

“Be thou the herald of
The Center of The Covenant”

THE COVENANT

PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR XXI OF
THE MINISTRY OF ABDUL-BAHA

[page 2]

FOREWORD

This Article is a brief statement of The Covenant God made with mankind through the prophets of the past and has fulfilled in these latter days, in the Bahai Movement.

[page 3]

A TABLET UPON THE COVENANT

(Translated from the Persian)

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 Mohammed made a covenant concerning His Holiness The Bab and The Bab was the One promised by Mohammed, for Mohammed gave the tidings of His coming. The Bab made a covenant concerning Baha’o’llah and gave the glad tidings of His coming, the One Promised by His Holiness The Bab. Baha’o’llah 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 Bahais whereby they were all commanded to follow the Cen-

[page 4]

ter of the Covenant after His (Baha’o’llah’s) departure, and turn not away, even to a hair’s breadth, from obeying him.

In the Book of Akdas, He. (Baha’o’llah) has given positive commands 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 means the Servitude of Abdul-Baha, all that was needed to explain the Center of the Covenant and the Interpreter of the Book has been revealed from the Supreme Pen. Now

as Abdul-Baha is the Interpreter of The Book he says that the “Chapter of the Branch” means Abdul Baha, that is, the Servitude of Abdul Baha, and none other.

In short, one of the specific features of this cycle of His Holiness Baha’o’llah, which has not been manifest during the former cycles, is that His Holiness Baha’o’llah left no opportunity for difference (division). 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 (peace) in this blessed cycle, and left no occasion for anyone to hesitate (doubt). All must therefore obey and be

[page 5]

submissive, and wholly turn themselves to the one appointed by Him, i.e. The Center of The Covenant.

But all explanations must alone be limited to what has been stated. Do you by no means exceed it; so that it may be conducive to harmony, and remove differences.

ADDRESS UPON THE COVENANT BY ABDUL-BAHA

[page 8]

ADDRESS

NEW YORK CITY, JUNE 19th, 1912.

Translated by DR. AMEEN U. FAREED.
Parentheses Supplied.

Tomorrow I wish to go to Montclair. Today is the last day in which we gather together with you to say farewell to you. Therefore, I wish to expound for you an important question, and that question concerns The Covenant.

In former cycles no distinct Covenant had been made in writing by the Supreme Pen; no distinct personage had been appointed to be the Standard differentiating falsehood from truth, so that whatsoever he was to say 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) being the expounder of the Book, but was a confirmation of Peter’s faith.

But in this dispensation of the Blessed Beauty, (Baha’o’llah) among its distinctions is that He did not leave people in perplexity. He entered into a covenant and testament

[page 9]

with the people. He appointed a Center of the Covenant. He wrote with His own pen and revealed it in the Kitab-el-Akdas, the Book of Laws, the Book of the Covenant, appointing him (Abdul-Baha) the Expounder of the Book. You must ask him (Abdul-Baha) regarding the meanings of the texts of the verses. Whatsoever he says is correct. Outside of this, in numerous tablets He (Baha'o'llah) 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 rescue left for anybody. No soul shall, of himself, speak anything. Whatsoever his (Abdul-Baha's) tongue utters, whatsoever his pen records, that is correct; according to the explicit text of Baha'o'llah 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 Mohammed. His Holiness Mohammed covenanted as regards The Bab, whom He called, "My Promised One," His Holiness The Bab,

[page 10]

in all His books, in all His epistles, explicitly covenanted with regard to the Blessed Beauty, Baha'o'llah — that Baha'o'llah was the Promised One of His Holiness The Bab. His Holiness Baha'o'llah covenanted, not that I (Abdul-Baha) am the Promised One, but that Abdul-Baha is the Expounder of the Book and The Center of His Covenant, and that the Promised One of Baha'o'llah will appear after one thousand or thousands of years. This is the Covenant which Baha'o'llah made. If a person shall deviate, he is not acceptable at the Threshold of Baha'o'llah. In case of difference — Abdul-Baha must be consulted. They must revolve around his good pleasure. After Abdul-Baha — whenever the Universal House of Justice is organized it will ward off differences.

Now I pray for you that GOD may aid you, may confirm you, may appoint you for His service; that He may suffer you to be as radiant candles; that He may accept you in His Kingdom; that He may make you the cause of the spread of the light of Baha'o'llah in these countries, and that the teachings of Baha'o'llah may be spread broadcast.

I pray for you, and I am pleased with all of you, each one, one by one; and I pray that GOD may aid and confirm you. From Montclair I will come back to you. New York is favored, I go away and I come back to it. The friends in New York must appreciate this. At present, farewell to you!

THE COVENANT

BY CHARLES MASON REMEY

[page 12]

INTRODUCTION

The Bahai Movement offers to the world the fulfillment of the religions of the past, an all-inclusive, universal teaching, so broad that people of all races and of all creeds find place therein. It is essentially a religious movement, a spiritual teaching, free from the limitations of sect and "ism," and constructive in its building upon the faith of the individual and upon the pure teachings of the past, thus increasing love and devotion for God and creating within each soul the desire to manifest these through brotherly service to one's fellowmen.

Mankind needs and seeks spiritual guidance. This divine guidance has come to humanity always through the instrumentality of the prophets or revealers of Truth. These chosen souls have been the founders of the great religious world-movements. They have manifested God to the people of the world, and through these divine manifestations men have known God and have become quickened by the life eternal.

Through prophets of the past was made the divine covenant, or promise to the world, of the coming in the "end of the days" of a Great Prophet, one Who would arise with spiritual power and establish upon earth God's Kingdom of Peace. Though the personalities of the prophets differed, yet the divine power which spoke through each one

[page 13]

was the same in spirit and reality. Each prophet revealed God and the law of the divine kingdom in proportion to the needs of the age to which he ministered, and in terms and parables familiar to its people

In their purity, all religious teachings are in perfect accord; all teach the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. Human differences, imaginations and superstitions have been the causes of religious division, dissension and disintegration, but true spirituality has ever been the source and mainspring of man's unity in religion and advancement in civilization. Each of the great world civilizations has, had its conception and birth in a spiritually active religion, and the downfall of civilizations has been brought about by spiritually lifeless religions, shrouded in forms and in superstitions.

Each age of the world has had its needs and problems to solve. Now, in this latter age, the great problems, economic, political and religious, are not confined, as in the past, to certain restricted geographic areas, but are universal. Through the advance of civilization all countries and peoples of the world have been brought together until, for the first time in its history, the world now finds it has entered upon a universal era in its progress. This is the universal age, in which all peoples and nations are to merge into one world-people and develop into one great world-civilization.

As the former ages have had certain spiritual or religious needs, so this present and coming universal age, past the thresh-

[page 14]

old of which the world now stands, has its own needs, spiritual and religious. The world is now ready for the spiritual unity and harmony of its people. The universal religion now comes, in order that the universal civilization may be realized.

The prophets of the past foresaw this latter-day religious need, and they also foresaw the coming of two great teachers and prophets who would minister to the whole world, and fulfill the covenant of God in establishing the universal religion or The Kingdom upon earth.

The Hebrew prophets dwelt at length upon the coming of the "Ancient of Days," and the glory of His epoch; Jesus, the Christ, spoke many times of His second coming and the establishment of His

Father's Kingdom upon earth; the Prophet Mohammed taught that the Mahdi would come, followed by the Manifestation of God Who would establish the Kingdom; Zoroaster taught of the triumph of light over darkness, of truth over ignorance, and His followers expect The Promised One Whom they call Shah Bahram, to accomplish this victory; Gautama, The Buddha, foretold the coming of the great Fifth Buddha, Who would bring enlightenment to all the world; the Hindu holy books mention another incarnation of Krishna, or the Divine Spirit, Whose mission would be universal enlightenment; while the poets and prose writers of all times have depicted the beauty and the perfection of the Utopian or millennial age. In reality all testifies to One Who is to

[page 15]

come. These promises of the prophets of old have been realized in the coming of Baha'o'llah, from whom the Bahai Movement takes its name, and in the coming of His forerunner, The Bab, and of His son, Abdul-Baha, who is "The Center of The Covenant" and through whose service the Divine Light is now proceeding; and in the Bahai cause, which has emanated from these teachings, is to be found the nucleus of the world's universal religion which is growing and developing and is uniting all people in The Kingdom of The Father.

[page 16]

THE BAB

THE FORERUNNER OF BAHA'O'LLAH.

Mirza Ali Mohammed, the first teacher of the Bahai cause, was known as The Bab which is the Persian and the Arabic word for door or gate. His teaching began with His declaration of His mission to eighteen chosen disciples who were gathered together in the city of Shiraz in Southern Persia. This took place on the 23rd of May, 1844.

To these spiritually prepared souls The Bab declared His mission as forerunner of a great, world teacher, One Whom He entitled "He whom God shall Manifest": The great, divine teacher Who would shortly appear with manifest signs of spiritual power, and through Whom the divine covenant would be fulfilled and the religious unity of the world would be accomplished.

The Bab, Who was a youth of twenty-five, through spiritual wisdom and through purity of purpose and soul, drew unto Himself many followers who in turn arose to promulgate His simple doctrines, and their fervor within a very short time assembled a large following.

Immediately, the movement met with great opposition upon the part of the Persian clergy, and at their instigation The Bab

[page 17]

was placed under military surveillance. Notwithstanding this trouble He continued His teaching, and exhorted the people through purity of living to make ready and to fit themselves for the coming of the Promised One Who was shortly to appear.

Thus passed the first two years of The Bab's ministry. His cause had then so increased in influence, that the Persian clergy, fearful of the loss of their hold over the people, caused the Bab to be

seized and cast into prison, but during His imprisonment He continued His teaching, through letters and epistles which were secretly conveyed to His followers throughout the country.

After four years of confinement The Bab, upon the charge of heresy, was condemned to death, and on July 9th, 1850, in the city of Tabriz in northwestern Persia, with one of His devoted followers The Bab suffered martyrdom.

This mission of The Bab was that of forerunner or precursor of "Him whom God shall Manifest." Moved by the spirit of God, He arose with steadfastness and power to herald the coming of the Lord of the Ages. The institutions which He established were therefore temporary, being destined to bridge over the time until the coming of the great teacher Who would establish a universal cause. The Bab gave very definite instructions to the followers that they, upon the appearance of the One Promised should turn implicitly to Him,

[page 18]

following His teachings and instructions in which would be contained a spiritual power that would evolve and grow until it filled the world, unifying all men, of all races and religions, in the Kingdom of God upon earth.

As the cause of The Bab spread throughout Persia, the most dire troubles and persecutions descended upon the believers, who were known as Babis. The Mussulmans fell upon them, destroying properties and killing men, women and children. Over twenty thousand believers willingly gave up property, family and life rather than deny their faith, which act would, in most cases, have saved them. In Persia even as late as 1901 there were over one hundred and seventy believers martyred at one time, in the city of Yazd.

[page 19]

BAHA'O'LLAH

THE PROMISED ONE.

After The Bab, appeared The Promised One: Baha'o'llah a youth of a family of nobility and prominence in Persia. He arose with vigor and force, upholding and publicly teaching the truths taught by The Bab.

Shortly after The Bab's martyrdom, when the great persecutions of the believers began, Baha'o'llah with many others of the new faith was cast into an underground dungeon, and with chains about His neck He was held prisoner while His properties were pillaged and confiscated. Many of Baha'o'llah's fellow prisoners were killed, while He with some of the believers, was finally sent in exile from Teheran to Baghdad in Irak-Arabi.

In Baghdad, Baha'o'llah arose with a spiritual power and a divine dominion to spread the new faith. He labored to bring strength and assurance to the Babis and He breathed into them a new spirit, for the massacres and persecutions had thrown them into a most lamentable condition of both mental and physical distress. Baha'o'llah went from Baghdad alone into the mountain fastnesses of Kurdistan, and there for two years He lived the life of a recluse, preparing Himself spiritually for His coming mission, then returned to Baghdad to care for and lead His flock.

[page 20]

In The Bab's prophetic writings had been many passages, through the spiritual interpretation of which, the people would be enabled to recognize the Promised One who would follow; and as the believers came more and more under Baha'o'llah's guidance they realized the profoundness of His divine knowledge and they looked upon Him as their promised guide.

In the coming of Baha'o'llah was the fulfilment of The Bab's promise, the coming of The Ancient of Days; The Lord of Hosts; to which The Bab had testified by a life of service and by martyrdom.

Through Baha'o'llah's wisdom and spiritual insight came calmness, assurance and strength to the followers, but as the movement increased in numbers the fanaticism of the Persian clergy against the believers continued to augment rather than diminish, until finally an international arrangement between the despotic kings of Persia and Turkey was made, by which Baha'o'llah and a band of His followers, were ordered to a more distant exile in Constantinople in order thus to separate them from the believers in Persia.

Upon the eve of His departure from Irak-Arabi to Constantinople in April, 1863, Bahá'o'llah had declared Himself to the most trusted followers to be the One of Whose coming The Bab had borne witness as of One "Whom God shall Manifest."

After a long journey, overland and by sea, Baha'o'llah and the band of exiles arrived

[page 21]

in Constantinople where they remained for several months; then they were sent still farther on, to Adrianople in Roumelia, that Baha'o'llah might be separated as far as possible from the world which His cause was agitating.

After five years of exile in Adrianople, in Turkey, during which the cause continued to grow both inwardly and outwardly in strength, another order, issued by the despotic Ottoman government, ordered Baha'o'llah to be sent to the prison fortress town of Akka (Acre), a Turkish penal colony on the Mediterranean sea just north of Mount Carmel in Syria.

In this land of Sharon and Carmel, where, according to the ancient prophets, the Glory of God would be manifest in the latter days, Baha'o'llah lived and taught. During the first two years in the Holy Land He was closely guarded within the prison of the fortress of Akka, but His greatness became so apparent to the prison officers and He manifested such spiritual power that they gave Him great freedom, and all were most kind and friendly, for they saw only truth and perfect righteousness in Him. Through this friendship the material condition of the believers was greatly bettered. First Baha'o'llah was allowed the liberty of the fortress city, then His tent was pitched upon the Mount of Carmel, and He spent much of His time at Behje, upon the plain of Akka.

[page 22]

During these years, many believers and truth seekers came great distances to visit Baha'o'llah and received from Him spiritual understanding, they in turn going forth to spread His cause in the far parts of the world.

Through His Tablets or epistles Baha'o'llah reached many people in distant lands, answering their questions and giving them spiritual advices. He also wrote many general treatises upon spiritual subjects. These contain explanations of the principles of His teachings, as well as certain general admonitions and ordinances through which mankind will evolve to a high state of material and spiritual welfare.

In His writings Baha'o'llah unlocked the mysteries of the spiritual truths in the holy books of the religions of the past. He clearly demonstrated that all Truth is One Truth, and that all prophets have manifested the one same God.

With the coming of Baha’o’llah and the establishment of His cause the mission of His forerunner The Bab was completed, and the Babi Cause became the Bahai Cause.

The mission of The Bab being practically confined to Persia and to a few neighboring countries, His ordinances and teachings were calculated to meet their local needs and conditions.

The mission of Baha’o’llah being to the whole world, His teachings are universal in character and are directly applicable to any and all conditions of men, irrespective of

[page 23]

race, religion or degree of human attainment.

In the month of May, 1892, after forty years of spiritual labor Baha’o’llah departed this life. He had given His teachings to the world, in their entirety, and His mission was completed, yet there was other work to be done in order to establish His cause in the world. The spirit of the Bahai teachings was to be practically demonstrated in the world. For the accomplishment of this, Baha’o’llah exhorted His followers to look towards His son, Abdul-Baha, as the expounder of His teachings, one upon whose shoulders His mantle would fall, and through whose service to humanity the life of the kingdom would be demonstrated to all the world. In order to insure the unity and solidarity of the cause, and to protect the believers from dis-union and differences, Baha’o’llah in two places in the Book of Akdas (one of His chief writings) commanded His followers after His departure to turn their faces to “The Branch extended from the Ancient Root”; and to refer all matters to “The Center of The Covenant.” Also, in the Book of The Testament, Baha’o’llah explains that by “The Branch extended from the Ancient Root” is meant the Greatest Branch, Abdul-Baha, to whom all should turn. Among the Tablets (epistles) of Baha’o’llah is the “Tablet of The Branch,” in which He prophesies that many shall arise against “The Branch” and shall persecute him most severely, and

[page 24]

shall deny him. These are the worst of people, for they are the opposers of The Covenant. All are exhorted implicitly to follow Abdul-Baha; to look to him as to the point of guidance for all, and upon his servitude as the source of the spiritual illumination of the world, “The Center of The Covenant.”

[page 25]

ABDUL-BAHÁ

THE CENTER OF THE COVENANT.

Abdul-Baha was born in Teheran in northern Persia, upon the 23rd day of May, 1844. the very day upon which The Bab gathered His disciples together in Southern Persia and made His declaration. Abdul-Baha was named Abbas; Abdul-Baha (The Servant of God) being his spiritual title, the name by which he is known as a spiritual teacher.

In the accounts handed down by those who knew Abdul-Baha when a child, we are told that at an early age he showed a contemplative and deeply spiritual disposition combined with a highly forceful and active nature. When Abdul-Baha was but eight years old, the greatest persecution of the Bahais began in Persia.

During the ten years, with his father Bahá’o’llah, in Baghdad, Abdul-Baha passed from

childhood into manhood. Because of the vicissitudes of the time he never attended any school, but through constant association with Bahá'ó'llah, and devotion and service in His cause Abdul-Baha grew strong in knowledge, in wisdom, and in spiritual attainments.

As he attained maturity Abdul-Baha became Baha'ó'llah's chief aid and disciple in carrying on His work. It was Abdul-Baha who first interviewed all persons who came

[page 26]

to confer with Baha'ó'llah, and so ordered matters that Baha'ó'llah could meet those having spiritual ability and capacity and who needed Him, and not those who came only through curiosity. During those days Baha'ó'llah was visited by many believers from Persia, as well as by truth seekers from among various religions and nations.

Abdul-Baha himself also taught the people diligently; and he discussed with learned theologians who marveled at his wisdom and his interpretation of spiritual teachings. They could not understand how this youth, uneducated from their standpoint of erudition, could produce with great ease and fluency arguments that none could refute nor gainsay.

When the time came for Baha'ó'llah to reveal himself as the Promised One of all religions, it was Abdul-Baha who first reconized Him in His divine capacity, and it was Abdul-Baha who first voiced the mighty message of The Manifestation of God among men.

Abdul-Baha's life has been one of service to the Bahai cause. During the exile journeys of Baha'ó'llah and His followers, and their imprisonment in Adrianople and Akka, Abdul-Baha was constantly endeavoring to serve them spiritually and materially. When persecution was at its height Abdul-Baha encouraged the people, cheered them and gave them hope; and when sickness and disease broke out among the Bahais while they were confined in the

[page 27]

prison of Akka, Abdul-Baha was the chief nurse and servant of all.

Persons often remark that Abdul-Baha appears much older than his age. This is undoubtedly true, for he has had to bear, not only his own troubles, but also those of the many who always have surrounded him. His method of teaching spiritual truths is direct and concrete; and he reaches the heart and through spiritual contact penetrates the soul of the individual.

Many instances, are related in the Orient, of the way in which Abdul-Baha, through long-suffering and persistent kindness, has made staunch friends and supporters of those who held out as his enemies so long as their hearts could withstand the power of his love.

Abdul-Baha remained in Akka a prisoner for just forty years. His freedom came through an adjustment of governmental matters, brought about by the re-establishment of the Turkish Constitution in the summer of 1908.

During this confinement Abdul-Baha was yearly visited by friends and followers from all parts of the world, although often it was with the greatest difficulty that these friends were able to see him, and sometimes the interviews were per force very brief. Notwithstanding these conditions, each pilgrim received bounteously from Abdul-Baha — the source of the spiritual life of the world of today — then hastened to his own country to share this gift of God.

[page 28]

As the life blood goes from the heart to each organ of the body, nourishing and bringing it into functional relation with every other organ, so, from Abdul-Baha, who is the center and heart of the Bahai cause, goes forth the spirit of the love of God, to each of the multitude of members.

Abdul-Baha is the chosen instrument of God, in his mission as “The Center of The Covenant.” His servitude to God is the center of divine guidance. This, Baha’o’llah proclaimed and this, the Bahais know. All who have had spiritual contact with Abdul-Baha, realize that in reality he is the point of divine guidance in the world today. Each one has had this demonstrated in a unique manner, primarily for his own personal enlightenment. The fact of Abdul-Baha’s mission as “The Center of The Covenant” holds the Bahais together in an organic body, and through the channel of Abdul-Baha’s life of service the Divine Spirit is constructing a new religious life in the world.

Since his freedom, Abdul-Baha has traveled. Two winters he has spent in Egypt, the summer and fall of the year 1911 he spent in London and in Paris, and now (November, 1912) he is traveling in America.

During these travels he is meeting people who have been attracted by the spirit of the Bahai cause, and he is sowing spiritual seed in their hearts which will grow in God’s own time and bring forth the fruit of The Kingdom of God upon earth.

[page 29]

The message which the Bahais are giving to the world is the fulfilment of The Covenant made by God with the people of the world through the prophets of old. In accordance with His promise, God has again caused a manifestation of Himself — in Baha’o’llah, who came for the whole world — that all people of all religions, races, and nations may become one in faith, and brothers in The Kingdom. In order to establish His Kingdom of Peace upon earth, God sent The Bab to prepare the way for His later manifestation in Baha’o’llah. Through Baha’o’llah, The Kingdom came to the world. Now, by Abdul-Baha — the beloved son of Baha’o’llah — The Kingdom is being proclaimed and established in the uttermost corners of the earth.

The greatest desire of Abdul-Baha, is to be known as the servant of God. In his life of service is seen the power, glory and majesty of Baha’o’llah, Who declared His son to be “The Center of The Covenant and the Greatest Branch from The Pre-existent Root”— The Spirit.

Through Abdul-Baha’s service, the glory of Baha’o’llah is being manifested in the world, and The Kingdom of The Father upon the earth is being realized.

[page 31]

AFTERWORD

The Bahai teaching appeals to the soul. It contains spiritual food and sustenance, and gives that moral assurance and faith that every one craves.

Spiritual truth appeals alike to the Oriental and to the Occidental, to the learned and to the unlearned. It is the one ground upon which all can meet in perfect accord. This is fully demonstrated in the spread of the Bahai spirit in the world, for its following is composed of Christians, Jews, Moslems, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists, and these many elements, The Bahai Faith is spiritually forming into one organic unit of brotherhood, united under the Fatherhood of God, and in His Kingdom on earth.