

*The Orthodox Bahá'í Faith*



**HERALD  
of the  
Covenant**

**SPECIAL EDITION**



*Commentary*  
on  
the  
*Will and Testament*  
of  
*'Abdu'l-Bahá*  
by  
*Joel Bray Marangella*

# HERALD OF THE COVENANT

Special Edition  
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This issue of the Herald of the Covenant is published with the approval of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith by the Orthodox Bahá'ís of Australia.

The title of this publication is derived from the unique, and peerless Covenant bequeathed to the Bahá'í world by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation -- a Covenant designed to shield His Cause from man-made interpretations which in the history of all of the great religions of the past have been such a cause of schism and divisiveness.

It is hoped that this publication will bring to both the Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í reader a fuller comprehension and deeper appreciation of the meaning, significance and implications of the mighty Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and the divinely-conceived System for the regulation of men's affairs on this earth to which It gave birth.

This is a special edition of the Herald of the Covenant devoted entirely to a commentary on the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá by the third Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

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## Introduction

The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has been described by the first Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, as that "immortal Document", the "Charter of the New World Order" of Bahá'u'lláh and a Document which "in some of its features" is "supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitáb-i-Aqdas" (the Most Holy Book). Shoghi Effendi has also extolled this Instrument as "His greatest legacy to posterity, the brightest emanation of His mind and the mightiest instrument forged to insure the continuity of the three ages [ Apostolic, Formative, and Golden ] which constitute the component parts of His Father's Dispensation."

The entire Will and Testament was written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá (in three parts) in His own hand and was signed and sealed by Him. It was written during one of the darkest periods of, His second incarceration in the prison-fortress of 'Akká (1901-1908).

'Abdu'l-Bahá had been reincarcerated as a result of the evil machinations of His own half-brother, Mírzá Muhammad-Alí. This Arch-breaker of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and his supporters who included most of the kindred of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had poisoned the minds of influential officials of the Ottoman government who in their turn instilled in the mind of the Sultán of Turkey, 'Abdu'l-Hamíd, unfounded fears concerning the intentions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In consequence thereof 'Abdu'l-Hamíd had issued an edict reimposing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's incarceration. He had also appointed a Commission of Enquiry to carry out an investigation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Little wonder, then, compassed about as He was by both internal and external enemies of the Faith bent on His extermination that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should have penned these words in His Will and Testament: ***"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."***

It is not surprising, too, under these circumstances, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should have dwelt at considerable length in His Will and Testament on the

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nefarious acts of not only Mírzá Muhammad-Alí but of Mírzá Yahyá, as well, the arch-breaker of the Báb's Covenant, and because of their insidious and unremitting attempts to destroy the Cause of God had laid such emphasis on avoiding and shunning the Covenant-breaker whose spiritual illness had been characterized by Him as spiritual leprosy.

'Abdu'l-Bahá - the Master - passed, away in Haifa Palestine on November 28th, 1921. Every Bahá'í will want to read the account of His funeral the likes of which had never before been seen in the Holy Land and read the eulogies paid to Him by the leading notables of the country as well as the leaders of every religious denomination who universally loved and revered Him.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament had been enclosed in a sealed envelope addressed to Shoghi Effendi, His grandson, who, at the time was studying at Oxford University in England, and had been entrusted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's faithful and devoted sister, Bahá'íyyih Khánum (The Greatest Holy Leaf). Its contents were not made known until Shoghi Effendi's return to Haifa It was the Greatest Holy Leaf who dispatched a cablegram on January 16th, 1922 to the Bahá'ís throughout the world informing them of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's appointment of Shoghi Effendi as His successor in the following words:

**"In Will Shoghi Effendi appointed Guardian of the Cause and Head of House of Justice."**

It will be noted that this message underlined the dual functions of the Guardian of the Faith, namely: his function as the head of the Faith and sole interpreter of the Words of Bahá'u'lláh and as the head or president of the Universal House of Justice. The English translation of the Will and Testament by Shoghi Effendi was received in the United States on February 25, 1922. It was addressed by the Guardian to **"The beloved of God and the handmaids of the Merciful throughout the United States of America and Canada."** The references made to this text that follow are based on this authentic text issued by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada in 1944 (an abridged version having been issued prior to that date).

Certainly, any serious student of the Faith approaching a study of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will want to deepen his understanding of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's spiritual relationship to Bahá'u'lláh, as the Center of His Covenant. For only in this way will he, be able to appreciate the sacred origin of this **"Divine Charter"** of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order and grasp, in some measure, the significance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's supreme and **"immortal Handiwork."**

In his endeavour to gain a better understanding of the Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá this student will study such Works of Bahá'u'lláh as His Kitáb-i'Ahd

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(Book of His Covenant), His Súriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch) and those excerpts from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas - His Most Holy Book - in which He has disclosed and extolled the Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

### **Extracts from Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh.**

As a preliminary to a review of the text of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament let us, as a temporary substitute for the study cited above, review some of the significant declarations found in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh concerning 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center of His Covenant.

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh proclaims: ***"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."***

In the Súriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch) the following verses are recorded: ***"There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá [a reference to the Manifestation of God] this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation."***<sup>1</sup>

***"Render thanks unto God, O people for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favor unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof and transgressed against Me."***

***"They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish."***

In another Tablet Bahá'u'lláh addresses 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the following Words: ***"We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind;"*** and in yet another Tablet: ***"a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth ...."***

In a letter addressed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá by Bahá'u'lláh when the former was visiting Beirut He referred to Him as ***"the Most Mighty Branch of God - His ancient and immutable Mystery."***

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The foregoing extracts gleaned from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh should suffice to disclose the unique and wondrous Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Let us now refer to certain excerpts taken from addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá when He was visiting America in 1912 in which he refers to His own Station.

### Extracts from Addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

In an address in New York City He stated:

***"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 Center 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 any one to create a new sect or faction of belief. To insure 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."***

In an address in Chicago He again spoke of His appointment as the Center of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah in the following Words:

***"Inasmuch as great divergences of denominational belief had arisen throughout the past, every man with a new idea attributing it to God, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh desired that there should not be any ground or reason for disagreement among the Bahá'is. Therefore with His own pen He wrote the Book of His Covenant, addressing His relations and all the people of the world saying "Verily, I have appointed One Who is the Center 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..."*** <sup>2</sup>

### Writings of Shoghi Effendi concerning Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Any attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the Station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be incomplete without considering the words with which Shoghi Effendi, the first beloved Guardian of the Faith, has eulogized Him

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in his immortal work titled: "**The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.**" In this work He has stated:

**"He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost as the Center 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 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."**

In his book titled: "**God Passes By**" Shoghi Effendi further adds to the appellations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as he reminds us that He was Bahá'u'lláh's "**beloved son, the apple of His eye, His vicegerent on earth, the Executive of His authority, the Pivot of His Covenant, the Shepherd of His flock, the Exemplar of His Faith, the Image of His perfections, the Mystery of His Revelation, the Interpreter of His mind, the Architect of His World Order, the Ensign of His Most Great Peace, the Focal point of His unerring guidance - in a word, the occupant of an office without peer or equal in the entire field of religious history...**"

### **Spiritual symbology and kinship**

In the foregoing quotations from the revealed Writings of Bahá'u'lláh it will be noted that He has employed spiritual terms first in referring to His own Station as "**the Ancient Root**" and, then, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the "**Most Mighty Branch**" the "**Limb of the Law of God**" and "**The Most Mighty Branch of God.**" It is clear that these terms have spiritual meanings and denote spiritual relationships and that with respect to those applying to 'Abdu'l-Bahá they are not to be confused with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's blood relationship to Bahá'u'lláh as His eldest Son. In confirmation of this we, need only refer to Bahá'u'lláh's Words in the Kitáb-i-Iqán (The Book of Certitude) wherein He mentions Sádiq - the sixth Imám - in several instances as "**the son of**

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**Muhammad**". As Sádiq was not a son of Muhammad but the son of Bakír this was a reference to Sádiq's spiritual relationship to Muhammad as His spiritual son. Similarly all of the twelve Imáms during the Islamic Dispensation could be referred to as the sons of Muhammad. And they could also be referred to as the branches of that Tree of Holiness.

In Bahá'u'lláh's "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf" He cites the following Words of the Báb in which He consecrates Himself to Bahá'u'lláh:

***"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... And shouldest 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."***<sup>3</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá, too, emphasises spiritual relationships in the matter of succession in past Dispensations. In "Some Answered Questions" He states:

***"Now Muhammad was the root and 'Alí the branch, like Moses and Joshua."***<sup>4</sup>

As we read the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá we should keep in mind that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has used similar symbology to that discussed above in referring not only to His own relationship to Bahá'u'lláh but, as well, to the relationship that binds the Guardians of the Faith to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of the Covenant. For the Guardians of the Faith as the chosen ministers of the Covenant after 'Abdu'l-Bahá are the spiritual twigs or youthful branches of the "**primal branch**" ('Abdu'l-Bahá) of the Sacred Lote-Tree.

## **Writings of Shoghi Effendi concerning the Will and Testament**

Before considering and discussing the text of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá it is essential that we also review some of the passages in the writings of Shoghi Effendi attesting to the divine genesis, nature and character of this unique, sacred and immutable Document that he has characterized as the very "**Child of the Covenant.**"

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In Shoghi Effendi's work "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh" we find the following wonderful description of the genesis of this divinely-conceived and immortal "Child":

**"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 [Bahá'u'lláh] and the One Who was its vehicle and chosen recipient ['Abdu'l-Bahá] . 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."**

**"Only future generations can comprehend the value and the significance attached to this Divine Masterpiece, which the hand of the Master-builder of the World has designed for the unification and the triumph of the world-wide Faith of Bahá'u'lláh."**

**"It would, however, be helpful and instructive to bear in mind certain basic principles with reference to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which together with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, [the Most Holy Book] constitutes the chief depository wherein are enshrined those priceless elements of that Divine Civilization, the establishment of which is the primary mission of the Bahá'í Faith. A study of the provisions of these sacred documents will reveal the close relationship that exists between them, as well as the identity of purpose and method which they inculcate. Far from regarding their specific provisions as incompatible and contradictory in spirit, every fair-minded inquirer will readily admit that they are not only complementary, but that they mutually confirm one another, and are inseparable parts of one complete unit." (Underlining added for emphasis.)**

**"For nothing short of the explicit directions of their Book, and the surprisingly emphatic language with which they have clothed the provisions of their Will could possibly safeguard the Faith for which they have both so gloriously laboured all their lives." (Underlining added for emphasis.) Nothing short of this could protect it from the heresies and calumnies with which denominations, peoples and governments have endeavored, and will, with increasing vigor, endeavor to assail it in the future."**

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**"The Administrative Order which this historic Document [ The Will and Testament ] has established, it should be noted, is by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems."**

**"The last twenty-three years of the first Bahá'í century [1921-1944] 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 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 [ written in 1944 ] 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 [Bahá'u'lláh] than from Him Who directly conceived it ['Abdu'l-Bahá]. 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 Will and Testament, a Part of the "Explicit Holy Text"**

It has been made crystal clear in the foregoing writings of Shoghi Effendi that the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is a divinely conceived Document, that it is an expression of the Will of both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and that it is a part of the "explicit Holy Text" being complementary to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Shoghi Effendi emphasises this fact by stating that they "are

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**inseparable parts of one complete unit".** This sacred Document can, therefore, never be altered, amended, or nullified or any of its provisions declared "BADA" by any person or persons or administrative institution, including the Universal House of Justice which can only enact laws that form no part of the explicit Holy Text under the terms of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. <sup>5</sup>

Let us now proceed to a consideration and review of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's supreme Handiwork concentrating where it may be required on those passages that were either misunderstood, misinterpreted or lost sight of by the then Hands of the Cause and the vast majority of their fellow believers following the passing of the first Guardian of the Faith when for the first time provisions concerning the continuity of the guardianship came into operation. Had these passages not been misunderstood and the preconceptions based on these misunderstandings not been so widely held and had the believers retained their faith in the immutability and immortality of every clause of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's divinely-conceived Charter for the New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, then the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh would not have fallen prey to the greatest violation that it has sustained in the history of the Faith.

### **Commentary on the Text - Part I**

In the opening passages of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament He pays homage to Bahá'u'lláh and to the mighty Covenant of which He has been the Author. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said elsewhere in His writings "***Hath such a Testament, set down by the Pen of the Most High ever been witnessed?***" And He has further extolled this Covenant as the "***Conclusive Testimony,***" the "***Universal Balance,***" the "***Magnet of God's Grace,***" the "***Upraised Standard,***" the "***irrefutable Testament,***" the "***almighty 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.***" The first Guardian of the Faith has written: "***this Covenant has been bequeathed to posterity in a Will and Testament [of Bahá'u'lláh] 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 to shield and support after His ascension, the appointed Center of His Faith and the Delineator of its future institutions.***"

Little wonder, therefore, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá should have praised this mighty Covenant at the very outset of His Will and Testament, a Document in which Bahá'u'lláh had conferred upon Him His station and authority to interpret Holy Writ. It had been 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the appointed Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant to whom all the followers of Bahá'u'lláh had been

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enjoined to turn following His ascension that **"had preserved the Sanctuary of His Most Beneficent Law"** and **"protected His Straight and Luminous Path"** from the **"onslaught of the company of the Covenant breakers"** that had **"threatened to subvert His Divine Edifice."**

In this same passage 'Abdu'l-Bahá extolls the aid rendered the Faith by those **"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..."**

In the second paragraph of His Will He first salutes, praises, blesses and glorifies His own station as the **"primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote Tree"** (Bahá'u'lláh).<sup>6</sup> This Lote-Tree is significantly referred to by the Báb as **"the Primal Tree"**. The greatest branch and unique branch is the **"primal branch"** of this Tree. This statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, therefore, emphasises His direct relationship to Bahá'u'lláh, that is; as the Center of the Covenant appointed by the Lord of the Covenant. In the clause that immediately follows 'Abdu'l-Bahá also relates this **"primal branch"** to the Twin Manifestations (Báb and Bahá'u'lláh) - **"the Twin Holy Trees"** - Who in a spiritual sense are one Reality - **"the Pre-existent Root."** It will be recalled that Bahá'u'lláh in enjoining His followers to turn **"unto the Most Great Branch"** identified 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the **"One Whom God hath purposed ,"** and the One **"Who hath branched from this pre-existent Root."**

It should be borne in mind that the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is unique and one that He carried with Him into the other world. For as Bahá'u'lláh revealed: **"We have made Thee ['Abdu'l-Bahá] a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth."** And as 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Himself, has stated: **"fear not if this Branch be severed from this material world and cast aside its leaves; nay, the leaves thereof shall flourish, for this Branch will grow after it is cut off from this world below, it shall reach the loftiest pinnacles of glory and it shall bear such fruits as will perfume the world with their fragrance."** And Shoghi Effendi in his writings added: **"He ['Abdu'l-Bahá] towers in conjunction with Them [Báb and Bahá'u'lláh] 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 than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise."** The following clause of the Will and Testament refers to **"the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth, gleam from out the Twin surging seas"** which is another way of 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressing His spiritual relationship as Center of the Covenant to the Twin Manifestations.

It will be recalled that earlier we made reference to the Words of the Báb cited by Bahá'u'lláh in the **"Epistle to the Son of the Wolf"** wherein the Báb identified His faithful followers, analogically speaking, as branches, leaves, and fruit of His Tree - **"The Tree of Holiness."** All of these are **"offshoots of**

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***the Tree of Holiness***" and it is these that 'Abdu'l-Bahá next eulogises. He further defines them as ***"the twigs of the Celestial Tree"*** and ***"they that in the Day of the Great Dividing have stood fast and firm in the Covenant."*** The Day of the Great Dividing was that period following the ascension, of Bahá'u'lláh when ***"almost the entire family of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as a considerable number of those who had formed His immediate entourage"*** fell under the baleful influence of Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí, His half-brother, and turned against 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant with the believers. As Shoghi Effendi has written, 'Abdu'l-Bahá at that time found Himself ***"forsaken, betrayed, [and ] assaulted by almost the entire body of His relatives... without any support at all save that of an unmarried sister, His four unmarried daughters, His wife and His uncle"*** and ***"was left alone to bear, in the face of a multitude of enemies arrayed against Him from within and without, the full brunt of the terrific responsibilities which His exalted office had laid upon Him."***

Of those to whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá pays tribute and eulogizes in the opening page of His Will and Testament there remain the Hands of the Cause of God and those believers ***"that have believed, rested assured, stood steadfast in His Covenant and followed the Light"*** that after His passing shone from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance. This Divine Guidance had been vouchsafed to mankind through the divinely conceived Institutions bequeathed by Him in His Will and Testament.

And in the final clause of the first page of His Testament He, once, again, calls attention to His own station by saying: ***"behold! he is the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees"*** and declares: ***"Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind."***

Several pages are taken up by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in recounting the afflictions and vicissitudes that have successively beset the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh at the hands of the enemies of the Faith who have violated the ancient Covenant of God. He laments the trials that afflicted Bahá'u'lláh over a fifty year period at the hands of His half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá, culminating in the, odious act of attempting to shed the sacred blood of Bahá'u'lláh.

He then recites the history of the treachery of His own, half-brother following the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh whose acts against Him ***"revived the blighted hopes of Yahyá's following"*** and made him ***"The Center of Sedition"*** and ***"the Prime Mover of Mischief."*** By rising up against 'Abdu'l-Bahá and perpetrating such acts, Muhammad-'Alí manifestly violated the Covenants of Bahá'u'lláh and, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, ***"he struck with "his axe" at the root of the Blessed Tree"*** (Bahá'u'lláh). 'Abdu'l-Bahá further adds: ***"had not the promised aid of the Ancient Beauty been graciously vouchsafed at every***

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**moment to this one, unworthy though he be, he [Muhammad-'Alí] would have destroyed, nay exterminated the Cause of God and utterly subverted the Divine Edifice."** 'Abdu'l-Bahá appeals to the believers **"to hold fast unto the Text of the clear and firmly established verse, revealed about Him,"** stating that **"None other transgression greater than his can be ever imagined."** He then enumerates the ignominious acts committed by Muhammad-'Alí against Him including his scheming to put 'Abdu'l-Bahá to death and his accusation that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had claimed to be a Manifestation of God and was therefore an impostor. 'Abdu'l-Bahá goes on to say: **"What deviation can be greater than interpolating and falsifying the words and verses of the Sacred Text, even as testified and declared by Mírzá Badi'u'lláh"** (a son of Bahá'u'lláh). In ending His account of the acts of Muhammad-'Alí, 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares that, he, **"by reason of his boundless transgression hath grievously fallen and been cut off from the Holy Tree."** <sup>7</sup>

It is only after recounting the nefarious acts of Mírzá Yahyá and Muhammad-'Alí that 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the first time since the first page of His Will and Testament mentions His passing and provides guidance as to whom the believers should turn as His successor with the following words: **"it is incumbent upon the Aghsán (Branches),<sup>8</sup> the Afnán (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (Pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abhá Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] to turn unto Shoghi Effendi -- the youthful branch<sup>9</sup> 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<sup>10</sup> -- as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch,<sup>11</sup> the guardian of the Cause of God, ..."**

In this first reference to His successor as the first Guardian of the Faith He also states that he is the **"expounder of the words of God."** Further He upholds the ancient law of primogeniture with respect to the appointment of future guardians of the Cause stating that **"after him [Shoghi Effendi] will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendents."** <sup>12</sup> Again, as an evidence of His wisdom and the emphasis placed on spiritual qualifications, 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the next page of His Will provides for an alternative appointment in the following words: **"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."** <sup>13</sup>

For the first time, also, 'Abdu'l-Bahá mentions the Universal House of Justice **"to be universally elected and established"** and points out that both the guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, are **"under the care and**

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**protection of the Abhá Beauty [ Bahá'u'lláh ] under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One." (The Báb) Therefore, "Whatsoever they decide is of God." <sup>14</sup>**

'Abdu'l-Bahá enumerates those actions that constitute fidelity to or rebellion against both the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice. A faithful believer will consider disobedience to, rebellion against or contention with the Guardian or the Universal House of Justice as nothing less than disobedience to, rebellion against or contention with God. With respect to the Guardian, He adds that he who opposeth, denieth, disputeth with, disbelieveth in, deviateth, separateth or turneth aside from him has done the same to God. He issues a particular warning concerning obedience to the Guardian in the following words: **"The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God."** 'Abdu'l-Bahá further emphasises this obedience in stating that: **"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."** And He adds this further warning: **"He that opposeth him [the guardian] 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 Center of Sedition."** Finally He issues this further warning: **"Beware, beware, lest the days after the ascension (of Bahá'u'lláh) be repeated when the Center of Sedition [Muhammad -Alí] waxed haughty and rebellious and with Divine Unity for his excuse deprived himself and perturbed and poisoned others."**

'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses His concern that not every vain glorious one bent on dissension and discord within the ranks of the faithful will openly declare his evil purposes. For this reason He assigns a specific responsibility to the Hands of the Cause who **"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."** <sup>15</sup>

Significantly, before a second important and critical function is assigned to the Hands of the Cause, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addresses the manner in which the Guardian appoints his successor and states the qualifications of that successor in these words: **"It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own lifetime him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing."** (Underlining has been added for emphasis.) It should be noted how clearly this clause of the Will is stated requiring the Guardian to appoint his successor during his lifetime and,

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therefore, not through the instrumentality of a will and testament to be opened after his passing.<sup>16</sup>

The Will and Testament requires that **"The Hands of the Cause must be nominated and appointed by the guardian of the Cause of God."** 'Abdu'l-Bahá stresses that **"All must be under his shadow and obey his command"**. The obligations of the Hands of the Cause **"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."**

'Abdu'l-Bahá states that **"This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the guardian of the Cause of God."**<sup>17</sup> These Hands **"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."** This election **"must be carried either unanimously or by majority from the company of the Hands."** It is this body of nine Hands which is assigned a protective role in connection with the Guardian's successor as 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that **"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"** by secret ballot.<sup>18</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá states that the Guardian must continually urge the Hands of the Cause **"to strive and endeavor to the utmost of their ability to diffuse the sweet savors 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."** This absolute command is binding upon everyone, that **"the existent world may become even as the Abhá Paradise, that the surface of the earth may become heavenly, that contention and conflicts 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."**

It is following the above exhortation that 'Abdu'l-Bahá briefly mentions the role of the Supreme Tribunal stating that **"Should differences arise they shall be amicably and conclusively settled by this Tribunal that shall include members from all the governments of the world."**

Elsewhere in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings He describes in detail the composition, manner of election, and functions of this Tribunal, a body which is not to be confused with the Universal House of Justice.<sup>19</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that **"In this sacred Dispensation conflict and contention are in no wise permitted."** He goes on to say that: **"It is incumbent**

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**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." And a few lines further He again exhorts us to: "Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religious 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 rancor 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."**

'Abdu'l-Bahá next turns His attention to the Universal House of Justice whose members He states **"must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding and the well-wishers of all mankind."** This supreme Bahá'í legislative body is elected by the members of the secondary (i.e. national) Houses of Justice. It should be particularly noted that **"It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text."** As Shoghi Effendi has explained if the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh were to be severed from the institution of the Universal House of Justice **"this same System of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be paralyzed in its action and would be powerless to fill in those gaps which the Author of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas has deliberately left in the body of His legislative and administrative ordinances."** It is clear from the foregoing that this body cannot alter, delete or amend any law of the Aqdas or any clause or provision of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which is, as already explained, a part of the explicit Holy Text, much less, in effect, declare those provisions pertaining to the continuity of the guardianship null and void, as the Hands of the Cause (with a single exception) did following the passing of Shoghi Effendi. Moreover, 'Abdu'l-Bahá specifies in His Will and Testament that **"the guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body" who, "should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him."** 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes the relationship that exists between the Guardian as the Head of this body and the other members in stating that **"the legislative body must reinforce the executive [the Guardian-President], 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 as Paradise itself."**

As ends are dependent upon means 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the closing page of the first part of His Will and Testament addresses the matter of Huquq or **"fixed money offering"** which He prescribes should 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."** He states that this offering **"causeth the people to become firm and steadfast and draweth Divine increase upon them."**<sup>20</sup>

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Finally, in the last page of Part I of His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Bahá stresses the command of Bahá'u'lláh **"to be submissive to all monarchs that are just and to show your fidelity to every righteous King"** and He exhorts us to **"Serve ye the sovereigns of the world with utmost truthfulness and loyalty. Show obedience unto them and be their well-wishers"** and **"Without their leave and permission do not meddle with political affairs, for disloyalty to the just sovereign is disloyalty to God himself."**

## Commentary on the Text, Part II

This part of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament opens with the following lamentation: **"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 to turn their hearts to this wronged one... and refer unto this lonely one all that about which they differ in Thy Holy Book..."** And He continues: **"Thou seest them, O Lord, my God... how that they have broken Thy Covenant... how with hate and rebelliousness they have erred from Thy Testament and have risen intent upon malice."**

And this further lament: **"their chief O my God, hath dared to interpolate Thy Book, to fraudently alter Thy decisive Holy Text and falsify that which hath been revealed by Thy All-Glorious Pen."** <sup>21</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá continues to recite the evil doings of the Covenant-breakers which have caused not only Him such great anguish but anguish and sorrow to the Holy Leaves of the Household (i.e the women-folk). Notwithstanding the afflictions He has suffered at their hands He offers up a prayer to God **"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."**

'Abdu'l-Bahá then issues a strong injunction: **"Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His Law and have the utmost fear of discord. This is the foundation of the people of Bahá."** He follows this with a second injunction stating: **"Unto the Most Holy Book [Kitáb-i-Aqdas] every one must turn and all that is not recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice."** He goes on to declare: **"That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority vote doth carry, that is verily the Truth and 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."** He elaborates on the

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responsibilities of this body, stating: **"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."** <sup>22</sup> Foreseeing the possibility that such subsidiary laws as may be passed by the Universal House of Justice at a given time may require modification or repeal as time goes on He makes the following provision: **"And inasmuch as this 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... This it can do because that law formeth no part of the Divine Explicit Text."**

The remaining paragraphs of Part Two of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament are devoted to the matter of Covenant breaking. He states: **"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."** He recounts again the evil doings of Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí the **"Center of Sedition,"** including his corruption of the Sacred Text and asks: **"Can a transgression be imagined more glaring than this, the interpolation of the Holy Text?"** He warns: **"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..."**

### **Commentary on the Text, Part III**

This part of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament contains but a little more than three pages, the first page of which contains a supplication to God in which He recites the sufferings He has endured at the hands of His enemies. He laments: **"Lord! My cup of woe runneth over, and from all sides blows are fiercely raging upon me."** Once again He laments the misdeeds of the Covenant-breakers who **"bestirred themselves to sow the seeds of grievous sedition, and to ruin the edifice of the Covenant."**

He lauds the labors of the loved ones of the Lord who **"withstood the enemies of the Covenant in well-nigh three score and ten treatises and supported by conclusive proof, unmistakable evidences and clear texts from the Holy Writ, they refuted their scrolls of doubt and mischief-kindling leaflets."** 'Abdu'l-Bahá goes on to recount how as these Covenant-breakers **"grew hopeless in their efforts against the loved ones of God, saw the**

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**Standard of His Testament waving throughout all regions, and witnessed the power of the Covenant... the flame of envy so blazed within them as to be beyond recounting." He continues: "For so grievous is the conduct and behavior of this false people that they are become even as an axe striking at the very root of the Blessed Tree." And then He warns: "Should they be suffered to continue they would, in but a few days' time exterminate the Cause of God, His word, and themselves."**

As His Will and Testament draws to a close 'Abdu'l-Bahá stresses the "gift of Teaching" stating that "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." But we must be wise in our teaching efforts for 'Abdu'l-Bahá adds: "Caution and prudence, however, must be observed... The veil must in no wise be suddenly rent asunder."

In the final passages of His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers again to Shoghi Effendi as the "twig"<sup>23</sup> **that hath branched from and the fruit given forth by the two hallowed and Divine Lote Trees**" and enjoins the believers to take the greatest care of him "For he is after 'Abdu'l-Bahá the guardian of the Cause of God..." 'Abdu'l-Bahá reiterates that "the Afnán"<sup>24</sup> **the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of The Lord must obey him [Shoghi Effendi] and turn unto him**" and warns the believers once again that "He hath 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."

In the concluding paragraph of His Will and Testament 'Abdu'l-Bahá issues this strong warning: "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 convictions."<sup>25</sup> **All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause**<sup>26</sup> **and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else**<sup>27</sup> **is in grievous error."**

This concludes our review of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This immortal Charter of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, in the words of Shoghi Effendi, "called into being, outlined the features and set in motion the processes" of the Bahá'í Administrative Order "upon which the institutions of the future Baha'i Commonwealth must needs be ultimately erected in the Golden Age that must witness the consummation of the Bahá'í Dispensation."

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It is hoped that this summary will contribute in some measure, at least, to a better understanding and appreciation of this divinely-conceived, momentous and sacred Document penned by the Master-Architect of the Bahá'í Administrative Order whose provisions will remain immutable and sacrosanct down through the ages to come of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh.



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<sup>1</sup> The "***Limb of the Law of God***" and "***Branch***" referred to in this sentence are obviously spiritual Limbs and are terms not to be confused with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's blood-line relationship to Bahá'u'lláh.

<sup>2</sup> If we reflect upon the strong emphasis of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the protection that had been afforded the Faith through Bahá'u'lláh's appointment of Him as the Center of the Covenant and sole interpreter of the Holy Word it becomes clear why 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided in His Will and Testament for the Institution of the Guardianship which, through an unbroken line of guardians down through the ages to come of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, would continue to insure this same essential safeguard and protection.

<sup>3</sup> In this supplication of the Báb to God He clearly indicates the preeminence of spiritual relationships to Him of those who profess to be adherents of His Cause including His own kin. It will be noted that in referring to the relationship that binds the faithful believers to Himself as the "***Tree***" the Báb identifies the male believers as branches, the female believers as leaves and any offspring as "***fruit***". The use of this same symbology has been carried forward into the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh and appears in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and is used by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will.

<sup>4</sup> Again, in this quotation we observe that the term "***branch***" denotes a spiritual relationship as neither 'Alí (the first Imám) nor

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Joshua were Sons or lineal descendents of these Manifestations. They were spiritual sons or branches of these two Holy Trees.

<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding Shoghi Effendi's clear statements concerning the inviolability of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the then Hands of the Cause following the passing of Shoghi Effendi completely ignored and repudiated the words of Shoghi Effendi and nullified those provisions of the Will and Testament pertaining to the continuity of the Guardianship declaring them to be "**BADA**" (i.e. God had changed His Mind). Thus in one fell swoop they destroyed all three of the supreme international Institutions of the Faith delineated in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, namely: the guardianship, the Hands of the Cause (appointed only by the Guardian) and the Universal House of Justice (a complete organ only when presided over by its "**sacred head for life**" - the Guardian or, on occasion, by his specifically appointed representative).

<sup>6</sup> It is apparent that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was disinclined to capitalize terms referring to Himself and therefore wrote "**primal branch**" rather than "**Primal Branch**". Another example is the following statement: "**it is incumbent upon everyone to hold fast unto the Text of the clear and firmly established blessed verse, revealed about him**". It is obvious that "**primal branch**" and "**Most Great Branch**", the term used by Baha'u'llah, are synonymous terms. Following the passing of Shoghi Effendi the then Hands of the Cause interpreted the "**primal branch**" to refer to Shoghi Effendi. Whereas it will become clear even after only a cursory review of the Will that the terms: "**youthful branch**" and "**twig**" used by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in subsequent passages to refer to Shoghi Effendi cannot be equated with "**primal branch**". It is from this "**primal branch**" that the youthful branch or twig - the Guardian - has spiritually sprung and from which all future Guardians will spiritually spring. This symbolically denotes the spiritual relationship of the Guardians to the Center of the Covenant.

<sup>7</sup> It is clear that being cut off from the Holy Tree denotes a spiritual severing from the Manifestation of God and that this statement again emphasises the primordial importance of spiritual relationships as contrasted with physical or blood-line relationships.



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This is reiterated in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "**Last Tablet to America**" wherein He quotes the account found in the New Testament of the brothers of Christ who came to Him and reminded Him that they were His brothers whereupon He replied that "**His brothers were those who believed in God.**" Afterwards, He refused to associate with these brothers. In this same Tablet He also recounts the history of Qurratu'l-'Ayn ,(a "**Letter of the Living**" during the Dispensation of the Báb) who forsook her two eldest sons. He quotes her words: "**All the friends of God are my children but these two [sons] are not. I will have nothing to do with them.**"

This is further emphasized in May Maxwell's book "**An Early Pilgrimage**" wherein she relates the following statement made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a young American believer whose parents had not accepted the Faith: "**Material relationship is nothing, it bears no eternal fruits. You are the child of God and of the Kingdom and the ties of the flesh are nothing, but the ties of the spirit are all. I am your father, these [the other believers present] are your brothers and sisters, and you must be glad and rejoice, for I love you exceedingly.**"

<sup>8</sup> The Aghsán are the Sons of Bahá'u'lláh and the term "**Branches**" in this instance (note capitalization used by Shoghi Effendi in his translation) does not denote a spiritual relationship but their blood-line relationship as members of Bahá'u'lláh's Family Tree. One can perceive the wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in making specific reference to these Branches as well as the Afnán (Twigs), the kindred of the Báb, when one considers the rebellion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's brothers against Him following the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. As they were enjoined, together with the other believers, to turn unto Shoghi Effendi, the first Guardian of the Faith, they were not able to claim any special prerogatives or station or put forward any excuse exempting them from the same obedience, submissiveness, and loyalty to the Guardian as the other believers. The Báb had no living son or Branch. His relatives, therefore, being more distant in their relationship to the Holy Tree, in terms of lineage, are Twigs of that Tree.

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<sup>9</sup> The term "**youthful branch**" denotes the spiritual relationship of the Guardian (in this case Shoghi Effendi) to the "**primal branch**", 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In this sense all the future Guardians of the Faith will be youthful branches when they initially inherit the guardianship irrespective of their physical age at the time.

<sup>10</sup> The "**two offshoots**" mentioned here are the mother and father of Shoghi Effendi, his mother being the daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his father a relative of the Báb. Therefore, Shoghi Effendi, "**the fruit grown from**" or offspring of this union was related to both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. But, more than this, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasises the spiritual relationship of Shoghi Effendi's father and mother to the "**Tree of Holiness**" (note that "**Tree**" is singular). As previously pointed out 'Abdu'l-Bahá has defined "**offshoots of the Tree of Holiness**" in the first page of His Will as "**they that in the Day of the Great Dividing have stood fast and firm in the Covenant .**"

<sup>11</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá had no son (or lineal Branch) to succeed Him and chose His grandson (a spiritual "**branch**" ) to be the first guardian of the Cause of God.

<sup>12</sup> Shoghi Effendi has pointed out in his writings that the law of primogeniture which endows the first-born with the exclusive right of inheritance has been upheld by the Prophets of the past.

<sup>13</sup> It is clear that under these terms the incumbent Guardian of the Faith is free to choose any other male believer whose fidelity to the Covenant and spiritual qualifications make him worthy to be considered a "**branch**" of the Holy Tree and to be appointed, therefore, as the Guardian's successor. In this event the following words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá contained in His "**Last Tablet to America**" are pertinent: "**Consider! The Divine Gardener cuts off the dry or weak branch from the good tree and grafts to it, a branch from another tree.**" One can see that under this provision the Guardian is not bound in any way to appoint a successor from his lineal descent nor the lineal descent of Bahá'u'lláh.

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<sup>14</sup> It should be borne in mind that the Universal House of Justice consists of two parts, namely: The Guardian as **"its sacred head"** or President and the body of this House whose members are elected by the secondary or National Houses of Justice. Shoghi Effendi has pointed out in his writings that the Guardian **"symbolizes the hereditary principle in this Dispensation"** and **"has been made the interpreter of the words of its Author."** Therefore, **"he ceases, consequently by virtue of the actual authority invested in him, to be the figurehead invariably associated with the prevailing systems of constitutional monarchies."** Under this authority the Guardian **"is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's revealed utterances."** It is clear from the foregoing that this supreme administrative institution of the Faith can only be an infallible legislative organism when it is presided over by its **"sacred head"** - the Guardian of the Cause of God as delineated in Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament.

<sup>15</sup> The first living contingent of the Hands of the Cause were appointed by Shoghi Effendi on 24 December 1951 (previous Hands having been named by him posthumously). During the remaining six years of his ministry he did not call upon the Hands to exercise the function of expulsion from the Faith but reserved this decision to himself.

<sup>16</sup> The new believer may well ask why it was that in view of this very explicit provision of the 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will calling for the Guardian to appoint his successor during his lifetime the Hands of the Cause, after his passing should have searched for a testamentary document left by Shoghi Effendi. It appears that these Hands, not to mention the believers at large, had misunderstood or forgotten this provision. When one considers the fact that Shoghi Effendi was only 61 years of age when he passed away so suddenly and unexpectedly it is understandable that the Bahá'í world, occupied so completely with achieving the goals of the Ten Year Global Crusade and having no intimation that Shoghi Effendi's life was nearing its end, would not have given close consideration to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and

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Testament, and particularly this clause, for a long time, if, in fact, they ever had.

<sup>17</sup> This body of nine elected Hands did not come into existence during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi. However, it was formed embryonically by Shoghi Effendi in the last few years of his ministry in that he appointed four Hands whom he called upon to reside in Haifa permanently. These together with Rúhíyyih Khánum, (his wife), also a Hand, constituted a body of five Hands working directly under Shoghi Effendi in the Holy Land.

<sup>18</sup> In the light of those provisions of the Will that require all to be submissive and obedient to the Guardian it is clear that the intent of this provision is not to give the Hands a veto over the one whom the Guardian has chosen as his successor but rather the intent is to safeguard the guardianship from any person or persons who might attempt to foist upon the believers a false pretender to the guardianship (i.e. not one chosen by his predecessor). In the light of those provisions of the Will that require all to be submissive and obedient to the Guardian it is clear that the intent of this provision is not to give the Hands a veto over the one whom the Guardian has chosen as his successor but rather the intent is to safeguard the guardianship from any person or persons who might attempt to foist upon the believers a false pretender to the guardianship (i.e. not one chosen by his predecessor).

<sup>19</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that ***"the Supreme Tribunal which His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has described will fulfil this sacred task (of establishing Universal Peace) with the utmost might and power. And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation -- that is to say parliaments -- should elect two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the***

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**congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation. When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority-rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal." (BWF, p 292).**

<sup>20</sup> **Huqúqu'llah (the Right of God) requires that "If a person has possessions equal in value to at least 19 mithqals in gold (approximately 3 1/2 grams) it is a spiritual obligation to pay 19% of the total amount once only". However, "Certain categories of possessions, such as one's residence, are exempt from this." After the initial payment, "whenever his income, after all expenses have been paid, increases the value of his possessions by the amount of at least 19 mithqals of gold, he is to pay 19% of this increase, and so on for each further increase." This provision of the Aqdas was not implemented during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi nor has it been implemented as of this writing (December 1984).**

<sup>21</sup> **Shoghi Effendi writes that Muhammad-'Alí "as testified by Mírzá Badí'u'lláh (his brother) in his confession, written and published on the occasion of his repentance and his short-lived reconciliation with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, had, while Bahá'u'lláh's body was still awaiting internment, carried off, by a ruse, the two satchels containing His Father's most precious documents, entrusted by Him, prior to His ascension, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá" and "by an exceedingly adroit and simple forgery of a word recurring in some of the denunciatory passages addressed by the Supreme Pen to Mírzá Yahyá, and by other devices such as mutilation and interpolation, had succeeded in making them directly applicable to a Brother [Abdu'l-Bahá] Whom he hated with such consuming passion."**

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<sup>22</sup> It should be reiterated that this body cannot alter or nullify in any way the institutions of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order delineated by the Master-Architect of that Order in His Will and Testament -- a Document that Shoghi Effendi has stressed is a part of the explicit Holy Text.

<sup>23</sup> It is obvious that the "**twig**" can in no wise be confused with "**the primal branch**" praised and glorified in the early passages of the Will, which as already explained, refers to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own station.

<sup>24</sup> It is apparent that when 'Abdu'l-Bahá penned these lines all of the Aghsán had become disloyal and joined the company of the Covenant-breakers.

<sup>25</sup> This statement alone makes it clear that the Hands of the Cause had no authority to declare the guardianship ended following the passing of Shoghi Effendi.

<sup>26</sup> Some publications issued by the violators following the passing of Shoghi Effendi pretended that the "**Center of the Cause**" was Haifa and not the person of the Guardian of the Cause of God as clearly intended by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

<sup>27</sup> In view of this clear warning by 'Abdu'l-Bahá it is obvious that the Bahá'ís were in error in turning to the Hands of the Cause as a substitute for the Guardian following his passing. They were duty bound to diligently search for the Guardian's successor. Had they instituted a careful re-examination of the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the acts taken by Shoghi Effendi in accordance therewith together with his momentous messages to the Bahá'í world during the concluding years of his ministry they would certainly have discovered that he had established the embryonic Universal House of Justice and had appointed its embryonic Guardian-President, Charles Mason Remey, who awaited the assumption of his Office upon the passing of Shoghi Effendi.