



**'ABDU'L-BAHÁ**  
**the**  
**"Architect of the**  
**Administrative Order."**

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With the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the first century of the Bahá'í era, whose inception had synchronised with His birth, had run more than three quarters of its course. Seventy-seven years previously the light of the Faith proclaimed by the Báb had risen above the horizon of Shiraz and flashed across the firmament of Persia, dispelling the age long gloom which had enveloped its people. A blood bath of unusual ferocity, in which government, clergy and people, heedless of the significance of that light and blind to its splendour, had jointly participated, had all but extinguished the radiance of its glory in the land of its birth. Bahá'u'lláh had at the darkest hour in the fortunes of that Faith been summoned, while Himself a prisoner in Tihrán, to reinvigorate its life, and been commissioned to fulfil its ultimate purpose. In Baghdád, upon the termination of the ten-year delay interposed between the first intimation of that Mission and its Declaration, He had revealed the Mystery enshrined in the Báb's embryonic Faith, and disclosed the fruit which it had yielded. In Adrianople Bahá'u'lláh's Message, the promise of the Báb as well as of all previous Dispensations, had been proclaimed to mankind, and its challenge voiced to the rulers of the earth in both the East and the West. Behind the walls of the prison-fortress of 'Akká the Bearer of God's newborn Revelation had ordained the laws and formulated the principles that were to constitute the warp and woof of His World Order. He had, moreover, prior to His ascension, instituted the Covenant that was to guide and assist in the laying of its foundations and to safeguard the unity of its builders. Armed with that peerless and potent Instrument, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His eldest Son and Center of His Covenant, had erected the standard of His Father's Faith in the North American continent, and established an impregnable basis for its institutions in Western Europe, in the Far East and in Australia. He had, in His works, Tablets and addresses, elucidated its principles, interpreted its laws, amplified its doctrine, and erected the rudimentary institutions of its future Administrative Order. In Russia He had raised its first House of Worship, whilst on the slopes of Mt. Carmel He had reared a befitting mausoleum for its Herald, and deposited His remains therein with His Own hands. Through His visits to several cities in Europe and the North American continent He had broadcast Bahá'u'lláh's Message to the peoples of the West, and heightened the prestige of the Cause of God to a degree it had never previously experienced. And lastly, in the evening of His life, He had through the revelation of the Tablets of

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the Divine Plan issued His mandate to the community which He Himself had raised up, trained and nurtured, a Plan that must in the years to come enable its members to diffuse the light, and erect the administrative fabric, of the Faith throughout the five continents of the globe.

The moment had now arrived for that undying, that world vitalising Spirit that was born in Shiráz, that had been rekindled in Tihrán, that had been fanned into flame in Baghdád and Adrianople, that had been carried to the West, and was now illuminating the fringes of five continents, to incarnate itself in institutions designed to canalise its outspreading energies and stimulate its growth. The Age that had witnessed the birth and rise of the Faith had now closed. The Heroic, the Apostolic Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, that primitive period in which its Founders had lived, in which its life had been generated, in which its greatest heroes had struggled and quaffed the cup of martyrdom, and its pristine foundations been established— a period whose splendours no victories in this or any future age, however brilliant, can rival—had now terminated with the passing of One Whose mission may be regarded as the link binding the Age in which the seed of the newborn Message had been incubating and those which are destined to witness its efflorescence and ultimate fruition.

The Formative Period, the Iron Age, of that Dispensation was now beginning, the Age in which the institutions, local, national and international, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh were to take shape, develop and become fully consolidated, in anticipation of the third, the last, the Golden Age destined to witness the emergence of a world-embracing Order enshrining the ultimate fruit of God's latest Revelation to mankind, a fruit whose maturity must signalise the establishment of a world civilisation and the formal inauguration of the Kingdom of the Father upon earth as promised by Jesus Christ Himself.

To this World Order the Báb Himself had, whilst a prisoner in the mountain fastnesses of Adhirbáyján, explicitly referred in His Persian Bayán, the Mother-Book of the Bábí Dispensation, had announced its advent, and associated it with the name of Bahá'u'lláh, Whose Mission He Himself had heralded. "**Well is it**

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***with Him,"*** is His remarkable statement in the sixteenth chapter of the third Vahíd, ***"who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord! For He will assuredly be made manifest . . ."*** To this same Order Bahá'u'lláh Who, in a later period, revealed the laws and principles that must govern the operation of that Order, had thus referred in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Mother-Book of His Dispensation: ***"The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this Most Great 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."*** Its features 'Abdu'l-Bahá, its great Architect, delineated in His Will and Testament, whilst the foundations of its rudimentary institutions are now being laid after Him by His followers in the East and in the West in this, the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

The last twenty-three years of the first Bahá'í century may thus be regarded as the initial stage of the Formative Period of the Faith, an Age of Transition to be identified with the rise and establishment of the Administrative Order, upon which the institutions of the future Bahá'í World Commonwealth must needs be ultimately erected in the Golden Age that must witness the consummation of the Bahá'í Dispensation. 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 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,

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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.

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 with out 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

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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.

Nor have the enemies who, at the hour of the inception of this Administrative Order, and in the course of its twenty-three year existence, both in the East and in the West, from within and from without, misrepresented its character, or derided and vilified it, or striven to arrest its march, or contrived to create a breach in the ranks of its supporters, succeeded in achieving their malevolent purpose. The strenuous exertions of an ambitious Armenian, who, in the course of the first years of its establishment in Egypt, endeavored to supplant it by the "*Scientific Society*" which in his short-sightedness he had conceived and was sponsoring, failed utterly in its purpose. The agitation provoked by a deluded woman who strove diligently both in the United States and in England to demonstrate the unauthenticity of the Charter responsible for its creation, and even to induce the civil authorities of Palestine to take legal action in the matter—a request which to her great chagrin was curtly refused—as well as the defection of one of the earliest pioneers and founders of the Faith in Germany, whom that same woman had so tragically misled, produced no effect whatsoever. The volumes which a shameless apostate composed and disseminated, during that same period in Persia, in his brazen efforts not only to disrupt that Order but to undermine the very Faith which had conceived it, proved similarly abortive. The schemes devised by the remnants of the Covenant-breakers, who immediately the aims and purposes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will became known arose, headed by Mírzá Badí'u'lláh, to wrest the custodianship of the holiest shrine in the Bahá'í world from its appointed Guardian, likewise came to naught and brought further discredit upon them. The subsequent attacks

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launched by certain exponents of Christian orthodoxy, in both Christian and non-Christian lands, with the object of subverting the foundations, and distorting the features, of this same Order were powerless to sap the loyalty of its upholders or to deflect them from their high purpose. Not even the infamous and insidious machinations of a former secretary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who, untaught by the retribution that befell Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis, as well as by the fate that overtook several other secretaries and interpreters of His Master, in both the East and the West, has arisen, and is still exerting himself, to pervert the purpose and nullify the essential provisions of the immortal Document from which that Order derives its authority, have been able to stay even momentarily the march of its institutions along the course set for it by its Author, or to create anything that might, however remotely, resemble a breach in the ranks of its assured, its wide-awake and stalwart supporters.

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 extolls 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 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 Shuá'u'lláh

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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 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 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.

Obedient to the summons issued by the Author of so momentous a Document conscious of their high calling; galvanized into action by the shock sustained through the unexpected and sudden removal of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; guided by the Plan which He, the Architect of the Administrative Order, had entrusted to their hands; undeterred by the attacks directed against it by betrayers and enemies, jealous of its gathering strength and blind to its unique significance, the members of the widely-scattered Bahá'í communities, in both the East and the West, arose with clear vision and inflexible determination to inaugurate the Formative Period of their Faith by laying the foundations of that world-embracing Administrative system designed to evolve into a World Order which posterity must acclaim as the promise and crowning glory of all the Dispensations of the past. Not content with the erection and consolidation of the administrative machinery provided for the preservation of the unity and the efficient conduct of the affairs of a steadily expanding community, the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh resolved, in the course of the two decades following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, to assert and demonstrate by their acts the independent character of that Faith, to enlarge still further its limits and swell the number of its avowed supporters.



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In this triple world-wide effort, it should be noted, the role played by the American Bahá'í community, since the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá until the termination of the first Bahá'í century, has been such as to lend a tremendous impetus to the development of the Faith throughout the world, to vindicate the confidence placed in its members by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself, and to justify the high praise He bestowed upon them and the fond hopes He entertained for their future. Indeed so preponderating has been the influence of its members in both the initiation and the consolidation of Bahá'í administrative institutions that their country may well deserve to be recognized as the cradle of the Administrative Order which Bahá'u'lláh Himself had envisaged and which the Will of the Center of His Covenant had called into being.

It should be borne in mind in this connection that the preliminary steps aiming at the disclosure of the scope and working of this Administrative Order, which was now to be formally established after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, had already been taken by Him, and even by Bahá'u'lláh in the years preceding His ascension. The appointment by Him of certain outstanding believers in Persia as "**Hands of the Cause**"; the initiation of local Assemblies and boards of consultation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in leading Bahá'í centers in both the East and the West; the formation of the Bahá'í Temple Unity in the United States of America; the establishment of local funds for the promotion of Bahá'í activities; the purchase of property dedicated to the Faith and its future institutions; the founding of publishing societies for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature; the erection of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the Bahá'í world; the construction of the Báb's mausoleum on Mt. Carmel; the institution of hostels for the accommodation of itinerant teachers and pilgrims—these may be regarded as the precursors of the institutions which, immediately after the closing of the Heroic Age of the Faith, were to be permanently and systematically established throughout the Bahá'í world.