

# The Covenant of Abdu'l-Baha: His Will and Testament

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## The Covenant of `Abdu'l-Bahá

We can get a glimpse of the importance of the Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha by seeing the remarkable language of Shoghi Effendi in describing it. Shoghi Effendi refers to the Most Holy Book as “the brightest emanation of the mind of Bahá'u'lláh” and as “the Charter of His New World Order.” (God Passes By, p. 213) He uses the identical language to refer to the Master's Will - the “brightest emanation” of the Master's mind (God Passes By, p. 325) and “the Charter of Baha'u'llah's New World Order” (God Passes By, p. xv, and “The World Order of Baha'u'llah” p. 144)

The Master's Will was in an envelope addressed in Abdu'l-Baha's own handwriting to the “Ghusn-i-Mumtaz,” the “Chosen Branch,” Shoghi Effendi (“The Priceless Pearl,” p. 41. As the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf:

“The ‘Kitáb-i-‘Ahd’ is, as you know, Bahá'u'lláh's ‘Book of Covenant’... The manuscript was in the possession of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá all through His ministry, and after His passing it was found enclosed in His own will. These two precious documents, namely the book of Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and the Will and Testament of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá have both been carefully preserved and are now in the possession of the Guardian.” (From a letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi dated 25 September 1934, “The Light of Divine Guidance” Vol. I, p. 62)

This physical oneness of these two documents - Baha'u'llah's Will and Testament enclosed within the Master's Will, and both of them inside the envelope addressed to the beloved Guardian - symbolizes the oneness of their contents. As Shoghi Effendi wrote, “they are one Will”. (“The World Order of Baha'u'llah,” p. 22)

He also wrote of the close connection of the twin Covenants, in a letter written by his secretary on his behalf:

“The Guardian considers the existence of two forms of Covenant both of which are explicitly mentioned in the literature of the Cause. First is the covenant that every Prophet makes with humanity or, more definitely, with His people that they will accept and follow the coming Manifestation who will be the reappearance of His reality. The second form of Covenant is such as the one Bahá'u'lláh made with His people that they should accept the Master. This is merely to establish and strengthen the succession of the series of Lights that appear after every Manifestation. Under the same category falls the Covenant

the Master made with the Bahá'ís that they should accept His administration after Him....” (From a letter on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer dated October 21, 1932; Bahá'í News #80, January, 1934, pp. 5-6)

We have a touching description of the passing of `Abdu'l-Bahá and of the reading of His Will, from Mr. Saichiro Fujita who was residing in the Holy Land at that time. His exact words and phrasing are retained, from a voice recording made of him by Sylvia loas.

“You know, before `Abdu'l-Baha passing away, it was on a Friday, we went visit the mosque in Haifa, Friday morning. That day return from mosque, He had to walk up the step. He says “I am tired,” went into the room. Then Friday, Saturday, Sunday! Three days. Sunday night, He passed away. Those days we had many American pilgrims there. That Mr. and Mrs. Hoagg, Boschs were there. I heard the cry, deafening noise. So immediately I went up this gate, there's many collected and mourning, the Eastern believers very demonstrative, you know. I said “What is it?” “It's `Abdu'l-Baha has passed.” So immediately I come back to Pilgrim House, informed them. And some of them come out, come now. That day. It's one o'clock, and all the family are all together there. Can't help. Doctor just left, Dr. Habib, that Christian Arab, that's their family doctor. Then from that room we had after few days, the day in Mount Carmel. I went there myself, making a place. ( ) called, ah, Ramatullah, he's very strong man, he carried casket way down. Ramatullah lived a long time ago, he was caretaker, gardener, very nice man. He had a big family, but years ago. All the notables from Haifa and Jerusalem, all were collected here, ah, for funeral. Even Herbert Samuel, walked right up, passing Master. Just out from this room, Number seven, and go around, Rahmatu'llah turn corner, in front of center of church, then go up, up, up, up, up to the Shrine. Everybody carrying casket up to the resting-place. Then up memorial day, we had biggest service here in Number 7. Then we had biggest dinner, luncheon served in, ah, Number 9. That one of the daughter's family, Ruha Khanum. Will of, ah, `Abdu'l-Bahá read in Number 7. In the center of the hall! That room! Oh, we had the biggest, ah, meeting there. All sitting on floor. A prominent Baha'i, from Egypt, he read the Will, right in the corner, and everybody faced, and everybody sat around, even the Nakazeen, some of the Nakazeen was among us, violator. Very touching ceremony. Oh, from early in morning, we had a meeting, ah, to go some time, to circulate all the Will of `Abdu'l-Baha. Every time mention, ah, Shoghi Effendi's name, everybody arise. Very respectable, very. That's why the Shoghi Effendi is be Guardian of the Cause. That day. ( ) family, back in that tea room now. See, the gentlemen and the ladies are all segregated. They know, behind the curtain,

they all know. The Will of `Abdu'l-Baha was read, everybody consented, Shoghi Effendi is the Guardian of the Cause. That's final, nobody object, and then after the passing `Abdu'l-Baha, the reign of Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.” (From an interview of Sachiro Fujita by Sylvia Ioas, in the House of `Abdu'l-Bahá, Number 7 Haparsim (“Persian”) Street, Mount Carmel, Haifa, November 24th, 1965) Interview of Sachiro Fujita - by Sylvia Ioas, 1975

The Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Baha was described by Shoghi Effendi as:

“amazing in all its aspects”: “. . . the remarkable revelations of the Beloved's Will and Testament, so amazing in all its aspects, so emphatic in its injunctions, have challenged and perplexed the keenest minds. . .” (Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p. 50)

It is highly advisable to study the entire text of the Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahá, one of the most important of all of the Bahá'í Writings.

Here is Shoghi Effendi's summary of the Master's 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 two-fold 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 Center; recalls the infamous conduct of Mírzá Yahya 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 Shu`a'u'llah and of his brother Mirza Badí'u'llah; reaffirms their excommunication, and predicts the frustration of all their hopes; summons the Afnán (the Bab'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 labor 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 Huququ'llah (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.” (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 328)

### **Bahíyyih Khánum on the Clarity of the Covenant**

Some teachings are enclosed in symbols and beautiful imagery, and are endowed with a variety of meanings and applications. On the other hand, for the sake of the unity of the Cause, the language of the Covenant is clear and explicit. The Greatest Holy Leaf wrote:

“It appears from your letter that you had written prior to the receipt of the Will and Testament of the Centre of the Covenant. You have certainly perused it by now. This Text is His decisive decree; it constitutes the very life of those endued with understanding. In it the Pen of Bounty has set forth in the most powerful, comprehensive, clear and detailed manner the obligations devolving on every stratum of the Baha'i community, and has hacked out the tree of violation by its root, and has caused the centre of it to be forlorn and disgraced. He has specifically named the centre to whom all must turn, thus solidly fixing and establishing the foundations of the Covenant, and has clearly appointed the centre, to whom all the people of Baha must direct themselves, the Chosen Branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God. This great bestowal is one of the special characteristics of this supreme Revelation, which of all Dispensations is the noblest and most excellent. Goodly be this to the steadfast, glad-tidings to the staunch, blessings to those who win the day.

“Praise be to God, you have arisen to serve Him, and are actively teaching and spreading His Faith. Such a bounty merits thanks a thousand times over, and praises forever, in the hallowed sanctuary of the one Beloved.”

Convey my Baha'i salutations to all the faithful.

(From a letter of the Greatest Holy Leaf, Bahíyyih Khánum, p. 122)