall with a gateway, within which shall be the Mercy, and in front, without it, the Torment.⁷⁴

The Hour

They will ask thee of the Hour—for what time is its coming fixed? SAY: The knowledge of it is only with my Lord: none shall manifest it in its time but He: it is the burden a of the Heavens and of the Earth: not otherwise than on a sudden will it come on you. They will ask thee as if thou wast privy to it:

⁷¹ Qur’án 2:204–206 (The Cow (Al-Baqarah))

⁷² Qur’án 3:5 (The Family of Imrán (Al-Imrán))

⁷³ Qur’án 7:50–51 (The Heights (Al-Aráf))

⁷⁴ Qur’án 57:13 (The Iron (Al-Hadíd))

SAY: The knowledge of it is with none but God. But most men know not this.⁷⁵

What! Are they sure that the overwhelming chastisement of God shall not come upon them, or that that Hour shall not come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware?⁷⁶

Decree accomplished

Warn them of the day of sighing when the decree shall be accomplished, while they are sunk in heedlessness and while they believe not.⁷⁷

Day of Resurrection

But on the day of resurrection some of you shall deny the others, and some of you shall curse the others; and your abode shall be the fire, and ye shall have none to help.⁷⁸

And every man's fate have we fastened about his neck: and on the day of resurrection will we bring forth to him a book which shall be proffered to him wide open.⁷⁹

Two blasts of trumpet

But now hath it been revealed to thee and to those who flourished before thee,—“Verily, if thou join partners with God, vain shall be all thy work, and thyself shalt be of those who perish. Nay, rather worship God! and be of those who render thanks.” But they have not deemed of God as is His due; for on the resurrection day the whole Earth shall be but his handful, and in his right hand shall the Heavens be folded together. Praise be to Him! and high be He uplifted above the partners they join with Him! And there shall be a blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the Earth shall expire, save those whom God shall vouchsafe to live. Then shall there be another blast on it, and lo! arising they shall gaze around them: And the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord, and the Book shall be set, and the

⁷⁵ Qur'án 7:186–7 (The Heights (Al-Aráf))

⁷⁶ Qur'án 12:107 (Joseph (Yúsuf))

⁷⁷ Qur'án 19:39 (Mary (Maryam))

⁷⁸ Qur'án 29:25 (The Spider (Al-Ankabút))

⁷⁹ Qur'án 17:14 (Children of Israel (Al-Isrá))

prophets shall be brought up, and the witnesses; and judgement shall be given between them with equity; and none shall be wronged: And every soul shall receive as it shall have wrought, for well knoweth He men's actions.⁸⁰

One day, the disturbing trumpet-blast shall disturb it, Which the second blast shall follow: ... Verily, it will be but a single blast,⁸¹

Christianity and the Day of Resurrection

Remember when God said, "O Jesus! verily I will cause thee to die, and will take thee up to myself and deliver thee from those who believe not; and I will place those who follow thee above those who believe not, until the day of resurrection. Then, to me is your return, and wherein ye differ will I decide between you."⁸²

And of those who say, "We are Christians," have we accepted the covenant. But they too have forgotten a part of what they were taught; wherefore we have stirred up enmity and hatred among them that shall last till the day of the Resurrection; and in the end will God tell them of their doings.⁸³

Gathering mankind

O our Lord! For the day of whose coming there is not a doubt, thou wilt surely gather mankind together. Verily, God will not fail the promise.⁸⁴

Rolling up the heavens

On that day we will roll up the heaven as one rolleth up written scrolls. As we made the first creation, so will we bring it forth again. This promise bindeth us; verily, we will perform it.⁸⁵

Coming of the Lord

Aye. But when the earth shall be crushed with crushing, crushing, And thy Lord shall come and the angels rank on rank, And Hell on that day shall be moved up,—Man shall on that day remember himself. But how shall

⁸⁰ Qur'án 39:65–70 (The Crowds (Az-Zumar))

⁸¹ Qur'án 79:6–7, 13 (Those who Tear Out (An-Názi'át))

⁸² Qur'án 3:48 (The Family of Imrán (Al-Imrán))

⁸³ Qur'án 5:17 (The Table Spread (Al-Má'idah))

⁸⁴ Qur'án 3:7 (The Family of Imrán (Al-Imrán))

⁸⁵ Qur'án 21:104 (The Prophets (Al-Anbiyá'))

remembrance help him? He shall say, Oh! would that I had prepared for this my life! On that day none shall punish as God punisheth, And none shall bind with such bonds as He. Oh, thou soul which art at rest, Return to thy Lord, pleased, and pleasing him: Enter thou among my servants, And enter thou my Paradise.⁸⁶

Attaining the Presence of God

It is God who hath reared the Heavens without pillars thou canst behold; then mounted his throne, and imposed laws on the sun and moon: each travelth to its appointed goal. He ordereth all things. He maketh his signs clear, that ye may have firm faith in a meeting with your Lord.⁸⁷

To him who hopeth to attain the Presence of God, the set time of God will surely come. And He is the Hearer, the Knower.⁸⁸

Verily, they who hope not to attain Our Presence, and find their satisfaction in this world's life, and rest on it, and who of Our signs are heedless—these! their abode the fire, in recompense of their deeds!⁸⁹

Then gave We the Book to Moses—complete for Him who should do right, and a decision for all matters, and a guidance, and a mercy, that they might believe in the Presence of their Lord.⁹⁰

They are those who believe not in the signs of the Lord, or that they shall ever attain His Presence. Vain, therefore, are their works; and no weight will We allow them on the Day of Resurrection. This shall be their reward—Hell. Because they were unbelievers, and treated My signs and My Apostles with scorn.⁹¹

Have they not considered within themselves that God hath not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them but for a serious end, and for

⁸⁶ Qur'án 89:22–30 (The Dawn (Al-Fajr))

⁸⁷ Qur'án 13:2 (The Thunder (Ar-Ra'd))

⁸⁸ Qur'án 29:5 quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 116.

⁸⁹ Qur'án 10:7–8 quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 116.

⁹⁰ Qur'án 6:154 quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 117.

⁹¹ Qur'án 18:105–106 quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, page 117

a fixed term? But truly most men believe not that they shall attain the Presence of their Lord.⁹²

Mankind before the Lord

What! Have they no thought that they shall be raised again for the Great Day, the Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds?⁹³

God will perfect His light

Fain would they put out the light of God with their mouths! But though the infidels hate it, God will perfect His light.⁹⁴

The Great Announcement

Of what ask they of one another? Of the great News.⁹⁵

The face of thy Lord shall abide

All on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord shall abide resplendent with majesty and glory.⁹⁶

(b) *Hadīth*

The significance of ‘Akká

I announce unto you a city, on the shores of the sea, white, whose whiteness is pleasing unto God—exalted be He! It is called ‘Akká. He that hath been bitten by one of its fleas is better, in the estimation of God, than he who hath received a grievous blow in the path of God. And he that raiseth therein the call to prayer, his voice will be lifted up unto Paradise. And he that remaineth therein for seven days in the face of the enemy, God will gather him with Khidr—peace be upon Him—and God will protect him from the most great terror on the Day of Resurrection.⁹⁷

⁹² Qur’án 30:8 quoted by Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 117.

⁹³ Qur’án 83:4–6 quoted by Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 117

⁹⁴ Qur’án 9:32 or 61:8 quoted by Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 118.

⁹⁵ Qur’án 78:1–2 (The Tidings (An-Naba’))

⁹⁶ Qur’án 55:26–7 (God, Most Gracious (Ar-Rahmán))

⁹⁷ Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 179.

There are kings and princes in Paradise. The poor of ‘Akká are the kings of Paradise and the princes thereof. A month in ‘Akká is better than a thousand years elsewhere.⁹⁸

Blessed the man that hath visited ‘Akká, and blessed he that hath visited the visitor of ‘Akká.⁹⁹

In ‘Akká are works of supererogation and acts which are beneficial, which God vouchsafed specially unto whomsoever He pleaseth. And he that saith in ‘Akká: ‘Glorified be God, and praise be unto God, and there is none other God but God, and most great is God, and there is no power nor strength except in God, the Exalted, the Mighty,’ God will write down for him a thousand good deeds, and blot out from him a thousand evil deeds, and will uplift him a thousand grades in Paradise, and will forgive him his transgressions. And whoso saith in ‘Akká: ‘I beg forgiveness of God,’ God will forgive all his trespasses. And he that remembereth God in ‘Akká at morn and at eventide, in the night-season and at dawn, is better in the sight of God than he who beareth swords, spears and arms in the path of God—exalted be He!¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 179.

⁹⁹ Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁰ Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 180.

Writings of the Báb
The Báb's cognizance of Himself

I recognize in Thee none other except the 'Great Announcement'—the Announcement voiced by the Concourse on high. By this name, I bear witness, they that circle the Throne of Glory have ever known Thee.¹⁰¹

**The Báb's fulfilment of Greater Covenant and establishment of His own
Covenant**

With each and every Prophet Whom We have sent down in the past, We have established a separate Covenant concerning the Remembrance of God and His Day. Manifest, in the realm of glory and through the power of truth, are the Remembrance of God and His Day before the eyes of the angels that circle His mercy-seat.¹⁰²

The Bayán and the Revelation of Him Whom God will make manifest

Conscious from the very beginning of His twofold mission, as the Bearer of a wholly independent Revelation and the Herald of One still greater than His own, He could not content Himself with the vast number of commentaries, of prayers, of laws and ordinances, of dissertations and epistles, of homilies and orations that had incessantly streamed from His pen. The Greater Covenant into which, as affirmed in His writings, God had, from time immemorial, entered, through the Prophets of all ages, with the whole of mankind, regarding the new-born Revelation, had already been fulfilled. It had now to be supplemented by a Lesser Covenant which He felt bound to make with the entire body of His followers concerning the One Whose advent He characterized as the fruit and ultimate purpose of His Dispensation. Such a Covenant had invariably been the feature of every previous religion. It had existed, under various forms, with varying degrees of emphasis, had always been couched in veiled language, and had been alluded to in cryptic prophecies, in abstruse allegories, in unauthenticated traditions, and in the fragmentary and obscure passages of the sacred Scriptures. In the Bábí Dispensation, however, it was destined to be established in clear and unequivocal language, though not

¹⁰¹ The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 72.

¹⁰² The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 68.

embodied in a separate document. Unlike the Prophets gone before Him, Whose Covenants were shrouded in mystery, unlike Bahá'u'lláh, Whose clearly defined Covenant was incorporated in a specially written Testament, and designated by Him as “*the Book of My Covenant*,” the Báb chose to intersperse His Book of Laws, the Persian Bayán, with unnumbered passages, some designedly obscure, mostly indubitably clear and conclusive, in which He fixes the date of the promised Revelation, extols its virtues, asserts its pre-eminent character, assigns to it unlimited powers and prerogatives, and tears down every barrier that might be an obstacle to its recognition. “He, verily,” Bahá'u'lláh, referring to the Báb in His Kitáb-i-Bádí, has stated, “hath not fallen short of His duty to exhort the people of the Bayán and to deliver unto them His Message. In no age or dispensation hath any Manifestation made mention, in such detail and in such explicit language, of the Manifestation destined to succeed Him.”¹⁰³

For today the Bayán is in the stage of seed; at the beginning of the manifestation of Him Whom God shall make manifest its ultimate perfection will become apparent.¹⁰⁴

Of all the tributes I have paid to Him Who is to come after Me, the greatest is this, My written confession, that no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference to Him in My Book, the Bayán, do justice to His Cause.¹⁰⁵

The year-old germ that holdeth within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of the whole of the Bayán.¹⁰⁶

“A thousand perusals of the Bayán,” He further remarks, “cannot equal the perusal of a single verse to be revealed by ‘Him Whom God shall make manifest.’”¹⁰⁷ ... The Bayán and such as are believers therein yearn more ardently after Him than the yearning of any lover after his beloved ... The Bayán deriveth all its glory from ‘Him Whom God shall make manifest.’ All

¹⁰³ Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, pp. 27–28.

¹⁰⁴ The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁵ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 151.

¹⁰⁷ The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, page 104.

blessing be upon him who believeth in Him and woe betide him that rejecteth His truth.’¹⁰⁸

Better is it for thee to recite but one of the verses of Him Whom God shall make manifest than to set down the whole of the Bayán, for on that Day that one verse can save thee, whereas the entire Bayán cannot save thee.¹⁰⁹

Suffer not yourselves to be shut out as by a veil from God after He hath revealed Himself. For all that hath been exalted in the Bayán is but as a ring upon My hand, and I Myself am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest -glorified be His mention! He turneth it as He pleaseth, for whatsoever He pleaseth, and through whatsoever He pleaseth. He, verily, is the Help in Peril, the Most High.¹¹⁰

The whole of the Bayán is only a leaf amongst the leaves of His Paradise.¹¹¹

Time of that Revelation

For none knoweth the time of the Revelation except God. Whenever it appeareth, all must acknowledge the Point of Truth, and render thanks unto God.¹¹²

Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause, the realities of the created things will not be made manifest. All that thou hast as yet seen is but the stage from the moist germ until We clothed it with flesh. Be patient, until thou beholdest a new creation. Say: ‘Blessed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of Makers!’¹¹³

How to recognize Him

Recognize Him by His verses. The greater your neglect in seeking to know Him, the more grievously will ye be veiled in fire.¹¹⁴

Know thou with absolute certainty, and through the firmly established and most irrevocable decree, that He—exalted be His glory, and magnified be His

¹⁰⁸ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁰⁹ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 153.

¹¹⁰ The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 168.

¹¹¹ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 152 and 158.

¹¹² The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 157.

¹¹³ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 152.

¹¹⁴ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 159.

might, and sanctified be His holiness, and glorified be His grandeur, and lauded be His ways, maketh each thing to be known through its own self; who then can know Him through any one except Himself?¹¹⁵

Recognition and denial

HE—glorified be His mention—resembleth the sun. Were unnumbered mirrors to be placed before it, each would, according to its capacity, reflect the splendour of that sun, and were none to be placed before it, it would still continue to rise and set, and the mirrors alone would be veiled from its light. I, verily, have not fallen short of My duty to admonish that people, and to devise means whereby they may turn towards God, their Lord, and believe in God, their Creator. If, on the day of His Revelation, all that are on earth bear Him allegiance, Mine inmost being will rejoice, inasmuch as all will have attained the summit of their existence, and will have been brought face to face with their Beloved, and will have recognized, to the fullest extent attainable in the world of being, the splendour of Him Who is the Desire of their hearts. If not, My soul will indeed be saddened. I truly have nurtured all things for this purpose. How, then, can anyone be veiled from Him? For this have I called upon God, and will continue to call upon Him. He, verily, is nigh, ready to answer.¹¹⁶

By the righteousness of Him Whose power causeth the seed to germinate and Who breatheth the spirit of life into all things, were I to be assured that in the day of His Manifestation thou wilt deny Him, I would unhesitatingly disown thee and repudiate thy faith If, on the other hand, I be told that a Christian, who beareth no allegiance to My Faith, will believe in Him, the same will I regard as the apple of Mine eye.¹¹⁷

Consecrate Thou, O my God, the whole of this Tree unto Him, that from it may be revealed all the fruits created by God within it for Him through Whom God hath willed to reveal all that He pleaseth. By Thy glory! I have not wished that this Tree should ever bear any branch, leaf, or fruit that would fail to bow down before Him, on the day of His Revelation, or refuse to laud Thee through Him, as beseemeth the glory of His all-glorious Revelation, and the

¹¹⁵ The Báb quoted by Bahá'ú'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 153.

¹¹⁶ The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 156.

¹¹⁷ The Báb quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'ú'lláh*, pp. 62–63, 101.

sublimity of His most sublime Concealment. And shouldst Thou behold, O my God, any branch, leaf, or fruit upon Me that hath failed to bow down before Him, on the day of His Revelation, cut it off, O My God, from that Tree, for it is not of Me, nor shall it return unto Me.¹¹⁸

The Báb's own relation to Him

I, verily, am a believer in Him, and in His Faith, and in His Book, and in His Testimonies, and in His Ways, and in all that proceedeth from Him concerning them. I glory in My kinship with Him, and pride Myself on My belief in Him.¹¹⁹

Glorified art Thou, O My God! Bear Thou witness that, through this Book, I have covenanted with all created things concerning the Mission of Him Whom Thou shalt make manifest, ere the covenant concerning Mine own Mission had been established.¹²⁰

Out of utter nothingness, O great and omnipotent Master, Thou hast, through the celestial potency of Thy might, brought me forth and raised me up to proclaim this Revelation. I have made none other but Thee my trust; I have clung to no will but Thy Will

... O thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days.¹²¹

The Order of Bahá'u'lláh ordained in the Bayán

“Well is it with him,” is His prophetic announcement, “who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán.”¹²²

WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

¹¹⁸ The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, pp. 155–156.

¹¹⁹ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 154.

¹²⁰ The Báb quoted by Bahá'u'lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 160.

¹²¹ The Báb: *Selections from the Báb*, p. 59.

¹²² The Báb quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, p. 25.

(a) Identity and Link with the Báb

Behold how the people of the Bayán have utterly failed to recognize that the sole object of whatsoever My Previous Manifestation and Harbinger of My Beauty hath revealed hath been My Revelation and the proclamation of My Cause. Never—and to this He Who is the Sovereign Truth beareth Me witness—would He have, but for Me, pronounced what He did pronounce.¹²³

Magnify Thou, O Lord my God, Him Who is the Primal Point, the Divine Mystery, the Unseen Essence, the Day-Spring of Divinity, and the Manifestation of Thy Lordship, through Whom all the knowledge of the past and all the knowledge of the future were made plain, through Whom the pearls of Thy hidden wisdom were uncovered, and the mystery of Thy treasured name disclosed, Whom Thou hast appointed as the Announcer of the One through Whose name the letter B and the letter E have been joined and united, through Whom Thy majesty, Thy sovereignty and Thy might were made known, through Whom Thy words have been sent down, and Thy laws set forth with clearness, and Thy signs spread abroad, and Thy Word established, through Whom the hearts of Thy chosen ones were laid bare, and all that were in the heavens and all that were on the earth were gathered together, Whom Thou hast called Alí-Muhammad in the kingdom of Thy names, and the Spirit of Spirits in the Tablets of Thine irrevocable decree, Whom Thou hast invested with Thine own title, unto Whose name all other names have, at Thy bidding and through the power of Thy might, been made to return, and in Whom Thou hast caused all Thine attributes and titles to attain their final consummation. To Him also belong such names as lay hid within Thy stainless tabernacles, in Thine invisible world and Thy sanctified cities.

... Magnify Thou, moreover, such as have believed in Him and in His signs and have turned towards Him, from among those that have acknowledged Thy unity in His Latter Manifestation—a Manifestation whereof He hath made mention in His Tablets, and in His Books, and in His Scriptures, and in all the wondrous verses and gem-like utterances that have descended upon Him. It is this same Manifestation Whose covenant Thou hast bidden Him establish ere He had established His own covenant. He it is Whose praise the Bayán hath

¹²³ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 244–245.

celebrated. In it His excellence hath been extolled, and His truth established, and His sovereignty proclaimed, and His Cause perfected. Blessed is the man that hath turned unto Him, and fulfilled the things He hath commanded, O Thou Who art the Lord of the worlds and the Desire of all them that have known Thee!

... Praised be Thou, O my God, inasmuch as Thou hast aided us to recognize and love Him. I, therefore, beseech Thee by Him and by Them Who are the Day-Springs of Thy Divinity, and the Manifestations of Thy Lordship, and the Treasuries of Thy Revelation, and the Depositories of Thine inspiration, to enable us to serve and obey Him, and to empower us to become the helpers of His Cause and the dispersers of His adversaries. Powerful art Thou to do all that pleaseth Thee. No God is there beside Thee, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the One Whose help is sought by all men!¹²⁴

This is the Day, O my Lord, which Thou didst announce unto all mankind as the Day whereon Thou wouldst reveal Thy Self, and shed Thy radiance, and shine brightly over all Thy creatures. Thou hast, moreover, entered into a covenant with them, in Thy Books, and Thy Scriptures, and Thy Scrolls, and Thy Tablets, concerning Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, and hast appointed the Bayán to be the Herald of this Most Great and all-glorious Manifestation, and this most resplendent and most sublime Appearance.¹²⁵

Thou art He, O my Lord, Who hath, in every line of Thy Book, entered into covenant with them for me, and made it so sure that none of Thy creatures can any longer evade it. Thou didst say—and Thy word is the truth: “One single letter from Him excelleth all that hath been sent down in the Bayán.”¹²⁶

“Had the Primal Point (the Báb) been someone else beside Me as ye claim,” is Bahá’u’lláh’s explicit statement, “and had attained My presence, verily He would have never allowed Himself to be separated from Me, but rather We would have had mutual delights with each other in My Days.” “He Who now voiceth the Word of God,” Bahá’u’lláh again affirms, “is none other except the Primal Point Who hath once again been made manifest.” “He is,” He thus

¹²⁴ Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 84–86.

¹²⁵ Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 275.

¹²⁶ Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 180–181.

refers to Himself in a Tablet addressed to one of the Letters of the Living, “the same as the One Who appeared in the year sixty (AH 1260). This verily is one of His mighty signs.” “Who,” He pleads in the *Súriy-i-Damm*, “will arise to secure the triumph of the Primal Beauty (the Báb) revealed in the countenance of His succeeding Manifestation?”¹²⁷

And when Thou didst purpose to make Thyself known unto men, Thou didst successively reveal the Manifestations of Thy Cause, and ordained each to be a sign of Thy Revelation among Thy people, and the Day-Spring of Thine invisible Self amidst Thy creatures, until the time when, as decreed by Thee, all Thy previous Revelations culminated in Him Whom Thou hast appointed as the Lord of all who are in the heaven of revelation and the kingdom of creation, Him Whom Thou hast established as the Sovereign Lord of all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. He it was Whom Thou hast determined to be the Herald of Thy Most Great Revelation and the Announcer of Thy Most Ancient Splendour. In this Thou hadst no other purpose except to try them who have manifested Thy most excellent titles unto all who are in heaven and on earth. He it was Whom Thou hast commanded to establish His covenant with all created things.¹²⁸

b) He is the King

Testimony fulfilled, proof perfected; fulfilment of Covenant established with everyone in the realms of revelation and creation, and renewal of call to God

I testify, O my God, that this is the Day whereon Thy testimony hath been fulfilled, and Thy clear tokens have been manifested, and Thine utterances have been revealed, and Thy signs have been demonstrated, and the radiance of Thy countenance hath been diffused, and Thy proof hath been perfected, and Thine ascendancy hath been established, and Thy mercy hath overflowed, and the Day-Star of Thy grace hath shone forth with such brilliance that Thou didst manifest Him Who is the Revealer of Thyself and the Treasury of Thy wisdom and the Dawning-Place of Thy majesty and power. Thou didst establish His

¹²⁷ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 138–139.

¹²⁸ Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 128–129.

covenant with every one who hath been created in the kingdoms of earth and heaven and in the realms of revelation and of creation.¹²⁹

Glorified art Thou, O my God! Thou knowest that my sole aim in revealing Thy Cause hath been to reveal Thee and not my self, and to manifest Thy glory rather than my glory. In Thy path, and to attain Thy pleasure, I have scorned rest, joy, delight. At all times and under all conditions my gaze hath been fixed on Thy precepts, and mine eyes bent upon the things Thou hast bidden me observe in Thy Tablets. I have wakened every morning to the light of Thy praise and Thy remembrance, and reached every evening inhaling the fragrances of Thy mercy.

And when the entire creation was stirred up, and the whole earth was convulsed, and the sweet savours of Thy name, the All-Praised, had almost ceased to breathe over Thy realms, and the winds of Thy mercy had well-nigh been stilled throughout Thy dominions, Thou didst, through the power of Thy might, raise me up among Thy servants, and bid me to show forth Thy sovereignty amidst Thy people. Thereupon I arose before all Thy creatures, strengthened by Thy help and Thy power, and summoned all the multitudes unto Thee, and announced unto all Thy servants Thy favours and Thy gifts, and invited them to turn towards this Ocean, every drop of the waters of which crieth out, proclaiming unto all that are in heaven and on earth that He is, in truth, the Fountain of all life, and the Quickener of the entire creation, and the Object of the adoration of all worlds, and the Best-Beloved of every understanding heart, and the Desire of all them that are nigh unto Thee.

Though the fierce winds of the hatred of the wicked doers blew and beat on this Lamp, He was, at no time, in His love for Thy beauty, hindered from shedding the fragrance of His light. As the transgressions committed against Thee waxed greater and greater, my eagerness to reveal Thy Cause correspondingly increased, and as the tribulations deepened—and to this Thy glory beareth me witness—a fuller measure of Thy sovereignty and of Thy power was vouchsafed by me unto Thy creatures.

And finally, I was cast by the transgressors into the prison-city of ‘Akká, and my kindred were made captives in Baghdad. The power of Thy might

¹²⁹ Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 35–36.

beareth me witness, O my God! Every trouble that hath touched me in Thy path hath added to my joy and increased my gladness. I swear by Thee, O Thou Who art the King of Kings! None of the kings of the earth hath power to hinder me from remembering Thee or from extolling Thy virtues. Were they to be leagued—as they have been leagued—against me, and to brandish their sharpest swords and most afflictive spears against me, I would not hesitate to magnify Thy name before all them that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth. Nay rather, I would cry out and say: “This, O my Beloved, is my face which I have offered up for Thy face, and this is my spirit which I have sacrificed for Thy spirit, and this is my blood that seetheth in my veins, in its longing to be shed for love of Thee and in Thy path.”

Though—as Thou beholdest me, O my God—I be dwelling in a place within whose walls no voice can be heard except the sound of the echo, though all the gates of ease and comfort be shut against us, and thick darkness appear to have compassed us on every side, yet my soul hath been so inflamed by its love for Thee, that nothing whatsoever can either quench the fire of its love or abate the consuming flame of its desire. Lifting up its voice, it crieth aloud amidst Thy servants, and calleth them, at all times and under all conditions, unto Thee.

I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, to open the eyes of Thy servants, that they may behold Thee shining above the horizon of Thy majesty and glory, and that they may not be hindered by the croaking of the raven from hearkening to the voice of the Dove of Thy sublime oneness, nor be prevented by the corrupt waters from partaking of the pure wine of Thy bounty and the everlasting streams of Thy gifts.

Gather them, then, together around this Divine Law, the covenant of which Thou hast established with all Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, and Whose ordinances Thou hast written down in Thy Tablets and Thy Scriptures. Raise them up, moreover, to such heights as will enable them to perceive Thy Call.

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 103–106.

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! Look Thou upon this wronged one, who hath been sorely afflicted by the oppressors among Thy creatures and the infidels among Thine enemies, though he himself hath refused to breathe a single breath but by Thy leave and at Thy bidding. I lay asleep on my couch, O my God, when lo, the gentle winds of Thy grace and Thy loving-kindness passed over me, and wakened me through the power of Thy sovereignty and Thy gifts, and bade me arise before Thy servants, and speak forth Thy praise, and glorify Thy word. Thereupon most of Thy people reviled me. I swear by Thy glory, O my God! I never thought that they would show forth such deeds, aware as I am that Thou hast Thyself announced this Revelation unto them in the Scrolls of Thy commandment and the Tablets of Thy decree, and hast covenanted with them concerning this youth in every word sent down by Thee unto Thy creatures and Thy people.

I am bewildered, therefore, O my God, and know not how to act toward them. Every time I hold my peace, and cease to extol Thy wondrous virtues, Thy Spirit impelleth me to cry out before all who are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth; and every time I am still, the breaths wafted from the right hand of Thy will and purpose pass over me, and stir me up, and I find myself to be as a leaf which lieth at the mercy of the winds of Thy decree, and is carried away whithersoever Thou dost permit or command it. Every man of insight who considereth what hath been revealed by me, will be persuaded that Thy Cause is not in my hands, but in Thy hands, and will recognize that the reins of power are held not in my grasp but in Thy grasp, and are subject to Thy sovereign might. And yet, Thou seest, O my God, how the inhabitants of Thy realm have arrayed themselves against me, and inflict upon me every moment of my life what causeth the realities of Thy chosen ones and trusted ones to tremble.¹³¹

**Purpose, promise, desire of all prophets and messengers
now revealed as heralded in all scriptures**

The Revelation which, from time immemorial, hath been acclaimed as the Purpose and Promise of all the Prophets of God, and the most cherished Desire of His Messengers, hath now, by virtue of the pervasive Will of the Almighty

¹³¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 306–307.

and at His irresistible bidding, been revealed unto men. The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures.¹³²

Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One. The Call of God hath been raised, and the light of His countenance hath been lifted up upon men. It behoveth every man to blot out the trace of every idle word from the tablet of his heart, and to gaze, with an open and unbiassed mind, on the signs of His Revelation, the proofs of His Mission, and the tokens of His glory.

Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day.¹³³

The time foreordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled. Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God, and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation. Happy is the man that pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Meditate upon this, O ye beloved of God, and let your ears be attentive unto His Word, so that ye may, by His grace and mercy, drink your fill from the crystal waters of constancy, and become as steadfast and immovable as the mountain in His Cause.¹³⁴

The Best Beloved is come and every hidden thing made known

The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is the sealed Wine of His name. Happy is the man that turneth unto Him, and drinketh his fill, and exclaimeth: “Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of the signs of God!” By the righteousness of the Almighty! Every hidden thing hath been manifested through the power of truth. All the favours of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.¹³⁵

¹³² Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 5.

¹³³ Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 10–11.

¹³⁴ Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 12–13.

¹³⁵ Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 34.

**Highest, final consummation of all past Dispensations unparalleled in past
or future;**

Jehovah, Spirit of Truth, Great Announcement

“I testify before God,” proclaims Bahá’u’lláh, “to the greatness, the inconceivable greatness of this Revelation. Again and again have We in most of Our Tablets borne witness to this truth, that mankind may be roused from its heedlessness.” “In this most mighty Revelation,” He unequivocally announces, “all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation.” “That which hath been made manifest in this pre-eminent, this most exalted Revelation, stands unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like.” “He it is,” referring to Himself He further proclaims, “Who in the Old Testament hath been named Jehovah, Who in the Gospel hath been designated as the Spirit of Truth, and in the Qur’án acclaimed as the Great Announcement.” “But for Him no Divine Messenger would have been invested with the robe of prophethood, nor would any of the sacred scriptures have been revealed. To this bear witness all created things.” “The word which the one true God uttereth in this day, though that word be the most familiar and commonplace of terms, is invested with supreme, with unique distinction.” “The generality of mankind is still immature. Had it acquired sufficient capacity We would have bestowed upon it so great a measure of Our knowledge that all who dwell on earth and in heaven would have found themselves, by virtue of the grace streaming from Our pen, completely independent of all knowledge save the knowledge of God, and would have been securely established upon the throne of abiding tranquillity.”¹³⁶

“Followers of the Gospel,” Bahá’u’lláh addressing the whole of Christendom exclaims, “behold the gates of heaven are flung open. He that had ascended unto it is now come. Give ear to His voice calling aloud over land and sea, announcing to all mankind the advent of this Revelation—a Revelation through the agency of which the Tongue of Grandeur is now proclaiming: ‘Lo, the sacred Pledge hath been fulfilled, for He, the Promised One, is come!’” “The voice of the Son of Man is calling aloud from the sacred vale: ‘Here am I, here am I, O God my God!’ ... whilst from the Burning Bush breaketh forth the

¹³⁶ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 103–104.

cry: ‘Lo, the Desire of the world is made manifest in His transcendent glory!’ The Father hath come. That which ye were promised in the Kingdom of God is fulfilled. This is the Word which the Son veiled when He said to those around Him that at that time they could not bear it ... Verily the Spirit of Truth is come to guide you unto all truth ... He is the One Who glorified the Son and exalted His Cause ...” “The Comforter Whose advent all the scriptures have promised is now come that He may reveal unto you all knowledge and wisdom. Seek Him over the entire surface of the earth, haply ye may find Him.”¹³⁷

King of Days, Most Great Day of God

“This is the King of Days,” He thus extols the age that has witnessed the advent of His Revelation, “the Day that hath seen the coming of the Best-beloved, Him Who through all eternity hath been acclaimed the Desire of the World.” “The world of being shineth in this Day with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation. All created things extol its saving grace and sing its praises. The universe is wrapt in an ecstasy of joy and gladness. The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God. Well is it with him that hath lived to see this Day and hath recognized its station.”¹³⁸

“Seize your chance,” He admonishes His followers, “inasmuch as a fleeting moment in this Day excelleth centuries of a bygone age ... Neither sun nor moon hath witnessed a day such as this ... It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained and may, in a sense, be characterized as God’s appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it.”¹³⁹

World-wide regeneration

“Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.” “This is,” He adds, “the most great, the most

¹³⁷ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 104–105.

¹³⁸ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 106.

¹³⁹ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 107.

joyful tidings imparted by the pen of this wronged One to mankind.” “How great,” He in another passage exclaims, “is the Cause! How staggering the weight of its message! This is the Day of which it hath been said: ‘O my son! verily God will bring everything to light though it were but the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and hidden in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth; for God is subtle, informed of all.’” “By the righteousness of the one true God! If one speck of a jewel be lost and buried beneath a mountain of stones, and lie hidden beyond the seven seas, the Hand of Omnipotence will assuredly reveal it in this day, pure and cleansed from dross.” “He that partaketh of the waters of My Revelation will taste all the incorruptible delights ordained by God from the beginning that hath no beginning to the end that hath no end.” “Every single letter proceeding from Our mouth is endowed with such regenerative power as to enable it to bring into existence a new creation—a creation the magnitude of which is inscrutable to all save God. He verily hath knowledge of all things.” “It is in Our power, should We wish it, to enable a speck of floating dust to generate, in less than the twinkling of an eye, suns of infinite, of unimaginable splendour, to cause a dewdrop to develop into vast and numberless oceans, to infuse into every letter such a force as to empower it to unfold all the knowledge of past and future ages.”¹⁴⁰

God’s Revelation now on unassailable foundation

“The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men’s fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure.”¹⁴¹

Bahá’u’lláh’s relation to God

“Naught is seen in My temple but the Temple of God, and in My beauty but His Beauty, and in My being but His Being, and in My self but His Self, and in My movement but His Movement, and in My acquiescence but His Acquiescence, and in My pen but His Pen, the Mighty, the All-Praised. There

¹⁴⁰ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 107.

¹⁴¹ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 109.

hath not been in My soul but the Truth, and in Myself naught could be seen but God.”¹⁴²

A new race of men

“The day is approaching when God will have, by an act of His Will, raised up a race of men the nature of which is inscrutable to all save God, the All-Powerful, the Self-Subsisting.”¹⁴³

Man’s unique distinction and his purpose

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation ... Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favour, so enduring a bounty.¹⁴⁴

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol.¹⁴⁵

c) *The Covenant*

God’s love, creation, revelation: man’s response and reward

O SON OF MAN!

¹⁴² Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 109.

¹⁴³ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 109–110.

¹⁴⁴ Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 65.

¹⁴⁵ Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 70.

Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.¹⁴⁶

O SON OF MAN!

I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.¹⁴⁷

O SON OF BEING!

Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.¹⁴⁸

O SON OF BEING!

Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not. This is that which hath been destined for thee in Our kingdom above and Our exalted Dominion.¹⁴⁹

Turn away from self

O SON OF MAN!

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.¹⁵⁰

God's three most holy words

O MY FRIENDS!

Have ye forgotten that true and radiant morn, when in those hallowed and blessed surroundings ye were all gathered in My presence beneath the shade of the tree of life, which is planted in the all-glorious paradise? Awe-struck ye listened as I gave utterance to these three most holy words: O friends! Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings. Would ye but sanctify your souls, ye would at this present hour recall that place

¹⁴⁶ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 6.

¹⁵⁰ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 7.

and those surroundings, and the truth of My utterance should be made evident unto all of you.¹⁵¹

Maturity of prayer

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee.¹⁵²

I bear witness to Thy unity and Thy oneness, and that Thou art God, and that there is none other God beside Thee. Thou hast, verily, revealed Thy Cause, fulfilled Thy Covenant, and opened wide the door of Thy grace to all that dwell in heaven and on earth.¹⁵³

O Thou the Desire of the world and the Beloved of the nations! Thou seest me turning toward Thee, and rid of all attachment to anyone save Thee, and clinging to Thy cord, through whose movement the whole creation hath been stirred up.¹⁵⁴

d) God's Purpose

God, His Manifestations and man

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, closed in the face of men. No man's understanding shall ever gain access unto His holy court. As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Every one of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the

¹⁵¹ Bahá'ú'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 19.

¹⁵² Bahá'ú'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 314.

¹⁵³ Bahá'ú'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p.316.

¹⁵⁴ Bahá'ú'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 17.

Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory.¹⁵⁵

God's purpose in sending His Prophets

The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.¹⁵⁶

God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.¹⁵⁷

The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book, nay, of every divinely-revealed verse, is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding, so that peace and tranquillity may be firmly established amongst them. Whatsoever instilleth assurance into the hearts of men, whatsoever exalteth their station or promoteth their contentment, is acceptable in the sight of God. How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfil his high destiny, can attain!¹⁵⁸

They that reflect their glory will, in like manner, continue to exist for evermore, for the Grace of God can never cease from flowing. This is a truth that none can disprove.¹⁵⁹

Duty of man in this Day

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the

¹⁵⁵ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 49–50.

¹⁵⁶ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 299.

¹⁵⁷ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 79–80.

¹⁵⁸ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 206.

¹⁵⁹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 74.

palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure.¹⁶⁰

The tie of servitude established between the worshiper and the adored One, between the creature and the Creator, should in itself be regarded as a token of His gracious favour unto men, and not as an indication of any merit they may possess. To this testifyeth every true and discerning believer.¹⁶¹

Say: O people! The Day, promised unto you in all the Scriptures, is now come. Fear ye God, and withhold not yourselves from recognizing the One Who is the Object of your creation. Hasten ye unto Him. Better is this for you than the world and all that is therein. Would that ye could perceive it!¹⁶²

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine—words of consummate power and wisdom. I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?¹⁶³

e) Man's Part

Man's potentialities all to be manifested in this Day

The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God.¹⁶⁴

Each a prescribed measure manifested through own volition

¹⁶⁰ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 8.

¹⁶¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 193–194.

¹⁶² Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 314.

¹⁶³ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 327–328.

¹⁶⁴ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 340.

Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. Your own acts testify to this truth.¹⁶⁵

Twofold obligation: steadfastness and observance of laws

The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man's supreme distinction, his real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity.

A twofold obligation resteth upon him who hath recognized the Day Spring of the Unity of God, and acknowledged the truth of Him Who is the Manifestation of His oneness. The first is steadfastness in His love, such steadfastness that neither the clamour of the enemy nor the claims of the idle pretender can deter him from cleaving unto Him Who is the Eternal Truth, a steadfastness that taketh no account of them whatever. The second is strict observance of the laws He hath prescribed—laws which He hath always ordained, and will continue to ordain, unto men, and through which the truth may be distinguished and separated from falsehood.¹⁶⁶

Each heart a seat for revelation of His glory

He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants, and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them. This indeed is a token of God's bountiful favour.¹⁶⁷

God's counsels

Strive, O people, that your eyes may be directed towards the mercy of God, that your hearts may be attuned to His wondrous remembrance, that your souls may rest confidently upon His grace and bounty, that your feet may tread the

¹⁶⁵ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 149.

¹⁶⁶ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 289–290.

¹⁶⁷ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 297.

path of His good-pleasure. Such are the counsels which I bequeath unto you. Would that ye might follow My counsels!¹⁶⁸

God's method unendingly

There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favours and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.¹⁶⁹

Station of true believer

“By the sorrows which afflict the beauty of the All-Glorious! Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle's eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. For this reason it hath been decreed that in this earthly life the full measure of the glory of his own station should remain concealed from the eyes of such a believer.” “If the veil be lifted,” He similarly affirms, “and the full glory of the station of those who have turned wholly towards God, and in their love for Him renounced the world, be made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded.”¹⁷⁰

“Fishers of men” to “quickeners of mankind”

Verily, He (Jesus) said: ‘Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.’ In this day, however, We say: ‘Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become quickeners of mankind.’⁷

The Tongue of Grandeur hath, however, in the day of His manifestation proclaimed: “It is not his to boast who loveth his country, but it is his who loveth the world.” Through the power released by these exalted words He hath lent a fresh impulse, and set a new direction, to the birds of men's hearts, and

¹⁶⁸ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 297.

¹⁶⁹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 68–69.

¹⁷⁰ Bahá'u'lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 108.

hath obliterated every trace of restriction and limitation from God's holy Book.¹⁷¹

Justice best beloved

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.¹⁷²

Service of entire human race

That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race.¹⁷³

House of Justice in each city, consultation and divine guidance

The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá [9], and should it exceed this number it doth not matter. They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen. It behoveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly.¹⁷⁴

“It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice,” Bahá'u'lláh, on the other hand, declares in the Eighth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise, “to take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them. God will

¹⁷¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 95–96.

¹⁷² Bahá'u'lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 2.

¹⁷³ Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 250.

¹⁷⁴ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 29.

verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth, and He verily is the Provider, the Omniscient.”¹⁷⁵

Ever-advancing civilization

All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.¹⁷⁶

Divine favour fully vouchsafed

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favour, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favour is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavours in the path of detachment will reveal. In this wise hath the divine favour been fully vouchsafed unto you and unto them that are in heaven and on earth. All praise to God, the Lord of all Worlds.¹⁷⁷

f) The Appointment of the Centre of the Covenant

Tablet of the Branch

He is Eternal in His Abhá Horizon!

Verily, the Cause of God hath come upon the clouds of utterances and the polytheists are in this day in great torment! Verily, the hosts of revelation have descended with banners of inspiration from the heaven of the Tablet in the name of God, the powerful, the mighty! At this time the monotheists all rejoice in the victory of God and His dominion, and the deniers will then be in manifest perplexity.

O ye people! Do ye flee from the mercy of God after it has encompassed the existent things created between the heavens and earths? Beware lest ye prefer your own selves before the mercy of God, and deprive not yourselves thereof! Verily, whosoever turneth away therefrom will be in great loss. Verily, mercy is like unto verses which have descended from the one heaven, and from them the monotheists drink the choice wine of life, whilst the

¹⁷⁵ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁶ Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 215.

¹⁷⁷ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 82.

polytheists drink from the fiery water; and when the verses of God are read unto them, the fire of hatred is enkindled within their breasts. Thus have they preferred their own selves before the mercy of God, and are of those who are heedless.

Enter, O people, beneath the shelter of the Word! Then drink therefrom the choice wine of inner significances and utterances; for therein is hidden the kawthar¹⁷⁸ of the glorious One—and it hath appeared from the horizon of the Will of your Lord, the merciful, with wonderful lights.

Say: Verily, the ocean of pre-existence hath branched forth from this most great Ocean. Blessed, therefore, is he who abides upon Its shores, and is of those who are established thereon. Verily, this most sacred temple of ‘Abhá—the branch of Holiness—hath branched forth from the Sadratu’l-Muntahá.¹⁷⁹ Blessed is whosoever sought shelter beneath it and is of those who rest therein.

Say: Verily, the branch of command hath sprung forth from this root which God hath firmly planted in the ground of the will, the limb of which has been elevated to a station which encompasses all existence. Therefore, exalted be He for this creation, the lofty, the blessed, the inaccessible, the mighty!

O ye people! Draw nigh unto It, and taste the fruits of its knowledge and wisdom on the part of the mighty, the knowing One. Whosoever will not taste thereof shall be deprived of the bounty, even though he hath partaken of all that is in the earth -were ye of those who know.

Say: Verily a word hath gone forth in favour from the most great Tablet and God has adorned It with the mantle of Himself, and made it sovereign over all in the earth and a sign of His grandeur and omnipotence among the creatures; in order that, through it, the people shall praise their Lord, the mighty, the powerful, the wise; and that, through it, they shall glorify their creator and sanctify the self of God which standeth within all things. Verily, this is naught but a Revelation upon the part of the wise, the ancient One!

Say: O people, praise ye God, for its Manifestation, for verily it is the most great favour upon you and the most perfect blessing upon you; and through

¹⁷⁸ Kawthar: lit. abundance. Traditionally, a lake or river in Paradise.

¹⁷⁹ Sadratu’l-Muntahá: the Divine Lote Tree; the tree beyond which there is no passing (i.e. the Manifestation of God).

Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whosoever turns to Him hath surely turned unto God, and whosoever turneth away from Him hath turned away from My beauty, denied My proof and is of those who transgress. Verily, He is the remembrance of God amongst you and His trust within you, and His manifestation unto you and His appearance among the servants who are nigh. Thus have I been commanded to convey to you the message of God, your Creator; and I have delivered to you that of which I was commanded. Whereupon, thereunto testifieth God, then His angels, then His messengers, and then His holy servants.

Inhale the fragrances of the Ridván from His roses and be not of those who are deprived. Appreciate the bounty of God upon you and be not veiled therefrom—and, verily, We have sent Him forth in the temple of man. Thus praise ye the Lord, the Originator of whatsoever He willeth through His wise and inviolable Command!

Verily, those who withhold themselves from the shelter of the Branch are indeed lost in the wilderness of perplexity; and are consumed by the heat of self-desire, and are of those who perish.

Hasten, O people, unto the shelter of God, in order that He may protect you from the heat of the Day whereon none shall find for himself any refuge or shelter except beneath the shelter of His Name, the clement, the forgiving! Clothe yourselves, O people, with the garment of assurance, in order that He may protect you from the dart of doubts and superstitions, and that ye may be of those who are assured in those days wherein none shall ever be assured and none shall be firmly established in the Cause, except by severing himself from all that is possessed by the people and turning unto the holy and radiant Outlook.

O ye people! Do ye take unto yourselves the Jebt¹⁸⁰ as a helper other than God, and do ye seek the Tághút¹⁸¹ as a Lord besides your Lord the almighty, the omnipotent? Forsake, O people, their mention, then hold the chalice of life in

¹⁸⁰ Jebt: Idol worshipped by the ancient Egyptians from which the name Egypt was derived.

¹⁸¹ (ághút: Another idol.

the Name of your Lord, the merciful. Verily, by God, the existent world is quickened through a drop thereof, were ye of those who know.

Say: In that Day there is no refuge for any one save the command of God, and no salvation for any soul but God. Verily, this is the truth and there is naught after truth but manifest error.

Verily, God hath made it incumbent upon every soul to deliver His Cause according to his ability. Thus hath the command been recorded by the finger of might and power upon the Tablet of majesty and greatness.

Whosoever quickens one soul in this Cause is like unto one quickening all the servants and the Lord shall bring him forth in the day of resurrection into the Ridván of oneness, adorned with the Mantle of Himself, the protector, the mighty, the generous! Thus will ye assist your Lord, and naught else save this shall ever be mentioned in this day before God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.

As to thee, O servant, hearken unto the admonition given unto thee in the Tablet; then seek the grace of thy Lord at all times. Then spread the Tablet among those who believe in God and in His verses; so that they may follow that which is contained therein, and be of those who are praiseworthy.

Say: O people, cause no corruption in the earth and dispute not with men; for, verily, this is not worthy of those who have chosen in the shelter of their Lord a station which shall indeed remain secure.

If ye find one athirst, give him to drink from the chalice of Kawthar¹⁸² and Tasnín,¹⁸³ and if ye find one endowed with an attentive ear, read unto him the verses of God, the mighty, the merciful, the compassionate! Unloose the tongue with excellent utterance, then admonish the people if ye find them advancing unto the sanctuary of God; otherwise abandon them unto themselves and forsake them in the abyss of hell. Beware lest ye scatter the pearls of inner significance before every barren, dumb one. Verily, the blind are deprived of witnessing the lights and are unable to distinguish between the stone and the holy, precious pearl.

¹⁸² Kawthar: lit. abundance. Traditionally, a lake or river in Paradise.

¹⁸³ Tasnín: fountain in Paradise.

Verily, wert thou to read the most mighty, wonderful verses to the stone for a thousand years, will it understand, or will they take any effect therein? No! by thy Lord, the merciful, the clement! If thou readest all the verses of God unto the deaf, will he hear a single letter? No! Verily, by the beauty, the mighty, the ancient!

Thus have We delivered unto thee some of the jewels of wisdom and utterance, in order that thou mayest gaze unto the direction of thy Lord and be severed from all the creatures. May the spirit and glory rest upon thee, and upon those who dwell upon the plain of holiness and who remain in the Cause of their Lord in manifest steadfastness!¹⁸⁴

Guardian's exposition of the significance of the Book of the Covenant

A dynamic process, divinely propelled, possessed of undreamt-of potentialities, world-embracing in scope, world-transforming in its ultimate consequences, had been set in motion on that memorable night when the Báb communicated the purpose of His mission to Mullá Husayn in an obscure corner of Shíráz. It acquired a tremendous momentum with the first intimations of Bahá'u'lláh's dawning Revelation amidst the darkness of the Síyáh-Chál¹⁸⁵ of Tihrán. It was further accelerated by the Declaration of His mission on the eve of His banishment from Baghdád. It moved to a climax with the proclamation of that same mission during the tempestuous years of His exile in Adrianople. Its full significance was disclosed when the Author of that Mission issued His historic summonses, appeals and warnings to the kings of the earth and the world's ecclesiastical leaders. It was finally consummated by the laws and ordinances which He formulated, by the principles which He enunciated and by the institutions which He ordained during the concluding years of His ministry in the prison-city of 'Akká.

To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument divinely ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable.

¹⁸⁴ Bahá'u'lláh: *Bahá'i World Faith*, pp. 204–207.

¹⁸⁵ Síyáh-Chál: The Black Pit in the slums of Tihrán where, in August 1853, Bahá'u'lláh was chained in darkness. Entry to the underground dungeon is down three flights of steps.

That instrument Bahá'u'lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant, an institution which He had firmly established prior to His ascension. This same Covenant He had anticipated in His *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, had alluded to it as He bade His last farewell to the members of His family, who had been summoned to His bed-side, in the days immediately preceding His ascension, and had incorporated it in a special document which He designated as “the Book of My Covenant,” and which He entrusted, during His last illness, to His eldest son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Written entirely in His own hand; unsealed, on the ninth day after His ascension in the presence of nine witnesses chosen from amongst His companions and members of His Family; read subsequently, on the afternoon of that same day, before a large company assembled in His Most Holy Tomb, including His sons, some of the Báb’s kinsmen, pilgrims and resident believers, this unique and epoch-making Document, designated by Bahá'u'lláh as His “Most Great Tablet,” and alluded to by Him as the “Crimson Book” in His *“Epistle to the Son of the Wolf,”* can find no parallel in the Scriptures of any previous Dispensation, not excluding that of the Báb Himself. For nowhere in the books pertaining to any of the world’s religious systems, not even among the writings of the Author of the Bábí Revelation, do we find any single document establishing a Covenant endowed with an authority comparable to the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh had Himself instituted.

“So firm and mighty is this Covenant,” He Who is its appointed Centre has affirmed, “that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like.” “It is indubitably clear,” He, furthermore, has stated, “that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.” “Know thou,” He has written, “that the ‘Sure Handle’ mentioned from the foundation of the world in the Books, the Tablets and the Scriptures of old is naught else but the Covenant and the Testament.” And again: “The lamp of the Covenant is the light of the world, and the words traced by the Pen of the Most High a limitless ocean.” “The Lord, the All-Glorified,” He has moreover declared, “hath, beneath the shade of the Tree of Anísá (Tree of Life), made a new Covenant and established a great Testament Hath such a Covenant been established in any previous Dispensation, age, period or century? Hath such a Testament, set down by the Pen of the Most

High, ever been witnessed? No, by God!” And finally: “The power of the Covenant is as the heat of the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created things on earth. The light of the Covenant, in like manner, is the educator of the minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men.” To this same Covenant He has in His writings referred as the “Conclusive Testimony,” the “Universal Balance,” the “Magnet of God’s grace,” the “Upraised Standard,” the “Irrefutable Testament,” “the all-mighty Covenant, the like of which the sacred Dispensations of the past have never witnessed” and “one of the distinctive features of this most mighty cycle.”

Extolled by the writer of the Apocalypse as “the Ark of His (God) Testament”; associated with the gathering beneath the “Tree of Anísá” (Tree of Life) mentioned by Bahá’u’lláh in the *Hidden Words*; glorified by Him, in other passages of His writings, as the “Ark of Salvation” and as “the Cord stretched betwixt the earth and the Abhá Kingdom,” this Covenant has been bequeathed to posterity in a Will and Testament which, together with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and several Tablets, in which the rank and station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are unequivocally disclosed, constitute the chief buttresses designed by the Lord of the Covenant Himself to shield and support, after His ascension, the appointed Centre of His Faith and the Delineator of its future institutions.¹⁸⁶

The Book of the Covenant (Kitáb-i-‘Ahd)

Although the Most High Horizon is devoid of trivial possessions of the earth, we have nevertheless bequeathed unto our heirs a noble and peerless heritage within the treasure-house of trust and resignation.

We have left no treasure nor have we added to man’s pains.

By the Life of God! In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed. Consider, then take warning by what the God of Mercy hath revealed in the Qur’án:

“Woe unto those who malign and speak evil of their fellows; who hoard earthly goods and count their riches.”

Earthly possessions are unstable; wherefore whatsoever passeth or suffereth vicissitudes is unworthy of regard except to a limited measure.

¹⁸⁶ Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, pp. 237-239.

In bearing hardships and tribulations and in revealing verses and expounding proofs, it has been the purpose of this oppressed One to extinguish the fire of hate and animosity, that, haply, the horizons of the hearts of mankind be illumined with the light of concord and attain real tranquillity.

The light of the following utterance shineth from the horizon of the Divine Tablet, which should be observed by all: Oh people of the world! I counsel you to act in a manner which shall tend to elevate your stations. Cling to divine virtue and obey the divine law. Truly I say, the tongue is for mentioning that which is good; do not defile it by evil speech. "God hath forgiven your past ways." You must henceforth speak that which is worthy. Shun reviling, maligning, and whatsoever will offend your fellowmen.

Man's station is great. Ere this, the following exalted words have flowed forth from the Pen of Abhá.

This is a Day great and blessed. Whatsoever was hidden in man is today being revealed. The station of man is great, were he to cling to truth and righteousness and be firm and steadfast in the Cause. Before the God of Mercy, a true man appears like unto heaven. The sun and the moon of that heaven are his sight and hearing and its stars are his shining attributes. His station is the highest and his signs are the educator of the world.

In this Day, every believer who discovered the fragrance of the garment and turned with a pure heart unto the most high horizon is indeed recorded in the Crimson Tablet as of the people of Bahá.

Hold the chalice of My grace in My name. Then drain it in My mention, the mighty, the wonderful!

Oh! people of the world! The religion of God is to create love and unity; do not make it the cause of enmity and discord. All that is regarded by men of insight and the people of the most lofty outlook as the means for safeguarding and effecting the peace and tranquillity of man, has flowed from the Supreme Pen. But the ignorant ones who are the victim of self and desire, are heedless of the consummate wisdom of the truly wise One, and their words and deeds are prompted by fancy and superstition.

Oh! ye chosen of God and His trusted ones! Kings are the manifestors of God's power and the sources of His majesty and affluence. Pray ye in their behalf The government of the earth has been vouchsafed unto them. But the hearts of men He decreed unto Himself He forbade conflict and strife—a rigid prohibition in the Book. This is the Decree of God in this most great Manifestation; and God hath preserved it from annulment and clothed it with the broidered garment of confirmation. Verily, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise!

It is incumbent upon all to support those rulers and chiefs of state who are adorned with the raiment of justice and equity. Blessed are the rulers and the learned in Al-Bahá! They verily are My trustees amongst My servants, and the sources of My Decrees amongst My people. Upon them rest My Bahá, My mercy, and My grace which hath encircled the world.

Anent this matter, we have revealed in the *Book of Aqdas* the following words which radiate the light of divine mercy:

Oh! my Branches! A mighty power and supreme potency is hidden and concealed in the world of being. Focus your gaze upon it and upon the direction of its unity, not upon the differences which are apparent therein.

God's Will and Testament enjoins upon the branches, the twigs, and the kinsfolk, one and all, to gaze unto the most great Branch. Consider what we have revealed in my *Book of Aqdas*, to wit:

“When the sea of My Presence is exhausted and the Book of Origin hath reached its end, turn you unto him (‘Abdu’l-Bahá) who is desired by God—he who is issued from this ancient Root.”¹⁸⁷

The purpose of this sacred verse is the most great Branch. Thus have we declared the matter as a favour on our part, and we are the gracious, the beneficent!

God hath, verily, decreed the station of the great Branch next to that of the most great Branch. Verily, He is the wise Ordainer. We have chosen Al-Akbar after the Al-Azam, as a command on the part of God, the All-Knowing, the Omniscient.

¹⁸⁷ See quotation after the next from Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 63

All must regard the other Branches with affection, but God hath not decreed unto them any right to the people's property.

Oh! my branches, my twigs, and my kinsfolk! I counsel you to manifest divine virtue, and to act in accord with the Law, and with whatsoever is befitting and will elevate your stations.

Truly I say, virtue is the greatest commander which leads the Cause of God to victory, and the legions which deserve this commander are pure, sanctified, and praiseworthy deeds and attributes.

Say: Oh servants! Do not make the cause of order a cause for disorder, nor the means of unity a means for disunity. It is hoped that the people of Bahá will observe the sacred verse: "Say, all are created by God." This lofty utterance is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and hostility which is hidden and stored in men's hearts and minds. This single utterance will cause the various sects and creeds to attain the light of true unity. Verily, He speaketh truth and guideth to the right path; and He is the Mighty, the Glorious, the Omnipotent.

For the honour of the Cause and the promotion of the Word—it is necessary that all shall respect and have regard for the Branches. This command has been recorded once and again in the divine Book. Blessed is he who obeys whatsoever hath been ordained on the part of God, the ancient ruler. All shall also have respect for the women-members of Our household and for the Afnán and kinsfolk. We likewise counsel you to serve mankind and bring peace to the world.

All that leads to the quickening of the peoples and the salvation of the world hath been revealed from the kingdom of utterance by the Lord of mankind. Harken to the exhortations of the Supreme Pen with ideal ears. These are preferable unto you above all that is on the earth. Whereunto beareth witness my Book, the blessed, the glorious!¹⁸⁸

Guardian's summary of the Book of the Covenant

In this weighty and incomparable Document its Author discloses the character of that "excellent and priceless heritage" bequeathed by Him to His

¹⁸⁸ *Bahá'i World Faith* (1943), pp. 207–10.

“heirs”; proclaims afresh the fundamental purpose of His Revelation; enjoins the “peoples of the world” to hold fast to that which will “elevate” their “station”; announces to them that “God hath forgiven what is past”; stresses the sublimity of man’s station; discloses the primary aim of the Faith of God; directs the faithful to pray for the welfare of the kings of the earth, “the manifestations of the power, and the daysprings of the might and riches, of God”; invests them with the rulership of the earth; singles out as His special domain the hearts of men; forbids categorically strife and contention; commands His followers to aid those rulers who are “adorned with the ornament of equity and justice”; and directs, in particular, the Aghsán (His sons) to ponder the “mighty force and the consummate power that lieth concealed in the world of being.” He bids them, moreover, together with the Afnán (the Báb’s kindred) and His own relatives, to “turn, one and all, unto the Most Great Branch (‘Abdu’l-Bahá)”; identifies Him with “the One Whom God hath purposed,” “Who hath branched from this pre-existent Root,” referred to in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; ordains the station of the “Greater Branch” (Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí) to be beneath that of the “Most Great Branch” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá); exhorts the believers to treat the Aghsán with consideration and affection; counsels them to respect His family and relatives, as well as the kindred of the Báb; denies His sons “any right to the property of others”; enjoins on them, on His kindred and on that of the Báb to “fear God, to do that which is meet and seemly” and to follow the things that will “exalt” their station; warns all men not to allow “the means of order to be made the cause of confusion, and the instrument of union an occasion for discord”; and concludes with an exhortation calling upon the faithful to “serve all nations,” and to strive for the “betterment of the world.”¹⁸⁹

**Kitáb-i-Aqdas instruction to turn to the Branch after the passing of
Bahá’u’lláh**

When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, pp. 239–240.

¹⁹⁰ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 63.

When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.¹⁹¹

Claim to further revelation

Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor. We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim. Should he repent, God will, no doubt, forgive him. If, however, he persisteth in his error, God will, assuredly, send down one who will deal mercilessly with him. Terrible, indeed, is God in punishing! Whosoever interpreteth this verse otherwise than its obvious meaning is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy which encompasseth all created things. Fear God, and follow not your idle fancies. Nay, rather, follow the bidding of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Wise.¹⁹²

g) Bahá'u'lláh about 'Abdu'l-Bahá

“Apple of Mine eye”

“O Thou Who art the apple of Mine eye!” Bahá'u'lláh, in His own handwriting, thus addresses 'Abdu'l-Bahá, “My glory, the ocean of My loving-kindness, the sun of My bounty, the heaven of My mercy rest upon Thee. We pray God to illumine the world through Thy knowledge and wisdom, to ordain for Thee that which will gladden Thine heart and impart consolation to Thine eyes.”¹⁹³

Shield to all in heaven and earth

“We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind,” He, in yet another Tablet, affirms, “a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth, a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. God grant that through Thee He may protect them, may enrich and sustain them, that He may inspire Thee with that which shall be a wellspring of wealth unto all

¹⁹¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 82.

¹⁹² Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 32.

¹⁹³ Bahá'u'lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 135.

created things, an ocean of bounty unto all men, and the dayspring of mercy unto all peoples.”¹⁹⁴

Greatest Branch

O thou My Greatest Branch! ... Verily, we have ordained Thee the Guardian of all the creatures, and a Protection to all those in the heavens and earth, and a Fortress to those who believe in God, the One, the Omniscient! ... I beg of Him to water the earth and all that is in it by Thee¹⁹⁵

“Render Him victorious”

“Thou knowest, O my God,” Bahá’u’lláh, in a prayer revealed in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s honour, supplicates, “that I desire for Him naught except that which Thou didst desire, and have chosen Him for no purpose save that which Thou hadst intended for Him. Render Him victorious, therefore, through Thy hosts of earth and heaven ... Ordain, I beseech Thee, by the ardour of My love for Thee and My yearning to manifest Thy Cause, for Him, as well as for them that love Him, that which Thou hast destined for Thy Messengers and the Trustees of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the Almighty, the All-Powerful.”¹⁹⁶

“God’s ardent Mystery”

All the atoms of the earth have announced unto all created things that from behind the gate of the Prison-city there hath appeared and above its horizon there hath shone forth the Orb of the beauty of the great, the Most Mighty Branch of God—His ancient and immutable Mystery—proceeding on its way to another land. Sorrow, thereby, hath enveloped this Prison-city, whilst another land rejoiceth. ...

Blessed, doubly blessed, is the ground which His footsteps have trodden, the eye that hath been cheered by the beauty of His countenance, the ear that hath been honoured by hearkening to His call, the heart that hath tasted the sweetness of His love, the breast that hath dilated through His remembrance,

¹⁹⁴ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 135–136.

¹⁹⁵ Bahá’u’lláh quoted in *Star of the West*, IV:14, p. 239.

¹⁹⁶ Bahá’u’lláh quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 136.

the pen that hath voiced His praise, the scroll that hath borne the testimony of His writings.”¹⁹⁷

WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

a) Centre of the Covenant

Fulfilment of proof and prophecy entirely centred in Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb

“Every proof and prophecy,” is His still more emphatic warning, “every manner of evidence, whether based on reason or on the text of the scriptures and traditions, are to be regarded as centred in the persons of Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb. In them is to be found their complete fulfilment.”¹⁹⁸

Station of Bahá’u’lláh, the Báb and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Blessed Beauty is the Sun of Truth, and His light the light of truth. The Báb is likewise the Sun of Truth, and His light the light of truth ... My station is the station of servitude—a servitude which is complete, pure and real, firmly established, enduring, obvious, explicitly revealed and subject to no interpretation whatever ... I am the Interpreter of the Word of God; such is my interpretation.”¹⁹⁹

Station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“I affirm,” is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own written comment on the Tablet of the Branch, “that the true meaning, the real significance, the innermost secret of these verses, of these very words, is my own servitude to the sacred Threshold of the Abhá Beauty, my complete self-effacement, my utter nothingness before Him. This is my resplendent crown, my most precious adorning. On this I pride myself in the kingdom of earth and heaven. Therein I glory among the company of the well-favoured!” “No one is permitted,” He warns us in the passage which immediately follows, “to give these verses any other interpretation.” “I am,” He, in this same connection, affirms, “according to the explicit texts of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and the *Kitáb-i-‘Ahd* the manifest Interpreter

¹⁹⁷ Bahá’u’lláh: *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 227–8.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 127–128.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 133.

of the Word of God ... Whoso deviates from my interpretation is a victim of his own fancy.”²⁰⁰

But if any soul asks concerning the station of the Servant, the answer is— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If he enquires after the meaning of the Branch, the answer is— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If he desires to know the significance of the verse regarding the Branch, the answer is— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. If he insists upon the explanation of the meaning of the “Branch extended from the Ancient Root”, the answer is— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”²⁰¹

My name is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My qualification is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My reality is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. My praise is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Thralldom to the Blessed Perfection is my glorious and refulgent diadem, and servitude to all the human race my perpetual religion... No name, no title, no mention, no commendation have I, nor will ever have, except ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This is my longing. This is my greatest yearning. This is my eternal life. This is my everlasting glory.”²⁰²

Appointment of the Centre of the Covenant the greatest characteristic of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation

As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past: It is the ordination and appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief. To ensure unity and agreement He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, including the interpreter and explainer of His teachings, so that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own view or opinion and thus create a sect founded upon his individual understanding of the divine Words. The Book of the Covenant or Testament of Bahá’u’lláh is the means of preventing such a possibility, for whosoever shall speak from the authority of himself alone shall be degraded. Be ye informed and cognizant of this.”²⁰³

²⁰⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 138.

²⁰¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, VIII:14, p. 186.

²⁰² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 139.

²⁰³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 455–456.

Covenant unexampled

In accordance with the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh hath made the Centre of the Covenant the Interpreter of His Word -a Covenant so firm and mighty that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like.²⁰⁴

Covenant distinctive, unique, leaves no occasion for difference

His Holiness Abraham, on Him be peace, made a covenant concerning His Holiness Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His coming. His Holiness Moses made a covenant concerning the Promised One, i.e. His Holiness Christ, and announced the good news of His Manifestation to the world. His Holiness Christ made a covenant concerning the Paraclete and gave the tidings of His coming. His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning His Holiness the Báb and the Báb was the One promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming. The Báb made a Covenant concerning the Blessed Beauty of Bahá'u'lláh and gave the glad-tidings of His coming for the Blessed Beauty was the One promised by His Holiness the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a promised One who will become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years. He likewise, with His Supreme Pen, entered into a great Covenant and Testament with all the Bahá'ís whereby they were all commanded to follow the Centre of the Covenant after His departure, and turn not away even to a hair's breadth from obeying Him.

In the *Book of Aqdas*, He has given positive command in two clear instances and has explicitly appointed the Interpreter of the Book. Also in all the Divine Tablets, especially in the Chapter of The Branch—all the meanings of which mean the Servitude of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that is 'Abdu'l-Bahá—all that was needed to explain the Centre of the Covenant and the Interpreter of the Book has been revealed from the Supreme Pen. Now as 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the Interpreter of the Book He says that the "Chapter of The Branch" means 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that is, the Servitude of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and none other.²⁰⁵

In short, one of the specific teachings of this cycle of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh which has not been manifest during the former cycles is that His

²⁰⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted by Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 136.

²⁰⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 358–359.

Holiness Bahá'u'lláh left no occasion for difference. For in His blessed Day He made a Covenant and Testament with the Traces of the Supreme Pen and explained the One to whom all should turn; and He explicitly pointed to the Interpreter of the Book, and thus closed all doors to interpretations. We must all offer thanks to God for He gave us rest in this blessed cycle, and left no occasion for any one to hesitate. All must therefore obey and be submissive and wholly turn themselves to the one appointed by Him.²⁰⁶

In former cycles no distinct Covenant was made in writing by the Supreme Pen; no distinct personage was appointed to be the Standard differentiating falsehood from truth, so that whatsoever he said was to stand as truth and that which he repudiated was to be known as falsehood. At most His Holiness Jesus Christ gave only an intimation, a symbol, and that was but an indication of the solidity of Peter's faith. When He mentioned his faith, His Holiness said, "Thou art Peter," which means rock, "and upon this rock will I build My church." This was a sanction of Peter's faith; it was not indicative of his [Peter's] being the Expounder of the Book-but was a confirmation of Peter's faith.

But in this Dispensation of the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] among its distractions is that He did not leave people in perplexity. He entered into a Covenant and Testament with the people. He appointed a Centre of the Covenant. He wrote with His own Pen and revealed it in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the Book of Laws, and *Kitáb-i-'Ahd*, the Book of the Covenant, appointing Him ['Abdu'l-Bahá] the Expounder of the Book. You must ask Him ['Abdu'l-Bahá] regarding the meanings of the texts of the verses. Whatever He says is correct. Outside of this, in numerous Tablets He [Bahá'u'lláh] has explicitly recorded it, with clear, sufficient, valid, and forceful statements. In the *Tablet of the Branch* He explicitly states: "Whatsoever The Branch says is right, or correct; and every person must obey The Branch with his life, with his heart, with his tongue. Without his will, not a word shall anyone utter." This is an explicit text of the Blessed Beauty. So there is no excuse left for anybody. No soul shall. of himself, speak anything. Whatsoever His ['Abdu'l-Bahá's] tongue

²⁰⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, VIII:14, p. 187.

utters, whatsoever His pen records, that is correct; according to the explicit text of Bahá'u'lláh in the *Tablet of the Branch*.

His Holiness Abraham covenanted with regard to Moses. His Holiness Moses was the promised One of Abraham, and he, Moses covenanted with regard to His Holiness Christ, saying that Christ was the promised One. His Holiness Christ covenanted with regard to His Holiness “The Paraclete”, which means His Holiness Muhammad. His Holiness Muhammad covenanted as regards the Báb, whom he called “My promised One”, His Holiness the Báb, in all his books, in all his epistles, explicitly covenanted with regard to the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, that Bahá'u'lláh was the promised One of his Holiness the Báb. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh covenanted, not that I [‘Abdu'l-Bahá] am the promised One, but that ‘Abdu'l-Bahá is the Expounder of the Book and the Centre of His Covenant, and that the promised One of Bahá'u'lláh will appear after one thousand or thousands of years. This is the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh made. If a person shall deviate, he is not acceptable at the Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh. In case of difference, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá must be consulted. They must revolve around his good pleasure. After ‘Abdu'l-Bahá’s, whenever the Universal House of justice is organized, it will ward off differences.²⁰⁷

Inasmuch as great differences and divergences of denominational belief had arisen throughout the past, every man with a new idea attributing it to God, Bahá'u'lláh desired that there should not be any ground or reason for disagreement among the Bahá'ís. Therefore, with His own pen He wrote the Book of His Covenant, addressing His relations and all people of the world, saying, “Verily, I have appointed One Who is the Centre of My Covenant. All must obey Him; all must turn to Him; He is the Expounder of My Book, and He is informed of My purpose. All must turn to Him. Whatsoever He says is correct, for, verily, He knoweth the texts of My Book. Other than He, no one doth know My Book.” The purpose of this statement is that there should never be discord and divergence among the Bahá'ís but that they should always be unified and agreed. ... Therefore, whosoever obeys the Centre of the Covenant

²⁰⁷ Address of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, II:14, pp. 9–10; and XII:14, p. 227–228.

appointed by Bahá'u'lláh has obeyed Bahá'u'lláh, and whosoever disobeys Him has disobeyed Bahá'u'lláh.

Beware! Beware! lest anyone should speak from the authority of his own thoughts or create a new thing out of himself. ... Bahá'u'lláh shuns such souls. I have expounded these things for you, for the conservation and protection of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, in order that you may be informed, lest any souls shall deceive you and lest any souls shall cause suspicion among you. You must love all people, and yet if any souls put you in doubt, you must know that Bahá'u'lláh is severed from them. Whosoever works for unity and fellowship is a servant of Bahá'u'lláh, and Bahá'u'lláh is his assistant and helper.²⁰⁸

Spirit of unity in the divine words

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the interpreter of the aims, intents, and purposes of the words of the Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh], and is the interpreter of his own written words; and none can say that this or that is the intention conveyed therein, save ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The spirit of unity exists in the divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create division and discord, is indeed one who errs.²⁰⁹

b) Significance of the Covenant

Naught can annul His Covenant

Verily, God effecteth that which He pleaseth; naught can annul His Covenant; naught can obstruct His favour nor oppose His Cause! He doeth with His will that which pleaseth Him and He is powerful over all things!²¹⁰

“There is a power in this Cause”

There is a power in this Cause—a mysterious power—far, far, far away from the ken of men and angels; that invisible power is the same cause of all these outward activities. It moves the hearts. It rends the mountains. It administers the complicated affairs of the Cause. It inspires the friends. It creates new spiritual worlds. This is the mystery of the Kingdom of Abhá!²¹¹

²⁰⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 323–325.

²⁰⁹ Pilgrim notes quoted in *Star of the West*, VI:6, p. 44.

²¹⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Vol. III, p. 598.

²¹¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. XV, p.243.

“Ere the close of this century”

“Now in the world of being the Hand of divine power hath firmly laid the foundations of this all-highest bounty and this wondrous gift. Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the dayspring of the revelation of its signs. Ere the close of this century and of this age, it shall be made clear and evident how wondrous was that springtide and how heavenly was that gift!”²¹²

The Covenant all-pervasive

Know thou, verily, the Covenant is an Orb which shines and gleams forth unto the universe. Verily, its light will dispel darkness, its sea will cast out the thick foam of suspicions upon the shore of perdition. Verily, naught in the world can ever resist the power of the kingdom. Should all mankind assemble, could they prevent the sun from its light, the winds from their blowing, the clouds from their showers. the mountains from their firmness or the stars from their beaming? No! By thy Lord, the Clement! Everything is subject to corruption; but the Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions.²¹³

Spirit of the age

... the spirit of this age is the Covenant and the Testament of God. It is like the pulsating artery in the body of the world.²¹⁴

Turn to the Kingdom of the Covenant

Consequently, turn thy face unto the Kingdom of the Covenant, thy heart beating with the love of God, thy soul attracted to the fragrances of god, thy tongue speaking of the appearances of the Kingdom of God, thy insight rending veils asunder and disclosing the realities of things-and with a power which may move the heart of all in the world.

This is a confirmation from the Lord of the effulgence, while all else save this shall never profit thee! This is that by reason of which thy face shall

²¹² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 111.

²¹³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in Bahá’í Scriptures, No. 641, pp. 320–1.

²¹⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, VIII:16, p. 219.

gleam, thy heart shall be dilated with joy, thy soul become pure, thy back strengthened, thy spirit rejoiced and thy identity quickened. Leave the people of suspicion behind thy back and adhere to the manifest signs.²¹⁵

Power of the Covenant pulsating, penetrating

Strive at present as much as possible to raise the call of the divine kingdom, for this call bestows the spirit of life. Endeavour to raise the call of the Covenant and Testament, for the power of the Covenant, like unto arteries, pulsates in the body of the world.²¹⁶

Know this for a certainty that today, the penetrative power in the arteries of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant. The body of the world will not be moved through any power except through the power of the Covenant. There is no other power like unto this. This Spirit of the Covenant is the real Centre of love and is reflecting its rays to all parts of the globe, which are resuscitating and regenerating man and illuminating the path to the Divine Kingdom.²¹⁷

My words are the reality

That which has come out of the centre of the Covenant you must take fast hold of. That which issues from my lips and that which is written with my pen is the reality. With this you can irrigate the vineyard of God. With this you can make the tree of the Cause of God become verdant. Through this the name of the Kingdom of God will be spread over the world. Through this the sun of reality will shine. Through this the clouds of mercy will pour down.²¹⁸

World of the Covenant like a tree beside the river of the water of life

The world of the Covenant is like unto the Blessed Tree which is growing beside the river of the Water of Life in the utmost delicacy and beauty, and day by day it is developing and adding to its verdancy.²¹⁹

Power of the Covenant alone, can move the heart of humanity

²¹⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in Bahá’í Scriptures, No. 641, p. 321.

²¹⁶ European Teaching Conference Manual (1948), p. 50.

²¹⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, VI:14, p. 111.

²¹⁸ European Teaching Conference Manual (1948), p. 50.

²¹⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, VIII:16, p. 219.

Today, every wise, vigilant and foresighted person is awakened, and to him are unveiled the mysteries of the future which show that nothing save the power of the Covenant is able to stir and move the heart of humanity

The Covenant of God is like a vast and fathomless ocean. A billow shall rise and surge therefrom and shall cast ashore all accumulated foam.²²⁰

Sum of all sacred writings

And this Covenant is the Ancient Covenant, the Illuminator of the horizons. ... It is the Testament and the Covenant and it is mentioned in all the tablets and the early Books and in the later tablets. ... It is the holy fragrance of His Holiness, the Creator, and the Breaths of Life of the garden of the Creator. It is the strong fortress; therefore it is a sure shelter for all created beings, and in brief, it is the sum of all the sacred writings, ancient and modern!²²¹

Shattering influence of the Divine summons

What more shall I say? What else can my pen recount? So loud is the call that reverberates from the Abhá Kingdom that mortal ears are well-nigh deafened with its vibrations. The whole creation, methinks, is being disrupted and is bursting asunder through the shattering influence of the Divine summons issued from the throne of glory. More than this I cannot write.²²²

c) Firmness in the Covenant

Assistance cut off unless one teaches

It is known and clear that today the unseen divine assistance encompasseth those who deliver the Message. And if the work of delivering the Message be neglected, the assistance shall be entirely cut off, for it is impossible that the friends of God could receive assistance unless they be engaged in delivering the Message.²²³

Firm Covenant to live and act according to the teachings

O ye Cohorts of God! Today in the present world each community is wandering in a wilderness, moving in accord with some passion and desire, and

²²⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 223.

²²¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, VIII:16, pp. 213–214.

²²² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 112.

²²³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Vol. II, pp. 390–1.

running to and fro in pursuance of his own imagination. Among the communities of the world, this community of the “Most Great Name” is free from every thought, keeping aloof from every project and scheme, arising with the purest designs and intentions, and striving and endeavouring with the utmost hope to live in accordance with the divine teachings in order that the surface of the earth become the delectable paradise, the nether world become the mirror of the Kingdom, the universe become another universe, and the human race attain to higher morals, conduct and manners.

O ye Cohorts of God! Through the protection and help of the Blessed Perfection—may my life be a sacrifice to His beloved ones!—you must conduct and deport yourselves in such a manner that you may stand out among other souls distinguished by a brilliancy like unto the sun. If any one of you enters a city he must become the centre of attraction because of the sincerity, faithfulness, love, honesty, fidelity, truthfulness and loving-kindness of his disposition and nature toward all the inhabitants of the world, that the people of the city may all cry out: “This person is unquestionably a Bahá’í; for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature and his disposition are of the attributes of the Bahá’ís.” Until you do attain to this station, you have not fulfilled the Covenant and the Testament of God. For according to the irrefutable texts, He has taken from us a firm covenant that we may live and act in accord with the divine exhortations, commands and lordly teachings.

O ye Cohorts of God! Now is the time when the signs and the perfections of the “Most Great Name” become manifest and clear in this golden cycle in order that it may become demonstrated and established beyond doubt that this period is the period of the Blessed Perfection, and this cycle is distinguished from all other cycles and epochs.²²⁴

Spirit that quickeneth the hearts

O ye beloved of God, know that steadfastness and firmness in this new and wonderful Covenant is indeed the spirit that quickeneth the hearts which are overflowing with the love of the Glorious Lord; verily, it is the power which penetrates into the hearts of the people of the world! Your Lord hath assuredly promised His servants who are firm and steadfast to render them victorious at

²²⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Vol. I, pp. 41–42.

all times, to exalt their word, propagate their power, diffuse their lights, strengthen their hearts, elevate their banners, assist their hosts, brighten their stars, increase the abundance of the showers of mercy upon them, and enable the brave lions (or teachers) to conquer.

Hasten, hasten, O ye firm believers! Hasten, hasten, O ye steadfast! Abandon the heedless, set aside every ignorant, take hold of the strong rope, be firm in this Great Cause, draw light from this Evident Light, be patient and be steadfast in this wise Religion! Ye shall see the hosts of inspiration descending successively from the Supreme World, the procession of attraction falling incessantly from the heights of heaven, the abundance of the Kingdom of El-Abhá outpouring continually and the teachings of God penetrating with the utmost power, while the heedless are indeed in evident loss.²²⁵

Armies of God, apostles of Bahá'u'lláh and conditions of attainment

O ye Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh!

May my life be sacrificed for you!

The blessed Person of the Promised One is interpreted in the Holy Book as the Lord of Hosts—the heavenly armies. By heavenly armies those souls are intended who are entirely freed from the human world, transformed into celestial spirits and have become divine angels. Such souls are the rays of the Sun of Reality who will illumine all the continents. Each one is holding in his hand a trumpet, blowing the breath of life over all the regions. They are delivered from human qualities and the defects of the world of nature, are characterized with the characteristics of God, and are attracted with the fragrances of the Merciful. Like unto the apostles of Christ, who were filled with Him, these souls also have become filled with His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh; that is, the love of Bahá'u'lláh has so mastered every organ, part and limb of their bodies, as to leave no effect from the promptings of the human world.

These souls are the armies of God and the conquerors of the East and the West. Should one of them turn his face toward some direction and summon the people to the Kingdom of God, all the ideal forces and lordly confirmations will rush to his support and reinforcement. He will behold all the doors open and all

²²⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Vol. II, pp. 442–3.

the strong fortifications and impregnable castles razed to the ground. Singly and alone he will attack the armies of the world, defeat the right and left wings of the hosts of all the countries, break through the lines of the legions of all the nations and carry his attack to the very centre of the powers of the earth. This is the meaning of the Hosts of God.

Any soul from among the believers of Bahá'u'lláh who attains to this station will become known as the Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore strive ye with heart and soul so that ye may reach this lofty and exalted position, be established on the throne of everlasting glory, and crown your heads with the shining diadem of the Kingdom, whose brilliant jewels may irradiate upon centuries and cycles.

O ye kind friends! Uplift your magnanimity and soar high toward the apex of heaven so that your blessed hearts may become illumined more and more, day by day, through the rays of the Sun of Reality, that is, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh; at every moment the spirits may obtain a new life, and the darkness of the world of nature may be entirely dispelled; thus you may become incarnate light and personified spirit, become entirely unaware of the sordid matters of this world and in touch with the affairs of the divine world.

Behold the portals which Bahá'u'lláh hath opened before you! Consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain; how unique the favours with which you have been endowed. Should we become intoxicated with this cup, the sovereignty of this globe of earth will become lower in our estimation than children's play. Should they place in the arena the crown of the government of the whole world, and invite each one of us to accept it, undoubtedly we shall not condescend, and shall refuse to accept it.

To attain to this supreme station is, however, dependent on the realization of certain conditions:

The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God. For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error. It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and the firm pillar of the religion of God. Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá'í world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Bahá'í world. It is evident that the axis of the oneness of

the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else. Had the Covenant not come to pass, had it not been revealed from the Supreme Pen and had not the Book of the Covenant, like unto the ray of the Sun of Reality, illuminated the world, the forces of the Cause of God would have been utterly scattered and certain souls who were the prisoners of their own passions and lusts would have taken into their hands an axe, cutting the root of this Blessed Tree. Every person would have pushed forward his own desire and every individual aired his own opinion! Notwithstanding this great Covenant, a few negligent souls galloped with their chargers into the battlefield, thinking perchance they might be able to weaken the foundation of the Cause of God: but praise be to God all of them were afflicted with regret and loss, and ere long they shall see themselves in poignant despair. Therefore, in the beginning the believers must make their steps firm in the Covenant so that the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh may encircle them from all sides, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse may become their supporters and helpers, and the exhortations and advices of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, like unto the pictures engraved on stone, may remain permanent and ineffaceable in the tablets of all hearts.

The second condition: Fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamoured of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abhá, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits.

O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship! Love, love! Unity, unity!—so that the power of the Bahá'í Cause may appear and become manifest in the world of

existence. My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul glows with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamoured with each other.²²⁶

Effect of absence or presence of alloy of self

O ye Cohorts of God! If you observe that a soul has turned his face completely toward the Cause of God, his intention is centralized upon the penetration of the Word of God, he is serving the Cause day and night with the utmost fidelity, no scent of selfishness is inhaled from his manners and deeds, and no trace of egotism or prejudice is seen in his personality—nay rather is he a wanderer in the wilderness of the love of God, and one intoxicated with the wine of the knowledge of God, occupied wholly with the diffusion of the fragrances of God, and attracted to the signs of the Kingdom of God; know ye of a certainty that he is confirmed with the powers of the Kingdom, assisted by the heaven of Might; and he will shine, gleam and sparkle like unto the morning star with the utmost brilliancy and splendour from the horizon of the everlasting gift. If he is alloyed with the slightest trace of passion, desire, ostentation or self-interest, it is certain that the results of all efforts will prove fruitless, and he will become deprived and hopeless.²²⁷

Qualities of teacher

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others? Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach severance to others?

In short, O ye believers of God! Endeavour ye, so that you may take hold of every means in the promulgation of the religion of God and the diffusion of the fragrances of God.²²⁸

²²⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 49–53.

²²⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Vol. I, p. 42.

²²⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 54.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s link with Spiritual Assembly

O ye who are firm in the Covenant! ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is constantly engaged in ideal communication with any Spiritual Assembly which is instituted through the divine bounty, and the members of which, in the utmost devotion, turn to the divine Kingdom and are firm in the Covenant. To them he is wholeheartedly attached and with them he is linked by everlasting ties. Thus correspondence with that gathering is sincere, constant and uninterrupted.²²⁹

Firmness in the Covenant wards off differences

Today the most important affair is firmness in the Covenant, because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences.²³⁰

Future effect of violation

The confirmation of the Kingdom of Abhá shall descend uninterruptedly upon those souls who are firm in the Covenant. Thou hast well observed that every firm one is assisted and aided, and every violator is degraded, humiliated, and lost. It is very astonishing that people are not admonished. They have observed how Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí, on account of violation of the Covenant, descended to the lowest degree of humiliation, and yet they do not become mindful. They have seen how others, through disobedience to the Testament, have fallen into a well of degradation, and yet they are not awakened.

This Covenant is the Covenant of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. Now its importance is not known befittingly, but in the future it shall attain to such a degree of importance that if a king violates to the extent of one atom, he shall be cut off immediately.²³¹

Degree of assistance according to degree of firmness

Today the stirring power that exhibits itself throughout all regions is the power of the Covenant, which, like unto the artery, beats and pulsates in the body of the world. He who is firmer in the Covenant is more assisted, just as ye

²²⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 89.

²³⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. IX, p. 139.

²³¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. IV, pp. 240–1.

are manifestly witnessing how firm souls are enkindled, attracted, and confirmed.²³²

Wavering soul a failure

Although in the body of the universe there are innumerable nerves, yet the main artery, which pulsates, energizes, and invigorates all beings, is the power of the Covenant. All else is secondary to this. Nobody is assisted and confirmed save that soul who is firm. Consider it well that every soul who is firm in the Covenant is luminous, like unto a candle which emanates its light on those around it. While every wavering soul is an utter failure, frozen, lifeless, dead—yet moving. This one proof is sufficient.²³³

Firmness means obedience

Firmness in the Covenant means obedience, so that no one may say this is my opinion. Nay rather, he must obey that which proceeds from the pen and tongue of the Covenant.²³⁴

Firmness leads to spiritual progress

Whosoever is firm in the Covenant and Testament is today endowed with a seeing eye, and a responsive ear, and daily advances in the divine realm until he becomes a heavenly angel.²³⁵

Today the magnet of the confirmations of the divine Kingdom is firmness in the Covenant and the Testament and all else save that is useless talk for by what (else) can Bahá'í unity be preserved?²³⁶

All forces of universe serve the Covenant

Today, those who are firm in the Covenant are soaring by the bounties of the Holy Spirit in lofty regions, while the wavering ones are depressed, dejected, and afflicted with a thousand pains and calamities. This is because the confirmation of the Abhá Kingdom have been cut off from them. They have been deprived of the Light of the Sun of Truth and have no share from the

²³² 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 233.

²³³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. XI, p. 308.

²³⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 227.

²³⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 251.

²³⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 268.

breezes of the Holy Spirit. They resemble these souls who arose to agitate the minds of men after the time of Christ. Each one, by every subtle means, gathered around himself a group of souls, but all were eventually led to face disappointment, loss, and failure. This was because the result of their principles was like unto a tree destitute of roots, or like the ocean foam. A rootless tree, no matter how tall and hardy it may seem, will ultimately wither away; and the ocean foam. however formidable it may appear, shall at last vanish and disappear.

In brief. the Covenant is like unto the ocean which preserves Bahá'í unity, and these souls are like unto the foam upon it. They manifest a temporary activity, but soon, like unto Judas Iscariot and his associates and those who approved of his conduct, they shall be completely forgotten. The ocean of the Covenant, on the other hand, is eternally surging, for it preserves Bahá'í unity.

Today, the Lord of Hosts is the defender of the Covenant, the forces of the Kingdom protect it, heavenly souls tender their services, and heavenly angels promulgate and spread it broadcast. If it is considered with insight, it will be seen that all the forces of the universe, in the last analysis, serve the Covenant. In the future it shall be made evident and manifest. In view of this fact, what can these weak and feeble souls achieve?²³⁷

The Covenant is an Institution of the Lord

For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord. The Blessed Perfection in all the tablets, books, epistles, and supplications has begged confirmation for and has praised and commended those who are firm in this Covenant and the Testament, and has asked the wrath of God and woe and desolation unto the violators. For firmness in this Covenant will preserve the unity of the religion of God and the foundation of the religion of God will not be shaken.²³⁸

Confirmation for the individual

²³⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. XI, pp. 240–1.

²³⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 223.

As thou hast realized thy own shortcomings, rest thou assured that thou art firm in the Covenant and Testament, and in the love of the True One art steadfast and growing.²³⁹

Today, no soul has any station or enjoys any title except the soul who is firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament, who entirely forgets himself and is released from the world.²⁴⁰

Today, whoever is firm in the Covenant, he will become ignited like unto a candle in the assemblage of the world, and the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abhá shall encircle him from all directions.²⁴¹

Be ye assured with the greatest assurance that, verily, God will help those who are firm in His Covenant in every matter, through His confirmation and favour, the lights of which will shine forth unto the east of the earth, as well as the west thereof. He will make them the signs of guidance among the creation and as shining and glittering stars from all horizons.²⁴²

Prayer for firmness

O God! Assist me with the hosts of the Supreme Concourse, and make me firm and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament. I am weak in the Covenant and Testament, confer upon me strength. I am poor, bestow upon me wealth from the treasury of the Kingdom. I am ignorant, open before my face the doors of knowledge. I am dead, breathe into me the breath of life. I am dumb, grant me an eloquent tongue, so that with a fluent expression I may raise the Call of Thy Kingdom and guide all to firmness in thy Covenant. Thou art the Generous, the Giver, and the Mighty.²⁴³

d) Unity

How otherwise establish oneness of mankind?

²³⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 228.

²⁴⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 218.

²⁴¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 219.

²⁴² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, vol. I, p. 83; and *Power of Divine Assistance*, p. 210.

²⁴³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in a pilgrim note in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 228.

Today the stirring power of the world of existence is the power of the Covenant which like unto arteries pulsates in the body of the contingent world and protects Bahá'í unity.

The Bahá'ís are ordered to establish the oneness of mankind; if they cannot unite around one point how will they be able to bring about the unity of mankind?²⁴⁴

Centre of the Covenant the remover of all difficulties

According to the clear text of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and other tablets the Centre of the Covenant is the remover of all the difficulties for he is the interpreter of the Book. Not one soul has the right to say one word in his own account, or to explain anything or to elucidate the text of the Book whether in public or in private.²⁴⁵

Book of the Covenant not oral but written

But on the other hand, the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* is not an oral communication; it is the mark of the Supreme Pen. It has been revealed in order to preserve Bahá'í unity, so that the souls may not become agitated and perturbed, may not every day set up for themselves an idol and establish a new centre of authority, and seditious men may not agitate.²⁴⁶

Unity through any means

Therefore, the hope is entertained that thou wilt be assisted under all conditions, for today that which is most important is firmness in the Covenant and the Testament. Otherwise Bahá'í unity will not be preserved. If Bahá'í unity could be preserved through anything else, undoubtedly the Blessed Beauty would have commanded it.²⁴⁷

Strength only in unity

Be sure therefore that if the believers are not united in the will of God, they will not be assisted. This is especially necessary because all of them are under the Tent of the Covenant in this Revelation. There is strength only in unity.

²⁴⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 272.

²⁴⁵ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 223.

²⁴⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 268.

²⁴⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 268.

Under one tent there is union and harmony. The Covenant of God in this day of Manifestation is a life-boat and Ark of Salvation. All true followers of the Blessed Perfection are sheltered and protected in this Ark. Whoever leaves it trusting in his own will and strength will drown and be destroyed. For the Blessed Perfection left no possibility for discord, disagreement, and dissension. The Covenant is like the sea and the believers are as the fishes in the sea. If a fish leaves the water it cannot live. There is nothing to equal, nothing so effective as the Covenant of God to bring about and continue unity.²⁴⁸

All must turn to the appointed Centre to preserve Bahá'í unity

With the utmost resolution and constancy call the souls to the Kingdom of Abhá and invite them to firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant and Testament. Read to them the translation of the *Tablet of The Branch*, and speak with gentleness, moderation, and loving-kindness, saying:

“We have no other aim save the protection of the fortified fortress of the Cause of God. We must guard this fortified fortress from the attack of the thoughtless ones. Hence we must all turn our faces to the appointed Centre in order that the Bahá'í unity be preserved; otherwise in one year the Bahá'ís would be divided into a thousand sects. We entertain no other object except the safety of the Cause of God!”²⁴⁹

If two souls quarrel

In brief, O ye believers of God! The text of the Divine Book is this: If two souls quarrel and contend about a question of the divine questions, differing and disputing, both are wrong. The wisdom of this incontrovertible law of God is this: That between two souls from amongst the believers of God, no contention and dispute might arise; that they may speak with each other with infinite amity and love. Should there appear the least trace of controversy, they must remain silent, and both parties must continue their discussions no longer, but ask the reality of the question from the Interpreter. This is the irrefutable command!²⁵⁰

e) The Succession and Fulfilment

²⁴⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*, p. 48; and *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 222.

²⁴⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. VIII, p. 223.

²⁵⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 56.

Guardian's tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahá

He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Centre and Pivot of Bahá'u'lláh's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal, the incarnation of every Bahá'í virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being "round Whom all names revolve," the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation—styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He is, above and beyond these appellations, the "Mystery of God"—an expression by which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.²⁵¹

Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

It would be indeed difficult for us, who stand so close to such a tremendous figure and are drawn by the mysterious power of so magnetic a personality, to obtain a clear and exact understanding of the role and character of One Who, not only in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh but in the entire field of religious history, fulfils a unique function. Though moving in a sphere of His own and holding a rank radically different from that of the Author and the Forerunner of the Bahá'í Revelation, He, by virtue of the station ordained for Him through the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, forms together with them what may be termed the Three Central Figures of a Faith that stands unapproached in the world's spiritual history. He towers, in conjunction with them, above the destinies of this infant Faith of God from a level to which no individual or body ministering to its needs after Him, and for no less a period than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise.²⁵²

²⁵¹ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 134.

²⁵² Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 131–132.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s spiritual relationship to Bahá’u’lláh

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Who incarnates an institution for which we can find no parallel whatsoever in any of the world’s recognized religious systems, may be said to have closed the Age to which He Himself belonged and opened the one in which we are now labouring. His Will and Testament should thus be regarded as the perpetual, the indissoluble link which the mind of Him Who is the Mystery of God has conceived in order to insure the continuity of the three ages that constitute the component parts of the Bahá’í Dispensation. The period in which the seed of the Faith had been slowly germinating is thus intertwined both with the one which must witness its efflorescence and the subsequent age in which that seed will have finally yielded its golden fruit.

The creative energies released by the Law of Bahá’u’lláh, permeating and evolving within the mind of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, have, by their very impact and close interaction, given birth to an Instrument which may be viewed as the Charter of the New World Order which is at once the glory and the promise of this most great Dispensation. The Will may thus be acclaimed as the inevitable offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who communicated the generating influence of His divine Purpose and the One Who was its vehicle and chosen recipient. Being the Child of the Covenant—the Heir of both the Originator and the Interpreter of the Law of God—the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá can no more be divorced from Him Who supplied the original and motivating impulse than from the One Who ultimately conceived it. Bahá’u’lláh’s inscrutable purpose, we must ever bear in mind, has been so thoroughly infused into the conduct of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and their motives have been so closely wedded together, that the mere attempt to dissociate the teachings of the former from any system which the ideal Exemplar of those same teachings has established would amount to a repudiation of one of the most sacred and basic truths of the Faith.²⁵³

Significance and origination of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament

The Charter which called into being, outlined the features and set in motion the processes of, this Administrative Order is none other than the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, His greatest legacy to posterity, the brightest

²⁵³ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 143–144.

emanation of His mind and the mightiest instrument forged to insure the continuity of the three ages which constitute the component parts of His Father's Dispensation.

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh had been instituted solely through the direct operation of His Will and purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on the other hand, may be regarded as the offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who had generated the forces of a God-given Faith and the One Who had been made its sole Interpreter and was recognized as its perfect Exemplar. The creative energies unleashed by the Originator of the Law of God in this age gave birth, through their impact upon the mind of Him Who had been chosen as its unerring Expounder, to that Instrument, the vast implications of which the present generation, even after the lapse of twenty-three years, is still incapable of fully apprehending. This Instrument can, if we would correctly appraise it, no more be divorced from the One Who provided the motivating impulse for its creation than from Him Who directly conceived it. The purpose of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation had, as already observed, been so thoroughly infused into the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and His Spirit had so profoundly impregnated His being, and their aims and motives been so completely blended, that to dissociate the doctrine laid down by the former from the supreme act associated with the mission of the latter would be tantamount to a repudiation of one of the most fundamental verities of the Faith.²⁵⁴

The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

[PART ONE]

Herein Follow the Tablets and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

All-praise to Him Who, by the Shield of His Covenant, hath guarded the Temple of His Cause from the darts of doubtfulness, Who by the Hosts of His Testament hath preserved the Sanctuary of His most Beneficent Law and protected His Straight and Luminous Path, staying thereby the onslaught of the company of Covenant-breakers, that have threatened to subvert His Divine Edifice; Who hath watched over His Mighty Stronghold and All-Glorious Faith,

²⁵⁴ Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, pp. 325–326.

through the aid of men whom the slander of the slanderer affect not, whom no earthly calling, glory and power can turn aside from the Covenant of God and His Testament, established firmly by His clear and manifest words, writ and revealed by His All-Glorious Pen and recorded in the Preserved Tablet.

Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest upon that primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree, grown out, blest, tender, verdant and flourishing from the Twin Holy Trees; the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas; upon the offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, the twigs of the Celestial Tree, they that in the Day of the Great Dividing have stood fast and firm in the Covenant; upon the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God that have diffused widely the Divine Fragrances, declared His Proofs, proclaimed His Faith, published abroad His Law, detached themselves from all things but Him, stood for righteousness in this world, and kindled the Fire of the Love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants; upon them that have believed, rested assured, stood steadfast in His Covenant and followed the Light that after my passing shineth from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance—for behold! he is the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees. Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind.

O ye beloved of the Lord! The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word. Ten thousand souls have shed streams of their sacred blood in this path, their precious lives they offered in sacrifice unto Him, hastened wrapt in holy ecstasy unto the glorious field of martyrdom, upraised the Standard of God's Faith and writ with their life-blood upon the Tablet of the world the verses of His Divine Unity. The sacred breast of His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my life be a sacrifice unto Him), was made a target to many a dart of woe, and in Mázindarán, the blessed feet of the Abhá Beauty (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) were so grievously scourged as to bleed and be sore wounded. His neck also was put into captive chains and His feet made fast in the stocks. In every hour, for a period of fifty years, a new trial and calamity befell Him and fresh afflictions and cares beset Him. One of them: after having suffered intense vicissitudes, He was made homeless and a wanderer and fell a victim to still new vexations and troubles. In Iraq, the Day-

Star of the world was so exposed to the wiles of the people of malice as to be eclipsed in splendour. Later on He was sent an exile to the Great City (Constantinople) and thence to the Land of Mystery (Adrianople), whence, grievously wronged, He was eventually transferred to the Most Great Prison ('Akká). He Whom the world hath wronged (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) was four times banished from city to city, till at last, condemned to perpetual confinement, He was incarcerated in this prison, the prison of highway robbers, of brigands and of man-slayers. All this is but one of the trials that have afflicted the Blessed Beauty, the rest being even as grievous as this.

And still another of His trials was the hostility, the flagrant injustice, the iniquity and rebellion of Mírzá Yahyá. Although that Wronged One, that Prisoner, had through His loving-kindness nurtured him in His own bosom ever since his early years, had showered at every moment His tender care upon him, exalted his name, shielded him from every misfortune, endeared him to them of this world and the next, and despite the firm exhortations and counsels of His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Báb) and His clear and conclusive warning;—“Beware, beware, lest the Nineteen Letters of the Living and that which hath been revealed in the Bayán veil thee!” yet notwithstanding this, Mírzá Yahyá denied Him, dealt falsely with Him, believed Him not, sowed the seeds of doubt, closed his eyes to His manifest verses and turned aside therefrom. Would that he had been content therewith! Nay, he even attempted to shed the sacred blood (of Bahá'u'lláh) and then raised a great clamour and tumult around him, attributing unto Bahá'u'lláh malevolence and cruelty towards himself. What sedition he stirred up and what a storm of mischief he raised whilst in the Land of Mystery (Adrianople)! At last, he wrought that which caused the Day-Star of the world to be sent an exile to this, the Most Great Prison, and sorely wronged, and in the West of this Great Prison He did set.

O ye that stand fast and firm in the Covenant! The Centre of Sedition, the Prime Mover of mischief, Mírzá Muhammad 'Alí, hath passed out from under the shadow of the Cause, hath broken the Covenant, hath falsified the Holy Text, hath inflicted a grievous loss upon the true Faith of God, hath scattered His people, hath with bitter rancour endeavoured to hurt 'Abdu'l-Bahá and hath assailed with the utmost enmity this servant of the Sacred Threshold. Every

dart he seized and hurled to pierce the breast of this wronged servant, no wound did he neglect to grievously inflict upon me, no venom did he spare but he poisoned therewith the life of this hapless one. I swear by the most holy Abhá Beauty and by the Light shining from His Holiness, the Exalted One (may my soul be a sacrifice for Their lowly servants), that because of this iniquity the dwellers in the Pavilion of the Abhá Kingdom have bewailed, the Celestial Concourse is lamenting, the Immortal Maids of Heaven in the All-Highest Paradise have raised their plaintive cries and the angelic company sighed and uttered their moanings. So grievous the deeds of this iniquitous person became that he struck with his axe at the root of the Blessed Tree, dealt a heavy blow at the Temple of the Cause of God, deluged with tears of blood the eyes of the loved ones of the Blessed Beauty, cheered and encouraged the enemies of the One True God, by his repudiation of the Covenant turned many a seeker after Truth aside from the Cause of God, revived the blighted hopes of Yahya's following, made himself detested, caused the enemies of the Greatest Name to become audacious and arrogant, put aside the firm and conclusive verses and sowed the seeds of doubt. Had not the promised aid of the Ancient Beauty been graciously vouchsafed at every moment to this one, unworthy though he be, he surely would have destroyed, nay exterminated the Cause of God and utterly subverted the Divine Edifice. But, praised be the Lord, the triumphant assistance of the Abhá Kingdom was received, the hosts of the Realm above hastened to bestow victory. The Cause of God was promoted far and wide, the call of the True One was noised abroad, ears in all regions were inclined to the Word of God, His standard was unfurled, the ensigns of Holiness gloriously waved aloft and the verses celebrating His Divine Unity were chanted. Now, that the true Faith of God may be shielded and protected, His Law guarded and preserved and His Cause remain safe and secure, it is incumbent upon everyone to hold fast unto the Text of the clear and firmly established blessed verse, revealed about him. None other transgression greater than his can be ever imagined. He (Bahá'u'lláh) sayeth, glorious and holy is His Word:—"My foolish loved ones have regarded him even as my partner, have kindled sedition in the land and they verily are of the mischief-makers." Consider, how foolish are the people! They that have been in His (Bahá'u'lláh's) Presence and beheld His Countenance, have nevertheless noised abroad such idle talk, until, exalted

be His explicit words, He said:—“Should he for a moment pass out from under the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught.” Reflect! What stress He layeth upon one moment’s deviation: that is, were he to incline a hair’s breadth to the right or to the left, his deviation would be clearly established and his utter nothingness made manifest. And now ye are witnessing how the wrath of God hath from all sides afflicted him and how day by day he is speeding towards destruction. Ere long will ye behold him and his associates, outwardly and inwardly, condemned to utter ruin.

What deviation can be greater than breaking the Covenant of God! What deviation can be greater than interpolating and falsifying the words and verses of the Sacred Text, even as testified and declared by Mírzá Badí’u’lláh! What deviation can be greater than calumniating the Centre of the Covenant himself! What deviation can be more glaring than spreading broadcast false and foolish reports touching the Temple of God’s Testament! What deviation can be more grievous than decreeing the death of the Centre of the Covenant, supported by the holy verse:—“He that layeth a claim ere the passing of a thousand years ...,” whilst he (Muhammad ‘Alí) without shame in the days of the Blessed Beauty had advanced such a claim as this and been confuted by Him in the aforementioned manner, the text of his claim being still extant in his own handwriting and bearing his own seal. What deviation can be more complete than falsely accusing the loved ones of God! What deviation can be more evil than causing their imprisonment and incarceration! What deviation can be more severe than delivering into the hands of the government the Holy Writings and Epistles, that haply they (the government) might arise intent upon the death of this wronged one! What deviation can be more violent than threatening the ruin of the Cause of God, forging and slanderously falsifying letters and documents so that this might perturb and alarm the government and lead to the shedding of the blood of this wronged one, -such letters and documents being now in the possession of the government! What deviation can be more odious than his iniquity and rebellion! What deviation can be more shameful than dispersing the gathering of the people of salvation! What deviation can be more infamous than the vain and feeble interpretations of the people of doubt! What deviation can be more wicked than joining hands with strangers and with the enemies of God!

A few months ago, in concert with others, he that hath broken the Covenant, hath prepared a document teeming with calumny and slander wherein, the Lord forbid, among many similar slanderous charges, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is deemed a deadly enemy, the ill-wisher of the Crown. They so perturbed the minds of the members of the Imperial Government that at last a Committee of Investigation was sent from the seat of His Majesty’s Government which, violating every rule of justice and equity that befit His Imperial Majesty, nay, with the most glaring injustice, proceeded with its investigations. The ill-wishers of the One True God surrounded them on every side and explained and excessively enlarged upon the text of the document whilst they (the members of the Committee) in their turn blindly acquiesced. One of their many calumnies was that this servant had raised aloft a banner in this city, had summoned the people together under it, had established a new sovereignty for himself, had erected upon Mount Carmel a mighty stronghold, had rallied around him all the peoples of the land and made them obedient to him, had caused disruption in the Faith of Islam, had covenanted with the following of Christ and, God forbid, had purposed to cause the gravest breach in the mighty power of the Crown. May the Lord protect us from such atrocious falsehoods!

According to the direct and sacred command of God we are forbidden to utter slander, are commanded to show forth peace and amity, are exhorted to rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and harmony with all the kindreds and peoples of the world. We must obey and be the well-wishers of the governments of the land, regard disloyalty unto a just king as disloyalty to God Himself and wishing evil to the government a transgression of the Cause of God. With these final and decisive words, how can it be that these imprisoned ones should indulge in such vain fancies; incarcerated, how could they show forth such disloyalty! But alas! The Committee of Investigation hath approved and confirmed these calumnies of my brother and ill-wishers and submitted them to the presence of His Majesty the Sovereign. Now at this moment a fierce storm is raging around this prisoner who awaiteth, be it favourable or unfavourable, the gracious will of His Majesty, may the Lord aid him by His grace to be just. In whatsoever condition he may be, with absolute calm and quietness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is ready for self-sacrifice and is wholly resigned and

submitted to His Will. What transgression can be more abominable, more odious, more wicked than this!

In like manner, the focal Centre of Hate, hath purposed to put ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to death and this is supported by the testimony written by Mírzá Shú’á’u’lláh himself and is here enclosed. It is evident and indisputable that they are privily and with the utmost subtlety engaged in conspiring against me. The following are his very words written by him in this letter:—“I curse at every moment him that hath kindled this discord, imprecate in these words ‘Lord! have no mercy upon him’ and I hope ere long God will make manifest the one that shall have no pity on him, who now weareth another garb and about whom I cannot any more explain.” Reference he doth make by these words to the sacred verse that beginneth as follows:—“He that layeth a claim ere the passing of a thousand years...” Reflect! How intent they are upon the death of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! Ponder in your hearts upon the phrase “I cannot any more explain” and realize what schemes they are devising for this purpose. They fear lest, too fully explained, the letter might fall into alien hands and their schemes be foiled and frustrated. The phrase is only foretelling good tidings to come, namely that regarding this all requisite arrangements have been made.

O God, my God! Thou seest this wronged servant of Thine, held fast in the talons of ferocious lions, of ravening wolves, of bloodthirsty beasts. Graciously assist me, through my love for Thee, that I may drink deep of the chalice that brimmeth over with faithfulness to Thee and is filled with Thy bountiful Grace; so that, fallen upon the dust, I may sink prostrate and senseless whilst my vesture is dyed crimson with my blood. This is my wish, my heart’s desire, my hope, my pride, my glory. Grant, O Lord my God, and my Refuge, that in my last hour, my end may even as musk shed its fragrance of glory! Is there a bounty greater than this? Nay, by Thy Glory! I call Thee to witness that no day passeth but that I quaff my fill from this cup, so grievous are the misdeeds wrought by them that have broken the Covenant, kindled discord, showed their malice, stirred sedition in the land and dishonoured Thee amidst Thy servants. Lord! Shield Thou from these Covenant-breakers the mighty Stronghold of Thy Faith and protect Thy secret Sanctuary from the onslaught of the ungodly. Thou art in truth the Mighty, the Powerful, the Gracious, the Strong.

In short, O ye beloved of the Lord! The Centre of Sedition, Mírzá Muhammad ‘Alí, in accordance with the decisive words of God and by reason of his boundless transgression, hath grievously fallen and been cut off from the Holy Tree. Verily, we wronged them not, but they have wronged themselves!

O God, my God! Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion, protect them with the watchful eye of Thy loving kindness from all rancour, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy care and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious Signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy Divine Unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy Holy Kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thy all-swaying power that cometh from Thy Realm of Glory. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious!

O ye that stand fast in the Covenant! When the hour cometh that this wronged and broken-winged bird will have taken its flight into the Celestial Concourse, when it will have hastened to the Realm of the Unseen and its mortal frame will have been either lost or hidden neath the dust, it is incumbent upon the Afnán, that are steadfast in the Covenant of God and have branched from the Tree of Holiness; the Hands, (pillars) of the Cause of God (the glory of the Lord rest upon them), and all the friends and loved ones, one and all to bestir themselves and arise with heart and soul and in one accord, to diffuse the sweet savours of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith. It behoveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime, and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest, and steadfast to the end, they must raise in every land the triumphal cry “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!” (O Thou the Glory of Glories), must achieve renown in the world wherever they go, must burn brightly even as a candle in every meeting and must kindle the flame of Divine love in every assembly; that the light of truth may rise resplendent in the midmost heart of the world, that throughout the East and throughout the West a vast concourse may gather under the shadow of the Word of God, that the sweet savours of holiness may be diffused, that faces may shine radiantly, hearts be filled with the Divine spirit and souls be made heavenly.

In these days, the most important of all things is the guidance of the nations and peoples of the world. Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance for it is the head corner-stone of the foundation itself. This wronged servant has spent his days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service. He rested not a moment, till the fame of the Cause of God was noised abroad in the world and the celestial strains from the Abhá Kingdom roused the East and the West. The beloved of God must also follow the same example. This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Bahá!

The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion, and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the divine guidance; till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth, and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!

O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghsán (Branches), the Afnán (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abhá Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi—the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees and the fruit grown from the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, -as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn. He is the Interpreter of the Word of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants.

The sacred and youthful branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abhá Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against

them hath rebelled against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God. May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him! The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the Guardian of the Cause of God. It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice, upon all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the Hands of the Cause of God to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the Guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him. He that opposeth him hath opposed the True One, will make a breach in the Cause of God, will subvert His Word and will become a manifestation of the Centre of Sedition. Beware, beware, lest the days after the ascension (of Bahá'u'lláh) be repeated when the Centre of Sedition waxed haughty and rebellious and with Divine Unity for his excuse deprived himself and perturbed and poisoned others. No doubt every vainglorious one that purposeth dissension and discord will not openly declare his evil purposes, nay rather, even as impure gold, will he seize upon divers measures and various pretexts that he may separate the gathering of the people of Bahá. My object is to show that the Hands of the Cause of God must be ever watchful and so soon as they find anyone beginning to oppose and protest against the Guardian of the Cause of God, cast him out from the congregation of the people of Bahá and in no wise accept any excuse from him. How often hath grievous error been disguised in the garb of truth, that it might sow the seeds of doubt in the hearts of men!

O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon the Guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing. He that is appointed must manifest in himself detachment from all worldly things, must be the essence of purity, must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning. Thus, should the first-born of the Guardian of the Cause of God not manifest in himself the truth of the words:—"The child is the secret essence of its sire," that is, should he not inherit of the spiritual within him (the Guardian of the Cause

of God) and his glorious lineage not be matched with a goodly character, then must he, (the Guardian of the Cause of God) choose another branch to succeed him.

The Hands of the Cause of God must elect from their own number nine persons that shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the Guardian of the Cause of God. The election of these nine must be carried either unanimously or by majority from the company of the Hands of the Cause of God and these, whether unanimously or by a majority vote, must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the Guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor. This assent must be given in such wise as the assenting and dissenting voices may not be distinguished (i.e., secret ballot).

O friends! The Hands of the Cause of God must be nominated and appointed by the Guardian of the Cause of God. All must be under his shadow and obey his command. Should any, within or without the company of the Hands of the Cause of God disobey and seek division, the wrath of God and His vengeance will be upon him, for he will have caused a breach in the true Faith of God.

The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God are to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things. They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners, their deeds and their words.

This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the Guardian of the Cause of God. He must continually urge them to strive and endeavour to the utmost of their ability to diffuse the sweet savours of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world, for it is the light of Divine Guidance that causeth all the universe to be illumined. To disregard, though it be for a moment, this absolute command which is binding upon everyone, is in no wise permitted, that the existent world may become even as the Abhá Paradise, that the surface of the earth may become heavenly, that contention and conflict amidst peoples, kindreds, nations and governments may disappear, that all the dwellers on earth may become one people and one race, that the world may become even as one home. Should differences arise, they shall be amicably and

conclusively settled by the Supreme Tribunal, that shall include members from all the governments and peoples of the world.

O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. So intense must be the spirit of love and loving kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them. For universality is of God and all limitations earthly. Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples. The vivifying breeze reviveth every living creature and all beings endued with life obtain their share and portion at His heavenly board. In like manner, the affections and loving kindness of the servants of the One True God must be bountifully and universally extended to all mankind. Regarding this, restrictions and limitations are in no wise permitted.

Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancour may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourselves, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful.

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the

fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind. By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one. Unto this body all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text. By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved and the Guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body. Should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him. Should any of the members commit a sin, injurious to the common weal, the Guardian of the Cause of God hath at his own discretion the right to expel him, whereupon the people must elect another one in his stead. This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them. The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.

O Lord, my God! Assist Thy loved ones to be firm in Thy Faith, to walk in Thy ways, to be steadfast in Thy Cause. Give them Thy grace to withstand the onslaught of self and passion, to follow the light of Divine Guidance. Thou art the Powerful, the Gracious, the Self-Subsisting, the Bestower, the Compassionate, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.

O friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! The Lord, as a sign of His infinite bounties, hath graciously favoured His servants by providing for a fixed money offering (Huqúq), to be dutifully presented unto Him, though He, the True One and His servants have been at all times independent of all created things, and God verily is the All-Possessing, exalted above the need of any gift from His creatures. This fixed money offering, however, causeth the people to become firm and steadfast and draweth Divine increase upon them. It is to be offered through the Guardian of the Cause of God, that it may be expended for the diffusion of the Fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Word, for benevolent pursuits and for the common weal.

O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon you to be submissive to all monarchs that are just and to show your fidelity to every righteous king. Serve ye the sovereigns of the world with utmost truthfulness and loyalty. Show obedience unto them and be their well-wishers. Without their leave and permission do not meddle with political affairs, for disloyalty to the just sovereign is disloyalty to God Himself.

This is my counsel and the commandment of God unto you. Well is it with them that act accordingly.

(This written paper hath for a long time been preserved under ground, damp having affected it. When brought forth to the light it was observed that certain parts of it were injured by the damp, and the Holy Land being sorely agitated it was left untouched.)

[PART TWO]

He Is God

O my Lord, my heart's Desire, Thou Whom I ever invoke, Thou Who art my Aider and my Shelter, my Helper and my Refuge! Thou seest me submerged in an ocean of calamities that overwhelm the soul, of afflictions that oppress the heart, of woes that disperse Thy gathering, of ills and pains that scatter Thy flock. Sore trials have compassed me round and perils have from all sides beset me. Thou seest me immersed in a sea of unsurpassed tribulation, sunk into a fathomless abyss, afflicted by mine enemies and consumed with the flame of their hate, enkindled by my kinsmen with whom Thou didst make Thy strong Covenant and Thy firm Testament, wherein Thou biddest them turn their hearts to this wronged one, to keep away from me the foolish, the unjust, and refer unto this lonely one all that about which they differ in Thy Holy Book, so that the Truth may be revealed unto them, their doubts may be dispelled and Thy manifest Signs be spread abroad.

Yet now Thou seest them, O Lord, my God! with Thine eye that sleepeth not, how that they have broken Thy Covenant and turned their backs thereon, how with hate and rebelliousness they have erred from Thy Testament and have arisen intent upon malice. Adversities have waxed still more severe as they rose with unbearable cruelty to overpower and crush me, as they scattered far

and wide their scrolls of doubt and in utter falsehood hurled their calumnies upon me. Not content with this, their chief, O my God, hath dared to interpolate Thy Book, to fraudulently alter Thy decisive Holy Text and falsify that which hath been revealed by Thy All-Glorious Pen. He did also maliciously insert that which Thou didst reveal for the one that hath wrought the most glaring cruelty upon Thee, disbelieved in Thee and denied Thy wondrous Signs, into what Thou didst reveal for this servant of Thine that hath been wronged in this world. All this he did that he might beguile the souls of men and breathe his evil whisperings into the hearts of Thy devoted ones. Thereunto did their second chief testify, confessing it in his own handwriting, setting thereupon his seal and spreading it throughout all regions. O my God! Could there be a more grievous injustice than this? And still they rested not, but further strove with stubbornness, falsehood and slander, with scorn and calumny to stir up sedition in the midst of the government of this land and elsewhere, causing them to deem me a sower of sedition and filling the minds with things that the ear abhorreth to hear. The government was thus alarmed, fear fell upon the sovereign, and the suspicion of the nobility was aroused. Minds were troubled, affairs were upset, souls were perturbed, the fire of anguish and sorrow was kindled within the breasts, the Holy Leaves (of the Household) were convulsed and shaken, their eyes rained with tears, their sighs and lamentations were raised and their hearts burned within them as they bewailed this wronged servant of Thine, fallen a victim into the hands of these, his kindred, nay, his very enemies!

Lord! Thou seest all things weeping over Me and My kindred rejoicing in My woes. By Thy Glory, O my God! Even amongst mine enemies, some have lamented my troubles and my distress, and of the envious ones a number have shed tears because of my cares, my exile and my afflictions. They did this because they found naught in me but affection and care and witnessed naught but kindness and mercy. As they saw me swept into the flood of tribulation and adversity and exposed even as a target to the arrows of fate, their hearts were moved with compassion, tears came to their eyes and they testified declaring:—"The Lord is our witness; naught have we seen from him but faithfulness, generosity and extreme compassion." The Covenant-breakers, foreboders of evil, however, waxed fiercer in their rancour, rejoiced as I fell a

victim to the most grievous ordeal, bestirred themselves against me and made merry over the heartrending happenings around me.

I call upon Thee, O Lord my God! with my tongue and with all my heart, not to requite them for their cruelty and their wrong-doings, their craft and their mischief, for they are foolish and ignoble and know not what they do. They discern not good from evil, neither do they distinguish right from wrong, nor justice from injustice. They follow their own desires and walk in the footsteps of the most imperfect and foolish amongst them. O my Lord! Have mercy upon them, shield them from all afflictions in these troubled times and grant that all trials and hardships may be the lot of this Thy servant that hath fallen into this darksome pit. Single me out for every woe and make me a sacrifice for all Thy loved ones. O Lord, Most High! May my soul, my life, my being, my spirit, my all be offered up for them. O God, my God! Lowly, suppliant and fallen upon my face, I beseech Thee with all the ardour of my invocation to pardon whosoever hath hurt me, forgive him that hath conspired against me and offended me, and wash away the misdeeds of them that have wrought injustice upon me. Vouchsafe unto them Thy goodly gifts, give them joy, relieve them from sorrow, grant them peace and prosperity, give them Thy bliss and pour upon them Thy bounty.

Thou art the Powerful, the Gracious, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!

O dearly beloved friends! I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour's life is lost to me. I am thus constrained to write these lines for the protection of the Cause of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Word and the safety of His Teachings. By the Ancient Beauty! This wronged one hath in no wise borne nor doth he bear a grudge against any one; towards none doth he entertain any ill-feeling and uttereth no word save for the good of the world. My supreme obligation, however, of necessity, prompteth me to guard and preserve the Cause of God. Thus, with the greatest regret, I counsel you saying: Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His law and have the utmost fear of discord. This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them): "His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Báb), is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abhá Beauty (may

my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.” Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant. By this House is meant that Universal House of Justice which is to be elected from all countries, that is from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England.

It is incumbent upon these members (of the Universal House of Justice) to gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself. Inasmuch as the House of Justice hath power to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear upon daily transactions, so also it hath power to repeal the same. Thus for example, the House of Justice enacteth today a certain law and enforceth it, and a hundred years hence, circumstances having profoundly changed and the conditions having altered, another House of Justice will then have power, according to the exigencies of the time, to alter that law. This it can do because these laws form no part of the divine explicit Text. The House of Justice is both the initiator and the abrogator of its own laws.

And now, one of the greatest and most fundamental principles of the Cause of God is to shun and avoid entirely the Covenant-breakers, for they will utterly destroy the Cause of God, exterminate His Law and render of no account all efforts exerted in the past. O friends! It behoveth you to call to mind with tenderness the trials of His Holiness, the Exalted One, and show your fidelity to the Ever-Blest Beauty. The utmost endeavour must be exerted lest all these woes, trials and afflictions, all this pure and sacred blood that hath been shed so profusely in the Path of God, may prove to be in vain. Ye know well what the hands of the Centre of Sedition, Mírzá Muhammad ‘Alí, and his associates have

wrought. Among his doings, one of them is the corruption of the Sacred Text whereof ye are all aware, the Lord be praised, and know that it is evident, proven and confirmed by the testimony of his brother, Mírzá Badí'u'lláh, whose confession is written in his own handwriting, beareth his seal, is printed and spread abroad. This is but one of his misdeeds. Can a transgression be imagined more glaring than this, the interpolation of the Holy Text? Nay, by the righteousness of the Lord! His transgressions are writ and recorded in a leaflet by itself. Please God, ye will peruse it.

In short, according to the explicit Divine Text the least transgression shall make of this man a fallen creature, and what transgression is more grievous than attempting to destroy the Divine Edifice, breaking the Covenant, erring from the Testament, falsifying the Holy Text, sowing the seeds of doubt, calumniating 'Abdu'l-Bahá, advancing claims for which God hath sent down no warrant, kindling mischief and striving to shed the very blood of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and many other things whereof ye are all aware! It is thus evident that should this man succeed in bringing disruption into the Cause of God, he will utterly destroy and exterminate it. Beware lest ye approach this man, for to approach him is worse than approaching fire!

Gracious God! After Mírzá Badí'u'lláh had declared in his own handwriting that this man (Muhammad 'Alí) had broken the Covenant and had proclaimed his falsification of the Holy Text, he realized that to return to the True Faith and pay allegiance to the Covenant and Testament would in no wise promote his selfish desires. He thus repented and regretted the thing he had done and attempted privily to gather in his printed confessions, plotted darkly with the Centre of Sedition against me and informed him daily of all the happenings within my household. He has even taken a leading part in the mischievous deeds that have of late been committed. Praise be to God affairs recovered their former stability and the loved ones obtained partial peace. But ever since the day he entered again into our midst, he began afresh to sow the seeds of sore sedition. Some of his machinations and intrigues will be recorded in a separate leaflet.

My purpose is, however, to show that it is incumbent upon the friends that are fast and firm in the Covenant and Testament to be ever wakeful lest after

this wronged one is gone this alert and active worker of mischief may cause disruption, privily sow the seeds of doubt and sedition and utterly root out the Cause of God. A thousand times shun his company. Take heed and be on your guard. Watch and examine; should anyone, openly or privily, have the least connection with him, cast him out from your midst, for he will surely cause disruption and mischief.

O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive with all your heart to shield the Cause of God from the onslaught of the insincere, for souls such as these cause the straight to become crooked and all benevolent efforts to produce contrary results.

O God, my God! I call Thee, Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, Thy Saints and Thy Holy Ones, to witness that I have declared conclusively Thy Proofs unto Thy loved ones and set forth clearly all things unto them, that they may watch over Thy Faith, guard Thy Straight Path and protect Thy Resplendent Law. Thou art, verily, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise!

[PART THREE]

He Is the Witness, the All-Sufficing

O my God! my Beloved, my heart's Desire! Thou knowest, Thou seest that which hath befallen this servant of Thine, that hath humbled himself at Thy Door, and Thou knowest the sins committed against him by the people of malice, they that have broken Thy Covenant and turned their backs on Thy Testament. In the day-time they afflicted me with the arrows of hate and in the night-season they privily conspired to hurt me. At dawn they committed that which the Celestial Concourse did lament and at eventide they unsheathed against me the sword of tyranny and hurled in the presence of the ungodly their darts of calumny upon me. Notwithstanding their misdeeds, this lowly servant of Thine was patient and did endure every affliction and trial at their hands, though by Thy power and might he could have destroyed their words, quenched their fire and stayed the flame of their rebelliousness.

Thou seest, O my God! how my long-suffering, my forbearance and silence have increased their cruelty, their arrogance and their pride. By Thy Glory, O Beloved One! They have misbelieved in Thee and rebelled against Thee in

such wise that they left me not a moment of rest and quiet, that I might arise as it is meet and seemly, to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind, and might serve at Thy Threshold of Holiness with a heart that overfloweth with the joy of the dwellers of the Abhá Kingdom.

Lord! My cup of woe runneth over, and from all sides blows are fiercely raging upon me. The darts of affliction have compassed me round and the arrows of distress have rained upon me. Thus tribulation overwhelmed me and my strength, because of the onslaught of the foemen, became weakness within me, while I stood alone and forsaken in the midst of my woes. Lord! Have mercy upon me, lift me up unto Thyself and make me to drink from the Chalice of Martyrdom, for the wide world with all its vastness can no longer contain me.

Thou art, verily, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful!

O ye the true, the sincere, the faithful friends of this wronged one! Everyone knoweth and believeth what calamities and afflictions have befallen this wronged one, this prisoner, at the hands of those who have broken the Covenant at the time when, after the setting of the Day-Star of the world, his heart was consumed with the flame of His bereavement.

When, in all parts of the earth, the enemies of God profiting by the passing away of the Sun of Truth, suddenly and with all their might launched their attack; at such a time and in the midst of so great a calamity, the Covenant-breakers arose with the utmost cruelty, intent upon harm and the stirring up of the spirit of enmity. At every moment a misdeed they did commit and bestirred themselves to sow the seeds of grievous sedition, and to ruin the edifice of the Covenant. But this wronged one, this prisoner, did his utmost to hide and veil their doings, that haply they might regret and repent. His long-suffering and forbearance of these evil deeds, however, made the rebellious ones still more arrogant and daring; until, through leaflets written with their own hands, they sowed the seeds of doubt, printing these leaflets and scattering them broadcast throughout the world, believing that such foolish doings would bring to naught the Covenant and the Testament.

Thereupon the loved ones of the Lord arose, inspired with the greatest confidence and constancy and aided by the power of the Kingdom, by Divine Strength, by heavenly Grace, by the unfailing help and Celestial Bounty, they withstood the enemies of the Covenant in well-nigh three score and ten treatises and supported by conclusive proofs, unmistakable evidences and clear texts from the Holy Writ, they refuted their scrolls of doubt and mischief-kindling leaflets. The Centre of Sedition was thus confounded in his craftiness, afflicted by the wrath of God, sunk into a degradation and infamy that shall be lasting until the Day of Doom. Base and wretched is the plight of the people of evil deeds, they that are in grievous loss!

And as they lost their cause, grew hopeless in their efforts against the loved ones of God, saw the Standard of His Testament waving throughout all regions and witnessed the power of the Covenant of the Merciful One, the flame of envy so blazed within them as to be beyond recounting. With the utmost vigour, exertion, rancour and enmity, they followed another path, walked in another way, devised another plan: that of kindling the flame of sedition in the heart of the very government itself, and thus cause this wronged one, this prisoner to appear as a mover of strife, inimical to the government and a hater and opponent of the Crown. Perchance ‘Abdu’l-Bahá may be put to death and his name be made to perish whereby an arena may be opened unto the enemies of the Covenant wherein they may advance and spur on their charger, inflict a grievous loss upon everyone and subvert the very foundations of the edifice of the Cause of God. For so grievous is the conduct and behaviour of this false people that they are become even as an axe striking at the very root of the Blessed Tree. Should they be suffered to continue they would, in but a few days’ time, exterminate the Cause of God, His Word, and themselves.

Hence, the beloved of the Lord must entirely shun them, avoid them, foil their machinations and evil whisperings, guard the Law of God and His religion, engage one and all in diffusing widely the sweet savours of God and to the best of their endeavour proclaim His Teachings.

Whosoever and whatsoever meeting becometh a hindrance to the diffusion of the Light of Faith, let the loved ones give them counsel and say: “Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of

God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves? Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abhá Beauty and teach the Cause of God.” Caution and prudence, however, must be observed even as recorded in the Book. The veil must in no wise be suddenly rent asunder. The Glory of Glories rest upon you.

O ye the faithful loved ones of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi, the twig that hath branched from and the fruit given forth by the two hallowed and Divine Lote-Trees, that no dust of despondency and sorrow may stain his radiant nature, that day by day he may wax greater in happiness, in joy and spirituality, and may grow to become even as a fruitful tree.

For he is, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnán, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him. He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyed God; he that turneth away from him, hath turned away from God and he that denieth him, hath denied the True One. Beware lest anyone falsely interpret these words, and like unto them that have broken the Covenant after the Day of Ascension (of Bahá’u’lláh) advance a pretext, raise the standard of revolt, wax stubborn and open wide the door of false interpretation. To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular conviction. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.

The Glory of Glories rest upon you!²⁵⁵

Guardian’s summary of the themes of the Will

The Document establishing that Order, the Charter of a future world civilization, which may be regarded in some of its features as supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; signed and sealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; entirely written with His own hand; its first section composed during one of the darkest periods of His incarceration in the prison-fortress of ‘Akká, proclaims, categorically and unequivocally, the fundamental beliefs of the followers of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh; reveals, in unmistakable language, the

²⁵⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Will and Testament*, pp. 1–27.

twofold character of the Mission of the Báb; discloses the full station of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation; asserts that “all others are servants unto Him and do His bidding”; stresses the importance of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; establishes the institution of the Guardianship as a hereditary office and outlines its essential functions; provides the measures for the election of the International House of Justice, defines its scope and sets forth its relationship to that Institution; prescribes the obligations, and emphasizes the responsibilities, of the Hands of the Cause of God; and extols the virtues of the indestructible Covenant established by Bahá'u'lláh. That Document, furthermore, lauds the courage and constancy of the supporters of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant; expatiates on the sufferings endured by its appointed Centre; recalls the infamous conduct of Mírzá Yahyá and his failure to heed the warnings of the Báb; exposes, in a series of indictments, the perfidy and rebellion of Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí, and the complicity of his son Shú'á'u'lláh and of his brother Mírzá Badí'u'lláh; reaffirms their excommunication, and predicts the frustration of all their hopes; summons the Afnán (the Báb's kindred), the Hands of the Cause and the entire company of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh to arise unitedly to propagate His Faith, to disperse far and wide, to labour tirelessly and to follow the heroic example of the Apostles of Jesus Christ; warns them against the dangers of association with the Covenant-breakers, and bids them shield the Cause from the assaults of the insincere and the hypocrite; and counsels them to demonstrate by their conduct the universality of the Faith they have espoused, and vindicate its high principles. In that same Document its Author reveals the significance and purpose of the Huqúqu'lláh (Right of God), already instituted in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; enjoins submission and fidelity towards all monarchs who are just; expresses His longing for martyrdom, and voices His prayers for the repentance as well as the forgiveness of His enemies.²⁵⁶

The Administrative Order as framework of the Will, nucleus and pattern of World Order

The Administrative Order, which ever since 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension has evolved and is taking shape under our very eyes in no fewer than forty countries of the world, may be considered as the framework of the Will itself,

²⁵⁶ Shoghi Effendi: *God Passes By*, p. 328.

the inviolable stronghold wherein this new-born child is being nurtured and developed. This Administrative Order, as it expands and consolidates itself, will no doubt manifest the potentialities and reveal the full implications of this momentous Document—this most remarkable expression of the Will of One of the most remarkable Figures of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh. It will, as its component parts, its organic institutions, begin to function with efficiency and vigour, assert its claim and demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.²⁵⁷

The strength, distinction and guarantee of the Administrative Order

It should be noted in this connection that this Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahá'u'lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances. Therein lies the secret of its strength, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism. Nowhere in the sacred scriptures of any of the world's religious systems, nor even in the writings of the Inaugurator of the Bábí Dispensation, do we find any provisions establishing a covenant or providing for an administrative order that can compare in scope and authority with those that lie at the very basis of the Bahá'í Dispensation.²⁵⁸

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, Promise of All Ages

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh should indeed be regarded, if we wish to be faithful to the tremendous implications of its message, as the culmination of a cycle, the final stage in a series of successive, of preliminary and progressive revelations. These, beginning with Adam and ending with the Báb, have paved the way and anticipated with an ever-increasing emphasis the advent of that Day of Days in which He Who is the Promise of All Ages should be made manifest.

To this truth the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh abundantly testify. A mere reference to the claims which, in vehement language and with compelling

²⁵⁷ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 144.

²⁵⁸ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 145.

power, He Himself has repeatedly advanced cannot but fully demonstrate the character of the Revelation of which He was the chosen bearer. To the words that have streamed from His pen—the fountainhead of so impetuous a Revelation—we should, therefore, direct our attention if we wish to obtain a clearer understanding of its importance and meaning. Whether in His assertion of the unprecedented claim He has advanced, or in His allusions to the mysterious forces He has released, whether in such passages as extol the glories of His long-awaited Day, or magnify the station which they who have recognized its hidden virtues will attain, Bahá'u'lláh and, to an almost equal extent, the Báb and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, have bequeathed to posterity mines of such inestimable wealth as none of us who belong to this generation can befittingly estimate.²⁵⁹

The ages of human evolution

The ages of its infancy and childhood are past, never again to return, while the Great Age, the consummation of all ages, which must signalize the coming of age of the entire human race, is yet to come. The convulsions of this transitional and most turbulent period in the annals of humanity are the essential prerequisites, and herald the inevitable approach, of that Age of Ages, “the time of the end,” in which the folly and tumult of strife that has, since the dawn of history, blackened the annals of mankind, will have been finally transmuted into the wisdom and the tranquillity of an undisturbed, a universal, and lasting peace, in which the discord and separation of the children of men will have given way to the world-wide reconciliation, and the complete unification of the divers elements that constitute human society.

This will indeed be the fitting climax of that process of integration which, starting with the family, the smallest unit in the scale of human organization, must, after having called successively into being the tribe, the city-state, and the nation, continue to operate until it culminates in the unification of the whole world, the final object and the crowning glory of human evolution on this planet. It is this stage which humanity, willingly or unwillingly, is resistlessly approaching. It is for this stage that this vast, this fiery ordeal which humanity

²⁵⁹ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 103.

is experiencing is mysteriously paving the way. It is with this stage that the fortunes and the purpose of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh are indissolubly linked.²⁶⁰

Divine Economy for all mankind

Feeble though our Faith may now appear in the eyes of men, who either denounce it as an offshoot of Islam, or contemptuously ignore it as one more of those obscure sects that abound in the West, this priceless gem of Divine Revelation, now still in its embryonic state, shall evolve within the shell of His law, and shall forge ahead, undivided and unimpaired, till it embraces the whole of mankind. Only those who have already recognized the supreme station of Bahá'u'lláh, only those whose hearts have been touched by His love, and have become familiar with the potency of His spirit, can adequately appreciate the value of this Divine Economy—His inestimable gift to mankind.²⁶¹

The Kingdom of God Himself

Let no one, while this System is still in its infancy, misconceive its character, belittle its significance or misrepresent its purpose. The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day. The Source from which it derives its inspiration is no one less than Bahá'u'lláh Himself. Its shield and defender are the embattled hosts of the Abhá Kingdom. Its seed is the blood of no less than twenty thousand martyrs who have offered up their lives that it may be born and flourish. The axis round which its institutions revolve are the authentic provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Its guiding principles are the truths which He Who is the unerring Interpreter of the teachings of our Faith has so clearly enunciated in His public addresses throughout the West. The laws that govern its operation and limit its functions are those which have been expressly ordained in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The seat round which its spiritual, its humanitarian and administrative activities will cluster are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its Dependencies. The pillars that sustain its authority and buttress its structure are the twin institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice. The central, the underlying aim which animates it is the establishment of the New World Order as adumbrated by Bahá'u'lláh. The

²⁶⁰ Shoghi Effendi: *The Promised Day is Come*, pp. 117–118.

²⁶¹ Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 23–24.

methods it employs, the standard it inculcates, incline it to neither East nor West, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither rich nor poor, neither white nor coloured. Its watchword is the unification of the human race; its standard the “Most Great Peace”; its consummation the advent of that golden millennium—the Day when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the Kingdom of God Himself, the Kingdom of Bahá’u’lláh.²⁶²

²⁶² Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 156–157.

COVENANT BREAKERS

OLD TESTAMENT

The story of Miriam

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard [it]. (Now the man Moses [was] very meek, above all the men which [were] upon the face of the earth.) And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood [in] the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, [I] the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, [and] will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses [is] not so, who [is] faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam [became] leprous, [white] as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, [she was] leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in [again]. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in [again].²⁶³

NEW TESTAMENT

²⁶³ Numbers 12:1–15. Compare with Numbers 16:1–33; 46–9; Malachi 2:10.

a) Words of Christ

Offences necessary

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!²⁶⁴

Story of Judas

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup [is] the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me [is] with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!²⁶⁵

b) Words of early followers of Christ

They separate themselves

I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these [filthy] dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds [they are] without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the

²⁶⁴ Matthew 18:7

²⁶⁵ Luke 22:20–22

blackness of darkness for ever. ... How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.²⁶⁶

Wilful sin after recognition of truth

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance [belongeth] unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. [It is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.²⁶⁷

QUR'ÁN

The Covenant of God and its breaking

Verily, God enjoineth justice and the doing of good and gifts to kindred; and he forbiddeth wickedness and wrong and oppression. He warneth you that haply ye may be mindful. Be faithful in the covenant of God when ye have covenanted, and break not your oaths after ye have pledged them: for now have ye made God to stand surety for you. Verily, God hath knowledge of what ye do. ... And barter not the covenant of God for a mean price; for with God is that which is better for you, if ye do but understand.²⁶⁸

But those who, after having contracted it, break their covenant with God, and cut asunder what God hath bidden to be united, and commit misdeeds on the earth, these, a curse awaiteth them, and an ill abode!²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Jude 1:5–13, 18–19. Compare with:

(i) The Story of Judas—Matthew 26:14–25, 45–50 and 27; 3–10; Mark 14:18–21, 42–50; Luke 22:1–6, 20–24, 47–53; John 13:18–30 and 18:2–12.

(ii) The Story of Lazarus (Lazar—Leper) John 11:1–44.

²⁶⁷ Hebrews 10:26–31

²⁶⁸ Qur'án 16:92–3, 97 (The Bees (An-Nahl))

²⁶⁹ Qur'án 13:25 (The Thunder (Ar-Ra'd))

Whoso, after he hath believed in God denieth him, if he were forced to it and if his heart remain steadfast in the faith, shall be guiltless: but whoso openeth his breast to infidelity—on such shall be wrath from God, and a severe punishment awaiteth them. This, because they have loved this present life beyond the next, and because God guideth not the unbelievers! These are they whose hearts and ears and eyes God hath sealed up: these are the careless ones: in the next world shall they perish beyond a doubt.²⁷⁰

Penalty for unbelief

O ye who believe! stand fast to justice, when ye bear witness before God, though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kindred, whether the party be rich or poor. God is nearer than you to both. Therefore follow not passion lest ye swerve from truth. And if ye wrest your testimony or stand aloof, God verily is well aware of what ye do. O ye who believe! believe in God and his Apostle, and the Book which he hath sent down to his Apostle, and the Book which he hath sent down aforetime. Whoever believeth not on God and his Angels and his Books and his Apostles, and in the last day, he verily hath erred with far-gone error. Verily, they who believed, then became unbelievers, then believed, and again became unbelievers, and then increased their unbelief it is not God who will forgive them or guide them into the way. Announce to the hypocrites that a dolorous torment doth await them. Those who take the unbelievers for friends besides the faithful—do they seek honour at their hands? Verily, all honour belongeth unto God! And already hath He sent this down to you in the Book “WHEN YE SHALL HEAR THE SIGNS OF GOD THEY SHALL NOT BE BELIEVED BUT SHALL BE MOCKED AT.” Sit ye not therefore with such, until they engage in other discourse; otherwise, ye will become like them. Verily God will gather the hypocrites and the infidels all together in Hell.²⁷¹

Veritable infidels

Of a truth they who believe not on God and his Apostles, and seek to separate God from his Apostles, and say, “Some we believe, and some we

²⁷⁰ Qur’án 16:108–110 (The Bees (An-Nahl))

²⁷¹ Qur’án 4:134–9 (Women (An-Nisá’))

believe not,” and desire to take a middle way; These! they are veritable infidels! and for the infidels have we prepared a shameful punishment.²⁷²

Despair and chastisement for those who believe not

“As for those who believe not in the signs of God, or that they shall ever attain His Presence, these of My mercy shall despair, and these doth a grievous chastisement await.”²⁷³

“But when Our clear signs are recited to them, they who look not forward to attain Our Presence, say, ‘Bring a different Qur’án from this, or make some change in it.’ Say: It is not for Me to change it as Mine own soul prompteth. I follow only what is revealed to Me: verily, I fear, if I rebel against My Lord, the punishment of a great day.”²⁷⁴

WRITINGS OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH

Renounce thyself and turn unto Me

There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me; for it behoveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be loved alone and above all that is.²⁷⁵

“My love is My stronghold”

My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure, and he that turneth away shall surely stray and perish.²⁷⁶

Return and lose not thy chance

I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me. The sword of thy rebellion hath felled the tree of thy hope. At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.²⁷⁷

Outwardly shepherds, inwardly wolves

²⁷² Qur’án 4:149–150 (Women (An-Nisá’))

²⁷³ Qur’án 29:23 quoted in Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 116.

²⁷⁴ Qur’án 10:15 quoted in Bahá’u’lláh: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 116.

²⁷⁵ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 8.

²⁷⁶ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Arabic No. 9.

²⁷⁷ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 21.

Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.

“My will and the will of another than Me cannot dwell together in one heart”

Wouldst thou have Me, seek none other than Me; and wouldst thou gaze upon My beauty, close thine eyes to the world and all that is therein; for My will and the will of another than Me, even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart.²⁷⁸

Beasts in pastures of passion and desire

Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the Beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor hath the breeze of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion.²⁷⁹

None faithful to the Covenant on Mount Párán

Call ye to mind that covenant ye have entered into with Me upon Mount Párán, situate within the hallowed precincts of Zamán. I have taken to witness the concourse on high and the dwellers in the city of eternity, yet now none do I find faithful unto the covenant. Of a certainty pride and rebellion have effaced it from the hearts, in such wise that no trace thereof remaineth. Yet knowing this, I waited and disclosed it not.²⁸⁰

Meaning of leprosy

Leprosy may be interpreted as any veil that interveneth between man and the recognition of the Lord, his God. Whoso alloweth himself to be shut out from

²⁷⁸ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 31.

²⁷⁹ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 45.

²⁸⁰ Bahá’u’lláh: *The Hidden Words*, Persian No. 71.

Him is indeed a leper, who shall not be remembered in the Kingdom of God, the Mighty, the All-Praised.²⁸¹

“Gather Thy servants together around this Divine Law”

I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, to open the eyes of Thy servants, that they may behold Thee shining above the horizon of Thy majesty and glory, and that they may not be hindered by the croaking of the raven from hearkening to the voice of the Dove of Thy sublime oneness, nor be prevented by the corrupt waters from partaking of the pure wine of Thy bounty and the everlasting streams of Thy gifts.

Gather them, then, together around this Divine Law, the covenant of which Thou hast established with all Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, and Whose ordinances Thou hast written down in Thy Tablets and Thy Scriptures. Raise them up, moreover, to such heights as will enable them to perceive Thy Call.

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious.²⁸²

WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

The Sun of the Covenant dissipates clouds, disperses bats

Souls are still unaware of the power of the Covenant. This Testament is neither a tradition nor a tale. It has been established through the pen of His Holiness—Bahá’u’lláh with the utmost firmness and undoubtedly if all the people of the world join in endeavouring to uproot it, they will all eventually fail and be disappointed. What can therefore a handful of people do?

The power of the Covenant is like unto the sun and those who have acted contrary to it are like transparent clouds. The Sun of the Covenant dissipates dense clouds and causes them to vanish. What then will it do to these imaginary mists? Thou dost consider that in all regions the Call of the Covenant is being raised and in the utmost power. His Holiness Christ said to Peter, “Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church.” This Word could not be resisted by all the people of the world and eventually it has been evident and manifest. At present His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh has through His

²⁸¹ Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 86.

²⁸² Bahá’u’lláh: *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 106.

Sacred Pen established this Covenant in the utmost power, perfection, and clearness. Consider then what power it yields. At present some superficial souls like unto bats are plotting together in the dark, and say to one another that this Sun of the Covenant shall be eclipsed and the resplendent Moon of the Testament shall be concealed. But the Sun of the Covenant through one effulgence shall disperse and annihilate these bats.²⁸³

Physical and spiritual life

A certain disciple came to Christ and asked permission to go and bury his father. He answered, “Let the dead bury their dead.” Therefore, Christ designated as dead some who were still living—that is, let the living dead, the spiritually dead, bury your father. They were dead because they were not believers in Christ. Although physically alive, they were dead spiritually. This is the meaning of Christ’s words, “That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.” He meant that those who were simply born of the human body were dead spiritually, while those quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit were living and eternally alive. These are the interpretations of Christ Himself.²⁸⁴

Healthy to avoid the spiritually diseased

Thou hadst asked some questions; that why the blessed and spiritual souls who are firm and steadfast, shun the company of degenerate persons. This is because, that just as the bodily diseases like consumption and cancer are contagious, likewise the spiritual diseases are also infectious. If a consumptive should associate with a thousand safe and healthy persons, the safety and health of these thousand persons would not affect the consumptive and would not cure him of his consumption. But when this consumptive associates with those thousand souls, in a short time the disease of consumption will infect a number of those healthy persons. This is a clear and self-evident question.

Likewise, if a thousand magnanimous persons associate with a degraded one, the perfection of those souls will not affect this debased person. On the contrary, this mean person will be the cause of their going astray. Therefore, His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh says in the Tablets: “Soon will a foul odour be

²⁸³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, XI:18, p. 307.

²⁸⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 245–246.

spread; shun it, so commandeth the Omniscient and the Wise. That is, in that city a stinking odour will soon be spread. You should avoid it. So are ye commanded by His Holiness, the Knower and the Wise.”

That foul odour is that of violation. Also in the Tablet of Advice He says: “Now, do not neglect your Sower, Protector, and Educator; and do not choose and prefer others to Him, lest foul and poisonous winds should pass over you.”

His Holiness Christ says that the owner of the garden does not leave the dried tree, but certainly cuts it and throws it into the fire, because the dried wood is worthy and deserving of fire.

Again, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh says: “Then, O ye trees of the blessed garden of My bestowal, protect ye yourselves from the poison of the treacherous souls and the stinking winds, which are the association of the polytheist and the negligent ones, so that the trees of existence, through the bounty of the Worshipped [God] be not deprived of the blessed breaths and breezes of love.”²⁸⁵

In every age seeds of discord, e.g. Arius

In every age and cycle, in the time of Moses, of His Holiness Christ and of His Holiness Muhammad as well as after these sacred Manifestations, some people of evil intention have been found and have sown the seeds of discord and of sedition. Even after Christ, Arius, the well-known patriarch, was the cause of a widespread schism in the Cause of God and intense agitation among the believers. His followers numbered over three million, and he as well as his successors exerted the utmost effort in order to produce a split and a widespread commotion in the religion of God. But eventually the power of Christ exterminated and utterly destroyed them all to the extent that no trace [of them] has been left. These people are like the froth that gathers on the surface of the sea; a wave surges from the ocean of the Covenant and through the power of the Abhá Kingdom will cast these foams ashore. In the Qur'án it is mentioned: “As to the foam, it is quickly gone; and as to what is useful to man, it remaineth on the earth.” These corrupt thoughts that emanate from personal and evil

²⁸⁵ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, XII:14, pp. 233–4.

intentions will all vanish, whereas the Covenant of God shall remain stable and secure.²⁸⁶

Carnal desires the cause of difference

... carnal desires are the cause of difference, as it is the case with violators [of the Covenant]. These do not doubt the validity of the Covenant, but selfish motives have dragged them to this condition. It is not that they ignore (or are ignorant of) what they do; they are perfectly aware and still they exhibit opposition. in short. the ocean of the Covenant is tumultuous and wide. It casts ashore the foam of violation, and thus rest ye assured.²⁸⁷

Shun all Covenant breakers

And now, one of the greatest and most fundamental principles of the Cause of God is to shun and avoid entirely the Covenant-breakers, for they will utterly destroy the Cause of God, exterminate His Law and render of no account all efforts exerted in the past. O friends! It behoveth you to call to mind with tenderness the trials of His Holiness, the Exalted One, and show your fidelity to the Ever-Blest Beauty. The utmost endeavour must be exerted lest all these woes, trials and afflictions, all this pure and sacred blood that hath been shed so profusely in the Path of God, may prove to be in vain.²⁸⁸

O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive with all your heart to shield the Cause of God from the onslaught of the insincere, for souls such as these cause the straight to become crooked and all benevolent efforts to produce contrary results.

O God, my God! I call Thee, Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, Thy Saints and Thy Holy Ones, to witness that I have declared conclusively Thy Proofs unto Thy loved ones and set forth clearly all things unto them, that they may watch over Thy Faith, guard Thy Straight Path and protect Thy Resplendent Law. Thou art, verily, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise!²⁸⁹

The Master's Last Tablet to America

²⁸⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 95.

²⁸⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, p. 246.

²⁸⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Will and Testament*, p. 20.

²⁸⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Will and Testament*, p. 22.

O ye friends of God!

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is day and night thinking of you and mentioning you, for the friends of God are dear to Him. Every morning at dawn I supplicate the Kingdom of God and ask that you may be filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that you may become brilliant candles, shine with the light of guidance and dispel the darkness of error. Rest assured that the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom will continuously reach you.

Through the power of the divine springtime, the downpour of the celestial clouds and the heat of the Sun of Reality, the tree of life is just beginning to grow. Before long, it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruits, and cast its shade over the East and the West. This Tree of Life is the Book of the Covenant.

In America, in these days, severe winds have surrounded the Lamp of the Covenant, hoping that this brilliant Light may be extinguished, and this Tree of Life may be uprooted. Certain weak, capricious, malicious and ignorant souls have been shaken by the earthquake of hatred, of animosity, have striven to efface the Divine Covenant and Testament, and render the clear water muddy so that in it they might fish. They have arisen against the Centre of the Covenant like the people of Bayán who attacked the Blessed Beauty and every moment uttered a calumny. Every day they seek a pretext and secretly arouse doubts, so that the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh may be completely annihilated in America.

O friends of God! Be awake, be awake; be vigilant, be vigilant! His Holiness, the Báb, made a Covenant for Bahá’u’lláh with all the people of the Bayán, so that on the day of appearance of “Him Whom God shall manifest”—and of the radiation of the Light of Bahá’u’lláh, they might believe and be assured, arise in service and promulgate the Word of God. Later the people of the Bayán, like Mírzá Yahyá and many others, arose against the Blessed Beauty, invented every sort of calumny, aroused doubt in the minds of the people, and from the Books of His Holiness the Báb—that were full of references to “Him Whom God shall manifest”—tried to prove Bahá’u’lláh false. Every day they wrote and spread a pamphlet opposing Bahá’u’lláh, caused trouble and perplexity among the people; they inflicted the greatest

injury and cruelty, yet counted themselves firm in the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb. However, when the light of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, lighted the universe, then all the faithful and sincere souls were freed from the darkness of the violation of the people of the Bayán and shone like brilliant candles.

Bahá'u'lláh, in all the Tablets and Epistles, forbade the true and firm friends from associating and meeting the violators of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, saying that no one should go near them because their breath is like the poison of the snake that kills instantly.

In the Hidden Words, He says: “Esteem the friendship of the just, but withhold both mind and hand from the company of the wicked.”

Addressing one of the friends, He says: “It is clear to your honour that before long Satan, in the garb of man, will reach that land and will try to mislead the friends of the Divine Beauty through temptations which arouse the desires of self, and will cause them to follow the footsteps of Satan away from the right and glorious path, and prevent them from attaining the Blessed Shore of the King of Oneness. This is a hidden information of which we have informed the chosen ones lest they may be deprived of their praiseworthy station by associating with the embodiments of hatred. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the friends of God to shun any person in whom they perceive the emanation of hatred for the Glorious Beauty of Abhá, though he may quote all the Heavenly Utterances and cling to all the Books.” He continues -Glorious be His Name!—“Protect yourselves with utmost vigilance, lest you be entrapped in the snare of deception and fraud.” This is the advice of the Pen of Destiny.

In another address, He says: “Therefore, to avoid these people will be the nearest path by which to attain the divine good pleasure; because their breath is infectious, like unto poison.”

In another Tablet, He says: “O Kázim, close thine eye to the people of the world; drink the water of knowledge from the heavenly cup bearers, and listen not to the nonsensical utterances of the manifestations of Satan, because the manifestations of Satan are occupying today the observation posts of the glorious path of God, and preventing the people by every means of deception

and ruse. Before long you will witness the turning away of the people of Bayán from the Manifestation of the Merciful.”

In another Tablet, He says: “Endeavour to your utmost to protect yourselves, because Satan appears in different robes and appeals to everyone according to each person’s own way, until he becomes like unto him—then he will leave him alone.”

In another Tablet, He says: “Shun any man in whom you perceive enmity for this Servant, though he may appear in the garb of piety of the former and later people, or may arise to the worship of the two worlds.”

In another Tablet, He says: “O Mahdí! Be informed by these utterances and shun the manifestations of the people of hell, the rising place of Nimrods, the rising place of Pharees, the fountain of Tághút,²⁹⁰ and the soothsayers.”

Again He says: “Say, O my friend and my pure ones! Listen to the Voice of this Beloved Prisoner in this Great Prison. If you detect in any man the least perceptible breath of violation, shun him and keep away from him.” Then He says: “Verily, they are manifestations of Satan.”

In another Tablet, He says: “And turn your faces to the Great Countenance for before long the foul odours of the wicked persons will pass over these regions. God willing, you may remain protected during these days.”

In the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, 6th to 9th verses, His Holiness Christ says: “But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. Wherefore if thy hand or thy feet offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.”

And in the 21st chapter and 38th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says: “But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the

²⁹⁰ Idol worshipped by the ancient Egyptians from which the name Egypt was derived.

heir, come let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him.”

Also in the 22nd chapter and the 14th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says “But many are called and few are chosen.”

In the Holy Writings of His Holiness, Bahá’u’lláh, in a thousand places at least, the violators of the Covenant are execrated and condemned. Some of the heavenly passages will be mentioned.

In short, all the friends in America know that the founders of this sedition—namely, the violators of the Covenant—are people whose aims are known to all the friends. Yet, O glorious God, they are deceived by them!

Praise be to God, you know with perfect clearness that His Holiness Christ, was extremely kind and loving, yet there were people like Judas Iscariot who—by their own deeds—separated themselves from Christ. Therefore, what fault of Christ’s could that be? Now the *Nághi dín*²⁹¹ say that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is despotic, drives some people out and excommunicates like the Pope. This is not so at all! Any person who has left (the Cause), did so because of his own actions, intrigues and evil plots. If this objection be raised against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, they must also object to the Blessed Beauty who, with distinct and conclusive command, forbids the friends from companionship and familiarity with the violators of the people of Bayán.

Supplication! O Lord of the Covenant! O luminous Star of the world! The persecuted ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has fallen into the hands of persons who appear as sheep and in reality are ferocious wolves; they exercise every sort of oppression, endeavour to destroy the foundation of the Covenant,—and claim to be Bahá’ís. They strike at the root of the Tree of the Covenant—and count themselves persecuted—just as did the people of Bayán who broke the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, and from six directions shot arrows of reproach and calumny at Thy Blessed Body. Notwithstanding this great oppression, they call themselves oppressed. Now this Servant of Thy Threshold has also fallen into the hands of oppressors. Every hour they contrive new intrigues and fraud, and bring forth new calumny.

²⁹¹ *Nághi dín* (Nakazeen)—Covenant-breakers.

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! Protect the Stronghold of Thy Cause from these thieves, and safeguard the lamps of the Kingdom from these malevolent winds!

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not rest a moment until He had raised Thy Cause and the Standard of the Kingdom of Abhá waved over the world. Now some people have arisen with intrigues and evil aspirations to trample this flag in America, but My hope is in Thy confirmations. Leave Me not single, alone and oppressed! As Thou didst promise, verbally and in writing, that Thou wouldst protect this deer of the pasture of Thy love from the attacks of the hounds of hatred and animosity, and that Thou wouldst safeguard this persecuted sheep from the claws and teeth of the ferocious wolves,—now do I await the appearance of Thy bounties and the realization of Thy definite promise. Thou art the true Protector, and Thou art the Lord of the Covenant! Therefore, protect this Lamp which Thou hast lighted, from the severe winds.

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! I have forsaken the world and its people, am heartbroken because of the unfaithful, and am weary. In the cage of this world I flutter like a frightened bird and long for the flight to Thy Kingdom.

Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá! Make me to drink the cup of sacrifice, and free Me! Relieve Me from these difficulties, hardships, afflictions and troubles! Thou art the assister, the helper, the protector and the supporter!

Now some of the writings, prayers and verses of the Blessed Beauty will be mentioned in which association with the violators is forbidden. In the Iranian Commune, He says:

“Protect this Servant from the doubts of the persons who have turned away from Thee and are deprived of the sea of Thy knowledge. O God! O God! Protect this Servant through Thy bounty and generosity from the evil of Thine enemies who have broken Thy Covenant and Testament.”

In another place He says: “O My God and the Aim of My Life! Protect this weak one with Thy Mighty hand from the voice of the Ná'ig.”

Also He says: “Ye have taken one whom I hate to be thy beloved, and My enemy to be thy friend.”

Also He says: “The company of the wicked ones increaseth sorrow, and the association with the pious ones removeth rust from the heart. The one who

desires to associate with God, let him associate with His friends; the one who wishes to hear the Words of God, let him hear the words of His chosen ones.”

Also He says: “Do not associate with the wicked, because the company of the wicked changeth the light of life into the fire of remorse. If thou asketh for the bounties of the Holy Spirit, associate with the pure ones, because they have quaffed the eternal chalice from the hands of the Cupbearer of eternity.”

Also He says: “The greatest of degradation is to leave the Shadow of God and enter under the shadow of Satan.”

Also He says: “O ye servants! There is nothing in this heart save the effulgences of the splendour of the morn of Meeting, and it does not speak but the absolute truth from your Lord. Therefore, do not follow self; break not God’s Covenant and violate not His Testament. Proceed with perfect steadfastness, and with heart, soul and tongue, turn unto Him, and be not of the thoughtless.”

And still He says: “You have forgotten God’s Covenant and violated His Testament.”

And again He says: “If anyone comes to you with the book of the wicked, put him behind you.”

“Among the people are those who have broken the Covenant, and among them are those who have followed what was ordained by the All-Knower, the All-Wise. My affliction is not from My imprisonment and persecution, or from what comes to Me from My rebellious servants,—but from the actions of those who attribute themselves to this persecuted One and commit among the people that which is degrading to the honour of God. Verily, they are of the seditious.”

Likewise speaking for the violators, He says: “Thou hast made the pulpits for Thy mention, the proclamation of Thy Word and the manifestation of Thy Cause, and we have ascended them to proclaim the breaking of Thy Covenant and Testament.”

Likewise, He says: “Take what has been ordained for you and follow not those who have broken God’s Covenant and Testament, for lo! they are the people of error.”

Again He says: “Those who have broken the Covenant of God, notwithstanding His Commands, and have turned away, they are the people of error before the most Opulent, the Exalted.”

And He says: “Those who have been faithful to God’s Covenant are of the highest ones in the sight of the exalted Lord. Those who have become negligent are of the people of fire in the sight of Thy Lord, the Beloved, the Independent.”

Likewise He says: “Blessed is the servant or maid-servant who believes, and woe to the polytheists who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and deviated from My Right Path.”

Likewise He says: “I implore of Thee not to deprive me of what Thou possessest or what Thou hast ordained for Thy chosen ones who have not broken Thy Covenant and Testament. Say! Die with your hatred! Verily, He is come by Whom the pillars of the world have been shaken and because of Whom the feet have stumbled—save those who have not broken the Covenant, but have followed what God revealed in His Book.”

Likewise He says: “The Supreme Concourse will pray for the one who is adorned with the garment of faithfulness between heaven and earth; but he who breaks the Covenant is cursed by heaven and earth.”

Likewise He says: “Take hold of what has been revealed unto you, with a power superior to that of the hands of the unbelievers who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have turned from the Face.”

Also He says: “O Yahyá! Verily the Book has come! Take it with a power from Us and do not follow those who have broken the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have denied what has been revealed from the Powerful, the All-Knower.”

Likewise He says: “I awoke this morning, O My God, under the shadow of Thy great bounty and have taken, with Thy power, the pen to mention Thee with such mention as shall be a light unto the pure, and fire unto the wicked who have violated Thy Covenant, denied Thy Verses and put aside the Kawthar of life which appeared by Thy command and was revealed by the finger of Thy will.”

Here, in a Tablet to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, He says also: “O God! This is a Branch which has sprung forth from the Tree of Oneness, the Sadrat²⁹² of Thy Unity. O God! Thou seest Him looking to Thee and clinging to the rope of Thy Bounties. Protect Him in the shelter of Thy Mercy! Thou knowest, O My God, that I do not desire Him save for what Thou dost desire Him, and I do not choose Him save for what Thou dost choose Him. Assist Him with the Hosts of Thy earth and Thy heaven. Assist, O God, those who assist Him, and choose those who choose Him. Confirm those who draw nigh unto Him, and debase those who deny Him and do not want Him. O God, Thou seest that at this moment of Revelation My Pen shakes and My Being trembles. I ask Thee, By My impatience in Thy Love and My willingness to proclaim Thy Cause, to ordain for Him and His friends, what Thou hast ordained for Thy Messengers and the faithful ones of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the powerful and the omnipotent! By God, O people, My eye weeps, and the eye of ‘Alí weeps in the Supreme Concourse; My heart throbs, and the heart of Muhammad throbs in the Courts of Abhá; My heart and the hearts of the Prophets lament with the people of knowledge, if you are those who are possessed of sight. My sorrow is not for Myself, but for the One Who comes after Me in the Shadow of the Cause with a clear, undeniable reign; because these will not acknowledge His Manifestation and will deny His evidences and verses, will dispute His power, will antagonize Him and will be traitors to His Cause—as they did to His Person in those days -and ye were witnesses.”

Again in a Tablet to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, He says: “O Greatest Branch! Verily, Thy illness caused Me sorrow, but God will cure Thee, and He is the most generous and best helper. Glory be upon Thee and upon those who serve Thee and encircle Thee! Woe and torment be upon him who opposes and torments Thee! Blessed is he who befriends Thee, and hell be for him who opposes Thee!”

Likewise He says: “Is it possible that after the dawning of the sun of Thy Testament from the horizon of Thy greatest Tablet, that any feet shall slip away from the right Path? We said, O My Supreme Pen, it behoves Thee to do as Thou hast been bidden by God, the exalted and the great. Do not ask about that

²⁹² Sadratu’l-Muntahá (the tree beyond which there is no passing) is a title of Bahá’u’lláh.

which melts Thy heart and those of the denizens of Paradise who encompass Thy wonderful Cause. Thou shouldst not know what We have hidden from Thee. Thy Lord is the veiler and the knower. Turn Thy most luminous Face to the greatest aspect and say: O My Merciful God! Decorate the Heaven of Bayán with the stars of steadfastness, trust and truth. Verily, Thou art the Powerful over what Thou willest. There is no God save Thee, the wise and the generous.”

In short, from these Holy Utterances and those of His Holiness Christ, it becomes clear, evident and proved, that man should associate with people who are firm in the Covenant and Testament, and befriend the pure ones; because bad associates bring about infection of bad qualities. It is like leprosy; it is impossible for a man to associate and befriend a leper and not be infected. This command is for the sake of protection and to safeguard.

Consider this text of the New Testament: the brothers of His Holiness Christ, came to Him and they said: “These are your brothers.” He answered that His brothers were those who believed in God, and refused to associate with His own brothers.

Likewise Qurratu’l-‘Ayn, who is celebrated in all the world, when she believed in God and was attracted to the Divine Breaths, she forsook her two eldest sons, although they were her two oldest children, because they did not become believers, and thereafter did not meet them. She said: “All the friends of God are my children, but these two are not. I will have nothing to do with them.”

Consider! The Divine Gardener cuts off the dry or weak branch from the good tree and grafts to it, a branch from another tree. He both separates and unites. This is that which His Holiness Christ says: that from all the world they come and enter the Kingdom, and the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out. Noah’s grandson, Canaan, was detested in the sight of Noah and others were accepted. The brothers of the Blessed Beauty detached themselves from Him, and the Blessed Beauty never met them. He said: “This is an eternal separation between you and Me.” All this was not because the Blessed Beauty was despotic; but because these persons, through their own actions and words deprived themselves from the bounties and bestowals of the Blessed Beauty.

His Holiness Christ did not exercise despotism in the case of Judas Iscariot and His own brothers,—but they separated themselves.

In short, the point is this: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is extremely kind, but when the disease is leprosy, what am I to do? Just as in bodily diseases we must prevent intermingling and infection and put into effect sanitary laws—because the infectious physical diseases uproot the foundation of humanity; likewise one must protect and safeguard the blessed souls from the breaths and fatal spiritual diseases; otherwise violation, like the plague, will become a contagion and all will perish. In the early days, after the Ascension of the Blessed Beauty, the centre of violation was alone; little by little the infection spread; and this was due to companionship and association.²⁹³

Desire for leadership and forming a party the cause of violation

All previous Books are subordinate to this Book of the Covenant, for it has been revealed subsequent to all the previous ones. He has named it the “Book of the Covenant,” therefore consider that if the friends remain firm in the Covenant will there be any misunderstandings among them? No, by God! Except those souls who have an evil intention and are thinking of leadership and of forming a party; those souls, although they have written epistles with their own pen and have execrated the violators, denouncing them as having destroyed the foundation of the monument erected by His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, and have written that He has written this Covenant with His own pen and that whoever deviated the least from the Centre of the Covenant is of the people of treachery and well deserves the wrath of God—these souls are themselves at present among the pioneers of violation. This is because of their personal motives, for they had thought of securing leadership and wealth, but when they considered that in remaining firm in the Covenant their purpose would not be realized, they deviated from it ... Their lie is now manifest. Notwithstanding this, some souls who are not aware of this fact waver when these people cast the seeds of suspicion ...²⁹⁴

Tests proportionate to greatness of the Cause

²⁹³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’i World Faith*, pp. 429–439.

²⁹⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quoted in *Star of the West*, vol. X, pp. 235–6.

The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe. These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected. These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features; but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and shall cast ashore the bodies of the dead, for it cannot retain them. Thus it is seen that the ocean of the Covenant hath surged and surged until it hath thrown out the dead bodies—souls that are deprived of the Spirit of God and are lost in passion and self and are seeking leadership. This foam of the ocean shall not endure and shall soon disperse and vanish, while the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar ...²⁹⁵

The bounties of God and how to know the faithful

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The more you love, the nearer you will be to God. Love is one of the bounties of God. Therefore to love one another is good.

The bounties of God are: to love each other, to speak the truth, to sever our hearts from the world, to be reverent, to be humble, to be hospitable. By these things you know the faithful servant of God. How do we know the light? By its rays. So when you see these qualities, you will know that the servant of God has received the regeneration. You must be thus reborn. You must pray and supplicate, and the more you pray and supplicate, the nearer you will be to God.

When a dead body is thrown into the ocean, the waves will throw it back upon the shore. So it is with the Ocean of Truth it will not accept a dead body; and if a believer has not these bounties of God, the sea will roll until he is finally cast out.

The people of God have no dependence upon the conditions of this world; they neither become bittered with the bitterness of the cup, nor do they become intoxicated if the cup be sweet.

²⁹⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pp. 210–211.

The people of God are like the birds, who satisfy themselves with a few crumbs, and sit the whole time on the branches of the tree singing the praises of God.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Bahá’í Scriptures*, No. 964, p. 501.