

Study Aids for
“THE
DISPENSATION
OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH”

A MESSAGE OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

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8 February 1934

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1. GENERAL NOTES

“Shoghi Effendi was also pleased to learn of the response which his last general communication ‘Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh’ addressed to the friends in the West has awakened in your community. It is his hope that the believers will, through their careful and continued study of this important communication acquire a new vision of the Cause, and will be stimulated to redouble their efforts for the expansion and consolidation of their work for the Faith.”

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 11 May 1934, cited in the compilation “Deepening”)

“As to the ‘Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh’ it also constitutes an invaluable supplement to these aforementioned Tablets [i.e., the Book of the Covenant and the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá].”

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual, 10 January 1935)

“The weighty treatise known as ‘The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh’, written in 1934, burst upon the Bahá’ís’ like a blinding white light. I remember when I first read it I had the most extraordinary feeling as if the whole universe had suddenly expanded around me and I was looking out into its dazzling star-filled immensity; all the frontiers of our understanding flew outwards; the glory of this Cause and the true station of its Central Figures were revealed to us and we were never the same again. One would have thought that the stunning impact of this one communication from the Guardian would kill puniness of soul forever! However Shoghi Effendi felt in his inmost heart about his other writings, I know from his remarks that he considered he had said all he had to say, in many ways, in the ‘Dispensation.’”

(Rúhiyyih Rabbání, “The Priceless Pearl”, p. 213)

2. SHOGHI EFFENDI'S CHARACTERIZATIONS OF THE BAHÁ'Í DISPENSATION

This 'supreme', this 'most great', this 'sacred', 'divinely-revealed', 'most glorious' and 'most holy Dispensation'; 'a Dispensation promised by all the Dispensations of the past'; 'a Dispensation the potentialities of which we are but beginning to perceive and the full range of which we can never determine'; 'the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh--the Ark of human salvation', 'the greatest religious Dispensation in the spiritual history of mankind'; 'a Dispensation which, as the Author of the Faith has Himself categorically asserted, must extend over a period of no less than one thousand years, and which will constitute the first stage in a series of Dispensations, to be established by future Manifestations, all deriving their inspiration from the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, and destined to last, in their aggregate, no less than five thousand centuries', 'the initial and brightest Dispensation of the...Bahá'í Cycle.'

A composite based on the following references:
PDC4, WOB144, BA9, GPB57,
MBW8, WOB134, GPB56, WOB102, WOB19,
MA19, CF5, CF69.

3. AN OUTLINE

I. SECTION ON BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

A. Understanding the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh (§1-8)

1. *Panorama of unique 90 year spectacle (1-4)*
 - a. Eternal truths that motivate its life (1)
 - b. Three Central Figures of the Faith (2)
 - c. Three Ages of the Bahá'í Era (3)
 - d. Forces, institutions and blissful Commonwealth (4)
2. *Purpose of letter to elucidate fundamental verities (5-8)*
 - a. Tremendous assistance to prosecution of Faith (5)
 - b. International status Faith demands clarification its root principles (6)
 - c. Special stress upon certain truths at basis of Faith (7)
 - d. Obligation and duty to obtain more adequate understanding (8)

B. Testimonies to the incomparable greatness of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation (§9-35)

1. *Affirmations from the Writings of the Báb (9-12)*
 - a. Persian Bayán on the pre-eminence of this Revelation (9)
 - b. Words of warning addressed to Vahíd (10)
 - c. From a prayer communing with Bahá'u'lláh (11)
 - d. References from the Commentary on the Súrih of Joseph (12)
2. *Abdu'l-Bahá's interpretation of a Zoroastrian prophecy (13-16)*
 - a. Text from a Tablet to a believer of Zoroastrian background (13)
 - b. Divine origin and independent status of Islám and the Imamate (14)
 - c. Independent character of the Bábí Dispensation and the principle of progressive revelation (15)
 - d. Bahá'í Faith as the culmination of a cycle (16)

3. *From Bahá'u'lláh's Own Words on the nature of His Revelation*
(17-29)

- a. Unprecedented claim (18-20, 27)
- b. Mysterious forces (21, 24, 29)
- c. Glories of this Day (22-23)
- d. Station of true believers (25)
- e. Precedence of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation over that of the Báb (26)
- f. World Order (28)
- g. Resistless power of the Revelation (29)

4. *Passages in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (30-35)

- a. Day of God (31)
- b. Growth and future development (32)
- c. Rank of the true believer (33)
- d. Relationship of Bahá'u'lláh to future Manifestations (34)
- e. Undying fire and call from the Abhá Kingdom (35)

C. Exposition of truths implicit in Bahá'u'lláh's claims (§36-52)

1. *Sublimity of this unique cycle* (36)

2. *Meaning of the divinity attributed to Bahá'u'lláh* (37-41)

- a. Human temple ever distinguished from God (37)
- b. God, the unknowable Essence, the Divine Being (38)
- c. Wrapt in impenetrable mystery (39)
- d. Relationship of God to the Manifestations (40)
- e. Bahá'u'lláh essentially a Manifestation of God never to be identified with the Essence of Divinity (41)

3. *Recognition of divine origin and first principles of past Dispensations* (42)

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4. *All-compelling power and unity of the Prophets of God* (43)
 5. *Cardinal principle of relativity of religious truth and progressiveness of Divine Revelation* (44-52)
 - a. Repudiation of a claim to finality for Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and the bedrock of Bahá'í belief (44)
 - b. An allegorical allusion to progressive Revelation (45)
 - c. Revelation corresponds to capacity of the people (46)
 - d. Messengers 'till the end that hath no end' (47)
 - e. 'He Who will come after Me' (48)
 - f. Circumstantial passage from the Bayán (49)
 - g. Gradual intensification of the Sun of Truth (50)
 - h. Ever-increasing measure of God's truth, will and guidance (51)
 - i. Affirmation from a prayer of Bahá'u'lláh (52)

II. SECTION ON THE BÁB

A. Twofold station of the Báb: Independent Prophet and Forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh (§53-56)

1. *Root principle of Bahá'í belief* (53)
2. *Most distinctive feature of Bahá'í Dispensation* (54)
3. *Short duration of Bábí Dispensation 'no criterion'* (55)
4. *Life and martyrdom of the Báb 'sufficient evidence'* (56)

B. References from the Central Figures (§57-67)

1. *Glowing tribute of Bahá'u'lláh* (58-61)
 - a. Affirmations of power and spirit of the Báb (58)
 - b. Comment on the character of Bábí heroes and martyrs (59)
 - c. Sublimity of the Báb's station compared with that of past Prophets (60)
 - d. Most memorable tribute (61)

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2. *Assertions of the Báb Himself* (62-63)
 - a. Excerpts from the Commentary on the Súrih of Joseph regarding the Báb's station (62)
 - b. The Primal Point and limitless potentialities (63)
 3. *Testimony of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (64-67)
 - a. Interpreter of Utterances of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb (64)
 - b. Explanation of the rise of the Sun of Truth (65)
 - c. Affirmation of the station of the Báb (66)
 - d. The Báb's dual and exalted station in the Will & Testament of the Master (67)

III. SECTION ON 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

A. Summary of previous exposition (§68)

B. Clarification of the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (§69-89)

1. *Significance of His position* (69)
2. *Not a Manifestation of God* (70-73)
 - a. No one to lay such claim for a thousand years (70)
 - b. Warning from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (71)
 - c. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's emphatic statements (72)
 - d. Assertion of His Will & Testament (73)
3. *Unique and exalted rank* (74-82)
 - a. Much more than an authorized interpreter (74)
 - b. Appellations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (75)
 - c. Authority from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, the Súriy-i-Ghusn, and Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá (76-79)
 - d. From a prayer revealed in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's honor (80)

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- e. From a letter to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on His visit to Beirut (81)
 - f. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s confirmation of His authority (82)
4. *Rejection of so-called ‘mystic unity’ with Bahá’u’lláh* (83-87)
- a. Master’s station neither identical to nor equivalent with Bahá’u’lláh (83-84)
 - b. Explanation of the verse ‘He is Myself’ (85-86)
 - c. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comments on the Tablet of the Branch (87)
5. *Identical Reality of the Forerunner and Founder of the Faith* (88-89)

C. Summary of this section (§90)

IV. SECTION ON THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

A. Origins of the Administrative Order (§91-101)

1. *Period of Divine Revelation and the Heroic Age* (91-92)
2. *Role of the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (93-95)
 - a. Link insuring continuity of the three ages (93)
 - b. Charter of the New World Order (94)
 - c. Not to be divorced from Bahá’u’lláh’s purpose (95)
 - d. Administrative Order: framework of the Will and nucleus and pattern of the New World Order (95)
3. *Unique in the annals of the worlds religious systems* (96-97)
 - a. Contrast with Christianity and Islám (96)
 - b. Compared to the Bábí Dispensation (96)
 - c. Invulnerable security of its world-embracing shelter (97)
4. *Scriptural references from the Central Figures* (98-100)
 - a. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the Covenant and the future (98)
 - b. Bahá’u’lláh on the World Order (99)
 - c. The Báb on the Order of Bahá’u’lláh (100)

5. *Early intimations of the nature and workings of the Administrative Order (101)*

B. Character and functions of the twin pillars of the Administrative Order: The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice (§102-116)

1. *Two fundamental organs of the Will & Testament (102)*
2. *Divine in origin, essential in functions, complementary in aim and purpose (103)*
3. *Textual foundation of the twin institutions (104-109)*
 - a. Guardianship and the hereditary principle (104)
 - b. Essential role of the House of Justice (105)
 - c. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will on the Guardian (106)
 - d. Bahá'u'lláh on the House of Justice (107)
 - e. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will on the Universal House of Justice (107-108)
 - f. Both institutions under the care and protection of the Twin Manifestations (109)
4. *Relationship between the two institutions (110-111)*
5. *Concerning the Guardianship (112-116)*
 - a. Anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá (112)
 - b. Position and vital function of the Guardian (113)
 - c. Importance not to be overemphasized (113)
 - d. Rank and nature of the Guardian (114-116)

C. Theory and features of the Administrative Order (§117-123)

1. *Not to be compared with systems governing human institutions (117)*
2. *Unique and unparalleled in history of state and religion (118)*

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3. *Contrasted with the three recognized forms of secular government (119-123)*
- a. Incorporates salutary elements without objectionable features (119)
 - b. Not to be regarded as purely democratic (120)
 - c. Neither autocratic or absolutistic (121)
 - d. Nor to be confused with any purely aristocratic system (122)
 - e. Embodies, reconciles and assimilates wholesome elements in each one (123)

D. Birth, rise and establishment of the Administrative Order (§124-129)

1. *Contrast between its consolidation and disintegration of present-day society (124-128)*
- a. Evidences of its power (125)
 - b. Comparison with the world situation (126-127)
 - c. Ominous signs and tumult produced by its birth (127-128)
2. *Hallmark of the Formative Age (129)*

E. Character, significance and purpose of the Administrative Order (§130)

F. A summary statement (§130)

4. THE THREE CENTRAL FIGURES OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

I. BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Founder-Author of the Faith, “the central Figure”

“the incomparable figure of Bahá'u'lláh, transcendental in His majesty, serene, awe-inspiring, unapproachably glorious.” (Disp ¶2)

“the august figure of Bahá'u'lláh, preeminent in holiness, awesome in the majesty of His strength and power, unapproachable in the transcendent brightness of His glory.” (GPB xiv)

Born: 12 November 1817, Tíhrán

Ministry: October 1852 to 29 May 1892 (39 years)

Ascended: 29 May 1892 (75 years)

II. THE BÁB

Prophet-Herald of the Faith, one of “the twin Figures” (Disp ¶2)

“the youthful glory of the Báb, infinite in His tenderness, irresistible in His charm, unsurpassed in His heroism, matchless in the dramatic circumstances of His short yet eventful life.” (Disp ¶2)

“the youthful and irresistible person of the Báb, matchless in His meekness, imperturbable in His serenity, magnetic in His utterance, unrivaled in the dramatic episodes of His swift and tragic ministry.” (GPB xiv)

Born: 20 October 1819, Shíráz

Ministry: 23 May 1844 to 9 July 1850 (6 years)

Martyred: 9 July 1850 (30 years)

III. ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

Perfect Exemplar of the Faith, “in a category entirely apart from the one occupied by the twin figures that preceded Him” (Disp ¶2)

“the vibrant, the magnetic personality of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reflecting to a degree that no man, however exalted his station, can hope to rival, the glory and power with which they who are the Manifestations of God are alone endowed.” (Disp ¶2)

“the vibrant personality of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, mysterious in His essence, unique in His station, astoundingly potent in both the charm and strength of His character.” (GPB xv)

“His words are not equal in rank, though they possess an equal validity with the utterances of Bahá’u’lláh...” (Disp ¶90)

Born: 23 May 1844, Tihván

Ministry: 29 May 1892 to 28 November 1921 (29 years)

Passed: 28 November 1921 (77 years)

5. THE THREE AGES OF THE BAHÁ'Í ERA

I. THE HEROIC AGE (Primitive or Apostolic Age)

(77 years: 1844-1921)

A. First epoch (9 years: 1844-53)—The Bábí Dispensation

1. Centers around the Báb
2. Begins with the Declaration of His Mission
3. Culminates in His Martyrdom - 9 July 1850
4. Ends in an orgy of religious massacre
5. Characterized by nine years of fierce and relentless contest

B. Second epoch (39 years: 1853-92)—Ministry of Bahá'u'lláh

1. Derives its inspiration from the august figure of Bahá'u'lláh
2. Opens with the first stirrings in the soul of Bahá'u'lláh of His Revelation (October 1852)
3. Attains its plenitude in His Proclamation to the Kings and ecclesiastical leaders of the earth (1867-68)
4. Terminates in the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká (29 May 1892)

C. Third epoch (29 years: 1892-1921)—Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

1. Revolves around the vibrant personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
2. Commences with the announcement of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh
3. Attains its climax in the emphatic assertion by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of the unique character and far-reaching implications of the Covenant in New York City (June 1912)
4. Closes with His passing and interment on Mt. Carmel (28 November 1921)

II. THE FORMATIVE AGE (Transitional or Iron Age) (1921-?)

A. First epoch (25 years: 1921-46)

1. Characterized by a dual process:
 - a. Consolidation of the administrative framework of the Faith and the extension in the sphere of action of its institutions
 - b. Rise and establishment of the foundations of the embryonic World Order
2. Witnessed the launching in the western hemisphere of the first stage in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan: the first Seven Year Plan (1937-44)

B. Second epoch (17 years: 1946-63)

1. Consisted of the unfoldment of further stages in the evolution of the Divine Plan beyond the limits of the western hemisphere to Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, included the Ten Year World Crusade
2. Culminated through the consummation of the laborious erection of the framework of the world administrative Order with the election of the first Universal House of Justice (1963)

C. Third epoch (22 years: 1963-1985)

1. Opened with the execution of a Nine Year Global Plan (1964-73), followed by a Five Year Plan (1974-79) and a Seven Year Plan (1979-86)

D. Fourth epoch (15 years: 1986-2001)

1. Opened with a Six Year Plan (1986-1992), followed by a Three Year Plan (1993-1996), a Four Year Plan (1996-2000), and finally a Twelve Month Plan (2000-2001).

E. Fifth epoch (2001- ?)

1. Opened with the Five Year Plan (2001-2006).
2. Succeeded by the present Five Year Plan (2006-2011).

F. Further successive epochs reaching to the fringes of the Golden Age, to witness:

1. The establishment of the Lesser Peace
2. The emancipation of the Faith from the fetters of religious orthodoxy
3. The universal recognition of the independent status of the Cause
4. The complete execution of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan

III. THE GOLDEN AGE (? - to at least 2852 A.D.)

Destined to consummate the Dispensation itself

To consist of its own series of epochs which will witness:

1. The birth and rise of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh
2. The unification of all peoples and nations of the world
3. The establishment of the Most Great Peace
4. The emergence of the Baha'i World Commonwealth
5. The worldwide recognition, universal proclamation and ultimate triumph of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh
6. The inauguration of the kingdom of the Father upon earth
7. The birth and efflorescence of a world civilization

6. THE CHARACTER, IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF THE BAHÁ'Í REVELATION

48 TESTIMONIES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH CITED BY SHOGHI EFFENDI

I. Assertion of the unprecedented claim He has advanced ¶18-21

(21 quotations)

A. Proclaims and announces the position of His Faith ¶18

(8 quotations)

1. 'inconceivable greatness of this Revelation'
2. 'all Dispensations ... final consummation'
3. 'unparalleled in the annals of the past'
4. 'Jehovah ... Spirit of Truth ... Great Announcement'
5. 'But for Him no Divine Messenger ... nor ... scriptures'
6. 'word which the one true God uttereth in this day'
7. 'generality of mankind is still immature'
8. 'writ upon My snow-white brow'

B. Announces its relation to past Dispensations ¶19-20

(11 quotations)

9. 'Followers of the Gospel'
10. 'voice of the Son of Man is calling aloud'
11. 'The Comforter ... is now come'
12. 'Call out to Zion, O Carmel'
13. 'I am the One Whom the tongue of Isaiah hath extolled'
14. 'The glory of Sinai hath hastened to circle round'
15. 'Hijáz is astir'
16. 'Elijah hath hastened unto My court'
17. 'Solomon in all his majesty circles ... around Me'
18. 'Had Muhammad ... attained this Day'
19. North and South both vibrate to the call'

C. Reveals the full potency of His invincible power ¶21

(2 quotations)

20. 'Should a man all alone, arise'
21. 'Should any one arise for the triumph of Our Cause'

II. Passages extolling the glories of His long-awaited Day ¶22-23

(5 quotations)

A. Extols the age that has witnessed the advent of His Revelation ¶22

- 22. 'This is the King of Days'
- 23. 'The world of being shineth in this Day'
- 24. 'give heed ... to no more than one word'

B. Appeals to mankind ¶23

- 25. 'Be fair, ye peoples of the world'
- 26. 'Seize your chance'

III. Allusions to the mysterious forces He has released

(8 quotations)

Expatiates on the forces latent in His Revelation ¶24

- 27. 'Through the movement of Our Pen of glory'
- 28. 'This is the most great, the most joyful tidings'
- 29. 'How great is the Cause!'
- 30. 'If one speck of a jewel be lost'
- 31. 'He that partaketh of the waters of My Revelation'
- 32. 'Every single letter proceeding from Our mouth'
- 33. 'It is in Our power, should We wish it'
- 34. 'We are possessed of such power'

IV. Passages magnifying the station which they who have recognized the hidden virtues of this Day will attain ¶25 (2 quotations)

- 35. 'Such is the station of the true believer'
- 36. 'If the veil be lifted'

V. Affirmation of the superlative character of this Revelation as compared with past Dispensations ¶26 (2 quotations)

- 37. 'If all the peoples of the world'

38. 'So tremendous is the outpouring of Divine grace'

VI. Admonishments to His countrymen ¶27 (3 quotations)

39. 'If I be slain at your hands'

40. 'Should they attempt to conceal His light'

41. 'Within the throat of this Youth'

VII. Anticipation of the future System of His Law ¶28

(2 quotations)

42. 'The world's equilibrium hath been upset'

43. 'an unassailable, an enduring foundation'

VIII. Testimonies to the resistless power infuse into the Revelation

¶29 (5 quotations)

44. 'Naught is seen in My Temple but the Temple of God'

45. 'The Holy Spirit itself hath been generated'

46. 'a knowledge, one word of which'

47. 'a race of men the nature of which is inscrutable'

48. 'Hands of Ascendancy and Might'

(¶ reference indicate paragraph numbering of *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*)

7. THE FUNDAMENTAL BAHÁ'Í PRINCIPLE

(EXCERPTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI)

1. "...the fundamental verity underlying the Bahá'í Faith, that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is not final but progressive." (*Bahá'í Administration*, p. 185)
2. "Its teachings revolve around the fundamental principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is progressive, not final." (*The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 58)
3. "...the truth that in accordance with the principle of progressive revelation every Manifestation of God must needs vouchsafe to the people of His day a measure of divine guidance ampler than any which a preceding and less receptive age could have received or appreciated." (*Ibid.*, p. 102)
4. "...as different stages in the eternal history and constant evolution of one religion, Divine and indivisible, of which it itself forms but an integral part." (*Ibid.*, p. 114)
5. "...the fundamental principle which constitutes the bedrock of Bahá'í belief, the principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is orderly, continuous and progressive and not spasmodic or final." (*Ibid.*, p. 115)
6. "...that from 'the beginning that hath no beginning' the Prophets of the one, the unknowable God, including Bahá'u'lláh Himself, have all, as the channels of God's grace, as the exponents of His unity, as the mirrors of His light and the revealers of His purpose, been commissioned to unfold to mankind an ever-increasing measure of His truth, of His inscrutable will and Divine guidance, and will continue to 'the end that hath no end' to vouchsafe still fuller and mightier revelations of His

limitless power and glory.” (*Ibid.*, p. 118)

7. “...Bahá’u’lláh inculcates the basic principle of the relativity of religious truth, the continuity of Divine Revelation, the progressiveness of religious experience.” (*The Promised Day Is Come*, para. 265)

8. “...readily and gratefully recognizes their respective contributions to the gradual unfoldment of one Divine Revelation, unhesitatingly acknowledges itself to be but one link in the chain of continually progressive Revelations...” (*God Passes By*, p. 100)

9. “The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá’u’lláh ... is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the non-essential aspects of their doctrines, and represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society.” (*Statement to the United Nations Commission on Palestine*, 1947)

8. UNJUSTIFIED INFERENCE AS
REPRODUCED IN "BAHÁ'Í SCRIPTURES"
(SEE SECTION ON 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ, ¶ 84-85)

BAHÁ'Í SCRIPTURES

Selections from the
Utterances of

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH AND 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

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CHAPTER SIX

THE COVENANT AND TESTAMENT OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH

527. *In His Name who shines forth from the Horizon of Might!*

Verily, the Tongue of the Ancient gives glad tidings to those who are in the world concerning the appearance of the Greatest Name, and who takes His Covenant among the nations.

Verily, He is Myself; the Shining-Place of My Identity; the East of My Cause; the Heaven of My Bounty; the Sea of My Will; the Lamp of My Guidance; the Path of My Justice; the Standard of My Love.*

The one who hath turned to Him hath turned to My Face and is illumined through the lights of My Beauty; hath acknowledged My Oneness and confessed My Singleness.

The one who hath denied Him hath been deprived of the Salsibil of My Love, of the Kawther of My Grace, the cup of My Mercy and of the Wine by which the sincere ones have been attracted and the monotheists have taken flight in the air of My Compassion, which no one hath known except him whom I have taught the matter revealed in My Hidden Tablet.

TABLET OF THE BRANCH

528. *He is Eternal in His Abha 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 hath encompassed the existent things created between the heavens and

* Abdul Baha.

9. THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH

(SHOGHI EFFENDI'S SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

FROM *GOD PASSES BY*, PP. 326-327)

The Administrative Order which this historic Document has established, it should be noted, is, by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems. No Prophet before Bahá'u'lláh, it can be confidently asserted, not even Muhammad Whose Book clearly lays down the laws and ordinances of the Islamic Dispensation, has established, authoritatively and in writing, anything comparable to the Administrative Order which the authorized Interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings has instituted, an Order which, by virtue of the administrative principles which its Author has formulated, the institutions He has established, and the right of interpretation with which He has invested its Guardian, must and will, in a manner unparalleled in any previous religion, safeguard from schism the Faith from which it has sprung. Nor is the principle governing its operation similar to that which underlies any system, whether theocratic or otherwise, which the minds of men have devised for the government of human institutions. Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh be said to conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic which mankind has witnessed in the past. It incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, is devoid of the defects which each of them inherently possesses, and blends the salutary truths which each undoubtedly contains without vitiating in any way the integrity of the Divine verities on which it is essentially founded. The hereditary authority which the Guardian of the Administrative Order is called upon to exercise, and the right of the interpretation of the Holy Writ solely conferred upon him; the powers and prerogatives of the Universal House of Justice, possessing the exclusive right to legislate on matters not explicitly revealed in the Most Holy Book; the ordinance exempting

its members from any responsibility to those whom they represent, and from the obligation to conform to their views, convictions or sentiments; the specific provisions requiring the free and democratic election by the mass of the faithful of the Body that constitutes the sole legislative organ in the world-wide Bahá'í community—these are among the features which combine to set apart the Order identified with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from any of the existing systems of human government.

10. SUMMARY NOTES ON THE THREE RECOGNIZED FORMS OF SECULAR GOVERNMENT

I. Autocracy ‘rule by one’ (or Monarchy) (auto [self] = kratos [might]) absolute government, controlling influence	Degenerate forms Despotism, tyranny, oppressive or cruel rulers
II. Aristocracy ‘rule by the best’ (aristos [best] + kratos [might]) government by the best citizens, supremacy of privileged order, the best representatives of intellect, etc.	Oligarchy, government by a few, by a privileged class
III. Democracy ‘rule by the people’ (demos [people] + kratos [might]) government by the people, direct or representative	Demogogy, leadership through use of popular prejudices, false claims and promises, appeal to desires. Anarchy, absence of government, disorder, confusion

FEATURES OF THE BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

Not an autocracy (a form of absolutistic ecclesiastical government) since

- sacred and exclusive right of legislation vested in the international elected representatives of the followers of the Faith
- laws requiring the election by universal suffrage of the local, national and international Houses of Justice

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- inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs (principle of consultation, majority vote, convention, etc.)

Not an aristocracy (whether secular or ecclesiastic) because of

- free and direct election from among the mass of the faithful of the body that constitutes the highest legislative organ
- abolition of professional priesthood with its accompanying sacraments
- total absence of episcopal authority with its attendant privileges, corruptions and bureaucratic tendencies
- right to vote and hold office for all adult believers

Not a democracy as members of Houses of Justice are

- not responsible to those whom they represent
- nor allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinions, and even the convictions of the masses of the faithful, or those who directly elect them
- to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience